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In Between War and Peace: The Conceptualisation of Russian Strategic Deterrence

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Suggested format for citing this paper: Lucassen, Okke Geurt (2018). 'In Between War and Peace: The Conceptualisation of Russian Strategic Deterrence', UPTAKE Working Paper, No. 16.

ABSTRACT

The Russian Federation has expanded its foreign policy instruments in recent years to include a broader range of tools, both military and non-military for times of peace and war. The implications of this pivot in Russian foreign policy is often referred to in terms such as Hybrid Warfare, Cross-Domain Coercion, New Generation War, or the Gerasimov doctrine. Examples of this turn include the annexation of Crimea, the use of paramilitary groups (such as the Wagner Group), and foreign election tampering. The present paper contributes to the growing literature on contemporary Russian foreign policy by dissecting what the Russian Federation has named 'Strategic Deterrence' (*сдерживание стратегическое*) as a part of its foreign policy strategy. Whilst established theories of foreign policy strategies such as Hybrid Warfare have been adapted to better fit the contemporary Russian model, the notion of Russian Strategic Deterrence is best understood through its conceptualisation as a uniquely Russian take on contemporary foreign policy. This paper provides an analysis on how Russian perceptions of Western expansionism have influenced the Russian conceptualisation of Strategic Deterrence, and how the Russian concept of Strategic Deterrence is distinct from seemingly similar and commonly interchanged concepts such as Hybrid Warfare.

About the author

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INTRODUCTION AND RELEVANCE

Western analysts, politicians, governments, and academics view Russian efforts such as foreign election tampering, the intervention in Ukraine, and the use of disinformation as emblematic foreign policy objectives. Whilst such initiatives are indeed an indication that the Russian Federation is willing to ramp up its efforts to protect its interests through non-conventional means, this paper will argue that such efforts are manifestations of a wider strategic change in Russian foreign policy. As such, contemporary Russian foreign policy should be analysed within the framework of Russia's pivot towards 'Strategic Deterrence.' Such Strategic Deterrence (*сдерживание стратегическое*) in the Russian conceptualisation of foreign policy includes a broad scope of methods to protect its interests through nuclear, non-nuclear, military, and non-military tools. The comprehensive nature of Russian Strategic Deterrence distinguishes it from the classical Western understanding of strategies of deterrence as they were popularised in nuclear and military terms by authors such as Brodie (1958) and Schelling (1960). Whereas classical Western foreign policy as a domain has remained largely separate from the military realm, contemporary Russian foreign policy has increasingly integrated and formalised military tools in its foreign policy toolset. Modern concepts such as Hybrid Warfare, Cross-Domain Coercion, and New Generation War have been developed to more adequately reflect these developments, yet they too have been conceptualised as variations on classical strategies of deterrence. Precisely because these iterations are rooted in the Western understanding of a clear delineation between foreign policy and military doctrine, they are unable to acknowledge its dual nature. Consequently, these concepts remain inadequate tools with which to analyse modern foreign policy of the Russian Federation. This paper aims to contribute to improving the understanding of modern Russian foreign policy as an intrinsically hybrid agenda. It does so by first giving a brief historical overview of how the Russian Federation developed a perception that the West has been utilising similar non-conventional tools to achieve its foreign policy objectives in the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and consequently explores the specific Russian conceptualisation of Strategic Deterrence. This two-part analysis of Russian perceptions of Western foreign policy and Russia's pivot in foreign policy, culminating in its contemporary conceptualisation of Strategic Deterrence,

serves as a foundation to better understand contemporary Russian foreign policy decision-making and the implications for the affected regions. The resulting understanding should be utilised to further analyse Russian Strategic Deterrence and its current and future applications in the Russian sphere of interest. To better understand Russian Strategic Deterrence is to better understand Russian reactionary policy to perceived European expansionism. A failure to overcome this mutual distrust between the West and Russia could lead to further escalation. Ideally, improved mutual understanding could lead to more inclusive policy on the behalf of the Russian Federation, the West, and all those caught in between.

RUSSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF WESTERN TOOLS OF MANIPULATION IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

The Cold War had ended, the Iron Curtain had fallen, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union heralded a new era. The former Soviet Republics were reinventing themselves as newly (re)established independent nation-states. The majority of these new states[1] were quick to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), ostensibly[2] signalling a continuation of close ties between the former Soviet republics, and with the Soviet Union's successor state of the Russian Federation taking on a leading role. Yet, Russia had lost its role as a superpower on the global theatre. In its successive iteration, the Russian Federation had lost a vast amount of territories, energy resources, influence, and its economy contracted by 43 percent of real GDP (Brzezinski, 1997; Trenin, 2011). It had to reinvent itself from a pan-Slavic, communist, anti-capitalist union to a new political entity that both accommodated the new world order, and yet was consistent with its own constituency that was historically defined through and by empire before (ethno-)nation. The Russian Federation recognised that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was due to internal shortcomings. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the focus of Russian policy was therefore on internal reforms, during which the EU under the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht took a leading role in strengthening the new Soviet successor states through supporting domestic reforms in these countries. The resulting normative

[1] With the exception of the Baltic states.
[2] As became clear over time, the Commonwealth of Independent States did not transform into an entity akin to the Union of Sovereign States, but instead became what Putin called a "vehicle for civilized divorce" (Trenin, 2011).

hegemony by the EU established an asymmetric EU-Russian relationship of cooperation vis-a-vis the post-Soviet space (Casier, 2016). Whilst the post-Soviet Republics welcomed Western reforms, the Russian Federation perceived this as an increasingly assertive and expansionist EU-NATO agenda and a threat to Russian interests in the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood (Casier, 2016; Trenin, 2011).

