



# EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Christos Smilianis and Elise Morton

# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR



# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

## Europe

- **not independent in matters of Defence**
  - Relies on NATO and US strength
  - US pays for 70% of NATO's budget
  - Average nuclear and small conventional deterrence ability
    - Brexit
  - Small hope for real European Army

# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

Europe

- **Huge “Soft power”**
  - Appeal to the youth
  - Economic achievements
  - Common interests to other players
  - Inspiring Ukrainian uprising
  - Firm sanctions to Russia
  - Democracy
  - Humanitarian aid
  - Cultural influence
  - Iran Nuclear Deal
- **The power is waning**
  - Financial crisis
  - Immigration crisis
  - Anti-EU movement, rise of the populists, misinformation
  - Trump
  - Brexit

# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

Europe

- **Huge “Soft power”**
  - Appeal to the youth
  - Economic achievements
  - Common interests to other players
  - Inspiring Ukrainian uprising
  - Firm sanctions to Russia
  - Democracy
  - Humanitarian aid
  - Cultural influence
  - Iran Nuclear Deal
- **The power is waning**
  - Financial crisis
  - Immigration crisis
  - Anti-EU movement, rise of the populists, misinformation
  - Trump
  - Brexit

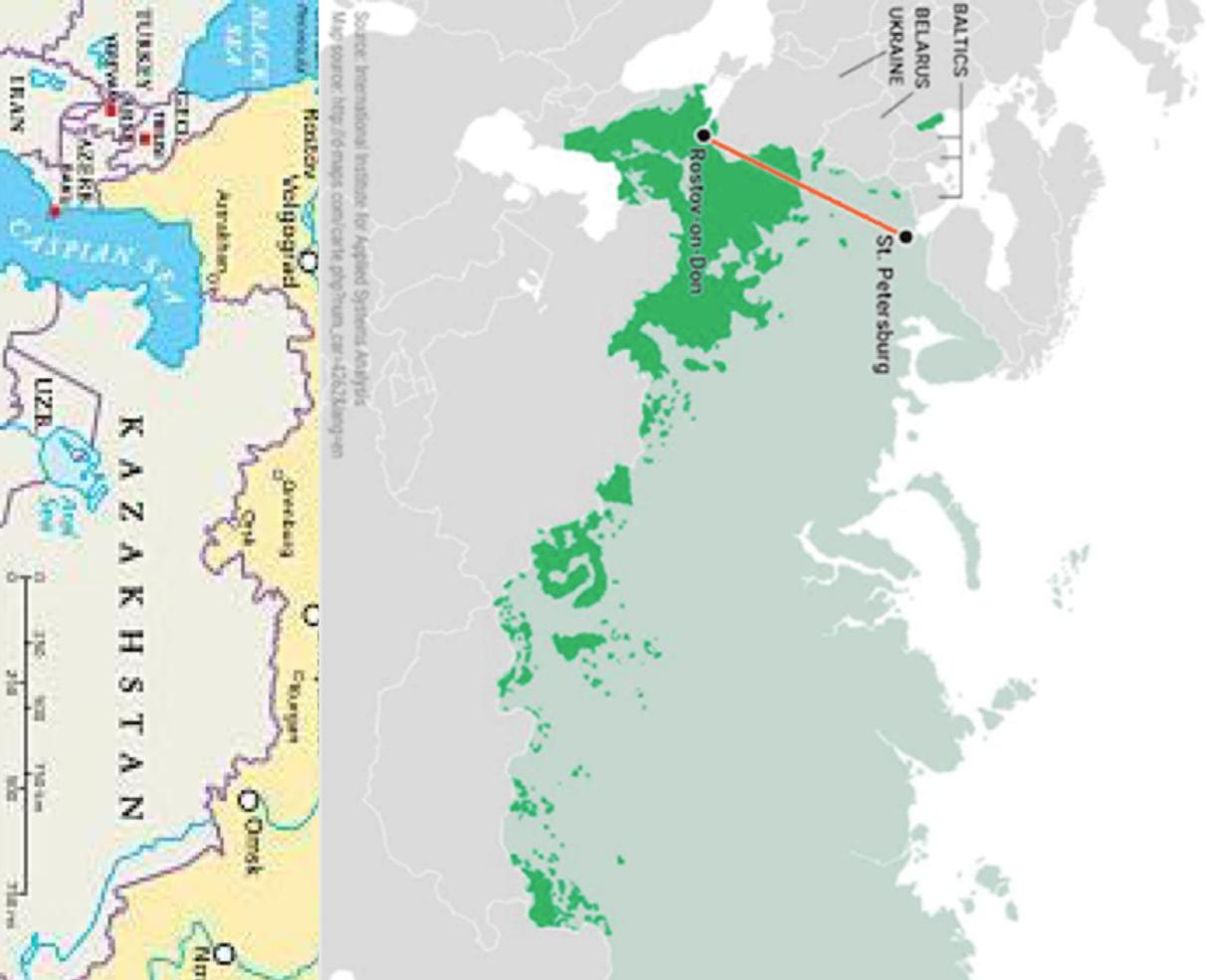
# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

Russia

- Huge Conventional Army
- Huge Nuclear Arsenal
- Recent “Imperial” past
- Outdated Systems
- Limited Air power capabilities
- Limited Planetary power projection capabilities

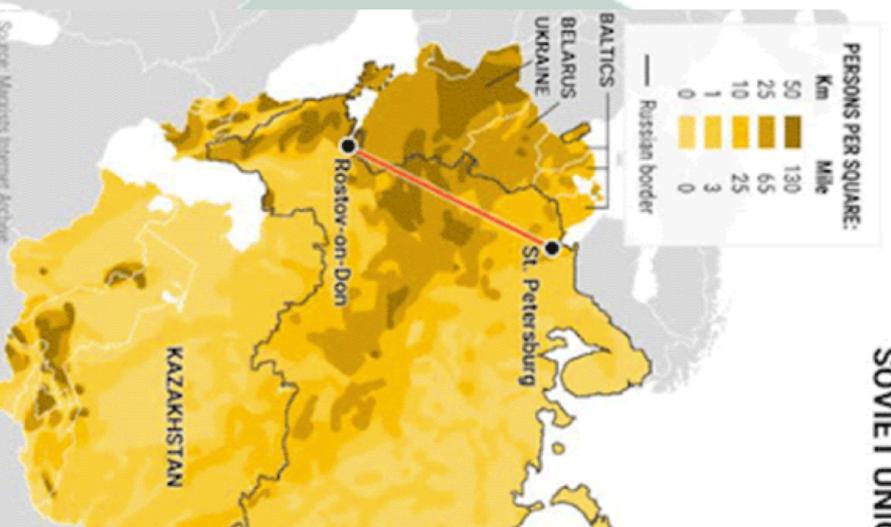
# GEOGRAPHY

## RUSSIAN AGRICULTURAL AREAS



Source: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis  
 Map source: [http://maps.com/carte.php?num\\_carte=4232&lang=en](http://maps.com/carte.php?num_carte=4232&lang=en)

