



THE WEAPONIZATION OF CULTURE:

KREMLIN'S TRADITIONAL AGENDA AND THE EXPORT OF VALUES TO CENTRAL EUROPE

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Introduction

The hybrid warfare that Russia has been waging against Europe and the West, especially since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis is a fight for people's minds and souls. Russia does not only try to undermine trust in Europe and its institutions among its citizens, but it also aims to offer an alternative. While the Russian regime is, most of the time, depicted as cynical and valueless, it certainly defines itself differently. There is an increasing effort to create an alternative value universe against the nihilist, decadent West – not only in Russia but also in the whole World. As Nina Khrushchev argues: “*Under Putin, the Soviets’ secular society began to rethink its place in a world in which conservative religious beliefs take precedence over civic norms.*”² This process is justified by the moral superiority of Eurasia over the West. Putin is depicted by the Center for Strategic Communications, a pro-Kremlin think tank as “*World Conservatism’s New Leader*”³.

Putin, in his annual address at the end of 2013, when defending the discriminative “anti-gay propaganda law” from international criticism before the Sochi Olympic Games, practically put Russia in the role of the global “moral compass” of conservatism. Putin claimed that banning “propaganda of non-traditional relations” should not be regarded as discriminative, it is only about strengthening traditional family values, which is a guarantee of Russia’s greatness. He also downplayed the Western approach of „so-called tolerance — genderless and infertile”, and said that the “destruction of traditional values from the top” in the West is “inherently undemocratic because it is based on abstract ideas and runs counter to the will of the majority of people.”⁴ He also said that the Western approach to human rights and freedom are about “the mandatory recognition of the equivalence of good and evil”. From this diagnosis, the goals of the regime are quite obvious: to spread the conservative “value trinity” of Nation, Family and Christianity.

To change the Western mindset, a holistic approach is needed. A tool for that is to invest more in the so-called *Metapolitics*. The project of metapolitics is about changing the political processes indirectly, challenging Western (liberal) moral assumptions and axioms that almost everybody takes for granted. This is a grand and heroic soft power project that finds more and more supporters within Europe, not only on the radical right, but also among conservative groups and Eurosceptics. The “weaponization” of culture and values has more general goal than reaching short-term geopolitical goals: this is the fight for ideological hegemony against the West.⁵

Contrary to the tools of classical warfare, the tools and actors of the “soft power” approach are diverse, and the strategy and its implementation is less centralized. As Marlene Laruelle argues in her book,⁶ for example, that in the promotion of the values and players of the European far-right, there is a semi-coordinated network of ideologues (e.g. Alexander Dugin), businessmen (e.g. Konstantin Malofeev), political players (mainly from the Rodina party such as Dmitriy Rogozin and Alexander Babakov) and the Russian Orthodox Church.

² Putin’s new ‘values pact’. <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/03/26/putins-new-values-pact/>

³ Vladimir Putin, Conservative Icon. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/vladimir-putin-conservative-icon/282572/>

⁴ The quotations are from USA Today’s article, quoting <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/12/12/putin-russia-gay-sochi/3997351/>

⁵ About the „weaponization” of culture see: Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, “The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money,” *The Interpreter/Institute of Modern Russia*, November 22, 2014, accessed August 1, 2016, http://www.interpretermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Menace_of_Unreality_Final.pdf

⁶ Laruelle, M. *Eurasianism and European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015).

This study aims to examine subtle channels of soft power: the “values export” activity of multiple actors and the recipients of these efforts in Central Eastern Europe: in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. To reach this goal, besides desktop research, authors of the study conducted more than 20 interviews with experts, and members of the NGO sector. Several sources, though, wanted to remain anonymous.

Executive summary

General patterns of influence

- A dangerous situation has arisen on the European continent, where Russian ideological expansion, closely tied to foreign policy and geopolitical goals, endorsing illiberal and anti-Western principles, met with the growing popularity of far-right (and far-left) parties and illiberal movements.⁷ Growing disillusionment with liberalism, human rights and democratic ideals provide fertile ground to this process.
- Moral superiority of Russia over the West, as the ideological cornerstone of the Putin regime, has gradually seeped into political discourse. This ideological direction manifests not only in the geopolitical domain—the Eurasianist worldview—but also in the social, religious, cultural and legal web of relations. The “Foreign agent law,” “Anti-gay propaganda law,” or “Patriotic STOP-list” are the best known examples of legislative policies, explicitly aimed at eradicating Western influence and presence in Russia, as well as laying a firm foundation for an illiberal society with limited human rights, weak civil society, and no independent public institutions.
- The dissemination of Eurasianist anti-human rights and non-Western ideology abroad through soft power has three explicit channels:
 - 1) “Public diplomacy,” primarily with the help of various organizations, events, forums, and conferences;
 - 2) Russian media, especially the international resources such as RT and Sputnik (and the now defunct Voice of Russia until the end of 2014), which became an important instrument of disseminating anti-Western narratives and disinformation about international relations and Russia’s foreign policy.
 - 3) “Protection” of the Russian minority, or “compatriots” abroad, including access to appropriate cultural, ideological and patriotic information/education, as well as using them for active measures in Germany and the Baltic States, among others. Protection of Russian communities abroad is yet another pretext for Russia to exert its hard power; however, the ratio of Russian-speaking minority is low in all the countries under investigation (but significantly higher in the Czech Republic and Austria than in the rest of the countries).

⁷ Although many European conservative groups or other organizations display ultra-conservative values similar to those represented by the Kremlin and Kremlin-close actors, we do not assume or implicate that these organizations or movements are in all of the cases directly related to Moscow or follow Moscow’s example. In some cases we found direct ideological, personal or organizational connections - we introduce these example in the study. Generally, we found that ultra-conservative movements can be sometimes good tools for the Kremlin and Kremlin-close actors to promote an illiberal value-set in Europe, and several organizations are championing President Putin as a „conservative” role model.

- Political and cultural influence is at times hard to differentiate, since the export of pro-Russian illiberal cultural agenda usually serves underlying geopolitical and economic interests. Thus, personal networks, events and organizations are easily transformed into political, economic or intelligence gains for Russian stakeholders.⁸
- Despite illiberal values constituting one,⁹ and a seemingly smaller, part of the Kremlin's efforts to subvert liberal-democratic order and pro-Western orientation, three major factors enhance the importance of the Russian illiberal values agenda worldwide:
 - 1) It is a more subtle form of influence compared to direct military, political or economic ways used to pursue interests, leaving mainstream political and civil actors unprepared or unaware of these kinds of endeavors;
 - 2) The Kremlin's ideological impact joins forces with global ultra-conservative forces: the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, different evangelist movements in the United States, and thousands of pro-life, pro-family, and anti-abortion traditionalist NGOs, not to mention the dense network of far-right, and, bizarrely, far-left movements running on similar or overlapping agendas;
 - 3) Russia is the only sovereign state with unmatched capabilities among developed countries taking a direct part in global traditionalist networks vying to reverse the development of worldwide human rights efforts in the 21st century.
- Brexit provides a new chance for Russia to capitalize on anti-Western sentiments, spread its illiberal ideology, as well as strengthen its illiberal allies throughout Europe, since the fiercest anti-Kremlin member state, Great-Britain, has left the Union. This kind of upheaval is best exemplified by the 34 anti-EU or anti-immigration referendums already set in motion by (mostly pro-Russian) political players.¹⁰ State Duma Deputy Sergei Zheleznyak immediately called the Brexit referendum result an "expected outcome", which might trigger "a series of referendums in other European countries, the marginalization and the collapse of the EU." The mayor of Moscow, Sergei Sobyenin, bluntly stated that "without the U.K., there will be nobody in the EU to defend sanctions against Russia so zealously."¹¹
- The refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks in Europe provide additional opportunities, strengthening the dichotomy of "Strong Russia" against the "weak, decadent West".

⁸ For example, Milos Zeman's pro-Russian geopolitical and cultural stance is supported by Lukoil, who financed the Czech President's election campaign. Similarly, the Polish Mateusz Piskorski is not only operating a string of pro-Russian institutions with pro-Kremlin agendas, but his think tank benefits greatly from the so called "election business" by providing observers to rigged elections in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

⁹ In an earlier version of this paper we used the terms "regressive" or "reactionary" to refer to the Kremlin's ultra-conservative values agenda, however, we decided using the word "illiberal" term instead because in some countries under review the former words were excessively used by the Communist state to undermine and discredit democratic movements. So, from now on we will utilize the "illiberal" term as terminus technicus to define the Kremlin's manipulative, distortive, authoritarian use of traditionalist, ultraconservative, Christian values. For more information on "reakcyjne podziemie" see: Andrzej Albert, *Najnowsza historia Polski 1914-1993* (Warszawa: 1995); Henryk Piecuch, *Tajna historia Polski: Od Bieruta do Ochaba. Akcje specjalne* (Warszawa 1996)

¹⁰ The world according to Europe's insurgent parties: Putin, migration and power.

http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_world_according_to_europes_insurgent_parties7055

¹¹ Russia reacts to Brexit referendum. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-reacts-to-brexit-referendum/573389.html>

Value export via different channels: shades of influence

- The Kremlin is clearly taking different approaches to spreading its influence in each country, adjusting the forms of influence and the messages to the particularities of the recipient countries. The two most important factors in this process are the host country's cultural proximity (e.g., shared cultural and historical origin, language, and values) to Russia and the public's perception of Moscow. The pro-Russian orientation of the elite and the public in general determines the room for maneuvering and modus operandi (e.g., using more manifest or subtle channels of influence).
- Generally, the cultural infiltration and the value export activity are much stronger via fringe organizations (radical parties, small NGOs, diaspora organizations, fringe media) than via the mainstream of the political spectrum. Fringe organizations are simply easier to influence and "buy up."
- Given that in none of the examined countries did we find dominantly pro-Russian public opinions (contrary to, for example, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, or Serbia), the value export activity rather takes the form of indirect ways. This is especially true in Poland, where influence from Russia is not welcome. Nevertheless, the Russian regime can take advantage of different divisions in each society under review.
- In Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary public diplomacy played and continues to play a crucial role in spreading social ideologies of the Putin regime via mainstream (even governmental) political players. While in Poland, direct spread of Russian illiberal values plays a marginal role due to the dominant fears over Russian expansion in the country.
- In several countries, value export is helped by political players. In Hungary, the far-right Jobbik, the strongest opposition party, is the servile supporter of Russian interests - for example, by promoting the implementation of the Russian regulation on "foreign agents" in Hungary¹². The mainstream (governmental) policy is also strongly in favor of Russia. As far as Slovakia is concerned, only a part of the governmental elite's sympathies are with Russia, which co-exist with a strongly pro-Western group, which includes President Kiska, who is sometimes even more radical than politicians in Poland and the Baltic States. Additionally, the media is also strongly influenced in these countries (in Slovakia more so than in Hungary) as well as in the Czech Republic.
- Public opinion is the most receptive to cultural and ideological influences in Slovakia, where the Pan-Slavic sentiments are generally strong.
- In Slovakia, different paramilitary organizations seem to be the most important tools and sources of influence, while in the Czech Republic it is the pro-Russian media, and in Hungary the governmental party Fidesz and its satellite organizations, the far-right Jobbik and traditionalist NGOs. In Poland, Russia tries to push political statements, not values, through various channels with limited impact. In Austria, beside strongly pro-Russian political players (FPÖ, most notably), organizations are rather used for reaching specific political and economic goals rather than to exert ideological influence.

¹² A Jobbik a zsidók után a civileket listázná.

http://index.hu/belfold/2013/10/03/a_jobbik_szerint_a_kulfoldrol_tamogatott_civilek_ugynokok/

International cooperation

- The traditionalist Pan-European networks help Russia in the promotion of its illiberal agenda. On the right side of the political spectrum, for instance, neo-Nazi movements and far-right parties have established far-right cultural networks infusing neo-Nazi ideology with the Neo-Eurasianism of Alexander Dugin.
- Traditionalist, ultra-conservative pro-life, pro-family organizations encounter a similar international network of NGOs close to the Kremlin (e.g., CitizenGo or the World Congress of Families).
- There is a new wave of anti-human rights movements that question the very foundation of traditional conservative politics built upon a “human rights consensus” in Europe. Thus, a “profound change in the European political and value system” is under way with some countries “questioning the universal human rights framework of politics based on their ‘cultural’ exceptionalism” according to Andrea Pető (Pető, 2015:127). As our findings suggest, actors of this profound change often find their role and policy models in Russia, and some Russian actors try to use this process on their own advantage.¹³
- In a bizarre manner, radical left groups, with a long history of international cooperation, are also promoting some values that the Russian regime emphasizes (peace, self-determination, autonomy¹⁴).

What to expect – predictive remarks

- While the economic crisis, the low oil prices and the sanctions reduced the capacities of actors close to the Kremlin to invest into ideological export, this capacity is still significant.
- Russian actors, in a semi-coordinated manner with the regime, might invest more in this ideological export in the future in order to compensate for the loss in terms of economic influence of the Putin-regime.
- Both Brexit and the refugee crisis provides a good opportunity for Russia to push its ideological narratives.
- The “weaponization” of the media will continue. A new doctrine on information is currently being formulated in Russia, to be accepted next year.¹⁵ The expansion of the value export via media is planned to be accelerated in the future: according to the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s recent speech on the 10-year anniversary of Russia Today, RT can expand to other countries, such as Serbia, Hungary, Romania, and Portugal as well.¹⁶ Where these media outlets do not operate, alternative media may serve as the main channel of dissemination of illiberal ideological messages.

¹³ See: Andrea Pető, “EPILOGUE: ‘ANTI-GENDER’ MOBILISATIONAL DISCOURSE OF CONSERVATIVE AND FAR RIGHT PARTIES AS A CHALLENGE FOR PROGRESSIVE POLITICS,” in *Gender as symbolic glue*, ed. Eszter Kováts Maari – Pöim (FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies/ Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Budapest, 2015), 126. <http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets/cae464d2-f4ca-468c-a93e-5d0dad365a83/feps-gender-as-symbolic-glue-wwwpdf.pdf>

¹⁴ Krekó, P., Györi, L. *Russia and the European Far Left*.

(<http://www.statecraft.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Peter%20Kreko%20Far%20Left%20definitive.pdf>)

¹⁵ See the following reports: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2829842>, <https://news.mail.ru/politics/23585916/?frommail=1>, and the official description of the earlier version of the doctrine: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/6/5.html>.

¹⁶ See speech at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwNmzD22dfg&app=desktop>

Recommendations

- The dispersion of the anti-progressive agenda in the EU Member States (MSs) we examined happens through different channels and tools of ideological influence. The following channels are worth highlighting:
 - “grassroots” organizations and strong political influence on the far-right in Slovakia;
 - new media and far-right, far-left political parties and fringe organizations in the Czech Republic;
 - Pro-Russian political organizations and some nationalistic organisations in Poland;
 - fringe media and the FPÖ in Austria;
 - right-wing political parties and some “pseudo-NGOs” in Hungary.
- Taking into consideration the diversity of political and ideological influences in the respective countries, there can be no “one size fits all” strategy to push back the growing attempts of the export of ultraconservative values in these countries.

With this in mind, we propose some general recommendations:

- 1) **More efforts are needed.** The major difference is that while Russia is actively interfering with European politics and societies, in Europe (and in the US) there are more discussions than actions. At the moment, the political will to push back the efforts of soft power tactics such as ideological export lack in the respective member states and beyond. While the European Union has set out the task to “counter Russian propaganda,”¹⁷ such efforts would require significant resources and a strong political support from the EU MSs—conditions that have not yet been fulfilled. Support for projects aiming at countering these attempts (e.g., by human rights NGOs, journalists and think tanks) can be useful tools to bring these issues to the surface.
- 2) **The “4R” approach: Reveal, React, Ridicule, Repeat.**
 - **Reveal:** the channels of Russian value export should be revealed by investigative journalists, analysts, and HRAWs. As this is a moving target, backing journalists revealing institutional support, tracking media influence regularly, and conducting opinion polls would be particularly helpful.
 - **React:** the obvious ways of Russian influence should be made public in order to discredit the players of illiberal influence and their hidden motives. NGOs should react to the information themselves and should build coalitions with politicians in order to raise awareness in relevant political fora and possibly diplomatic circles.
 - **Ridicule:** the conspiracy theory-based, anti-progressive, anti-gender messages should be ridiculed (with facts and blatantly open ways of political propaganda, see below).
 - **Repeat:** the information on the Russian influence and promotion of illiberal values should be repeated in order to achieve a real impact in terms of awareness-raising among the wider public, decision-makers and NGOs. Short-term, quick counter-messaging projects will likely not work. It is important to keep the alliance and network of players active that can push back the illiberal agenda.

¹⁷ See more on this in Gotev, G. (2015). „Tiny EU task force set up to counter Russian propaganda” <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/tiny-eu-task-force-set-counter-russian-propaganda-317148> and Jozwiak, R. (2015). „EU to counter Russian propaganda by promoting 'European values'” <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/25/eu-russia-propaganda-ukraine>

- 3) **Deconstruct the self-definition of ultraconservative groups in Russia.** It is essential to highlight the kleptocratic nature of Putin's regime that uses "conservative" and "traditionalist" narratives domestically with only one aim: to preserve the corrupt regime from any social, political and economic change. On the other hand, while the Kremlin claims it follows a family-friendly political agenda, the birth rates in Russia are on the decline and Russia is becoming more and more similar to the aging societies of the West it wants to distinguish itself from. The Russian Society performs projects aiming at bringing these basic facts to the public and at provoking debates that can help raise awareness and immunize the public.
- 4) **Reverse the allegations on "Foreign Agents."** All information on the foreign funding and diplomatic support of the ultraconservative groups from Russia should be discredited with the same arguments that Putin's regime uses to discredit NGOs domestically. Questioning the ideological sincerity of such ultraconservative groups and focusing on their role as the tool of the Kremlin can help discredit these groups and their messages. EU Member States need to reform their laws with the aim of making the sources of funding for political parties and the media transparent.
- 5) **Find ways to support and stabilize both public and private media.** State media need to become truly "public," with checks and balances that separate them from elected politicians and local oligarchs who may have an interest in dealing with Putin's regime in the economic, financial or energy spheres and, thus, may directly or indirectly promote illiberal and anti-Western values. European institutions could advise on the drafting of media laws and regulations, which would meet democratic standards and encourage constructive public debate. The "journalism training" programs created in the 1990s are insufficient in the current climate. Without legal support, the press will easily be manipulated both by Russia and by various pro-Russian extremist groups seeking to gain political power.
- 6) **Corruption in the region is often connected to Russia and must be understood as a vital security issue for the entire continent,** not least because allegations of corruption, whether true or false, are often used to discredit liberal democratic and progressive political parties. Russia aims to extend its influence via corrupting individuals and organizations in the political, journalist and expert community. International economic institutions need to come up with better means of identifying and sanctioning lawbreakers, especially those who use offshore banking systems and other techniques that are difficult for smaller governments and poor bureaucracies to investigate.
- 7) **Frame Russian influence as a "hard," geopolitical and security issue instead of a mere "soft" human rights question.** It is a fair assessment given the often violent "active measures," backed by the Russian secret services, aiming to undermine and discredit political systems and their leaders in Europe. It raises the importance of the question in the eyes of many.
- 8) **Kremlin-critical messaging should avoid any Russophobe flavor,** as such statements only help the Kremlin. Distinction between the criticism of the Putin-government and Russian society should be emphasized in all public activities. It is also crucially important not to alienate but involve Russian speaking minorities in EU member states.

Russia's Soft Power in Europe: Channels of Ideological Influence and Russia's Geopolitical Role

The core of Russia's soft power, according to Andrey Kortunov, the director of the Russian International Affairs Council and president of the New Eurasia Foundation in Moscow, is the promotion of conservatism, traditionalism, and family values.¹⁸ In the international arena, Russia has defined its position as a moral fighter against Western amorality, ideological decay and overall social chaos, as it is popularly seen in Russia.¹⁹ Moralism and traditionalism *a la* Russia convey not only conservative ideals, but also religiosity, anti-Westernism, illiberal values, and a broad spectrum of illiberal social values.

Moral superiority of Russia over the West as the cornerstone of ideology has gradually seeped into political discourse, justifying, criticizing, and evaluating actions. Western attempts to "falsify history" of World War II²⁰ were deemed by Putin as attempts to "deprive Russia of her moral authority"²¹; Western sanctions against Russia were called "immoral" by Sergei Naryshkin, chairman of the State Duma²²; and the "unjust sanctions" also gave the "moral right" to Russia to respond to the West in a similar vein.²³ The schism between Russia and the West has gradually become an underlying motive of Putin's speeches and his attempt to position Russia in the geopolitical arena.²⁴

This ideological direction manifests not only in the geopolitical domain—the Eurasianist worldview—but also in the social, religious, cultural and legal web of relations. The "Foreign agent law," "Anti-gay propaganda law," or "Patriotic STOP-list" are the best known examples of legislative policies explicitly aimed at eradicating Western influence and presence in the country, as well as laying a firm foundation for an illiberal society with limited human rights, weak civil society, and no independent public institutions. The case of human rights group Memorial²⁵ is one of the latest examples of the Kremlin's war against independent groups and civil society. Following the same logic of pushing back Western cultural and political influences, which are seen as posing a danger to the integrity of the political system; foreign media companies are forced to leave Russia by a new law that makes restrictions for foreign ownership of the media.²⁶

Moreover, these illiberal ideologies are not confined to Russia only, but appear to extend beyond, into Europe as well. It seems that xenophobic, homophobic, and generally anti-Western, illiberal groups in Europe have an ally and rather than being ostracized from the European political and cultural landscapes, they may, and often do, turn to Russia for support.

¹⁸ See roundtable discussion: http://tvkultura.ru/video/show/brand_id/20917/episode_id/366802/

¹⁹ See various reports and speeches: <http://kommersant.ru/Doc/2366328?replyto=151631115>, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/6/as-ties-with-the-west-suffer-russia-embraces-its-own-east.html>, http://m.rbth.co.uk/society/2015/09/01/poll_russians_consider_us_amoral_and_devoid_of_spiritual_values_48903.html.

²⁰ See the following report on (re)interpretation of history: <http://ria.ru/world/20150610/1069207024.html>

²¹ See the following report on Putin considering reinterpretation of WWII as an attempt to undermine Russia's moral authority: <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/1834384>

²² See the following report on "amorality" of Western sanctions: <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2015/01/20/naryshkin-antirossiyskie-sankcii-zapada-stanovyatsya-vse-bole-amoralnymi.html>

²³ See Putin's opinion about the Western sanctions: <http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2014/11/18/putin-zapad-podstavilsya2-pod-rossiya-vvela-kontrsanckii>

²⁴ The Crimean speech is one prime example; the full speech is available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

²⁵ See report by Human Rights Watch on oppression of NGOs in Russia: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/02/meanwhile-putins-russia-ngos-face-oppression-and-absurdity>

²⁶ See report on Russian media ownership law: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/foreign-publishers-quit-russia-over-media-ownership-law/529645.html>

Look Inside: Russia's moral triumph, Western moral degradation and political decline

"Ideological competition [especially in Europe] is with us to stay, despite the end of the Cold War," wrote Nicolai N. Petro in 2011.²⁷ His words still hold true. Many commentators in Russia believe this competition is tipping in their favor, suggesting that the world is witnessing the waning of Western powers and the weakening of Western ideological appeal. One newspaper paralleled the weak foreign policy of the US with "panic-like respect" towards the politics of the Kremlin and Vladimir Putin, in connection with Russia's attack on ISIS in Syria.²⁸ Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, stated the following during a recent youth forum:

*"We are witnessing the end of a long epoch—the political, financial and economic dominance of the historical West...it is hard to acknowledge that one's supremacy is over and we are seeing superficial attempts [at keeping up this waning dominance] ...and new poles are forming in the Asian-Pacific region."*²⁹

Thus, following this line of logic, while Russia is occupying its well-deserved global position of power, Russia must also be protected from the Western ideological machine. "My sense is that Russia is trying to reconstruct a strong image of itself and doing so in opposition of the Western world," shared a board member³⁰ of an LGBT organization in Russia, who has been actively involved in the human rights movement for years, "and one of the ways to do it is to make an internal enemy – LGBT community is a simple internal enemy (...) and their values are now 'imports of the west,'" she claimed referring to the infamous Foreign Agent Law. A chairperson for the national board on LGBT rights in Russia commented in similar vein: "There is a position that everything they [the West] do is in order to kick Russia deeper in mud. Everything is against Russia. Obama must be dreaming and thinking about how to vex Russia. This is now common belief." In the process, the interviewee added, human rights are discredited as "Western ideology" and human rights activist is a swearword in Russian. Other observers also suggested that Russia desperately needs an enemy and the illusion of threat³¹ and with the West as the external foe, and the human rights as a weapon in a battle, all Western influence, including promotion of the human rights became an imminent threat Russia must tackle.

The promoters of this illiberal ideological agenda seem to be evident: "it's the state and ROC, along with a number of organizations loyal to the state who are promoting this idea of 'traditional values'"—most interviewed persons agreed. One organization highlighted was the National Cathedral (*Narodnyj Sobor*), which lists scientists, historians, lawyers, politicians, businessmen, and various cultural figures as part of the organization, as well as numerous scientific, cultural and political foundations and organizations as allies.³² They are open about their deliberate contribution to the "ideological export": "*Constructive contacts with national and Christian organizations of Europe play a vital part in our activity. In this area Narodny Sobor contributes to cultural and educational actions, tourism and pilgrimages, supports more friendly relations between nations.*"³³ This organization thus carefully blends religiosity (Orthodoxy), patriotism, and "Westophobia," a term that seems to creep into Russian discourse.³⁴ This amalgamation of ideologies is indicative of the earlier described phenomenon: entities loyal to the state striving to preserve "traditional values," seen as the promotion of Russian interests, support for Putin's politics, distrust of the West and a strong anti-human rights stance.

²⁷ See full article: http://www.e-ir.info/2011/01/28/is-ideological-competition-in-europe-necessary/#_edn1

²⁸ Article appeared on politonline.ru, which is part of the Pravda.ru media holding on October 1, 2015, with the title "Запад ощутил паническое уважение к России" [The West felt panic-like respect for Russia] <http://www.politonline.ru/comments/22883495.html>

²⁹ TV coverage in Russian available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDqQdZQduAY> and media coverage available at <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2655950>

³⁰ The member was interviewed for the purposes of this project.

³¹ See interview with journalist Ksenia Kirillova: <http://snob.ru/profile/26145/blog/94867>

³² See the list here: <http://www.narodsobor.ru/about/ns/companions?start=8>

³³ See full description here: <http://mosnarodsobor.ru/?page=articles&id=13>

³⁴ See for example: <http://newsforums.bbc.co.uk/ws/thread.jspa?sortBy=2&forumID=3024&>

Similarly, another organization is “Strong family” (*Krepkaya sem’ya*)—a federal-level project of United Russia, aimed at protecting Russian family values against “Western fashion”—is deemed to be critical to Russia’s future, as even Sergey Naryshkin mentioned.³⁵ Naryshkin continued:

“‘Strong family’ is part of the public response to the difficult and unprecedented challenges. The key goals are protection of family values and foundations of morality. We see attempts to distort and undermine traditional notions of the family and morality, and in some countries, such actions became official policy. Our opponents should have no illusions - we will always resist these attempts.”

