



CHANGING CHARACTER OF RUSSIA'S UNDERSTANDING OF WAR: Policy Implications for the UK and Its Allies

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1. Introduction

Russia's current leaders believe their country is at war with the Euro-Atlantic, whether the countries of the Euro-Atlantic recognise this or not.¹ This belief is deep-seated and reflects an incompatibility between how Russia views the world and how the countries of the Euro-Atlantic view the world.² It is this belief that drives Russia's hostile actions across a range of domains -- including in cyberspace, in disinformation campaigns, in assassinations of its own citizens as well as foreign citizens abroad, and in attempts to destabilise countries.

Much attention has been paid to how Russia wages war since its annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014. In particular, attention has focussed overwhelmingly on a 2013 article in *Voenna-Promyshlennyyi Kur'er* (Military-Industrial Courier), a Russian army journal, by Chief of the General Staff General Valery Gerasimov which is seen by many analysts and commentators as foreshadowing Russia's embrace of so-called 'hybrid war' (*gibridnaya voina*).³ In the article, Gerasimov made a series of observations about the

¹ A number of commentators have made this argument over recent years, including: Keir Giles and Toomas Hendrik Ilves, 'Europe must admit Russia is waging war', *Chatham House Expert Comment*, 23 April 2021, available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/04/europe-must-admit-russia-waging-war>; Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political Warfare: Moving Beyond the Hybrid* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019); and, Oscar Jonsson, 'Gen. McChrystal is right - in fact, Russian leaders think they already are at war', *Foreign Policy*, 30 January 2017, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/30/gen-mcchrystal-is-right-in-fact-russian-leaders-think-they-already-are-at-war/>. Others, meanwhile, prefer to describe the situation as a 'conflict'. See, for example, Mathieu Boulègue, 'Myth 04: 'Russia is not in a conflict with the West'' in 'Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia: How they affect Western policy, and what can be done', *Chatham House*, May 2021, available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia>

² See, Andrew Foxall, 'Russia's Strategic Culture and Worldview: Policy Implications for UK and its Allies', Changing Character of War Centre, April 2021, available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55faab67e4b0914105347194/t/6082a3c69a2f75063aae88e3/1619174343048/How+Russia+Views+the+World++Andrew+Foxall.pdf>. See also, Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019).

³ Valery Gerasimov, 'Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii [The Value of Science in Foresight]', *Voenna-Promyshlennyyi Kur'er*, No. 8 (476), 27 February - 5 March 2013, pp. 1-3, available at: https://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK_08_476.pdf. On Gerasimov's speeches and writing more broadly, see 'Russian General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov: Shaping Russia's Armed Forces and Military Thought' in: Timothy L. Thomas 'Russian Military Thought: Concepts and Elements', MITRE Corporation, August 2019, available at: <https://www.mitre.org/sites/default/files/publications/pr-19-1004-russian-military-thought-concepts-elements.pdf>, pp. 11-1 - 11-17

character of contemporary warfare, including that there are no clear borders between war and peace, and that non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals have largely surpassed military means.

Gerasimov's observations were based on the "so-called 'coloured revolutions' in North Africa and the Middle East" which he believed had been provoked by the Euro-Atlantic using non-military means.⁴ While Gerasimov was plainly wrong about this, it was precisely because he believed the Euro-Atlantic waged whole-of-government warfare which transcends the boundaries between peace- and wartime that he described a state of permanent conflict. Gerasimov was not proposing a new way of Russian warfare, but instead explaining his understanding of how the Euro-Atlantic waged war -- and suggesting that Russia had to adopt innovative ideas on future security challenges in order to "outrun" its adversaries.⁵

Gerasimov's belief that war was no longer 'declared' and was fought with non-military means appeared novel, but in fact was anything but. As early as 2005, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov had explained:

there is a war against Russia underway, and it has been going on for quite a few years. No one declared war on us. There is not one country that would be in a state of war with Russia. But there are people and organizations in various countries who take part in hostilities against the Russian Federation.⁶

Speaking two years later, Ivanov was more specific about one of the non-military means used to wage this war, arguing, "The development of information technology has resulted in information itself turning into a certain kind of weapon" that allows "would-be military actions in practically any theater of war, and most importantly, without using military power."⁷ And Ivanov was not alone. Writing in 2008, the American analyst of Russian foreign policy Stephen Blank observed that "Russian officials and analysts ... openly state their belief that the country is facing an information or network war".⁸

In the years since, it has become apparent that Russia's leaders share the view that Russia is at war -- and that a wide range of Euro-Atlantic actions are interpreted as non-military means of warfare. In addition to information activities, they include diplomatic expulsions, which were described by Russia's Permanent Representative to the European Union (EU) Vladimir Chizhov in 2021 as evidence of "the West's current anti-Russia psychosis";⁹ the promotion of democracy, which Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai

⁴ Valery Gerasimov, 'Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii', *Voенно-Promyshlennyy Kur'er*, p. 2

⁵ On 'mirror imaging' and the imposition of Western concepts on Russian thinking, see Timothy L. Thomas, *Russian Military Strategy: Impacting 21st Century Reform and Geopolitics* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: FMSO, 2015).

⁶ Quoted in Ivan N. Vorobyov and Valery A. Kiselyov, 'Strategies of Destruction and Attrition: A New Version', *Military Thought: A Russian Journal of Military Theory and Strategy*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2014), pp. 127-141, p. 134. See also, Makhmut A. Gareyev, *Srazheniya na voeynno-istoricheskome fronte* [Battles on the Military-History Front] (Moscow: ISAN Press, 2010), p. 729

⁷ Quoted in Stephen Blank, 'INFORMATION WARFARE A LA RUSSE' in Phil Williams and Dighton Fiddner (Eds) *Cyberspace: Malevolent Actors, Criminal Opportunities, and Strategic Competition* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College Press, 2016), pp. 205-272 pp. 222-3

⁸ Stephen Blank, 'Web War I: Is Europe's First Information War a New Kind of War?', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2018), pp. 227-247, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495930802185312>.

