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RUSSIAN WORLD-VIEWS

Domestic power play and foreign behaviour

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

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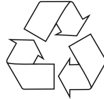

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This report is based on the views expressed during, and short papers contributed by speakers at, a workshop organised by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service as part of its academic outreach program. Offered as a means to support ongoing discussion, the report does not constitute an analytical document, nor does it represent any formal position of the organisations involved. The workshop was conducted under the Chatham House rule; therefore no attributions are made and the identity of speakers and participants is not disclosed.

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DOMESTIC POWER PLAY AND FOREIGN BEHAVIOUR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

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THE WORKSHOP AND ITS OBJECTIVES

On 20 March 2017, the Academic Outreach (AO) branch of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) hosted a workshop to assess Russia's foreign policy, its domestic drivers and security consequences.

Held under the Chatham House rule, the workshop was designed around the work of four researchers from Europe and North America. The event took stock of Russia's world-view, the changing dynamics of the Putin regime, as well as the non-military tools at its disposal to advance its goals in the international arena. It concluded by considering what direction Russian foreign policy could take towards the West, the Middle East and Asia during the course in the next two years. The papers presented at the event form the basis of this report. The entirety of this report reflects the views of those independent experts, not those of CSIS.

The AO program at CSIS, established in 2008, aims to promote a dialogue between intelligence practitioners and leading specialists from a wide variety of disciplines and cultural backgrounds working in universities, think-tanks, business and other research institutions in Canada and abroad. It may be that some of our interlocutors hold ideas or promote findings that conflict with the views and analysis of the Service, but it is for this specific reason that there is value to engage in this kind of conversation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The continuation of the sanctions regime imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea has generated further tensions within the country and the ruling elite. Paradoxically, the contraction of the economy has increased the popular appeal of an adventurous foreign policy.

The economy

Russia is in economic crisis, but President Vladimir Putin has maintained his image as the indispensable leader.

- The economy has suffered from the decline in oil revenues, failed economic reforms and Western sanctions. Living standards have decreased along with government revenues, and internal elite conflicts over the division of resources have intensified.
- Russians are frustrated by the unresponsiveness of the government and by widespread, illegitimate wealth and corruption. Most still see Putin as a man working hard to deal with Russia's problems.
- Putin cultivates his image as a decisive leader who saved the country from the chaos of the Yeltsin years, protects internal stability and projects strength abroad.
- Putin ended the independent power of the oligarchs. They now owe their wealth and position to him.
- Putin stresses the state, rather than the individual, as the core of Russia's national identity. The share of the economy controlled by the state has doubled under his rule, and the beneficiaries are the pillars of his regime.

Controlling the narrative

State-controlled media shape the perceptions of Russians at home and in neighbouring countries. Multiple propaganda channels are used to manipulate foreign friends and adversaries.

- Putin believes he must suppress open dissent, which could be quickly and unpredictably transformed into a regime-threatening movement.

- Russians watch television for an average of four hours a day. Putin and the media emphasise the state, stability and the greatness of Russia; the state is presenting as driving improvements in the lives of the Russian people. The country is portrayed as a fortress and a champion of civilisation, but is nevertheless surrounded by enemies.

- Russians overwhelmingly support Putin's foreign policy and accept his version of events outside Russia. Fifty-five (55) per cent of the population want Russia to return to the status of a great power; only 8 per cent want to be closer to the West.

- In the long-standing tradition of Russia's secret services, the country uses 'active measures' to influence foreign leaders and populations. Its reliance on such measures has increased in recent years, especially against Western countries. This includes aggressive cyber penetration and the propagation of fake news stories designed to distort the perceptions and weaken the will of target populations. Active measures have even more potential today because of the reach of the Internet.

- Putin believes that Russia must counter Western soft power, which, in his view, undermined the Soviet Union and is now directed against the Russian regime.

- Not all Russians are completely under the influence of state messaging. A rising number of young, urban professionals are focused on their careers; do not accept the state's narratives, and actively debate fairness, justice and fundamental values. Their influence is expected to increase as Russia ages and their proportion in the population grows.

Purges continue

There has been an ongoing series of regime purges, resulting in the dismissal of numerous senior officials.

- The purges began in August 2015 with the dismissal of the head of the Russian railway system.
- There are several reasons for those purges. They remove people around Putin who worked with him before the myth of his omnipotence was established; they address widespread bureaucratic ineffectiveness; they result from competition among powerful groups for a share of the state's diminishing financial base; they provide public exposure of extravagant corruption by senior officials, often through investigations and raids carried out by the FSB, the domestic security service; and finally they entrench the president's control.
- The security services, the foreign ministry and the defence ministry have been strong enough to withstand the purges. The oil and gas sector and some financial positions, too, have been largely exempted. Some economic advisors and the presidential administration have been more seriously impacted. The net result has been a reduction in the number of people around the president who can advance alternative perspectives and arguments.

Foreign-policy narrative

The economic crisis, the need to maintain popular support and the shift in power within the regime all place more emphasis on an aggressive foreign policy as a means to maintain regime legitimacy and popularity.

- Russia deliberately uses the tactic of unpredictability and strategic surprise, leading to a foreign policy that is both assertive and risky.
- While it is difficult to know what Putin will do next, his general intentions are clear. He wants to assert Russia's centrality to

global diplomacy; reassert a sphere of influence over the former Soviet republics; weaken the US, NATO and the EU; and build strategic alliances with potential international partners.

- Russia hoped that it would be able to influence leading countries to oppose continued sanctions. Putin and his senior advisors believed that US President Donald Trump would be supportive of this objective, but Russians have been disappointed, finding the new president to be unpredictable.

Outlook

The trends described in this report reinforce each other. An increasingly insular Kremlin must concentrate on dramatic moves on the international stage to maintain popular support as the economy shrinks, thus increasing its reliance on a risky foreign policy. Russian propaganda will continue to push a narrative calculated to create consensus within Russia and division abroad. Putin is expected to be re-elected as president in 2018. The relatively small but vocal opposition will grow in importance as the population ages.

The impact of Russian influence on the US election process has decreased the chances that a rapprochement could take place in the near future. In an international system with many uncertainties and potential crises, the leaders of two major powers have an aggressive but unpredictable approach to foreign policy, and to each other, thereby increasing the possibility of miscalculation and crisis escalation.

CHAPTER 1

RUSSIANS' VIEW OF THE WORLD AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE

President Putin has enforced a policy that emphasises the primacy of the state in Russian life. His ideology has driven the dominant role of the state in the economy, the suppression of dissent, a united approach with the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the conversion of most media outlets into propagandists for the official narrative. However, many Russians feel they fulfill their obligations to the state more than the state fulfills its responsibilities to them. A small but growing number of young, urbanised Russians ignore the state's messages and obtain their news from other sources.

This paper will address the subject of Russia's world-view and the attitude of different social groups about the role of the state in defending their interest. While opinion polls regarding the attitude towards the state are available from various pollsters in Russia, most notably the Levada Centre, no polling data about the attitude of different social or professional groups towards the state exists to the best of the author's knowledge. Most of the analysis will be therefore based on anecdotal evidence, the author's field work and interviews and, most importantly on his understanding of the role of the state media propaganda in shaping the worldview of the Russian public.