NATO Intervention in the Kosovo War

A key event of pivoting NATO-EU foreign policy and Russian perceptions of such policy was the NATO intervention in Kosovo 1999 during the Yugoslav wars. NATO had been a defensive military alliance, yet now it conducted an offensive campaign in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Moreover, NATO ignored Russian protests and bypassed the need to obtain authorisation from the United Nations' Security Council, where the Russian Federation could have vetoed any resolution. The Western and Russian historical recollection of the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia could not be more contrasting. Where the West felt morally obligated to stop Serbian genocidal campaigns against Albanians in the heart of Europe, Igor Ivanov[3] described NATO itself perpetrating "genocide against the Yugoslav [*i.e.,* Serbian] peoples" and supporting Albanian terrorism (Mendeloff, 2008). Russia was at this time engaged in the Second Chechen War and feared the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia was setting a precedent for further Western mingling in the domestic affairs of sovereign foreign states. When NATO adopted a new version of The Alliance's Strategic Concept in 1999, it further reinforced the Russian perception of increased Western assertion. The new version of the Alliance's Strategic Concept formalised NATO's ability to station and deploy NATO forces outside of its member states' territories (NATO, 1999). Indeed, a popular Russian statement during the time was that "the difference between Serbia and Russia was that the latter had nuclear weapons, and thus was safe from Western invasion." (Trenin, 2011).

The Russian Federation perceived the West's actions eastward as a building threat and saw the institutions that promised to safeguard sovereignty and security fail. The UNSC was unable to deliver upon its promise to prevent illegal wars of aggression

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[3] Igor Ivanov was Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs during the NATO intervention in the Kosovo war. He served as Russian foreign minister from 1998 to 2004.

against sovereign nation-states, NATO was repurposing from a defensive alliance to an aggressive coalition, and Eastern European states displayed to be willing co-conspirators for access to the West. Following their 1997 invitations at the Madrid Summit, the former Soviet satellite states of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland officially joined NATO in 1999. The Madrid Summit proclaimed: "NATO Enlargement will continue to apply with regard to future aspirants, regardless of their geographic location. No European democratic country (...) will be excluded from consideration." (Madrid Declaration, 1997). The extent of eurocentrism in Eastern Europe revealed itself when Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine refused the establishment of an air corridor to Russia in its attempt to reinforce peacekeeping forces in Yugoslavia (Trenin, 2011). After four years of unsuccessful Russian military counterbalancing in Yugoslavia, the Russian Federation was forced to abandon its peacekeeping mission and relinquish the Balkans to the Western (*i.e.,* EU-NATO) sphere of influence. The Russian Federation was unable to assert its military, economic, and political interests in the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood. Instead, it saw its own influence in the region decline whilst the West's increased. The EU henceforth took on an increasingly leading role in reforming and integrating the eastern states of Europe. The Yugoslavia affair became the first major point of contention over foreign policy between the Russian Federation and the more assertive and Eastern-European orientated incarnation of the European Union.

Russian-Western Competition in the Shared Euro-Russian Neighbourhood

Despite improved cooperation between Russia and the US post-9/11 in Afghanistan in their collective fight against the Taliban, relations between the Russian Federation and the West deteriorated as competition increased in scale, scope, and intensity starting around 2003 (Casier, 2016; Trenin, 2011). Whilst aspirations of the then newly inaugurated president Putin to join NATO in the years 2000-2002 were unsuccessful, the bilateral relations under the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) were transformed into the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) on 28 May 2002[4]. Yet, domestic revolutions in the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood and increased NATO and EU expansionism further deteriorated relations between Russia and the West, with both

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[4] Through the NRC, member states would henceforth have their own respective bilateral relations over NATO issues with Russia on more equal terms (Trenin, 2011).

reinforcing its negative perceptions of the other. The Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine both saw Kremlin-friendly authorities replaced by pro-Western regimes, which announced their intents to become NATO members in the future (Simon and Spero, 2010). The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland had already acceded to the NATO alliance in 1999, and on 29 March 2004, they were joined by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Consequently, they all acceded to the European Union a mere 33 days later.[5] The West hailed the Colour Revolutions and the expansion of European norms and values through institutional means as prime examples of the effectiveness of its democratic principles and leading role in creating institutional, political and economic reforms in the newly established independent states. Yet, Russia perceived such practices as Western expansionism at best and Western coups appealingly disguised as democracy at worst (Cadier, 2014; Casier, 2016; Trenin, 2011). The Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the subsequent ousting of Yanukovych, who had been strongly endorsed by Putin, was especially perceived by Russia not as a local uprising aimed at the neglectful and corrupt authorities, but rather as a United States-led initiative to actively reduce the influence of Russia in the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood, or even worse, a possible practice exercise in later overthrowing the Russian government and installing a Western puppet regime (Trenin, 2009).

