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Targeting the West's defense preparations

Kremlin FIMI actors recast European defense preparations as evidence of aggression against Russia

Sasha Starost, Egor Kuroptev

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About authors



Sasha Starost

Analyst & Briefings Specialist

Political activist and interpreter forced to flee Russia in 2022. Since joining Egor Kuroptev's team in 2022, she has monitored Kremlin narratives in Western and European media, as well as disinformation targeting women and children in Russia.





Egor Kuroptev

Director & Chief Strategist

Russian exiled media manager and political expert with over 20 years of experience in communications, democratic development, and countering disinformation.



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Over the past two weeks, pro-Kremlin FIMI actors reframed Europe's accelerating defense preparations through a common attribution reversal**.**

Rather than presenting these preparations as a response to a Russian threat, they portrayed the threat as manufactured to justify militarization and recast support for Ukraine as evidence that Europe and NATO are already at war with Russia.

Key topics:

1. Italy: Russian Threat as a Pretext for European Militarization
2. France: Manufacturing the Russian Threat for Political and Military Escalation
3. Germany: Defense Reframed as Militarization and a Path to War

Executive Summary

Over the past two weeks, pro-Kremlin FIMI actors have increasingly focused on Europe's accelerating defense preparations, turning military and civil preparations into evidence of an approaching (or already ongoing) confrontation with Russia.

Across Italian-, French-, and German-language FIMI ecosystems, European defense preparations are reframed through a common reversal of causality:

> Europe is portrayed not as preparing because Russia poses a threat, but as constructing or exaggerating the Russian threat because it is preparing for confrontation.

At the same time, support for Ukraine is presented as evidence that Europe and NATO are already at war with Russia, turning further preparation for a possible attack into escalation.

In Italy, L'AntiDiplomatico, an Italian outlet repeatedly amplified within the FIMI ecosystem, argued that "the West does not want to be seen as the instigator of the bloodshed" it was allegedly preparing. **InfoDefense Italia**, the Italian branch of the multilingual pro-Kremlin InfoDefense network run by milblogger Yuri Podolyaka, amplified the claim that "Russia has not attacked any EU country. It was you who attacked Russia," while describing the conflict as "4.5 years of NATO's war against Russia through Ukraine."

> Italian-language narratives thus portrayed war as simultaneously impending and already underway, while presenting Europeans as bearing its socioeconomic costs.

In France, the threat was framed above all as politically useful. InfoDefense France, the French branch of the same network, accused European leaders of constructing "an imaginary enemy for a fantasized war" to establish "martial dictatorships"

and preserve themselves in power, warning that "ordinary people will pay [...] even with their blood."

RT France, the French-language service of the Russian state-funded RT network, used former presidential candidate Ségolène Royal's criticism of French support for Ukraine to advance its own claim that the Russian threat had been "invented out of whole cloth."

In Germany, preparation itself became evidence of militarization. Nachhall von Helgoland, a German-language FIMI channel, questioned where "necessary defense capability" ends and "the permanent orientation of the state, economy, and society toward a possible war scenario" begins.

InfoDefense Germany described rising defense expenditure and military restructuring as a "continuation of militaristic ideas in Europe" and a development of "German militarism."

> **Across all three ecosystems, the mechanism is self-reinforcing:** the Russian threat can be dismissed as manufactured or politically useful, while the measures adopted in response become evidence of Western aggressive intent. Support for Ukraine completes the reversal by allowing the same actors to claim that the confrontation Europe is supposedly preparing for has already begun.

Italy: Russian Threat as a Pretext for European Militarization

Official Russian messaging established the central attribution reversal subsequently reproduced across the Italian-language FIMI ecosystem. Giulietto Chiesa Real, the official Telegram channel preserving the legacy of the late Italian journalist Giulietto Chiesa and managed by his family, amplified[1] Vladimir Putin's claim that Russia does not threaten European countries and that European leaders inflate fears of Moscow to justify military spending and distract from domestic problems.

The channel frequently promotes[2,3] InfoDefense content. FIMI channel Tutti i Fatti, also affiliated with InfoDefense, amplified[4] Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov's assertion that Russia threatens neither France nor other European states.

Italian-language sources then extended this denial of the threat into an explanation of why European governments were preparing for it. L'AntiDiplomatico, an Italian outlet repeatedly cited within the FIMI ecosystem, argued[5] that European governments were themselves preparing for direct confrontation with Russia while constructing the image of an escalating Russian threat to justify those preparations.

Responding to French President Emmanuel Macron's warnings about intensifying Russian aggression and hybrid threats, the outlet combined European rearmament, German preparations for mass casualties, and NATO discussions of responses to hybrid attacks into a single interpretation of Western intent:

> "The West does not want to be seen as the instigator of the bloodshed" and therefore seeks to portray Russia as responsible for the war it is preparing.