## SOVIET UNION POPULATION DENSITY



Source: Mardas Internet Archive  
 Map source: [http://maps.com/carte.php?num\\_carte=4232&lang=en](http://maps.com/carte.php?num_carte=4232&lang=en)



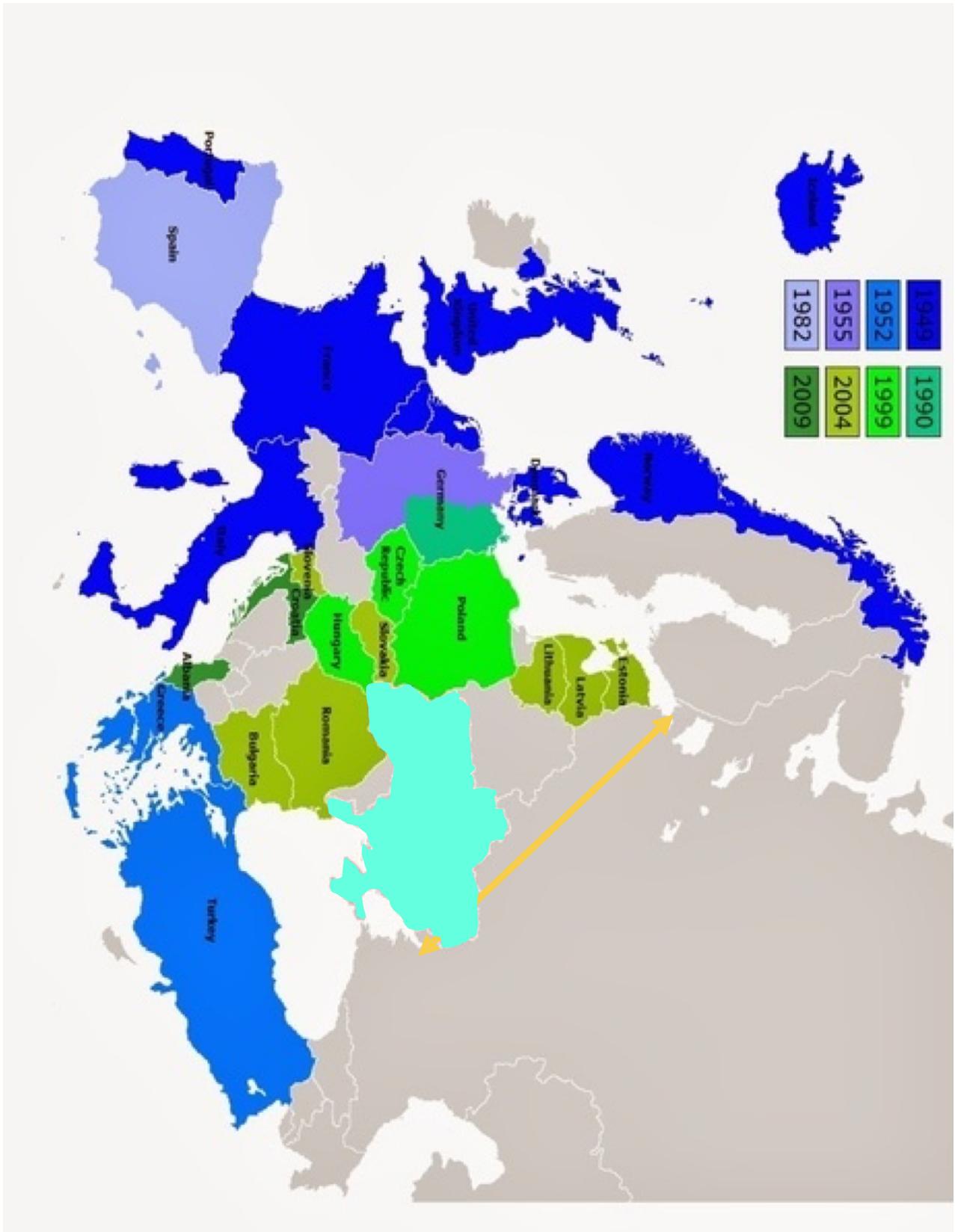
## RUSSIAN RAILRO

THE EUROPEAN PENINSULA AND RUSSIA



# FARTHEST GERMAN ADVANCE, 1942

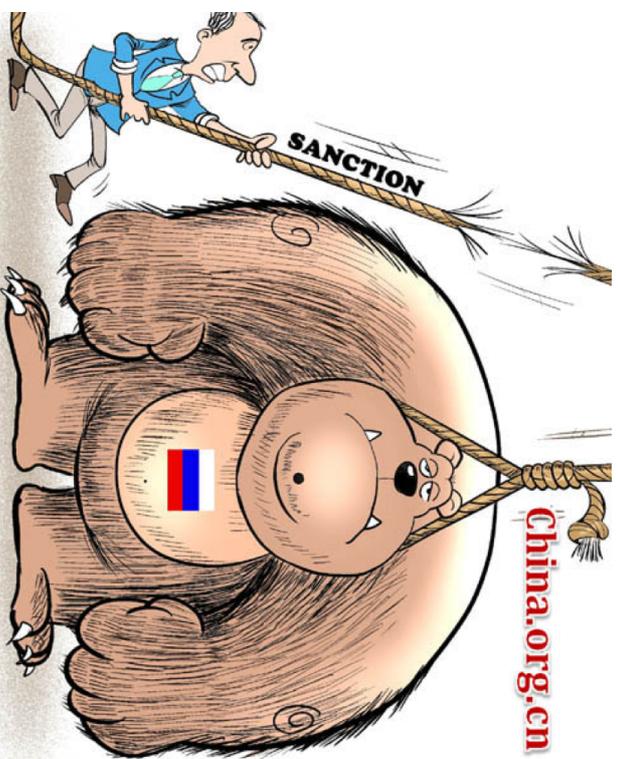




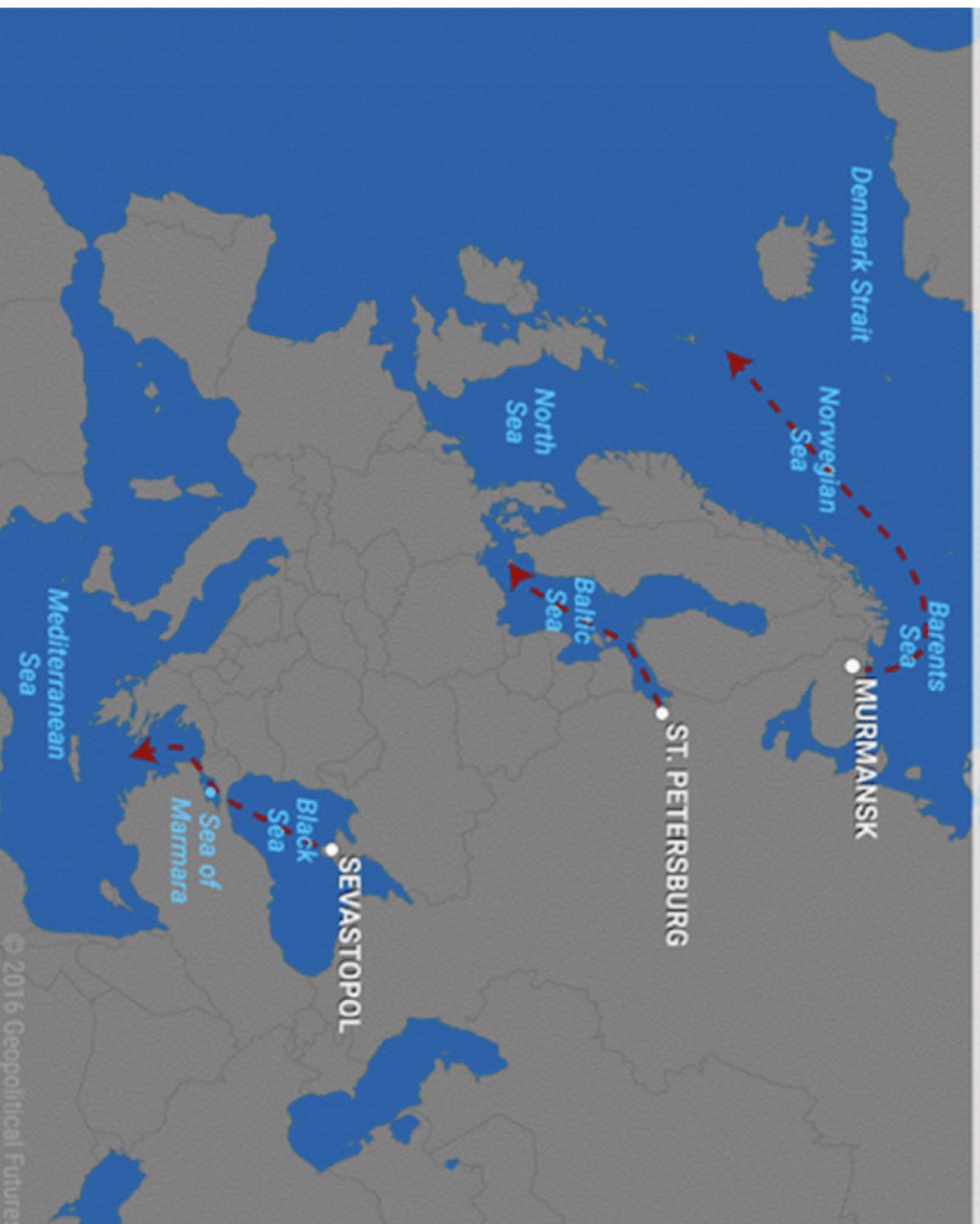
# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

