

INSTITUTE of
MODERN RUSSIA



Hybrid Analytica: Pro-Kremlin Expert Propaganda in Moscow, Europe and the U.S.

A Case Study on Think Tanks and Universities

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Credits

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Kremlin's connections with think tanks, universities, and research institutions in Russia, Europe and the United States and its co-optation of Russian and Western experts into the pool of proxy communicators for the Putin regime. The author details how Kremlin-linked Moscow-based think tanks design new ideological doctrines for the Russian government and how various Kremlin sympathizers promote pro-Kremlin propaganda narratives in the West. The author studies the role of Russian intelligence services and Russian institutions of soft power in the design and implementation of the present-day strategies of knowledge weaponization and ideological subversion. The study also looks at the attempts of pro-Kremlin oligarchs to translate academic philanthropy into political access. The paper argues that Western governments and academic institutions should officially acknowledge the threat posed by Russia's subversive information warfare, step up efforts to expose Russia's network of agents within Western academia, and adopt mechanisms to safeguard professional integrity and due diligence processes.

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1. Introduction

"Disinformation makes up 90 percent of today's warfare. You no longer need to bomb cities. It is enough to bomb the brains out."
Oksana Zabuzhko¹

"Concepts and practices moved from east to west. Russia in the 2010s was a kleptocratic regime that sought to export the politics of eternity: to demolish factuality, to preserve inequality, and to accelerate similar tendencies in Europe and the United States."
Timothy Snyder²

There is no shortage of evidence that Russia's³ capacity to weaponize information, create confusion, and spread fake news constitutes a serious challenge to Western liberal democracies.⁴ In 2016, the European Parliament recognized that the Russian government has been "aggressively employing a wide range of tools and instruments, such as think tanks and special foundations ... to challenge democratic values, divide Europe, gather domestic support and create the perception of failed states in the European Union's eastern neighborhood."⁵

The critical element of Moscow's present hybrid warfare against the West is informational warfare, defined here as a comprehensive and concerted state-sponsored influence campaign designed to steer social debate, hijack political, social and media narratives, and distort information context in order to influence decision-making in international organizations and countries around the world in a way that would validate and accommodate the interests of the ruling Russian kleptocracy.

Moscow's opaque connections with European and American research institutions, and its co-optation of Western experts into the pool of Kremlin proxy communicators, have demanded scrutiny ever since the *New York Times* inaugurated the debate on the transformation of think tanks into agents of foreign influence.⁶ The Kremlin's ties to Western academia are hard to trace and even more difficult to prove, but systematic and meticulous investigation can help reveal the true scope of Russia's hybrid warfare against the West while offering recommendations for counteraction.

The Kremlin's strategy of engaging a subversive Western influence network to promote its agenda has finally become a matter of concern for national security practitioners in Europe and America. For example, Estonia's Foreign Intelligence Service chief recently acknowledged that there is a network of politicians, journalists, diplomats and businesspeople operating in his country as agents of Russian influence.⁷

¹ "Oksana Zabuzhko: Segodnya ne nuzhno bombit' goroda, dostatochno razbombit' mozgi" (In Russian) ("Oksana Zabuzhko: You no longer need to bomb cities, it is enough to bomb brains"). *Apostrophe*, April 18, 2017: <https://apostrophe.ua/article/society/culture/2017-04-18/oksanazabuzhko-segodnya-ne-nuzhno-bombit-goroda-dostatochno-razbombit-mozgi/11737/>

² Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, (Tim Duggan Books: New York, 2018), 11.

³ Throughout this paper, the terms Russia, the Kremlin, and Moscow are used to refer to the Russian government under President Vladimir Putin.

⁴ See, for example, Douglas E. Schoen and Evan Roth Smith, *Putin's Master Plan to Destroy Europe, Divide NATO, and Restore Russian Power and Global Influence*, (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2016).

⁵ European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties (2016/2030(INI)), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONGML+TA+P8-TA-2016-0441+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

⁶ Lipton, Eric, Brooke Williams and Nicholas Confessore. "Foreign Powers Buy Influence at Think Tanks." *The New York Times*, September 6, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/07/us/politics/foreign-powers-buy-influence-at-think-tanks.html>

⁷ Jeff Seldin, "Estonia Spy Chief: Network of Operatives Pushing Russian Agenda in West," *Voice of America*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/networks-of-operatives-pushing-russian-agenda-in-west/4492266.html>

Leading Kremlin watchers have already taken initial steps towards analyzing Moscow's attempts to engage the international expert community in its information warfare campaign.⁸ The present analysis is strongly influenced by these preceding efforts. It also draws on exclusive research data obtained from eleven reputable experts, each of whom took part in an expert survey conducted by the European Values Think-Tank in July 2018.⁹ This study is also based on a wide range of open-source materials and numerous face-to-face interviews with international experts, civil society organizations, journalists and researchers.

This report concludes that the Russian government pursues a coherent and well-coordinated "knowledge weaponization" strategy that has five inter-related components:

- 1) engagement of Kremlin-linked Russian think tanks in the design of domestic and international communication strategies for the Putin regime;
- 2) establishment of influence centers abroad, which operate as think tanks, academic Russian study centers, cultural centers, various associations of Russian-speaking immigrants, etc.;
- 3) use of private, typically oligarch-sponsored, actors to promote the Kremlin's interests in the West;
- 4) reliance on Russian intelligence in the Kremlin's information warfare and infiltration of other countries through the network of agents of influence;
- 5) pursuit of a deliberate policy of employing Russian state or oligarch-controlled media as multipliers, promoters and/or validators of pro-Kremlin narratives and messaging.

Combined, these efforts have led to the rise of **the new phenomenon of "hybrid analytica,"** which we define here as the process of design, development and promotion of various pseudo-academic narratives by duped or manipulated bona fide intellectuals, academics and think tank experts or political "lobbyists in disguise," whose vested interests have been recruited through the global network of the Kremlin-linked operatives with an aim to support and accommodate the international or domestic agenda of the Putin regime, and which result in the demolition of factuality, undermined trust in expertise, disinformation, and overall pollution of the policymaking and public debate environment.

First, the present analysis identifies how the Russian expert and think tank community legitimizes and preserves Vladimir Putin's grip on power by developing the necessary intellectual fodder and policy recommendations for Russian state officials, public experts and the media. All of Russia's leading state-owned think tanks have close ties to the ruling elite and are coordinated either from the Presidential Administration, the State Duma, the ruling United Russia party, or the Russian Foreign Ministry.¹⁰

⁸ See for example: Alina Polyakova et al., "Russian Influence in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom," *Atlantic Council*, November 2016; Alina Polyakova et al., "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses. Russian Influence in Greece, Italy, and Spain," *Atlantic Council*, November 2017; Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money", *The Institute of Modern Russia*, 2014; Vladislava Vojtišková, Vít Novotný, Hubertus Schmid-Schmidfelden, Kristina Potapova, "The Bear in Sheep's Clothing, Russia's Government-Funded Organizations in the EU," *Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies*, 2016; Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World. Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighborhood," *Chatham House*, April, 2016; Ilya Zaslavskiy, "How Non-State Actors Export Kleptocratic Norms to the West," *Hudson Institute, Kleptocracy Initiative*, September 2017; Marius Laurinavičius, "Weaponizing Kleptocracy: Putin's Hybrid Warfare," Briefing Paper, *Hudson Institute*, June 2017.

⁹ The Kremlin Watch Expert Opinion Poll "Western Think Tanks and Russian Interests," July 2018, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WEjd0N2S9FP2bie62kDriv5kultUhsC334EecKgRUw/edit>

¹⁰ This conclusion is also supported by the report by Carolina Vendil Pallin and Susanne Oxenstjerne, "Russian Think Tanks and Soft Power," *FOI – Swedish Defense Research Agency*, August 2018, <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4451--SE>

Second, the Russian state, with its intimate linkages between the government and powerful business actors, has infiltrated social and political debates in the West and obtained closer access to its elites by opening its own think tanks in Europe and America (e.g., the Dialogue for Civilizations Institute in Berlin, the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation in Paris, and the Center of Global Interests in Washington D.C.).¹¹

Third, Russian “soft power” organizations – e.g., Rossotrudnichestvo, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, and the Gorchakov Fund – have established numerous centers of Russian studies at European and American universities to promote Russia’s cultural diplomacy and broaden the network of Kremlin sympathizers within Western academia. This effort is supplemented by the Kremlin’s international PR platforms, such as the Valdai Discussion Club and the Gorchakov Fund’s “Dialogue for the Future” conference.

Fourth, various oligarchs with well-established links to the Kremlin, including M. Fridman, P. Aven, V. Vekselberg, A. Mordashov, V. Yakunin, V. Alekperov, A. Usmanov, V. Yevtushenkov, L. Blavatnik and others,¹² have poured millions of dollars into Russian “soft power” instruments, Western think tanks and universities. Their dual objective is to strengthen the Kremlin’s positions internationally as well as protect their personal business interests in light of the growing crisis in U.S.–Russia and EU–Russia relations. The regime’s kleptocratic consensus and symbiosis with the oligarchs allows President Putin to use their business empires as extensions of the Russian government and engage non-state vehicles to promote state policies through seemingly “independent”, “objective”, “non-affiliated” and “credible” agents of influence.

Fifth, several Western think tanks have started following pro-Kremlin narratives or become involved in direct political lobbying on behalf of the Russian state. The Kremlin actively fosters partnerships with Russia sympathizers within academic institutions and think-tanks, but goes after its critics and ideological opponents. In 2018, a Russian group affiliated with the Russian government attempted to hack into the computers of the Hudson Institute, a conservative Washington think tank active in investigations of corruption in Russia, as well as those of the International Republican Institute (IRI).¹³

Sixth, the professional background of Russian experts and CEOs of various Kremlin-linked Russian think tanks indicates their extensive ties to Russian intelligence: namely, the Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB), the present-day Federal Security Service (FSB), and the Main Foreign Intelligence Directorate of the Russian Defense Ministry (GRU). In 2016, the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies was implicated in efforts to subvert Western democracies and provide the intellectual framework and rationale for Russia’s interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.¹⁴

¹¹ See pages 22-25 and 41-42 of this report.