⁹ 'Expulsion of diplomats from Czech Republic shows anti-Russian psychosis, says Chizhov', *TASS*, 24 April 2021, available at: <https://tass.com/politics/1282617>

Patrushev said in 2015 was an attempt to “dismember” Russia;¹⁰ and, the United States’ (US) and EU’s economic sanctions, imposed since 2014 on Russian individuals, entities, and sectors of the economy, which were described by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as seeking “to secure regime change”.¹¹

This paper traces the changing character of Russia’s understanding of war as contained within official Russian security-related documents: the Foreign Policy Concept, Military Doctrine, National Security Strategy, and Information Security Doctrine. By doing so, the paper demonstrates that what Russia’s leaders understand as ‘war’ has broadened significantly since the early 1990s; then the widespread belief was that war was primarily fought with military means and defined by armed conflict, now the widespread belief is that war is in large part fought with non-military means and includes almost any non-military actions that are perceived to harm the country’s interests. That Russia believes it is already in a state of war, albeit fought primarily with non-military means for the time being, has important implications for policymaking in the UK as well as in the Euro-Atlantic as a whole.

2. How Russia Understands War

Russia has three major official documents on various aspects of its security policy: a Foreign Policy Concept, a Military Doctrine, and a National Security Strategy. In addition, Russia also has an Information Security Doctrine. Taken together, these documents provide a picture of official Russian perceptions of war, as well as the state of international affairs and the main threats and opportunities facing the country. They also reveal persistent themes which are repeated from document to document and, additionally, are reiterated in official policy speeches and statements.

The Foreign Policy Concept is produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was the first of the three major documents to be adopted, in April 1993. Since then, revisions were released in 2000, 2008, 2013, and 2016. The Military Doctrine is produced by the Ministry of Defense and was the second to be adopted, in November 1993. Successive iterations were published in 2000, 2010, and 2014. Produced by the Security Council, the National Security Concept was the last of the three to be published, in December 1997.¹² It is hierarchically superior to the Foreign Policy Concept and Military Doctrine, and was revised in 2000, 2009, and 2015. The Information Security Doctrine is also produced by the Security Council, and was first published in 2000. An update was subsequently published in 2016.

During the 1990s, Russia’s security documents reflected a traditional understanding of war as being waged by the military. This began to broaden in the 2000s, as the ‘colour revolutions’ in the post-Soviet space and global developments in information and communication technology led to an emphasis on non-military means of waging war, primarily information, economic, and diplomatic. From the early 2010s onwards, this

¹⁰ Paul Sonne, ‘U.S. Is Trying to Dismember Russia, Says Putin Adviser’, *Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2015, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-is-trying-to-dismember-russia-says-putin-adviser-1423667319>

¹¹ Polina Devitt, ‘Lavrov accuses West of seeking ‘regime change’ in Russia’, *Reuters*, 22 November 2014, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSKCN0J609G20141122>

¹² See, for example, Marcel De Haas, *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century: Putin, Medvedev and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2010)

understanding broadened further, and reflected a belief that non-military means could be as effective -- or even more effective -- than military means in achieving political and strategic goals.

2.1 Foreign Policy Concept 1993

Post-Soviet Russia's first Foreign Policy Concept, adopted in April 1993, called for Russia's "active and full participation as a great power" in the international system, explaining that this "would be most consistent with its geopolitical significance, economic and intellectual potential, military-political and foreign economic interests."¹³

The Concept listed threats facing Russia under the headings of political, economic, environmental, and military. Military threats included existing and potential hotbeds of local wars and armed conflicts close to Russia's borders; unsettled issues of management and control over the strategic nuclear forces of the former USSR; proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; and, the persistence of the threat of international terrorism.

The Concept conveyed a traditional view on the threats facing the country. It also explained that the threats could be overcome: "Most of the threats, both real and potential, can be neutralized or weakened through overcoming the crisis in the Russian Federation, strengthening its state, institutions, economic and defense potential, as well as through the effective use of foreign policy means."

2.2 Military Doctrine 1993

Post-Soviet Russia's first Military Doctrine, adopted in November 1993, stated that "confrontation generated by ideological antagonism is being overcome, partnership and all-around cooperation are expanding, confidence in the military sphere is strengthening, and nuclear and conventional armaments are being reduced" (Section 2.1).¹⁴

The Doctrine listed the main external military dangers facing Russia, and the items in the list were similar to those included in the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept. They included territorial claims against Russia; existing and potential local wars and armed conflicts close to Russia's borders; weapons of mass destruction; expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of Russia's interests; and, international terrorism. The focus of the Doctrine, thus, was on conventional military means.

The Doctrine did not define what constituted 'war', but instead described how "Social, political, territorial, religious, national-ethnic, and other conflicts and the desire of a number of states and political forces to resolve them by means of armed struggle constitute the main reasons for its persistence and for the emergence of armed conflicts and wars." (Section 2.1)

¹³ 'Iz "Osnovnykh polozheniy kontseptsii vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii" ot 23 aprelya 1993 goda' ["Basic Provisions of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" dated April 23, 1993], available at: <http://uchebnik-online.com/131/1174.html>

¹⁴ 'The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation 1993, adopted by the President of Russia on 2 November 1993', *Federation of American Scientists*, n.d., available at: <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/russia-mil-doc.html>

2.3 National Security Concept 1997

Russia's National Security Concept, published in December 1997, began by noting that "the threat of large-scale aggression against Russia is virtually absent in the foreseeable future" and that "the main ones [threats] right now and in the foreseeable future do not have a military orientation". (Section I)¹⁵

According to the Concept, "The most real threat to Russia in the defense sphere is posed by existing and potential hotbeds of local wars and armed conflicts close to its state border" (Section III). It went on to note other threats, including "the spectrum of threats connected with international terrorism"; "the technological upsurge of a number of leading world powers ... [which] could lead to a qualitatively new stage in the development of the arms race"; as well as "foreign intelligence services' agent and operational-technical penetration of Russia."

The threat posed by the Euro-Atlantic was also given attention. The Concept acknowledged "the attempts of other states to counter Russia's consolidation as an influential center of the multi-polar world", explaining "we cannot rule out attempts at power rivalry with Russia" (Section I). It warned that "The prospect of NATO expansion to the East is unacceptable to Russia" (Section I). "Even when there are no aggressive intentions with regard to Russia", the Concept went on to explain, the presence of military alliances near Russia's borders "presented a potential military danger" (Section III).