There is no doubt that guarding these values, associated with deeply illiberal and ultra-conservative social forces, must not stop at Russia’s borders – Putin pledged already in 2012 to protect Christianity worldwide,³⁶ as well as reassured conservatives around the world that Russia is ready to stand up for “‘family values’ against a tide of liberal, Western, pro-gay propaganda ‘that asks us to accept without question the equality of good and evil (...) ‘defend traditional values that have made up the spiritual and moral foundation of civilization in every nation for thousands of years’.”³⁷ After the abominable “Gay propaganda law,” Putin’s Russia indeed became the “champion of conservative values”³⁸ and like-minded organizations worldwide signed a letter of support, expressing their concern over heavy criticism directed at Russia over anti-gender and anti-gay measures.³⁹ There have been several organizations in CEE undersigning this letter: for example, the Association of Cristian Intellectuals in Hungary and Akce D.O.S.T in the Czech Republic.

It is not even surprising that European far-right parties find Putin’s rhetoric appealing, given that Putin is building his politics on the same apocalyptic narrative on the death of nation states: “If, for European countries, national pride is a long-forgotten concept and if sovereignty is too much of a luxury for them, then for Russia, real state sovereignty is a mandatory condition of its existence.”⁴⁰ As these parties provide important help in the value export process, it is not a mere coincidence that Putin’s Russia seems to readily support them⁴¹ and provides a forum for discussion, networking, and co-ordination of their policy.⁴²

Promoters outside: Promoting and spreading non-liberal values in Europe

“For several years now it has become obvious that Russia is promoting these [illiberal] values here in Russia and doing the same thing on an international arena (...) I hear this from representatives of international organizations that do advocacy on an international arena,” shared a member of a Russian LGBT organization, which has been labeled as “foreign agent” and underwent 16 months of trial, until the NGO had to be liquidated. On the European side of affairs, LGBT organizations are also concerned with Russia’s ideological presence in the region.⁴³ Nokolas Gvosdev,⁴⁴ professor of national security studies at the U.S. Naval War College, maintains that there is ideological “export” from Russia to Europe, which happens through the “*articulation of ‘themes’ (sovereign democracy, defense of traditional cultures, etc.) that makes the intellectual case for resisting Euro-American claims to universal values and standards.*”

³⁵ See full article on Naryshkin: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/03/11/zachita-site.html>

³⁶ See article on Putin’s promise to protect Christianity: <https://www.rt.com/politics/putin-foreign-make-representatives-797/>

³⁷ See article on Putin’s foreign policy assessment: <http://new.spectator.co.uk/2014/02/putins-masterplan/>

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ See the full document, entitled “Statement by worldwide organizations in support of the Russian Federal Law On Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development”: <http://www.profesionalesetica.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Statement-in-support-of-Russia+list-of-signign-entities-v2.pdf>

⁴⁰ See article on Putin not following instructions from the West: http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/04-12-2014/129214-putin_address_federal_assembly-0/#sthash.p2Dcb9ir.dpuf

⁴¹ An earlier study demonstrates the financial connections between parties such as Jobbik and Russia, http://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_SDI_Boll_study_IamEurasian.pdf also see <http://new.spectator.co.uk/2015/02/how-vladimir-putin-is-waging-war-on-the-west-and-winning/>

⁴² See the Russia Conservative Forum events: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32009360>

⁴³ Conversation and discussion during Capacity Building Workshop, entitled “How to Counter Right-Wing Populism and Extremism in Europe” on 12-16 October, 2015, organized by Heinrich Boll Stiftung Foundation in Brussels, Belgium.

⁴⁴ Professor Gvosdev was interviewed for this project; he was not speaking for the U.S. government in any capacity and his opinion does not constitute any sort of official perspective.

There is also an effort to promote a more solidarist balance to counter what is seen as the excessive individualist focus of the United States and the EU elite in Brussels that erodes traditional community structures. Russia helps to incubate these movements by providing platforms for assembly and dialogue, and follows up through financial support for such movements—in essence, what it has done is to help bring groups that might otherwise have been on the fringe and give them through these mechanisms the ability to gain greater visibility. (...) Antiliberal groups (...) in Europe, tend to reject the need for a close security alliance and partnership with the United States and are skeptical of the continued value and utility of NATO. They tend to reject efforts to operationalize international human rights standards or to insist on conformity with one set of values. (...) For all these reasons, support for these groups (...) makes good geopolitical sense... Russia is presenting itself as an alternative and a counterbalancer to the United States and to the EU elite for groups in Europe who feel threatened or marginalized by the status quo. Given the democracy deficit within the EU central structures, Russia is poised to portray itself as an ally for those in the EU who feel disenfranchised from the European project.”

Dissemination of anti-human rights and non-Western ideology abroad through soft power has three explicit channels: 1) “*public diplomacy*,” concerned with changing discourse about Russia, primarily with the help of various organizations, events, forums meetings, and mass media supporting and promoting this ideology; 2) “protection” of the *Russian minority abroad*, including access to appropriate cultural, ideological and patriotic information/education; 3) media is essential in the diffusion of illiberal ideology (e.g., spread of RT) and a new doctrine on information security is currently being formulated in Russia, to be accepted next year.

According to a recent Russian newscast, in 2016 a new doctrine is on the agenda, the “Doctrine of Information Security,” which is set to replace the former doctrine from the year 2000. While the exact record is not yet accessible, there are nevertheless excerpts already in circulation:⁴⁵ the new national security document, which serves as a basis “for the development of measures to advance the system of information security of the Russian Federation,” recognizes that the “information space” is increasingly used “to address military and political problems.” Furthermore, to ensure the information security of the country, state programs will be developed and cooperation between Russia and other countries in this area will be facilitated. Again critical is the acknowledgment that the “information sphere plays an important role in ensuring political stability in the country, defense and state security” and pertains to national interests, including the following: “bringing accurate information to the Russian and international public about the state politics of the Russian Federation” and the “promotion of spiritual and cultural values of the peoples of Russia in the world.” However, the document also identifies clusters of threats to national security in the information sphere, which all revolve around foreign governments using information technology with the aim of destabilizing Russia and manipulating information, including the “tendency to increase the volume of materials in the foreign media with biased information on foreign and domestic politics of the Russian Federation.”

Public Diplomacy Countering Western Criticism: Media, Events, and Organizations

Several organizations, institutions, forums and alike were mandated to influence the public discourse about Russia. These “soft” methods manifested in the foundation of successive *organizations*—Valdai Club in 2004, Institute for Democracy and Cooperation in 2007, Public Diplomacy Foundation in 2008, and Russian Council of International Affairs in 2010—and the *expansion of media spaces* (Russia Today, Russia Beyond Headlines, World Congress of the Russian Press, and various Russian-language media channels abroad).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See the following reports: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2829842>, <https://news.mail.ru/politics/23585916/?frommail=1>, and the official description of the earlier version of the doctrine: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/6/5.html>.

⁴⁶ Marlene Laruelle, *The “Russian World”: Russia’s Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination* (2015), 13.

Mass media, as a primary apparatus to frame Russia's image abroad and an instrument to spread illiberal values, is a critical channel of information, which has slowly been monopolized in the hands of Putin. For instance, Dmitriy Kiselyov was appointed by Putin as head of the new Kremlin-run international media conglomerate *Rossia Segodnya*. He is a well-known pro-Putin loyalist and supporter of the Kremlin's controversial policies, who openly denigrates the West and expresses homophobic views. Kiselyov was also called "Putin's personal propagandist" by critics.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Western media coverage critical of Russia, along with the alleged "information war" waged by the Baltics against Russians (Russian-speakers),⁴⁸ were also used to justify expansion of Kremlin-financed pro-Russian media abroad. As a response, the European Union has set out the task to "counter Russian propaganda,"⁴⁹ especially concerning the "Eastern Neighborhood" countries, pledging to provide alternative, unbiased media sources.⁵⁰

There are international media events Russia organizes that are used as a platform for delineating the "appropriate" media discourse. Events such as the annual World Congress of the Russian Press, which just this year involved 500 Russian-language media outlets from 63 countries, focus on media coverage and access to Russian-language media around the world.⁵¹ This event combines journalists, publishers, CEOs, as well as Russian politicians (and among the general partners are the Bank of Moscow, Rostelecom and Rosset).⁵² During this year's meeting, for instance, Deputy Prime Minister Olga Golodets thanked Russian-language foreign press for remaining faithful to Russian culture; the Executive Director of the World Association of Russian Press Alexander Klein congratulated the Russian press for demonstrating that "it stays with Russia," despite the difficult foreign policy situation in the past years; and Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev distributed awards (Diplomas) of the Russian Government to selected Russian-speaking foreign media outlets for their service.⁵³ Additionally, the Russian language media outlets abroad should be part of "developing united Russian information space," according to the Chairman of the Federation Council, Valentina Matviyenko.⁵⁴

Part of the agenda to alter Russia's image abroad is to stress the country's role in saving "traditional European values," elevating Putin as a "conservative icon" and the "vanguard of a new 'Conservative International'."⁵⁵ Vitaly Milonov, a politician and Member of the Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg from the United Russia faction and the primary drafter of the "gay propaganda law,"^{56,57} together with foreign partners intends to create an international organization called "The Volunteers of Freedom" to promote traditional family values in Europe.⁵⁸

⁴⁷ See article on media propaganda: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-media-kiselyov-propagandist/25195932.html>

⁴⁸ See article on NATO and „information war”: <http://warp.pro/c12/176.html>

⁴⁹ See article on EU efforts to counter Russian propaganda: <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/tiny-eu-task-force-set-counter-russian-propaganda-317148>

⁵⁰ See another article on countering Russian propaganda: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/25/eu-russia-propaganda-ukraine>

⁵¹ See article on Russian press congress and Russian-language media abroad: <http://tass.ru/en/non-political/799873>

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ See articles on pro-Russian (Russian-language) media abroad: <http://warp.pro/c13/100.html>, <http://warp.pro/c13/99.html>, <http://warp.pro/c13/96.html>

⁵⁴ See article on the attitude on reinterpretation of history among the Russian-language media abroad: <http://warp.pro/c13/87.html>

⁵⁵ See articles on Putin's role in preserving conservative values:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/vladimir-putin-conservative-icon/282572/> see also

http://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2013/12/131212_putin_address_analysis.shtml

⁵⁶ More on the law: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/world/asia/anti-gay-law-stirs-fears-in-russia.html?_r=0

⁵⁷ Refers to the Russian federal law "for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values"

⁵⁸ See article on Russia promoting traditionalism in Europe: <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2669346>

After the adoption of the anti-gay propaganda law (Russian Federal Law On Protection of Children) there was a widespread, international wave of declaration of support on the level of Christian, pro-life, ultraconservative NGO-s. Czech, Hungarian and Polish NGOs (see Table 1 below) also undersigned a declaration on the support of this legislation⁵⁹. According to the text, “any harmful initiative for the natural family is destructive for the society as a whole. We also affirm that the children need special protection due to their innocence and immaturity.”

Table 1: Organizations in Central Eastern Europe supporting the Russian Federal Law On Protection of Children

Country	Organization	Type	Political orientation	Activity	Domestic Aff.	Russian Aff.
Czech Republic	Movement for Life of the Czech Republic/ Hnutí Pro život ČR (founded 1992)	NGO	Roman Catholic, conservative, anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQ	Largest pro-life organization in the Czech Republic. It organizes the March for Life in Prague each year, supported the presidential candidacy of Vaclav Klaus.	Young Christian Democrats	
	Citizen Initiative D.O.S.T. (Trust, Objectivity, Freedom, Tradition)/ Akce D.O.S.T (founded 2007)	NGO	Anti-American, Eurosceptic, ultraconservative, anti-Semitic, anti-LGBTQ, Roman Catholic ideology	Christian ultraconservative association, its main ideologist has been accused of anti-Semitism. The organization launches anti-gay initiatives pitted against the United States liberal agenda.		Institute of Democracy and Cooperation
Hungary	Association of Cristian Intellectuals/ Keresztény Értelmiségiek Szövetsége (founded 1989)	NGO	Roman Catholic, Christian intellectuals' society of the Fidesz-KDNP	The organization was founded by Roman Catholic intellectuals, officially became a part of the Civic Collaboration Forum founded and funded by Fidesz-KDNP. The NGO's mainstream traditionalist agenda is aligned with that of the ruling party's.	Fidesz-KDNP	
	Together for Life Association/Együtt az Életért Közhasznú Egyesület (founded 2008)	NGO	Pro-life, anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQ, Christian, Roman Catholic ideology	The organizations's main agenda concerns abortion, although it also launched anti-LGBTQ petitions. Frivaldszky Edit president is also the head of the international traditionalist CitizenGO petition movement and the far-right, pro-Russian French Manif Pour Tous movement in Hungary. The association is on good terms with the Fidesz-KDNP government, cooperates with other traditionalist NGOs close to the ruling party. Frivaldszky closely associated with the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church as well.	Fidesz-KDNP	CitizenGO, Manif Pour Tous

⁵⁹ Statement by worldwide organizations in support of the Russian Federal Law On Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development
http://www.europeandignitywatch.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Day_to_Day_diverse/2013_09_02_Statement_in_support_of_Russia_list_of_signign_entities.pdf

Country	Organization	Type	Political orientation	Activity	Domestic Aff.	Russian Aff.
Poland	Mission Support Center Initiatives for Life and Family /Fundacja Centrum Wspierania Inicjatyw dla Życia i Rodziny (founded 2007)	NGO	Roman Catholic, Christian, pro-family, anti-LGBTQ, anti-euthanasia	Organizes marches on traditional life and families, introduced bill to ban abortion. Participated in the Paris march of Manif Pour Tous.	Roman Catholic Church	Manif Pour Tous
	Fundacja Życie/Foundation Life (founded 2012)	NGO	Christian, pro-family, anti-LGBTQ	Organizes marches on traditional life and families.	Roman Catholic Church	
	Instytut Ks. Piotra Skargi/ Fr. Peter Skarga Institute (founded 2001)	NGO	Roman Catholic laymen organization, pro-family, pro-life, anti-LGBTQ	The Institute defends marriage and family. It blocked the legalization of homosexual unions in Poland, by sending protests to the Polish Parliament, organizing pickets, public conferences and lobbying activities and distributing traditionalist publications.	Roman Catholic Church	World Congress of Families
	Instytut Edukacji Społecznej i Religijnej im. ks. Piotra Skargi/ Fr. Piotr Skarga Institute for Social and Religious Education	NGO	same	Fr. Peter Skarga Institute's educational organization	Roman Catholic Church	World Congress of Families
	Katolickie Stowarzyszenie Dziennikarzy/ Catholic Journalists Association (founded 1991)	NGO	Roman Catholic	Association of Roman Catholic journalists in PolandThe association organizes retreats, days of recollection and prayer, as well as vocational training.	Roman Catholic Church	
	Polska Federacja Ruchów Obrony Życia/ Polish Federation of Life Protection Movements (founded 1992)	NGO	Pro-life, pro-family, anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQ, anti-abortion	Polish association uniting more than 130 pro-life and pro-family movements. Publishes a monthly magazine titled "The Voice of Life".		World Congress of Families

Russian Minority: Ideological Shield and Broadcasting Illiberal Values

The conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea were strong impetus for Putin to reassure that Russia “will always protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine and the Ukrainian part of the population, who feels that not only ethnically, but also culturally and linguistically there are inseparable ties with Russia, and feels part of a broad ‘Russian world’.”⁶⁰ Later, during a meeting of ambassadors and permanent representatives of the Russian Federation, Putin also added that Russia will “vigorously defend the rights of Russian compatriots abroad and will use the whole arsenal of means available—from political and economic, to humanitarian operations included in the international law, and the right to self-defense.”⁶¹

The historical concept of the “Russian World” (*Russkiy Mir*) has recently been employed anew and it has been politicized to blanket the increasingly aggressive political direction in a familiar cultural term. The term in its current use was institutionalized when the Russian World Fund was established in 2007. This cultural phenomenon has acquired a strong military connotation (“securitization of the concept ‘Russian World’,” according to a Russian political scientist, Igor Zevelev⁶²), and increasingly used as ideological justification of bellicose foreign politics to protect Russians living abroad.

⁶⁰ See article on protection of Russians in Ukraine: <http://ria.ru/world/20140624/1013426007.html#ixzz3nOsQY34c>

⁶¹ See article on Putin claiming to protect Russian abroad: <http://russian.rt.com/inotv/2014-07-01/Vladimir-Putin-poobeshhal-otstoyat-prava>

⁶² See full article at: <http://lenta.ru/articles/2015/03/17/crimea/>

Protection of the “Russian world” is thus a pretense to get involved in countries with Russian minorities (see Table 2); some warn that this tactic is a part of “hybrid warfare” strategy:

“Strategists with Kremlin ties say the strategy combines propaganda, diplomacy and, eventually, special-forces troops entering foreign territories in the guise of local rebel forces. Above all, hybrid warfare requires sympathizers inside the country. ‘In order to wage a hybrid war,’ says Konstantin Sivkov, who served as a strategist for the Russian General Staff from 1995 to 2007 and now heads a military think tank in Moscow, ‘you need a serious opposition force inside the target country, a so-called fifth column, which is a force that is prepared to rise up in support of the foreign invader.’”⁶³

Table 2. Ratio of Russian-speaking minorities in the CEE countries under examination

Russian diaspora living in CEE countries ⁶⁴			
Country	Number	% of total population	Source
Austria	30,032	0.35	Statistik Austria, 2015
Czech Republic	31,545	0.3	2011 Census of the Czech Republic
Hungary	2,512	0.03	2011 Census of Hungary
Poland	13,046	0.034	2011 Census of Poland
Slovakia	1,997	0.037	2011 Census of the Slovak Republic

Orthodox religion (with Russian Orthodox Church as unconditional supporter of Putin’s Russia), Russian culture and language are all carefully devised as carriers of the illiberal value systems, and widely promoted abroad within the framework of “Russian world.”^{65,66} The Russian Orthodox Church also has an international fund with global outreach: Fund for the Unity of Orthodox Peoples. Through the Fund, the efforts and contribution of many pro-Russian politicians has been acknowledged.

Russia is here to stay...

The dangers, as the evidence proposed above unequivocally suggests, are multifold. First, as Russia is redefining its role on geopolitical grounds, the country’s position is increasingly reflecting an aggressive, bellicose, and illiberal stance. Second, European far-right movements have been gaining momentum, whose ideology largely aligns with that of Russia, making the two sides “natural allies.” Third, as “soft power” is employed increasingly, and yet often underestimated or unnoticed, it becomes an even more precarious situation abroad, where European liberal values and human rights might be at risk.

⁶³ See full article at: <http://time.com/3616934/russias-fifth-column/>

⁶⁴ Sources for statistics:

http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstruktur/bevoelkerung_nach_staatsangehoerigkeit_geburtsland/index.html

<https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20555375/180313q3.pdf/92e90323-d046-475d-898d-f8e8fd5025e1?version=1.0>

http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz_04_2011.pdf

http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/LUD_ludnosc_stan_str_dem_spo_NSP2011.pdf

<http://census2011.statistics.sk/tabulky.html>

⁶⁵ See article on “Russkiy Mir”: <http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/26855650.html#page=1>

⁶⁶ The example of Hungary is indicative of this process: the construction of a new Orthodox Church was recently announced in Heviz, Hungary, a popular vacation destination for Russians (see: <http://hungary.orthodoxia.org/2015/09/10/ortodox-templom-epul-hevizen/>); then, in September 2015 a new Russian-language TV program was announced in Hungary, in a country where the number of Russian-speaking minorities is almost negligible (see: http://hvg.hu/kultura/20150917_Hetfotol_indul_az_orosz_nyelvu_hirado_az)

Indeed, it appears that Western criticism of Putin, including the sanctions (even if they were morally well-grounded) have strengthened Putin's position domestically and "helped stoke nationalist fervor and inspire personal feelings of resentment towards the West."⁶⁷ As Putin himself suggested, "*Russia is a self-sufficient country; we will work within the foreign economic environment that has taken shape, develop domestic production and technology and act more decisively to carry out transformation. Pressure from outside, as has been the case on past occasions, will only consolidate our society.*"⁶⁸

LGBT organizations equally pleaded to maintain dialogue with Russia in order to encourage human rights organizations in their struggle: "dialogue with Russia is important, violations against human rights must be brought up, otherwise we will be completely isolated." Yet, while engaging with Russia might be unavoidable, it nevertheless remains imperative to fully grasp its political appeal and channels of ideological influence, in order to halt the spread of illiberal values and strengthen values of democracy, open society and tolerance in Europe and beyond.

CONSERVATIVE VALUES IN THE PUBLIC OPINION

In order to assess the receptiveness to the values of the ideological export, we examined the extent of three values in these societies: tradition, conformity and security. All of these values are related to the "Conservation" orientation in the Schwartz universal values scale, one of the best scientifically grounded models for human values (see the Figure 1 below).⁶⁹ The most important findings are the following:

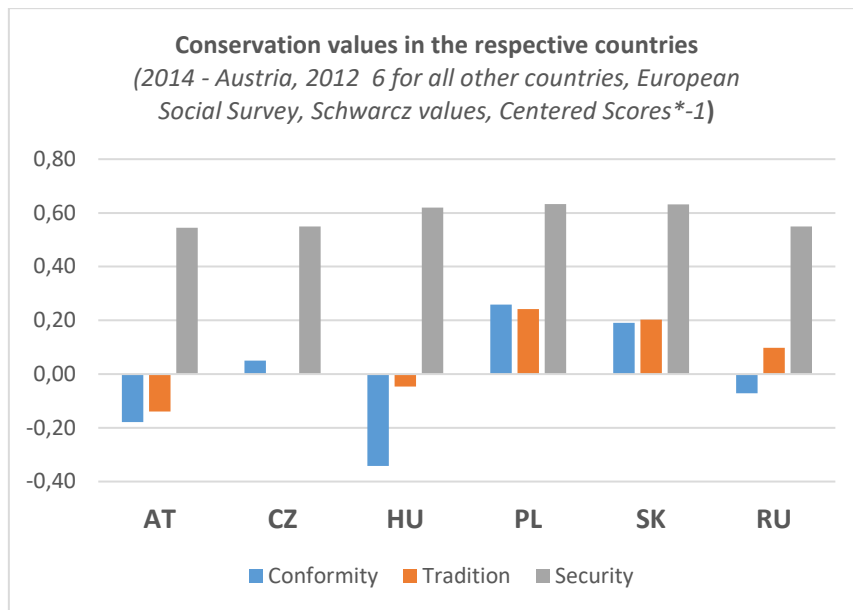
- 1) The population of Poland and Slovakia might be the most receptive to the traditionalist, anti-gender and ultra-conservative messages;
- 2) The populations of all the countries under examination are strongly receptive to security-based messages, with Hungary, Poland and Slovakia showing notably high figures in this respect;
- 3) Austria and Hungary are less receptive to ideologies based on traditionalism and conformity;
- 4) Czech public opinion seems to be receptive to security and securitization, but non-traditionalist and non-conformist tendencies are also strong here.
- 5) Interestingly, the values that the Putin regime emphasizes and strives to export are not dominant values in Russian society, which is neither strongly conformist, nor traditionalist, nor strongly concerned with security in international comparison.

⁶⁷ See the article on Putin by The National Interest: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/5-things-you-need-know-about-putins-popularity-russia-13380?page=2>; this article was also translate to Russian <http://apostrophe.com.ua/article/world/ex-ussr/2015-08-03/diagnoz-dlya-rossii-5-faktov-o-putine-i-tom-pochemu-ego-lyubyat-v-rf/2049>

⁶⁸ Full speech of Putin during the Valdai Discussion Club meeting in 2014 is available here: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860>

⁶⁹ Schwartz, S. H. (2003). "A Proposal for Measuring Value Orientations across Nations." Chapter 7 in the Questionnaire Development Package of the European Social Survey. Website: https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/methodology/core_ess_questionnaire/ESS_core_questionnaire_human_values.pdf

Figure 1. The values of “Conservation” in the five countries and Russia (Source: own calculations based on the European Social Survey)



Country case-studies

Austria

Executive Summary

Austria is seen as a neutral country and a safe place for international meetings with a mutual interest for collaboration of the two sides. No successful attempts to promote “illiberal values” can be observed so far; however, the country is a hub of Russian spies and Russia is successful in pushing policy issues and keeping a wide range of actors supporting it. Since 2007, Moscow found new political partners with the radical right FPÖ party of Heinz-Christian Strache, and especially during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict we saw an extending strategic alliance between the FPÖ and representatives of the Russian Federation. In 2014 the oppositional FPÖ explicitly supported Russia's annexation of Crimea by “observing” the “referendum” which has not been recognized by the international community so far. The extent of support goes well beyond this. The “dovish” attitude is dominant on the center-left and the center-right as well, with influential businessmen and employers in these parties and around the government, with vested interest to return to “business as usual” regarding Russia, including raising the sanctions.

Representatives of the economic wing of the two ruling parties, social-democratic SPÖ and conservative ÖVP, as well as the prominent “Austro-Russian Friendship Organization” expressed understanding regarding Russia's legitimization of its activities against Ukraine. Politicians and businessmen in Austria have been repeatedly calling for the abolition of EU sanctions imposed against Russia; their argument focuses on economic damage for Austrian companies.

The Russian minority in Austria

Recent events in Germany, following the case in Berlin, illustrate that Russian minorities can be used by the Kremlin as an effective tool to interact with local politics.⁷⁰ Compared to Germany, where many migrants from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union reside, Austria has significantly less, but not a negligible amount of Russian inhabitants. In addition, there are several thousands of naturalized former Soviet or Russian citizens, and there are 32.000 official residents with Russian citizenship in the country. In addition, 467.000 Russian tourists visited Austria in 2014.⁷¹ The mass of Russian tourists provides an additional reason for politicians and businessmen to call for the abolition of sanctions.

Media

Russian-language media & organizations within the Russian community in Austria

Vienna, as the obvious center of Russian life in Austria, features a limited number of print and online media for a Russian-reading audience. All these media have no relevance outside their immediate audience, with barely a few mentions in the Austrian mainstream, and with no instances of any of their articles being republished. Most of the articles, in fact, focus on practical and touristic aspects of Austria, there is limited content on Russian politics and even less trace of illiberal values.

⁷⁰ Reports on fringe sites of the Internet and later of Russian state media regarding a 13-year-old girl of Russian origin having been raped by Muslim refugees in Berlin (the local police is denying that) led to a number of demonstrations all around Germany in January 2016. Ten thousand participants of these meetings protested against the refugee politics of German chancellor Angela Merkel and got major coverage in the Russian media. On January 26th Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov even defied German authorities and claimed that the rape indeed had taken place, and used the case to argue against European politics. See more on the story: <http://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de/inhalt.demonstrationen-von-russlanddeutschen-die-wahrheit-zaehlt-nicht.b7f0d290-26c4-412b-96ee-2355a2ac86dd.html>

⁷¹ See: Statistics Austria

http://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_PDF_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=023841

Print media

The most ideological content was in the monthly “Sootechestvennik” (compatriot), which was published by a non-profit organization (“Verein”) from November 2005, and claimed in the first issue that its goal was connecting Russian-speaking people in Austria to Russia's organizations for compatriots. Even though in the 2014 February volume it was announced that the monthly paper would partially be funded by the Russian state-supported “Russky mir” Foundation, they discontinued the publication with that issue, sharing no updates on the website after February 2014.⁷² According to the homepage of “Russky mir,” the foundation refused a grant to the publisher of the magazine. The last issue of “Sootechestvennik” was entirely in line with the Kremlin: a feature article focused on the Olympic Games in Sochi, another article by “Russky mir” discussed the challenges of retaining Russian identity, and there was an article of a fringe German journalist called Ali Ria Ashley on how the rights of parents of Russian origin are violated in Germany.