The role of the state

The two subjects — the attitude to the state and the world-view of the Russian public — are inextricably linked. The most durable ideological construct engrained by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and successfully awakened by President Vladimir Putin is the one of Russia as a besieged fortress, surrounded by enemies, and the state as its main citadel. One of the most revolutionary changes Mikhail Gorbachev brought to Russia was his declaration that human values

should be put above the interests of the state. Conversely, one of the biggest reversals of the Putin era has been to put the ephemeral interests of the state above those of private individuals.

In contrast to former leader Boris Yeltsin, who for better or worse saw Russia as a nation, Putin sees it first and foremost as a state. On the eve of the new millennium, he published a manifesto titled, *Russia on the Threshold of the New Millennium*, that hailed the state as a central driver of Russia's success and a force of consolidation. Russia did not need state ideology, the manifesto argued. Its ideology, its national idea, is the state. Personal rights of freedom were all well and good, but they could not provide the strength and security of the state. Russia, Putin asserted, would never become a second edition of Britain or the US where liberal values had deep historic traditions. Russia had its own traditional, core values. These were patriotism, collectivism and *derzhavnost* — a tradition of being a great geopolitical state power that commands the attention of other countries — and *gosudarstvennichestvo*, the primacy of the state.

The word *derzhava* stems from the verb *derzhat*, or 'to hold together'. The state is seen as the only thing that can hold Russian people together. According to Putin,

> *For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly to fight against. Quite the contrary, it is the source and guarantor of order, the initiator and the main driving force of any change. Society desires the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state. In Russia, a collective form of life has always dominated over individualism. It is also a fact that paternalism is deeply grounded in Russian society. The majority of Russians associate the improvement in their lives not so much with their own endeavours, initiative, entrepreneurship but with the help and support of the state... And we can't ignore them.*

A demand for a strong, or at least functional, state was almost universal at the time when Putin came to power. In fact, his emergence as Russia's president was largely the result of this demand. After the collapse of state institutions in 1991, the plummeting economy, the

collapse of the welfare system, disillusionment with the pro-Western liberals, the power of the oligarchs who exploited the weakness of the state, and the financial crisis of 1998, this demand was understandable. It was the main reason why Boris Yeltsin had little choice but to pick a successor from the ranks of the FSB — the former KGB, which stood for the Committee of *State* Security.

This demand for the restoration of the state was equally strong among economic liberals, who saw it as a necessary defence against the rule of the oligarch and a guardian of their liberties, as well as the communists who associated it with the restoration of Soviet-era benefits and its geopolitical status in the world. One of Putin's first symbolic gestures was the restoration of the Soviet anthem originally composed on the orders of Stalin, who has been reinstated in Russia's popular consciousness as a great statesman. The defeat of Nazi Germany has been presented (and accepted by the population) as a triumph of the Soviet state, rather than a victory of humanity over fascism.

Olga Vasilyeva, a recently appointed minister of education, who has strong connections to the Orthodox Church, has praised Stalin for restoring state patriotism as a strand of Russian history. "The highest interest of any citizen is the interest of the nation," she said. Modern Russian historians have produced new schoolbooks that explain the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop pact to divide Europe between Stalin and Hitler as a legitimate defensive move on Stalin's part.

This does not mean that Putin was set to restore the Soviet empire or rebuild its welfare system or its ideology of equality. Quite the contrary. In the first three years of his presidency Putin pushed on with liberal economic reforms, including the introduction of a flat tax rate. At the same time, he took over control of the media, and then the oil and gas sectors. This was done under the slogans of rebuilding the state and since the largest oil firm, Yukos, was owned by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the country's richest tycoon, and the main private television channel, NTV, belonged to Vladimir Gusinsky, another oligarch, few people protested.

The idea of the state had two dimensions. The most important was Russia's place in the world. An opinion poll conducted in January 2000 found that 55 per cent of the Russian population expected Putin to return Russia to the status of a great and respected *derzhava*, and that only 8 per cent expected him to bring Russia closer to the West. People wanted Russia to be 'respected' by the outside world, which in their minds meant to be feared. "If they fear you, it means they respect you", the saying went. In this regard Putin has fully fulfilled his promise of "making Russia great again".

People wanted Russia to be 'respected' by the outside world, which in their minds meant to be feared.

The other dimension was economic. Helped by rising oil prices and economic recovery, which was largely the result of the market reforms of the 1990s, Putin was able to fulfill the most basic obligations: to pay out salaries and pensions which had been in arrears for months if not years. This gave an enormous boost to Putin. At the same time, he used oil and gas revenues throughout the 2000s to increase the share of the state in the economy and to keep many of the unviable Soviet-era enterprises going. Putin did not merely fail to dismantle the Soviet structure; he used Russia's oil and gas windfalls to reinforce it in order to preserve social stability and votes.

The main resource of the state bureaucracy was its participation in the rent-distribution chain. While this allowed Putin to allocate funds to sensitive regions and factories, it also increases the country's addiction to oil and gas and fans paternalism. Putin has worked hard to build up the image of the state as the sole benefactor, taking credit for rising incomes generated by high oil prices. As he stressed at the United Russia congress, only the state and its ruling party are capable of sorting out people's problems. "No one else is responsible for affairs in a village, town, city or region or the whole country. There is no such force."

Between 2005 and 2015 the share of the state in the economy doubled, from 35 per cent to 70 per cent, turning Russia into a corporatist state. At the same time, the size of government bureaucracy doubled as well. During the 2000s the number of civil servants almost doubled. A quarter of the country's entire workforce is employed in the public sector. The total number of people who depend on the state is between 35 per cent and 40 per cent. These are most often Putin's supporters. The growth was particularly notable among police and state security service. (Russia has the highest number of policemen per thousand people.) This vast public sector is one of the main pillars of Putin's support.

> *Putin has worked hard to build up the image of the state as the sole benefactor, taking credit for rising incomes generated by high oil prices.*

Yet, this does not mean that the vast majority of people are satisfied with the state or even rely on it for the provision of basic services. According to an opinion poll by the Levada Centre, 47 per cent of the population think that they fulfil their obligations towards the state. But only 23 per cent feel that the state fulfils its obligations towards the people. The lofty support for Putin (86 per cent), who stands up to defend the interest of the state, is combined with deep contempt for people in power who are seen as corrupt, amoral and callous.

The vast majority of Russians do not trust most state institutions, including courts and the police, consider the government corrupt and acting in the interest of a few cronies, and are deeply unhappy about the state of healthcare or the cost of utilities. Some 55 per cent of Russians rely only upon themselves and avoid any contact with the state, which they consider a threat. The only area in which they see the role of the state positively is in that of foreign policy — something they have no way of verifying for themselves. Most importantly 75 per cent of Russians feel they have no influence on the situation in the country.

Russian leaders actively support this attitude in the population. Most people feel like they are observers rather than participants in a political process. This explains the enormous power of television in the country. People watch television not to receive facts and news, but to receive a message from the Kremlin and adjust their views of the world accordingly.

If you want to know what most Russians feel about the world, watching Russian state television is essential. The majority of the population simply internalises the message provided by television. Television provides not only a narrative of a hostile world and Russia as both its victim and a great power, but it also provides feelings and emotional experience both in the format of news programs, talks shows, TV serials and dramas. This political apathy is part of people's self-preservation mechanism. Television propaganda exploits the syndrome of learned helplessness — a psychological condition where people who have been repeatedly abused give up control and start believing that nothing depends on them. Having a mighty enemy, such as the United States, helps alleviate their feelings of failure and weakness.