¹² Ilya Zaslavskiy, “Mikhail Fridman, Pyotr Aven, German Khan, and their connections to the Kremlin and the FSB,” Research Note, *Underminers*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.underminers.info/publications/2018/5/21/mikhail-fridman-pyotr-aven-german-khan-and-their-connections-to-the-fsb-and-the-kremlin>; McKenzie, Sheena, Nicole Gaouette and Donna Borak, “The full ‘Putin list’ of Russian oligarchs and political figures released by the US Treasury,” *CNN*, January 30, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/30/politics/full-us-list-of-russian-oligarchs-with-putin-ties-intl/index.html>; “Kremlin-linked Billionaire, Netanyahu Friend Donated to Trump’s Private Legal Fund,” *Haaretz*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/kremlin-linked-billionaire-netanyahu-friend-donated-to-trump-s-legal-fund-1.5453274>

¹³ Dvoskin, Elizabeth and Graig Timberg, “Microsoft says it has found a Russian operation targeting U.S. political institutions,” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/microsoft-says-it-has-found-a-russian-operation-targeting-us-political-institutions/2018/08/20/52273e14-a4d2-11e8-97ce-cc9042272f07_story.html

¹⁴ Parker, Ned, Jonathan Landay, John Walcott, “Putin-linked think tank drew up plan to sway 2016 US election – documents,” *Reuters*, April 19, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-election-exclusive/exclusive-putin-linked-think-tank-drew-up-plan-to-sway-2016-u-s-election-documents-idUSKBN17L2N3>

Seventh, the recent arrest of alleged Russian spy Maria Butina¹⁵ shows that the scope of Russian espionage may be much larger than previously believed. Despite abundant evidence that Russian intelligence has been recruiting students and professors since Soviet times,¹⁶ some Western universities, sensitive to their finances and global relationships, have largely ignored this threat.¹⁷

The Russian authorities assertively nurture and rely upon the aforementioned networks of Kremlin agents within the Western establishment. The rector of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Anatoliy Torkunov, recently acknowledged that his university serves as an “important channel of Russia's unofficial political dialogue with many countries”¹⁸ and that MGIMO's think tank Eurasian Strategies, which provides analytical services to Russian state and non-state sectors, actively engages the global network of MGIMO alumni in solicitation of information, guidance and promotion of Russian interests abroad.¹⁹

In short, as political expert Lilia Shevtsova has noted, we are presently dealing with four groups of actors who collectively advance pro-Putin narratives:

“These are the Russian experts who scream that the epoch of the West is over and that America ... should not be reckoned with. These are Western leaders ([Gerhard] Schroeder, [Silvio] Berlusconi, [Nicolas] Sarkozy, [Jacques] Chirac, and others), who whispered into the Russian president's ear what he wanted to hear. These are European leaders (for example, Hungarian Prime Minister [Viktor] Orban), who learned how to exchange pro-Kremlin rhetoric for gratuitous Russian assistance. These are Western intellectual gurus, journalists and other public figures, who, for Russian money, seek to convince the world that Russia has every right to feel hurt and is perfectly entitled to break windows in someone else's house.”²⁰

The unexpected conclusion of the present study is that European and American sanctions against Russia have not only considerably restrained and impeded Russia's international contacts at the political level, but have simultaneously created additional professional opportunities for Russian and Western intellectuals. At the background of Russia's deteriorating relations with the West, they suddenly found themselves at the very heart of “track II diplomacy” efforts. Russia's invitations to the Valdai Club, as well as its generosity and first-class hospitality, have proved hard to decline. To a significant degree, Russia is testing the Western intellectual community and its ability to resist the Kremlin's many temptations and co-optation strategies.

The mutation and proliferation of think tanks, along with the noticeable corrosion of ethical standards in Western academia, have thus resulted in the phenomenon of *Putinverstehers* – i.e., a growing number of pro-Kremlin communicators, sympathizers and lobbyists who often provide the apologetic excuse “we must deal with them in order to understand them” (or vice versa) to justify their attendance and active involvement in Russian agitprop fora. Some even present their pro-Russian biases and outright academic opportunism as a new form of intellectual heroism or martyr leadership against the backdrop of overwhelming international “hostility” towards Russia.

¹⁵ Haley Samsel, “Recent AU Graduate Charged With Acting as Russian Agent in U.S.,” *The Eagle*, July 16, 2018, <http://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2018/07/recent-au-graduate-charged-with-acting-as-russian-agent-in-united-states>

¹⁶ Kseniya Kirillova, “Veteran KGB Agent Talks About Butina,” *KyivPost*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/kseniya-kirillova-veteran-soviet-kgb-agent-talks-about-butin.html>

¹⁷ Daniel Golden, “Why Russian Spies Really Like American Universities,” *Talking Points Memo*, July 23, 2018, <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/russian-spies-american-universities>

¹⁸ “Rektor MGIMO o sozdanii konsaltingovo agentstva ‘Evraziiskie strategii’” (in Russian) (MGIMO Rector on the establishment of Eurasian Strategies consulting agency), *Eurasian Strategies*, June 20, 2018, <http://eurasian-strategies.ru/media/insights/v-mgimo-sozdano-konsaltingovoe-agentstvo-evraziiskie-strategii/>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Lilia Shevtsova, “Vlyapalis” (in Russian) (We got into trouble), *Ekho Moskvy*, August 14, 2018, <https://echo.msk.ru/blog/shevtsova/2258916-echo/>

“The Kremlin Web of ‘Hybrid Analytica’” illustrates our research findings and depicts ties between the two groups of actors. The first chart names the Russian entities and pro-Kremlin oligarchs, as well as the network of their proxy Moscow-based think tanks, state “soft power” organizations and Russia’s influence centers abroad. Collectively, this group of actors is involved in the justification of the Putin regime, as well as in the design and promotion of domestic and international communication strategies for the Russian authorities.

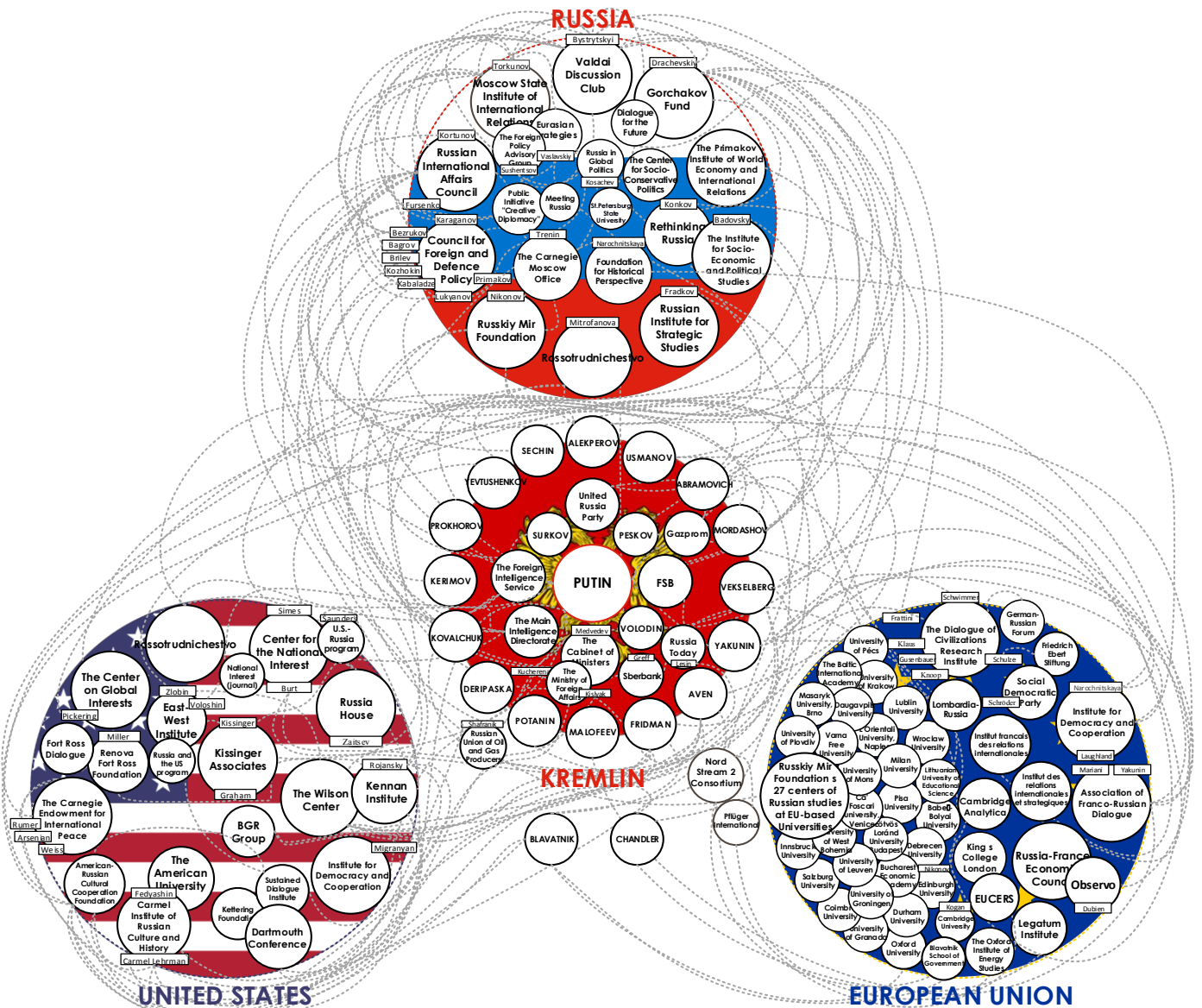
It also shows the connections between the Kremlin-controlled think tanks and individual oligarchs and academic and research institutions in Europe and the United States, based on identified partnerships, joint academic programs and financial contributions from the Russian side, which could, to a varying degree, inadvertently or deliberately promote Russian propaganda in the West and create the danger of malfeasant collaboration (as opposed to positive or neutral cooperation with Russia's academic institutions).

The infographics demonstrate the scope of institutional ties between Russian propaganda actors and Western academic institutions and think tanks. They do not attempt to characterize the Western institutions as entirely supportive of the Kremlin or suggest that all connections between Western and Russian organizations are necessarily malign. Often it is only a small part (a particular faculty, department or unit) or a prominent individual expert within a Western institution that may appear to speak in the name of the whole institution when peddling Kremlin-supported content. Often the attempted influence is nuanced, subtle, and carried out through a deliberately flexible approach to narratives useful to the Kremlin or the result of conscious self-censorship, avoiding topics deemed sensitive by the Kremlin and its global network.

However, as was the case with Muammar Gaddafi's scandalous penetration of the London School of Economics,²¹ we believe any institution as a whole and its administrators should be held accountable for their failure to stop any malign influence once it is uncovered by activists and NGOs. Institutions bear full responsibility for inadequate and unprofessional due diligence, relaxed enforcement of governance standards and mere lip service to their proclaimed values and goals.

²¹ In 2011, LSE director Howard Davies was forced to resign after revelations that LSE had been involved in a £2.2m deal to train hundreds of young Libyans to become part of the country's future elite. Jeevan Vasagar and Syal Rajeev, “LSE Head Quits Over Gaddafi Scandal,” *The Guardian*, 4 March 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/mar/03/lse-director-resigns-gaddafi-scandal>

Chart 1. The Kremlin Web of “Hybrid Analytica”



Although there can be no one-size-fits-all prescription for how to meet the challenges posed by Russian disinformation, here is a **summary of our recommendations** on combatting Russian “hybrid analytica.”