Following the launch of “Davay!” in autumn 2010, the editor-in-chief claimed that his monthly newspaper wants to avoid political topics and focus on tourism and practical information on Austria. Afterwards, this approach changed, and “Davay!” now publishes short notes on politics. While the content is written in a neutral tone and without any trace of illiberal values, nevertheless “Davay!” reprints texts from “Russia beyond the headlines,” a project of the state-owned “Rossiyskaya gazeta.”

The low level of funding also holds true for the oldest Russian monthly in Vienna called “Novy Vensky Zhurnal” (New Viennese Journal, NVZh). It has been published since 1996 by a so-called “Media-Gruppa Mir,” which is also editing a few other ad-oriented Russian outlets and is running the webpage russianvienna.com. This “media-group” as such can't be taken seriously, however, it seems to be indistinguishable from Irina Moutchkina (or Irina Muchkina), the editor-in-chief of the journal. NVZh appears almost as official media from the Russian point of view; the Russian Embassy prominently advertises the magazine and russianvienna.com on its homepage. There is no trace of an illiberal content.

Overall, the commercial rather than ideological orientation of these Russian language media outlets explains their relatively non-aggressive stance. From the official Russian point of view, there is no need to invest in a major change of editorial policies, since the majority of Russians abroad, including Austria, watches Russian state TV such as “RTR,” which is more effective in influencing this audience in ideological terms.

Novy Vensky Zhurnal as a major organizational platform

There seems to be a certain interest in “Novy Vensky Zhurnal” as an organizational or recruitment platform. At least in late 2015 and early 2016 the Russian Embassy in Vienna published on its homepage a “call for volunteers” for “media-group Mir” (and NVZh's), inviting young people to work for the editorial office of these media outlets. “We hope to create an amicable collective of similar minded people who love the Russian language and their Homeland,”⁷³ the text read; further, there are instructions to contact Irina Nikolayevna Muchkina,⁷⁴ the director of “media-group Mir” and the president of the “All-Austrian Association of Russian compatriots.”

⁷² See: <http://www.sootchestvennik.com>.

⁷³ See: <http://austria.mid.ru/>, 16.10.2015. The Russian text uses the word “Rodina” with a capital “R,” which in the given context can be only understood as Russia itself.

⁷⁴ In 2008 then-president Dmitry Medvedev awarded Muchkina “for her large contribution in developing cultural connections with the Russian Federation and for conserving Russian language and culture” with an “Order of Friendship.” See Decree of the Russian President Nr. 1722, 3.12.2008
<http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102125922&intelsearch=%EC%F3%F7%EA%E8%ED%E0>

Muchkina presides over a “Coordinating Council for Compatriots in Austria”⁷⁵ and is a member of the board of the “International Council for Russian Compatriots,”⁷⁶ an organization founded in October 2001 with the support of President Vladimir Putin. According to the homepage of this Moscow-based organization, the board of trustees is led by Aleksandr Babakov, Duma member and businessman, who was declared Vladimir Putin's special envoy for the collaboration with compatriots' organizations outside Russia. Babakov, who has been put on the European Union sanction list following the annexation of Crimea, is also considered crucial for the Russian-influenced funding for Front National in 2014.⁷⁷

The “Coordinating Council for Compatriots in Austria” also refers to one of the most important organizations for Russians in the country: Father Vladimir (Tyshchuk), the dean of the Saint-Nicholas Cathedral behind the Russian embassy in Vienna, who is also its member, is responsible for contact between the Council and Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in Austria.⁷⁸

Marginal webpages in the Russian mainstream

There is at least one major Russian website in Austria which is following the aggressive rhetoric of Sergey Kurginyan, a Russian spin-doctor and ideologist of some neo-Soviet revival with ties to the Kremlin. There is no doubt that Rugraz.net is the most explicit demonstration of illiberal Russian values that one can find in Austria. There are lectures of Sergey Kurginyan and videos about the situation in Ukraine, as seen from the point of view of Russian propaganda published on Rugraz.net, which is run by a music teacher living in the Austrian city of Graz (Styria), called Andrey Sidorov and a few fellow activists.⁷⁹ For quite a long time, this page has also been publishing articles with an anti-Western stance, criticizing the moral decay of the West. Beyond his ideological activities, Sidorov is also strongly connected to the local ROC community; he works as the webmaster of the local parish's homepage, prihod-graz.orthodox.ru. But as in Vienna, the parish in Graz also keeps a low profile, and most people in Graz do not even know about its existence.

New Austrian fringe media

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine also saw the expansion and the foundation of at least three media-related projects in Austria, which share an admiration for the ruling Russian president. “Neopresse”⁸⁰ has been published since 2012 by Stefan Hofbauer, an IT-specialist based in Linz; “Contra Magazin”⁸¹ was founded in autumn 2013 by two extreme right-wing activists called Andreas Keltscha⁸² and Marco Maier; “Info Direkt”⁸³ started as an online medium in February 2015 in Linz, and as of October 2015 it has already published five issues. Officially, this medium is published by an obscure non-profit organization in Linz and the main person behind it is Stefan Magnet, who used to be involved in PR work for the Upper Austrian branch of FPÖ.

⁷⁵ See: <http://www.russianaustria.org/index.php/soviet>

⁷⁶ See: <http://www.msrs.ru/authority/pravlenie>

⁷⁷ See: for example <http://www.lesinrocks.com/2014/11/27/actualite/mysterieux-financement-russe-du-front-national-en-cinq-points-11538041/>

⁷⁸ ROC itself has been keeping a low profile in the Austrian society, in every aspect. In recent years, the church only once tried to interfere in Austria: After two artists had protested against ROC's role in the prison sentence for members of the Russian art group „Pussy Riot “and had made a brief and peaceful photo-shooting in Vienna's Saint-Nicholas Cathedral, the local orthodox priest asked the Austrian authorities to start a criminal investigation against the artists. The Austrian police, though, didn't see any criminal offence and closed the case soon.

⁷⁹ See: <http://rugraz.net/index.php/ru/component/jdownloads/finish/3/107>

⁸⁰ See: <http://neopresse.com>

⁸¹ See: <http://www.contra-magazin.com>

⁸² Keltscha, who used to work as a taxi driver in Vienna, made headlines back in 2011 when he protested on Facebook against the shutdown of Alpen-Donau, one of the most notorious neonazi homepages in Austria. Cf. "profil" Nr. 15/11, 11.04.2011, page 15

⁸³ See <http://www.info-direkt.eu> After having used www.info-direkt.at, a homepage in the Austrian domain, “Info-Direkt” switched recently to the .eu domain. And uses, for unknown reasons, Russian reg.ru as it's hoster. Physically thereby the server of “Info-Direkt” is located in Moscow.

These projects seem to have some success among the quite wide anti-American oriented audience in Austria and Germany, as well as bloggers and Internet activists who believe the Russian explanation of the events in Ukraine. It was this group of people that commented on many articles about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the pages of mainstream Austrian media.

“Contra Magazin” has been featured at least nine times in the major and state owned Russian news agency RIA Novosti,⁸⁴ while “Info Direkt” even made it to Russian state TV.⁸⁵ The first major reference to “Info-DIREKT,” a controlled media itself, looks like a classical spin operation, or active measure by the Kremlin. All these media outlets analogously have their agenda coordinated by the Kremlin and the so-called “bumazhka,”⁸⁶ sent from the administration of the Russian president to the editors of leading TV stations. Uwe Sailer, a leading observer of the extreme right in Linz, the hometown of “Info-Direkt,” speculates about possible Russian funding for “Info-Direkt.” Overall, however, “illiberal values” so far played a very marginal role for “Info-Direkt.”

Institutions

The Austria-Russian Friendship Organization

The “Österreichisch-Russische Freundschaftsgesellschaft” (ORFG) (Austro-Russian friendship society), which went through a visible evolution, especially since last year, is the most prominent Austro-Russian organization in Austria. A new non-profit organization (Verein) was founded in May 2000, initially with Raiffeisen International-CEO Herbert Stepic as its president, at least according to media reports,⁸⁷ who was followed in June 2003 by Ernst Strasser, who served as the Minister of Interior Affairs between 2000 and 2004, and, after a political break, became a member of the European Parliament. Under the leadership of the conservative politician Strasser, ORFG kept a low profile and was mainly considered as a business club, used specifically by Austrian companies to promote their commercial interests in Russia. After British journalists revealed that Strasser had been involved corruption in March 2011, the MEP stepped down from all his functions, including his ORFG presidency, and was finally sentenced in 2014 to three years in prison.

Under Strasser's successor, Ludwig Scharinger, a former CEO of the Raiffeisenbank's Upper Austrian branch, the situation changed. Starting with the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, followed by European Union mandated sanctions against the latter, the organization stopped doing non-public business lobbying. ORFG got much more visible during 2014 and 2015, as one of the most vocal organizations in Austria to defend Russia and to call for an end of Western sanctions against the country. Ludwig Scharinger and other members of his organization argued that these measures are harming for Austrian companies. Scharinger himself, quite unexpectedly, used harsh anti-American rhetoric in public appearances. His successor Richard Schenz, a former CEO of Austrian gas and oil company OMV and vice-president of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, at the beginning of his presidency maintained a lower profile.

Besides Scharinger, other leading representatives of the Friendship Society also made headlines by taking a pro-Russian stance in the recent years. In November 2014 for example, Scharinger's then deputy Christoph Matznetter, a social-democrat member of the Austrian parliament, expressed his doubts that pro-Russian separatists might be behind the crash of flight MH17 over Eastern Ukraine.

⁸⁴ According to a source inside “RIA Novosti” these special articles are not written by the core staff of this Russian news agency itself or by correspondents in Austria or Germany, but by former collaborators of “Russia Today” who are now responsible for the homepage of “RIA Novosti”. Of course, the outside audience does not see this internal difference.

⁸⁵ “Info-DIREKT im russischen TV“, Info-DIREKT Nr. 5 (Oktober 2015), p. 27

⁸⁶ Literally “small paper”: Written recommendations from the administration of the Russian president that are sent at least on a weekly basis to the main TV stations in Russian. They propose what kind of topics should be mentioned in the news and also in what way they should be mentioned.

⁸⁷ “Strasser neuer Präsident der Österreichisch-Russischen Gesellschaft”, Austria Press Agency, 17.6.2003

Business groups and networks

Another group that promotes a pro-Russian stance in Austrian politics is the Federal Economic Chamber,⁸⁸ whose longtime president Christoph Leitl, himself an influential member of ÖVP (Austrian People's Party), has repeatedly called to lift sanctions against the Russian Federation. In fact, Vladimir Putin's visit to Austria in June 2014 was the first visit of the Russian president to an EU-capital after Crimea's annexation. The reasoning behind the warm reception of Putin in Vienna in 2014 was to create a friendly atmosphere for Austrian companies in Russia, without any real changes in terms of Austria's position concerning EU sanctions.

Especially in the field of finance and energy, Austrian and Russian companies have mutual interests, and this can be seen as the prime reason for pro-Russian lobbying efforts of Austrian business leaders in recent years: two leading Russian banks, VTB and Sberbank, have branches in Vienna; Austria's Raiffeisen is a major player in the Russian banking scene; the Austrian oil and gas giant OMV has been trying to work closer with Gazprom in the recent years; Gazprom has a subsidiary in Austria called Gazprom Neft Trading GmbH, with one of biggest turnovers among Austrian companies⁸⁹ and a low-profile public presence.

Siegfried Wolf, who, since October 2015, works as the chairman of the board of directors at Russian Machines, as the president of the supervisory board of the Vienna-based Sberbank Europe AG, and in various other functions, is also regarded as quite active in fostering Russian interests in Austria. During the 2014 Valdai meeting in Sochi, he was filmed by a Russian television channel while talking to Putin's influential spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Numerous Austrian business leaders, some connected to the above-mentioned companies, are also involved in lobbying efforts, which are supposed to advocate Austrian business interests in Russia.⁹⁰ All these activities are pragmatic and business oriented. There is, as far as we know, no trace of illiberal values in these activities.

Russia and FPÖ

After the split with longtime FPÖ-leader Jörg Haider, who did not have a pro-Russian stance, Heinz-Christian Strache took over the party. Strache published three press releases welcoming Putin cordially in Austria, expressed his understanding for Russia concerning NATO's missile defense systems in Eastern Europe, and congratulated United Russia on its victory in the Duma elections of December 2007. More obviously, in 2008 Strache expressed support for Russia's position in the Russian-Georgian war. Russian officials began meeting with the leader of Austria's right-wing opposition.⁹¹ However, Strache's stance, in line with official politics in Russia after 2007, must not be seen necessarily as a result of direct influence from Moscow. His ideological orientation is deeply rooted in the context of the Austrian far-right.

⁸⁸ Official representation of the Austrian business community with compulsory membership for companies, and as such a major factor of Austrian politics.

⁸⁹ According to the last balance sheet that was published in Austria's company register in September 2015, Gazprom Neft Trading GmbH had a turnover of almost 12 billion in 2014.

⁹⁰ Besides the banking sector with the strong presence of Raiffeisen as the most prominent example, Austria has strong exports to Russia in machinery and plants, pharmaceuticals, food, paper/cardboard and according to official figures of Statistics Austria sold products worth €3,193,523 to Russia, which itself imported products to Austria worth only €2,294,603. See: http://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_PDF_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=024201

⁹¹ In September 2008 Oleg Morozov, the first deputy speaker of the Russian Duma, visits Strache in Vienna, in December 2008 an FPÖ delegation led by Strache travels to Moscow and meets Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov, but also officials of the Russian-orthodox church. During that visit Strache speaks in an interview with radio station Ekho Moskvy also about Christian values and about his support for ROC. See <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot/559905-echo/>

An Austrian radical right-wing intellectual, who wanted to remain anonymous, expressed the FPÖ's pragmatic pro-Russian position as following:

"I think this is also about the European Union and about changes inside the EU, where one needs strategic partners and closer connections with Russia, Russia needs our industry and we need cheap energy, makes sense in strategic terms. (...) I think nobody inside FPÖ wants to destroy the European Union, but they want to change some matters."

According to our research, the main figure behind the first wave of contacts with Russia, which began with two conferences on the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008 und 2009,⁹² was Levan Pirveli, a dubious businessman from Georgia and self-declared archenemy of then-president Mikheil Saakashvili, implicated in a murder and in economic crimes,⁹³ who lived in Austria at that time. Pirveli soon also involved his old acquaintance in Moscow, journalist Maksim Shevchenko, who later organized the visit of a FPÖ-delegation consisting of Pirveli, Johannes Hübner the person responsible for foreign politics in the party and Strache's deputy Johann Gudenus to Ramzan Kadyrov in early 2012.

With Pirveli returning to Georgia, Johann Gudenus, who was leading the party in Vienna's local parliament between 2010 and 2015 and served as vice-mayor without portfolio starting in 2015, became the most important intermediary between the party and Russia. Rather compromising for Gudenus is a strange business contact to Russia; despite the fact that from 2005 he has been representing FPÖ in Vienna's local parliament, Gudenus worked also as the director of a company called Donovan Invest Trading GmbH between October 2006 and March 2010. According to official documents, this company trades with cotton and starting from May 14, 2007⁹⁴ the company has belonged to Roman Veksler from Moscow.⁹⁵ Gudenus' position as Russia's main contact of the FPÖ remains stable ever since and this was especially visible in 2014, when he observed the "referendum" on Crimea in March 2014 and the local elections in St. Petersburg in September 2014.⁹⁶ Gudenus is active in the promotion of ultraconservative values as well: he gave a speech at the International Forum "Large Family and Future of Humanity," where he spoke about a "European gay lobby," and he accompanied party leader Strache at a high profile meeting with members of the Russian Duma in November 2014. Strache denied that his party gets Russian funding, and no evidence on the contrary has been released yet.

⁹² The two above-mentioned conferences, titled "Europe-Russia-Georgia: Peace Building" were organized with the participation of a company Austrian Technologies GmbH, which was founded in 2007 and headed by Barbara Kappel, a member of FPÖ and, at that time, a member of the Vienna City Parliament. Austrian Technologies GmbH took over from an NGO with the same name, which between 2001 and 2007 under the ÖVP-FPÖ-BZÖ government had pretended to be an Austrian official agency. Austrian Technologies claimed to promote Austrian businesses abroad and showed some activities in Russia, but following the developing party line of FPÖ also had a clearly pro-Russian political focus.

⁹³ According to our unpublished research Pirveli is also to blame for a lasting conflict between Austria's Raiffeisen Zentralbank (RZB) and the state of Georgia. In a murky deal during the nineties a company controlled by Pirveli called "Anglo Oil" had got a credit of approx. 40 Million Euro under a guarantee of the Georgian state. After "Anglo Oil" had not returned the credit, RZB was trying to get the money from the state in 2006. The Georgian Government however refused, arguing that RZB knew from the beginning that the deal was corrupt from start. At least as of spring 2013 the conflict was still pending with the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris, according to Georgian officials RZB wants to get approx. 100 Million Dollar from the Georgian state.

⁹⁴ Strache's first Putin-friendly press-release was published 9 days later, on May 23rd 2007, the day before Vladimir Putin started his official visit to Austria.

⁹⁵ Little is known about Roman Vladimirovich Veksler (born in 1973), who seems to have lived in Vienna at a certain time. According to Russian registers, he has been active mainly in companies associated with Olga Mikhaylovna Veksler and Galina Mikhaylovna Veksler, who are most likely relatives of his.

⁹⁶ These kinds of election observations were and are organized by the Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections (EODE), another FSB outfit. And it is not only Gudenus and Stadler who participate in this, but other FPÖ politicians as well, for example Johannes Hübner.

After heavy criticism in the Austrian press, in 2015 FPÖ was less visible in building ties with Russia. Gudenus even skipped a meeting of radical and extreme right wing parties called “International Russian Conservation Forum” in St. Petersburg in March 2015, despite the fact that he had originally planned to go there.⁹⁷

Persons

“Reform-conservative” Ewald Stadler and Russia

Besides the FPÖ itself, a prominent former FPÖ politician and radical Catholic Ewald Stadler also got involved with Russian politics in recent years. Stadler observed the Russian presidential elections of March 2012 in the city of Samara, which brought Vladimir Putin back into the presidential office for a third time, and rejected a critical report of the OSCE complaining of massive falsifications.

Almost two years later, in late 2013, Stadler, who served as a member of the European Parliament until June 2014, showed a renewed interest in the former Soviet Union. A few weeks after he had registered a new party called “The Reform-conservatives” (REKOS),⁹⁸ he expressed his support for Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich in his conflict with the civil society and criticized the European Union for their politics towards Ukraine. In March 2014, Stadler observed and applauded the Russian controlled “Referendum” on Crimea and even observed the “elections” in the so-called “Donetsk People's Republic” in November 2014. Overall, he is one of the Western politicians who has no more political relevance in his home country, but who can be used to show that Russia is not alone in the West in their vision of the world. However, in early 2015, Stadler has also been involved as a lawyer with the Austrian version of German “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident” (PEGIDA).

Other important power structures and personalities with Russian links and interests

The business wings of the ruling Social-Democrats (SPÖ)⁹⁹ and Conservatives (ÖVP) also lobby for cooperation with Russia. These parties and their representatives, though, do not support illiberal values. Their recent activities against sanctions that the European Union imposed against Russia in 2014 seem to be exclusively driven by pragmatic considerations.¹⁰⁰ As a leading ÖVP politician told to one of the authors of the study, the majority of the party, and especially the employers and businessmen, strongly oppose the sanctions due to the negative impact on growth, jobs and tourism. For this reason, FPÖ is not attacked by its political rivals for their pro-Russian stance.

⁹⁷ Asked by Austrian journalists, Johann Gudenus in the first place denied that he had ever planned to go there. The Russian organizers, however, provided the letter Gudenus had sent to confirm his participation a few months earlier. Being confronted with this document, FPÖ confirmed its authenticity and explained the original denial of Gudenus' confirmation with his bad memory. Then, the party justified Gudenus' final rejection to go there by pointing at the list of the participating European parties, featuring NPD from Germany or Golden Dawn from Greece. See: <http://www.fpoe-wien.at/news-datail/artikel/gudenus-sagte-teilnahme-beim-international-russian-conservation-forum-nach-bekanntwerden-der-teilnehmerliste-ab/>

⁹⁸ Rudolf Gehring, the leader of the marginal “Austrian Christian Party” (CPÖ), who took part in various elections without success, is formally Stadler's deputy in the party, which is so a one-person project. Cf. No. 319 – REKOS: http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Service/parteienverz/files/Parteienverzeichnis_gem__1_Abs_4_PartG_Stand_2015_09_16.pdf

⁹⁹ E.g., MP Christoph Matznetter, the vice-president of the Austro-Russian Friendship Society mentioned above.

¹⁰⁰ Besides the banking and energy sector, Austria has strong exports to Russia in machinery, pharmaceuticals, food, and paper/cardboard; according to official figures of Statistics Austria, Austria sold products worth 3,193,523 Euro to Russia, and imported only 2,294,603 Euro worth of products to Austria. See: http://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_PDF_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=024201

Gerhard Mangott, professor of Political Science at the University of Innsbruck and the most televised Austrian expert on Russia, attends Valdai since 2013, and he is well known for his soft approach on Russian developments. Mangott has been trying to promote a more Russia-friendly interpretation of major events, and in late 2013 and early 2014 his activities on Twitter¹⁰¹ at times amounted to propaganda. However, Mangott's stance lacks any kind of illiberal values.

Events

Balls and ideology

For a number of years Vienna has also been featuring two competing "Russian" balls, and one of these events openly reflects on quite specific ideological content. On the one hand, there is an official "Moscow Ball in Vienna," which is supported by the ORFG or the Russian Embassy. This event has taken place since 2007 and is now combined with a "Gala night for Russian business," organized by the Viennese entrepreneur Elisabeth Smagin-Mellonic. She, together with Aleksandr Smagin, are also behind a similar "Vensky bal" in Moscow, which has taken place since 2003, the year when then Austrian president Thomas Klestil attended the event. The other ball, called "Russian Ball in Vienna" exists since 2006 and is organized as a private initiative by Nathalie Holzmüller. In recent years, she has inched closer to the leading representatives of FPÖ, and in 2014 she started to openly promote the Kremlin's position concerning Ukraine. Back in April 2014, Holzmüller also organized the Viennese meeting for the Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev, radical right thinker Alexander Dugin and representatives of European parties; information on the event was leaked to the Swiss "Tagesanzeiger."¹⁰² Given that she is not a significant political player, it is likely that she was proposed by Gudenus as a possible organizer for Malofeyev and his team. The "Russian ball in Vienna" is a good example that reveals how mutual interests bring together Kremlin-close businessmen, hardliner ideologists and European radical right political players.

¹⁰¹ See: https://twitter.com/gerhard_mangott. Mangott has quite limited expertise on Ukraine, with very little time spend in the country. (See: <https://www.google.at/search?q=kiiv+site:.gerhard-mangott.at>)

¹⁰² See: <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/Gipfeltreffen-mit-Putins-fuenfter-Kolonne/story/30542701>

Hungary

Executive Summary

Russian ideological influence in Hungary is mostly dependent on political parties because of anti-Soviet historical experience and consequent political narratives, which prevented Russian organizations to be rooted in Hungarian societal life after the transition. In Hungary, the parties are the main actors of spreading ideological influence for three basic reasons: 1) there are no grassroots Russian organizations present in Hungary; 2) the Hungarian public is traditionally reserved towards Russia because of the tense historical relationship; and 3) the right-wing of politics made an explicit pro-Russian geopolitical turn.

Jobbik and Fidesz have cultivated political/ideological networks that have the possibility to serve the Kremlin's interest. The pro-Russian turn of Jobbik and Fidesz follows a conservative drift, but only Jobbik displays a real traditionalist approach and values, related to or modeled after the Kremlin. Jobbik as a cultural phenomenon is part of a broader pro-Russian far-right traditionalist network relying on the Eurasian ideology.

The Hungarian public is hard to influence by the Russian illiberal agenda even with willing parties. Jobbik and Fidesz have considerable political and cultural networks within their reach, enabling the Kremlin to exercise direct cultural impact on the Hungarian elite and parts of the civil society. This way, there is a seemingly paradoxical situation of Russian influence in Hungary: the Hungarian public is mostly pro-European and pro-American, while the political and cultural elite are prone to follow the "Eastern Opening" endorsed by the Kremlin. Moscow may have more impact on far-right organizations around Jobbik and those Christian, pro-family and pro-life NGOs which fall under Fidesz leadership and their interests are aligned with those of the Kremlin.

Jobbik, a party with very strong political ties to Russia, loyally follows a pro-Kremlin agenda, with actions such as introducing a Hungarian version of the "Foreign Agents Law" proposal that Russia has implemented. While there are certain well-established points of cultural-ideological infiltration to the Hungarian elite, this does not really translate into the Hungarian public effectively due to the troubled past Hungary shares with the USSR.

The white supremacist, neo-Nazi ideology infused by Eurasianism and translated for the Hungarian audience via actors around the Arktos publishing group is particularly troubling, because its main representative, Daniel Friberg resides currently in Budapest, and it increasingly attempts to spread an ideologically illiberal agenda through "metapolitical" actions.¹⁰³ Arktos is the main publisher of the works of Eurasianist ideologist Alexander Dugin who is on very good terms with Jobbik – having even invited party leader, Gábor Vona to Moscow to give a lecture on the decline of the Western civilization.

Media

Since the "Hungarian Voice of Russia" has turned into Sputnik International, there is no direct Hungarian speaking Russian online media available for the Hungarian public.

Pro-Russian narratives, as a form of manifestation of anti-Western and anti-US sentiments, existed in the Hungarian media even before 2010. In 2008 for example, the main pro-Russian newspaper, Magyar Nemzet criticized the Atlanticist Fidesz leaders for their pro-American position in the Georgia-Russia conflict.

¹⁰³ On this point see: http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/52296/Soros_Europa_ellensege

However, following Fidesz's abrupt pro-Kremlin turn after winning the 2010 elections, all mainstream media within the party's post-elections clout, including the Magyar Nemzet Group (from here on MNO-Group), and the media group of Gábor Széles (from here on Echo-Group), comprising of newspapers, radio and TV channels, soon conformed even more to the new foreign policy line, since their leading journalists already had established contacts with the Kremlin. For example, Gábor Stier, a journalist from daily Magyar Nemzet is a frequent guest and reporter at the Valdai Club for pro-Russian intellectuals;¹⁰⁴ Ferenc Szaniszló, a pro-Kremlin conspiracy theorist and showman at Echo TV has earned his degree at Moscow State University, along with Stier.¹⁰⁵ The pro-Russian turn became even more evident after September 2015, when the main Hungarian state-owned TV channel, M1 started to broadcast news in Russian for an hour a day (in a country where the ratio of ethnic Russians is minimal and other significant ethnic minorities do not get their own official newshour).¹⁰⁶

The Hungarian far-right media's pro-Russian attitude is – beside the eastward-looking “Turanist” ideology – also strongly connected to Jobbik's pro-Russian position. Besides the numerous social media pages, the Alfahír media portal is owned and operated by Jobbik and the Kuruc.info “anonymous” portal, which is very likely controlled by one of Jobbik's leaders, Előd Novák, emerged as the main platform for pro-Russian, far-right stances. The anti-progressive agenda (anti-gay, anti-gender, anti-human rights) is obviously present there, but this is a consequence of the prevailing socially illiberal agenda.