Support for Putin's regime depends on television's ability to draw the public away from their everyday experiences and into it's the news agenda. When people switch off the news, look around them and see the economy in a bad way, by and large Putin's ratings fall, too. The annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine saw the news and the president bounce back again. People who had previously distanced themselves from politics were mesmerised by dramatic imagery, martial music and well-staged and edited action.

Russian television does not simply cover wars that are driven by foreign policy. It takes foreign adventures as raw material from which to generate events that stoke domestic passions and reinforce the government narrative.

The annexation of Crimea, for example, unfolded according to a script created by television, which ran something like this: the Ukrainian revolution brought to power US sponsored neo-Nazis.

The descendants of those who had collaborated with Hitler during the Second World War now vandalised Soviet war memorials and threatened to annihilate Russian language and history in Crimea. The Russian population of Crimea turned to Vladimir Putin for help, which he duly provided.

> *Russian television…takes foreign adventures as raw material from which to generate events that stoke domestic passions and reinforce the government narrative.*

Russian soldiers were portrayed as liberators, rather than occupiers. Videos were uploaded on the Internet showing a Russian soldier in Crimea holding a small child in his arms — a reference to the giant statue of the Soviet Liberator Soldier erected in Berlin in 1949.

Fake stories such as the one about 'fascists' crucifying a Russian boy in eastern Ukraine helped to mobilise the population and fan the war, which then provided hours of television drama. Television abdicated people of responsibility while making them feel noble and heroic, giving them purpose and a sense of importance.

The media machine created by Putin and his friends, who directly and indirectly control all main television channels, thrives on wars and confrontation with the West. It combines news formats with entertainment and films to generate emotions. The Russians are the most active viewers in the world and watch television on average four hours a day (and more among older people). Television is the most important and effective social institution in the country. It is what holds Russia together. Television creates the country's agenda and produces the emotions which serve the interest of the Kremlin at any particular moment.

In the first few years of Putin's power, television worked as a tranquiliser, projecting an illusion of stability, just as the violent crime dramas flooding Russian television created an illusion of total lawlessness. While news was supposed to calm the audience, the

violent crime dramas raised adrenaline levels and aggression in the national bloodstream. As one high-powered Russian official and former FSB general explained, this deluge of graphic violence was not a response to high spectator demand but a conscious policy formed in the upper echelons of the Russian power structure, to create the impression that only the strong state portrayed in the news could protect a vulnerable population from the violence on the screen. The question of what was good or bad for the audience was not a matter of taste. "A doctor does not ask the patient under the knife what is good for him," Konstantin Ernst, the head of Channel One, Russia's main TV channel, said.

Today television works as a steroid, a doping and a psychoactive agent that creates an artificial sense of strength of the state. Thanks to this role as the avatar of a resurgent nation, Putin is staying popular during one of the worst economic crises in modern Russian history. The model of economic growth fuelled by the redistribution of growing oil rents has run its course. Unable to revive Russia's stagnating economy, offer any vision for the future and increase the rent, Putin reconfigured his third presidential term as a wartime presidency, its successes presented with polish by television. As George Orwell wrote in his review of *Mein Kampf* in 1940,

> *He [Hitler] has grasped the falsity of the hedonistic attitude to life. Nearly all Western thought since the last war, certainly all "progressive" thought, has assumed tacitly that human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security and avoidance of pain. The Socialist who finds his children playing with soldiers is usually upset, but he is never able to think of a substitute for the tin soldiers; tin pacifists somehow won't do. Hitler, because in his own joyless mind he feels it with exceptional strength, knows that human beings* don't *only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth control and, in general common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle, self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty parades.*

As Russia has shown in Ukraine and in Syria, mobilisation, struggle and drums can be achieved by means of propaganda and virtual reality. But the victims of its propaganda are real enough.

At the same time there is a new generation of young, urbanised, educated Russians who live their lives separately from the state. Although the state is suppressing any independent civil or political activity, it still allows a lot more personal freedom than it did during Soviet days. While the mainstream media is occupied by state propaganda, the energy of the modern intellectuals has been directed into education and ethics. For now, at least, these people do not pose a serious political or economic threat to the Kremlin. But they represent a different and more fundamental challenge to the system that has to do with values and ideas. Some of the most striking public lecture projects launched in Russia in recent years were called 'The Return of Ethics' and 'Public Lies'.

These people have little in common with Putin's vision of the state, and they belong to a global world of which Russia is only a part. It is all but impossible to impose the idea of state supremacy on them. One of the central contradictions in today's Russia is that while these young and educated people can generate economic growth and intellectual products, they have no political representation. Putin's power relies on those who cannot survive without the state. But the young educated Russians have two main advantages: one is their brain power, the other is their age. And for all of Putin's television magic, he cannot turn the old into young.

CHAPTER 2

THE RECENT ELITE RESHUFFLING AND THE CRISIS-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION OF PUTIN’S REGIME

There are several reasons behind the recent purges of senior Russian officials, including incompetence and corruption, but some have been the victims of ongoing struggles over the division of scarce resources. While the struggles continue, the security forces, foreign ministry and defence department appear to have preserved their dominance, while the influence of the presidential administration has declined. The number of people able to challenge Putin's perception of domestic, economic and foreign policy issues has therefore been reduced.

Is it really out of the ordinary?

Periodic, surprising and never satisfactorily explained firing and hiring at the top of state bureaucracy is an entrenched tradition of Russian politics (even without taking Stalin's purges as a reference point). Indeed, Boris Yeltsin's 'castlings' (*rokirovochka*) were a trademark of his leadership, and Vladimir Putin sacked first Alexander Voloshin, the chief of the presidential administration, and then the entire cabinet of Mikhail Kasyanov in late 2003 and early 2004. The scope and style of the current cadre reshuffling, however, go far beyond the usual Byzantine pattern of keeping the courtiers loyal and alert – and so require a careful examination.

The scandalous departure of Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov in November 2012 was definitely a special case, and it was the abrupt dismissal of Vladimir Yakunin from the post of president of the Russian Railways corporation in August 2015 that marked the beginning of the still on-going decimation. His formal position was not that important, but he was known to be personally close to Putin and had taken on the rather ambitious task of developing an 'ideological' discourse for the regime. His downfall has focused the

attention of Kremlin watchers on the series of follow-up departures of 'old comrades', from the retirement of Evgeny Murov, the head of the Federal Protective Service (FSO), in May 2016, to the sacking of Sergei Ivanov, the head of the presidential administration, in August 2016. But there is far more to the massive cadre 'renewal' than just replacement of several top-level long-serving loyalists.

Before examining these murky processes, it is useful to point out that several key state structures have been exempted from purges. The Foreign Ministry, led by the highly visible Sergei Lavrov, is one of them. Despite severe mismanagement problems, there have been no changes in the key positions in the oil and gas sector, where Igor Sechin, Alexei Miller, Gennady Timchenko, Vagit Alekperov and a few other heavy weights continue their squabbles. No replacements have occurred among the key financial positions held by Anton Siluanov (successor to Aleksei Kudrin), Elvira Nabiullina, German Gref and Andrei Kostin. Perhaps most significantly, there has been no reshuffle in the Security Council, managed since 2008 by Nikolai Patrushev, former director of the FSB.