Europe & Russia

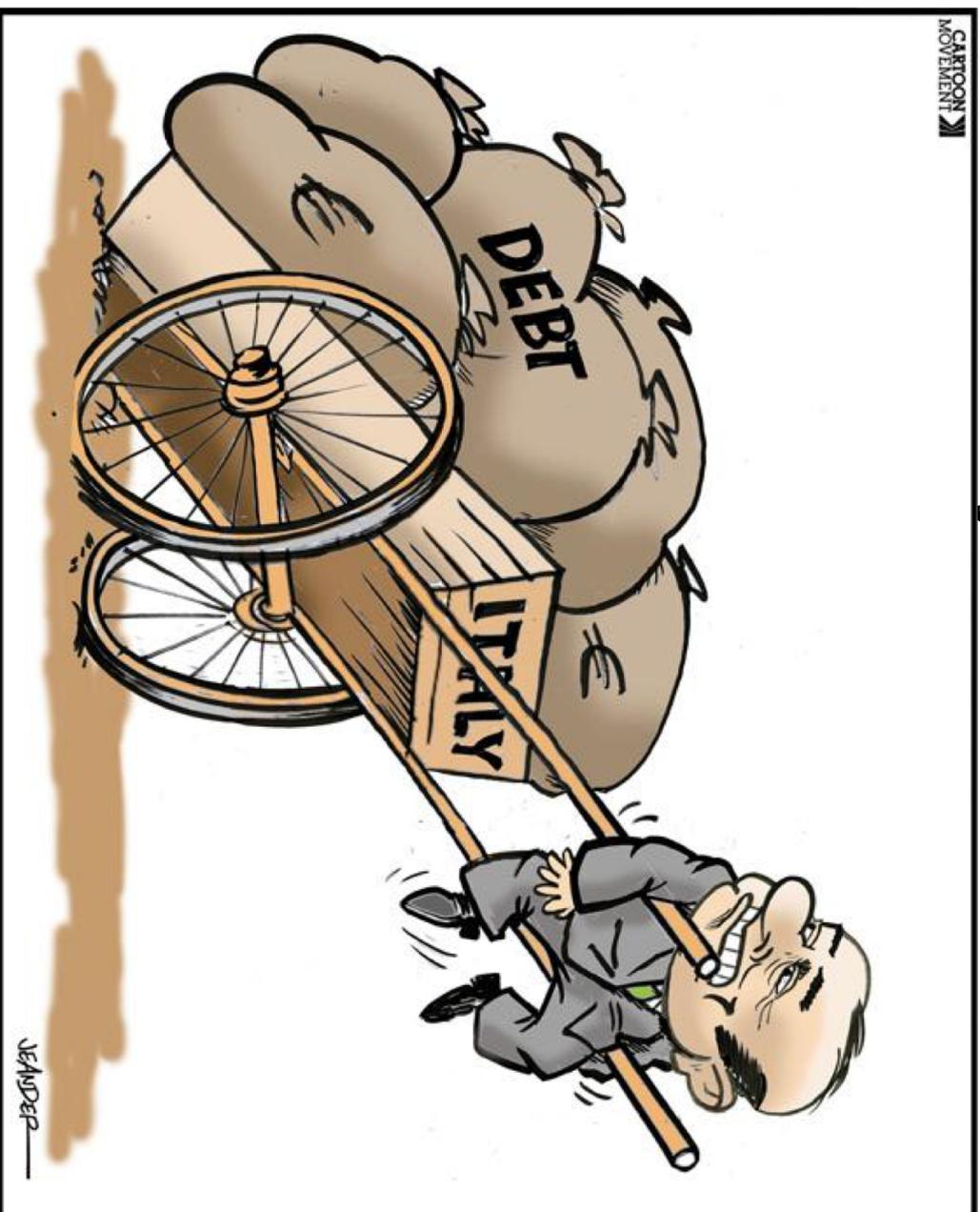
Economy and trade



## RUSSIA'S MARITIME CHOKE POINTS



# Economy and trade



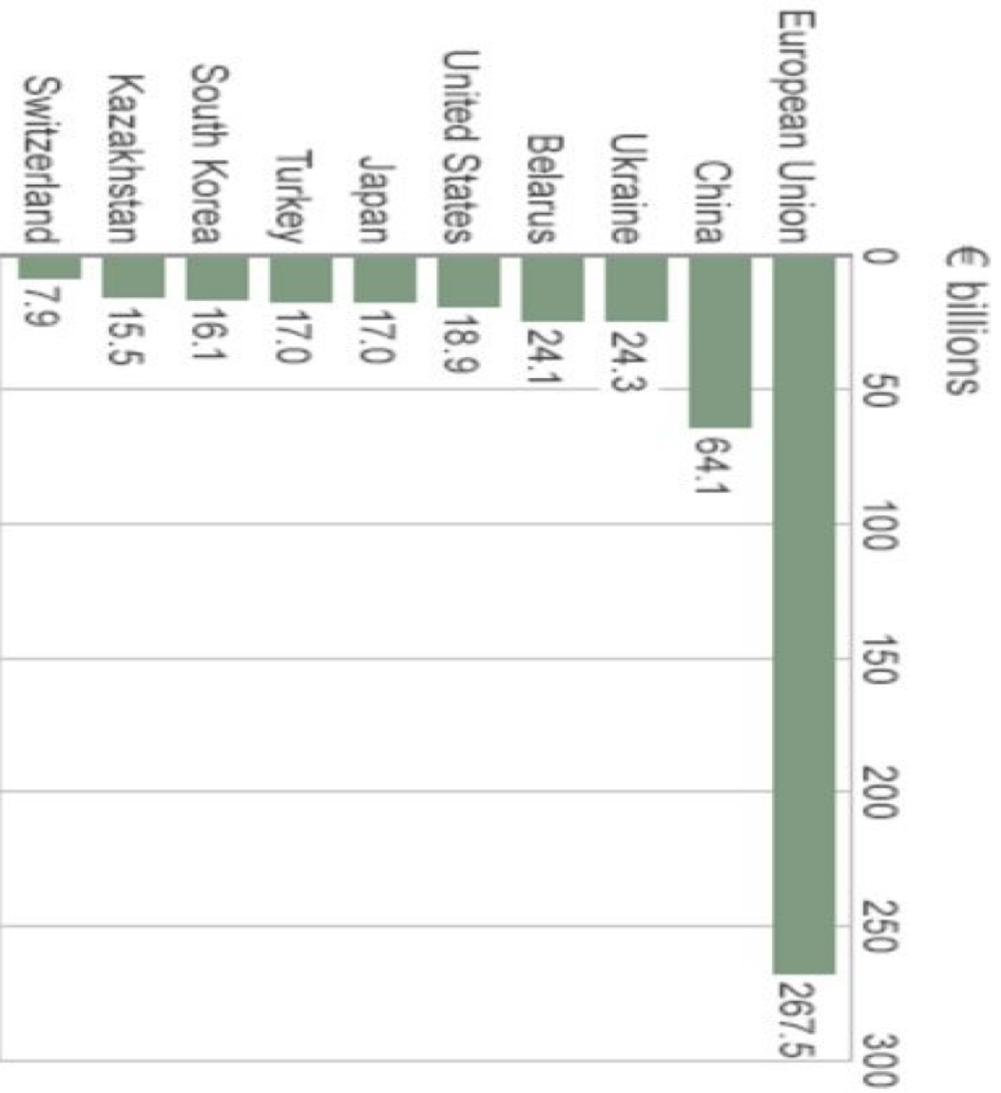
# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

Europe & Russia