The NATO intervention during the Yugoslav war had signalled to the Russian Federation that the sovereignty of independent nation states only goes as far as it falls within the Western paradigm of what constitutes acceptable governance of their respective constituencies whilst simultaneously revealing the vastly altered geopolitical loyalties on the European theatre. If adversaries of the West would step out of line, it was not shy to utilise military tools through NATO to pursue its foreign policy objectives. The Colour Revolutions and the mass expansion of both NATO and the EU in the eastern direction additionally signalled that the Western sphere of influence was to be extended not only by military means in the face of what the West would label as oppression, but also through non-military tools such as political incentives and (de)stabilising mechanisms, as well as economic support and

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[5] With the exception of Bulgaria and Romania who were not yet deemed ready for EU membership. They eventually acceded in 2007.

coercion, regardless of the traditional regional delineation of Western or Eastern interests and ideology. Russia was unable to counteract such measures as it was reinventing itself as a nation-state whilst trying to reestablish the Russian Federation as a regional and global superpower, still reforming its reeling economy throughout the 1990s and early 2000s[6].

Yet even after the 2004 expansions of the EU and NATO, the West doubled down on its efforts to continue its success of reforming its European neighbours and increasing its influence in the region. Traditional foreign policy instruments that the EU had previously used to great effect had to be modernised to mitigate the effects of expansion fatigue and to address the Russian interests in potential associate member states that were already members of the CIS. As such, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was established in 2004 to improve the economic and political integration of associate countries through administrative, economic, and political reforms in the domestic domain. When the conditions of agreed reforms would be met, the associate countries and the EU would sign bilateral agreements in the realm of 'the three M's: Markets (sectorial access to the EU's internal market), Mobility (visa liberalisation), and Money (financial aid and loans) (Cadier, 2014). Yet, the ENP was unable to continue the EU's foreign policy successes in its near neighbours. The ENP could by design only provide limited rewards for the egregiously costly reforms that it demanded. An adapted[7] and more regionally focused iteration was introduced with the 2009 launch of the Eastern Partnership. The Eastern Partnership provides a forum to discuss agreements on the three M's with the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Russia had witnessed the ever-increasing encroachment of the EU into the Russian spheres of interest. Now, the Eastern Partnership brought Western hegemony too close for comfort. If Russia were to continue competing with the West over their shared sphere of interest and retain an equitable share, Russia would need to "master the Western tools of legitimising the political processes in the post-Soviet space"

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[6] The Russian economy would only recover to pre-1990 levels by 2007, right on time for the global financial crisis to make its entry. The 2008 financial crisis hit Russia especially hard due to its dependence on oil revenues (Trenin, 2011).
[7] Amongst other changes, political components were removed. Crucially, the EaP was not a stepping stone towards EU membership (Cadier, 2014; Naumescu, 2016).

(Frolov, 2005). The Russian adaptation to the modern competition with the West over interests in the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood through non-conventional means is what has culminated in the Russian concept of Strategic Deterrence.

DEFINING STRATEGIC DETERRENCE

Previous sections have shown how the Russian Federation had come to perceive Western foreign policy as expansionist, utilising both military and non-military tools to exert control over what used to be strongly Russian-influenced regions. The Russian Federation has in reaction conceived of its own comprehensive foreign policy strategy, referred to as Strategic Deterrence. I define Strategic Deterrence in Russian foreign policy as follows:

Strategic Deterrence in Russian foreign policy is the collective of instruments, using soft and hard power, by employing (dis-)information, cyber, economic, military, and political tools, both offensively and defensively, continuously regardless of peace- or war-time, in pursuit of deterring violent conflict, de-escalation (or early cessation) of military conflict, or stabilising military-political situations in (potential) adversary (coalitions of) states of interest, on favourable conditions for the Russian Federation.

This rather broad and vague definition is comprised of consistently recurring elements in Russian literature, political commentary and official doctrine, as well as Western academia, expert analyses, NATO doctrine, and media (Bartles, 2016; Bruusgaard, 2016; Cadier, 2014; Carter, 2016; Gerasimov, 2017; Lavrov, 2014). The specific definition as it is given and used throughout this paper is based on the definition given by the military-encyclopaedic dictionary of the Russian Ministry of Defence, complemented by the analyses of Adamsky's (2015) Cross-Domain Coercion and Bruusgaard's (2016) Strategic Deterrence. Other concepts such as Hybrid Warfare, New Generation War, the Gerasimov[8] doctrine, and (Russian)

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[8] Named after Valery Gerasimov (Валерий Герасимов), current Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, and first Deputy Defence Minister of the Russian Federation. It should be noted that Mark Galeotti, who coined the term, apologised for labelling his mis-conflation of military strategy and political foreign policy instruments as the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'. See his article in *Foreign Policy* (2018): https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/
Whilst Galeotti has reiterated that there is no grand military strategy for creating local cleavages as a prelude to an invasion *a la* Crimea, the absence of what he named the Gerasimov Doctrine does not exclude the very real comprehensive foreign policy strategy of Russian Strategic Deterrence.

brinkmanship refer to seemingly similar tool sets. Both the Russian Federation and Western governments have deployed instruments in these toolsets. Yet, the terminology of Hybrid Warfare et al. are mostly used in reference to Russian foreign policy. This paper opts to use the term Strategic Deterrence instead of Hybrid Warfare or any of the variations on this type of doctrine. Before elaborating on the conceptualisation of Strategic Deterrence, it is prudent to explain why the term Hybrid Warfare is deemed to be inadequate when referring to Russian foreign policy and is as such not used in this paper.