Multi-purpose reshuffling with multiple drivers

What makes the radical cadre policy difficult to interpret is the overlap and interplay of several different motivations, often inside the same bureaucratic structure. Most medium to high-level decisions have to be ratified by President Putin, but this does not mean that he has initiated those or exercises full control over the making and breaking of careers. One of the motivations, for that matter, quite possibly is his desire to get rid of old comrades who remember the early years of his unremarkable state service and may see him as somewhat less than an almighty leader. Sergei Ivanov may fall into this category of riddance, while Vladimir Yakunin may exemplify the growing understanding that old loyalists are badly underperforming in positions that require management skill to handle growing problems. Alexei Miller might be a candidate for the same treatment because the increase of 'administrative' costs in Gazprom has brought this behemoth of a company to the brink of bankruptcy.

The imperative for making the leadership of some state structures more efficient and less costly dovetails with the intention to renovate the regime's façade, now rotting. Putin understands that no amount of propaganda could erase the public irritation over 'irreplaceable' bosses, and his replacement of seven regional governors in February 2017 (compared to eight such replacements throughout 2016) may illustrate that challenge. The September 2016 Duma elections was another cause for an extensive renewal of high-visibility *nomenklatura*. Putin also acknowledges the need to appoint some scapegoats in order to demonstrate achievements in the 'struggle' against corruption. The arrest of Alexey Ulyukaev, the minister of economic development, in November 2016, is a case in point, while the real reasons for the shocking imprisonment remain murky.

> *...his desire to get rid of old comrades who remember the early years of his unremarkable state service and may see him as somewhat less than an almighty leader.*

The most powerful driver for dismissing key figures is nevertheless the reduction of cash flows inside the state system, creating fierce competition among the actors controlling these sources of income. These internecine squabbles are typically camouflaged as a struggle against corruption, and it is the FSB[1] that, in most cases, is able to assert its dominance over other law enforcement agencies, while it struggles to enforce order inside its own overgrown system.

The FSB is not quite omnipotent

The FSB has claimed a more dominant role in the Russian state than the KGB was ever able to play in the USSR, and in the absence of anything resembling a party control, it is able to pursue the elite reshaping policy its leadership sees fit. Its power now comes less from the application of instruments of terror and more from the accumulation and disbursement of money. This means that the need to expand the financial base is ever growing. The aggressive move against the Federal Custom Service with the scandalous arrest of its

director Andrei Belyaninov, in July 2016, was quite probably driven by this need. The most spectacular and heavy-impact operation was, however, directed against the Investigations Committee and involved the arrest of General Denis Nikandrov and two other officers in July 2016, followed by the arrest of Colonel Dmitri Zakharchenko in the Ministry of Interior in September 2016.

While the FSB has seriously set back the 'competition', there are good reasons to believe that Putin concluded that some operations had gone too far, particularly with the airing on TV screens of shoeboxes packed with millions of US dollars. Both the Minister of Interior, Vladimir Kolokoltsev, and the head of the Investigations Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, have kept their positions (the latter had only to sacrifice his trusted spokesman, General Vladimir Markin), and Belyaninov was cleared from all accusations and received his money (but not his position) back. General Oleg Feoktistov, who initiated the operation against Belyaninov, was fired from the FSB. Since the late 2016, there has been no development in the case against Nikandrov/Zakharchenko (except for firing their 'curators' in the FSB) and no new high-profile attacks.

Perhaps the most material sign of Putin's concern about over-concentration of power in the FSB was the decision to establish the National Guard as a separate federal service relying on officers from the Ministry of the Interior reinforced by various special troops (like OMON and SOBR). General Victor Zolotov, former head of the Presidential Security Service (SBP) and deputy to General Evgeny Murov, was appointed commander of the National Guard, but the FSB made sure that his performance in the first year has been not exactly stellar. The exercises aimed at dispersing public protests received poor media coverage, and the arrest of his former deputy general, Vyacheslav Varchuk, in March 2017 was a blow.

The realignment of Putin's inner circles

The mechanism of decision-making in Putin's court includes not only large state bureaucracies but also various aids and advisers who form several overlapping and often competing circles. The workings

of these 'councils' are extremely opaque, so only a few observations can be made. Putin's immediate working environment is shaped by the presidential administration, but with the departure of such heavy weights as Sergei Ivanov and Vyacheslav Volodin (now the Chairman of the State Duma), its political role has quite probably diminished. Still the influence of such loyal courtiers as Alexei Gromov or Vladimir Kozhin remains significant, and Dmitri Peskov performs a key function of voicing the official line.

Another important circle consists of the leadership of the Federal Protective Service (FSO) and Presidential Security Service (SBP); the tandem of Murov and Zolotov was known to be very influential in various security matters. Dmitri Kochnev and other newcomers are definitely not of the same calibre, and it is also remarkable that Putin promoted several of his bodyguards to important political positions (Aleksei Dyumin became the governor of Tula region; and Evgeny Zinichev after an extra-short governorship in Kaliningrad, became deputy director of the FSB in October 2016).

With the departure of many long-term courtiers, the role of the few remaining old comrades has increased, if only by default. Formally, a central figure here is Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev, who loyally performed the role of president from 2008 to 2012. Putin periodically demonstrates closeness to his junior friend and at other times demonstratively belittles him. It is obviously significant that Alexei Navalny, a leader of liberal opposition, was allowed to conduct an investigation into Medvedev's corruption and publish detailed results in March 2017. The most notorious of Putin's old lieutenants is Igor Sechin, who controls revenues generated by state-owned Rosneft and cultivates networks built in the 2000s when he was deputy chief of the presidential administration. Ulyukaev's downfall is attributed to Sechin's intrigue, but the firing of Feoktistov (who has landed a cosy job in Rosneft) is described by insiders as a part of the effort at curtailing his improper influence in the FSB.

Another key part of Putin's power structure is the Security Council, and Patrushev exercises tight control over its apparatus and workings. Characteristic in this regard is that Putin's April 2016 decree on

granting Zolotov the status of a permanent member was revoked in just a week, and Zolotov was demoted to ranking member of this exclusive body. As the influence of the presidential administration and the FSO/SBP has declined, the role of the unperturbed Security Council has strengthened.

Conclusion: Influence on foreign policy-making

Most of the high and medium-high level cadre 'renewal' since the middle of 2015 has direct consequences for setting priorities in domestic and economic policy, but the impact on foreign policy-making is also significant. Most of the people directly involved in this process — from Putin's aid, Yury Ushakov, to Foreign Minister Lavrov — have kept their jobs, but it is the informal structures that matter most. What is possible to infer about those is that the proverbial 'narrow circles' have become even narrower and the number of people who might venture an opinion different from that of the 'decider' has decreased to just a few. One of them might be Sergei Naryshkin (former Chairman of the State Duma), but it will take him some time to gain confidence in the position of the chief of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).

Alexander Bortnikov, the director of the FSB, has probably gained greater influence, particularly through his strong connection with Nikolai Patrushev, while Sechin and Sergei Chemezov, director of Rostec corporation, are known to be able to offer advice in matters far beyond their immediate responsibilities. One particular area where the FSB has expanded its role is cyber operations, which have become a top priority issue in relations with the US and many European states. Putin has little understanding of the nature of cyber security, and his trust in FSB excellence is inevitably undermined by the arrest of three operatives in the Information Security Centre for high treason. The FSB could have limited competence in many foreign policy matters, and Mikhail Fradkov (former director of the SVR) may in time turn the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) into a useful source of analysis. But it has definitely not been the case in the recent years.