Real mouthpieces of Kremlin propaganda are disseminated as blogs and Facebook sites, such as Titkolt Hírek/Világlátó, hidfo.ru, etc. After Voice of Russia Hungary have closed its Hungarian branch, there remained no Russian state-owned media outlet in Hungary, although the Russian Foreign Minister discussed a plan to launch one in 2015; a Hungarian Pro-Russian far-right journalist, István Lovas also mentioned the possible establishment of an official media established by the Kremlin's affiliations. So far, no steps have been taken in this direction.

Mainstream media

Generally, it can be said that the rightist MNO- or Echo-groups do not exhibit a coherent anti-liberal cultural agenda related to the Kremlin because of their different relationship with pro-Russian Fidesz.

The Magyar Nemzet media group is owned by a former Fidesz-supporter and oligarch Lajos Simicska, who severed all relations with PM Orbán and his party in February 2015 because a certain businessmen close to the PM unsuccessfully tried to take control of the media conglomerate by surprise in order to oust Simicska.¹⁰⁷ The conflict caused the daily Magyar Nemzet and Hír TV media channel to alter its geopolitical stance by publishing more articles with Atlanticist voices. Still, the MNO-group remained partly pro-Russian on some key issues. Simicska seems to avoid a “war on two fronts” with his once close political ally PM Orbán and the Kremlin, which is now a close international ally of the Orbán Cabinet.

Since 2010, the Magyar Nemzet Online (MNO) displays four areas of Russian anti-liberal values: Russian anti-liberal legislation; human rights issues; traditionalism; the establishment of the pro-Russian Tolstoy Association, an NGO close to Fidesz (detailed below). The newspaper published two articles in 2015 about the bill allowing the prosecution of “undesirable” foreign NGOs on national security grounds.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ “Contributors”, Valdai Discussion Club, accessed October 20, 2014, <http://valdaiclub.com/authors/22184.html>

¹⁰⁵ See: http://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_SDI_Boll_study_IamEurasian.pdf

¹⁰⁶ See the following articles: http://hvg.hu/kultura/20150917_Hetfotol_indul_az_orsosz_nyelvu_hirado_az, <http://24.hu/kozelet/2015/09/22/itt-van-az-m1-orosz-nyelvu-hiradoja/>

¹⁰⁷ See: http://index.hu/belfold/2015/02/06/simicska_lajos_orban_egy_geci/

¹⁰⁸ See: <http://mno.hu/kulfold/betilthatjak-a-nem-kivanatos-kulfoldi-szervezeteket-oroszorszagban-1287020>, <http://mno.hu/kulfold/nemkivanatos-lesz-a-soros-alapitvany-oroszorszagban-1289416>

These articles contain a slight critique of the Russian legislation while stressing the Kremlin's official narrative for the new restrictive legislation:

“Not even Soros denies his role played in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, neither in the so-called Ukrainian orange revolution and the organization of the Euromaidan.”¹⁰⁹

The newspaper summarizes several speeches made by President Putin in which he linked Russian geopolitical ambitions to its traditionalist social and political regime. In this interpretation, the “return of Crimea” was meant to be a civilizational and sacred task by regaining ownership of the “cradle” of Orthodox Christianity.¹¹⁰ The foreign policy editor, Gábor Stier painted a very flattering picture of Putin when citing the President's 2015 Valdai speech in October after praising the Russian intervention in Syria for “ending the Syrian bloodbath and the disintegration of the country” in the fight against ISIS.¹¹¹

Compared to the MNO media world, the Echo-Group supports the pro-Kremlin agenda explicitly. Journalists featured at the daily Magyar Hírlap and Echo TV voice the most extreme anti-West and pro-Moscow political conspiracy theories, in addition to their support for far-right ideology. Magyar Hírlap often praises President Putin for “preventing a genocide” in Crimea by rescuing the Russian naval base in Sevastopol from the NATO-backed Fascist “junta” in Kiev. Russia is displayed as the defender of “human civilization” after WWII.¹¹² However, when it comes to the traditionalist values, they also fail to present a broader pro-Russian cultural agenda, likely due to the Echo-Group's clear-cut (geo)political pro-Russian stance which renders pro-Russian cultural indoctrination unnecessary – in the light of a strong Hungarian far-right cultural-ideological explanation of the world on a daily basis.

Despite of the rather sporadic appearance of illiberal values in the Hungarian mainstream media, as compared to the dominance of pro-Russian geopolitical agenda, some leading journalists are known for their affiliations with the Kremlin – such as Gábor Stier, foreign policy editor of Magyar Nemzet, who regularly partakes in the Valdai meetings and openly endorses President Putin. Adrienn Szaniszló, daughter of the former leading “investigative journalist” and conspiracy theorist, Ferenc Szaniszló at Echo TV, participated as an observer in the elections of the separatist territories in Eastern Ukraine.

Far-right media

The far-right does not shy away from the explicit promotion of traditionalism and ultra-conservatism. Dugin and his Eurasianist ideology are well represented in the far-right media of Jobbik. The party's main medium, Alfahír (alfahir.hu) addresses all important issues on the Kremlin's agenda: Eurasianism, Russian human rights scandals, anti-gay legislation, migration, feminism, and the protection of the traditional family. Moreover, Alfahír conducted an interview with Alexander Dugin about the Eurasian Economic Union and his Eurasianist ideology.¹¹³ The interview has caused a debate in Hungarian far-right circles, since it declared the end of nation states, instead proposing the establishment of Western or European and Eurasian empires.

¹⁰⁹ See: <http://mno.hu/kulfold/nemkivanatos-lesz-a-soros-alapitvany-oroszorszagban-1289416>

¹¹⁰ Vlagyimir Putyin üzent Európának és Amerikának. <http://mno.hu/kulfold/vlagyimir-putyin-uzent-europanak-es-amerikanak-1261692>

¹¹¹ See: <http://tabletmno.hu/kulfold/putyin-visszavag-libiaert-1309684>, http://mno.hu/magyar_nemzet_kulfold/moszkvaszinre-lep-1303099

¹¹² See the following articles: http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/10536/Putyin_esete_Amerikaval, http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/10536/Putyin_esete_Amerikaval

¹¹³ See: http://alfahir.hu/birodalom_epul_a_nyugattal_szemben

The far-right medium called the members of Pussy Riot “cracked-heeled bitches” or streetwalkers who committed an anti-Christian Feminist provocation by uttering an anti-Putin “Punk-prayer” in a church,¹¹⁴ and offered conspiracy theories to explain away the Kremlin’s possible responsibility for the political murder of Boris Nemtsov.¹¹⁵ The medium had numerous reports on Orthodox countries, especially Russia, banning the LGBT parade or morally condemning the LGBT communities. All these Russian human rights issues have been pursued constantly by Alfahír, so the narratives of the Kremlin have reached the Hungarian far-right audience.

Jobbik’s “underground” media, the openly anti-Semitic, anti-Roma and xenophobic Kuruc.info (kuruc.info) shares similar views to Alfahír, but in a blunter way. Kuruc.info relies on conspiracy theories and expresses unconstrained xenophobia and vulgarity. For example, the site reported on the attack against Pussy Riot members in Nizhny Novgorod in 2014 and directly quoted the attackers’ scolding:

“Stinky cunts, stinky, dirty bitches, why have you come here, piss off to America, piss off!”¹¹⁶

New media and social media

Since the Crimean crisis, several anonymous pro-Russian Facebook propaganda pages (see Table 3) have appeared displaying a far-right political agenda. This kind of information warfare mobilizes not only individual outlets, but also a range of media networks connecting mainstream far-right media news sites close to the far-right Jobbik party with Facebook (FB) pages, amplifying their impact. This FB disinformation network employs a wide variety of channels, including direct war propaganda (e.g., Facebook pages called Kiállunk Oroszország mellett/We stand by Russia,¹¹⁷ South Front Hu¹¹⁸), Eurasianism (e.g., Facebook page called Eurázsiai Népszövetség/Eurasian League of Nations¹¹⁹), separatism (e.g., Facebook page called Egymillióan az igazságos határokért/One million (people) for Just Borders¹²⁰), general pro-Kremlin stance (e.g., Facebook page called Kiállunk Putyin mellett - We support Putin - Мы поддерживаем Путина¹²¹), conspiracies (e.g., Facebook page called Titkolt hírek /Secret News¹²²) and other sites of fake “independent” NGOs or media outlets in Hungary.

Table 3. Selected pro-Russian Hungarian Facebook pages ranked by number of likes

Page	Likes ¹²³	Established
KárpátHír	17977	13.09.2014
Kiállunk Oroszország mellett - Support Vladimir Putin from Hungary	17952	03.03.2014
South Front Hu	13639	15.06.2014
Orientalista.hu	12013	02.10.2014
Hídő Net	11652	07.03.2014
Orosz Hírek	11082	13.08.2010.
Egymillióan az igazságos határokért	10171	09.03.2013
Page	Likes	Established

¹¹⁴ See the following articles: http://alfahir.hu/sziberiai_taborba_vittek_az_egyik_pussy_riot_tagot, http://alfahir.hu/putyin_kegyelmet_adhat_a_pussy_riot_repedtsarku_szajhainak

¹¹⁵ See the following articles:

http://alfahir.hu/a_charlie_hebdo_karikaturainak_tamogatasa_miatt_gyilkolhattak_meg_nyemcovot

http://alfahir.hu/nyemcovot_is_iszlamistak_olhettek_meg http://alfahir.hu/zuros_nougy_miatt_lohettek_le_nyemcovot

¹¹⁶ See: https://kuruc.info/r/6/124734?fb_comment_id=407783426033098_1975107#f4e421158

¹¹⁷ See: <https://www.facebook.com/kiallunk.roszorszag.mellett>

¹¹⁸ See: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthFrontHu>

¹¹⁹ See: <https://www.facebook.com/euraszianepszovetseg>

¹²⁰ See: <https://www.facebook.com/igazsagoshatarok>

¹²¹ See: <https://www.facebook.com/kiallunkputinmellett>

¹²² See: <https://www.facebook.com/titkoltthirek>

¹²³ As of April 2016.

ЕМОБТ	4119	22.12.2014
Eurázsiai Népszövetség, Евразийская Лига	3264	26.04.2014
Magyar Ifjúság Közösségi Szervezete- MIKSZ	2090	07.11.2010
300.000 -en a NATO Ellen	1846	17.06.2015

These pages have distinct foci, while all are explicitly pro-Russian, the pro-separatist, softly revisionist¹²⁴ KárpátHír or Transcarpathian News serve as a far-right news portal targeting Kiev. South Front Hu, similarly to the “We stand by Russia” page was created for the special purpose of pro-Kremlin separatist propaganda, providing a series of reports from the front line of Eastern Ukraine. “Russian News” (Orosz Hírek) is also mainly preoccupied with the geopolitical interests of the Kremlin. The “300.000 against NATO” (300.000-en a NATO ellen) page protests against the occupation of Hungary by the United States and refuses the stationing of American heavy weaponry in Hungary. Orientalista.hu is a far-right, anti-Semitic conspiracy site, which exhibits the pro-Russian association of migration and Russian intervention by claiming that Putin saved Syria from the American military intervention which is part of a greater “plan” to destabilize Hungary through mass-migration instigated by this American move.¹²⁵ The Eurasian League of Nations (Eurázsiai Népszövetség) is an outlet that portrays the liberal, pro-gay Europe as weak when facing the Islamist threat. “Hawk News Hungary” is the newest among the core members, waging a special war based on the Eurasian ideology against Western liberalism.¹²⁶ Hawk News has also a special place for Alexander Dugin by introducing Dugin’s “fourth political theory” as a tool in the fight against liberalism.^{127,128}

The Christian Women Against Femen Facebook page, founded and operated by the Jobbik Youth Section (Jobbik Ifjúsági Tagozat, Jobbik IT), is also part of a wider network.¹²⁹ The page has strong connections to pro-Russian French far-right circles. On the one hand, it called attention to an event of the far-right General Alliance against Racism and for the Respect of the French and Christian Identity (AGRIF) where an MEP of the openly pro-Kremlin Front National, Bruno Gollnisch was a speaker.¹³⁰

On the other hand, the former Polish leader of the initiative, Maria Piasecka-Łopuszańska participated in a march of the French far-right pro-life, anti-feminist, anti-LGBT “Manif pour tous” movement, also supported by Moscow, in Paris.^{131,132} In June, 2013 Christian Women Against Femen organized a demonstration both in Budapest and Warsaw before the French embassies in support of the 19 activists of the pro-Russian far-right Identitarian movement (Génération Identitaire).¹³³

¹²⁴ Manifested, for example, in their support to reclaim the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine inhabited by the Hungarian minority.

¹²⁵ Putyin látogatásáról... <http://orientalista.hu/putyin-latogatasarol/>

¹²⁶ Several articles announce that Europe and Hungary have arrived at a crossroads with the forming of the Eurasian Economic Union: “The inner circles of the ruling party [the Fidesz, the editors] are prepared to adapt to the changed political environment and transpose the formalities of Atlanticism with a sort of moderate Eurasian regime.” See: <https://hawkneshungary.wordpress.com/2015/01/11/minden-magyarorszag-part-valaszut-elott-all/>

¹²⁷ See: <https://hawkneshungary.wordpress.com/2015/01/29/dugin-a-liberalizmus-elleni-harc-eszkoze-a-negyedik-politikai-elmelet/>

¹²⁸ The page was prepared to publish the video speech of Dugin, which was supposed to be held at the white supremacist Identitarian Congress in Budapest in 2014, but was missed by Dugin due to the official ban of the event and the negative publicity. See: <https://hawkneshungary.wordpress.com/2014/10/13/a-nyilt-tarsadalom-ellensegei/>

¹²⁹ The page tends to conduct international actions, mobilize against local Femen activist groups in Sweden, Poland, Romania and France. See: <https://www.facebook.com/ChristianWomenAgainstFemen/posts/457995607656503>

¹³⁰ See: <https://www.facebook.com/ChristianWomenAgainstFemen/posts/254639968047927>

¹³¹ See: <https://www.facebook.com/ChristianWomenAgainstFemen/posts/10152224315465148>

¹³² The “Manif pour tous” movement can be considered as pro-Russian, since not only the French far-right scenery is soaked with Russophile interests and networks, but also the movement itself has a branch in Moscow, and was invited to Moscow to meet Russian religious leaders and lawmakers to discuss the protection of traditional families in March 2014. See: http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/news/2014_03_31/French-defenders-of-traditional-family-to-meet-Russian-religious-leaders-lawmakers-5961/

¹³³ The far-right activists briefly occupied the French Socialist Party’s roof to protest the gay marriage law and called for the resignation of François Hollande. Their action was on the side line of the Manif Pour Tous march against gay marriage organized in Paris. See: <http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2013/07/26/manif-pour-tous-militants-condamnes-siege-ps->

The Budapest demonstration was also attended the paramilitary, revisionist Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement supporting the separatists' cause in Eastern Ukraine, and finally by Edda Budaházy who can be linked to the "In the name of family" pro-life Facebook group.

Institutions

Fidesz (political party)

Historically, Fidesz positioned itself as one of the harshest anti-Communist actors in the Hungarian political life, denouncing any political bargain with the "heirs" of the Communists. Fidesz had tense relationships with Russia during their first stint in government (1998-2002). For Fidesz, the task before 2010, their re-election to power, was to master the usual pragmatic pro-Russian turn. The turning point came in 2009, when, at a non-official meeting between Orbán and Putin, the leaders came closer to each other. This necessary political move became more of a strategic alliance between PM Orbán and President Putin with the "authoritarian" turn of the Hungarian regime, the agreement on building the Paks Nuclear Plant, and the two countries' growing international isolation. While in opposition in 2008, Orbán already praised Russia as one of the winners of the 2008 global financial crisis.¹³⁴ The real pro-Russian turn of the second Fidesz government was presented by PM Orbán in 2010:

*"(...) As a matter of fact, Europe needs to face a situation where the Western world, our civilization will regain the very spot on the world's economic map it used to have 150 years ago (...). It is quite evident (...) Europe (...) needs to find a compromise one or another way with other large areas with Christian roots, not yet or just loosely integrated with Europe. We should not avoid the obvious; this is about Russia."*¹³⁵

The pro-Russian turn of the Hungarian government has been driven by ideology and values from the very beginning. Talking to a group of ambassadors in 2010, Orbán already named Christianity as the main binding factor between Russia and Hungary. Meanwhile, Fidesz's rapprochement with Russia was presented by the Hungarian government as a pragmatic economic and energy-related realignment. In fact, the "value-free foreign policy" became a bottom line for the Hungarian diplomacy shielding Fidesz both from domestic and international criticism. The crisis in Crimea and later in Ukraine has overwritten the Hungarian government's foreign policy ambitions. While Fidesz supported the pro-Ukrainian mainstream line of European policies in the EC and EP, the party played right into the geopolitical divide by demanding the Ukrainian government to respect the Hungarian minority's rights in Transcarpathia in 2014, and by halting gas-flow from Hungary to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the Hungarian government continued to emphasize its "pragmatic" foreign policy which resulted in an inevitable duplicity of its approach: condemnation of the sanctions against Russia by Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, while simultaneously supporting those with votes in the European Parliament.

Russian influence „outsourced”

The ultraconservative political stance of Fidesz is present along many important political issues, starting with the new Constitution adopted in 2011 defining marriage as a bond between man and woman only; reinstating mandatory "moral" or religious education in schools; boosting state-funding of "traditional churches"; trying to limit the Pride Parade; enacting a mandatory Sunday shopping ban in the name of family and Christianity etc. Thus, there is a systemic illiberal values agenda represented by Fidesz and its coalition partner, the Christian Democrats that manifested in several measures from the (later abolished) Sundays closing law to the conservative interpretation of family.

generation-identitaire_n_3656677.html_http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2013/07/26/manif-pour-tous-militants-condamnes-siege-ps-generation-identitaire_n_3656677.html

¹³⁴ See full speech at: http://2007-2010.orbanviktor.hu/beszedekek_list.php?item=66

¹³⁵ See full speech at: http://2007-2010.orbanviktor.hu/beszedekek_list.php?item=66

However, these are not “imports” from Russia, but – similarly to the case of the new Polish government – the expressions of right-wing Christian (mainly Catholic) traditionalism. Nevertheless, there is the civil intellectual circle around Sándor Lezsák, Fidesz MP, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, and another string of organizations consisting of different traditionalist NGOs - both groups funded by the government.

The “Eastern Opening Collegium”

The Lakitelek People’s Collegium (founded by the Deputy Speaker of the House Sándor Lezsák) announced a special collegium titled “Eastern Opening Collegium” in 2013.¹³⁶ The Collegium’s declared aim is to break down the government’s Eastern Opening foreign policy and to provide people with basic knowledge on its target countries. The target group was a cohort of young professionals under 35, who are interested in the Eastern Opening due to their professional or educational occupation, or who may wish to participate in the actualization of the government’s foreign policy direction.

Kristóf Kalocsai, a rightist journalist at MTVA, member of the Ibero-American Collegium and the Lakitelek People’s Collegium shed light on the operation of the Collegium: the institution evolved into a network of rightist cultural activities for all layers of society, ranging from local folk artists to the Fidesz government; it functions as a rightist “breeding ground” for future rightist intellectuals and politicians.

The leading lecturers of the Eastern Collegium seem to leave no questions about the pro-Kremlin orientation of the Collegium. Besides Sándor Lezsák and Sándor Dorogi, former MTI (Hungarian Telegraphic Office) correspondent in Moscow, Ernő Keskeny, the former Hungarian ambassador to Moscow were the head lecturers of the Collegium. Among the invited lecturers we can find Aleksandr Tolkach, former Russian ambassador to Budapest,¹³⁷ and Szilárd Kiss, the former Agricultural Attaché at the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow.¹³⁸ Keskeny and Kiss played a very important part in Hungarian foreign policy, assisting Orbán Viktor’s Eastern Opening towards Russia directly.¹³⁹ Furthermore, Keskeny was a key person in the reconciliation between Fidesz and the Kremlin, and in 2009 he arranged the first informal meeting between President Putin and Viktor Orbán, who was still in opposition at the time.

Szilárd Kiss has had a successful business career dealing mostly with food products in Russia for the last 28 years. Although Kiss was closer to the MSZP, Keskeny and Kiss formed a friendship when Keskeny was the Hungarian ambassador to Moscow between 1998 and 2002. As a result, Kiss’ foreign policy career soared after Fidesz got in power in 2010. Probably due to his Russian affiliations, Kiss became the Agricultural Attaché at the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow in 2010 despite failing the national security screening twice. In addition, it was an open secret in the Foreign Ministry that Kiss might have been recruited by the FSB.¹⁴⁰ The wife of Kiss, Yelena Tsvetkova established a Hungarian visa center in Moscow for Russian businessmen. Kiss was later removed from the government, and currently there is an investigation going on against him.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ See: http://www.lakitelek.hu/nepfoiskola/index.php?option=com_eventlist&view=details&id=583:keleti-nyitas-kollegium&Itemid=7

¹³⁷ See: <http://mno.hu/belfold/ez-magyarorszag-es-oroszorszag-kozos-erdeke-1188441>

¹³⁸ See: http://www.lakitelek.hu/nepfoiskola/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1463%3AAbeszamolo-az-iksz-2013-harmadik-egyedevi-programjairol&catid=23%3AAbeszamolok&Itemid=74

¹³⁹ Ernő Keskeny has specialized in Russia early in his career: he served as the Hungarian consul in St. Petersburg in 1995; Hungarian ambassador to Moscow appointed by the first Orbán government 1998-2002; Ministerial Commissioner for the CIS-states and head of the Eastern-European and Central-Asian Department in the Foreign Ministry after 2010; and Hungarian ambassador to Kiev since 2014. Keskeny’s stationing in Kiev is interpreted by some Hungarian diplomats as sending a very strong pro-Russian signal towards Moscow.

¹⁴⁰ See:

http://index.hu/belfold/2015/07/21/kiss_szilard_keskeny_erno_jelena_cvetkova_lena_orosz_titkosszolgalat_meszaros_lorinc_4_resz/, <http://444.hu/2015/01/22/letartoztattak-a-kormany-egyik-moszkvai-lobbistajat>

¹⁴¹ Read more at: http://index.hu/belfold/2016/03/03/kiss_szilard_mar_szabadlabon_epiti_kapcsolatait/

The Tolstoy Association

The Tolstoy Association for the Hungarian-Russian Cooperation was officially formed in one of the halls of the Hungarian parliament in 2011 on the initiative of Sándor Lezsák and Ernő Keskeny. The founding declaration expressed the need for a shared forum of “joint thinking based on common [Hungarian-Russian] cultural and Christian values,” establishing a realistic view of Russia in the Hungarian public, as well as promoting Hungary’s image in Russia. The declaration was also signed by Péter Erdő, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and the Primate of Hungary. Since 2011, the Association has conducted a wide array of cultural activities, including the organization of Russian cultural quizzes for Hungarian secondary school students about “Russian classics,” supporting research on Russian-Hungarian common historical origins; and hosting a conference titled “The health of culture, the culture of health” in 2014.¹⁴² In 2012, the Association published a book entitled “Culture and hygiene Humanism as need,” which included 12 lectures given at the Hungarian Cultural, Scientific and Information Centre in Moscow. The book’s central problem is national identity defined against the “*new globalized, value-relativistic information age besieged by monetary dictatorship.*”¹⁴³

Traditionalist NGOs

There are several Christian, pro-life, anti-feminist, homophobic NGOs that either relate to Fidesz-KDNP or to the Roman Catholic Church. Representatives of The Alpha Alliance for the Protection of Unborn, New-Born Babies, Children and Families attended Jobbik’s racist conference. The Alliance lists 17 other traditionalist NGOs as partners on its website.¹⁴⁴

The Association of Christian Intellectuals (Keresztény Értelmiségiek Szövetsége, KÉSZ) is founded by the Christian KDNP party and ratified the petition supporting the Russian anti-LGBT law against gay propaganda.^{145,146} One key person of the traditionalist network is Edit Frivaldszky who heads the Together for Life Association, which was the other Hungarian NGO signing the pro-Russian anti-gay petition. She has also been working for the Catholic Pro-Life Forum and participates in several traditionalist networks with connections to the Kremlin. Although Together for Life Association was not included in the Alpha Alliance’s list, the two nevertheless cooperate closely.¹⁴⁷

Frivaldszky’s domestic activities concern the Roman Catholic Youth for the Unified World movement and the Oikosz Foundation.

The Oikosz Foundation is headed by Jobbik’s former caucus chairman Ervin Nagy,¹⁴⁸ and it is funded mostly by the government.¹⁴⁹ The Oikosz Foundation seems to belong to a string of fake NGOs established by Fidesz for political marketing purposes, cooperating with the Civic Unity Forum (CÖF), which has held several pro-Fidesz marches in Budapest in the past. Frivaldszky has been the Hungarian leader of both the French far-right, anti-LGBT La Manif Pour Tous and the CitizenGO network since 2014.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² See their website: <http://tolsztojtarsasag.hu/>

¹⁴³ See: <http://tolsztojtarsasag.hu/en/magunkrol/kultura-es-higienia-a-humanizmus-mint-szuekseget.html>, <http://tolsztojtarsasag.hu/Docs/Egyhazfoi-levelek.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ See: http://www.alfaszovetseg.hu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=31

¹⁴⁵ See: <http://novaeterrae.eu/en/news/461-our-support-to-the-recent-and-controversial-russian-federal-law.html>

¹⁴⁶ Another sub-group consists of Catholic organizations, such as the Hungarian Catholic Family Association (Magyar Katolikus Családegysület) or the Pacem in Utero Association against abortion, the latter has its office at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. See: http://alfaszovetseg.hu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=102

¹⁴⁷ It is a known fact that Ildikó Varnyú, who had worked for the Alpha Alliance for 20 years, joined the Together for Life Association’s team in 2015. See: <http://orokbe.hu/2015/03/12/egyutt-az-eletert-varnyu-ildiko/>

¹⁴⁸ Ervin Nagy had left Jobbik in 2008 after disapproving the establishment of the paramilitary Hungarian Guard.

¹⁴⁹ The state-owned Szerencsjáték Zrt., responsible for the national lottery, funded the organization with 5 million HUF in 2015. See: http://index.hu/gazdasag/2015/10/09/szerencsejatek_zrt._tamogatas_kozpenz_veritas_moscell_lmp/

¹⁵⁰ Edit Frivaldszky is the president of the Hungarian pro-life Together for Life Association with connections to the Roman Catholic Youth for the Unified World movement. She was one of the founders of the “One of us” European movement against abortion. See: http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20141230_citizengo_konzervativok_a_csalad_es_az_elet_vedelmeert

A short list of pro-Russian traditionalist NGOs is featured in Table 4 below, which showcases the lack of grassroots pro-Kremlin movements in Hungary, because almost all pro-Russian NGOs are headed or funded by major parties.