Russian officials perceive Hybrid Warfare to be more of a Western concept and strategy, exploited during campaigns such as the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Such campaigns bypassed the requirement to obtain a mandate from the UN Security Council where any Western interference would have been vetoed by Russia (Bartles, 2016; Trenin, 2011). As discussed previously, the Russian and Western perspective on the Kosovo intervention vary widely. Where the West lauds the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia for strong-arming genocidal parties into ending mass atrocities, Russians perceive the campaign as an illegal Western military operation against a sovereign state engaged in counter-terrorism operations that were unfairly portrayed as having excessive collateral damage. Not only did it set a possible precedent for Western actors to become involved in a sovereign state's internal affairs and border integrity, it led to the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Russian perception is that the West has refined its foreign policy strategy to wage 'just wars' by creating a false pretext through employing non-military tools. Such strategy supposedly employs a multi-step cross-domain approach:

(1) Create a political opposition through Western state propaganda, the internet, social media and NGOs → political dissent, insurgency and social strife → authorities cannot maintain order → security deteriorates

(2) Support insurgents, deploy special forces and Private Military Companies (PMCs) → further destabilise the country → authorities react with force to maintain security

(3) With the false pretext of regime violence against the country's civilians impose sanctions → reduce capabilities of authorities & enhance public dissent

(4) Government collapses under internal and external pressure → deployment of military under guise of 'peacekeeping'

(5) Install new government that is friendly to the West

Figure 1. Russian perception of multi-step plan as a part of Western Hybrid Warfare strategies. (Bartles, 2016; Frolov, 2015; Gerasimov, 2013).

Such perceptions of Western foreign policy strategy as a pretext to a justified conduct of war are common in Russia and former Soviet Republics (Bartles, 2016). The overall image it paints of Western interventionism fits the Russian narrative of counterbalancing European expansionism through alternative means. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov echoed a similar sentiment when he spoke at the XXII Assembly of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy in 2014 on Russian development and the contention between the EU and the Russian Federation over Ukraine and Crimea[9]. In his speech, he highlighted the use of American non-military tools to change the Ukrainian regime, referring to it as a hybrid war strategy.

[9] Lavrov, S. (2014, November 22). Remarks by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the XXII Assembly of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/remarks_by_foreign_minister_sergey_lavrov_at_the_xxii_assembly_of_the_council_on_foreign_and_defence/

'It has become fashionable to argue that Russia is waging a kind of "hybrid war" in Crimea and in Ukraine. It is an interesting term, but I would apply it above all to the United States and its war strategy – it is truly a hybrid war aimed not so much at defeating the enemy militarily as at changing the regimes in the states that pursue a policy Washington does not like. It is using financial and economic pressure, information attacks, using others on the perimeter of a corresponding state as proxies and of course, information and ideological pressure through externally financed non-governmental organisations. Is it not a hybrid process and not what we call war? It would be interesting to discuss the concept of the hybrid war to see who is waging it and is it only about "little green men"'. (Lavrov, 2014)

It is clear that Russia perceives Hybrid Warfare as a Western construct and a Western tool to influence foreign states seldom using the term. The Russian Federation prefers to reserve it to discuss either Western war strategy or whenever the West uses the term 'Hybrid Warfare' in reference to Russian foreign policy (Adamsky, 2015; Gerasimov, 2017). The various definitions of Hybrid Warfare all have their own idiosyncrasies, yet all are based upon or utilise Western conceptualisations of strategies of war. Using such Western lexicon to describe, understand, or analyse Russian conduct can lead to misrepresentations, misunderstandings, misleading results, and counterproductive intelligence. Many authors have attempted to either adapt the Hybrid Warfare definition or to coin a new definition that fits the Russian *modus operandi* better, yet such concepts tend to be too narrow or too broad (Adamsky, 2015; Bruusgaard, 2016).

Russian Strategic Deterrence as part of Russian foreign policy is rooted in Russian history, linguistics, and military doctrine just as Western ideas on Hybrid Warfare have developed within its own historical context. As such, Russian usage of what in English is called 'deterrence' can encompass a wide variety of meanings with its respective idiosyncrasies based on context[10]. Due to the limited scope of this paper, such intricate matters will not be discussed at length. In order to prevent the continuation

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[10] See for example (Adamsky, 2015) and (Bruusgaard, 2016).

of using Western lexicon to describe Russian foreign policy, and in order to use the very terms the Russian Federation itself uses in reference to its tools, the present paper uses the term Strategic Deterrence.