One state structure that has acquired pivotal importance with Russia's power projection towards and confrontation with the West in the ministry of defence, led by the greatest survivor in Russian politics, Sergei Shoigu. Since his appointment in November 2012, Shoigu has gained much support in the officer corps and promoted generals with combat experience to prominent positions, including the Chief of General Staff, while effectively protecting his domain from any recent reshuffling. The only exception was the severe purge of the command of the Baltic Fleet, in July 2016, but that has only increased his authority. Shoigu's problem is that he is not a part of Putin's team and is the only high-level official with an independent political base. This inevitably makes him a dangerous rival for the Kremlin's courtiers and the FSB.

It has to be noted that the dynamics of cadre reshuffling had significantly decreased in the first few months of 2017 comparing with the second half of 2016. The intensity of internecine struggle among various 'power structures' has, however, hardly diminished, and the problems arising from the mismanagement of Russia's economy keep growing, requiring a political response. New shocking dismissals and corruption scandals are certain to come in the run-up to the presidential elections in spring 2018.

CHAPTER 3

MOSCOW'S 'INFORMATION WAR' AGAINST THE WEST AND HOW TO COUNTER IT

Recent Russian measures to use cyber penetration and fake news to discredit Western leaders is nothing new. 'Active measures' were always part of the KGB's arsenal of weapons, and can be particularly effective now because of the accessibility and reach of modern media. The Russian approach can be described as a 'war on information' and varies according to the target, but the ultimate intention is to weaken the political will and resistance to Russian goals of target populations by exacerbating political and ethnic tensions.

The 2016 presidential election in the United States saw the country drawn into a micro-version of the Kremlin's 'information war' as Moscow's hacking of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) helped discredit Hilary Clinton's reputation and Russian online botnets and trolls backed Donald Trump. For anyone who has been following events in Europe these last few years this was nothing new. Discrediting the Kremlin's opponents; undermining confidence in democracy; hacks; paranoia; propaganda; useful idiots; setting allies against each other; financial seduction; internet trolls... These and other similar tools have been used in orders of magnitude much greater in Central and Eastern Europe, can be used in the upcoming elections in Europe, and might well continue to expand the world over as the Kremlin's confidence grows. What is the right way to deal with this challenge? Should it be ignored or aggressively confronted? Is it really a 'war'? Is it really a threat?

The Kremlin takes information warfare seriously. Back in Soviet days the Kremlin already ran an extensive operation to subvert the West through what were known as Active Measures, a team of 15,000 KGB agents whose job was to, in the words of former KGB General Oleg Kalugin, "drive wedges in the Western community alliances of all sorts, particularly NATO, to sow discord among allies, to weaken the

United States in the eyes of the people in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America."

Today Russian doctrine puts information warfare as a priority in its policy. It describes itself as under attack from Western soft power and is thus duty-bound to respond. Vladimir Putin's first public reference to soft power came in a 2012 article titled "Russia and the Changing World," in which he described it as "a matrix of tools and methods to reach foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence. Regrettably, these methods are being used all too frequently to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalistic attitudes, to manipulate the public and to conduct direct interference in the domestic policy of sovereign countries." Despite describing itself as under attack, the Kremlin actually has a great advantage in such a game as it can use different tools holistically: from international broadcasters through to energy companies, oligarchs who fund covert operations, the Russian Orthodox Church and support for far-right parties throughout Europe. Placing fake stories and conspiracies was an important part of Active Measures, and in the Internet age it has become easier than ever to generate fake stories to damage your enemies: not so much information war as a 'war on information' (in the handy articulation of journalist Robert Coalson).

At the heart of the Kremlin's thinking is the idea that you can break another country psychologically without necessarily touching it physically. As with all mind games, the first challenge is to ensure your response does not actually play into the other side's hands.

In countries with large Russian speaking populations, for example, the Kremlin's aim is to sharpen the divides between ethnic and linguistic groups. Those divides can be very grave. Many Russian speakers live in a reality dictated by Kremlin propaganda, and are aggrieved at a perceived loss of status since the end of the Cold War. According to a new study by the Latvian Defence Academy, 41.3 per cent of Russian-Latvians — about a fifth of the total population — believe that the "rights and interests of Russian speakers in Latvia are violated on such a scale, that Russian intervention is necessary

and justified". When Latvian politicians respond with initiatives to test Russian language teachers for loyalty and calls to expel Russian speakers, this only help to sharpen the divides the Kremlin plays on.

In the case of the US election, Donald Trump positioned himself as the 'outsider' who opposes the globalist establishment and its liberal values. He was openly sympathetic to Vladimir Putin, himself the enemy of liberal elites and the global order: what better way to snub Washington than to side with its sworn enemy? When the Democrats criticised Trump as being Putin's puppet, this only helped reinforce both Putin's and Trump's image as rebels against the system.

Instead of knee-jerk reactions, one needs to look at the deeper social dynamics in play. In Latvia, this might include promoting social and political movements which can unite across ethnic divides. In the US, it could have meant more effort to understand voters concerns. He who understands audiences better, wins.

Consider the case of Odessa, Ukraine. After the Kremlin's annexation of Crimea and invasion of the Donbass region, the multi-ethnic, Russian-speaking port city of Odessa looked to be next. In spring 2014, after a fight between pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian groups broke out leading to an accidental fire, in which some 40 pro-Russians died, the Kremlin flooded broadcast and social media with disinformation about how the fire had been started on purpose, how Ukrainian death squads in gas-masks had executed hundreds inside. Lost in a fog of lies and fears, the town teetered on the brink of civil war. Some called for the Kremlin to invade.

But some of the brighter people in the information department of the local administration felt they knew their town better than Putin. The Kremlin's pitch was that ethnic differences would prove decisive — but they felt that Odessans were more interested in prosperity and security. A trading port ravaged by the wars of the 20th century, Odessa has no real appetite for conflict. The competition was not between Russian or Ukrainian ethnic identities, but about which side could guarantee Odessa's future as an international trading hub. The information campaign they launched did not focus on ethnic

divides or national narratives, but on how the Russian invasion had brought poverty, destruction and isolation to the Donbas. It worked: support for remaining in Ukraine surged as it became equated with security and prosperity.

Information warfare, therefore, is all about understanding complex social and psychological dynamics. In that sense, describing it as war is not particularly helpful. There is an innate problem in using military thinking when dealing with the subtle fabric of societies. It creates the illusion of solutions: 'if the other side has taken this information hill', the military logic goes, 'then we can take that information plateau to attack them from'. This is a pointless and ultimately counter-productive way to think.

There is an innate problem in using military thinking when dealing with the subtle fabric of societies.

The war metaphor is unhelpful in other ways too, as it opens up the space to dismiss any criticism as Russian 'information war'. Lithuanian's prime minister, for example, has alleged that strikes by the Trade Union of Lithuanian Teachers are influenced by Moscow. Ukraine's President has called a *New York Times* editorial criticising his lack of reforms part of Russia's 'hybrid war' against Ukraine, while his Minister of the Interior, Arsen Avakov, labels independent Ukrainian journalists who do not toe the government line 'liberal-separatists' (the journalists have received death threats).