Table 4. NGOs in Hungary that are helping the promotion of the illiberal value agenda

Organization	Type	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity
Lakitelek People's Collegium	Educational NGO founded by Fidesz MP, vice-speaker of the parliament, Sándor Lezsák	Launched Eastern Opening Collegium in 2013 to assist government's pro-Russian turn.
The Tolstoy Association	Intercultural NGO launched in the parliament by Fidesz MPs	Centered on common Hungarian-Russian cultural and Christian values.
The Alpha Alliance for the Protection of Unborn, New-Born Babies, Children and Families	Pro-life NGO	It is founded and operated by persons close to pro-Russian Jobbik, assists Jobbik's traditionalist agenda.
Association of Christian Intellectuals	Christian NGO founded by the ruling Christian-democrat KDNP party	Ratified the petition supporting the Russian law against "gay propaganda".
The Oikosz Foundation	Fake NGO founded, financed by Fidesz, headed by Jobbik's former caucus chairman Ervin Nagy	Petitions against "gay lobby" with the pro-Russian international CitizenGO movement.

Jobbik

There are five issues represented by Jobbik that reflect a strong influence of the Kremlin: Alexander Dugin and his Eurasianist ideology; the shared Eurasian cultural origin; the "foreign agent" labeling of NGOs; homophobia; and, at last, anti-feminism. Jobbik's chairman, Gábor Vona was invited by Dugin to give a lecture at Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2013. Also, Vona met several Duma politicians there and gave a presentation about "Russia and Europe" in which he criticized the European Union for giving up traditional values.¹⁵¹

Although Western far-right parties generally refuse cooperation with Jobbik due to the party's racist stance, Jobbik nevertheless has good relations with some Western far-right movements and persons. For example, Nick Griffin, the former leader of the British National Party (BNP) was a guest-speaker at the third far-right "Population Conference" organized by Jobbik affiliates, where he spoke about the need for "white, Christian children" in the face of African and Middle-Eastern immigration; this later was interpreted as an anti-Roma stance in the Hungarian context.¹⁵²

Despite being on good terms with the Russian ideologist, Vona refused Dugin's more imperialistic idea about the demise of nation states and the creation of a new union of Central Eastern European states.^{153,154} The party propagates mainly the geopolitical aspect of Eurasianism.

<https://www.facebook.com/fiatalokazegyestvilagert?fref=nf>

¹⁵¹ See: <https://jobbik.hu/hireink/vona-gabor-lomonosov-egyetemem-tartott-eloadast>

¹⁵² See: <http://nol.hu/belfold/jobik-nepesedesi-konferencia-1604965>

¹⁵³ See: <https://jobbik.hu/hireink/korrekt-es-konstruktiv-politikai-legkort> The chairman does support a geopolitically favorable situation for Hungary

¹⁵⁴ "Eurasianism means for me that Hungary can be sort of an intermediary between Europe and Asia. (...) The advantages of Eurasianism lies by leaving the independence of regions untouched while building on a continental cooperation as opposed to the European Union's oppression"; source: <https://jobbik.hu/hireink/vona-gabor-az-orosz-magyar-viszonyrol>

The party's ideological and philosophical periodical aimed at the far-right intelligentsia, the Hungarian Hyperion (Magyar Hüperión), dedicated a special issue for the Eurasianist ideology with Vona himself writing a piece.

Jobbik aims to sanction the foreign funded NGOs similarly to Russia, and the party submitted a parliamentary proposal in 2013 to “monitor the foreign influences under the disguise of non-governmental organizations.”¹⁵⁵ The party's 2014 election program also threatened international human rights NGOs' “spurious activity” to be labeled as the work of “foreign agents,” modeled after Russia.¹⁵⁶ Then, the party proposed a ban on “homosexual propaganda” as well, but Jobbik never declared that their parallel proposal is connected to the Russian law.¹⁵⁷

The traditionalist, partly pro-Russian political agenda might help Jobbik to break out from its international political isolation, for which the most obvious example was the formation of the far-right Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom caucus in the European Parliament spearheaded by Front National excluding Jobbik, NPD or Greek Golden Dawn on grounds of racism and neo-Nazi ideology.

Persons

One key pro-Russian person should be mentioned: Béla Kovács, MEP of Jobbik, who is currently under criminal investigation for spying on the EU on behalf of Russia.¹⁵⁸ However, he is primarily a political and economic lobbyist and a geopolitically oriented politician with no known record of any cultural activities.

Events

One major event from 2014 is worth mentioning: the American white supremacist National Policy Institute think tank planned a far-right conference titled “The Future of Europe” with the aim to foster relations between American, European and Russian far-right actors. Presenters included Richard B. Spencer, head of the National Policy Institute; Alexander Dugin; Philippe Vardon, French political scientist and founder of the far-right Bloc Identity (Bloc Identitaire) movement; John S. Morgan, editor in chief of the far-right Arktos Media; and representatives of Jobbik.¹⁵⁹ The conference was banned by the Hungarian authorities, although a fraction of the participants did meet up in Budapest at an undisclosed location, while most of the presenters declined to attend the event.

The importance of such far-right events is highlighted in the interview conducted by Political Capital with Zoltán Sz. Bíró, Senior Research fellow at the Institute of History (Research Centre For the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences). In his opinion, Russian institutions in Hungary play a usual diplomatic role, cultural exchanges between the two countries are restricted to high culture, and there is no cultural influence exercised by the Kremlin or any other actor in the Hungarian public.

Thus, we may conclude that fringe cultural exchanges have more cultural impact in general in Hungary.

¹⁵⁵ One such example presented by the party was the Center for American Progress Foundation close to Charles Gati, who provided funding to the former leftist PM Gordon Bajnai's Homeland and Progress Association.
<http://oroszhirek.hu/index.php/video/world/3083-orosz-mintara-ugynok-szervezetkent-tartana-nyilvan-a-kulfoldrol-tamogatott-civil-szervezeteket-a-jobbik>

¹⁵⁶ See: https://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/kimondjukmegoldjuk2014_netre.pdf

¹⁵⁷ See: The homophobia displayed by Jobbik usually concerns the ban of the LGBT pride parade in Budapest.
http://index.hu/belfold/2012/04/11/oroszorszagbol_szerez_otleteket_a_jobbik/

¹⁵⁸ See: <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/europes-east/parliament-lifts-hungarian-meps-immunity-over-russia-spy-probe-318523>

¹⁵⁹ See: <http://pcblog.atlatszo.hu/2014/08/11/a-jobbik-az-orosz-nacionalistak-es-az-amerikai-feher-fajvedok/>

Three characteristics of the conference command special attention. First, Alexander Dugin plays a visible intermediary role between one of the leading pro-Russian American organization of “science-based racism” and the new pro-Russian European neo-Nazi and far-right movements, striving to reach a shared identity based on Eurasianism. Second, the main media sponsor of the event was Arktos Media, which is becoming increasingly active in Hungary.¹⁶⁰ Arktos Media is owned by Lennart Berg, a former member of the Swedish Resistance. According to András Dezső, an investigative journalist at index.hu who specializes in far-right issues, Arktos Media established a Budapest-based publishing company for a short period of time and now the founder of the publishing house, Daniel Friberg, resides permanently in Budapest. Third, Arktos Media plays a central role in publishing and distributing new far-right and traditionalist literature in the world, especially in Europe. Arktos published most of Dugin’s works in English.¹⁶¹ Thus, the role of Pro-Russian actors – some with a suspicious background and possible connections to the Russian secret services – may be involved in establishing, dispersing and controlling a new racist traditionalist ideology, especially in the CEE countries,¹⁶² in addition to direct political propaganda against Western liberal political structures with the help of far-right political actors, also assisted by the Russian regime.

¹⁶⁰ The predecessor of Arktos, NFSE-Media established the Metapedia.

<http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/archive/packaging-hate-%E2%80%93-the-new-right-publishing-networks>

¹⁶¹ See: <http://www.arktos.com/catalogsearch/result/?order=relevance&dir=desc&q=dugin>

¹⁶² Dugin and the Kremlin are also against globalization, Western far-left ideologies and movements.

SLOVAKIA

Executive Summary

Support for illiberal values is only one part of the Kremlin's efforts to subvert liberal-democratic order and pro-Western orientation in Slovakia. More important is the focus on general discontent with the economic and political situation in Slovakia and, more broadly, in Europe. There is significant support for pan-Slavic sentiments and the role of "heroic Russia" defeating Nazi Germany and "liberating (Czecho-) Slovakia"—both building on a solid base for propaganda perpetuated by the Slovak school system as well as public media. A serious challenge for Slovakia is the infiltration of some institutions, such as the Institute of Economy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the public and the media by people holding anti-Western/pro-Russian positions, as well as the formation of new institutions with Russian capital and a pro-Kremlin agenda. Another serious challenge is military training and support provided to pro-Russian/anti-NATO paramilitary groups formed in Slovakia, and the penetration of such groups into Slovak schools and their links to the Slovak Army.

The main force responsible for spreading social-conservative, anti-liberal values in Slovakia is the hierarchy of the influential Roman Catholic Church. Some of the anti-liberal politicians are the most visible pro-Kremlin propagandists, and by far the most prominent among them is Jan Čarnogurský, former Catholic dissident, founding leader of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), political partner of the Catholic Church on Slovakia's party scene in some important issues, and a former prime minister of Slovakia.

Links between pro-Russian and anti-liberal/anti-EU/anti-NATO groups are extensive not only within the country, but also between Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The main lines of indoctrination in the public that create a fertile ground for Russian propaganda include references to traditions of Slavic reciprocity that make Slovaks and Russians culturally close nations; tradition of the anti-fascist struggle during World War II; criticism of the West and the USA in particular; and values of social conservatism. One of the main aims of indoctrination is to undermine the EU and legitimize Russia's position by inspiring and fueling overblown criticism of corruption, excessive bureaucracy, unemployment, social polarization, and other challenges faced by the EU.

In Slovakia, quite a large set of factors and actors exists for the purpose of public indoctrination, using illiberal values. Socially conservative traditions are represented mostly by the Catholic Church. Illusions of Slavic solidarity, inherited from the past, create favorable conditions for the activities of the "agents" of Russia's influence. So far the modus operandi of the pro-Russian camp in Slovakia included mostly activities of various local actors, such as public figures, organizations, and media outlets with diverse ideological and political profiles, while political stakeholders from Russia played a secondary (assisting) role. The Russian embassy intensified its PR-activities, distributing press-releases on Russian foreign policy in Slovakian, however, Russian public diplomacy ("soft power") was not efficient. A more efficient tool appears to be websites in Slovakian spreading pro-Russian narratives.

There are other factors limiting or neutralizing the efficiency of the pro-Russian camp in Slovakia: the lack of credible "mainstream" actors; the controversial profiles of the main local "faces" of Russian influence in the country; the hesitant position of the Catholic Church, which is cautious in its interaction with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian government; the prevailing pro-Western and pro-European foreign-policy orientation of the population. The majority of relevant political parties are pro-Western and anti-Kremlin, with the notable exception of far-right ĽS-NS, nationalist SNS and the ruling Smer-SD along with its leader, Róbert Fico, with his dual "pragmatic" pro-Western and pro-Russian orientation. (However, after the parliamentary elections in 2016 Smer-SD and SNS, being coalition partners with two minor center-right pro-Western parties, emphasize their adherence to Euro-Atlantic values in foreign policy).

On the opposite site of the equation are several important institutional failures such as: an obsolete school system uncritically indoctrinating pupils and students with de facto pro-Russian curricula in history, literature and other subjects; endless repetition of Soviet propaganda WWII films on public TV stations; insufficient or completely missing distancing of the Catholic Church's hierarchy from Russian conservative agents in Slovakia; apparent inaction of the Ministry of Interior in closing channels of Russian training and indoctrination of paramilitary organizations and groups with clearly anti-NATO/anti-Western agenda; and non-existent support of the Slovak government, the EU, NATO or private donors for civil organizations monitoring, debunking, and resisting Russian propaganda and its subversive activities in Slovakia.

Historical background of Russophilia in Slovakia

Uncritical Russophilia in Slovakia is driven by several factors: 1) ideological legacy of the 19th century national intellectual elite; 2) political and ideological legacy of the leftist intellectual circles from the interwar period and of the Slovak Communists (1948–1989), who promoted a pro-Russian/Soviet course and continue building on the nostalgia for “good old times before 1989”; 3) activities of a diverse spectrum of political actors after the fall of the Communist regime, including nationalists from the Slovak National Party (SNS), Marxist-Leninists from the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), to some extent members of Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS, especially in 1994–1998), some representatives of Smer – Social Democracy (Smer-SD), as well as some social organizations and radical movements and groups, specifically those that are anti-Western, anti-European, isolationist, “neutralist,” revisionist, or even openly fascist. The heterogeneous conglomerate of ideological and political forces acting in favor of closer cooperation with Russia after 1989 included opponents of the EU, NATO and the USA, illiberal Christian ultra-conservatives, and actors of the far-right and far-left extremist scene.

Historical roots of pro-Russian intellectual tradition

A relatively coherent idea about the relationship between Slovakia and Russia was presented by Ludovít Štúr, the codifier of the modern Slovak language, in his lengthy essay *Slovanstvo a svet budúcnosti* [The Slavdom and the World of the Future], which was published in Russian 1867 in Russia. Štúr is a cult figure in Slovakia and a formative person in terms of the linguistic and cultural identity of the Slovak nation.¹⁶³ At the end of the 19th century, Štúr's ideas were further developed by another prominent Slovak intellectual leader, Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, the editor of cultural and literary magazine *Slovenské pohľady* [Slovak Insights] who supported the idea of Slovaks' connection to the “giant Russian oak” (an expression coined by Ján Kollár). In the first half of the 20th century Štúr's Russophile legacy was revived by the intellectual, left-oriented (de facto pro-Communist) group DAV, whose members (especially Ladislav Novomeský) propagated Slovakia's inclination to Soviet Russia. This school of thought found a political umbrella for its activities in the Slovak communist political-ideological camp in the period before World War II.

¹⁶³ The basic element of Štúr's concept was criticism of the “rotten“ West, which allegedly exhausted its potential for development and thus has to vacate its place, to be filled by Slavs who entered the stage of history as the main driving force, with Russia and its socio-political organization as the vanguard of Slavic nations. Also, Štúr supported Russian autocracy.

Media

In relation to Russia, Slovakia's media scene is divided into three main segments:

Outlets with a clear-cut, critical attitude toward policies of the Russian state

The mainstream printed media outlets with clear, critical positions towards Russia's policies include daily *Sme* [We], daily *Denník N* [Daily N] and weekly *Týždeň* [Week]. The articles published in these media outlets support values related to the pro-Western foreign policy orientation of the Slovak Republic, liberal economic reforms, Atlanticism, values of liberal democracy, open society and civic principles.

Outlets with indifferent, unclear, ambivalent or mixed stances

A much larger group of popular Slovak media outlets do not adhere to a clearly defined position in relation to Russia. They combine the publication of critical and neutral articles with "positive" materials about Russia. Consequently, they create an "information fog" and promote the perception that truth is negotiable and nobody/nothing can be trusted. It is important to clarify that most of the pro-Russian organizations in Slovakia center around mainly political, geopolitical, historical etc. agendas, whereas illiberal values of fundamentalist Christianity, anti-feminism, anti-LGBTQ are represented only sporadically. Thus, we may conclude that these organizations' geopolitical stances create a friendly environment for the Kremlin to spread whatever messages it pleases, including traditionalist values.

An example of the infiltration of mainstream media outlets by journalists with overtly or covertly pro-Russian agenda is the daily *Pravda* [Truth]. *Pravda*, the former newspaper of the Communist Party of Slovakia, now in private ownership, is a daily paper with the highest print circulation in Slovakia (including subscription by many government ministries, departments and state institutions). *Pravda*'s commentator of international politics, Boris Latta, systematically presents the Kremlin's narratives in his writings; for instance, in articles on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, he regularly doubts the ability of Ukraine as an independent state to solve its social problems, describes the development of the country in a negative light, indirectly justifies Russia's policy towards Ukraine, and advocates for Russia's military intervention in Syria. Another pro-Russian aspect is the selection of quotes from Western media and the selection of "letters to the editor," where practically all published letters express pro-Russian, anti-American, and anti-West views. This selection creates a perception that this is the position of all or at least the majority of Slovaks.

The position of TV news channel TA3 is peculiar. Informing about international politics and trying to show a "balanced" approach, it also offers space for the presentation of pro-Russian narratives formulated by local Slovak promoters. TA3 regularly provides space for the most vocal defenders of Putin's policies, such as Jan Čarnogurský, who promotes the idea that Russia must defend itself against the West and it is becoming the defender of traditional values and morality that are at risk in the West.

Outlets with an unambiguous pro-Russian positions

The openly pro-Russian camp on Slovakia's media scene consists of several mostly marginal (politically and ideologically) media outlets. None of the mainstream media can be considered as part of this camp, which combines the direct approval of Russia's state policies with a critical tone towards the West and, recently, towards Ukraine. There are three groups of pro-Russian media in Slovakia: illiberal, nationalist and left-leaning.

Pro-Russian illiberal media relies on conspiracy theories (e.g., the domination of the US and Zionism, anti-vaccination propaganda, juvenile justice agenda, and alike). This is important in itself, given that conspiracy theories often reflect an anti-modernist, illiberal worldview.¹⁶⁴ The monthly *Zem a vek* [Earth and Age] is a typical anti-Semitic media outlet. In May 2014, the editors of the magazine, Tibor “Elliot” Rostás and Dušan Budzák, met with the incumbent Russian Ambassador to Slovakia, Pavel Kuznetsov and asked for Russian support of their media project. In June 2015, upon the initiative of the Russian Embassy in Slovakia, Rostás and Budzák travelled to Moscow to ask for the support of their media house-project that would include not only the magazine, but also TV and radio stations, a daily newspaper, and online media. New TV channel INTV started broadcasting in the beginning of 2016. In the beginning of 2015, *Zem a vek* also announced the start of a petition for Slovakia’s withdrawal from NATO.

The online radio *Slobodný vysielateľ* [Free Broadcaster], with Norbert Lichtner as the editor-in-chief, is a fringe outlet established in early 2013 in Banská Bystrica. Its name is a mimicry: refers to the “Free Broadcaster,” the legendary radio station that announced and supported the anti-Nazi Slovak National Uprising in 1944, thus creating an illusion of a rebellious, pro-democratic spirit. *Slobodný vysielateľ* combines anti-corruption rhetoric with calls for a Swiss-style direct or “true” democracy, along with a broad range of esoteric and conspiracy topics, marked by anti-Western and anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Pro-Russian nationalist media outlets include the monthly *Extra S* [Extra Slovakia], with Pavol Kapusta as the editor-in-chief, and the bi-weekly periodical *Literárny týždenník* [Literary Weekly] with Štefan Cifra as the editor-in-chief. The mentioned media are characterized by excessive criticism of the pro-Western line of Slovakia’s foreign policy, by their opposition to liberal socio-economic reforms and state interventionism, by disagreement with NATO’s activities, criticism of various aspects of European integration and EU policies, anti-Americanism, ethnic nationalism, pan-Slavic ideas, and by evident inclinations to the policy of Russia’s current leadership.

Pro-Russian left-leaning media outlets include less nationalistic and conservative, but more social-oriented periodicals with critical attitudes towards Western capitalism. They publish contributions with openly pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian, anti-American, and anti-Western content.

The monthly *Slovenský rozhľad* [Slovak Outlook], with Vladimír Dobrovič as the editor is close to the party Smer-SD, playing the role of a propagandist tool for the party. It publishes articles favoring Russia’s foreign policy, thus justifying Robert Fico’s Janus-faced policy of being both a loyal member of the EU and NATO, while at the same time a loud critic of NATO and the sanctions against Russia.

Web-portal *Slovo* [Word, the former weekly *Slovo/Nové slovo*], with Emil Polák as the editor, took part in the discussion on the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict as a media outlet publishing contributions with pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian, anti-American and anti-Western content. *Bojovník* [The Warrior], a bi-weekly periodical of the Slovak Union of Antifascist Fighters, led by Editor-in-chief Vladimír Mikunda and Editor Vladimír Dobrovič, publishes materials taken directly from Russian sources that spread the Russian narratives on the struggle against “Ukrainian fascism” and openly supports separatist “anti-fascist” rebels in Donbass.

In February 2015, Juraj Smatana, a civic activist, published a list of 42 websites in Slovak and Czech language, which spread pro-Russian content and open pro-Russian propaganda. According to Smatana, in many cases the content of the mentioned pro-Russian websites was a mixture of truth, half-truth and obvious lies. The list is continuously growing as new, similar websites continue to emerge.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Hofstadter R. (1965). The paranoid style in American politics. In Hofstadter R. (Ed.), *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press, Harvard. 3-40.; West, H.G., Sanders, T. (2003). *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.

There are several websites in Slovakian promoting clearly conservative values, for instance Fórum života (Forum of Life, www.forumzivota.sk), Life News (www.lifenews.sk), or Inštitút Leva XIII (Institute of Leo XIII, <http://www.instituteofleoxiii.org>). It must be stressed that all these organizations and sites have their own roots in the traditional social-conservatism of the Catholic Church and represent its radical wing. They have strong links to similar groups in both Western Europe and the USA, and their cooperation with Russian partners is relatively new and limited. In December 2013, Fórum života (Forum of Life) enthusiastically informed that “33 countries” expressed support for the new Russian law on child protection.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Institute of Leo XIII initiated an anti-EU petition to “Stop Euroval.”¹⁶⁶ On lifenews.sk, pro-Russian positions have an entire section.¹⁶⁷

Anonymous interviewees, including two experts on right-wing extremism, one on pro-Russian conspiracy theories and social media, another one on gender equality, and a fourth one on LGBTQ movement, identified “ideological patterns” used for the projection of Russia’s influence in Slovakia in specific communities. In case of the radical-nationalist and extremist scene these patterns include, for example, references to the traditions of Russian-Slovak relations, recalling the legacy of Ľudovít Štur, a pro-Russian „national revivalist” of the 19th century, evoking myths of pan-Slavic solidarity between the countries. Another Russian concept is the traditionalist view of family against Western “gender ideology,” which allegedly forces authorities in Western countries to take children from their parents and give them to homosexuals for adoption. As the expert on pro-Russian social media has put it:

“The aim of this (ideological, the editor) stream is to turn the Slovak public against the EU, liberal democracy, the European understanding of human rights and the principle of equality between men and women.”

Conservative Slovak Christians is another group drawn into the Kremlin’s value agenda which includes such motivational factors in Russian public life as the “conservatism” of state policy, “state” church, „return to the family“. Another expert argued that “Putin helped himself extremely in the eyes of conservative Catholic believers by his brutal crackdown against Pussy Riot. The whole case has contributed to the acquisition of sympathy from many Catholic believers to Russia and to Putin in unexpected forms”. Conservative Catholics regarded the performance of the group as „insulting to the faith“. Putin became a guardian of conservative values and morality in their eyes.

Institutions

Institutional background for Russia’s influence in Slovakia is constituted by political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors.

Political parties

Slovenská národná strana [Slovak National Party, SNS], with Anton Danko as the chairman, is a nationalist political formation (outside of parliament in 2012 – 2016) with traditionally pro-Russian and anti-Western stances that the party expressed till the very last time. It emphasizes traditional values, Christian morality, family, and usually expresses homophobic attitudes. SNS was re-elected to Parliament in March 2016. After entering the ruling coalition with Smer-SD and two minor center-right parties in March 2016, SNS stresses that it supports the “Euro-Atlanticist” foreign policy of Slovakia, however it has not distanced itself from its previous unambiguous pro-Russian stances.

¹⁶⁵ See: <http://www.forumzivota.sk/2013/09/08/3353/>

¹⁶⁶ See: <http://www.stopeuroval.sk/>

¹⁶⁷ See: <http://www.lifenews.sk/category/country/rus>

Party *Národ a spravodlivosť* [Nation and Justice], with Anna Belousovová as the chairperson, who was the former chairperson of SNS and a widow after the death of Russian businessman Alexander Belousov, who built a Russian Orthodox church in Bratislava in the early 2000s, which is still not functional. She received an award from then-Russian President Medvedev for her work on building bridges between Russia and Slovakia. It is an extra-parliamentary and marginal party, a splinter from the SNS, and a political formation with similar positions towards Russia. The party was not elected to Parliament in the 2016 elections.

Party *Naše Slovensko – Ludová strana* [Our Slovakia – People’s Party], with Marian Kotleba as the de facto leader, who is the governor of the Banská Bystrica region, is an extremist, radical-nationalist, racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic political formation with clear support of Russia’s policies, including the Russian aggression in Ukraine. It is the main anti-system political force in Slovakia. In the March 2016 elections it passed the threshold required to be allocated seats in Parliament. Surprisingly, the party took 8% of vote in the parliamentary elections.¹⁶⁸

Party *Magnificat Slovakia* is a marginal extra-parliamentary ultra-conservative, Catholic political formation, which is anti-liberal, anti-Islamic, and openly pro-Russian in international politics. It also is an integral part of the pro-life and anti-LGBT movement in Slovakia.

Some remarks are necessary to the *Smer-SD* party, a dominant power in Slovak politics, which for the first time since 1989 won an absolute majority in 2012 in Parliament and formed a single-party government. In 2016 it was re-elected, but had to form a coalition government. The party’s attitude to Russia is ambivalent, and the main political line of the party is defined by its chairman, Robert Fico. Although it would be an exaggeration to state that *Smer-SD* is a pro-Russian party, nevertheless the frequency of positive statements made by Fico and his party colleagues in relation to Russia’s policy is the highest among all parliamentary parties.

Social organizations (NGOs)

While most of the pro-Russian and conservative social organizations have relatively limited outreach, occasionally they manage to pass their pro-Russian messages to and through important large structures, such as the Catholic Church. Such an occasion was, for instance, the visit of Alexei Komov¹⁶⁹ to Slovakia in February, 2015. Inevitably, news about Komov’s visit to Slovakia were subsequently spread by the Catholic Church’s media. Furthermore, his visit happened in the context of the Slovak anti-homosexual referendum that failed with only 21 percent participation. Komov, a key player in Russian anti-Western conservative propaganda, also met with a number of Slovak conservative politicians.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ See commentary: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/06/slovakia-election-far-right-wins-seats-peoples-party-marian-kotleba>

¹⁶⁹ “Komov is representative of Russia in the World Congress of Families, ambassador of the World Congress of Families at the UN and also president of Russian think-tank FamilyPolicy.ru.,” wrote the the Press Office of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia. See <https://www.tkkbs.sk/view.php?cisloclanku=20150217033>.