We call on Western governments:

- to officially acknowledge the threat posed by Russia’s hostile subversive information warfare, which strives to undermine our democratic and liberal values while manipulating our governments and societies by means of distorting truth on an industrial scale;
- to re-focus financial support for Russia-related academic programs from culture and history to in-depth analysis of Russia’s authoritarianism, kleptocracy and corrupt practices, such as state-sponsored propaganda and information warfare, militant foreign policy, violations of international law, and abuse of human rights;

- to issue special recommendations to their institutions of education and research, urging them to temporarily refrain from cooperation and acceptance of financial donations from Russian “soft power” organizations like Rossotrudnichestvo, the Russkiy Mir foundation, and the Gorchakov foundation.

We call on Western education and research institutions:

- to adopt mechanisms safeguarding the integrity of their policies and practices, including a temporary freeze on cooperation programs with Russia and screening of its financing;
- to update their due diligence rules with respect to receipt of (supposedly) private funding from Russia, making it more transparent and ethical to prevent any forms of malign Russian influence through Kremlin-friendly oligarchs. Updated due diligence policies should include a verification procedure conducted by independent and credible third-party watchdogs that focuses on the Kremlin’s strategies of subversion. The due diligence process should be based on a close study of Russian language sources and not be limited to superficial reviews of the activities of potential donors to Western academic institutions.

We call on Western civil society and the expert community:

- to step up efforts to expose Russia’s network of agents of influence by monitoring academic and research institutions to reveal propaganda content disguised as scholarly debates, and investigate further the extent and implications of connections between the Western expert community and the Kremlin;
- to pay special attention to media outlets that publish analytical Russia-related content that whitewashes the Kremlin, promotes Moscow’s propaganda narratives and policy objectives. The sources of funding and political/business affiliations of such outlets, as well as Western contributors, who legitimize and promote soft forms of pro-Russian propaganda, require continuous scrutiny;
- to be vigilant and mindful of covert Russian intelligence activities, remembering that FSB traditionally targeted Western journalists and scholars at forums, conferences, festivals, and sporting events held in Russia to recruit them as agents of influence²². Decisions regarding attendance of conferences, roundtables and other events held in Russia must take into account awareness of likely attempts by the Russian secret services to place Western participants in various compromising situations.

²² Oliver Kund, “Russia looking for agents of influence in Estonia,” *Postimees*, February 9, 2018, <https://news.postimees.ee/4404323/russia-looking-for-agents-of-influence-in-estonia>

2. Kremlin Expert Propaganda from Suslov to Surkov

2.1. Why Do Think Tanks Matter?

For most of the twentieth century, think tanks were a primarily Western phenomenon. Established by governments or private donors to generate alternative policy recommendations and shape decision-making on important issues, think tanks have traditionally operated on the principles of freedom of conscience and scholarly research. In general, they serve to promote social and political values while also seeking to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of various political, social or economic issues.²³

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had no tradition of independent think tanks. Under the Soviet regime, there was no alternative to the dominant communist ideology and zero tolerance for free political thinking. The expert and analytical roles were performed by various state-funded and Communist Party-controlled research institutions or departments, which operated within the Communist Party committees, the Soviet bureaucracy, the KGB or the State Planning Committee (Gosplan).

The first independent think tanks appeared in Russia during the *perestroika* years and shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. The most well-known of these included the Levada Center (established in 1987), the Gorbachev Foundation (established in 1992), and the Yegor Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy (established in 1990). During Boris Yeltsin's presidency, Western governments and private donors actively supported the development of independent think tanks and nonprofit organizations in Russia in an attempt to aid the country's democratization process. These efforts have witnessed serious disruption with Vladimir Putin's accession to power. The 2012 "foreign agents" law landed a major blow against Russian civil society and the think tank community.²⁴

While the Kremlin tightened control over independent think tanks and nonprofits, it simultaneously created new opportunities for experts employed at Russian state research agencies. The March 2011 decree of President Dmitri Medvedev changed the status of the **Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS)**²⁵ and transferred its jurisdiction to the Presidential Administration.²⁶ In 2016, President Putin appointed **Mikhail Fradkov**, former Prime Minister of Russia (2004-2007) and ex-director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (2007-2016), as RISS director. Similarly, in August 2015, the **Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO)** was renamed as the federal state budget research institution "The Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations" to underscore its status as a government-controlled institution.²⁷

Large-scale opposition protests after the fraudulent 2011 parliamentary and 2012 presidential elections in Russia convinced the Putin regime to intensify its propaganda efforts in order to prevent the mere possibility of a color revolution in Russia. The Kremlin appeared to throw funds at these efforts to establish new, less academic and more propaganda-oriented think tanks to produce research materials, articles and media messaging in support of the new ideological doctrine of the Russian state.

²³ Andrew Selee, *What Should Think Tanks Do? A Strategic Guide for Policy Impact*, (Stanford University Press, 2013), 4.

²⁴ The law required nonprofit organizations that received foreign donations to register as "foreign agents." The bill was introduced by United Russia and signed into law by President Putin. It was criticized both in Russia and internationally as a violation of human rights and as being designed to counter opposition groups. The word "foreign agent" in Russian has strong associations with Cold War-era espionage. See The Law "On Amendments to Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Non-profit Organizations Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent," State Duma of the Russian Federation, <http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/main.nsf/%28SpravkaNew%29?OpenAgent&RN=102766-6&02>

²⁵ The Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, <https://riss.ru>

²⁶ Presidential Decree of Dmitri Medvedev dated March 15, 2011. https://riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/Ukaz_15_03_2011.pdf

²⁷ The Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, <https://www.imemo.ru>

The regime also employed numerous experts, journalists and creative intelligentsia as its communicators and legitimizers. This marked the beginning of the Kremlin's gradual taming of Russian think tanks and their forced transformation into mouthpieces for the regime.

Putin's "ideologists-in-chief" – **Vladislav Surkov** (Putin's personal aid), **Vyacheslav Volodin** (currently speaker of the Russian Duma, former deputy chief of Presidential Administration), and **Dmitri Peskov** (Putin's press secretary and deputy head of his Presidential Administration) – are minor present-day versions of Mikhail Suslov, the former Communist secretary for ideology, who spent forty-four years in the Kremlin masterminding Soviet propaganda campaigns.²⁸

Following in the footsteps of Suslov's concept of "developed socialism"²⁹ (which used thousands of empty words to explain why communism was nowhere in sight fifty years after the 1917 revolution), Putin's cronies now concoct their own "alternative realities" and look for any plausible arguments to justify Russia's "unique historical mission." Instead of asking what should be done to make Russia a healthy democracy and help the country overcome enduring social injustices, Moscow's propagandists are busy answering the question of what makes Russia so uniquely unfit for independent courts, free elections, a government free of corruption, and peace with its neighbors.

2.2. The Kremlin's Neo-Conservative Doctrine

The Kremlin's answer to this riddle took the form of the new **ideological doctrine of "sovereign democracy"** (democracy without the rule of law, democratic values or the separation of power), **which then evolved into the Russian "neo-conservatism doctrine,"** featuring the following elements.³⁰

- 1) promotion of the concept of the superiority of Russians and the Russian state compared to other nations, and the glorification of Russia as the world's leading defender of "true" Christianity, morality, family and other conservative values;
- 2) revisionism of Russian/Soviet history and whitewashing of Soviet leaders, including Joseph Stalin; denial of Moscow's responsibility for mass crimes committed against the Russian people as well as other nations of the USSR and abroad, particularly the 1932-33 genocide against Ukrainians; glorification of Russia's role in the World War Second victory over Nazi Germany and silencing the role of other nations in this success;
- 3) denial of Russia's responsibility for international aggression, including the war in Georgia in 2008 and the subsequent occupation of parts of its territory, de-facto occupation of parts of Moldova, and the ongoing undeclared war against Ukraine which has so far resulted in the illegal annexation of Crimea and the military occupation of Ukraine's eastern territories;

²⁸ Appointed in 1948, Suslov supervised all propaganda-related departments within the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) until his death in 1982. In addition to CPSU's departments for ideology, propaganda, culture, academia, the media, youth, and international relations, Suslov controlled the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, the Soviet Army's political directorate, the State media and publishing committee, as well as all leading Soviet journals, newspapers, and professional unions of creative intelligentsia.

²⁹ Alfred B. Evans, "Developed Socialism in Soviet Ideology," *Soviet Studies*, vol. XXIX, no. 3 (July 1977): 409-28.

³⁰ The elements of this ideological doctrine have been discussed in: Lilia Shevtsova "The Putin Doctrine: Myth, Provocation, Blackmail, or the Real Deal," *The American Interest*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/04/14/the-putin-doctrine-myth-provocation-blackmail-or-the-real-deal/>; Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World. Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighborhood," *Chatham House*, April 2016, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/agents-russian-world-proxy-groups-contested-neighborhood>; Maria Engström, "Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy," *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 35, no.3 (2014): 356-379; Maria Snegovaya, "Reviving the Propaganda State. How the Kremlin hijacked History to Survive," *Center for European Policy Analysis*, January 2018, <https://www.cepa.org/reviving-the-propaganda-state>

- 4) dehumanizing Ukrainians; bashing Ukraine’s culture and language; promoting narratives of fascist revival and anti-Semitism in Ukraine; misrepresenting Ukraine’s current government as a Western puppet committed to neo-Nazi ideologies; discrediting Ukraine’s post-Euromaidan reforms as incompetent; portraying Ukraine as a “failed” and “corrupt” state that is not worthy of Western support;
- 5) blaming the West for the Cold War and portraying Western sanctions against Russia as a return to a “morally bankrupt” and “unjust” “Cold War mentality”;
- 6) criticism of the West for the “loss of its moral compass” and “degeneracy”; mocking Western concepts of human rights and democracy; accusing the West of double standards;
- 7) hyperbolic focus on the West’s economic and political troubles, which are misrepresented as inherent societal failures; support for anti-establishment groups and radical rightist and leftist ideologies in Europe and North America which are often misrepresented as legitimate voices speaking on behalf of whole societies;
- 8) criticism of Western institutions for their seeming inability to react to new global challenges, such as international terrorism and migration, in order to undermine their credibility and standing;
- 9) obstruction of European integration; revival of divisive lines within Europe based on ethnicity, culture, religion, and history; support for separatism in targeted Western states.