2.4 National Security Concept 2000

The updated National Security Concept, published in January 2000, had a less optimistic tone than the one it replaced.¹⁶ It noted that there were two major trends of the day. The first was globalisation, which Russia believed would lead to "a multipolar world" (Section I). The second was the "attempts to create an international relations structure based on domination by developed Western countries ... under US leadership and designed for unilateral solutions (primarily by the use of military force)" (Section I). Building on the second of these, the Concept warned that "a number of states are stepping up efforts to weaken Russia politically, economically, militarily and in other ways" (Section I).

In line with its predecessor, the Concept noted "the growing technological edge of a number of leading powers" and warned that "their capabilities to develop new-generation weapons and military equipment create the prerequisites for a qualitatively new phase of the arms race and for a radical alteration of the forms and methods of warfare" (Section III). The Concept also warned of "an increased threat to the national security of the Russian Federation in the information sphere", explaining that:

¹⁵ 'Russian National Security Blueprint, approved by the President of Russia on 17 December 1997', *Federation of American Scientists*, n.d., available at: <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/blueprint.html>

¹⁶ 'Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii [On the approval of the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation]', President of Russia, 10 January 2000, available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/11782>. An English translation is available from: 'National Security Concept of the Russian Federation', The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 10 January 2000, available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/589768

The striving of a number of countries to dominate the global information space and oust Russia from the external and internal information market poses a serious danger, as do the elaboration by a number of states of a concept of information wars that envisages creation of means of dangerous influence on the information spheres of other countries of the world.” (Section III)

2.5 Information Security Doctrine 2000

The Information Security Doctrine was approved in September 2000.¹⁷ It defined information security as “the state of protection of its [Russia’s] national interests in the information sphere” (Section I.1) and described the information sphere even broader still, as being “information, information infrastructure, entities engaged in the collection, formation, dissemination and use of information, and a system governing public relations arising out of these conditions” (Section I.1).

The Doctrine divided the threats facing Russia’s security in the information sphere into internal and external, and provided a list of each.

Internal threats included the poor state of Russia’s economy and the under-development of its information sphere; the tendency for organised criminal structures to either influence the content of the information sphere or gain access to sensitive or confidential information; a decline in educational standards amongst the population; and, Russia’s “lag behind” other countries in both the development and use of information technology (Section I.3).

External threats included the “activities of foreign political, economic, military, intelligence and information entities, directed against” Russia’s interests; an increase in competition for information technologies; activities of terrorist organisations; and, notably, the “development by a number of States of information war concepts” that focus on “disturbing the normal functioning of their information and telecommunication systems, breaching the security of their information resources and gaining unsanctioned access to them.” (Section I.3)

2.6 Military Doctrine 2000

The updated Military Doctrine, published in April 2000, explained that “the threat of direct military aggression in traditional forms” against Russia had decreased as a result of “positive changes in the international situation, the conduct by our country of an active peace-loving foreign policy course, and the maintenance of Russia’s military potential -- primarily its nuclear deterrent potential -- at an adequate level” (Section I.4).¹⁸

¹⁷ ‘Doktrina Informatsionnoy Bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation]’, 9 September 2000, available at: <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&prevDoc=102417017&backlink=1&&nd=102161033>. An English translation is available from: ‘Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation’, available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Documents/National_Strategies_Repository/Russia_2000.pdf.

¹⁸ ‘Ob utverzhdenii “Voyennoy doktriny Rossiyskoy Federatsii” [On the approval of the “Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation”]’, President of Russia, 21 April 2000, available at: <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/15386>. An English translation is available from: ‘Russia’s Military Doctrine’, Arms Control Association, available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-05/russias-military-doctrine>

The Doctrine repeated many of the same external military dangers that were outlined in its predecessor, including territorial claims against Russia; existing and potential local wars and armed conflicts close to Russia's borders; expansion of military alliances to the detriment of Russia's interests; and, international terrorism. Notably, it stated that one of the main threats was "hostile information (information-technical, information-psychological) operations that damage the military security of the Russian Federation and its allies" (Section I.5).

Furthermore, in explaining the character of war, the Doctrine stated that "The nature of modern wars (armed conflicts) is determined by their military-political goals, the means of achieving those goals, and the scale of the military operations." (Section II.2) Additionally, it explained that a feature of war was "the extensive use of indirect, non-close-quarter, and other (including nontraditional) forms and means of operation, and long-range effective engagement and electronic engagement" (Section II.3).

2.7 Foreign Policy Concept 2000

The Foreign Policy Concept, updated in June 2000, began by lamenting that "Certain plans related to establishing new, equitable and mutually advantageous partnership relations of Russia with the rest of the world" which were included in its predecessor document "have not been justified" (Section I).¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Concept described how the "transformation of international relations, the end of confrontation, steady elimination of the consequences of the 'Cold War' ... have substantially broadened the possibilities for cooperation in the world arena" (Section II).

In contrast to its predecessor, but like all other documents since the National Security Concept 1997, the Concept was critical of the "growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States" (Section II). The Concept was also clear that "Russia retains its negative attitude towards the expansion of NATO" (Section IV).

While acknowledging the continuing importance of military power, the Concept explained that "an ever greater role is being played by economic, political, scientific and technological, ecological, and information factors" (Section II). The emphasis placed on "information" in the Concepts' early paragraphs was expanded upon in a later section (Section III.5). Under the heading "Information support for foreign policy activities", the Concept explained:

An important area in the foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation is communicating to the broad sectors of the world public objective and accurate information about its positions on the main international problems, foreign policy initiatives and actions by the Russian Federation...

2.8 Foreign Policy Concept 2008

The updated Foreign Policy Concept, published in January 2008, called for the "rethinking of the priorities of the Russian foreign policy with due account for the increased role of the country in international affairs"

¹⁹ 'Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii [The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation]', President of Russia, 28 June 2000, available at: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901764263>. An English translation is available from: 'The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation', *Federation of American Scientists*, available at: <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/ru>

(Section I).²⁰ The Concept held that, in part because of “the strengthening of Russia and its international position”, there had been a “significant enhancement of global cooperation. The threat of a fullscale war, including a nuclear one, has been diminished” (Section I).

