

maps” that pose a large geopolitical strategic issue, such as “Ending the Cold War in Europe.” Below that issue, the authors posit broad themes such as “Security in Europe.” They then pose a series of questions that lead to choices such as “Should the U.S. keep troops in Europe or not?”

Such questions, sifted through the interaction of values, realities, and actions, had to be answered. Choices *had* to be made. This is what strategy formulation was during the end of the Cold War. Indeed, one could argue that this is what strategy always is: fork-in-the-road decisions made with incomplete and sometimes confusing data. Some leaders, such as Gorbachev, made decisions that tended to be more wrong than right; others, such as Bush and Kohl, made ones that tended to be more right than wrong. For policymakers, warfighters, and students of strategy throughout the joint force, the insights offered should be of immediate value.

The Cold War ended three decades ago. For a brief moment, history itself appeared to have ended in a way that signaled the ascent of American ideals worldwide, in perpetuity. That moment has passed, no doubt. Nonetheless, as Zelikow and Rice point out, we would do well to remember our triumphs as well as our defeats, and recall that both result from deliberate choices and not simply historical accidents. JFQ

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### **The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines Between War and Peace**

By Oscar Jonsson

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Reviewed by Mariya Y. Omelicheva

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles,” wrote the influential Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*. Russia’s ongoing efforts to reshape the world in ways that are at odds with American values and interests have turned Moscow into a dangerous adversary. Countless analyses have appeared in recent years that venture to understand how Russian leadership thinks, what Russia wants, and how it plans to get it. Oscar Jonsson’s *The Russian Understanding of War* is a valuable addition to the corpus of knowledge on Russia’s military thinking about war.

Relying on a close reading of Russian security, military, and foreign policy doctrines and the writings of Russian military, academic, and political elites, Jonsson traces the evolution of Russian

military thought about war from the early Soviet period through contemporary times. According to Jonsson, the nature of war—traditionally understood in Russia as armed violence for political purposes—had not changed much until recently. The advent of information-psychological warfare has led to the blurring of the boundary between war and peace. Having observed the role of information in “altering the consciousness of a country” and undermining public trust in state institutions “to the degree that citizens are prepared to revolt, creating color revolutions,” Russian strategists began conceiving of information as a weapon and a more effective means of achieving strategic outcomes than armed force.

The surge of interest in Russia’s thinking stems from the growing awareness that Western strategic and military concepts may have limited utility for deciphering Russia’s purposes, perspectives, and mental models on war. Notwithstanding an appreciation of the fundamental differences in countries’ conceptions of war, Jonsson chooses to approach Russia’s views on armed conflict from a longstanding Western military theoretical background informed by a Clausewitzian perspective, rather than alternative “lenses” grounded in Russia’s own military theory. By doing so, the author falls into the same trap of ascertaining the seemingly novel Russian approach to operations for a fundamentally new conception of war, as many other writers on hybrid warfare and the Gerasimov doctrine have been caught in before.

Russia’s information-psychological operations are anything but new. They repurpose tried-and-tested malign influence campaigns used by the Soviets in Eastern and Western Europe. Similar to modern Russian strategists, the Soviet military and political elite recognized the economic and technological superiority of the United States and sought to compensate for capability gaps by exploiting cultural values and psychological biases in individual decisionmaking processes. Questions about the nature versus the character of war were not at the forefront of Soviet thinking, which,

as Jonsson aptly discusses in his book, was highly ideologized and focused on issues of just war versus unjust war. The Soviet holistic approach to war, which treated armed conflict as a complex sociopolitical phenomenon and part of a single synthetic system, stands in stark contrast to Western and American analytical perspectives. Soviet military thinkers envisioned the enemy as a system, and the operational logic that built on this approach required neutralizing the enemy's ability to attain its goals. Information-psychological operations were instrumental and remain ingrained in modern Russian military thinking.

The key premise of the book, however, remains timely and valid. Knowing one's opponent is the first step to developing effective countermeasures. The core argument of Jonsson's study emphasizes the fact that Russia has conceptualized war as a continuation of politics, and politics as a continuation of war, thus rendering the binary "peace or war" paradigm of the operational environment obsolete. Many joint force operational and strategic concepts are developed wholly or in part on the assumption of operations taking place in either a distinct state of peace or war. The Joint Operating Environment 2035 envisions challenges that are significantly different from those of recent decades. One of the main challenges—the contest over ideas and norms—will take place entirely in the information domain. Jonsson's volume speaks directly to the joint force concepts for operating in the information environment by reminding us that Russia has conceptualized information holistically, embracing not only the technological aspects of information but also its psychological aspects. U.S. and Western approaches to information tend to be more technologically biased and infrastructure-centered, not sufficiently integrating less tangible (cognitive and perceptual) methods of manipulation.

To truly understand an adversary requires delving deeper into its politics, culture, and society. While a valuable guide to Russia's thinking about war, Jonsson's book should be read in

conjunction with other studies in Russia's decisionmaking, such as Marlene Laruelle and Jean Radvanyi, *Understanding Russia: The Challenge of Transformation* (Rowan and Littlefield, 2018); Bettina Renz, *Russia's Military Revival* (Polity, 2018); Roger E. Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security* (Routledge, 2019). These works offer a comprehensive collection of chapters on all aspects of Russian security and foreign policy.

Although an authoritarian regime, the Kremlin is captive to opaque and intricate inner power struggles and attentive to public sentiments. These domestic considerations can either amplify or lower the threshold for the use of force and the acceptance of risk, thus affecting the use of information operations. It is also vital to recognize that Russian policymakers and strategists perceive the world through mirror images. The Kremlin ideologues are convinced that the West uses similar, if not the same, concepts and methods of information war against them. Therefore, it is not that Russian conduct always follows Russian theorizing about war, but Russian theorizing about war can be used to justify Russia's own conduct and criticize the West. Lastly, the emphasis on understanding Russia's information warfare should not blind us to Russia's readiness to use military force.

*The Russian Understanding of War* is a useful read for all national security analysts and strategists, as well as Russia-watchers throughout the joint force. Ultimately, Jonsson succeeds in his goal of providing a helpful guide to understanding an adversary that has embraced a form of conflict at odds with Western notions of war and peace. JFQ

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*The European Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation: Implications for Transatlantic Security*  
By Jonathan Dunn



Many U.S. defense officials expressed concern over the EU's November 2017 launch of its Permanent Structured Cooperation. They fear that a more capable EU would make it a competitor to NATO for European security issues, and in so doing reduce U.S. influence in European security. Concerns about diminished U.S. influence and EU divergence from NATO as a result of PESCO are misguided. Rather than be concerned about the remote possibility of European strategic autonomy, the United States should throw its full support behind the PESCO initiative and other attempts to strengthen European defense. That said, the United States has an interest in the direction that the EU takes with PESCO and should therefore attempt to shape it constructively.



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