## Economy and trade

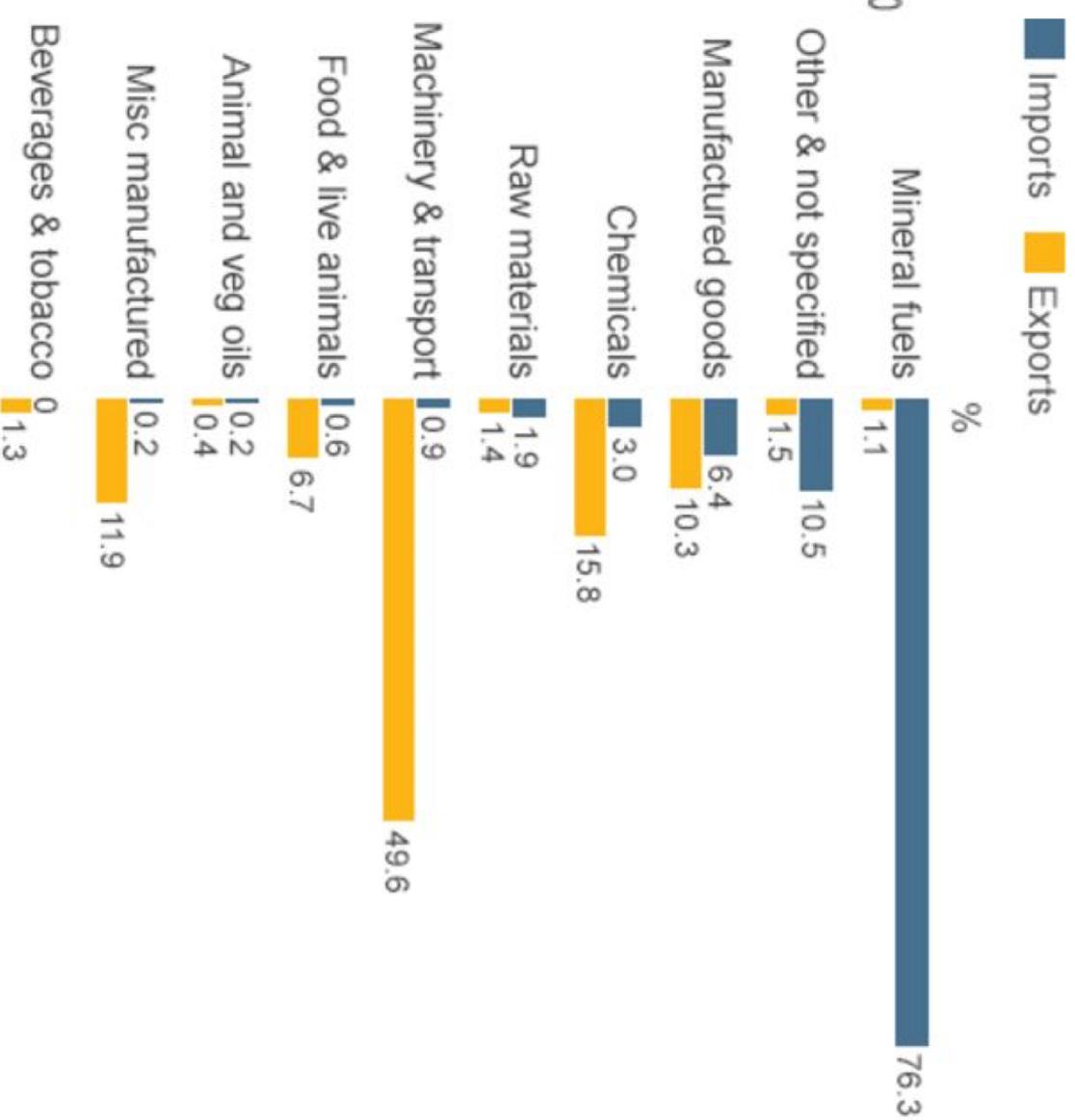
- Strong Economic ties until the Annexation of Crimea
- Firm sanctions against Russia no matter the cost
- Europe's dependency on fuels and raw materials
- Trade rebounds since 2017
- Ruble free fall
- Russian economy buttered