Aspects of Strategic Deterrence

As laid out in the definition previously, Russian Strategic Deterrence encompasses a wide range of tools from different domains. The non-military domains are specifically mentioned within the definition of the military-encyclopaedic dictionary as examples of tools that are not part of the more classical military options that are mentioned under their own respective domain.[11] Such military tools include military exercises, peacekeeping operations, deployment of regular troops, and reconnaissance missions[12]. Of note is that grey operations such as supporting insurgent troops, deploying special ops, or the use of PMCs are absent from the Russian doctrine definition, even though the Russian Federation has extensively deployed such tools in Ukraine and Syria.

The definition as conceptualised and used by the Russian federation is so broad that hardly any military or non-military operations would not fall within the scope of Strategic Deterrence. The inclusive and expansive nature of the definition is intended to create a most comprehensive and flexible toolset for the Russian Federation to utilise as a complementary[13] deterrent to nuclear deterrence capabilities. By having a versatile and flexible range of options for non-nuclear, military and non-military Strategic Deterrence, the Russian Federation is able to quickly adapt to the changing needs and interests. This idea is reflected in Gerasimov's ideas on modern warfare (2013) when he quoted Soviet military scholar Aleksandr Svechin: "It is extraordinarily hard to predict the conditions of war. For each war, it is necessary to work out a

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[11] Russian Federation Ministry of Defense, military-encyclopaedic dictionary (2015). Available at: http://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/dictionary/details_rvsn.htm?id=14206@morfDictionary

[12] The examples that are mentioned in the Russian military-encyclopaedic dictionary definition also include options such as showcasing nuclear capabilities. Despite the importance of nuclear deterrence and its capability to complement non-nuclear deterrence (see Adamsky (2015)), it does not fall within the scope of this paper. It should be noted that the Russian concept of устрашение (ustrashenie; literally: intimidation) is more closely associated with both nuclear capabilities and foreign deterrence strategies. The focus of this paper remains on non-nuclear, military and non-military Strategic Deterrence in Russian foreign policy.

[13] And indeed the (threat of) non-nuclear deterrence is strengthened by the availability of nuclear capabilities (and its respective deterrence options). (Adamsky, 2015).

particular line for its strategic conduct. Each war is a unique case, demanding the establishment of a particular logic and not the application of some template." The Russian doctrine of Strategic Deterrence as a part of its foreign policy aims to accomplish just that: an expansive toolset that can employ specific instruments as its respective conduct of strategy demands.

Defining characteristics that distinguish Russian Strategic Deterrence both from Western conceptualisations of deterrence strategies and Hybrid Warfare are:

(1)   Universality: The pursuit of deterring all types of security threats;

(2)   Continuousness: Through the employment, to a greater or lesser extent, of Strategic Deterrence both in peace- and war-times;

(3)   The blending of the logics of deterrence and coercion: Employing both methods of coercion and deterrence regardless of peace- or wartime, thus emphasising the need to demonstrate the capability of coercion to strengthen the impact of deterrence;

(4)   The coordinated employment of instruments across all domains[14].

Both in its methods and in its identification of threats, Russian Strategic Deterrence is all-inclusive. It seeks to prevent, deter, de-escalate, and terminate any possible threats to the interests of the Russian Federation, whether they are military, political, economic, financial, diplomatic or otherwise. This aspect of universality enables Russian Strategic Deterrence to be used reactively to any foreign (in-)action that possibly threatens Russian interests. Although the element of universality expands the possible scenarios for the implementation of Strategic Deterrence, it simultaneously obscures the specific conditions that should trigger a distinct instrument of the deterrence toolset[15]. As a result, Russian Strategic Deterrence assembles all possible adversities into a single realm of threats to Russian interests.

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[14] Adamsky refers to this as the Cross-Domain Coercion strategy of Russian Strategic Deterrence, yet the all-encompassing reach of the instruments engaged by the Russian Federation validates the designation of 'all-domain' rather than 'cross-domain' (Adamsky, 2015; Bruusgaard, 2016).
[15] This theoretical quagmire is not practically resolved within Russian doctrine or academia, as there is hardly any deliberation by Russian theorists on the uses, triggers, or impacts of non-military tools of deterrence. The lack of practical instructions on non-military strategic deterrence tools may be due to the military vocations of the Russian theorists in question (Bruusgaard, 2016)

By conflating all possible threats to Russian interests, regardless of intensity, into the category of security threats, the distinction between peace- and wartime becomes blurred. Whereas classic Western policy-making is based upon a clear delineation of policy options based on the condition of war or on the condition of peace, Russian Strategic Deterrence purposefully clouds this distinction. Non-nuclear, nuclear, military and non-military instruments of deterrence could and should be employed under Russian Strategic Deterrence as to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, both in peace- and in war-time as the Russian military-encyclopaedic dictionary specifically emphasises. Russian Strategic Deterrence is to be employed continuously to prevent, deter, de-escalate and terminate hostilities, "up to massive use of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction in a large-scale war" (Russian Ministry of Defence, military-encyclopaedic dictionary, 2018). Continuousness then is the second distinct aspect of Russian Strategic Deterrence.