Excusing one's own problems as information war in this way ends up mirroring the Kremlin's mind-set. In Russia, information warfare has often become much more than about concrete operations by security agencies; it is a myth which explains away all of Russia's historic failures. In this vision, the fall of the Soviet Union was not caused by a terrible system but was all down to Western-inspired 'information operations' such as 'freedom of speech' and 'economic reform'. In the world of information war everything is a plot: 'human rights' or 'press freedom' have no intrinsic worth. This allows the

Kremlin to ignore Russia's real problems. In turn, the Kremlin's information war against the West could be either a useful way to focus on the West's own problems, which the Kremlin preys on — such as corruption or the rise of fake news — or as a an excuse to avoid them and let them fester. However, if democracies end up using information warfare as an excuse to avoid reform, it will end up doing damage to their systems quicker than the Kremlin's efforts: Putin can always use force to stay in power. So perhaps the most important weapon in Russia's information warfare is the very idea of information war.

Democracies are in a double bind: how to respond to information warfare without echoing its frames? As responses are being considered, it is important to appreciate that:

- Today's media and information environment is deeply fractured. Each echo chamber has its own dynamics. During the Cold War, it was enough to win the argument in a limited information space. Now it is necessary to communicate in different ways with different people, even within countries. Transborder broadcasting, blogs and social media mean that whole audiences can no longer be reached by mainstream media. During the Cold War, it was also enough to prove to major newspapers and broadcasters that the Kremlin was spreading disinformation about, for example, the CIA having designed the AIDS virus. But now myth-busting and fact-checking conducted by mainstream newspapers will only reach a certain audience and probably not the one the Kremlin is targeting anyway.
- If there is one common thread in the Kremlin's many narratives it is the use of conspiratorial discourse and a strategic use of disinformation to trash the information space, break trust, increase polarization and undermine the public space for democratic debate: This is a war *on* information rather than information warfare. In this regard, the Kremlin is going with the flow of changes in Western media, politics and society, where there is less trust in public institutions and mainstream

media, where previously fringe movements are now gaining strength and the space for a public discourse is shrinking.

- Unlike during the Cold War, when Russia promoted itself as an attractive, Communist alternative to the West, today's Kremlin focuses on exacerbating existing fissures in the West and using anti-immigration, anti-US or anti-EU sentiments to further its own goals. Russia does sell itself as an attractive alternative to Russian speakers in former Soviet states such as Ukraine and the Baltics, but even in those cases the motivations of audiences in, for example, Luhansk and Narva can be very different.

These factors mean that, as we consider how to confront the Kremlin's challenge, we are faced with a paradox: on the one hand, the need to talk to different audiences and echo chambers in different ways; on the other, to build trust between polarised groups to rebuild overall trust. Some first steps could include the following:

Systematic content and audience analysis. Currently, no dedicated agency systematically analyses the effect of Russian (or any other) disinformation. Why are audiences receptive to disinformation? Do current debunking efforts end up curbing or actually helping disinformation campaigns by strengthening polarisation?

New agencies, new cooperation. Some are calling for the reconstruction of the US Information Agency. A bipartisan bill co-sponsored by Senators Chris Murphy and Rob Portman calls for the creation of an **interagency** Centre for Information Analysis and Response. In Europe, Jakub Janda of the think tank European Values argues for strategic communications departments throughout the EU. In any case, Western governments need to find a constructive way to interact with media and NGOs, fostering a community of transnational critical inquiry and trust. Governments might show more willingness to share evidence of financial crimes, video of covert military operations and audio intercepts.

Deconstruct disinformation. A counterpart to organisations such as Global Witness, Transparency International and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) could **investigate** disinformation and hybrid campaigns and **myth-bust** for significant audiences who are receptive to fact-based arguments. It could use technology to automate fact-checking and troll-busting, educate media professionals and provide 'disinformation ratings' to call out those media outlets which have fallen victim to (or collude in) Russian propaganda attacks.

A working group on historical trauma. One of the most effective Kremlin propaganda themes exploits the heroic legacy of the Second World War. This employs false syllogisms, such as 'Stalin fought the Nazis, therefore everyone who fought Stalin was a Nazi", and then links these to the present: 'Everyone who opposes Russia now is a fascist'. A working group of psychologists, historians, sociologists and media specialists should create an ideas factory to develop ways of approaching historical and psychological trauma and highlighting other narratives.

Reinvent public broadcasting. In a fragmented media landscape, a strong, independent public broadcaster could grow to be the most trusted medium available, not only **setting journalistic standards** but also **engaging in social and civic issues.**

Russian-language content factory. Viewers in Ukraine, the Baltics and the Caucasus tune into Kremlin television because it is glossier and more entertaining. The UK's Foreign Office is backing a 'content factory' to help the EU Association and Baltic countries create new Russian-language entertainment programming. Other donors might support this initiative.

A Russian language news wire/hub. No Russian-language outlet provides consistently reliable and comprehensive news. The European Endowment for Democracy suggests a proto-news agency for news outlets across the region would do the job.

Media literacy. Educating media consumers to spot disinformation is an important long-term priority. Pilot projects in Ukraine, notably by International Research and Exchanges (IREX), have broken new ground both in the techniques used, and in reaching beyond academic environments. Future media-literacy projects should use both online and broadcast media channels.

Advertising boycotts. Western advertisers finance channels that carry hate speech and demonise LGBT communities, while Western production companies sell entertainment content. A sustained campaign may be required to pressure them to shun such clients and business.

CHAPTER 4

RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: POTENTIAL FUTURE SCENARIOS

Russia's use of surprise as an element of foreign-policy implementation is deliberate and not just an opportunistic reaction to events. These tactics support a policy which is more assertive and devoted to expanding Russia's regional and global influence. While it is difficult to predict Russia's next moves, it is possible to look at Russia's overall objectives and assess possible targets and tactics. Many international tensions can be exploited. The combination of international tensions, other unpredictable leaders and Russian unexpected behaviour will increase the dangers of miscalculation and crisis escalation.

Russian foreign policy has taken several unexpected turns in the last few years. These include the annexation of Crimea, military intervention in Syria, abrupt shifts towards Turkey, and emerging relations with the Taliban. It would be an error to see such shifts as merely a response to changing external circumstances; some developments have provided windows of opportunity that the Kremlin has adroitly seized upon, while others were perceived as threats to Russia's national interest that required a firm response. The regime also cultivates an image of unpredictability, injecting an element of 'strategic surprise' to better seize the initiative.

Domestic factors also help shape the Kremlin's foreign policy. A highly centralised decision-making process, combined with the absence of public debate, enhance the Moscow's capability to act rapidly and forcibly, as well as to engage in high-risk adventures. Likewise, the regime's shifting sources of legitimacy help explain its actions abroad. For a number of years, President Valdimir Putin's support rested upon the country's strong economic performance, which also improved living standards for broader segments of the population. But a sharp drop in oil prices, failed economic reforms,

and the sanctions imposed by the US and the EU undermined the country's economic model. In response, the regime turned to foreign policy as an alternate source of legitimacy, dusting off the traditional narrative of Russia as a global power and producing 'success stories' such as the 're-unification with Crimea'. Such demonstrations, however, have a limited shelf life, repeatedly triggering a search for new successes in a bid to continue to bolster Putin's popularity.