## Russia's top trading partners 2012



Source: Eurostat

## EU imports from and exports to Russia



Source: Eurostat

# TRADE



# WHAT LIES BEHIND RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

## Society trends

- ❖ Humans are emotional beings and not rational
- ❖ Current generation faced the consequences of the collapse of the USSR
- ❖ Younger generations demand reforms and democracy. Are excluded from power.

“A new type of war has emerged, in which armed warfare has given up its decisive place in the achievement of the military and political objectives of war to another kind of warfare - information warfare.” V. Квачков, Спецназ России (Russia's Special Purpose Forces), 2004

# INFORMATION WARFARE / ИНФОРМАЦИОННАЯ ВОЙНА

**What is it?**

Dan Kuehl of the National Defence University defined information warfare as the “**conflict or struggle between two or more groups in the information environment**”

“The strategic use of information or information technology for intelligence-gathering or military purposes; the deliberate disruption of information and communications systems, especially by a terrorist or subversive group.” (Oxford English Dictionary)

Information warfare is a “**holistic concept** that includes computer network operations, electronic warfare, psychological operations, and information operations.” (Sophia Porotsky, *Global Security Review*)

**Aim: not to propagandise Russian ideals, but to plant seeds of doubt and distrust; to confuse, distract, polarise and demoralise.**

## GAP BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN UNDERSTANDING:

- Division into discrete aspects e.g. disinformation, cyber attacks on infrastructure is NOT a Russian concept
  - Information warfare is, rather, a holistic concept
- Can cover a vast range of activities/channels e.g. real or invented news media, statements by leaders or celebrities, Facebook ads/accounts, online troll campaigns, text messages, YouTube videos, vox pops by concerned citizens
- Russian concept of information war = all-encompassing, and not limited to wartime vs the Western conception = limited, tactical information operations carried out during hostilities

Michael Connell, 2016

# WHAT NARRATIVES?

1. Narratives depicting Russia as powerful e.g. threats of nuclear action, misinformation about military movements → confusion in international community
2. Cynicism about domestic and international politics and discredits the idea of international law and norms. Disputing concept of truth by flooding internet with stories, many are fake news or conspiracy theories
3. Legitimizes illegally created 'facts on the ground' by weaponising otherwise acceptable concepts: popular self-determination, defending sovereign borders, and the inviolability of human rights e.g. Crimea, dubious self-proclaimed republics recognised e.g. South Ossetia, giving ethnic Russians in other countries citizenship