The blending of all potential threats to Russian interests into a single domain of security threats, and the blurring of the line between war and peace consequently leads to the possibility to utilise instruments of both coercion and deterrence in a simultaneous matter. When there is but a single domain of threats to Russian interests that is, without deliberation for a delineation between war and peace, contracted into a single obscure tempus, strategies of deterrence become more interwoven with strategies of coercion. Russian Strategic Deterrence does not distinguish an escalation of hostilities as a failure of deterrence, but rather as a condition in which more coercive instruments need to be employed to improve the effectiveness of instruments of deterrence. As such, the logic of deterrence becomes dependent on the demonstration of coercive capabilities (Bruusgaard, 2016). The interwoven logics of coercion and deterrence then seem to signal that as the impact of employed deterrence instruments *decreases*, the need to demonstrate the coercive capabilities (*i.e.,* alternatives) *increases*. The demonstration of capability and willingness to utilise coercive measures serves as a deterrent by showing the readiness to escalate hostilities and by doing so attempts to de-escalate and deter, bordering on brinkmanship (Gareev, 2009). Whilst such an entanglement of strategies of deterrence and coercion may in theory complement and strengthen each other, and within its own definition is consistent as defensive instruments, coercively tainted instruments of deterrence may be perceived by external actors not

as indeed deterrence, but rather as intimidation or provocation, leading counter-productively to further escalation.

The fourth and last distinguishing aspect of Russian Strategic Deterrence is a logical consequence from its first aspect of universality: its utilisation of instruments of deterrence across all domains. Russia perceives threats (*i.e.,* interests) across all domains (cyber, diplomatic, informational, economic, military, political, etc.) within a single realm of security threats, and thus instruments across all those same domains are considered simultaneously and in conjunction. In the conduct of Russian Strategic Deterrence, each tool is considered in relation to the added and combined benefit on the use of a different tool that may or may not be in the same domain but still within the comprehensive design of the toolkit. Central to optimising the utility of tools from all domains is the use of informational instruments, integrating the instruments across the other domains (Adamsky, 2015). The use of informational instruments refers to tools such as the dissemination of (dis-)information, creating or leveraging local (military) support, and creating a public image of defense rather than offense or intervention (Adamsky, 2015; Gerasimov, 2017; Lanoszka, 2016). Such efforts include (digital) sabotage, discrediting of foreign leadership, manipulating local cleavages, and mobilising local populations against foreign authorities. The alleged Russian hacking efforts aimed at influencing elections in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, as well as its related online troll armies could be considered to fall within the scope of informational instruments (Cerulus, 2017; Greenberg, 2017; Stelzenmuller, 2017). Such informational efforts are complemented by various other military and non-military instruments such as the deployment of Precision-Guided Munitions, special (covert) operations,[16] economic sanctions, political isolation, and disruption of diplomatic relations (Adamsky, 2015; Bartles, 2016; Lanoszka, 2016).

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[16] Such as the "little green men" in Ukraine.
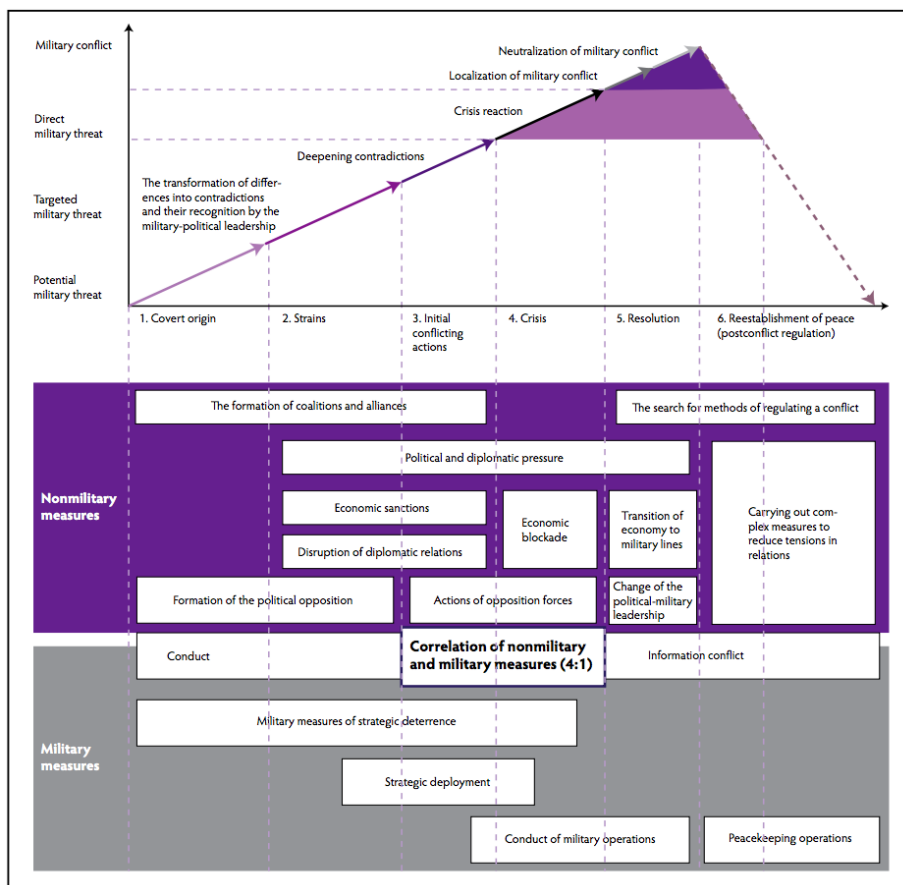
Figure 2. The conduct of modern warfare. Graphic from Gerasimov (2013); English translation provided by Bartles (2016).