Nevertheless, like its predecessor, the Concept was critical of the unipolar world, emphasising that “US actions in [sic] the world stage [should] be based on the principles and norms of international law, first of all the UN Charter” (Section IV), and of NATO expansion, which it explained “Russia maintains its negative attitude towards” as it “violates the principle of equal security” (Section IV).

The Concept noted that, in the modern world, “Differences between domestic and external means of ensuring national interests and security are gradually disappearing” (Section II). At the same time, the Concept acknowledged the increasing importance of non-military factors in international affairs, explaining “Together with the military power of States, economic, scientific and technological, environmental, demographic and informational factors are coming to the fore as major factors of influence of a state on international affairs” (Section II).

Building on this observation, the Concept explained that, “The use of political and diplomatic, legal, military, economic, financial and other instruments in handling foreign policy tasks should be commensurate with their real value in terms of safeguarding Russia’s foreign policy interests” (Section III).

2.9 National Security Strategy to 2020

The National Security Strategy replaced the National Security Concept, and was approved in May 2009.²¹ Akin to the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept, it held that “Russia has overcome the consequences of the systemic political and socio-economic crisis of the end of the 20th century” (Section I.1). But the Strategy was less optimistic in its evaluation of global security, warning that “The vulnerability of all members of the international community to new threats and challenges has grown” and that “a qualitatively new geopolitical situation is unfolding” (Section II.8).

In particular, in the section on “National Defense” (Section IV.1) or external security, the Strategy warned:

Threats to military security include the policies of a number of leading foreign countries, directed at achieving predominant superiority in the military sphere, primarily in terms of strategic nuclear forces, but also by developing high-precision, informational and other high-technology means of conducting armed warfare, i.e. strategic non-nuclear arms... (Section IV.1.30)

Later on, the Strategy listed the “main threats to national security in the sphere of state and public security”, which essentially means internal (or domestic) security. The first threat listed was “investigative or other

²⁰ ‘The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation’, President of Russia, 12 January 2008, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>

²¹ ‘Strategiya natsional’noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2020 goda [National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020]’, President of Russia, 13 May 2009, available at: <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/424>. An English translation is available from: National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020’, available at: <http://mepoforum.sk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NDS-RF-2009-en.pdf>

activity by the special services and organisations of foreign countries, and likewise by individual persons, directed at causing harm to the security of the Russian Federation” (Section IV.2.37). The Strategy, thus, continued the trend first evident in the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of blurring the lines of internal and external security.

2.10 Military Doctrine 2010

The updated Military Doctrine was published in February 2010²², having reportedly been under development since 2005.²³ Much of the content in the updated document was not substantially new. Like its 2000 predecessor, the Doctrine acknowledged “the decline in the likelihood of a large-scale war involving the use of conventional means of attack and nuclear weapons” against Russia, but it immediately warned that “in a number of areas military dangers to the Russian Federation are intensifying” (Section II.7). NATO is listed as the first of these ‘military dangers’ (Section II.8.a).

The Doctrine offered a list of “features of contemporary military conflicts” (Section II.12), the first characteristic of which was “the integrated utilization of military force and forces and resources of a nonmilitary character” (Section II.12.a) and this was shortly followed by “the intensification of the role of information warfare” (Section II.12.d). In addition, the Doctrine also offered a list of “Features of modern military conflicts” (Section II.13), which included “the prior implementation of measures of information warfare in order to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military force and, subsequently, in the interest of shaping a favourable response from the world community to the utilization of military force.” (Section II.13.d).

The Doctrine, thus, saw information warfare as transcending the boundaries between war and peace by virtue of its ability to achieve political and strategic objectives instead of military force. Not only this, “develop[ing] forces and resources for information warfare” (Section III.41.c) was listed as a key task for Russia’s armed forces.

2.11 Foreign Policy Concept 2013

The updated Foreign Policy Concept, approved in February 2013, repeated many of the themes of its predecessor.²⁴ This included the assumptions that the international system was becoming “polycentric” (Section II.5) and that there was a “reduced risk of a large-scale war, including a nuclear one” (Section II.7). Russia’s opposition to NATO was still present, with the Concept explaining “Russia maintains a negative attitude towards NATO's expansion” (Section IV.63).

²² ‘Voyennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii [The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation]’, President of Russia, 5 February 2010, available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/461>. An English translation is available from: ‘The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation’, *Carnegie Endowment*, available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf

²³ Keir Giles, ‘The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation 2010’, NATO Research Review, Research Division - NATO Defense College, February 2010

²⁴ ‘Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation’, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 18 February 2013, available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/122186

What was new, however, was a recognition that “Economic, legal, scientific, environmental, demographic and IT factors [have] become as important for states in influencing world politics as military power” (Section II.10). With this in mind, the Concept went on to note that soft power -- which it defined as “a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy” (Section II.20) -- is “becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations” (Section II.20). The Concept warned in the next sentence, however, that

increasing global competition and the growing crisis potential sometimes creates a risk of destructive and unlawful use of “soft power” and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation, manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad.

With this, the Concept acknowledged that information (in the form of soft power) could be used to achieve political and strategic objectives. Not only was this possible without the need for military means, it might even be preferable to military means since these were losing their relative importance.

2.12 Military Doctrine 2014

Only four years after its previous update, the Military Doctrine was revised again in December 2014.²⁵ Much of the content in the revised Doctrine was carried over from its predecessor, including the observation that the “unleashing of a large-scale war against the Russian Federation becomes [sic] less probable” and the warning that “in a number of areas the military dangers encountered by the Russian Federation are increasing” (Section II.11). Again, the Doctrine lists NATO as the first of these ‘military dangers’ (Section II.12.a).

For all of the similarities, the Doctrine differed from its predecessor in a number of important respects. First, it saw international affairs as being “characterized by the strengthening of global competition” (Section II.9). Second, it placed increased emphasis on non-military means of war. It stated one of the main tasks for the military was “to neutralize potential military risks and military threats through political, diplomatic and other non-military means” (Section III.21.b).