The West has difficulty assessing the Kremlin's cost-benefit calculations in foreign policy and the opacity of the Russian decision-making process is not the only factor explaining this. Moscow's behavior has been apparent for quite some time but expertise on Russia has shrunk in Western capitals, where politicians have tended to focus on the Middle East, and the EU's multiples crises, which have overshadowed developments in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Moreover, illusions and misconceptions have further clouded their perspective. For example, by classifying Russia as a mere 'regional power', US President Barack Obama contributed to underestimating Russia's capabilities and willingness to enforce its interests outside of its proclaimed sphere of interests. And the EU's self-perception as a transformative force for peace has blinded it to the growing geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Western politicians cannot match Putin's capacity to react swiftly to policy challenges. EU member-states face structural constraints: democratic decision-making processes and the necessity to coordinate part of their foreign policy within the rest of the EU and/or NATO.

Grey swans

The present paper is based on a foresight exercise conducted by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) that identifies existing trends in the Kremlin's foreign policy and extrapolates from them situations that could occur in the coming years. Its objective is not to imagine new situations but rather to think through existing structures and developments. This method focuses on 'grey swans', that is, trends that develop over a long period of time and which are of importance to policy-makers but have not yet been treated as a priority.

Growing assertiveness, an enhanced toolbox and windows of opportunity

When analysing Russia's foreign policy, one should take a number of broad developments into consideration, beginning with its growing regional reach. Although Moscow saw itself as a global power in the early 1990s, its focus was limited to the post-Soviet space, the Euro-Atlantic region and China. Since the middle of the 2000s, however, Russia has successfully diversified and strengthened its relations with other Asian countries, such as Japan and Vietnam, and institutions, including ASEAN and APEC. Moscow's military intervention in Syria starting in 2015, proved to be a game changer, effectively transforming the Kremlin into an influential actor in the Middle East. Although Russia is less active at present in Africa and Latin America, windows of opportunity due to US President Donald Trump's election could allow for further Russian engagement there, at least with Cuba.

Secondly, Russia's foreign policy has become much more assertive. This became particularly evident in the post-Soviet space, where Moscow not only expanded its projects promoting regional integration but also resorted to the threat and use of military force to change internationally recognised borders. From this position of strength, Moscow now strives to rebuild the Euro-Atlantic security order on its own terms, conducting activities designed to weaken the EU's and NATO's internal cohesion with the aim of shaping a European order based on bilateral ties between regional great powers, rather than multilateral institutions.

Thirdly, as already alluded to, there are growing links between foreign and domestic policy. Domestic incentives have increased in recent years. 'Colour revolutions' and the mass protests in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2011 and 2012 altered the Kremlin's perception of the European Union. While NATO had been seen as the main threat to Russia since its inception, the EU is now increasingly included in this same category because the socio-political and economic changes triggered by post-Soviet states' association with, or membership in the EU are greater that than those brought about by membership in NATO. Such changes limit the scope and effectiveness of Russia's

influence in what it claims to be its sphere of influence. Furthermore, the Kremlin saw the ultimate aim of the 'colour revolutions' as attempts at regime change targeting Russia itself. For this reason, weakening the EU and restricting European (and other Western) links with Russian society have become a foreign policy priority.

Against the backdrop of the March 2018 presidential elections, we can expect domestic requirements to influence even more the regime's foreign policy positions in order to buttress its legitimacy. This could take the form of a more assertive posture towards the European Union and NATO in order to underpin the narrative of a besieged fortress and create a 'rally around the flag' effect; the announcement of significant agreements with other non-Western, authoritarian regimes such as China or Turkey to demonstrate that Russia is a great power able to reshape the global order; or public relations coups that appeal to national pride. In addition, incentives to stimulate economic growth could trigger a pragmatic engagement policy towards the EU but only if reform-minded technocrats are promoted to top government positions.

Fourthly, Russia has at its disposal a wider inventory of tools to pursue foreign policy objectives. Thanks to military reforms begun in autumn 2008 that increased the armed forces' capabilities for hybrid and conventional warfare, Moscow is in a better position to threaten or resort to military force to achieve its goals. This is especially true with regards to both post-Soviet states and NATO members, albeit in a much more limited way with regards to the latter. Its increased military also serves as a force multiplier for non-military means of influence. So-called soft instruments include subversion, mobilising ethnic minorities and 'proxies' or exploiting economic dependencies. Some of these soft instruments were first developed for domestic purposes and then added to the foreign policy toolbox, for example perception management techniques (propaganda, disinformation, *kompromat*) or cyber attacks. We can expect growing cooperation among like-minded regimes to improve the range and effectiveness of their soft power tools. For instance, Russia and China might enhance their cooperation in cyberspace by isolating themselves from the global Internet and establishing their own 'EurasiaNet'.

External events also serve to mold the Kremlin's foreign policy. There are several windows of opportunity for Putin in 2017 and 2018. The EU's multiple crises, Brexit and election campaigns ensure that European decision-makers will remain focused on domestic issues. Should (pro-Putin) nationalist and right-wing forces win in a key country, it will be difficult to uphold a common EU policy towards Russia, making it easier for the Kremlin to engage member-states on a bilateral basis. The main 'unknown', however, is Washington's policy towards Russia under the new Trump administration. Here, Putin's tactical unpredictability meets Trump's own, enhancing the possibility of miscalculation and unintended escalation. Russia might view Trump's statement to the effect that NATO is obsolete as an invitation to test the Alliance's cohesion with a show of force or by resorting to a form of hybrid warfare in the Baltic states.

Possible alternate futures in the next two years

Post-Soviet space: military threats and territorial expansion

Although neither NATO nor the EU will propose further association or membership agreements that would challenge Russia's position in the post-Soviet space during this timeframe, Moscow's claim to a sphere of influence in this region is contested by a number of the former Soviet republics themselves. The presidents of Belarus and Kazakhstan increasingly play the nationalist card and reach out to other partners in a bid to defend their sovereignty. Russia might respond with a show of force. During the large-scale military exercise Zapad 2017, scheduled for September 2017, more than 30,000 Russian soldiers will be present on Belarusian soil. Russia could allege a NATO threat to justify a prolonged stay of part of its troops in Belarus, with a view to compelling Lukashenko to allow a permanent Russian airbase there. Playing the military card vis-à-vis Kazakhstan would only make sense should the Kazakh leadership turn away from Moscow. In that event, Russia could instrumentalise ethnic Russians in the northwest of Kazakhstan or stage an anti-Russian incident, thereby providing legitimacy for military intervention. However, even a limited military campaign in Kazakhstan would not be in the Kremlin's best interest as its combat-ready units are already thinly

stretched as a result of the operations in Ukraine and Syria. However, large-scale exercises on the border, coupled with a tacit mobilisation of proxies, could serve as useful reminders of Russian power.

Another strategic surprise could be a public relations coup where Moscow accepts South-Ossetian demands to re-join the Russian republic of North Ossetia. This could be portrayed as one more success story leading up to the Russian presidential elections. In addition, such a move would complicate Georgia's NATO dreams even more. Given Trump's supposed disinterest in the post-Soviet space and the EU's internal crises, the Kremlin could hope for a quick, painless victory.