2.3. Moscow-Based Think Tanks as Promoters of Russian Neo-Conservative Doctrine

The United Russia party played a leading role in the design of the Kremlin’s “neoconservatism” doctrine. In 2012, it opened two think tanks – the **Center for Socio-Conservative Politics (CSKP)**³¹ and the **Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (ISEPS)**³² – to produce the requisite analytical and ideological grounds of the Putin regime. The latter was led by Dmitri Badovsky, who previously served as deputy head of the Presidential Administration’s Domestic Politics unit.³³

On the eve of the 2016 Duma elections, ISEPS opened a subsidiary think tank, **Rethinking Russia (RR)**, to spread United Russia’s political propaganda to international audiences.³⁴ Reports produced by RR have extensive reach and specifically target Western experts and journalists. For example, the report titled “Russia’s Political System Between State Duma Electoral Campaigns of 2011 and 2016” was sent to 6,000 Western journalists and experts.³⁵ The think tank was even supposed to have an office in Brussels.³⁶

Yan Vaslavskiy, an MGIMO graduate and most likely Vyacheslav Volodin’s protégé, served as its director until 2016. Vaslavskiy became chief of the Duma Secretariat’s analytical department soon after

³¹ The Center for Socio-Conservative Policy, <http://cskp.ru/tsentr-sotsialno-konservativnoy-politiki/>

³² ISEPI Fund, www.isepr.ru/about/guide

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rethinking Russia, <http://rethinkingrussia.ru/>

³⁵ Robert Berkovskiy, “Rasshivka uzkiikh mest,” (in Russian), (Narrow passages explained), *Lenta.ru*, December 24, 2015, <https://lenta.ru/articles/2015/12/24/rethinkingrussia/>

³⁶ Andrey Vinokurov, Natalia Galimova, “Demokratiya ne prikhodit odna. Okolokremlyovskiy fond predpravil doklad o sud’bakh demokrati v mire” (In Russian) (Democracy does not arrive alone. The Kremlin-linked think tank presented a report on the destiny of democracy in the world), *Gazeta.ru*, June 3, 2015, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/06/03_a_6744658.shtml

Volodin left the post of Russian Presidential Administration Chief and was appointed as Speaker of the Russian Duma.³⁷ Aleksandr Konkov, former advisor to the executive director of the Aleksandr Gorchakov public diplomacy fund, replaced Vaslavskiy at Rethinking Russia.³⁸

The Kremlin's adventurist foreign policy agenda is mainly developed and upheld by the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the Foreign Policy think tank and Eurasian Strategies. All Kremlin-linked foreign policy think tanks have deep ties to the Russian secret services and thus perform both analytical and intelligence functions for the Kremlin and the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The Council for Foreign and Defense Policy³⁹ was established in the early 1990s by Vitaliy Shlykov – an officer in the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) and deputy defense minister under Boris Yeltsin. The Council is presently led by its honorary chairman **Sergey Karaganov** and executive chairman **Fedor Lukyanov**, also editor-in-chief of the *Russia in Global Politics* journal⁴⁰ and research director of the Valdai Discussion Club.

Karaganov is a dean of the elite Moscow College National Research University – Higher School of Economics and advisor to Vladimir Putin's Presidential Administration. He is the author of the so-called Karaganov Doctrine, which is the Kremlin's strategy to rely on Russian-language speakers in the so-called “near abroad” (former Soviet republics) as the prime guarantors of Moscow's political and economic influence over its neighbors.⁴¹ Karaganov's answer to the question of “how to win the Cold War?” is to encourage Russia “to build up its propaganda capacities.”⁴²

The Council works closely with the Presidential Administration, Russia's Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry, and other related state agencies. In 2017, it received personal praise from Vladimir Putin, while Foreign Minister Lavrov underscored its ability to “generate new ideas and ensure they find reflection in public opinion, which, to a certain extent, it [the Council] forms by itself.”⁴³

The Council's Supervisory Board features several Kremlin-linked business figures and state officials. These include **Andrey Bezrukov** – a retired Russian intelligence officer and advisor to Rosneft president Igor Sechin; **Andrey Bagrov** – deputy CEO of Norilskiy Nickel (led by Putin's crony Vladimir Potanin); **Sergey Brilev** – deputy director of the state-owned TV channel “Rossiya”; **Vyacheslav Nikonov** – executive director of the Russkiy Mir Foundation; **Yuriy Kabaladze** – a former KGB official and deputy dean of the MGIMO's International Media department; and MGIMO's vice rector **Yevgeniy Kozhokin**.⁴⁴

The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)⁴⁵ was established in 2010 by Dmitri Medvedev's Presidential Decree, and co-founded by the Foreign Ministry and the Education and Science Ministry of the Russian Federation. Its director, **Andrey Kortunov**, is a former deputy chief of the Russian Institute

³⁷ “Dotsent usilit apparat,” (in Russian) (Associate professor will strengthen the apparatus), *Gazeta.ru*, March 9, 2018, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2017/03/09_a_10566641.shtml

³⁸ “Kadrovye izmeneniya v Rethinking Russia” (in Russian) (Personnel Reshuffle at “Rethinking Russia”), *Rethinking Russia*, April 14, 2017, <http://rethinkingrussia.ru/2017/04/rethinking-russia/>

³⁹ The Council for Foreign and Defense Policy, www.svp.ru

⁴⁰ *Russia in Global Politics*, <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/>

⁴¹ Mark Mackinnon, “Sergey Karaganov: The man behind Putin's pugnacity,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 20, 2014, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/sergey-karaganov-the-man-behind-putins-pugnacity/article17734125/>

⁴² Sergey Karaganov, “Kak pobedit v kholodnoi voine,” (in Russian) (How to win the Cold War), *Rossiya v global'noi politike*, July 18, 2018, <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/Kak-pobedit-v-kholodnoi-voine-19683>

⁴³ Maksim Makarychev, “Vladimir Putin vysoko otsenil rabotu sovetov po vneshnei i oboronnoi politike,” (in Russian) (Putin acknowledged the work of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy), *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, April 8, 2017, <https://rg.ru/2017/04/08/vladimir-putin-vysoko-ocenil-rabotu-sovetov-po-vneshnej-i-oboronnoj-politike.html>

⁴⁴ Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, <http://svop.ru/президиум/>

⁴⁵ The Russian International Affairs Council, <http://russiancouncil.ru/en>

for U.S. and Canadian Studies. RIAC's board of trustees features several high-ranking Russian government officials including: Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov**, Executive Director of the Gorchakov Foundation **Leonid Drachevskiy**, aid to President Putin **Andrey Fursenko**, MGIMO rector **Anatoliy Torkunov**, and Sberbank President **German Greff**. The Council's Presidium is co-led by oligarch **Petr Aven**, former Russian foreign minister **Igor Ivanov**, Putin's press secretary **Dmitriy Peskov**, deputy foreign minister **Dmitriy Morgulov** and **Fedor Lukyanov**.⁴⁶

The Kremlin's foreign policy doctrine is also supported by several analytical think tanks within MGIMO. The **Foreign Policy** think tank⁴⁷ was opened by MGIMO's associate professor **Andrey Sushentsov**. In 2017, it received a "mega grant" from the Russian government to work on large-scale research projects in the field of foreign policy.⁴⁸ That same year, Sushentsov and MGIMO rector **Anatoliy Torkunov** opened yet another think tank, **Eurasian Strategies**,⁴⁹ to consult for the Russian government and businesses. The Eurasian Strategies advisory council includes the aforementioned Yan Vaslavskiy and journalist Yevgeniy Primakov – grandson of the late Russian foreign minister Yevgeniy Primakov, who also serves on the Advisory Board of Sergey Karaganov's Council for Foreign and Defense Policy.

Although the number of think tanks in present-day Russia may create the illusion of competing views and alternative visions, a closer look reveals that **they consist of a rather narrow circle of propaganda narrative creators** who are simply wearing different hats as either "experts", "CEOs" or "board members" in various Kremlin-linked organizations. As Table 1 illustrates, Lukyanov has positions at four seemingly unrelated institutions, while MGIMO rector Torkunov features in six organizations.⁵⁰

Table 1. Inter-Connectedness of Moscow-based pro-Putin Think Tanks

Expert	Valdai Discussion Club	Editorial Board "Russia in Global Politics"	RIAC	Council for Foreign and Defense Policy	Russkiy Mir Foundation	Gorchakov Fund	Eurasian Strategies	Foreign Policy Think Tank
Fedor Lukyanov	+	+	+	+				
Sergey Karaganov	+	+	+	+				
Anatoliy Torkunov	+	+	+			+	+	+
Vyacheslav Nikonov	+	+		+	+			
Yevgeniy Primakov				+			+	
Igor Ivanov	+	+				+		
Konstantin Kosachev	+	+				+		
Anatoliy Sushentsov	+						+	+

⁴⁶ The bios of the members of RIAC's Presidium and Board of Trustees are available at <http://russiancouncil.ru/management/presidium/> and <http://russiancouncil.ru/management/board-trustees/>

⁴⁷ Foreign Policy think tank, <http://www.foreignpolicy.ru>

⁴⁸ "Rektor MGIMO o sozdanii konsaltingovogo agenstva 'Evrazijskiye strategii'" (In Russian) (MGIMO rector on the Eurasian Strategy consultancy agency), *Eurasian Strategies*, June 20, 2018, <http://eurasian-strategies.ru/media/insights/v-mgimo-sozdano-konsaltingovoe-agentstvo-evrazijskie-strategii/>

⁴⁹ Eurasian Strategies, <http://eurasian-strategies.ru>

⁵⁰ Compiled by the author based on the analysis of websites of all listed organizations.

Interestingly, many Kremlin-linked experts and foreign policy professionals receive invitations to engage with the West as representatives of “liberal,” “reasonable” or even “democratic” Russia and as unofficial channels for dialogue with the Kremlin. Yet, the principal difference between the Russian and Western intellectual communities is that the first operates under authoritarian rule and by nature has fewer independent voices. One cannot reasonably expect an honest or trustworthy account from people living under Kremlin control and whose main task is to promote the Kremlin agenda.

Kremlin-linked experts, just like the Russian state media, are “hired guns” – mercenaries in the Kremlin’s propaganda war against the West. They can never truly influence the regime or genuinely engage in serious criticism of the system, because their primary duty is to serve the interests of the regime. Professional options that are available to Russia experts at the present moment are limited to one of the following three: 1) serve the regime and prosper; 2) be servile, quiet and unknown, 3) speak up and face repression.

Therefore, the dilemma for the Western academic community is how to “study Russia without engaging in contacts and exchanges that would ultimately compromise [North America’s and] Europe’s normative integrity and legitimize the Kremlin’s discourses, which are formulated elegantly and aimed at [North American and] European consumption”.⁵¹

⁵¹ Andrey Makarychev, “Language Games for Export: Russia’s Narrative for Europe and in Europe,” *Ponars Eurasia*, July 9, 2018, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/article/language-games-export-russias-narratives-europe>

3. The International PR Platforms of the Putin Regime

3.1. The Valdai Discussion Club

In 2004, the Kremlin established the Valdai Discussion Club to deliver “*independent and objective* [emphasis added] scholarly analysis of political, economic, and social developments in Russia and the world”. It is the Kremlin’s international public relations platform that allows President Putin (who has attended *all* the Valdai Club’s meetings since its founding), to educate the West on Russia’s moves.