¹⁷⁰ KDĽ (Christian Democratic Movement) politician and current MEP Anna Záborská and also MP for *Smer-Social Democracy* party Ján Podmanický, then chairman of the Slovak Parliament’s Committee on Social Affairs, hosted Alexei Komov as a representative of Russian Federation at a conference on 30 November 2012. See http://www.family-sk.sk/download/File/2012_11_30%20Rodina%20spolocnosti%20spolocnost%20rodine1.pdf

Several Organizations have ties or promote pro-Russian, illiberal political messages, as summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Pro-Russian organizations in Slovakia

Organization	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity
<i>Slovensko-ruská spoločnosť</i> [Slovak–Russian Society]	A pro-Russian advocacy and lobby NGO with a clear political message; it presents strong anti-NATO, anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric.
<i>Slovenské Hnutie Obrody</i> [Slovak Revival Movement]	An illiberal, ultra-conservative, radical nationalist, revisionist organization, strongly connected to Russian radical nationalist and paramilitary organizations. The chairman is Robert Švec
<i>Pokojní bojovníci</i> [Peaceful Warriors]	A citizens' group, a tool for conducting openly pro-Russian activities, whose members participated in numerous anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western public events, in actions in favor of illegal separatist republics formed on the occupied parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions
<i>Panslovanská únia</i> [Pan-Slavic Union]	A conservative-nationalist association emphasizing the special role of Slavs in history; a pro-Russian, anti-Western, anti-Ukrainian group that occasionally uses anti-Semitic rhetoric. The chairman is Milan Janičina, the Minister of Privatization in 1994
<i>Zväz Rusov na Slovensku</i> [Union of Russians in Slovakia]	An organization of the Russian ethnic minority in Slovakia and it is officially recognized by the state. The group is fuelling strong sentiment to the “Motherland” among citizens of Russian origin living in Slovakia
<i>Klub ruských občanov</i> [Club of Russian Citizens]	an informal association of Russian expats, a diaspora type of organization with strong Russian patriotism, advocating for Russian traditional values mixed with Soviet-style nostalgia
<i>Dobrá sila</i> [Good Force]	personal project of Sergej Chelemendik (died in May 2016), a “spiritual movement” in favor of the Good and eternal fight against Evil, combining primitive conspiratory rhetoric with the adornment of Vladimir Putin and Russia's policies
<i>Klub slovensko–ruských podnikateľov Rossiya</i> [Club of Slovak-Russian Businessmen]	Personal project of Sergej Chelemendik, informal group of businessmen
<i>Aliancia za rodinu</i> [Alliance for Family]	A broad “pro-life” and anti-gay movement with some influential factions inspired by official Russian policies in both issues
<i>Slovenskí branci</i> [Slovak Cadets]	A paramilitary group providing military training combined with Russian indoctrination to young people in Slovakia. According the Slovak Ministry of Interior, the group had 12 territorial units with around 200 members all around Slovakia in 2014. ¹⁷¹ There are reports that training is at least partly provided by former Russian <i>Specnaz</i> (Special Forces). Some of the <i>Slovenskí branci</i> members are known to fight in Ukraine's Donbas on the Russian side, the most known is the case of Martin Kepřta. ¹⁷²
Organization	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity

¹⁷¹ See: <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/370430-militanti-cvicia-mladych-policia-ich-len-sleduje/>

¹⁷² See: <http://branic.blog.sme.sk/c/375808/rozhovor-s-dostojnikom-armady-doneckej-ludovej-republiky-martinom-keprtom.html>

<i>Súkromná stredná odborná škola ochrany osôb a majetku</i> ¹⁷³ [Private secondary professional school on the protection of persons and properties]	Accredited secondary school for the training of specialists of private security companies, used Russian teachers and instructors, appears to be financed by Russian capital, spreading anti-Western, anti-NATO and pro-Russian views among students
<i>Akadémia médií</i> [Media Academy]	A private higher education facility providing university degree to students of journalism, established with the help of Russian capital and led by left-wing, pro-Russian and anti-NATO activist Eduard Chmelár.
<i>Paneuropska vysoká škola</i> [Pan-European High School]	A private university school established by Moscow and formerly led by Jan Čarnogurský, providing training for journalists, lawyers, businessmen, and psychologists. It was recently taken over by owners with Czech capital background

Russian efforts to infiltrate some sectors of the established academic world are also important. Examples include important institutions such as some institutes of the Slovak Academy of Science. *Institute of Economy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences* (EU SAV), for instance, works closely with the Russian Embassy in promoting Russian geopolitical views and perspectives via an annual conference called “Paradigm of the Future Changes in the 21st Century.”¹⁷⁴ Professor Peter Staněk, one of the most prominent and publically the most visible employee of the EU SAV, who is a co-organizer of these conferences, is known as a strong promoter of pro-Russian perspectives. Staněk also served as an economic advisor to PM Fico.

Official Russian representative institutions offer specific support for actors of pro-Russian networks in Slovakia. The *Embassy of the Russian Federation in Slovakia* provides circulation of official statements from the president, the government, MFA of RF, information briefs, comments and explanations of current events, and they are also involved in the distribution of materials/statements of the Slovak pro-Russian domestic actors. The Embassy promotes “soft diplomacy,” demonstratively with the “honorary consulate of Novorossiya” led by Slovak businessman Marian Farkaš. The *Russian Cultural and Scientific Centre* is a cultural institute affiliated with the Russian Embassy. Its tasks include the organization of cultural and artistic events with the participation of Russian and Slovak artists supporting the official state doctrine of Russia or simply expressing sympathy towards Russia.

Persons

Ján Čarnogurský, the chairman of the Slovak-Russian Society (SRS), former dissident, former chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement’s (KDH), former Slovak Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, became involved in activities directed against Slovakia’s membership in NATO and became by far the most prominent open supporter of Putin’s Russia in Slovakia after retiring from active politics. Čarnogurský is a member of the Valdai Club, which organizes the “Davos” meeting of Russia. His system of views include: perception of Russia as a permanent strategic ally of Slovakia; the view that Slovakia was “maneuvered into NATO by lies and coercion” so that its territory could be used as a platform against Russia; Russia must defend itself against the West; Russia is the defender of traditional values and morality; Russia cannot pursue a policy identical to the policy of Western countries; an authoritarian form of government is optimal for Russia; the necessity of Slovakia’s affiliation to Russia if Slovaks felt the “existential threat” borne out of current international arrangements (for example the EU or the NATO).

¹⁷³ See: <https://ssosoom.edupage.org/>

¹⁷⁴ See: http://ekonom.sav.sk/konferencie/paradigmy5/program_en.html

Eduard Chmelár is a member of the younger generation of pro-Russian activist defining himself as leftist, environmentalist and a peace movement activist. His anti-NATO views made him a close ally and follower of Ján Čarnogurský. Čarnogurský gradually opened the doors for him to eventually become the president (“rector”) of a small private higher education facility, “Media Academy” (Akadémia médií). Although he was initially more critical of military action, various perks slowly made him a public defender of pro-Russian positions.

Sergej Chelemendik (died in May 2016) was a publisher, writer and essayist of Russian origin, former politician, and a former member of the Slovak parliament. In 2006–2010 he was elected to Parliament from the candidate list of the Slovak National Party. He was known by his extremely aggressive anti-Western, anti-Hungarian, anti-American, anti-EU and, in the last two years, anti-Ukrainian statements and comments. He served as a mouthpiece for Russian propaganda in Slovakia.

Events

As far as the events used by pro-Russian circles in Slovakia are concerned, during the last two years a mixture of different public actions was observed. They included: 1) pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian demonstrations attended by a relatively small number of people, mostly members of *Pokojní bojovníci* group during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; 2) protests against NATO and the USA, organized several times since the beginning of 2015 on Hviezdoslavovo Square in Bratislava, in front of the US Embassy, attended usually by several hundred persons. Protests were organized by a group of fringe NGOs, and the faces on these demonstrations were always Ján Čarnogurský and Eduard Chmelár; 3) a visit of (fake) members of the Russian biker club Night Wolves in Bratislava and their meeting with the local public on Slavín memorial hill. Russians constituted a considerable part of the audience and the President of Slovak republic, Andrej Kiska, was aggressively booed and verbally attacked by the crowd when he was placing flowers on the memorial; 4) photograph exhibitions on “fight of Novorussia’s people” for freedom against Ukrainian oppression.

Network

Actors of pro-Russian activities have so far represented a conglomerate of organizations, initiatives and persons rather than a functional network. The significance, credibility, social status, and organizational structure of pro-Russian actors are rather uneven. The indication that their actions were coordinated from above has been evident in the last two years, when persons involved in such activities jointly participated in different events, sending common signals to the audience. However, “agents” of Russian influence still lack the professional credibility and strong social recognition for possibly transforming themselves into respected mainstream actors. They can still be considered to be on the fringes. There are also some limits for the successful combination of illiberal and illiberal agendas with Russia’s open political influence and it seems like the role of the main promoters of Russian narratives will be fulfilled by actors with other ideological preferences, namely Slovophile nationalists.

Poland

Executive Summary

Russia does not spread values in Poland directly, instead it utilizes mainly political statements to achieve its geopolitical and economic goals. Values in this case are only tools to achieve the aforementioned goals inserted into political messages, ideas or news.

The main channels of Russian influence are organizations, such as Mateusz Piskorski's European Centre of Geopolitical Analysis, which directly or indirectly spread pro-Russian statements. The most important divisions, which Russia uses to its advantage, are historic animosities between Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania. The main tools of Russian influence in Poland are short messages, such as memes and comments with simple statements.¹⁷⁵

The main danger is that Russian influence will grow in Poland as a consequence of social objection, historical issues and national animosities. Conservative values are not evidence of Russian influence in Poland, but these are tools that might be used by the Kremlin to achieve its political goals. In general, all organizations with a nationalist orientation (many on the left side as well) are exposed to Russian values by creating and expanding international conflicts between Poland and other countries either intentionally or not. The real threats are institutions in which Mateusz Piskorski and Bartosz Bekier appear. They are directly linked to Russia and due to their connections and interests, they are capable of using force (for example, in the form of volunteer patrols).¹⁷⁶

Russia strives to use nationalist movements to turn the Polish society against Ukraine and Lithuania. There are two main channels of reaching this goal: 1) the "Kremlin Propaganda" spread by Piskorski and his associates, and 2) "Russian PR" in Poland against the Kremlin's enemies (NATO, EU, etc.). These contents are also disseminated through national movements, influential intellectuals and journalists. Lately, national movements are more focused on Ukraine, Lithuania and immigrants, while 3-4 years ago they were more concentrating on fighting leftist movements and the LGBT community. Russia uses these conflicts as an opportunity to influence debates in the society.

There are two groups that contribute to the spread of illiberal Russian values: 1) A group that consists of entities dependent strictly on Russia, representing the Kremlin's point of view, and the members' values are linked to, for example, the Eurasian idea of Dugin or Putin's authoritarian policies. They have a small target audience and are treated as political and institutional entities of minor importance. They are only dangerous because journalists and other influential individuals ask for their opinion or invite them to conferences and 2) a group that consists of unaware supporters who are used by Russian propaganda. The best example is priest Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zalewski, who is an advocate of the commemoration of Poles murdered in Volyn by the OUN-UPA in Ukraine.

Overall, Russia has been and continues to be treated in Poland as a potential threat. This animosity has been around for more than four hundred years. Nowadays, the threat is not only military, but also a political and economic one and it focuses on regaining lost Russian influence in the region.

¹⁷⁵ See: <http://demotywatory.pl/4567482/ Teraz-juz-wiesz>

¹⁷⁶ See: <http://xportal.pl/?p=21938>

Media

The spread of Russian values in Poland is a complex and multifaceted process. As a result of historic issues and more than forty years of socialism, Poles are strongly resistant to direct Russian propaganda. Radio Sputnik, for instance, reaches only 0.01% of the target audience in Poland¹⁷⁷ and any reference to these media in the mainstream is considered nonsense. Consequently, the most important goal of the Kremlin is to shape public opinion subtly.

An example of indirect Russian influence is, for instance, the OSCE conference in Warsaw that was held in September 2014, during which there was a discussion on human rights in Ukraine after EuroMaidan,¹⁷⁸ but “experts” partaking in this meeting were not impartial.¹⁷⁹ At that meeting “experts” tried to prove that the government in Kiev did not observe the basic principles of human rights, and it was destructive to the Russian Orthodox Church and Russians in general. Another example is the Anna German International Festival (Międzynarodowy Festiwal Anny German)¹⁸⁰: The president of the Polish Woman League is Mrs. Aldona Michalak, who is closely associated with the Poland-Russia Association for Cooperation. As part of the Festival’s Honorary Committee, the wives of ambassadors of the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Vice-premier Janusz Piechociński and the mayors of six Polish Cities attended.

Overall, these events are tools to make Russia look friendlier in the eyes of Poles, albeit with highly limited success. Alarmingly, Polish politicians and local government representatives let Russia get involved in the organization of such events.

Among pro-Russian media, there is no strict division between outlets that directly spread Russian values and the ones that foster those indirectly or unconsciously (“useful idiots”). However, only a small group of people trust mass media with a direct Russian background.

¹⁷⁷ See: <http://goo.gl/dgOjnv>

¹⁷⁸ See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm0fjgF1dtk and hwww.youtube.com/watch?v=S4DqXmf7OH0

¹⁷⁹ The people invited to the discussion were Oleg Muzyka (Ukraine), member of the illegalized political party Rodina, who was spreading false information about clashes in Odessa on May 2, 2014; Konrad Rękas, formerly a member of Self-defence (Samoobrona, a marginal political party), and the European Centre of Geopolitical Analysis (Europejskie Centrum Analiza Geopolitycznych); Ronald Lasecki, member of Falanga, a pro-Russian organization, connected with the National Bolsheviks of Eduard Limonov and Alexander Dugin’s Eurasianist movement; Tomasz Jankowski, the spokesperson of Self-defence at the time, and associate of Mateusz Piskorski (chief of European Centre of Geopolitical Analysis), chief of Ukrainian Committee, responsible for anti-Maidan demonstrations in Warsaw; Jacek Kamiński, member of the European Centre of Geopolitical Analysis, formerly affiliated with the National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, far-right organization), currently linked with leftist organizations, president of the Foundation Institute of New Countries (Fundacja Instytut Nowych Państw, which is part of The International Institute of the Newly Established States (Международный институт новейших государств of Aleksei Martynow); publicist (why is there no name?) of „Myśl Polska” (far-right nationalist journal) and “Socjalizm Teraz” (Socialism Now, far-left journal).—I edited this list, would be good if someone checked

¹⁸⁰ Organized by the Polish Woman League (Liga Polskich Kobiet), the Centre for Russian Culture and Science in Warsaw (Rosyjski Ośrodek Nauki i Kultury w Warszawie; Rossotrudnichestwo), the Poland-East Association for Cooperation (Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Polska-Wschód), and the Poland-Russia Association for Cooperation (Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Polska-Rosja).

Below in Table 6 is a non-exhaustive alphabetical list of media that disseminates Russian statements

Table 6. Significant pro-Russian media in Poland

I. Russian influence and values ¹⁸¹		II. Illiberal values ¹⁸²	
D: Direct Russian influence	N: Nationalist Ideology	1: Pro-family	
S: Soft Russian influence or foster Russia	L: Leftist political beliefs	2: Anti-feminism	
C: Influence through conservative values	F: Far or extreme	3: Anti-abortion	
		4: Pro-life	
		5: Anti-LGBTQ	
Organization	Pro-Kremlin agenda or activity	I	II
Baza Dokumentów Papieskich	Part of Xportal.pl. Spreading conservative values and foster Russia as a country that protects conservative values.	S, C	1, 2, 3, 4,
Endecja.pl	Web portal rooted in nationalist ideology, currently not updated. Mainly against liberalism.	N, S	-
Kresy.pl	Website with news spreading controversial options, which are based on pro-Russian media and foster a Russian point of view. Connected inter alia with www.censor.net.ua , www.nowastrategia.org.pl , and www.prawy.pl . An example of media directed by a narrow group.	S, C, N	-
Kronika Narodowa ¹⁸³	Against Ukrainian authorities, ^{184,185} against NATO, ¹⁸⁶ support for DPR ¹⁸⁷ and their manifesto. ¹⁸⁸	D, N, F	-
Myśl Polska	Conservative newspaper against Ukraine.	S, C	-
Nacjonalista.pl ¹⁸⁹	News and opinions portal of the National Radical Journal. Probably linked to NOP. Nacjonalista.pl is against globalization, capitalism, imperialism, communism and forced integration of different communities. They support “race and cultural separatism” and “ethnopluralism” ¹⁹⁰ .	S, C, N	-
Narodowcy.net	Web portal with news, published material, and blogs. Anti-liberal, anti-democratic, ¹⁹¹ pro-Russian, anti-LGBT ¹⁹² and anti-Ukraine. ¹⁹³	S, C, N	5
Polityka Narodowa	Quarterly, established in 2008 by people who had grown up with „national ideology.” Connected to Młodzież Wszechpolska (MW), European Centre of Geopolitical Analyses and Dugin’s Eurasianism.	D, C, N, F	-

¹⁸¹ Direct Russian Influence: when organisations or individuals directly refer to statements of the Kremlin or Kremlin media, or when institutional connections are clearly visible and undeniable. This type of influence can be focused on politics, international relations or economic issues, or on cultural statements. It does not mean that all Russian cultural events in Poland are involved in Russian influence system. It means that cultural events may be used as a tool in Kremlin's policy making. Indirect or soft Russian influence: when organisations or individuals create and spread statements, which follow Kremlin’s strategic goals, but shown as independent statements.

¹⁸² If none, then unmarked.

¹⁸³ See: www.kronikanarodowa.pl

¹⁸⁴ See: <http://goo.gl/U4UD75>

¹⁸⁵ See: <http://goo.gl/N0Poka>

¹⁸⁶ See: <http://goo.gl/kUpAb1>

¹⁸⁷ See: <http://goo.gl/nPHX1L>

¹⁸⁸ See: <http://goo.gl/8qPT4d>

¹⁸⁹ Huge list of pages focused on national and conservative values can be found here: also foreign.nacjonalista.pl/katalog-stron

¹⁹⁰ See: www.nacjonalista.pl/nasze-poglady

¹⁹¹ See: narodowcy.net/europa-i-swiat/11353-amerykanie-finansuja-migracje-do-europy

¹⁹² See: narodowcy.net/europa-i-swiat/11309-srodowiska-lgbtq-zamierzaja-zablokowac-parade-rownosci-w-szwecji

¹⁹³ See: narodowcy.net/europa-i-swiat/11342-neobanderowcy-zasila-sbu

Prawica.net	Conservative website, a place to exchange views and opinions. Spreads a positive image of Russia, ^{194,195} and has links to Sputnik. Besides that, it is to the fore of soft conservative groups following Russian values. They are against the EU. ¹⁹⁶	S, C	-
Radio Hobby	Retransmits Sputnik radio broadcasts. ¹⁹⁷	D	-
Xportal	Website with news and published articles. The site spreads Russian propaganda in Poland, it is connected with Falanga, ¹⁹⁸ National-bolshevism ¹⁹⁹ and the European Centre of Geopolitical Analyses. ²⁰⁰ Falanga should be considered as a potential terrorist organization, and Xportal as their media outlet.	D, N, F	-

Pro-Russian issues

Paradoxically, people who are today involved in spreading Russian values originate from the left and right wing of the political spectrum as well. There is no real “pro-Russian” political party in Poland - except for "Zmiana," a so-called political party that was never registered officially. It is more reasonable to talk about information spreading system, where several recipients groups receive specially prepared content.

There are three main topics in pro-Russian and Russian-oriented media. 1) Historic antagonism: The best examples are two FB pages, Vilnius People’s Republic²⁰¹ (Wileńska Republika Ludowa/Виленская Народная Республика) and Lviv People’s Republic²⁰² (Lwowska Republika Ludowa/Львовская Народная Республика). The key is to provoke Poland against Lithuania and Ukraine, and minorities in this process are an important factor.²⁰³ 2) Statements used by nationalist movements: These movements stand against political elites and the capitalist system in general. They are against NATO and criticize the EU and the USA. These organizations use a highly patriotic rhetoric focused on historical issues. Because of that, they are likely to match the rhetoric spread by Russian statements on fighting the Third Reich and fascism in general. This type of narrative is used by the Kremlin to describe the present situation in Ukraine. Members of these institutions are likely to protest against Polish involvement in Ukraine. 3) Undermining the legitimacy of the Polish involvement in Eastern Countries and showing a different view of Russia and Russian policy: this way of enhancement of the image of Russia is done by journalists and Russian-oriented organizations. Such statements are prevalent in certain news portals²⁰⁴ or interviews with respected personalities.²⁰⁵

Overall, direct quotations from Russian media are limited. It is important to stress that organizations directly linked to Russia follow the Kremlin-oriented Russian media and try to spread these statements. Pro-family and pro-life, anti-abortion, anti-feminism and anti-LGBT statements might be found in nationalist movements and media connected to them. Other Russia-oriented media do not focus on such statements. Political Capital interviewed four anonymous sources: a journalist, who is an expert on far-right movements, a former security officer, an LGBTQ activist, left-wing politician, and an academic researcher.

¹⁹⁴ See: www.prawica.net/2226

¹⁹⁵ See: www.prawica.net/2281

¹⁹⁶ See: ksiegarnia.prawica.net/Cukiernik-Dziesiec-lat-w-Unii

¹⁹⁷ See: www.hobby.pl/; www.pl.sputniknews.com/

¹⁹⁸ See: www.falanga.org.pl/

¹⁹⁹ See: www.nazbolpolska.blogspot.com/

²⁰⁰ See: www.geopolityka.org/

²⁰¹ See: <http://goo.gl/xDQEMq>

²⁰² See: <http://goo.gl/Vw7e7K>

²⁰³ E.g., using members of Polish minority in Lithuania; see: www.marszniepodleglosci.pl/2-maja-z-marszem-niepodleglosci/

²⁰⁴ Onet.pl, for instance, informs on news such as “Russia fight against ISIS” and that US forces “mistakenly fired a hospital in Kunduz.”

²⁰⁵ Concerns mainly academics or artists.

One of them underlined the force and nature of the Kremlin’s influence:

“Russia tries to push their interests in Poland, they will use all possibilities to achieve it. Ideology, values or interest groups... if it is possible they will use them.”

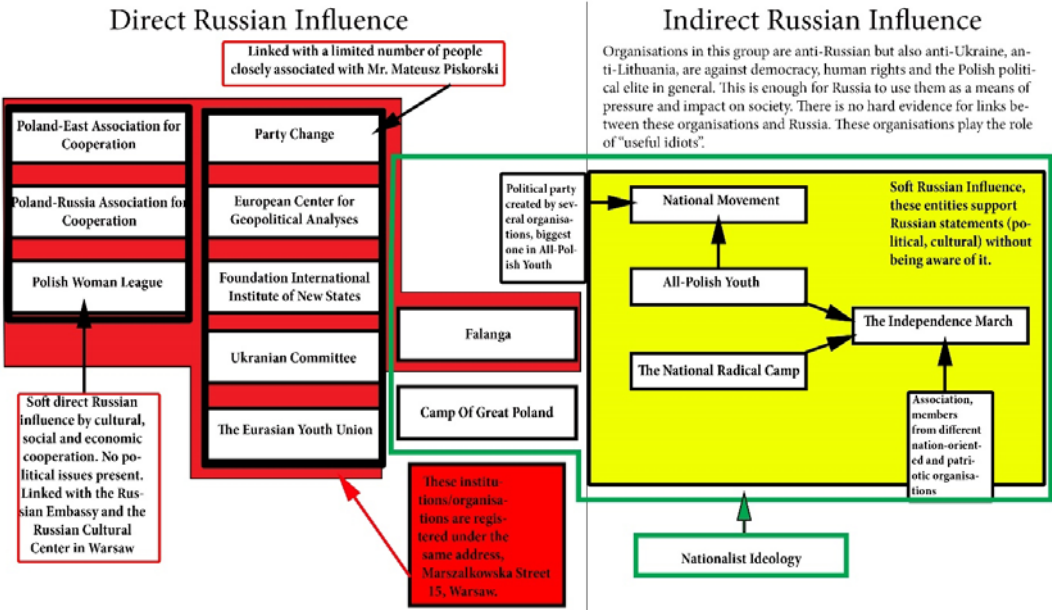
Audiences reached

Russian backed groups base their influence on conflicts and antagonism in Polish society. The most susceptible group exposed to pro-Russian values are the young, patriotic people, who might be easily manipulated. However, the number of likes on the Facebook pages connected to sites based in Russia is not high.²⁰⁶ The number of likes of nationalist movements and related media are higher.²⁰⁷

Institutions

Institutions include various entities, rooted in different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. There are entities established by members of the former Polish communist party, far-right nationalists, Christian or other organizations. There are two general types of organizations and individuals in pro-Russian networks in Poland: 1) those who directly spread Russian values, support Russian policy, follow Russian statements and sometimes use their symbols; 2) those who show support for Putin’s policy in an indirect, unofficial way. Figure 2 below is a comprehensive overview of the two sets of networks.

Figure 2. Direct and indirect ideological influence of the Kremlin in Polish organizational networks



²⁰⁶ Sputnik agency got around 8 thousand, the political party Change 10 thousand, the European Centre for Geopolitical Analyses got only a bit more than 3 thousand likes.

²⁰⁷ The Facebook page of the National Movement got more than 150 thousand likes, the National Radical Camp 32 thousand and the Camp of Great Poland (OWP) 1500 thousand likes, but related media nacjonalista.pl had only 12 thousand and Kronika Narodowa 5 thousand likes. The All-Polish Youth has 59 thousand likes but PolitykaNarodowa.pl only around 5 thousand. The most radical nationalist organization, Falanga, got only 3 thousand likes, but their supported online medium, Xportal, has more than 12 thousand.

Institutions with direct Russian influence

Organizations, which spread Russian values and statements in a direct way, are connected to Mr. Mateusz Piskorski, leader of the openly pro-Russian, officially not registered, Change party (Zmiana). Mateusz's role is unquestionable, since Polish counter-intelligence arrested him in May, 2016 and he is currently in detention on charges of spying for Russia.²⁰⁸ The most important organization is the European Centre for Geopolitical Analyses (Europejskie Centrum Analiz Geopolitycznych, ECAG), a think-tank, which cooperates on ideological grounds with the political party Change (Zmiana) and with the Ukrainian Committee (Komitet Ukraiński) as well. Mr. Piskorski is a deputy chief editor of ECAG and its portal geopolityka.org.²⁰⁹ He has been a regular „election observer” during several elections in the former USSR territories or the CEE region, where official Russian election monitoring activities have been conducted. Zmiana president²¹⁰ and President of the Foundation International Institute of Newly Established States (Fundacja Międzynarodowy Instytut Nowych Państw, FMINP).²¹¹ The President of the Ukrainian Committee²¹² Tomasz Jankowski is the Zmiana Secretary,²¹³ who formerly was an associate of Piskorski, when Piskorski was a spokesman of the political party Samoobrona. Statements of these institutions have some common content: they present anti-Western rhetoric and disagree with the democratic political system and liberalism in general. They treat the Color Revolutions as a threat to the status quo and official authorities. Editors of geopolityka.org are invited to give opinions to pravda.ru,²¹⁴ Golosrossii²¹⁵ and Russia Today.²¹⁶ In Poland, however, they are marginal entities.

Change (Zmiana), a rather value oriented political party that maintains that during the past 26 years Poland has been a “half-colonial market for Western companies and a cheap workforce reservoir.” Change focuses on regaining the sovereignty of the fatherland, “true” Polish *raison d'état* and peaceful coexistence.

Camp of Great Poland (Obóz Wielkiej Polski, OWP) is an association established in 2003. The name and their ideology refer to the interwar organization bearing the same name. Self-described as a “third way,” they pretend to represent the whole nation. The main goal of the recreation of the OWP was to “consolidate the ‘National Movement’” in Poland and “to recover stolen property and obtain Poland’s due place among European countries.”²¹⁷ One of the members of this organization, Dawid Hudziec, is an editor and a journalist of the Polish-Language portal of Novorossiya Today News Agency.²¹⁸

The Eurasian Youth Union (Euroazjatycki Związek Młodzieży; EZM), is the least known group of pro-Russian organizations in Poland. There is no official webpage of this entity, and it is a part of the Eurasian Youth Union²¹⁹ (Евразийский союз молодёжи), a Russian organization established in 2005, which is part of International Eurasian Movement²²⁰ (Международное Евразийское Движение; MED).