The Russian understanding of modern warfare is that non-military measures and military tools are utilised in a 4:1 ratio (Gerasimov, 2013; Bartles, 2016). For the effective use of any tool in the toolkit, all other tools from all other domains should be considered in conjunction with the already deployed instruments. It is the Russian understanding that the waging of modern warfare is done on all fronts, at all times, simultaneously. An extreme simplification of the Russian concept of Strategic Deterrence would be akin to: *In response to any threat [i.e., threat to Russian interests], at all times, regardless of domain, expanding and contracting the deployment of any and all means as deemed necessary.*

A BRIEF EXAMPLE OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIC DETERRENCE IMPLEMENTED IN UKRAINE

The case of Ukraine is of paramount pertinence for Russian Strategic Deterrence. Ukraine has long been regarded as "a little Russia," closely interlinked with the identity and the fate of the Russian people (Trenin, 2011, p74). The administration of Crimea itself was transferred to the Ukrainian Republic in 1954, marking the 300th anniversary of Ukraine being integrated into the Russian Empire (Calamur, 2014). Whilst it was a mostly symbolic move during Soviet times,[17] it reinforces the Russian official narrative that Ukraine is not a 'proper' state and that the Ukrainian territories are quintessential Russian. As much was reflected in Putin's words to George W. Bush: "You don't understand, George, Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is in Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us." (Gaddy and Hill, 2015, p360). It is then no surprise that Ukraine is one of the prime examples[18] where the concept of Russian Strategic Deterrence has been implemented.

Whilst the demarcating events of the Maidan revolution and the annexation of Crimea are prime events that have been latched on to by analysts and media, the foundations on which Russian Strategic Deterrence was employed in Ukraine had been laid long before. As previously mentioned, Putin had publicly supported the 2004 election campaign of Yanukovych. The nullification of the rigged elections was perceived by the Russian Federation to be a Western coup disguised as democracy (Cadier, 2014). When Yanukovych assumed the Presidency in 2010, he was not the pro-Russian strongman that the Russian Federation would have liked to see in power. Indeed, Yanukovych intentionally tried to obfuscate the geopolitical orientation of his regime in an attempt to strengthen its bargaining position vis-a-vis Russia and the

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[17] Especially since the strategically important city of Sevastopol, which functioned as the headquarters for the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, was still administered by Moscow (Trenin, 2011).

[18] Other earlier examples of Russian use of strategies of deterrence could include Russian support of Yanukovych around the time of the Orange revolution, the prelude to the Russo-Georgian war, and the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Whilst analyses of Russian strategies of deterrence would certainly be interesting, the concept of Strategic Deterrence as it is discussed in this paper had not been officially defined and designated in Russian doctrine, nor do such analyses fall within the scope of this paper. Indeed it has been argued that Georgia became a point of reference for the Russian Federation as to how the West would react to more coercive tactics. See for example Allison (2014); Freedman (2014); and Gaddy and Hill (2015). Others such as Cadier have argued that Russia's military intervention in Georgia serves as a counterexample as "this conflict had in itself little repercussions on EU–Russia relations." (Cadier, 2014, p79).

EU (Cadier, 2014; Gnedina and Sleptsova, 2012). Whilst Yanukovych ultimately rejected the Association Agreement with the EU, instead opting for a financial deal with the Russian Federation, he did not join the Eurasian Customs Union despite Russia's urging to do so (Cadier, 2014).

The case of Ukraine displays the distinct aspects of Russian Strategic Deterrence. The aspect of universality is evident through the Russian perception that the post-Yanukovych Western-orientated regime change under Poroshenko was a threat to Russian security (*i.e.,* interests), not of a military nature or a direct challenge of Russian influence in the region, but rather through political association with Western adversaries (*i.e.,* the EU and NATO).

Whilst the efforts to both reinforce the strategic interests of Russia in Ukraine and to deter (further) Western association were expanded following the Maidan revolution, the Russian Federation had engaged in similar practices in earlier years. Irredentism in Crimea resurged in 2008 following the Bucharest NATO summit in April when the possibility of Membership Action Plans (MAPs) for Ukraine and Georgia was discussed. When the MAPs had been reviewed and declined in December, the movements in Crimea ebbed, and completely disappeared when Yanukovych assumed his presidency of Ukraine in 2010 (Trenin, 2011). Such instances highlight the continuousness of the use of non-conventional and non-military tools in Russian Strategic Deterrence, scaled up and down in size according to need.