Particular emphasis was placed on the role of information, with a warning of a “tendency towards shifting the military risks and military threats to the information space and the internal sphere of the Russian Federation.” (Section II.11). Included in the list of external military ‘risks’ was the “use of information and communication technologies for military-political purposes” (Section II.12.l) while included on the list of internal military ‘risks’ was “subversive information activities against the population” (Section II.13.c).

Within a list of “Characteristic features and specifics of current military conflicts” (Section II.15), the Doctrine first listed the “integrated employment of military force and political, economic, informational or

²⁵ ‘Voyennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii [The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation]’, 25 December 2014, available at: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/420246589>. An English translation is available from: ‘The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation’, Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 29 June 2015, available at: <https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>

other non-military measures implemented with a wide use of the protest potential of the population and of special operations forces” (Section II.15.a).

2.13 National Security Strategy 2015

The updated National Security Strategy, published in December 2015, carried over a number of themes from the 2009 iteration and added detail to them.²⁶ It noted “the strengthening of Russia” (Section II.12) on the international stage, but cautioned that this was taking place “against a backdrop of new threats to national security”. The Strategy also accused “the United States and its allies” of pursuing a “policy of containing Russia that ... envisions the exertion of political, economic, military and informational pressure on it” (Section II.12).

There were three important differences from the 2009 document. First, the Strategy warned that “an entire spectrum of political, financial-economic, and informational instruments” were being used by the Euro-Atlantic “in the struggle for influence in the international arena” (Section II.13). Second, the Strategy was explicit that NATO’s activities close to Russia’s borders “were creating a threat to national security” (Section II.15). Third, the Strategy observed that “The practice of overthrowing legitimate political regimes and provoking intrastate instability and conflicts is becoming increasingly widespread” (Section III.18).

In a latter section on “Ensuring National Security” (IV) and under the heading “The main threats to state and public security” (point 43), the Strategy listed:

“the activities of radical public associations and groups using nationalist and religious extremist ideology, foreign and international nongovernmental organizations and financial and economic structures, and also individuals, focused on destroying the unity and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, destabilizing the domestic political and social situation -- including through inciting “color revolutions” -- and destroying traditional Russian religious and moral values.

2.14 Foreign Policy Concept 2016

The Foreign Policy Concept was updated again in November 2016, and builds upon the content and tone of its 2013 predecessor.²⁷ It states that “a multipolar international system” is emerging (Section II.4), and acknowledges that “a large-scale war, including nuclear war, between major powers remains unlikely” (Section II.6). But it is explicit about the reason for the former -- the “eroding [of] the global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers” (Section II.4) -- and is pessimistic about the sustainability of the latter, noting that “Existing military and political alliances are not capable of countering the full range of challenges and threats the world is currently facing” (Section II.7).

²⁶ ‘On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation’, President of Russia, 31 December 2015, available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391>

²⁷ ‘Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016)’, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 1 December 2016, available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248

The Concept retains the recognition that non-military means can be used to achieve outcomes that were previously only attainable through military means. “Alongside military might”, the Concept states, “other important factors allowing States to influence international politics are taking centre stage, including economic, legal, technological and IT capabilities” (Section II.8) Similarly, it acknowledges that “In addition to traditional methods of diplomacy, “soft power” has become an integral part of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives” (Section II.9).

In order to support this, Section III (“Priorities of the Russian Federation in Overcoming Global Challenges”) includes a sub-section on “Information Support for Foreign Policy Activities of the Russian Federation”. Three points are listed, including: “Russia seeks to ensure that the world has an objective image of the country, develops its own effective ways to influence foreign audiences ... and takes necessary steps to counter threats to its information security. New information and communication technology is used to this end.” (point 47).

2.15 Information Security Doctrine 2016

Russia adopted a new Information Security Doctrine in December 2016, replacing the document that had been in place since 2000.²⁸ The Doctrine repeated much of the same content as its predecessor, but its focus was otherwise different in two important respects, both of which are evident in Section III “Major Information Threats and the State of Information Security”.

First, the Doctrine warns that “The possibilities of transboundary information circulation are increasingly used for geopolitical goals, goals of a military-political nature contravening international law...” (Section III.10). As a result of this, the Doctrine explained, “a number of foreign countries are building up their information technology capacities to influence the information infrastructure in pursuing military purposes” (Section III.11). Furthermore, the Doctrine noted that “information and psychological tools [can be used] with a view to destabilizing the internal political and social situation in various regions across the world, undermining sovereignty and violating the territorial integrity of other States” (Section III.12).

Second, the Doctrine is clear that these are not abstract concerns, but instead are affecting Russia. “There is a trend among foreign media”, the Concept notes, “to publish an increasing number of materials containing biased assessments” of Russia (Section III.12). Not only this, Russian media outlets “often face blatant discrimination abroad” and Russian journalists are “prevented from performing their professional duties” (ibid). The Concept explains that this is not only an external issue, but also an internal one: “There is a growing information pressure on the population of Russia, primarily on the Russian youth, with the aim to erode Russian traditional spiritual and moral values” (ibid.).

3. How Russia Understands War

²⁸ ‘Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation’, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 5 December 2016, available at: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2563163

Russia's understanding of war, as contained within security-related policy documents, has broadened and widened significantly over the post-Soviet period. During the 1990s, these documents emphasised the centrality of the military to war, as is clear in the 1993 Military Doctrine. Beginning in the 2000s, non-military means of waging war started to garner more attention, in particular information, diplomatic, and economic means. This was evident in each of the three updated documents published in 2000 (Foreign Policy Concept, Military Doctrine, and National Security Concept) while the Information Security Doctrine adopted the same year warned about the threat of "information war".

The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept acknowledged that non-military means were emerging alongside military means, while the 2010 Military Doctrine emphasised the role of non-military means in war. Thereafter, subsequent iterations of all four documents have recognised that non-military means are able to achieve political and strategic objectives without the need to use military means. The 2014 Military Doctrine, for example, recognises the "potential military risks and military threats [to Russia] through political, diplomatic and other non-military means", while the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept explains that "economic, legal, technological and IT capabilities" are just as useful for exerting international influence as the military.