²⁰⁸ *Poland detains pro-Kremlin party leader for spying.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/19/poland-detains-pro-kremlin-party-leader-mateusz-piskorski-spying>

²⁰⁹ See: www.geopolityka.org/redakcja-portalu/redakcja-portalu

²¹⁰ See: www.partia-zmiana.pl/biography

²¹¹ See: www.krs-online.com.pl/fundacja-miedzynarodowy-instytut-nowych-krs-817242.html

²¹² See: www.komitet-ukrainski.pl

²¹³ See: www.partia-zmiana.pl/biography

²¹⁴ See: www.pravda.ru/news/expert/20-06-2014/1212855-konrad-0

²¹⁵ See: www.pl.sputniknews.com/polish.ruvr.ru/2014_12_15/O-wizycie-Petro-Poroszenki-w-Polsce-6869

²¹⁶ See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbCGjJIQK8

²¹⁷ See: <http://goo.gl/WwoLxw>

²¹⁸ See: www.novorossia.today/opinie/dawid-hudziec

²¹⁹ See: www.rossia3.ru

²²⁰ See: www.med.org.ru

This association was established after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Its goal is to rebuild the might of the Russian Empire in a political and ideological way, based on conservative values. The association, in its ideological work, is guided by the principles of Neo-Eurasianism, National Bolshevism and Heidegger's philosophy.

Falanga, an ultranationalist organization linked with the Global Revolutionary Alliance, strives to create a new value system through revolutionary changes. Nationalism in Falanga's doctrine is important. The organization proposes integration with "Eurasia (...) as a great space of common interests, through which the center of gravity of world geopolitics will return to the old lands of Europe and Asia, tearing off the head of the Atlantic American Empire." In the field of economy Falanga proposes "state capitalism" which is a system "established nowadays in China and Putin's Russia." Bartosz Bekier, leader of Falanga is a vice president of Change. Mr. Michał Prokopowicz, vice-president of Falanga, was a regional coordinator of Change and the expert responsible for defense issues in the party.

The Poland-East Association for Cooperation (Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Polska-Wschód) focuses on cultural and social issues. Entities that belong to this group are linked to the Russian Embassy in Poland. At the core of this group, there are two associations, one is the Poland-East Association for Cooperation (Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Polska-Wschód) and the other is the Poland-Russia Association for Cooperation (Stowarzyszenie Współpracy Polska-Rosja),²²¹ the latter being closely related to the Polish Women League²²² (Liga Kobiet Polskich). These entities strive for good relations with Russia and are involved in whitewashing the Kremlin's image. Both of these groups are connected to the Centre of Russian Culture and Science in Warsaw,²²³ which is part of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, these entities closely cooperate with each other^{224,225} and with ECAG, Zmiana and the Eurasian Youth Union.²²⁶

Another important pro-Russian political personality is MEP Janusz Korwin-Mikke, who used to be the leader of the ultraconservative party Congress of the New Right, which is particularly popular among the youth and earned 7.15% of the votes, and, consequently, four seats in the European Parliament.²²⁷ In January, 2015 Korwin-Mikke founded his new formation named The Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic—Liberty and Hope (Koalicja Odnowy Rzeczypospolitej Wolność i Nadzieja KORWiN) as a right-libertarian and Eurosceptic political party. He voiced many controversial traditionalist views: women should not have the right to vote, women are less intelligent than men, and other similar statements.²²⁸

²²¹ The main goals of these entities are comparable: The Poland-East Association for Cooperation, among other goals, would like to be an important player in influencing public opinion "(...) on the role and importance of good neighbourly relations and cooperation with our Polish neighbours from the East." The Poland-Russia Association for Cooperation will take measures to "contribute to the construction and development of good neighbourly relations based on cooperation and friendship between the public Polish and Russian communities on the basis of equality and partnership, mutual trust, respect and mutual benefit." www.polskarosja.net/cowspieramy

²²² See: www.ligakobietpolskich.pl/?page_id=1341

²²³ See: www.ronik.org.pl/index.php/pl

²²⁴ See: www.polskarosja.net/partnerzy

²²⁵ See: swpw.org/o-nas/partnerzy

²²⁶ See: www.polskarosja.net/prezentacja-ksiazki-lawrowa

²²⁷ See: <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/812714,rosyj-ski-profil-korwin-mikkego-na-facebooku-to-dopiero-poczatek-bedzie-miedzynarodowka-nowej-prawicy.html>

²²⁸ See: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/nov/08/nigel-farage-ukip-europe-janusz-korwin-mikke>

In an interview with the Russian RIA Novosti, Korwin-Mikke referred to the annexation of Crimea as “completely natural.”²²⁹ It comes as no surprise that the Kremlin-affiliated media frequently quotes him, and that he was invited – although in the end he did not attend – to the “Russia, Ukraine, Novorossiya: global issues and challenges” conference held on August 20, 2014, whose special guest was the U.S. sanctioned Sergey Glazyev, an advisor close to Putin.

In one of his latest statements, Korwin-Mikke condemned the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, and referred to it as having no purpose other than provoking Russia. He also added that Ukraine needs a dictator much like Augusto Pinochet or Deng Xiaoping, who could solve its problems; furthermore, he claimed that Poland should not intervene in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, since “it’s not [our] war.”²³⁰

Institutions with indirect Russian influence

These organizations are anti-democratic, anti-systemic and conservative; they follow pro-life and pro-family principles. They also present anti-abortion, anti-feminist and anti-LGBT agenda. However, these illiberal values are mostly not a result of Russian influence. Due to their conservatism, anti-systemic and anti-democratic agenda, these organizations can adopt Russian political and economic messages rooted in an authoritarian model. Interviewees agreed that Russian influence is subtle and highly pragmatic in many ways:

“Russians are everywhere. They want to gain as much influence on the Polish economy as it is possible. Yes, they use national movements now, but who knows, maybe in two years they will support the bike riders’ lobby. Russians do what benefits them.”

An interviewed expert also acknowledged the weakness of Polish nationalist movements, which might make the Polish youth receptive to the fundamental traditionalism openly or secretly endorsed by the Kremlin:

“We do not have moral authority, young people need to believe in something, many of them decide to believe in patriotism, used by radicals.”

National Movement (Poland) (Ruch Narodowy; RN) is an important political party established in 2014 and officially registered in 2015. Previously, it was a social movement created in 2012 for the Independence March (Marsz Niepodległości), and it consisted of the National Radical Camp, All-Polish Youth and the Real Politics Union (Unia Polityki Realnej, UPR). After the proclamation of their political profile and their decision to run in the parliamentary elections jointly with the KUKIZ party, the National Radical Camp left the National Movement.²³¹ The ideological base of the National Movement is the inter-war nationalism of “Roman Dmowski and his successors, adjusted to modern social, economic and cultural challenges.”²³²

All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska, MW) is an organization that was recreated from an academic association in 1989 by Roman Giertych, who was the President of the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR). The group’s ideological declaration is based on the Polish national movement.

The National Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny; ONR) self-identifies as a social movement of young people who consider God, honor, the Fatherland, family, tradition and friendship as the most important values; it is not a political party and it does not want to participate in party politics.

²²⁹ See: <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/460407,janusz-korwin-mikke-gwiazda-rosyjskich-mediow.html>

²³⁰ See: <http://natemat.pl/100807,korwin-mikke-o-ukrainie-racje-mial-prezydent-rosji-polska-nie-powinna-mieszac-sie-w-ten-konflikt-to-nie-nasza-wojna>

²³¹ <http://goo.gl/jZxX2T>

²³² www.ruchnarodowy.net/o-nas

Instead, they propose “national activism,” which is built around the preparation of patriotic manifestations, the support of veterans, orphanages and people with financial problems. Concerning current political issues, ONR is against immigration from the Muslim world; instead, they want the Polish government to accept repatriates from the former Soviet Union. ONR also cooperates with other nationalist organizations, and ONR, together with All-Polish Youth, organizes The Independence March.

Institutions mentioned above are susceptible to pro-russian statements and because of that, they may be used by the Kremlin to help spreading illiberal values and content.

Persons

In general, only a limited number of people took part in events organized by a group of Pro-Russian entities with direct Russian influence. In this case, culture-related events, where politicians can meet Russian officials, may be used as a tool by the Kremlin to softly influence the Polish society by whitewashing Russian policy and echoing Russian statements in indirect ways. However, it does not mean that all Russian cultural or academic events have hidden political goals. In the case of the group under indirect Russian influence, which includes the Polish nationalist organizations sharing similar cultural values with the Kremlin, the number of attendees is much higher. For instance, during the Independence March in 2014 there were around 70 thousand people. Below in Table 7 there is a list of key figures transmitting Russian influence directly and indirectly.

Table 7. Important Polish personalities exerting direct or indirect Russian influence

Direct Russian Influence	Indirect Russian Influence
Mateusz Piskorski	Witold Tumanowicz
Konrad Rękas	Artur Zawisza
Jacek Kamiński	Adam Andruszkiewicz
Jan Engelgard	Adam Małcki
Bartosz Bekier	Bartosz Berk
Zbigniew Bereza	Krzysztof Bosak
Józef Bryll	Robert Winnicki
Jerzy Smoliński	
Aldona Michalak	
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	
Sylwester Chruszcz	

Besides, there is another influential group: the intelligentsia, or people who can shape public opinion. One example is Stanisław Bieleń, a professor at the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Warsaw. His statements follow Russian propaganda and his opinions are often quoted by pro-Russian media.^{233,234,235} A similar stance is occupied by Bogusław Paż, a professor at University of Wrocław, who's opinions about Ukraine and Ukrainians are in line with Russian statements.²³⁶

Ways of cooperation between domestic and foreign pro-Russian stakeholders depend on the type of the event. For instance, during the discussion “Human rights in Ukraine after Euromaidan,” some Russian representatives took part, who in some cases described themselves as “Ukrainian oppositionists.”

²³³ See: <http://pl.sputniknews.com/opinie/20150912/997357.html>

²³⁴ See: <https://marucha.wordpress.com/2014/03/23/prof-stanislaw-bielen-pod-wieloma-wzgledami-ukraina-znajduje-sie-na-granicy-upadku/>

²³⁵ See: <http://www.bumerangmedia.com/2014/08/prof-bielen-pomyslmy-o-polskim.html>

²³⁶ See: <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/wroclaw/prokuratura-zajmie-sie-skandalicznym-wpisem-profesora-universytetu-wroclawskiego/tjbx2>

In Marsz Niepodległości, Jobbik representatives²³⁷ take part every year. In 2015 September, the vice-premier of Crimea came to Warsaw, and he took part in the meeting of the Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights as a member of the independent organization "Russian society in Crimea."²³⁸

The most dangerous links are the direct military connections of some organizations. OWP recruited people to take part in the II Slavonic Patriotic Camp in Moscow in 2013^{239,240} when they participated in military drills. High school students took part in a trip to Crimea,²⁴¹ which was a prize in a Russian language competition. Other examples include Mateusz Piskorski, Konrad Rękas and Bartosz Bekier being invited by the Nev Rus Coordination Centre to attend a conference on "Russia, Ukraine, Novorossiya: Global problems and challenges"²⁴² held in Crimea. One of the speakers there was Dugin.

Another person to consider is Janusz Korwin-Mikke, member of the EU Parliament; his statements glorify Putin and his imperial policy in the context of Polish security.^{243,244} He also traveled to Crimea^{245,246} and suggested that Poland should not be involved in the war in Ukraine.²⁴⁷ Korwin-Mikke is a marginal politician (although he is a member of the European Parliament) but due to his pro-Russian statements he is often shown in the Russian media.²⁴⁸

Events

The most important events organized by the pro-Russian network in Poland are marches and protests against the EU, NATO, the USA, and liberalism in general. They also organize events aimed at pro-Ukrainian groups and statements. Furthermore, organizations gathered around Mateusz Piskorski organize marches,²⁴⁹ protests,²⁵⁰ debates²⁵¹ and conferences. Nationalist organizations focus on marches and protests, or they partake in social work. For instance, in October they organized about ten marches against immigrants. Patriotism, anti-communism and the rejection of the political left are their common values. The most important nation-oriented event is The Independence March,²⁵² which is not pro-Russian, and definitely not Russia-oriented, but it highlights one of the push factors that Russian indirect influence may exploit. This event unites Polish far-right organizations. From the Kremlin's point of view, it is an opportunity to show that many people do not accept Polish foreign policy, are against elites and agree with conservatism. The number of entities against Marsz Niepodległości is impressive.²⁵³ During this event there are street fights mixed with anti-democratic, anti-liberal and anti-elite slogans.

²³⁷ See: <http://goo.gl/vgRcyv>

²³⁸ See: <http://goo.gl/2nQcRr>

²³⁹ See: <http://goo.gl/Fz67c3>

²⁴⁰ See: <https://goo.gl/aCKANV>

²⁴¹ See: <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,18907409,wyjazd-bialostockich-licealistow-na-krym-wywolal-burzliwa-reakcje.html?disableRedirects=true>

²⁴² See: <http://tiny.pl/gmn3c>

²⁴³ See: http://www.tvn24.pl/wideo/z-anteny/27-04-korwin-mikke-o-prezydencie-rosji-jego-ekscelencja-putin,1417271.html?playlist_id=19489

²⁴⁴ See: <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/korwin-mikke-w-tvn24-ukraina-jest-naszym-wrogiem-nie-rosja,585383.html>

²⁴⁵ See: <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/janusz-korwin-mikke-na-krymie,601922.html>

²⁴⁶ See: <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,19322484,janusz-korwin-mikke-z-wizyta-na-krymie-polecial-przez-moskwe.html>

²⁴⁷ See: <http://natemat.pl/100807,korwin-mikke-o-ukrainie-racje-mial-prezydent-rosji-polska-nie-powinna-mieszac-sie-w-ten-konflikt-to-nie-nasza-wojna>

²⁴⁸ See: http://ria.ru/tags/person_JAnush_Korwin-Mikke/

²⁴⁹ See: <http://partia-zmiana.pl/2015/10/26/marsz-zniszczonych-fabryk-24-10-2015/>

²⁵⁰ See: <http://niezalezna.pl/58668-sympatycy-putina-w-warszawie-prorosyjska-manifestacja-pod-ambasada-ukrainy>

²⁵¹ See: <http://www.geopolityka.org/komentarze/debaty/debata-na-temat-fali-rosyjskich-protestow>

²⁵² See: <https://marszniepodleglosci.pl/>

²⁵³ See: www.11listopada.org/sklad

The Independence March demonstrates the political right's ability to protest, and it unites the fragmented scene of nationalist movements. Each year since 2010 the number of people attending this event grew.

Network

The network of pro-Russian organizations in Poland is dynamic. The key factors in understanding the pro-Russian network in Poland are connections of organizations and individuals. In the case of the direct Russian influence group, the same people appear in many different entities. One day they are party representatives, the next day they are members of the Ukrainian Committee or international relations experts from ECAG. In the case of nation-oriented entities, which cooperate and compete with each other, the model is different: connections are based on the links between organizations and individual relations are of secondary importance. Organizations which were described above as ones with direct links to Russia may be treated as unofficial representatives of Russia. The key factor in the relations with Russia is the Eurasian movement of Alexander Dugin, who should be viewed as the basis of the movement's ideological background.

The Czech Republic

Executive Summary

In the Czech Republic there is a relatively low influence of Christianity. Consequently, the possibility to spread the illiberal values via the Church is highly limited. An important systematic factor is the historical context of the so-called “Munich Complex” which explains the prevalent suspicion of “big powers” and gives room for anti-Americanism. Another important factor is the enormous fear of Islam and immigration—polls²⁵⁴ show that up to two thirds of the country expressed this fear. Anti-Islamism, exploited by pro-Russian actors, is strongly related to a socially conservative political-ideological agenda.

In this environment, 1) the real grassroots activity of clearly pro-Kremlin civic society groups is relatively limited; 2) mainstream media occasionally fall for the Kremlin narrative, but they are dominantly pro-Western or neutral; 3) the nest of pro-Kremlin narratives lies among several dozens of websites, which call themselves “alternative media”: some are officially paid by the Kremlin, some only express its agenda (the most influential one is *Parlamentní listy*, a widely read online medium); 4) President Miloš Zeman is the agenda setter for pro-Kremlin stances in various aspects ranging from denying the Russian presence in Ukraine,²⁵⁵ attacking LGBT groups²⁵⁶ or political prisoners in Russia,²⁵⁷ to a supportive ideological narrative legitimizing authoritarian leaders. In Zeman’s ideology, the anti-human-rights, socially illiberal and pro-Russian narratives are interconnected. His campaign was co-financed by Lukoil. 5) Another force is the far-right, anti-refugee politician Tomio Okamura who has expressed pro-Russian attitudes before.

The problems with counter-narratives in the Czech context are the following: the lack of credible pro-Western voices and the division of citizens on geopolitical and value-based issues. The current cabinet has done virtually nothing noteworthy in the field of countering Russian propaganda in 2014 – 2015. In late 2015, the Government launched *Review of National Security* report, one of the eleven chapters of which scrutinizes the Influence of foreign powers. The most significant step taken so far is the establishment of the Hybrid Threat Centre in the Czech Interior Ministry, to be operational from January 2017 with up to 30 staffers. A number of NGOs and initiatives support pro-Western values, but very few of them actually conduct systematic activities.

Media

The Russian efforts to gain influence and spread propaganda mainly follow the means attested already during the Soviet era: concealment, covering their own (Russian/Soviet) actions and the demonization of the West. Russia has been building influential propaganda structures in the Czech Republic, the goal being the assertion and protection of Russian economic and political interests. The spectrum of the Russian propaganda tools used in the Czech Republic stretches from ideologically manipulating citizens to professionals consciously cooperating with Russians. As the internationalists memorial affair showed at the Olšany Cemetery in Prague in March 2014, where a memorial plaque was advocating and supporting the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ ČTK: Uprchlíků se bojí dvě třetiny Čechů, rozšíření islámu 80 %. iHned.cz. 6.11.2015. WWW: http://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-64832050-pruzkum-uprchliku-se-boji-dve-tretiny-cechu-rozsireni-islam-80-procent?utm_source=mediafed&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=mediafed

²⁵⁵ Lucie Stuchlíková, Lubor Kreč: Rusové přiznávají, že bojují na Ukrajině. Prezident Česka ne. Aktuálně.cz. 10.3.2015. WWW: <http://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/rusove-priznavaji-ze-bojuji-na-ukrajine-prezident-ceska-ne/r~e59dc11ac63a11e486b9002590604f2e/>

²⁵⁶ Jakub Konečný: Vadí Zemanovi homosexualita? Proč nechce jmenovat Putnu profesorem? Tiscali.cz. 20.5.2013. WWW: <http://zpravy.tiscali.cz/vadi-zemanovi-homosexualita-proc-nechce-jmenovat-putnu-profesorem-213477>

²⁵⁷ ČTK: Synové Gorbaněvské: Tvrdohlavý Zeman odmítá podpořit ruské politické vězně. Lidovky.cz. 2.2.2015. WWW: http://www.lidovky.cz/synove-gorbanevske-zeman-se-odmita-postavit-za-politicke-vezne-v-rusku-1nx-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A150202_180734_in_domov_ele

²⁵⁸ Ron Synovitz and Katarina Solikova: Russian Memorial Removed From Prague Cemetery. Radio Free Europe. 20.3.2014. WWW: <http://www.rferl.org/content/czech-memorial-soviet-russian/25304333.html>

The Czech public is sensitive to direct Russian (or any other foreign) influence in the Czech Republic. Consequently, Russian-language propaganda does not have much effect.

Czech pro-Russian oriented organizations or individuals and their web projects have a reasonable importance among the Czech audience.²⁵⁹ Through these channels, Russian opinions and arguments are expressed in a way that an ordinary citizen could assume that he does not embrace Russian ideas, opinions and convictions.

Media with clearly critical editorial policy on the actions of the Russian Federation

Mainstream media with pro-Atlantic editorial policies are not dominant, yet influential. Such outlets are the weekly *Respekt*, daily *Hospodářské noviny*, *Lidové noviny*,²⁶⁰ online *Aktuálně.cz*, the special watchdog project *HlidaciPes.org*, or *Neovlivni.cz*, a project focusing on the disclosure of foreign (not only Kremlin's) influence. They mostly follow liberal, Western values.

Media with indifferent, unclear, unreadable or mixed stances

The majority of Czech media fall into the category with no significant normative stances. Outlets, such as the daily *Mladá Fronta DNES*, tabloid *Blesk*, weekly *TÝDEN*, or television such as *TV NOVA* or *TV Prima* all fall into this category.

Certain left-leaning media represent special cases: due to their ideological criticism of the USA (as well as NATO and the EU for its alleged neoliberalism) they offer a so-called “balanced” view on the Ukrainian conflict. For instance, this unwritten policy is followed by the online portal *Deník Referendum* or *Alarm/A2*.²⁶¹ *Deník Referendum* stands against neo-conservatism, for example criticizing²⁶² access of conservatives to public TV. Both outlets are highly critical of US foreign policy,²⁶³ including the invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the “war on terror.”²⁶⁴ *Alarm/A2* published an article²⁶⁵ claiming that the USA had made efforts to change the regime in Ukraine.

However, the social values agenda of *Deník Referendum* can be described as leftist-progressive, sometimes even radical left.²⁶⁶ For example, *Deník Referendum* can be considered pro-choice,²⁶⁷ and the same set of values is defended by *Alarm/A2*.²⁶⁸ Both outlets have defended Pussy Riot, in the form of publishing an open letter at *Alarm/A2*²⁶⁹ or connecting the case to the situation of Nadia Savchenko in *Deník Referendum*.²⁷⁰

Sometimes, clearly apologetic texts are published; the same is characteristic of the leading left-wing printed daily *Právo*, which is neutral in its news section but has several pro-Kremlin commentators, such as Jan Keller (who is also Member of the European Parliament for ČSSD).

²⁵⁹ Jako příklad může sloužit průběžná návštěvnost portálů patřících akciové společnosti OUR MEDIA, mezi které patří např. výše zmíněné Parlamentní listy nebo Protiproud. WWW: <http://kurzy.cz/~nr/netmonitor/our-media-a-s/home/>

²⁶⁰ With some exceptions of their external authors, such as Jan Petránek, who comments regularly for Czech State Radio. Commentator Jan Petránek even claimed that occupation of Crimea was „a defensive move“. See Czech Radio: http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiozurnal/host/_zprava/putinuv-vpad-na-krym-byl-obranny-tah-a-zapad-se-prepocital-mini-jan-petranek--1451880 (5. 2. 2015)

²⁶¹ For example, see clearly apologetic article by Petr Gočev at *Alarm.cz* – Rozumět Putinovi (Understanding Putin) (28. 1. 2015): <http://a2alarm.cz/2015/01/rozumet-putinovi/>

²⁶² See: <http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/18809-propaganda-po-zapadnim-zpusobu>

²⁶³ See: <http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/20149-jiri-pehe-symbol-neutrality-ceskych-medii>

²⁶⁴ See: <http://a2alarm.cz/2015/09/valka-proti-teroru-plni-vse-v-co-bin-ladin-doufal/>

²⁶⁵ See: <http://a2alarm.cz/2014/03/ukrajina-neni-toho-na-jednu-zmenu-rezimu-az-moc/>

²⁶⁶ See: <http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/20224-v-cem-a-proc-se-neshodnu-s-petrem-uhlem>

²⁶⁷ See: <http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/22296-virus-zika-znovu-otevira-palcivou-debatu-o-potrtech>

²⁶⁸ See: <http://a2alarm.cz/2016/04/nepotratis/>

²⁶⁹ See: <http://a2alarm.cz/2014/11/otevreny-dopis-pussy-riot/>

²⁷⁰ See: <http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/22489-mohu-si-dovolit-byt-bezradny>

Media with dominant pro-Kremlin stances²⁷¹

Unlike in Slovakia, outlets with dominant pro-Kremlin stances do not intervene often with the mainstream media debate. *Literární noviny*²⁷² is an openly pro-Russian weekly paper, but its influence is relatively small. Most of the export of the Kremlin's narrative can be tracked to online websites. The key actor is *Parlamentní listy*, which gives voice to Putin apologists, conspiracy theories and anti-system, conservative subjects or individuals.

Czech public media—the Czech Television and Czech Radio—are a special case. Since both are held accountable to the Codex of the Czech Television and Codex of Czech Radio,^{273,274} a “balanced” take is expected on all issues. In reality, this is translated into situations when two guests are usually invited with opposite positions.

Overview of pro-Kremlin websites

There are many propaganda websites in the Czech Republic. An overview of pro-Kremlin websites was made in 2015 by Neovlivni.cz.²⁷⁵ Most of the websites present the Kremlin's point of view on the Ukrainian crisis and criticize the EU and NATO. The sites generally feature a quite significant illiberal values agenda regarding feminism (i.e., a strong anti-gender stance), LGBT issues, and traditional family relation. Ultimately, with or without mentioning the Kremlin, the Czech pro-Kremlin sites work as “echo chambers” of illiberal values. One prime example is Miloš Zeman, who is often quoted promoting a strongly illiberal ideological agenda.²⁷⁶

Ondřej Kundra has conducted three interviews in the Czech Republic on the condition of anonymity. Thus, sources can be identified as one high-ranking official of one of the Czech intelligence agencies, a leading member of the Czech Defense Ministry, and, finally, a representative of one of the specialized police units dealing with foreign threats. All three interviewees agreed on the increased activity of pro-Russian web pages in the Czech Republic since the beginning of the Russian war in Ukraine:

“In this case, we acted too late. No one was interested in this issue in the past, security forces had a lack of awareness of it and because they didn't get any political assignment, they weren't and aren't dealing with it,” said the high-ranking official from the Czech intelligence agency. However, according to both him and the representative of the specialized police, the Czech Republic is not under as much threat as Slovakia is, because a number of pro-Russian web pages and other Kremlin information channels are less active here and also less read, so their chance to influence public opinion is limited.