The Valdai was co-founded by two think tanks – the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Russian International Affairs Council – and two academic institutions – the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) and the National Research University – Higher School of Economics. The Club has several wealthy partners, including **Severstal** (owned by **Aleksey Mordashov**, 2nd richest Russian, \$18.7 bln), **Alfa Bank** (owned by **Mikhail Fridman**, 8th richest Russian, total assets \$15.1 bln); **Renova Charity Foundation** (owned by **Viktor Vekselberg**, 9th richest Russian, \$14.4 bln) and **Metalloinvest** (owned by **Alisher Usmanov**, 10th richest Russian, \$12.5 bln).⁵²

The Valdai is led by Andrey Bystrytskyi – the former director of information programs at the Russian state TV channel “Rossiya” and director of the Russian state international radio broadcaster “Golos Rossii”.⁵³ Its academic director, Fedor Lukyanov, also sits on the presidium of the Russian International Affairs Council. Lukyanov is a regular guest on major Russian TV channels which are known to be subject to government content control and censorship. In the last two years, he gave three primetime one-hour interviews to Russian journalist Vladimir Pozner. In April 2018, they addressed the subject of the growing propagandistic nature of Western media and the “pitiful condition” of the West. Europe, as Lukyanov put it, has “lost its independence” while the United States increasingly resembles the Coen Brothers’ grotesque movie “Burn after Reading” that shows a “world led by [American] imbecility and paranoia.”⁵⁴

The Valdai truly serves as a soft power façade for the Putin regime with “a definite whiff of Potemkin in the air”.⁵⁵ It offers its participants the opportunity to meet with Putin and become acquainted with a variety of the country’s regions.⁵⁶ Since its founding, 1,000 representatives of the international scholarly community have attended the conference from 63 countries,⁵⁷ as well as numerous leading politicians and public figures, including: Wolfgang Schäussel, former Chancellor of Austria (2000-2007); Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister of Italy (1996-1998, 2006-2008); Dominique de Villepin, former Prime Minister of France (2005-2007); Volker Rühle, former German Defense Minister (1992-1998); François Fillon, former Prime Minister of France (2007-2012); Franco Frattini, former Italian Foreign Minister (2008-2011); Ján Čarnogurský, former Prime Minister of Slovakia (1991-1992); and Václav Klaus, former President of the Czech Republic (2003-2013).⁵⁸

Year after year, the Kremlin serves the same ideological menu to its guests by criticizing the West and praising Russia’s “uniqueness.” It is indeed puzzling that so many Western scholars continue attending the Valdai, just like “puppets in the Kremlin’s theater to make Putin look good,”⁵⁹ and ignoring the

⁵² The Valdai Discussion Club, <http://valdaiclub.com/about/partners/>; “200 richest Russians,” *Forbes*, 2018, <http://www.forbes.ru/rating/360355-200-bogateyshih-biznesmenov-rossii-2018>

⁵³ Valdai Club Staff, <http://ru.valdaiclub.com/about/staff/>

⁵⁴ “Pozner. Guest Fedor Lukyanov,” *Youtube*, April 16, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghAQ2U6_WaE

⁵⁵ Rodric Braithwaite, “The Potemkin village is Inhabited,” *OpenDemocracy*, September 30, 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/rodric-braithwaite/potemkin-village-is-inhabited-0>

⁵⁶ The first year the Valdai Club was held in Valdai, near Velikii Novgorod, followed by Tver, St. Petersburg, Khanty-Mansiisk, Kazan, etc.

⁵⁷ The Valdai Club states that debates were attended by professors from universities including Harvard, Columbia, Georgetown, Stanford, the University of London, Johns Hopkins, the London School of Economics, King’s College London, Sciences Po and the Sorbonne.

⁵⁸ “What is Valdai?” *The Valdai Discussion Club*, <http://ru.valdaiclub.com/about/valdai/>

⁵⁹ Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss, “The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money,” 21.

fact that their presence, listening, nodding, and silent acceptance of messages delivered by Kremlin-appointed speakers is later used to legitimize the regime and its actions.⁶⁰

The Valdai Discussion Club is a platform where Western experts are charmed and ideologically captured by the Kremlin. The variety of publications and information materials, produced by Western and Russian experts after attending the Valdai conference, create a great deal of additional “informational noise” around Russia and bolster the illusion of the Kremlin’s global presence and vast influence.

The Valdai is also a platform through which the Kremlin disseminates its propaganda messages on an industrial scale. First, the Valdai speakers (carefully selected by the Kremlin) present their arguments at the event. Then, the same messages are picked up and repeated almost verbatim by Western experts in their articles or public interviews in European and American media. Later, the Russian state media quotes a Western expert, without mentioning that he or she was simply reporting the Kremlin’s message heard at the Valdai. The positions of Western scholars are typically presented as independent opinions, thus legitimizing the Kremlin’s narratives and policies. As soon as the statement is dispatched and immediately shared by thousands of Russian social media trolls, the pro-Kremlin narrative has come full circle in the disinformation cycle.

3.2. The Gorchakov Foundation’s “Dialogue for the Future” Conference

The Valdai Discussion Club is supplemented by another international PR platform, the “**Dialogue for the Future**” conference, launched by the **Gorchakov Foundation** in 2011. It brings together international journalists, political scientists, and think tank representatives from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic states. The event is devoted to the discussion and analysis of Russia's foreign policy. In 2014, the Gorchakov foundation “broadened the geography” of participants and invited representatives from Iran, Turkey and China, as well as from the unrecognized political entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (de-facto Russia-occupied territories of Georgia) and Transnistria (de-facto Russia-occupied territory of Moldova).

The participants of the “Dialogue for the Future” conference traditionally meet with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov. In 2017, the conference was opened by Franco Frattini, Italy’s Foreign Minister of the Berlusconi cabinets of 2002-2004 and 2008-2011.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Lilia Shevtova, *Lonely Power. Why Russia has Failed to Become the West and the West is Weary of Russia*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (Washington DC, 2010), 98-99.

⁶¹ *The Gorchakov Fund*, November 16, 2017, <https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/view/yubileynyy-dialog-vo-imya-budushchego-otkryl-izvestnyy-italyanskiy-politik-obshchestvennyy-devatel-f/>

4. Moscow’s Ideological Subversion Agencies

4.1. Rossotrudnichestvo, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Gorchakov Fund

In addition to strengthening its think tank propaganda narratives and creating high-level international PR platforms, the Kremlin established three “soft power”⁶² organizations to deliver its propaganda messages to the West. These three organizations rely on a mix of covert and overt “active measures” to serve the Kremlin’s agenda, and thus effectively function as ideological subversion agencies.⁶³

The **Rossotrudnichestvo**, the **Russkiy Mir Foundation** and the **Gorchakov Fund** were established between 2007 and 2010 by Dmitri Medvedev’s presidential decrees. Their annual budgets total €5.12 million (the Russkiy Mir Foundation), €40 million (Rossotrudnichestvo, to be increased to €110 million by 2020) and €660,000 (the Gorchakov Fund).⁶⁴ The Russkiy Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo are based in Moscow but have representative offices in the EU.

On the eve of the 2012 presidential elections, Putin proposed to increase Russia’s academic and cultural presence in the world because “the promotion of culture, not imperialism, the export of education and culture, not guns or political regimes, could help create more favorable conditions for Russian goods, services and ideas.”⁶⁵ Table 2 summarizes the features and operational focus of these three agencies of soft power. Numerous Russian oligarchs officially joined the Board of Trustees of the Gorchakov Fund, which may indicate that they also provided financial support to the institution or its activities.

Table 2. The Russian Federation’s Institutions of Ideological Subversion

Name	Leader and Website
<p>Rossotrudnichestvo – established in 2008 operates under the Russian Ministry Foreign Ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - operates in 81 countries; - has 98 representative offices; - manages 74 Russian centers of science and culture in 62 countries, - has 24 staffers serving at Russian Embassies in 22 countries⁶⁶; - supports the study of the Russian language and Russian education services; extends cooperation with universities; coordinates youth projects and short-term study visits to Russia. 	<p>Eleonora Mitrofanova</p> <p>http://rs.gov.ru</p>
<p>The Russkiy Mir Foundation – established in 2007 operates under the Russian Foreign Ministry and Education Ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relies on public and private funds; - promotes Russian language and Russia’s national heritage abroad. 	<p>Vyacheslav Nikonov</p> <p>https://russkiymir.ru/en</p>

⁶² While some have argued that the term “soft power” is inapplicable in the case of Russia, since the Kremlin uses cultural diplomacy as an instrument of hybrid warfare, we use the term here for the sake of explanatory expedience. See for example: Marius Laurinavičius, “Weaponizing Kleptocracy: Putin’s Hybrid Warfare,” 11.

⁶³ Orysia Lutsevych, “Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood”.

⁶⁴ Vladislava Vojtišková, et al, “The Bear in Sheep’s Clothing, Russia’s Government-Funded Organizations in the EU”, 29.

⁶⁵ Vladimir Putin. “Rossiya i menyayushchiysya mir,” (Russia and the changing world) (in Russian), *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, February 27, 2012, <https://rg.ru/2012/02/27/putin-politika.html>

⁶⁶ All figures taken from the official website of Rossotrudnichestvo. Last checked on August 13, 2018, Source: About Rossotrudnichestvo: <http://rs.gov.ru/ru/about>

<p>The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund – established in 2010 - encourages development of the public diplomacy field, and supports the establishment of a favorable public, political and business climate for Russia</p> <p>Board of Trustees⁶⁷: Vagit Alekperov (total assets \$16.4 bln); Vladimir Yevtushenkov (\$2 bln); Aleksey Mordashov (\$18.7 bln); Mikhail Prokhorov (\$9.6 bln); Usher Usmanov (\$12.5 bln); Vladimir Yakunin; Suleiman Kerimov (\$6.4 bln).⁶⁸</p>	<p>Leonid Drachevsky</p> <p>https://gorchakovfund.ru/</p>
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The Russkiy Mir foundation is led by **Vyacheslav Nikonov** – a grandson of Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister who signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 that delineated the spheres of interest between Germany and the Soviet Union and opened the way to their joint invasion of Poland. Nikonov's father served at the NKVD (Soviet secret service) and then as editor-in-chief of the propaganda journal *The Communist*. During Soviet times, Nikonov was a staffer at the CPSU Central Committee, ultimately rising to the level of division chief in its Ideology Department. In 1991, he served as an assistant to Vadim Bakatin, the last Soviet KGB Chief. Elected to the Russian State Duma in 1993, Nikonov became the Chairman of the Duma's Subcommittee for International Security and Arms Control.⁶⁹

The Gorchakov Fund actively advances cooperation between young Russian and foreign scholars. It regularly organizes various conferences within the framework of its flagship programs like the Security Academy, the Balkan Dialogue, the Baltic Dialogue, the Diplomatic Dialogue for Young Specialists, the Caucasian Dialogue, the Caspian Youth School, and the School on Central Asia.⁷⁰ The Gorchakov Fund has also opened its Friends' Club to continue cooperation with the numerous alumni of its research and educational programs, mostly comprising representatives of NGOs and universities in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS countries), the Baltic States and southeastern Europe.⁷¹

In 2018, the Gorchakov Fund financially supported the Youth Patriotic Forum “Donuzlav-2018” in the Russian-occupied Crimean village of Novoozerny near Yevpatoria. The camp aims to “raise youth in the spirit of patriotism, love and devoutness to their Motherland, with the desire to study national history, towards unification of brotherly nations of historical Russia while building the modern Eurasian Union”⁷² – a description that thinly veils the objectives of Russian neo-imperialism.