EU: interfering in election campaigns

Following Russia's interference in the US election campaign, one can no longer consider such interference in the European theatre as a grey swan. Proof already exists of such intrusive behaviour and unfolding developments invite further meddling. Campaigns to discredit far-right candidates' rivals could lead to a victory of Eurosceptic and Putin-friendly forces. In such an event, the European Union would find itself mired in an even deeper crisis and Moscow would be significantly closer to being able to engage directly with the region's leading actors.

Although a victory of right-wing forces does not seem probable in Germany, weakening Chancellor Angela Merkel would be to the Kremlin's advantage. Cyber-attacks on the German Bundestag in 2015 and 2016 might lead to hack-and-leak campaigns as occurred in the US. In addition, Russia could try to mobilise Russian Germans. As a result of the lessons learned from the Lisa F. case[2], Moscow will probably not meddle openly in anti-government protests in the future but make use of ties with right- and left-wing parties to weaken the German government. Given the improved relations with Erdogan, Russia could also help coordinate protests of Russian-Germans and members of the Turkish diaspora in support of 'traditional family values'. Another possible option open to the Kremlin would be to further promote the narrative of Germany as a new Fourth Reich or

as a malign hegemon by launching coordinated media-campaigns in Greece, Italy and Poland.

Russia-US: potential for (de)escalation

Given the existence of double unpredictability in this arena, both greater cooperation and increased confrontation are possible. On the one hand, the potential for conflict might be reduced significantly since Trump will most likely not pursue the promotion of democracy as a foreign policy goal or pay much attention to the post-Soviet space. Both Washington and Moscow could also enhance their cooperation in combatting terrorism. On the other hand, the new US president might fuel tensions with Russia by not accepting Russia as an equal partner in the crucial area of nuclear weapons. Trump's stated intent to outmatch other nuclear powers challenges a crucial pillar of Russia's great power identity. Were Trump to refuse to concede to Russian demands with regards to missile defence, Moscow might respond by withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty. Since there remain structural constraints to cooperation, such as weak trade relations, the bilateral relationship will become even more fragile and prone to sharp turns.

Growing dependency on China, reaching out to Japan

Against the backdrop of growing US-China tensions, Russia might see an opportunity to achieve the status of swing state, able to balance between conflicting parties and extract concessions from both. However, such an option is not promising, as Russia has too little to offer to either side and has become increasingly dependent upon China. If Moscow is unable to further diversify its relations with other Asian countries, its dependence on Beijing will only increase. In an escalating US-China confrontation, Beijing might ask its 'strategic partner' to takes sides. So as to enhance its room for manoeuvre, the Kremlin might seek to improve ties with Japan by proposing a compromise on the Kurile Islands.

Promoting a new regional order in the Middle East

Russia will most likely be more active in the Middle East in the coming years. Now established as a veto actor in the Syrian conflict, Moscow is increasingly able to define the that regional order. Together with long-term as well as ad-hoc partners such as Iran, Turkey, Israel, and Pakistan, it could continue to set up new formats for regional conflict resolution that sideline the West. This is already occurring with regards to Syria ('Astana Talks') and Afghanistan (talks with Pakistan, China and Taliban). However, Trump's attempt to rewrite the nuclear deal with Iran could also offer a window of opportunity for further European-Russian cooperation.

ENDNOTES

1 Russia's domestic intelligence service

2 Against the backdrop of the Syrian migrant crisis, in January 2016 a thirteen-year-old Russian-German girl claimed to have been kidnapped and raped by men of Middle Eastern or North African appearance. Russian media and the Russian Foreign Minister immediately expressed outrage, claimed that the facts were being hidden out of 'political correctness', and members of the Russian-German community staged protests that were supported by German far-right groups eager to use the migrant crisis for their own political ends. Germany's response was swift and strong: a police investigation rapidly uncovered that the young girl had feared returning home because of problems at school and had invented the kidnapping claim to cover her 30-hour disappearance. The German Foreign Minister strongly rebuked his Russian counterpart for interference in German domestic affairs.

APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP AGENDA

RUSSIAN WORLD-VIEWS

DOMESTIC POWER RELATIONS AND FOREIGN BEHAVIOUR

An unclassified workshop of the Academic Outreach program of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)

20 March 2017, Ottawa

PROGRAM

8:30 - 8:45	Opening remarks: context and objectives of the workshop
8:45 - 9:30	**Module 1 - How Russians view their relationship with the state and the country's role in the world**
9:30 - 10:15	**Module 2 - The changing configuration of the Putin regime and growing importance of the FSB**
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 11:15	**Module 3 - Disinformation and other non-military tools in expanding Russia's influence abroad**
11:15 - 12:00	**Module 4 - Russian foreign policy and alternate scenarios**
12:00 - 12:15	Workshop Lead's synthesis
12:15	Adjourn

APPENDIX B

ACADEMIC OUTREACH AT CSIS

Intelligence in a shifting world

It has become a truism to say that the world today is changing at an ever faster pace. Analysts, commentators, researchers and citizens from all backgrounds—in and outside government—may well recognise the value of this cliché, but most are only beginning to appreciate the very tangible implications of what otherwise remains an abstract statement.

The global security environment, which refers to the various threats to geopolitical, regional and national stability and prosperity, has changed profoundly since the fall of Communism, marking the end of a bipolar world organised around the ambitions of, and military tensions between, the United States and the former USSR. Quickly dispelling the tempting end of history theory of the 1990s, the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, as well as subsequent events of a related nature in different countries, have since further affected our understanding of security.

Globalisation, the rapid development of technology and the associated sophistication of information and communications have influenced the work and nature of governments, including intelligence services. In addition to traditional state-to-state conflict, there now exist a wide array of security challenges that cross national boundaries, involve non-state actors and sometimes even non-human factors. Those range from terrorism, illicit networks and global diseases to energy security, international competition for resources, and the security consequences of a deteriorating natural environment globally. The elements of national and global security have therefore grown more complex and increasingly interdependent.

What we do

It is to understand those current and emerging issues that CSIS launched, in September 2008, its academic outreach program. By drawing regularly on knowledge from experts and taking a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach in doing so, the Service plays an active role in fostering a contextual understanding of security

issues for the benefit of its own experts, as well as the researchers and specialists we engage. Our activities aim to shed light on current security issues, to develop a long-term view of various security trends and problems, to challenge our own assumptions and cultural bias, as well as to sharpen our research and analytical capacities.

To do so, we aim to:

- Tap into networks of experts from various disciplines and sectors, including government, think-tanks, research institutes, universities, private business and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Canada and abroad. Where those networks do not exist, we may create them in partnership with various organisations;
- Stimulate the study of issues related to Canadian security and the country's security and intelligence apparatus, while contributing to an informed public discussion about the history, function and future of intelligence in Canada.

The Service's academic outreach program resorts to a number of vehicles. It supports, designs, plans and/or hosts several activities, including conferences, seminars, presentations and round-table discussions. It also contributes actively to the development of the Global Futures Forum, a multinational security and intelligence community which it has supported since 2005.

While the academic outreach program does not take positions on particular issues, the results of some of its activities are released on the CSIS web site (http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca). By publicising the ideas emerging from its activities, the program seeks to stimulate debate and encourage the flow of views and perspectives between the Service, organisations and individual thinkers.