While it follows, in the words of the senior British analyst of Russia Charles Blandy, that Russia sees "war as being something much more than military conflict",²⁹ it does not mean that conventional military force has lost its relevance. Quite the opposite, large-scale or full-scale war is emphasised in every iteration of the Foreign Policy Concept, Military Doctrine, and National Security Concept.

At the same time, since 2008 Russia has invested heavily in the modernisation and reform of its armed forces, first under Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov and then under his successor Sergei Shoigu, and this has focused on conventional (and nuclear) capabilities. Russia spends considerable money and time preparing for conventional operations: its four annual strategic exercises conducted on a rotating basis among four of Russia's five military districts (*Zapad*, *Vostok*, *Tsentr*, and *Kavkaz*) are a case in point. As the American expert on Russia's military Michael Kofman dryly puts it, "what Russia does best is conventional war, and if a conflict does not start that way, it is how it always ends."³⁰

Nevertheless, in the context of its overall conventional inferiority and limited resources, Russia has attached increasing importance to non-military means given that it believes they can be as effective as military means and are, on the whole, less expensive.³¹ Russia's "broad sense of quite what constitutes 'war'", writes the leading British analyst of Russian security affairs Mark Galeotti, means that it also has "a broad sense of what

²⁹ Charles K. Bartles, 'Getting Gerasimov Right', *Military Review*, January-February 2016, available at: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/January-February-2016/>, pg. 34

³⁰ Michael Kofman, 'Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts', *War on the Rocks*, 11 March 2016, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-other-dark-arts/>

³¹ In the words of Alina Polyakova and Mathieu Boulègue, "The Russian leadership fundamentally feels its conventional military is inferior to the West's, and especially NATO. Therefore, as Russia cannot compete symmetrically, it chooses to contest and disrupt asymmetrically." See, Alina Polyakova and Mathieu Boulègue, 'The Evolution of Russian Hybrid Warfare', *Center for European Policy Analysis*, January 2021, available at: <https://cepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CEPA-Hybrid-Warfare-1.28.21.pdf>

might be warfighting assets.”³² It is such an understanding of war, in which all means of national power are leveraged and ambiguity between state and non-state entities is encouraged, that allows Russia to undertake actions that are deniable, whether plausibly or implausibly.

Such an understanding of war is nothing new for Russia, but instead “bears the imprint of doctrines, disciplines and habits acquired over a considerable period of time” in the words of the distinguished Russia-watcher James Sherr.³³ Indeed, as the Swedish academic Oscar Jonsson has convincingly shown, it is the result of debates that have taken place amongst Russian military practitioners and theorists since 1991, and which build on Soviet- and Tsarist-era thinking.³⁴ As early as 2002, military theorist Pavel Kazarin suggested that information warfare blurred the lines between war and peace and, as such, represented “a special form of war [since it is] present in all other forms”.³⁵ He argued that because the economy is the foundation of a state’s strength, any means -- military or non-military -- that can be used to weaken it are, by definition, means of war.

Writing in 2006, then-Chief of the General Staff General Yuri Baluyevsky argued that “the very essence of ‘military power’ has undergone a change”, with the emergence of “new (non-violent) forms”.³⁶ The following year, he wrote about the importance of “diplomacy, international legal, information, economic and other non-military methods” of warfare.³⁷ Another key participant in these debates was then Chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the General Staff General-Lieutenant Andrei Kartapolov. In 2015, he observed that “The use of indirect actions and methods of conducting wars of a new type allows us to achieve the necessary military results, such as ... inflicting economic, political, and territorial damage, without explicit application of armed forces.”³⁸ Kartapolov’s subsequent trajectory -- in 2018 he was appointed, by presidential decree, Chief of Main Directorate for Political-Military Affairs of the Russian Armed Forces and now holds the rank of General-Colonel -- suggests his views enjoy high-level approval.³⁹

³² Mark Galeotti, ‘Hybrid, ambiguous, and non-linear? How new is Russia’s ‘new way of war’?’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2016), pp. 282-301, pg. 297, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2015.1129170>.

³³ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia’s Influence Abroad* (London: Chatham House, 2013), pg. 17

³⁴ Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the lines between war and peace*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2019)

³⁵ Pavel Kazarin, ‘The Nature of War as a Scientific Category’, *Military Thought: A Russian Journal of Military Theory and Strategy*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2002) pp. 19-21. pg. 19

³⁶ Yuri Baluyevsky, ‘Generalnyy shtab i zadachi voyennogo stroitelstva [The General Staff and goals for military organization]’, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 January 2006, available at: <https://lenta.ru/articles/2006/01/25/baluevski/>

³⁷ Yuri Baluyevsky, ‘Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation’, *Military Thought: A Russian Journal of Military Theory and Strategy*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2007) pp. 15-22. pg. 19

³⁸ Andrei Kartapolov, ‘Uroki voyennykh konfliktov i perspektivy razvitiya sredstv i metodov ikh vedeniya, pryamykh i kosvennykh deystviy v sovremennykh mezhdunarodnykh konfliktakh [Lessons of Military Conflicts and Prospects for the Development of Means and Methods of Conducting Them, Direct and Indirect Actions in Contemporary International Conflicts]’, *Vestnik Akademii Voennykh Nauk*, No. 2, Vol. 51 (2015), pp. 26-36. pg. 33

³⁹ ‘Kartapolov Andrey Valeriyevich’, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, n.d., available at: https://structure.mil.ru/management/info.htm?id=11960036@SD_Employee. Available in English at: https://eng.mil.ru/en/management/deputy/more.htm?id=11960036@SD_Employee

It follows that Russia's current leaders understand war in terms far broader than many of their counterparts in the Euro-Atlantic. They believe that their country is in a full-scale non-military war, in which all means of state power (not necessarily including military means, but not excluding them either) are used across all domains. This is underpinned by a belief, widely held by Russia's current leaders, that their country is under threat from the Euro-Atlantic -- and that the threat is existential. This view did not originate with Vladimir Putin, but has become canonical under his leadership. In particular, Russia's leaders perceive that the Euro-Atlantic's values -- for example, universal human rights and the rule of law -- threaten Russia's stability as much as its conventional capabilities.