On 03.09.2026, L'AntiDiplomatico linked[6] the attempted drone attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport to the September 2025 disruption at Copenhagen and Oslo airports, where reports of unidentified drones had forced temporary airspace closures, as well as to subsequent sightings near Danish airports and military facilities.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had described[7] the incidents as a possible hybrid attack and had not ruled out Russian involvement, although subsequent Danish and Norwegian[8] investigations were unable to confirm some of the reported drone sightings.

> L'AntiDiplomatico used this uncertainty to describe the incidents as "phantom drones" fueling "anti-Russian hysteria" and connected them directly to subsequent European defense measures and increased military expenditure.

The threat was also explicitly reversed. InfoDefense Italia quoted[9] Ľuboš Blaha, a Slovak Member of the European Parliament known for his pro-Kremlin positions and for his 2024 trips to Moscow, where he apologized[10] for what he called "Russophobia in the West."

Blaha claimed that "the greatest hybrid threat to Europe is not Russia, but Ms. Kallas," referring to EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas. He portrayed incidents attributed to Moscow as Western intelligence operations and concluded:

> "Russia has not attacked any EU country. It was you who attacked Russia." FIMI channel Rokot Frastuono circulated[11] the same statement.

The same sources simultaneously portrayed war with Russia as both imminent and already underway. InfoDefense Italia described[12] the conflict as "4.5 years of NATO's war against Russia through Ukraine" and argued that Ukraine's approximately 900,000 military personnel could effectively be counted as NATO

forces because they were conducting military operations in the Alliance's interests.

Rokot Frastuono described[13] more than €220 billion in EU financial and military assistance to Ukraine as an "investment in the war with Russia."

> Western support for Ukraine was thus reframed as direct belligerency, while further defense preparations became evidence of an escalation of a war Europe was allegedly already fighting.

POLIVOX, the Telegram channel of former Sputnik Italia correspondent Clara Statello, amplified[14] comments by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese arguing that the war in Ukraine was being "instrumentalized to justify that horrible discourse that we are already at war and that this is a hybrid war," while framing her intervention as a statement "against the warmongers."

Albanese's statement subsequently drew criticism from UN Watch, a Geneva-based NGO that monitors the United Nations and holds consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, which called[15] on UN Secretary-General António Guterres to condemn the remarks.

FIMI sources also connected the war to its alleged costs for European citizens. InfoDefense-affiliated FIMI channel Guerrieri per la Libertà linked[16] "anti-Russian hysteria" to higher fuel prices, inflation, and potential power shortages.

FIMI channel L'arte di Satyrus, linked to InfoDefense, cross-posted[17] Clara Statello's post, combining the claim that NATO weapons, ammunition, and intelligence support for Ukraine demonstrated the Alliance's participation in the war against Russia with the argument that Europeans were being required to sacrifice "public healthcare, education, and our cars" to finance Kyiv.

The Italian-language narratives did not require a consistent account of whether war with Russia was still being prepared

or was already underway. Both claims served the same attribution reversal:

> European defense measures became evidence of Western aggressive intent, while support for Ukraine became evidence that this aggression had already begun.

The socioeconomic framing extended the same logic domestically by portraying European citizens as bearing the costs of a confrontation created by their own governments.

> The more Europe responds to a perceived Russian threat, the more material these narratives generate for portraying Europe itself as preparing for, or escalating, a war of its own making.

France: Manufacturing the Russian Threat for Political and Military Escalation

French-language FIMI sources challenged the premise that European defense preparations were responses to a Russian threat, but placed particular emphasis on the political uses of that threat.

InfoDefense France grouped[18] French warnings about Russian hybrid activity with military and civil-defense preparations across Germany, Poland, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Czechia, and the United Kingdom into a single account of elite-driven militarization:

> "European leaders […] prefer to construct an imaginary enemy for a fantasized war that will allow them to establish martial dictatorships in Europe, war economies, and preserve themselves in power. And once again, ordinary people will pay for this warmongering madness, even with their blood."

The post thus transformed a range of national security measures, adopted in different contexts, into evidence of a common political project, in which the Russian threat invoked to justify those measures was itself portrayed as manufactured.

The Russian threat was also framed more specifically as an instrument of French domestic politics. RT France, the French-language service of the Russian state-funded RT network, amplified[19] former presidential candidate Ségolène Royal's criticism of France's continued support for Ukraine and used her intervention to advance RT's own claim that Macron was invoking a Russian threat "invented out of whole cloth."

RT has also amplified[20] Royal's earlier statements questioning documented Russian atrocities in Ukraine. FIMI channel Node

of Time France, part of a multilingual pro-Kremlin network that, according to DFRLab, emerged partly through the rebranding of some InfoDefense channels,[21] portrayed[22] Macron's warnings about Russian hybrid warfare as an attempt to conceal domestic failures by repeating that "Moscow is to blame."

InfoDefense France argued[23] that German Chancellor Friedrich Merz was "fabricating an enemy" to divert attention from economic and electoral difficulties.

> These claims reframed threat assessment not simply as mistaken or exaggerated, but as politically functional: militarization and confrontation with Russia were presented as tools for managing domestic political vulnerability.