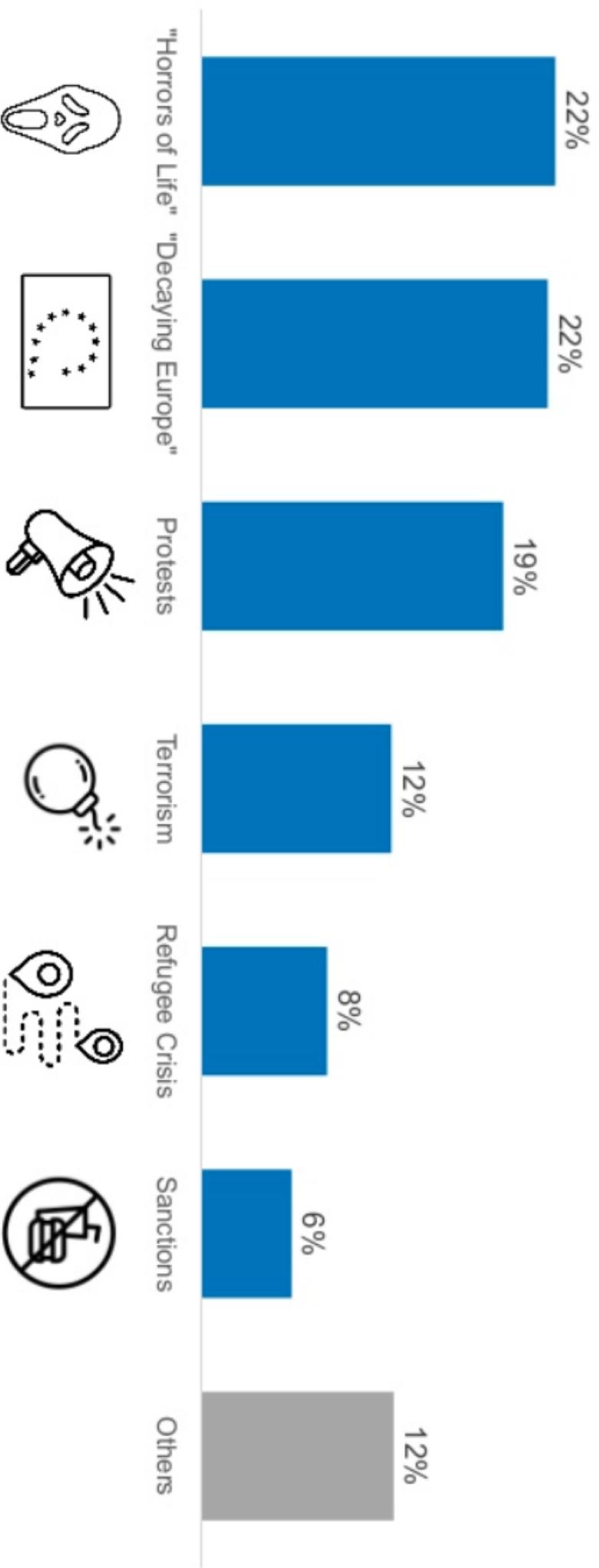
## HOW? PRACTICALITIES

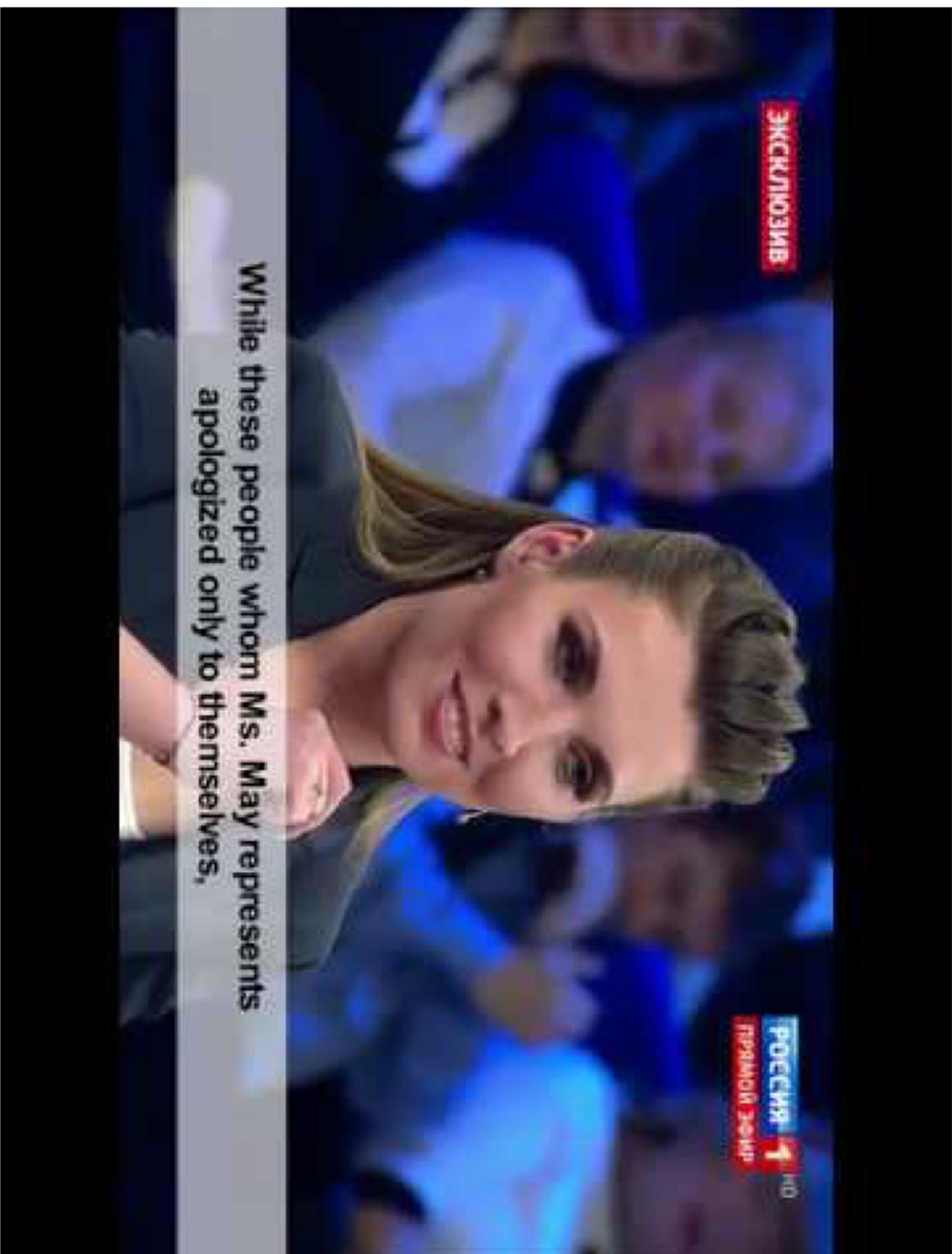
National media at home:

“Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, vague laws on extremism grant the authorities great discretion to crack down on any speech, organization, or activity that lacks official support. The government controls, directly or through state-owned companies and friendly business magnates, all of the national television networks and many radio and print outlets, as well as most of the media advertising market.” Freedom House, 2018

- Reporters Without Borders 2018 World Press Freedom Index: 148 out of 180 countries, leading independent news outlets have either been brought under control or been forced to close
- Freedom House: Attacks, arrests, and threats against journalists are common. Two independent investigative reporters were killed during the year.
- Foreign Agents law

# REPORTING EUROPE





**While these people whom Ms. May represents apologized only to themselves,**

## CASE STUDY: SKRIPAL POISONING

### Example narratives in state-sponsored media

- The nerve agent attack was a hoax
  - Alexander Gurnov: "[Was] there really an assassination attempt? Are they really in a London hospital? Are they really close to death?"
- The Skripals' pets were destroyed in an attempt to conceal evidence
- The British will demolish the pub, restaurant, and Mr Skripal's house. It is obvious this is an effort to destroy the evidence

### Long-read in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*

- "The average Briton piously believes the authorities and never doubts their words"
- This is not our Russia or eastern Europe, where people have critical thought and a steadfast immunity to propaganda"

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA: RT (ENGLISH, RUSSIAN, SPANISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, ARABIC) AND SPUTNIK (31 LANGUAGES)



# WHAT IS SPUTNIK?



Web



Online



Mobile



Social Media



News



Analysis Center

SPUTNIKNEWS.COM

Спутник  
KABKAZA

SPUTNIK

**YULIA SKRIPAL**  
POISONED VICTIM

**VIKTORIA SKRIPAL**  
VICTIM'S RELATIVE

COURTESY: VIKTORIA SKRIPAL, FACEBOOK

**Yulia:** I think no, here the situation is now... we'll deal with it later.  
**Victoria:** That's it, I know, yes, I know e



© 2018 RT

**RT**

**UK BARS SKRIPAL'S NIECE FROM UK, SHE SAYS 'BRITAIN HIDING SOMETHING'**

MOSCOW

08:03

U.S. GOVERNMENT APPROVES \$1.38N ARTILLERY SALE TO SAUDI ARABIA

# REACHING RUSSIAN SPEAKERS OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

## Case study: the Baltic States

Narratives: Infringement on rights of Russian speakers

Revival of Nazism

NATO using/abusing Baltic States

Baltic governments rewriting history and demonising Russia

Country	Share of Russian TV*	Evaluated channels	Share of adults who understand Russian language well enough to watch TV news**
 Latvia	Not less than 30%	NTV Mir Baltic, PBK, Piatnica International, REN TV Baltic, RTR Planeta Baltija, CTC Baltija, TNT, TNT4 International, 3+	47%
 Estonia	Not less than 20%	NTV Mir, PBK, Ren TV Estonia, RTR Planeta, CTC, TNT, 3+	44%
 Lithuania	Not less than 5%	NTV Mir Lietuva, PBK, REN Lietuva	70%