However misguided the perception may be, it fuels the belief that Russia is playing catch-up with the Euro-Atlantic's non-military means. Speaking in 2016, Gerasimov said:

It is necessary to focus on the main components of [the Euro-Atlantic's] hybrid methods. The falsification of events, control of the media are among the most effective methods of asymmetrical warfare. The effect can be comparable with the results of large-scale use of troops and forces.⁴⁰

Seen from Moscow, all manner of Euro-Atlantic non-military activities -- from the imposition of economic sanctions and the financing of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who support rule-of-law initiatives to the creation of Netflix⁴¹ and Pokémon Go⁴² -- have the potential to harm Russia's interests and are, thus, means of war. This view not only reinforces the belief that Russia is under threat but also provides justification for how it wages war. That Russia believes it is playing catch-up with the Euro-Atlantic's non-military means explains why Moscow undertakes hostile non-military actions across a range of domains. In the words of Mark Galeotti:

[why] stick to rules that favour the opposition? ... Russia seeks to avoid conflict where it is weak and its enemies strong, but rather to shift the battle to terrain of its own choosing.⁴³

Importantly, Russia's leaders link all of these concerns about the Euro-Atlantic's non-military means of war to 'colour revolutions'. From their perspective, events in Georgia in 2003, Kyrgyzstan in 2004, and Ukraine in 2005 (the original 'colour revolutions'), as well as in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen in 2011 (the so-called 'Arab Spring') and in Ukraine in 2014 were not the result of domestic uprisings against unpopular leaders, but instead were provoked by the Euro-Atlantic using non-military means in order to achieve regime change and the installation of leaders committed to building states on the Euro-Atlantic

⁴⁰ Valery Gerasimov, 'Po opytu Sirii [From the experience of Syria]', *Voenno-Promyshlennyi Kur'er*, 9 March 2016, available at: <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>

⁴¹ Tom Parfitt, 'Netflix is just a CIA plot, says Kremlin', *The Times*, 24 June 2016, available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/netflix-is-just-a-cia-plot-says-kremlin-w879zxw3c>

⁴² 'The Devil has arrived through this mechanism': The Russian authorities weigh in on Pokémon Go. Five quotes', *Meduza*, 18 July 2016, available at: <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2016/07/18/the-devil-has-arrived-through-this-mechanism>

⁴³ Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political Warfare: Moving Beyond the Hybrid*, pg. 21.

model.⁴⁴ So too were the protests in Russia in late 2011 and early 2012, during which Putin claimed protestors were “paid agents of the West”.⁴⁵

Through a prism of Russian threat assessment, the Euro-Atlantic’s non-military activities -- no matter how uncoordinated and unrelated in reality they may be -- can be combined into a single trajectory which leads to the conclusion that they are means of regime change and that they will, sooner or later, target Russia.

Speaking in 2014, at the height of the Ukraine Crisis, Putin warned “we must do everything necessary to ensure this [a ‘colour revolution’] never happens in Russia.”⁴⁶ Around the same time, Lavrov said that EU and US sanctions were intended to “destroy the economy and trigger popular protests ... to secure regime change.”⁴⁷ In 2015, Putin stated that he had observed “attempts to use so-called colour revolution technology, ranging from organizing unlawful public protests to open propaganda of hatred and enmity in social networks”. The aim, he said, was “obvious -- to provoke civil conflict and strike a blow at our [Russia’s] sovereignty”.⁴⁸

These concerns have intensified over recent years. Speaking in 2019, Gerasimov argued that the Euro-Atlantic is “working on offensive military actions ... they are using the colour revolution technology and soft power. They aim to eliminate the statehood of countries they dislike, undermine sovereignty, change the legally elected bodies of state power.”⁴⁹ The same year, Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council Rashid Nurgaliyev claimed that “It is not a secret for us that NATO is laying the groundwork to put the West-controlled regimes in power in a number of CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] countries, particularly by inciting ‘color revolutions’.”⁵⁰

In his Address to the Federal Assembly in 2021, Putin peddled a conspiracy theory about the Euro-Atlantic being behind an attempted colour revolution in Belarus before warning, “Those behind provocations that threaten the core interests of our security will regret what they have done in a way they have not regretted anything for a long time.”⁵¹ Later in the same speech, Putin warned the Euro-Atlantic not to cross Russia’s

⁴⁴ The ‘colour revolutions’ usually feature prominently in the Kremlin’s litany of Euro-Atlantic misdemeanors. For an overview of these, see Richard Sakwa, *Russia Against the West: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

⁴⁵ Miriam Elder, ‘Vladimir Putin calls Russia’s protestors ‘paid agents of the west’’, *The Guardian*, 15 December 2011, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/15/vladimir-putin-russian-protesters-tv>

⁴⁶ ‘Security Council meeting’, *President of Russia*, 20 November 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/47045>

⁴⁷ Polina Devitt, ‘Lavrov accuses West of seeking ‘regime change’ in Russia’

⁴⁸ Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, ‘Rasshirennoe zasedanie kollegi MVD’ [An Extended Meeting of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Staff], 4 March 2015, available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47776>

⁴⁹ Valery Gerasimov, ‘Vektory razvitiya voyennoy strategii [Vectors of the Development of Military Strategy]’, *Krasnaya Vezda*, 4 March 2019, available at: <http://redstar.ru/vektory-razvitiya-voennoj-strategii/>. A summary of Gerasimov’s speech was published in English and is available from: ‘Russia’s Geopolitical Rivals Preparing for High-Tech Wars in Space – Gen Staff’, *Sputnik News*, 2 March 2019, available at: <https://sputniknews.com/military/201903021072893281-russia-hightech-space-wars/>

⁵⁰ ‘NATO cooking up ‘color revolutions’ in CSTO states, says Russian Security Council’, *TASS*, 2 July 2019, available at: <https://tass.com/defense/1066764>

⁵¹ ‘Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly’, *President of Russia*, 21 April 2021, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/65418>

“red line”, stating that “We ourselves will determine in each specific case where it will be drawn.” With this, Putin was deliberately ambiguous about the threshold for escalation in Russia’s war with the Euro-Atlantic which many in the Euro-Atlantic are not even aware is a war.