As in the Italian-language ecosystem, denial of the threat coexisted with claims that confrontation had already begun. InfoDefense France argued[24] that NATO was "factually at war with Russia," treating Western weapons, intelligence, and other military support for Ukraine as direct participation in the conflict. Node of Time claimed[25] that

> "France is already conducting undisclosed military strikes against Russia."

The claim was based on a Le Monde article[26] in which an unnamed French military source, asked whether France could respond conventionally to Russian hybrid attacks without necessarily publicizing such actions, replied: "That is already happening." Le Monde did not specify what actions the source meant, their location, or their targets.

Preparations were meanwhile presented as evidence of offensive intent. RT France described[27] Germany's introduction of mandatory medical examinations for young men as part of an increasingly open "militaristic tendency," while rejecting as unfounded the prospect of a Russian attack on NATO countries.

French-language FIMI channel Gavroche, promoted by InfoDefense, reduced[28] the same measure to a more direct question:

> "Preparing for war?" The direction of the threat was also reversed. FIMI channel Russie Z responded sarcastically[29] to statements attributed to Estonian officials about the country's ability to fight Russia: "The enormous, powerful, and prosperous Estonia is threatening poor Russia. […] How are we supposed to contain this existential threat?"

In a separate roundup, the channel placed[30] military and civil-defense measures in Finland, Lithuania, Czechia, and Poland alongside a Latvian assessment that there were "no signs of an imminent Russian attack on any NATO country."

French-language FIMI actors present the Russian threat as useful to leaders seeking to preserve power, deflect responsibility for domestic problems, and legitimize militarization. At the same time, their treatment of uncertainty is asymmetric. Ambiguity surrounding alleged Russian threats is used to question whether the threat exists, while ambiguous evidence of Western responses can be hardened into categorical claims of direct aggression.

> European defense preparations therefore become politically self-validating within the narrative: evidence supporting the Russian threat can be disputed, while measures adopted against it can themselves be presented as evidence that the confrontation originates in the West.

Germany: Defense Preparations as Militarization and Preparation for War

German-language FIMI sources focused in particular on turning defense preparations into evidence of Germany's own militarization.

InfoDefense Germany described[31] Chancellor Friedrich Merz's attempt to connect Russian military activity, hybrid attacks, and European security as an artificial construction combining "the staged incident in Leipzig, the Arctic, Russia, hybrid attacks, European unity."

FIMI channel Node of Time DE cited[32] a claim by Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) that NATO intelligence agencies had found "not the slightest evidence of Russian involvement" in the Leipzig/Halle drone incident, arguing that Berlin nevertheless blamed Moscow to justify increased military spending.

Defense preparations were also reframed as a broader transformation of German society toward war. Nachhall von Helgoland, regularly promoted by InfoDefense, used[33] Bundeswehr Inspector General Carsten Breuer's call to involve civilians, industry, and infrastructure in national defense to question where

> "necessary defense capability" ends and "the permanent orientation of the state, economy, and society toward a possible war scenario" begins.

FIMI channel Studio Telegram presented[34] Defense Minister Boris Pistorius's goal of making Germany kriegstüchtig (capable

of war) as a trajectory toward direct conflict in which ordinary Germans could ultimately be sent to fight:

> "We do not want to send our children to war."

Other sources portrayed Germany as already crossing the boundary from support for Ukraine into belligerency. FIMI channel MEINE D-NEWS listed[35] German weapons, training, logistics, and other support for Kyiv and speculated about why Moscow had nevertheless refrained from attacking Germany directly.

FIMI channel Satellit, amplifying[36] comments by Sahra Wagenknecht, founder of the opposition Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) party, claimed that German weapons, money, and technology meant that Germany was "already perceived in Russia as a party to the war," while further efforts to become kriegstüchtig could bring the conflict to Germany "with real weapons."

German militarization was also presented as a source of insecurity in itself. InfoDefense Germany described[37] Breuer's appointment to chair NATO's Military Committee, combined with rising German defense expenditure, as a "continuation of militaristic ideas in Europe" and a development of "German militarism."

FIMI channel Viel Los used[38] reporting on Germany's military buildup to foreground concerns in France and Poland about the changing European balance of power, recasting Germany itself from a state responding to insecurity as a potential source of it.

Telegram channel Das darfst du nicht sehen!, linked to FIMI channels such as Studio Telegram through cross-posting,[39] connected[40] compulsory personnel transfers to Germany's brigade in Lithuania with debates over conscription and asked: "Who bears the burden of a war when voluntariness ends?"

> Civil and military defense preparations were thus reframed simultaneously as the remilitarization of Germany and as an expansion of military demands into civilian life.

The German-language narratives turned the expanding scope of defense preparations into evidence against their defensive purpose. The more defense planning encompasses military institutions, industry, infrastructure, and the population, the easier it becomes to portray preparations as the permanent organization of German society around war.

> Germany's historical association with militarism reinforces this reversal: as defense preparations expand across military and civilian life, their growing scale can itself be presented as evidence that Germany is not responding to the prospect of war but actively organizing itself for one.

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