After Russia was unable to achieve its foreign policy goal of increasing political and economic integration with Ukraine through political means (by incentivising Yanukovych and pressing him to join the Eurasian Customs Union), it quickly resorted to more coercive methods by leveraging local 'ethnic' cleavages[19] in the East of Ukraine and Crimea to create local instability, deploying special and covert ops in Crimea, and eventually annexing the peninsula (Cadier, 2014; Bruusgaard, 2016). By simultaneously employing coercive and deterrent instruments under a single strategy of deterrence is a conflation of the logics of coercion and deterrence itself.

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[19] The Russian Federation conflates Russian-speakers to be ethnic Russians, thus reinforcing the idea that Russia is defending the security and interests of Russians in foreign countries. This in turn contributes to the Russian narrative of legitimising interventionist methods to protect Russians abroad.

The fourth and final aspect of instruments being utilised across all domains is already evident from the various tools mentioned in the previous paragraph. Extra attention should be given to the leading and uniting role of informational instruments. During the Ukraine Crisis and the annexation of Crimea, a disinformation campaign was launched by the Russian Federation to obscure reporting on and from Crimea and Ukraine (Giles, 2015). Examples include Russian media barraging the domestic and international public with allegations of neo-fascism and neo-Nazism in the new Poroshenko government (Economist, 2015; Frum, 2014; Shushter, 2014; Yuhas, 2014; Snyder, 2014), and actively causing confusion by sowing disinformation on the circumstances of the downing of flight MH17.[20]

Figure 3. Demographic map of native languages in Ukraine. Map from the Economist (2015).

CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed how Russian perceptions of Western foreign policy towards the shared Euro-Russian neighbourhood have affected the conceptualisation of Russian foreign policy in its doctrine of Strategic Deterrence. The West's (*i.e.,* EU and

[20] The Russian Ministry of Defence, and affiliated news agencies such as RT, have at different times alleged that MH17 was shot down by a Ukrainian aircraft, or by a Ukrainian BUK missile. Sometimes the same outlet would disseminate contradicting information on a single day. For a more extensive overview see for example: Toler (2018).

NATO) transformative and normative impact through its foreign policy instruments on the post-Soviet Space should not be understated, as is showcased both by the pivot of formerly Russian-orientated countries towards the West, as well as the Russian perceptions and reactions to such developments.

The Russian perception that the West has been using non-conventional strategies of deterrence, coercion, and expansion in the late 90s and throughout the 21st century has made a deep impact upon the adaptation of Russian doctrine, its foreign policy and its conceptualisation of Strategic Deterrence. The NATO intervention in Kosovo was perceived as a watershed moment, indicating offensive capabilities in the shared sphere of interests to which the Russian Federation has adapted its foreign policy strategy by integrating military and non-military instruments into a single toolset to be utilised under the umbrella term of Strategic Deterrence.

Russian Strategic Deterrence employs a collective of instruments from a wide variety of domains including: cyber, diplomatic, (dis-)information, economic, legal, ideological, military, political, scientific, and technical tools. The Russian Federation utilises these tools both offensively and defensively, continuously regardless of peace- or war-time. The aim of using these instruments is ostensibly to deter, de-escalate and cease violent conflict, or in the absence of violent conflict between the adversary and the Russian Federation to stabilise military-political situations in (potentially) adversary (coalitions of) states of interest. The four distinct aspects of Russian Strategic Deterrence: universality, continuousness, blending of the logics of deterrence and coercion, and the utility of instruments across all domains were all present in the implementation of the Russian Strategic Deterrence in Ukraine during and following the Ukraine crisis of 2013. The comprehensive nature of Russian Strategic Deterrence has intentionally obscured the concept of strategies of deterrence itself, increasing the difficulty to distinguish these aspects of Russian foreign policy from alternative instruments such as military operations. As such, it becomes ever-more paramount for academics, citizens, governments, politicians, and policy-makers to study the intricacies of Russian perceptions and the conceptualisations of foreign policy. By working towards a greater understanding of the disparity in experiences between the West and Russia, we can identify the antagonistic turns in foreign policy doctrine over the last three decades, with the aim

to collectively create more integrative policy for the peoples of the EU, Russia, and those caught in between.

DISCUSSION

Current developments in Russian foreign policy are watched closely by governments, media, and academics around the world. Yet in reference to what the Russian Federation has labelled Strategic Deterrence, the most prevalently used term remains Hybrid Warfare. While this paper has discussed the historical context in which the concept was conceived, it does not take an explicit stance as to whether the communities at large should adopt the term Russian Strategic Deterrence over any other. Should foreign governments adopt the term Strategic Deterrence, they would lend gravitas to the concept itself and by extension might legitimise the policies pursued as a part of this foreign policy strategy. On the other hand, experts that deal with Russian foreign policy should be familiar with the term and the context in which it was conceptualised to better understand decision-making by the Russian Federation. Ideally, this paper is able to give experts better insight as to how modern Russian foreign policy strategy has been developed and encourages analysts to examine current Russian foreign policy through the lens of Strategic Deterrence.

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