4. Conclusions

Russia’s current leaders believe that their country is engaged in an ongoing war with the Euro-Atlantic which is being fought, for the moment, through non-military means. Not only this, they believe that the Euro-Atlantic started this war. This means Moscow perceives its action to be primarily defensive.⁵² It also means that Moscow perceives Euro-Atlantic actions to be threatening when their intent is innocent or defensive, and that it perceives Euro-Atlantic actions to be threatening even when those actions have nothing to do with Russia -- or any other country, for that matter. Seen from the Kremlin, Euro-Atlantic actions seek to undermine Russia and ultimately bring about regime change in Moscow. The Kremlin believes this because these are the lessons it has drawn from the behaviour of the Euro-Atlantic, primarily the US and NATO, over at least the last two decades.⁵³

The implications of this divergence in understanding over international affairs and recent as well as more distant history are stark. Economic sanctions are a case in point. Since 2014, the EU and US have imposed a series of sanctions on Russia, and these have been seen in Euro-Atlantic capitals as a way to avoid escalating current tensions with Moscow. For Russia, however, economic sanctions are seen as a non-military means of war.⁵⁴ Speaking in 2015, president of the state-owned VTB Bank Andrei Kostin described sanctions as “economic war against Russia.”⁵⁵ Patrushev, meanwhile, has argued that “the purpose of Western sanctions is to change the leadership of Russia.”⁵⁶

Russia’s current leaders do not believe that the war is purely non-militarily, instead that it is currently non-military. Gerasimov, for his part, has argued that the ratio of non-military to military means in war is four to one.⁵⁷ They believe that non-militarily means are used in the opening stages of war (which the Euro-Atlantic may naively misunderstand as ‘peace’),⁵⁸ and that while later stages may involve military means this is not

⁵² Andrew Monaghan, ‘How Moscow Understands War and Military Strategy’, *CNA*, November 2020, available at: https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/IOP-2020-U-028629-Final.pdf

⁵³ Andrew Monaghan, ‘Preparing for War? Moscow Facing an Arc of Crisis’, *Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College*, December 2016, available at: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep11520>

⁵⁴ Charles Bartles makes a similar point, arguing “while the West considers these nonmilitary measures [economic sanctions] as ways of avoiding war, Russia considers these measures as war.” See, Charles K. Bartles, ‘Getting Gerasimov Right’, pg. 34

⁵⁵ Holly Ellyatt, ‘Sanctions on Russia are ‘economic war’’, *CNBC*, 30 January 2015, available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2015/01/30/new-sanctions-on-russia-are-economic-war.html>

⁵⁶ Ekho Moskvyy, ‘Sekretar SovBeza Nikolai Patrushev zayavil shto tsel zapadnikh sanktsii –eto smena rukovodstva Rossii’ [Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev said that the goal of Western sanctions is leadership change in Russia], 3 July 2015, available at: <http://echo.msk.ru/news/1578484-echo.html>

⁵⁷ Valery Gerasimov, ‘Tsennost’ nauki v predvidenii [The Value of Science in Foresight]’, pg. 3.

⁵⁸ There has been considerable interest over the last decade in Russia in the concept of the ‘Initial Period of Warfare’ (IPW). See, for example, Sergey G. Chekinov and Sergey A. Bogdanov, ‘Nachal’nyye periody voyn i ikh vliyaniye na podgotovku strany k voyne budushchego [Initial Periods of War and their Influence on a Country’s Preparation for Future War]’, *Voennaya Mysl*, No.11 (2012), pp. 14-27. See also, Timothy L. Thomas, ‘Russian Military Thought: Concepts and Elements’.

inevitable as non-military means are able to achieve political and strategic goals by themselves.⁵⁹ Accordingly, Russia continues to emphasise conventional military power, which is how it has defined its security and status throughout its history.⁶⁰ Almost a decade and a half after beginning to reorganise and upgrade its armed forces, Russia's military is now both stronger and more influential than at any time since the end of the Soviet Union.

This situation has obvious implications for those in the UK as well as elsewhere in the Euro-Atlantic who are developing policy toward Russia. Some of these are:

- Because Russia perceives that it is in a war with the Euro-Atlantic, the countries and institutions of the Euro-Atlantic ought to recognise this -- jointly and publicly. But whether they do or do not, the fundamentals of the situation will not dramatically change: it is only necessary for one party to believe that war exists for war to exist.
- Russia understands that the Euro-Atlantic started the non-military war and Russia understands its actions as being primarily defensive. This view is at odds with the Euro-Atlantic's belief both that Russia is waging non-military war offensively and that Russia started it.
- The mismatch in perceptions of war is due to a fundamental incompatibility between how Russia views the world and how the countries of the Euro-Atlantic view the world. This means that the relationship as a whole cannot be fixed through policy steps or tweaks.
- As the example of economic sanctions shows, there is significant opportunity for misunderstanding and miscalculation between the Euro-Atlantic and Russia. This requires clear and direct communication by the Euro-Atlantic as to the reason(s) for action(s) and their intention(s), rather than couching these in diplomatic niceties.
- Russia wages war through non-military means because they are a means to exacerbate existing shortcomings in the Euro-Atlantic and to take advantage of opportunities that arise. As long as Moscow perceives that its actions expand its influence and enhance its status, and thus its perception of power, it will continue to act in its current assertive manner.
- Some of the non-military means used by Russia have both defensive and offensive applications. Thus, in addition to the belief that the lines between war and peace have been blurred and to the deliberate obscuring of the lines between state and non-state entities, it is also the case that the lines between defensive and offensive have been blurred.
- Russia's use of non-military means has, on a number of notable occasions, involved the use of military forces: the 2018 Salisbury poison attack was carried out by military intelligence officers, so too was the 2014 explosion in an ammunition depot in the Czech Republic. The countries and

⁵⁹ In this way, Russia's current leadership's thinking is very similar to that of George F. Kennan, who made a similar argument in his 1948 memo on 'The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare'. See, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320.pdf?v=941dc9ee5c6e51333ea9ebbbc9104e8c>

⁶⁰ Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West*

institutions of the Euro-Atlantic must not exercise undue self-restraint in responding to such incidents, as doing so risks giving Russia the impression that it can act without consequences.

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