## NEW / SOCIAL MEDIA

- Information warfare = opportunistic, exploiting the features of liberal globalisation to undermine it, e.g. trans-border flows of information and people, social networks,
- Pro-Russian trolls and bots exploit specific features of the relationship between traditional and social media in order to plant, disseminate and lend credibility to disinformation
- Moscow \$400m annual investment → cyber-warriors trained to manipulate search results, construct botnet, exploit social media, create fake news, and spy online
- Hijacking already existing authoritative social media accounts in order to spread disinformation e.g. Swedish TV4 television channels

Mason Richey (International Politics and Society)

# CASE STUDY: US ELECTION 2016

## Ads and fake Facebook accounts

- September 2017, Facebook told congressional investigators it had discovered that hundreds of fake accounts linked to a Russian troll farm had bought \$100,000 in advertisements targeting the 2016 U.S. election audience
- Approximately 3000 adverts were involved, and these were reportedly viewed by between four and five million Facebook users prior to the election
- October 2017 – Facebook admitted that about 126 million Americans may have seen posts published by Russia-based operatives

## Hacking

- Hacking and release of US Democratic Party emails, damaged Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy, cast doubt over the legitimacy of US elections



**/bot/**  
/bät/



**/troll/**  
/tröl/



# CASE STUDY: CRIMEA - HYBRID WARFARE

- “Little green men”
- Information dominance in Crimea during the operation there in March 2014.
- Isolated Crimea from independent news from the outside world: control over broadcast and print media, telecommunications including the notionally independent internet
- Result: public perception in Crimea of events in the rest of Ukraine being determined exclusively by Russia, which greatly facilitated the Russian seizure of the peninsula and subsequent attempts at its legitimization

The screenshot displays the Mapping Media Freedom interface. On the left, a list of reports is shown with red location markers on a map of Crimea. The reports include:

- Crimea/Kyiv: Journalist barred from city parliament... Sevastopol, 09/11/2015 14:00
- Crimea/Kyiv: ATR offices and homes of journalists... CrimeanPeninsula, 02/11/2015 10:00
- Crimea/Kyiv: Two local media outlets blocked... Kpym, 02/11/2015 19:50
- Crimea/Kyiv: Journalist strangled by repair work... Kpymenck, 02/11/2015 15:55
- Crimea/Kyiv/Kyiv: Editor of news portal assaulted... Sevastopol, 09/04/2015 12:11
- Ukraine: Forced closure of Crimean Tatar-language... Kpym, 01/04/2015 14:25
- Crimea/Kyiv: ATR media holding stopped broadcast... Kpym, 01/04/2015 00:00
- Ukraine: Journalist arrested and home searched... Kpym, 08/03/2015 10:07

At the bottom of the list, it says "1-8 of 8 reports" and a "Download reports" button is visible. On the right side of the interface, there is a "SUBMIT A REPORT" button and a search bar labeled "Search reports".



## EU RESPONSE

- **European External Action Service Eastern Stratcom Task Force**

= focused on proactive communication of EU policies and activities in the Eastern neighbourhood (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and beyond (Russia itself).

The East Stratcom Team is intended to develop dedicated communication material on priority issues, where EU strategic communication needs to be improved or the EU is subject to disinformation campaigns.

- **Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats**

= intergovernmental think tank based in Helsinki, Finland, focusing on responses to hybrid threats under the auspices of the European Union (EU) and NATO.

The Centre conducts training courses, hosts workshops to policymakers and practitioners, and produces white papers on hybrid threats, such as weaknesses in an electrical grid or possible exploitation of vaguely written legislation.

## CASE STUDY: “EU VS DISINFORMATION”

- Comprehensive new website of the “EU vs disinformation” campaign -- aimed at international, popular audience. Available in English, German and Russian.
- Run by the European External Action Service East Stratcom Task Force
  - = the only publicly accessible, international database of disinformation cases
- Produces a weekly Disinformation Review (debunking articles), own analytical studies + collates reports, studies and articles by other authors on the subject
- Trains EU institutions, Member State governments, journalists and researchers



[NEWS AND ANALYSIS](#) [DISINFO REVIEW](#) [DISINFO CASES](#) [READING LIST](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT US](#)

[IN THE MEDIA](#) [SUBSCRIBE EN](#) [RU](#) [DE](#)

### News and analysis



**Figure of the Week: 20**

Amid growing international consensus that Moscow was behind the poisoning of ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Russian audiences are being bombarded with different, often conflicting theories about the case.

[READ MORE](#)

## ACTIONS TAKEN BY INDIVIDUAL EU MEMBER STATES

### Reactive:

- 2016 - Latvian authorities shut down Russia's pro-Kremlin news site Sputnik, calling it a "propaganda tool" and drawing an immediate rebuke from Moscow + six month ban of Russian foreign news channel Russia RTR
- Reports of Russian journalists being banned from entering countries e.g. Russian TVT reporter Anatoly Kurlayev banned from entering Latvia
- RT UK broadcasting licence in question

### Proactive:

- Estonian public broadcaster has launched a channel aimed at the country's Russian-speaking minority
- Germany plans to help Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania establish Russian-language media outlets to counter the "disinformation" allegedly being spread by Russian channels broadcasting in the region

## POSSIBLE PROGRESS/FUTURE CHANGES IN APPROACH.

- 1. Defensive → proactive**  
Neutralise disinformation via strategic communications to generate proactive narratives
- 2. Work with private sector**  
e.g. social media platforms used to propagate “fake news” – incentivise their cooperation
- 3. Information sharing**  
Requires agencies to coordinate government and private sector communications. Examples are the EU’s Eastern Stratcom Task Force and Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, which must be scaled-up and better resourced
- 4. Invest in research and development on AI and computational propaganda**
- 5. Remember what defines a democracy:**  
openness and freedom of expression. Do not engage in censorship

# POLITICAL INFLUENCE

# POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

1. a. Within EU - traditional
  - **Political networks**

Aligned or friendly political parties:

- cooperation agreements with United Russia e.g. Front National (Fr), Freedom Party (Aus), youth wing of AfD (Ger)
- pro-Russian policies: e.g. 5 Star Movement (It), Podemos (Es), Jobbik (Hu), Party for Freedom (NL)

- **Campaign financing**

FN (Fr) loan of \$9.8 million in 2014, additional loan in 2017

- **Support for separatists**

Russia backed the Catalan bid, propaganda campaign that deployed state-owned media outlets and social media bots to support the separatists' narratives

- **Support for would-be authoritarians**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico have identified Russia as a political model to learn from

## POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

### 1. b. Within EU - online/info

Cannot be separated from disinformation. Covert activities aimed at influencing politics, narratives, and policies in favor of Russia's geopolitical interests—evolved **from overt to covert, physical to digital**.