The “Creative Diplomacy” initiative (PICREADI) was set up in 2010.⁷³ It positions itself as a civic initiative in the field of public diplomacy, but has all characteristics of a GONGO. Since 2013, the organization received three presidential grants in support of its public diplomacy efforts.⁷⁴ Its most recent initiative, *The Russian public diplomacy program for young leaders “To Know Russia,”* supplements the government’s propaganda efforts. The program aims “to explain and translate the Russian point of view on the important [for Russia] geopolitical issues” and “to establish the network of young lead-

⁶⁷ The information about the Gorchakov Fund’s Board of Trustees is available at: <https://gorchakovfund.ru/about/>

⁶⁸ The 2018 Forbes list of 200 riches Russians. *Forbes*, 2018, <http://www.forbes.ru/rating/360355-200-bogateyshih-biznesmenov-rossii-2018>

⁶⁹ Nikonov Vyacheslav Alekseevich, Russkiy Mir Foundation, <https://ruskiymir.ru/fund/administration/Nikonov-Vyacheslav-Alekseevich.php>

⁷⁰ <https://gorchakovfund.ru/projects/>

⁷¹ <https://gorchakovfund.ru/en/club/>

⁷² “The Gorchakov Fund sponsored Youth Patriotic Forum ‘Donuzlav’ in Crimea,” *The Gorchakov Fund*, August 3, 2018, <https://gorchakovfund.ru/en/news/view/the-gorchakov-fund-sponsored-youth-patriotic-forum-donuzlav-in-crimea/>

⁷³ Center for Support and Development of Public Initiatives, <http://picreadi.com/>

⁷⁴ Nonprofit organization “Creative Diplomacy,” *Open NGO*, <https://openngo.ru/organization/1117799005587/>

ers” from the cohort of European and American government representatives, business circles, journalists and experts, to ensure they have “a favorable opinion about Russia and are interested to partner with it.”⁷⁵

The participants have the unique opportunity to meet with senior Russian officials and top political experts, including the Russian State Duma and the Foreign Ministry.⁷⁶ PICREADI regularly publishes interviews with pro-Kremlin experts.⁷⁷ Its also carries out the public debate competition named after Sergey Kortunov, the late brother of RIAC’s President Andrey Kortunov.⁷⁸

PICREADI’s public diplomacy projects were personally supported by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.⁷⁹ The organization is led by Natalia Burlinova, a MGIMO graduate, who started her career at Rosoboronexport - Russia’s only state-controlled intermediary in the area of exports and imports of military products, technologies and services.⁸⁰ Burlinova also served at “RIA Novosti” (Russia’s state-owned news media holding), including its bureau in Washington DC. She later joined the expert group at the Nataliya Narochitskaya’s Foundation for Historical Perspective (discussed in section 5.2. of this report). In 2011-2014 Burlinova served as program manager at the Gorchakov Foundation.⁸¹

4.2. The Russkiy Mir Centers in Europe

The Russkiy Mir foundation focuses on youth exchanges and promotion of academic ties with Western universities. MGIMO rector Anatoliy Torkunov once stated that academic diplomacy was also part of Soviet propaganda: “the USSR for a long time used higher education as a geopolitical tool and as an 'ideological weapon' at the time of confrontation and the Cold War, long before the term ‘soft power’ was coined.”⁸²

The Russkiy Mir Foundation runs **41 centers of Russian culture** in EU member states, including **27 centers at EU universities (see Table 3)**. The largest number of centers was opened at universities in the United Kingdom, Italy, Hungary, and Poland, followed by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Romania.

⁷⁵ Grant discription, “Russian public diplomacy program for young leaders 'To Know Russia',” Official Website of government support of nonprofit organizations, <https://grants.oprf.ru/grants2016-2/winners/rec2922/>

⁷⁶ Center for Support and Development of Public Initiatives, http://picreadi.com/meeting_russia/

⁷⁷ Interview with Fedor Lukyanov “Russia’s Image Does not Correspond to Reality”, PICREADI, September 26, 2019, <http://www.picreadi.ru/obraz-rossii-ne-sootvetstvuet-realn/>; Interview with Andrey Sushentsov, “There is a dismal expert knowledge in the USA about Russia,” PICREADI, September 14, 2019, <http://www.picreadi.ru/intervyu-s-andreem-sushencovym/>

⁷⁸ Foreign Policy Debates named after Sergey Kortunov, <http://fpdebates.tilda.ws>

⁷⁹ Word from the President, PICREADI, <http://www.picreadi.ru/about/president/>

⁸⁰ Rosoboronexport, status, <http://roe.ru/eng/rosoboronexport/status/>

⁸¹ Burlinova Nataliya Valerievna, PICREADI, Team, <http://www.picreadi.ru/about/team/burlinova/>

⁸² Anatoliy Torkunov, “Education as a Soft Power Instrument of Russia’s Foreign Policy,” *Russian International Affairs Council*, March 6, 2013, <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/education-as-a-soft-power-instrument-of-russia-s-foreign-pol/>

Table 3. The Russkiy Mir Centers at Universities in EU member states⁸³

#	Country	Name of University
1	Austria	<u>Russian Center at Innsbruck University</u>
2	Austria	<u>Russian Center at Salzburg University</u>
3	Belgium	<u>Center for Russian Studies at University of Leuven</u>
4	Belgium	<u>Center for Russian Language and Culture and the University of Mons</u>
5	Bulgaria	<u>Russian Center at Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"</u>
6	Bulgaria	<u>University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"</u>
7	Czech Republic	<u>Masaryk University, Brno</u>
8	Czech Republic	<u>University of West Bohemia, Pilsen</u>
9	Hungary	<u>Eötvös Loránd University Budapest</u>
10	Hungary	<u>Debrecen University Russian Center</u>
11	Hungary	<u>University of Pécs</u>
12	Italy	<u>Milan University</u>
13	Italy	<u>Pisa University Russian Center</u>
14	Italy	<u>L'Orientali University, Naples</u>
15	Latvia	<u>Daugavpils University Russian Center</u>
16	Latvia	<u>The Baltic International Academy (Private university)</u>
17	Lithuania	<u>Lithianian University of Educational Science</u>
18	Netherlands	<u>Russian Center at the University of Groningen</u>
19	Poland	<u>Russian Center at the University of Krakow</u>
20	Poland	<u>Lublin University Russian Center</u>
21	Poland	<u>Wroclaw University Russian Center</u>
22	Portugal	<u>Center of Russian Studies Coimbra University</u>
23	Romania	<u>Bucharest Economic Academy</u>
24	Romania	<u>Babeş-Bolyai University</u>
25	Spain	<u>Russian Center at the University of Granada</u>
26	United Kingdom	<u>Edinburgh University Dashkova Center</u>
27	United Kingdom	<u>St Antony's College Russian studies program, University of Oxford</u>
28	United Kingdom	<u>The Russkiy Mir Center Durham University</u>

⁸³ The Russkiy Mir Foundation, Catalogue of Russkiy Mir Centers <https://ruskiymir.ru/rucenter/catalogue.php>

The Russian cultural centers abroad also serve as hubs for Kremlin intelligence gatherings. In 2013, the Rossotrudnichestvo office in Washington D.C. found themselves at the center of a diplomatic scandal when the FBI opened an investigation against its former director Yuri Zaitsev. U.S. officials suspected that the Russian government-run cultural exchange program in America's capital was clandestinely recruiting students as possible intelligence assets and using cultural events for the purposes of intelligence gathering.⁸⁴ For the past 12 years, the program has paid about 130 Americans to visit Russia, who often stayed in luxury hotels and met with Russian government officials.⁸⁵

In Europe, the program has so far avoided associated criminal investigations, and enjoyed success by allowing Moscow to attract Russia sympathizers from Western academia. This effort to expand the network of the Kremlin's agents of influence was supported by several oligarchs, who prioritized "investments" into British academic institutions to acquire higher social status and networking opportunities in London's higher society (see section 6 of this report).

4.3. Russian Soft Power in the United Kingdom: Where Business Meets Academia

The Putin regime uses a number of soft power tools in order to improve its image in the UK, including public and cultural diplomacy, well-equipped Kremlin-aligned print- and broadcast-media outlets, Christian Orthodoxy, a raft of cultural and linguistic programs, political allies on the left and right, and expert academic and policymaking communities.⁸⁶

The prioritization of academic ties with academic institutions in the UK has a number of political and business reasons. In 2016, at least 70 Russian companies were listed and traded on the London Stock Exchange, while British real estate and luxury goods attracted many Russian businesspeople.⁸⁷ Thus, the promotion of Russia's soft power by strengthening academic ties between Russian and UK universities was part of Russia's strategy to improve its image in the UK and to protect the business interests of financial moguls loyal to the Kremlin.

The **Princess Dashkova Russian Centre** was established at the **University of Edinburgh** in 2010 with £240,000 of funding from the Russkiy Mir Foundation.⁸⁸ The Center was personally opened by its director, Vyacheslav Nikonov. Two years later, the University of Edinburgh awarded Nikonov an honorary doctorate.⁸⁹

Interestingly, the University also invested £636,638 in shares of Russia's Sberbank, which was later sanctioned by both the United States and the European Union.⁹⁰ The Kremlin's propaganda effort in Scotland did not stop there. Russian media company Sputnik established an office in Edinburgh to provide the Scottish people with "alternative angles on stories, views and backgrounds that they might not necessarily get from anyone else" – a typical Russian euphemism for disinformation.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Horwitz, Sari. "Head of D.C.-based Russian cultural center being investigated as possible spy." *The Washington Post*, October 23, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/head-of-dc-based-russian-cultural-center-being-investigated-as-possible-spy/2013/10/23/63a0bb54-3c02-11e3-a94f-b58017bfee6c_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.cad6fc1c8ac5

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Andrew Foxall, "The Kremlin's Sleight of Hand: Russia's Soft Power Offinsice in the UK," *The Henry Jackson Society, Russia Studies Center*, Policy Paper #3, February 2015, 3, <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/The-Kremlins-Sleight-of-Hand.pdf>

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁸ "Russian Center Opens in Edinburgh," *Russkiy Mir Foundation*, April 19, 2010, <https://russkiymir.ru/en/news/122508>; "From Russia With Conditions," *The Times*, November 19, 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/from-russia-with-conditions-w2p7qjvlx>; Sophia Muller, "University of Edinburgh academic center revealed to have been funded by a Putin-led Russian cultural unit," *The Tab*, April 22, 2018, <https://thetab.com/uk/edinburgh/2018/04/22/university-of-edinburgh-academic-centre-revealed-to-have-been-funded-by-a-putin-led-russian-cultural-unit-45923>

⁸⁹ Honorary Graduates, Annual Review 2011/12, *University of Edinburgh*, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/annual-review/1112/honorary>

⁹⁰ Peter Georghagan, "Edinburgh University Criticized for Investment in Sanctioned Russian Bank," *The Ferret*, November 20, 2017, <https://theferret.scot/edinburgh-university-investment-russian-bank/>

⁹¹ "Russian news agency Sputnik sets up Scottish studio," *BBC News*, August 10, 2016), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-37036900>; For more information visit: Neil Tweedie, "As Kremlin sets up propaganda HQ in (of all places) Edinburgh, are Putin's

In April 2012, the Russkiy Mir Foundation unveiled **its program at the University of Oxford**.⁹² The opening ceremony was attended by the Russian ambassador to Britain, Alexander Yakovenko, and Alexey Gromyko, director of the Russkiy Mir European program and grandson of the Soviet foreign minister Andrey Gromyko. In February 2014, just one month before Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, the Russkiy Mir Foundation supported a seminar at Oxford's St. Antony's College tellingly titled "Cultural Memory in Sevastopol – 'Ukraine's City of Russian Glory.'" ⁹³ The Russkiy Mir program at Oxford was closed in 2014.