²⁷¹ For more investigative pieces on pro-Kremlin media, follow Neovlivni.cz at <http://neovlivni.cz/category/ruska-stopa/prokremelska-media/>

²⁷² See articles by its commentator Tereza Spencerová: <http://www.literarky.cz/blogy/tereza-spencerova>

²⁷³ Kodex ČT. Cesktelevize.cz. WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/kodex-ct/preambule-a-vyklad-pojmu/>

²⁷⁴ Kodex Českého rozhlasu. Rozhlas.cz. http://www.rozhlas.cz/rada/legislativa/_zprava/kodex-ceskeho-rozhlasu--789056

²⁷⁵ Neovlivni.cz. Kreml v ČR: Databáze proruského obsahu. Neovlivni.cz. 10.8.2015. WWW: <http://neovlivni.cz/kreml-cr-database-prorusky-obsah-vliv/>

²⁷⁶ <http://euserver.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/1737-vzdelany-zeman-haji-zajmy-naroda-stetky-a-prasata-obcuji-v-kostele-vyhrocena-demonstrace-na-podporu-prezidenta-kam-prisli-i-jeho-odpurci.aspx>, Zeman: O Pussy Riot vám nabídnu důkaz pravdy, pokud máte odvahu ho uveřejnit (+18 let). Bezpolicíckekorektnosti.cz. 16.11.2014. WWW: <http://www.bezpolicíckekorektnosti.cz/?p=26163>

Regarding narratives and values these websites share, there has been a significant shift since the fall of 2015. Having analyzed 1) the weekly data from EEAS East STRATCOM Disinformation Review; 2) weekly monitoring reports of the European Values Think-Tank (launched in November 2015, available upon request); and 3) monthly monitoring reports entitled “Information war monitor for Central Europe” by CEPI, Political Capital Institute and the European Values Think-Tank,²⁷⁷ a clear pattern emerged: all pro-Russian media mention conspiracy stories about refugees, Muslims, or the whole migration crisis; LGBT, anti-feminism and Christianity-related issues are interconnected and mixed in a general anti-Western narrative. A brief characterization of these websites is summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Selected pro-Kremlin websites

Organization	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity
Bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz / Vlastenecké noviny.cz	The website informs on the situation in the Czech Republic and beyond. It criticizes immigration, ²⁷⁸ Islam ²⁷⁹ and Western countries. ²⁸⁰ It often offers only a Russian point of view on the Ukrainian crisis. It is powered by: Alfa libera, o. s.; leading contributor is Radek Velička, journalist and supporter of the far-right Citizen Initiative D.O.S.T.; the website publishes comments of Miroslav Macek ²⁸¹ , the former vice-chairman of Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Adam B. Bartoš, a supporter of anti-Semitism, Peter Hájek, the former Senior Advisor to President Václav Klaus, Michael Semín, the leader of the Citizen Initiative D.O.S.T. The site provides space to anti-feminism ²⁸² and anti-LGBT ²⁸³ rhetoric and conservative values. ²⁸⁴ It is connected to the <i>Blok proti islámu</i> political movement, whose leading member Petr Hampl is one of the frequent contributors, and <i>Patrioti</i> , a marginal political party that stands against globalization and membership in the EU and NATO. ²⁸⁵
Euserver.cz	The website characterizes itself as a place that enables intellectual debate between patriotic left-wing and right-wing parties. They discuss how to protect the sovereignty of the Czech Republic. The website advises against Islam, ²⁸⁶ points out corruption in Western countries ²⁸⁷ and sees Putin’s Russia as the only hope. It exclusively the Russian point of view exclusively regarding the Ukrainian crisis. It is owned by OUR MEDIA, a. s. controlled by Michal Voráček.

²⁷⁷ October-November 2015 edition: <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/information-war-monitor-central-europe-october-november-2015>, December 2015 edition: <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/information-war-monitor-central-europe-december-2015>

²⁷⁸ Hana Macharáčková: V Německu mohou vetřelci krást, loupit a zabíjet; Kdo proti tomu protestuje je extrémista, rasista a xenofob. Bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz. 16.2.2016. WWW: <http://www.bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz/?p=68522>

²⁷⁹ Lea Vojteková: Uprchlíci nám nevadí. Co nám vadí jsou muslimští ekonomičtí přivandrovalci a islám. Bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz. 7.2.2016. WWW: <http://www.bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz/?p=67979>

²⁸⁰ Ladislav Kašuka: Severoatlantická aliance není demokratickou obrannou aliancí, nýbrž paktem agresorů a vrahů. Bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz. 14.2.2016. WWW: <http://www.bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz/?p=68498>

²⁸¹ Glosy Miroslava Macka. Bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz. <http://www.bezpolitickekorektnosti.cz/?cat=411>

²⁸² O co těm odporným feministickým lesbickým škeblím, které jsou hnusné jako ropuchy, jde? <http://www.vlasteneckenoviny.cz/?p=105891>

²⁸³ We want more; Aneb viděl někdo ty homosexuály a lesby? Je jich tak málo, že nejsou ani vidět. Ale aktivisté jsou slyšet <http://www.vlasteneckenoviny.cz/?s=lesb>

²⁸⁴ Bez rodiny to nejde páni sociální inženýři <http://www.vlasteneckenoviny.cz/?p=159739>

²⁸⁵ See: <http://patriotistrana.cz/program/>

²⁸⁶ Masakr v pařížské redakci Charlie Hebdo opět ukázal, že islám nechce soužití, ale násilnou islamizaci Evropy. Pojďte se mu postavit na demonstraci před sídlem prezidenta Zemana. Euserver.cz. 11.1.2015. WWW: <http://euserver.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/1796-masakr-v-parizske-redakci-charlie-hebdo-opet-ukazal-ze-islam-nechce-souziti-ale-nasilnou-islamizaci-evropy-pojdte-se-mu-postavit-na-demonstraci-pred-sidlem-prezidenta-zemana.aspx>

²⁸⁷ Washington a Brusel se vměšují do ruských voleb. Problémy u svých voleb však nepřiznají. Euserver.cz. 13.3.2012. WWW: <http://euserver.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/358-washington-a-brusel-se-vmesuji-do-ruskych-voleb-problemy-u-svych-voleb-vsak-nepřiznaji.aspx>

Organization	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity
Euportal.cz	Motto: Free Nations of Europe and Free Citizens of Nations. It publishes pro-Putin articles and criticizes Western countries ²⁸⁸ ; it presents the Russian point of view on the Ukrainian crisis; the server has strong anti-immigration rhetoric. ²⁸⁹ The website was supported by former President Václav Klaus. It is owned by OUR MEDIA, a. s. controlled by Michal Voráček, powered by: Český portál, o.p.s.; Adam B. Bartoš, the anti-Semite, is a member of the Board of Directors; editor in Chief is Lukáš Petřík, a journalist of Parlamentní listy.
Freeglobe.cz	The website warns about risks which lead to eventual loss of freedom and warns to defend national sovereignty against violations of civil liberties by the state or supranational bodies ²⁹⁰ and the restriction of the sovereignty of countries. ²⁹¹ The published articles are highly pro-Russian and pro-Putin. It is owned by OUR MEDIA, a. s. controlled by Michal Voráček and powered by: Český portál, o.p.s. The managing Director is Daniel Kotula; Adam B. Bartoš, an anti-Semite and a member of the Board of Directors; editor in Chief is Adam B. Bartoš who goes by a pseudonym “Edvard Steinský.”
HLAS RUSKA/ SPUTNIK	Motto: Sputnik Tells the Untold. Hlas Ruska, the official Russian radio station broadcasting since 1929, was replaced by Sputnik in 2015, the radio and news agency. It broadcasts in 30 languages, 130 cities and 34 countries. It represents the Kremlin’s point of view on international news.
Isstras.eu/ CZ	Motto: Strengthening the Slavic Solidarity in the Geopolitical Space of Slavic Countries. The website criticizes Western countries, particularly the USA, ²⁹² and supports Russia and Vladimir Putin ²⁹³ ; the website also supports traditional Slavic values as a connection between Czechs and Russians. ²⁹⁴ Powered by: Institute of Slavic Strategic Studies (ISSTRAS), which was co-founded by Radmila Zemanova-Kopecká, a former member of Citizens’ Rights Party (former SPOZ), who is also associated with other similar websites.
Nwoo.org	Motto: World Cannot be Ruled and Dominated by Group of Individuals, namely: The Bilderberg Group, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Trilateral Commission, NATO, UN, IMF (MMF), the CIA, The Illuminati, FreeMason (Svobodní Zednáři) or governments controlled by these or other societies (banking families, financiers, royal families, political clans). It has been presenting the Russian point of view on the Ukrainian crisis since 2014. Jan Korál is the Editor in Chief. He attends the same kind of events as Adam B. Bartoš (an anti-Semite).

²⁸⁸ Kdo je pan Putin, jak se dostal k moci, proč je na západě tak nenáviděn a proč Obama odjel jak spráskaný pes? Tady je odpověď- Euserver.cz. 9.4.2014. WWW: <http://euportal.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/11931-kdo-je-pan-putin-jak-se-dostal-k-moci-proc-je-na-zapade-tak-nenaviden-a-proc-obama-odjel-jak-spraskany-pes-tady-je-odpoved.aspx>

²⁸⁹ See the following articles: <http://eportal.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/8271-v-tomto-malem-mestecku-se-lide-vzbouřili-proti-vlade-sobotka-bude-nevericne-koukat-kdo-je-podporil.aspx>; <http://eportal.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/8276-co-by-ti-cernosi-jako-chteli-tyto-statistiky-hovori-za-vse.aspx>; <http://eportal.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/8279-uprchlici-se-zase-servali-jako-kone-duvod-sporu-vas-zaskoci.aspx>; <http://eportal.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/8290-tato-evropska-zeme-prisla-na-to-jak-se-zbavit-uprchliku-ma-to-ale-jeden-takovy-hacek-.aspx>

²⁹⁰ Antonín Seruti: Eurokrati chtějí přivést integraci EU s Tureckem ke konečnému vítězství. Sdílime společné hodnoty. Freeglobe.cz. 7.2.2016. WWW: <http://freeglobe.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/14890-eurokrati-chteji-privest-integraci-eu-s-tureckem-ke-konecnemu-vitezstvi-sdilime-spolecne-hodnoty.aspx>

²⁹¹ Lukáš Petřík: Analýza: Vystoupení z EU by přineslo České republice prosperitu. Freeglobe.cz. 4.10.2013. WWW: <http://freeglobe.parlamentnilisty.cz/Articles/3333-analyza-vystoupeni-z-eu-by-prineslo-ceske-republice-prosperitu.aspx>

²⁹² Radka Zemanová, Kopecká: EU a USA v roli „užitečných idiotů“. Isstras.eu. 20.4.2014. WWW: <http://www.isstras.eu/cs/2014/04/20/eu-a-usa-v-rolu-uzitecnych-idiotu/>

²⁹³ Tradiční hodnoty jsou pro Rusko strategií národní bezpečnosti. Isstras.eu. 7.1.2016. WWW: <http://www.isstras.eu/cs/2016/01/07/tradicni-hodnoty-jsou-pro-rusko-strategii-narodni-bezpecnosti/>

²⁹⁴ See: <http://www.isstras.eu/cs/2016/01/07/tradicni-hodnoty-jsou-pro-rusko-strategii-narodni-bezpecnosti/>

Organization	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity
Parlamentní listy	Motto: Nobody Tells us What to Write. Articles supporting Putin and the Kremlin are often published by Petr Hájek, Michal Semín and others. It republishes articles of other pro-Kremlin journalists from other websites. Powered by: OUR MEDIA, a. s. According to the Commercial Register it was owned in 2014 by Michal Voráček, a businessman and very influential mass media person. It has a relatively high number of readers. This platform is key for most pro-Kremlin and pro-conspiracy subjects.
Protiproud	Moto: Everybody Has a Choice. Become Slave or Join Protiproud. The website informs about the corruption of Western countries ²⁹⁵ ; it presents conspiracy theories, admires Putin and presents a pro-Russian point of view on international events. It has a “spiritual life” section, where traditional Christian values are juxtaposed with modern Western model of society. ²⁹⁶ It is owned by OUR MEDIA, a. s. controlled by Michal Voráček. The Editor in Chief is Petr Hájek, a supporter of conspiracy theories, denier of the evolution theory and Senior Advisor to the former President Václav Klaus. The website is in Czech and Russian as well.
Stalo-se.cz	Motto: Our Team Supplies Alternative Information, Information Which is not Presented in the Mainstream Media and Propaganda Information Management. The website presents domestic and international news and offers exclusively Russian point of view on the Ukrainian crisis. It takes information from Russian mass media and Kremlin agencies. Powered by: Alfa libera, o. s. This website has merged with Vlastenecke noviny. The leading contributor is Radek Velička, a journalist and supporter of the far-right Citizen Initiative D.O.S.T.
Svobodnenoviny.eu	Motto: Balancing the Mainstream News. The website presents domestic and international news and offers mainly the Kremlin’s point of view on the Ukrainian crisis. The site is anti-Western. ²⁹⁷ It also extensively covers the situation around the migration crisis and provides space to the far-right radical nationalist political party Národní demokracie. ²⁹⁸ It often attacks liberal narratives. One of the contributors is Jiří Vyvadil, the president of Friends of Russia in the Czech Republic Initiative and a fan of Vladimir Putin. The website is owned by Martin Gudbier.
YOUTH TIME MAGAZINE	Motto: Magazine Created by Youth for Youth. The mostly lifestyle magazine is in English and Russian. It features interviews with individuals supporting Moscow policies. The Editor in Chief is Julia Kinash, a close colleague of Vladimir Yakunin, an oligarch and long-term head of Russian Railways. His WPF “Dialogue of Civilizations” is a partner organization of Youth Movement Time. The magazine is funded by companies, which are connected to Russian Railways.

²⁹⁵ Hra na demokracii skončila: Tajná dohoda TISA předá Americe národní státy na stříbrném podnosu. Vzdělání, zdravotnictví a vše ostatní do privátních rukou? Klíčový projekt nového světového řádu. Protiproud.cz. 27.1.2016. WWW: <http://protiproud.parlamentnilisty.cz/politika/2211-hra-na-demokracii-skoncila-tajna-dohoda-tisa-preda-americe-narodni-staty-na-stribrnem-podnosu-vzdelani-zdravotnictvi-a-vse-ostatni-do-privatnich-rukou-klicovy-projekt-noveho-svetoveho-radu.htm>

²⁹⁶ See: <http://protiproud.parlamentnilisty.cz/duchovni-svet/2263-politicka-ekumena-na-kube-setkani-po-tisici-letech-centrum-pravoslavi-se-presouva-do-moskvy-pokatolicti-schizmatici-naseho-papeze-rusko-uci-zapad-moralce-hodil-frantisek-vychodni-katoliky-pres-palubu.htm>; <http://protiproud.parlamentnilisty.cz/duchovni-svet/2237-popelecni-streda-ztiseni-uprostred-bouricihu-sveta-nezname-dne-ani-hodiny-sveho-odchodu-postni-tradice-u-nas-jak-zemrel-kral-ladislav-svedectvi-obracene-prostitutky.htm>

²⁹⁷ See: <http://svobodnenoviny.eu/havloidi-pryc-z-vlady-pryc-z-medii-pryc-ze-skolstvi/>

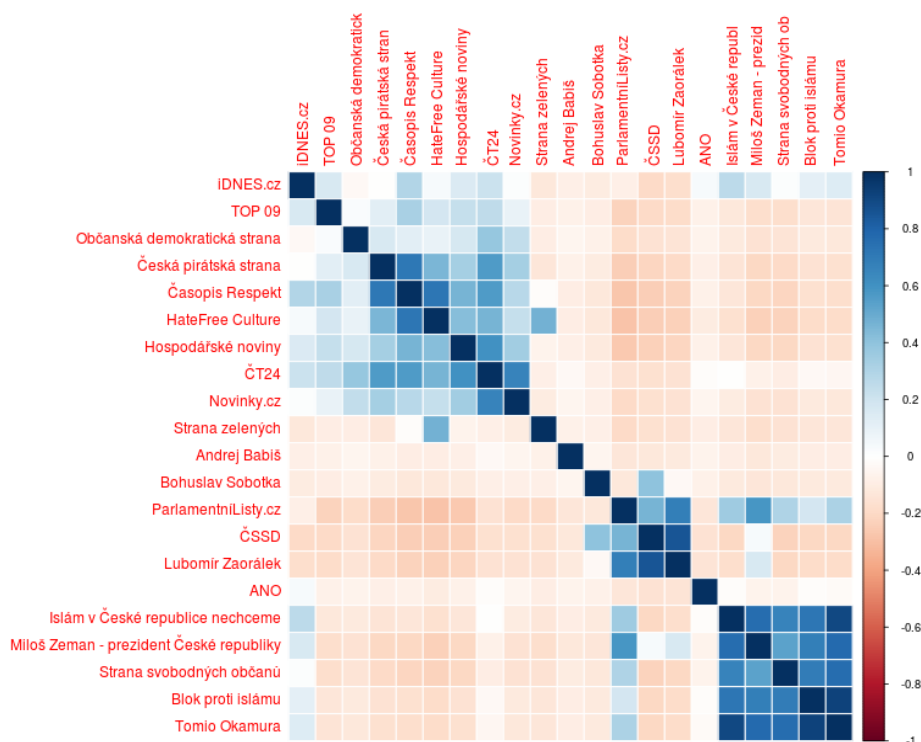
²⁹⁸ See: <http://svobodnenoviny.eu/demonstrace-a-pochod-za-ceskou-republiku-26-brezna-2016-praha/>

Organization	Illiberal/pro-Kremlin agenda or activity
Zvedavec.org	Motto: I am Trying to Find the Truth. All is Connected and All is Heading in Certain Direction. The More I Read the More I Understand the Intentions of Powerful People. I Like Controversial Topics. Zvedavec is Independent, Simply Because It Can be. The website presents conspiracy theories, publishes articles about the Ukrainian crisis and criticizes Western countries. ²⁹⁹ It was founded by a Czechoslovakian emigrant living in Toronto, Vladimir Stwora in 1999. Stwora was sentenced to a suspended sentence in September 2011 for questioning the existence of concentration camps and gas chambers.

Social media

A very important platform for spreading illiberal values is Facebook. From Šlerka's graph³⁰⁰ (Figure 3 below) we can see the intricate correlation between fans of various pages.

Figure 3. Value-sets of selected Czech Facebook pages



Radio

Russian influence can also be disseminated in the form of radio broadcasting. Two of the most popular radios of this sort are *Svobodné radio*—which claims that people are deprived of their basic liberties by laws adopted by governments that are directed against citizens—and *Svobodný vysílač*, with content including strong anti-EU feelings and conspiracy theories. The two radio stations do not possess a clear value-orientation, but they indirectly promote anti-liberal narratives, mostly with geopolitical motives (on Ukraine or Syria).

²⁹⁹ Michael Jabara Carley: Ukrajina – článek řetězce amerického obklíčování Ruska. Zvedavec.org. 9.10.2015. WWW: <http://www.zvedavec.org/komentare/2015/10/6614-ukrajina-clanek-retezce-americkeho-obklivovani-ruska.htm>

³⁰⁰ ŠLERKA Josef, <http://databoutique.cz/post/132864956223/jak-lajkovali-na-facebooku-antiislamist%C3%A9>

Institutions

Two key institutions that are the sources of Russian influence are the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Czech Republic and the Office of the President of the Czech Republic. These two are by far the most influential organizations with significant political, financial, rhetorical and ideological resources present in the Czech political system. Besides these, the political parties are important players as well, such as the Communist Party of Czechia and Moravia.

Parliamentary political parties

Czech political parties represented in the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament can be divided into three groups:

1) With clear pro-Western stances

TOP 09 (Tradition Responsibility Prosperity – EPP member): Acting as an opposition party, it has been one of the most vocal critics of the Kremlin's policies and actions, with a Western, conservative liberal value set. It even stands publicly against Russian propaganda.

ODS (Civic Democratic Party – ECR member): An opposition party; it is a critic of the governing coalition, describing them as weak and soft in their response to Russian aggression and propaganda. There have been a few pro-Kremlin voices in the party (not in the leadership), but the party has been resolute in its stances.

KDU-ČSL (Union of Christian Democrats – Czech Peoples Party - EPP member): A junior governing coalition partner, firmly criticizes Russian actions in Crimea and Ukraine in the new media.

2) With inconclusive or multiple stance(s)

ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens – ALDE member): A populist party founded by millionaire and oligarch Andrej Babiš; it has not had strong and sustainable stances on any foreign policy issue. The party's voice is the voice of its leader.

ČSSD (Czech Party of Social Democrats – PES member): A senior coalition partner, it has experienced a significant internal split on the issue of European actions against Russia. Minister of Industry Jan Mládek with his previous Russian connections has been one of the most vocal critics of sanctions, and Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka was either silent or unclear on the sanctions.

3) Clearly defending Kremlin in all of their policies

KSČM (Communist Party of Czechia and Moravia – GUE member): A long-term anti-establishment party with stable support of around 15%, it expresses understanding and support for Russian political/military actions in every media and public appearance. Its deep anti-Western approach is obvious, and it is the voice of the Kremlin on the Czech scene. Despite being a leftist party, it can be considered socially conservative (with anti-liberal rhetoric) with mainly ambiguous or negative attitudes towards, for example, LGBT rights.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Tereza Kurfiřtová: Komunisté se štěpí v názorech na homosexualitu. EuroZprávy.cz. 10.8.2012. WWW: <http://domaci.eurozpravy.cz/spolecnost/54715-komuniste-se-stepi-v-nazorech-na-homosexualitu/>

Úsvit přímé demokracie (Dawn of Direct Democracy – potential EFDD member): This was originally a single-issue party focusing on Roma and direct democracy issues. During its time in Parliament, it took a position on Russian aggression,³⁰² refugees and Islam,³⁰³ in opposition to what the government is standing for. It was clearly a populist party, which eventually split in 2015.

Non-parliamentary political parties

Strana práv občanů – SPO – formerly SPOZ (Party of Citizens Rights): It was established as a one-man party for Miloš Zeman to get him to the position of the president (which was successfully achieved in 2013), and it can be considered close to KSČM. The party fully reflects Miloš Zeman's opinion, including all of his pro-Kremlin stances, and it is present in *Parlamentní listy*, an alternative platform with clear pro-Kremlin and pro-conspiracy editorial policy. Considering values, it is socially conservative, and it presents a strong anti-LGBTQ platform.³⁰⁴

Strana svobodných občanů (Party of Free Citizen): A member of EFDD Group in the European Parliament with a clearly Eurosceptic agenda; it is on the political map due to its one Member of European Parliament (Petr Mach). Its pro-Kremlin stance is a collateral product of its ideology, not the main cause.

Blok proti islámu (Block against Islam): It was established as a political subject in the summer of 2015. It has a single-issue agenda, and it has a growing support among the electorate with anti-establishment tendencies. It sees the EU as a weak pro-Islamic establishment, and therefore describes Vladimir Putin as a strong leader who fights Islamism and protects conservative traditional values. Its leader, Martin Konvička, in some cases, adores certain conspiracy theories and puts Russia high on his moral map.

Persons

Miloš Zeman³⁰⁵ is the President of the Czech Republic since 2013 (with a mandate until 2018). The former Prime Minister and a long-time leader of ČSSD, he has had positive attitudes towards authoritarian regimes and Vladimir Putin. He acts as a tool of Kremlin information war against the West, while he portrays himself as the defender of Czech sovereignty.

Václav Klaus is a former long-term Prime Minister and a two-term president (2003–2013). He founded and led the ODS political party and has been the strongest Czech critic of the EU over the last 25 years. After becoming a hero of the 1990s, he started to change and harden his ideological approach during his time as the Czech President. Ideological criticism of the EU³⁰⁶ was accompanied by his growing negative attitude towards the USA, homosexuals and even climate change.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Radim Fiala: Rusko není jediným a hlavním viníkem války na Ukrajině. *Parlamentnilisty.cz*. 26.8.2014. WWW: <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/politika/politici-voicum/Fiala-Usvit-Rusko-neni-jediny-m-a-hlavnim-vinikem-valky-na-Ukrajine-332187>

³⁰³ Josef Kopecký: Ve jménu Alláha vraždí kdekoliv na světě, varoval nový šéf Úsvitu Lidinský. *iDnes.cz*. 8.8.2015. WWW: http://zpravy.idnes.cz/usvit-nove-vede-veteran-z-afghanistanu-lidinsky-fuo-/domaci.aspx?c=A150808_124747_domaci_kop

³⁰⁴ Zemanovi se nelíbí Putnova účast na Prague Pride. *Českátelevize.cz*. 18.5.2013. WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1097727-zemanovi-se-nelibi-putnova-ucast-na-prague-pride>

³⁰⁵ See five top pro-Kremlin positions by Zeman reported by European Values Think-Tank: WWW: <http://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/5-kroku-kterymi-milos-zeman-rozkladal-ceskou-zahranicni-politiku-roce-2014/>

³⁰⁶ Luboš Palata: Evropskou unii zrušíme jako komunismus, vyzval Klaus v Bruselu. *iDnes.cz*. 13.11.2014. WWW: http://zpravy.idnes.cz/vaclav-klaus-vyzyva-ke-zruseni-unie-d72-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A141112_221004_domaci_mlb

³⁰⁷ Klaus v nové knize: globální oteplování neexistuje, klima je deset tisíc let stejné. *Novinky.cz*. 26.8.2009. WWW: <http://www.novinky.cz/domaci/177316-klaus-v-nove-knize-globalni-oteplovani-neexistuje-klima-je-deset-tisic-let-stejne.html>

After leaving the presidential office in 2013, while seeking public appearances, he started to criticize the West for the situation in Ukraine³⁰⁸ and even apologized for Russian actions in Western media³⁰⁹ or in the British Parliament.³¹⁰ He is a public supporter and a fan of Marine Le Pen, and he regularly meets with representatives of the Kremlin.

Marek Obrtel is a former Army officer who served in the Afghanistan War. He is best known for returning the medal received during his NATO operation service in Afghanistan War. He has called NATO a “criminal organization”³¹¹ and founded the initiative “Českoslovenští vojáci v záloze proti válce plánované velením NATO” (Czech-Slovak Reserve Soldiers against War Planned by NATO Leadership) which plans to “defend our homeland” against the NATO, the USA, refugees and Islamists. He publicly adores Russia.

Events

The pro-Kremlin events are not major, well-attended or regular in the Czech Republic. The only visible subject with relevant activity is a group called “Friends of Russia in the Czech Republic.”

On the anniversary of celebrating the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army, a convoy of Putin's “emissaries” was to pass through the Czech Republic—a biker gang called the Night Wolves.³¹² However, the real purpose of the tour was clearly to demonstrate their support for Putin, who is on friendly terms with the group's leader. The Night Wolves should be perceived, above all, as a criminal group.³¹³ They also had their supporters among a specific local group called *Přátelé Ruska v České republice*. One of the most vocal ones is a lawyer and politician, former Senator Jiří Vyvadil.

Intelligence Scandal

In the summer of 2010, the Czech Republic was shocked by a scandal involving Robert Rachardzo, a Russian spy, a superstar in his line of business. He proved that one agent could significantly harm the reputation of a NATO member with trivial “intelligence” tools. Rachardzo was supposed to use his knowledge of psychology to collect discrediting personal material about significant Czech personages. The Czech Army generals³¹⁴ had to eventually leave the army, thanks to Rachardzo's activities. Rachardzo's mission was not discovered by the overconfident Czech secret services, but by experienced Western allies.

The source from the Czech Defense Ministry said that the Russian Embassy in the Czech Republic is very active in espionage activities. Russian agents are trying to influence the legislative process, obtain particular public contracts, promote Russian companies to major projects and, therefore, increase the dependence of Prague on Moscow. “The problem is more complex. There are Russian spies even outside the Embassy and Czech secret services have no capacity to control them,” Mr. K says.

³⁰⁸ ČTK: Klaus: K tragédii na Ukrajině přispěly USA a EU. Putin jedná racionálně. iDnes.cz. 6.3.2014. WWW: http://zpravy.idnes.cz/klaus-o-situaci-v-rusku-a-na-ukrajine-dv4-/domaci.aspx?c=A140306_145211_domaci_maq

³⁰⁹ Neil Clark: Vaclav Klaus: the West's lies about Russia are monstrous. Spectator.co.uk. 27.9.2014. WWW: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/09/europe-needs-systemic-change/>

³¹⁰ Za Ukrajinu může z velké části Západ, zopakoval Klaus ve Sněmovně lordů. Česká televize.cz. 10.11.2014. WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/svet/1009928-za-ukrajinu-muze-z-velke-casti-zapad-zopakoval-klaus-ve-snemovne-lordu>

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Network

From what we know, most of the key actors of the pro-Russian ideological influence are not well connected and coordinated.

Two focal points have been identified. One is *Parlamentní listy*, where most of the actors under the Kremlin's influence publish on a regular basis, and their voices get multiplied. The second one is President Miloš Zeman, who sets the agenda for pro-Kremlin actors to follow. Anything he says in this aspect is widely shared, recognized and retold by his followers.