### **Ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the Brexit vote**

French pres election (fake news about EM in spring 2017 by Russia-linked trolls (human-curated fake accounts) and bots (automated accounts))

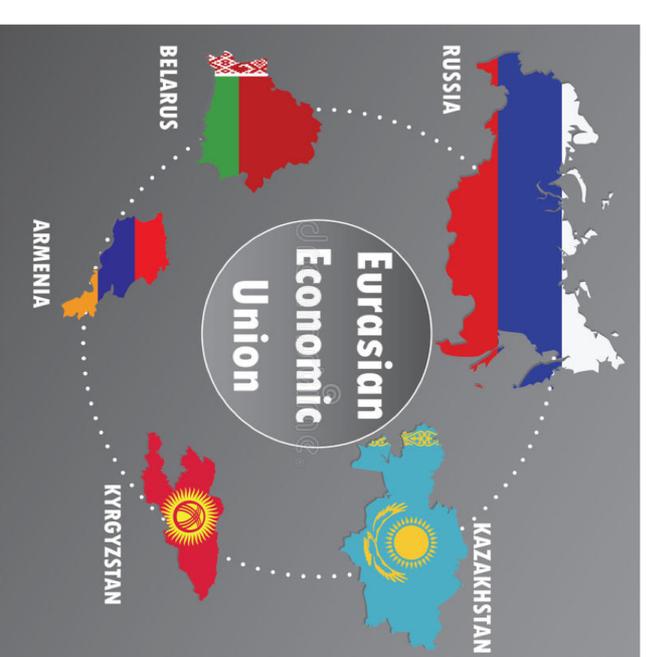
### **2017 Catalan referendum disinformation campaign**

Objective = political subversion, undermine liberal order, destabilising disinformation campaigns within a hybrid-warfare framework (recalls USSR)

## 2. Overlapping zones of interest

### a. **post-Soviet space**

- Eurasian Economic Union + EU
- Eurasian Economic Union (launched 2015). Current members = Belarus, Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Prospective members = Tajikistan, Turkey and Iran. Similarities to EU.
- Competition between projects, overlapping vision and zone of interest
- Politicisation and securitisation with the Ukraine crisis
- Need for more cooperative strategies



Again, cannot be separated from information warfare

## Political influence of Russian TV on Eastern Partnership Countries

Country	Share of Russian TV*	Share of adults who understand Russian language**
 Belarus	Up to 50%	100%
 Moldova	Not less than 30%	95%
 Georgia	From 10% to 20% by different evaluations	89%
 Armenia		87%
 Azerbaijan		77%

## A POPULAR JOKE:

When it comes to EU membership, the difference between pessimists and optimists is that optimists believe Turkey will join during the Albanian EU presidency, while pessimists believe Albania will join during the Turkish EU presidency. Meaning: never.

## b. Balkans

- “Serbia and the rest of the Balkans are a pawn in a great game of powers between Russia, the EU, and the US.” Former Serbian economy minister Saša Radulović
- Albania, FYROM, Montenegro and Serbia are officially recognised as candidates for EU membership. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates.
  - Stabilisation and Association Agreements in force
- Serbia and Montenegro are frontrunners to achieve EU membership by 2025.
  - 6 February – wary of Russian meddling, the European Commission published its new enhanced Strategy for the Western Balkans, that included refining the accession process for Serbia and Montenegro
  - Laid out six initiatives: rule of law; security and migration; socio-economic development; transport and energy connectivity; digital agenda; and “reconciliation and good neighbourly relations.”

## RUSSIA IN THE REGION

- Engaging in geopolitics in a way that the EU is not
- Has been described as “warmer” presence (Ivor Roberts, former British ambassador to Yugoslavia), compared to the demands of the EU
- Renewed Russian campaign: the attention of Russian Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev, who has taken on the region as a special responsibility; seeking to exacerbate discord in the region
- Form linkages with elites and anti-Western groups
- What is Russia’s aim? Not necessarily to stop countries joining EU, but to bring Russian influence in with them
  - More key - ensuring countries of former Yugoslavia do not join NATO but remain as a wedge between Greece and its NATO allies to the north

## CASE STUDY: COMPETING LINKAGES/LEVERAGES IN SERBIA

- Began EU accession negotiations in 2014, has strong economic and trade ties with EU countries but dependent on Russian energy and investment
- EU = biggest financial donor in Serbia. 2001-2014 over 2.6 billion euros. Visa-free travel for citizens of Serbia travelling to the Schengen area since December 2009
- 2008 – 51% of Serbia's oil and gas company Naftna Industrija Srbije (NIS) transferred to Russia's Gazprom Neft (a subsidiary of Gazprom) in exchange for 400 million Euros and 550 mln Euros of investments
- Intensification in political contacts with Russia in recent years eg Medvedev addressing parliament in 2009
- Security cooperation also intensive, Serbia gained observer status in the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation in 2013. Along with EU, Russia helped Serbia after 2014 flooding
- Serbia and Russia are both predominantly Slavic and Eastern Orthodox countries. Russian Orthodox Church maintains linkages
- Organisations promoting Russia's image in Serbia - e.g. the Russian Centre in Belgrade university, Russian House (branch of Russtrudnichestvo), Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre in Niš

## JEAN - CLAUDE JUNCKER BALKANS VISIT

- Serbia, Montenegro, FYROM, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- “Accession is not a dream but a reality, a reality that is going to come. [...] I will be returning to Brussels with the conviction, which I already have in fact, that the place of the Western Balkans is at the heart of the European Union.”

Meanwhile...



# Reading material on Strategic balance and economy

- <https://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21739223-vladimir-putins-election-victory-does-not-mean-there-no-hope-new-generation-rising?frsc=dg%7Ce>
- <http://uk.businessinsider.com/10-maps-that-explain-russia-strategy-2017-7/#russia-is-almost-landlocked-1>
- <https://www.csis.org/analysis/turkey-has-no-allies-black-sea-only-interests>
- <https://www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21740434-stocks-and-currency-plunge-foreign-investors-rush-door-american>
- <https://www.theglobalist.com/europes-soft-power/>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-diplomacy-analysis-idUSKBN1800U8>
- <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2018/03/united-we-fall-a-european-army-is-a-really-bad-idea/>
- <https://euobserver.com/opinion/139485>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26436291>