In April 2013, the Foundation paid an additional £85,000 to **Durham University** to open **the Russkiy Mir Sergey Averintsev Centre** – an interdisciplinary research center to "communicate the riches of Russian civilization to the general public."⁹⁴ The Center took its name after Russian biblical scholar and cultural historian of the late Soviet era, Sergey Averintsev, who studied the "spirituality of the past" and "spirituality of the future" and "reversed the relation between politics and culture in the minds of many intellectuals."⁹⁵

The British media started questioning the Russkiy Mir Foundation's links to British universities amid wider scrutiny of the Russian government's efforts to meddle in Western politics.⁹⁶ It urged the University of Edinburgh to strip Nikonov of his honorary doctorate "in light of the rise of an increasingly authoritarian government in Russia."⁹⁷ In response, the University stated that it has "no plans" to withdraw the degree, but will "continue to monitor events closely".⁹⁸ Duncan Hames, Director of Policy Transparency International UK stressed that "prestigious UK institutions – like the University of Edinburgh – should be aware of the broader consequences of doing business with companies and individuals which represent a high money laundering and corruption risk... Universities in particular are a target for this type of activity and should conduct thorough due diligence on those with whom they have commercial or philanthropic relationships."⁹⁹

4.4. Russia-Italy-Crimea: Where Politics Meets Culture

The Kremlin has also made considerable investments into Italian cultural and educational institutions. The Russkiy Mir Foundation opened three centers of Russian culture there, at the University of Milan, the University of Pisa, and L'Orientale University in Naples (see Table 3). Professor Oksana Pakhlyovska has observed:

"The Russkiy Mir foundation, [economic] crisis in Russia irrespective, stays focused and works hard. Even reputable [Italian] intellectuals 'stand in line' to receive 'Putin's money', because Europe's financial crisis had hit universities rather hard. Professors of Russian history get [financial]

beauties on a secret mission to break up the UK?," *The Daily Mail*, August 10, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3732324/As-Kremlin-sets-propaganda-HQ-places-Edinburgh-Putin-s-beauties-secret-mission-break-UK.html>

⁹² "Russkiy Mir Foundation to Unveil its Program at the University of Oxford," *Russkiy Mir Foundation*, February 24, 2012, <https://russkiy-mir.ru/en/fund/press/140665/>

⁹³ Oxford University, "Cultural Memory of Sevastopol – Ukraine's City of Russian Glory," <http://www.rees.ox.ac.uk/cultural-memory-sevastopol-ukraines-city-russian-glory>

⁹⁴ The Russkiy Mir Center, Durham University, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/russkiymircentre/>

⁹⁵ Sergey Sergeevich Averintsev, Durham University, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/russkiymircentre/sergeiaverintsev/>

⁹⁶ Eugene Smith, "Durham University cultural centre funded by Russian propaganda agency," *Palatinate*, January 26, 2017, <https://www.palatinat.org.uk/durham-university-cultural-centre-funded-by-russian-propaganda-agency/>

⁹⁷ Paul Hutcheon, "Edinburgh University under pressure to strip Russian 'propaganda' chief of honorary degree," *The Sunday Herald*, March 24, 2018, <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/16114602.Edinburgh-University-told-strip-Russian-propaganda-chief-of-honorary-degree/>

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Peter Georghagan, "Edinburgh University Criticized for Investment in Sanctioned Russian Bank," *The Ferret*, November 20, 2017, <https://theferret.scot/edinburgh-university-investment-russian-bank/>

possibility to hold conferences, publish books, organize student exchanges and such opportunities are simply unavailable for experts in Slavic studies.”¹⁰⁰

In 2014 – the year of Russia's annexation of Crimea – the academic council of Ca' Foscari University in Venice made a unanimous decision to award the infamous Russian minister of culture Vladimir Medinsky – who, among many other heinous views, supports the revival of the cult of Stalin – the title of honorary professor in acknowledgement of his academic work and role in developing Russian culture.¹⁰¹ 226 Italian academics wrote an open letter in protest of this decision, stating that “universities should support free research, and not a culture that serves a political regime.”¹⁰² Similarly, Russian scholars warned that giving an award to one of the most infamous figures of Russian contemporary cultural policy would damage the university's reputation.¹⁰³ Due to this scandal, Medinsky cancelled his visit to the University. The university's then-vice rector, Silvia Burini, was forced to fly to Moscow to give the award to Medinsky in person.¹⁰⁴ Burini currently serves as director of the Ca' Foscari University's Center for the Study of Russian Art (CSRA).¹⁰⁵ It has been argued that the decision to award Medinsky was probably influenced by the generosity of the Russian government.¹⁰⁶ The CSRA was opened on March 6, 2011 by **Svetlana Medvedeva**, president of the Russian Foundation for Socio-Cultural Initiatives and wife of the then-Russian President Dmitri Medvedev.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the Russian government, Russian oligarchs also actively support Russo-Italian partnership in cultural sphere. In 2017, Italian President Sergio Mattarella awarded Russian billionaire **Alisher Usmanov**, Putin's close associate, the Order “For merits to the Italian Republic” in recognition of his philanthropic support of Italian cultural projects.¹⁰⁸

Many Italian politicians make no secret of their favorable relationship with the Kremlin.¹⁰⁹ Compared to other EU member states, the Italian media gives greater prominence to pro-Russian narratives.¹¹⁰ Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right League party and Italy's deputy prime minister and interior minister, has recently proposed lifting the EU's Russia sanctions, denied Russia's illegitimate annexation of Crimea, and compared Ukraine's Euromaidan revolution to a “pseudo-revolution funded by foreign powers.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁰ “Oksana Pakhlyovska: V Italii praktychno nemaye lideriv gromadyans'koi dumky, yaki b adekvatno rozpovidaly ukrainsku story,” (in Ukrainian) (Oksana Pakhlyovska: In Italy there are virtually no public opinion leaders, who would actively promote the Ukrainian story), *Glavkom*, December 1, 2016, <https://glavkom.ua/interviews/oksan-pahlovska-v-italiji-val-antiukrajinski-literaturi-jiji-leytmotiv-kijivska-hunta-vchinila-genocid-385760.html>

¹⁰¹ Anna Abalkina, “Khronika polucheniya Vladimirom Medinskim pochetnogo zvaniya Ca' Foscari Honorary Fellow” (in Russian) (The chronicle of awarding Vladimir Medinsky with the Honorary Fellow title of Ca' Foscari University), *Troitskii variant*, October 18, 2016, <https://trv-science.ru/2016/10/18/khronika-polucheniya-medinskim-ca-foscari-honorary-fellow/>; Daniela Ghio, “L'università premia il ministro russofilo-Putin, è bufera su Ca' Foscari,” *Il Gazzettino*, May 10, 2014, <https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/vladimir-medinskij-premio-ca-foscari-universit-agrave-venezia-polemica-408477.html>

¹⁰² “Letter of 226 professors and staffers of Ca' Foscari university in protest of awarding V. Medinsky with honorary professorship,” *Polit.ru*, May 14, 2014, http://polit.ru/article/2014/05/19/226_professors_ca_foscari_letter/

¹⁰³ “The Letter of Russian artists in protest of Medinsky's award,” *Colta.ru*, May 15, 2014, <http://www.colta.ru/articles/specials/3196>

¹⁰⁴ Elena Polyakovskaya, “Mantiyu dlia Medinskogo podvezli v Moskvu,” (in Russian) (Medinsky's mantle was brought to Moscow), *Radio Svoboda*, May 15, 2014, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/25386409.html>

¹⁰⁵ Il Centro Studi sulle Arti della Russia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, <http://www.unive.it/pag/30989>

¹⁰⁶ Maria Lipman, “Meet the Second-Rate Academic Who is Vladimir Putin's Culture Cop. Vladimir Medinsky is nationalist and anti-European, just like Putin,” *New Republic*, May 24, 2014, <https://newrepublic.com/article/117896/vladimir-medinsky-russias-culture-minister-putin-toady>

¹⁰⁷ “Svetlana Medvedeva otkryla v Venetsii centr izucheniya kultury Rossii” (in Russian) (Svetlana Medvedeva opened the Russian Culture Center in Venice), *Vesti.ru*, March 6, 2011, <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=434128>

¹⁰⁸ “Presidente Mattarella premia magnate russo per progetti di restauro di edifici storici,” *Sputnik Italia*, March 12, 2017, <https://it.sputniknews.com/italia/201703124191187-Russia-oligarca-Usmanov-Italia-Roma-cultura/>

¹⁰⁹ For more details see: Alina Polyakova, et al. “The Kremlin's Trojan Horses. Russia Influence in Greece, Italy and Spain,” *Atlantic Council*, (November 2017), http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/The_Kremlins_Trojan_Horses_2_web_1121.pdf

¹¹⁰ Joanna Plucinska and Mark Scott, “How Italy Does Putin's Work,” *Politico*, March 3, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/italy-election-fake-news-sunday-bufale-misinformation-vladimir-putin-russia/>

¹¹¹ Lally Weymouth, “Italy has Done a Lot – Maybe Too Much,” *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/italy-has-done-a-lot--maybe-too-much/2018/07/19/dc81a292-8acf-11e8-8aea-86e88ae760d8_story.html

Italian media reported that about thirty Italian citizens currently serve as mercenaries in Donbas along with representatives of local criminal groups and the Russian army, and that some of them could have been recruited via Russian cultural organizations in Italy.¹¹² Irina Osipova, the daughter of the director of the Rossotrudnichestvo office in Italy, allegedly cooperated with Italian far-right politicians as part of activities undertaken by the Lombardia-Russia cultural association. The association could assist in recruiting Italian mercenaries to fight in Russia's undeclared war against Ukraine.¹¹³ In 2016, Lombardia-Russia cultural association organized a visit for a group of Italian businesspeople to the so-called Donbas and Luhansk People's Republics (Ukraine's territories that are de-facto under Russian occupation), where they met with local government officials.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Tommaso Fregatti, Matteo Indice, "Reclutavano mercenari per la guerra in Ucraina. Arrestati sei neofascisti italiani, caccia ai complici," *La Stampa*, August 1, 2018, <http://www.lastampa.it/2018/08/01/italia/reclutavano-mercenari-per-la-guerra-in-ucraina-arrestati-sei-neofascisti-italiani-caccia-ai-complici-Hd0tgCsCszueiZKOFWFAXI/pagina.html>

¹¹³ Yaroslav Krychko, "Vbyvaty ukraintiv za 400 evro. V Italii rozkryly skhemu verbuвання boyovykyv na Donbas," (In Ukrainian) (To kill Ukrainians for 400 euro. The scheme of recruiting mercenaries to fight in Donbas uncovered in Italy), *Radio Svoboda*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donbas-realii-boyovyky-z-italii/29427659.html>; "Mercenari e istigatori all'odio razziale," *La Repubblica*, August 2, 2018, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2018/08/02/mercenari-e-istigatori-allodio-razzialeGenova05.html>

¹¹⁴ "Venetsianty na Donbase," (in Russian) (Venetians in Donbas), *Lombardie-Russia*, December 13, 2016, <http://ru.lombardiarussia.org/index.php/component/content/article/57-categoria-home-/288-2016-12-13-13-53-25>

5. The Export of Ideas: Russian Think Tanks Go West

5.1. Vladimir Yakunin and the Dialogue of Civilizations Institute in Berlin

The Kremlin also pursued a strategy of increasing its media and think tank presence in major European capitals. When the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (DOC-RI) was established in Berlin in 2016, German media immediately warned it would serve as an “instrument of Moscow’s hybrid warfare” against the West.¹¹⁵

The Institute was founded by **Vladimir Yakunin** – a one-time KGB general and former head of Russian Railways. In her illuminating book, *Putin’s Kleptocracy*, the late professor Karen Dawisha argued that Yakunin has been a “grey cardinal” at Putin’s side since his first days in power.¹¹⁶ In 2014, the U.S. government sanctioned Yakunin, citing his role as Putin’s confidant.¹¹⁷ The European Union has thus far refrained from sanctioning Yakunin, which allows him to travel and participate in DOC-RI events.

The Institute’s two other co-founders are the Former Secretary General of the Council of Europe **Walter Schwimmer** and Professor **Peter W. Schulze** of the Georg-August University of Göttingen. From 1992-2003, Dr. Schulze served as Director of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung’s Moscow office – the political think tank of the Social Democratic Party, whose former leader Gerhard Schröder is one of Vladimir Putin’s staunchest sympathizers.¹¹⁸ The Institute’s Supervisory Board is led by three persons – **Vaclav Klaus**, former President of the Czech Republic (2003-2013), **Alfred Gusenbauer**, former Federal Chancellor of Austria (2007-2008), and **Andrea von Knoop**, former Chairwoman of the German Business Association in Russia.

The Institute does not disclose its donors and states that donations to its endowment in Geneva have “the advantage of strategic long-term cooperation with special tax advantages” and that “contribution can be made in the form of online payment, cash, securities, or real estate.”¹¹⁹ The media reported that Yakunin plans to put twenty-five million euro into the functioning of the Institute over the next five years.¹²⁰

This sizable funding has allowed Yakunin to turn DOC-RI into a powerful propaganda machine. Even in the wake of EU sanctions against Russia and America’s personal sanctions against Yakunin, DOC-RI recruited a great number of academics from top American universities like Columbia and Princeton. In May 2018, *Think Progress* reported that eight American academics were officially affiliated with Yakunin’s think tanks. The official employers in the United States - American universities - had been unaware of scholars’ relationship with DOC-RI, as well as any policy prohibiting staff from working with individuals sanctioned by the U.S. government.¹²¹ As of July 26, 2018, the Institute employed 24 external experts and 15 research team members.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Von Markus Wehner, “Achtung, Wladimir kommt!”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 28, 2016, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/putin-vertrauter-jakunin-gruendet-politik-institut-in-berlin-14308332.html>

¹¹⁶ Samuel Ramani, “Karen Dawisha on How Putin Views the West,” *HuffingtonPost*, October 29, 2015, <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/samuel-ramani/karen-dawisha-on-how-putin-b-8404910.html>; Karen Dawisha, *Putin’s Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia*, (Simon & Shuster, 2018), pp. 65, 67, 71, 94, 95, 99, 101, 113-114, 283, 33, 339.

¹¹⁷ “Treasury Sanctions Russian Officials, Members of the Russian Leadership’s Inner Circle, and an Entity for Involvement in the Situation in Ukraine,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, March 20, 2014, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl23331.aspx>

¹¹⁸ Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, The University of Goettingen, <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/188175.html>

¹¹⁹ <https://doc-research.org/about-us/support-the-institute/>

¹²⁰ Ben Knight, “Putin associate opens Russia-friendly think tank in Berlin,” *Deutsche Welle*, July 1, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/putin-associate-opens-russia-friendly-think-tank-in-berlin/a-19372110>

¹²¹ Casey Michel, “Oligarch gets an assist from U.S. academics in whitewashing Russia’s reputation,” *ThinkProgress*, May 30, 2018, <https://thinkprogress.org/why-are-these-american-academics-helping-a-sanctioned-russian-oligarch-1d1fa57c98e1/>

¹²² The list of DOC-RI experts is available at: <https://doc-research.org/experts/> (last checked on August 14, 2018).

DOC-RI makes no secret of its relationship with Yakunin and thus its international research contractors cannot pretend to be in the dark about who is funding their trips to DOC-RI's numerous international events.¹²³

Sanctions aside, many European scholars and politicians are still willing and eager to have a “dialogue” with Yakunin. The upcoming 2018 Rhodes Forum may feature several retired leaders like **Joschka Fisher**, former Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor of Germany (1998-2005), **Dominique de Villepin**, former Prime Minister of France (2005-2007), and **Eva Kailu**, Member of European Parliament.¹²⁴ The Institute actively engages former EU officials, including **Günter Verheugen**, former European Commissioner for Enlargement (1999-2004).¹²⁵

The Institute organizes cultural events and often invites Western diplomats to the lectures of **Dmitri Trenin**, director of the Moscow Carnegie Center,¹²⁶ or **Andrey Kortunov**, director of RIAC.¹²⁷ A quick glance through DOC-RI's Twitter feed attests to its pro-Moscow narrative.¹²⁸ On April 12, 2018, following Andrey Kortunov's presentation, DOC-RI quoted him as saying that “the [presidential] election in Russia was not manipulated. Putin is the most popular politician in Russia and this will not change in the near future... Sanctions and isolation from the international community should not be the aim of Europe and the US.”¹²⁹

In Berlin, the activities of DOC-RI are backed up by the **German-Russian Forum**,¹³⁰ where Yakunin sits on the Board of Trustees.

In 2018, Yakunin was granted a visa that paves the way for him to live and work in Germany. As DOC-RI's spokesperson stressed, “getting a visa allowing you to work *in the country where the headquarters of your organization are located* [emphasis added] is a normal work process.”¹³¹

5.2. The Institute for Democracy and Cooperation in Paris

The Institute for Democracy and Cooperation was launched in 2008 in Paris and New York and, in the words of its American office chief **Andranik Migranyan**, was tasked “to shape alternative views on political processes in Russia”, “monitor violations of human rights in the West” and “export Russia's understanding of democracy to Europe and USA.”¹³² Putin promised to start monitoring human rights

¹²³ Based on DOC-RI website, it has held thirty public events in Berlin, six in Vienna, fifteen in Russia, two in Kazakhstan, and several smaller events in Geneva, Rome, Warsaw and New Delhi.

¹²⁴ “Making Multiculturalism Work: Enhancing Dialogue on Peace, Security and Development, Program of the October 5-6 2018 Rhode Forum,” *Dialogue for Civilizations Research Institute*, <https://doc-research.org/forum/forum2018/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Rhodes-Forum-Agenda-18-June.pdf>

¹²⁵ “DOC New Year Reception with Günter Verheugen,” *Dialogue for Civilization Research Institute*, January 30, 2018, <https://doc-research.org/our-events/doc-new-year-reception-gunter-verheugen/>

¹²⁶ D. Trenin is a director of the Moscow Carnegie Center. See “Lecture by D. Trenin: ‘What Place for Europe in Russia’s Strategy of Greater Eurasia?’”, *Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute*, February 22, 2017, <https://doc-research.org/our-events/lecture-by-d-trenin-what-place-for-europe-in-russias-strategy-of-greater-eurasia/>

¹²⁷ “Putin’s 4th presidency: Prospects for Russian foreign policy – Lecture by Andrey Kortunov,” *DOC-RI*, April 12, 2018, <https://doc-research.org/our-events/putins-4th-presidency-prospects-russian-foreign-policy-lecture-andrey-kortunov/>

¹²⁸ Casey Michel, “Oligarch gets an assist from U.S. academics in whitewashing Russia’s reputation.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Established in 1993 by former chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and President Vladimir Putin. It is closely linked with, and partly funded by, German companies active in Russia. See: Stefan Meister, “Germany. Interdependence as Vulnerability,” in: Alina Polyakova, et al, “Russian Influence in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom,” 13.

¹³¹ “Sanctioned Putin ally Vladimir Yakunin granted German visa,” *Deutsche Welle*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/sanctioned-putin-ally-vladimir-yakunin-granted-german-visa/a-45162025>

¹³² Eleonora Mandalyan, “Andranik Migranyan edet v Ameriku” (in Russian) (Andranik Migranyan goes to America), *Russkiy Bazar*, no. 17 (627), April 2008, <http://www.russian-bazaar.com/ru/content/12341.htm>

violations in the EU at the 2007 Russia-EU summit in Portugal.¹³³ In 2011, the Russian Foreign Ministry responded with its first report “On the situation with human rights in several world countries”,¹³⁴ which was later praised by Putin as a document that provided “information and propaganda grounds for [Russia’s] foreign policy and diplomatic activities”.¹³⁵

According to the Russian press,¹³⁶ the Institute was managed directly from the Kremlin by **Anatoliy Kucherena** – Vladimir Putin’s *doverennoe litso* (trusted representative) in the 2012 and 2018 presidential elections.¹³⁷ Kucherena’s status in the Kremlin is also evidenced by the fact that from 2013-2014 he represented the interests of two “VIP” clients – the former NSA contractor Edward Snowden and the fugitive president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich.¹³⁸ Kucherena has been serving as Chairman of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Public Council since 2013.

In France, the Institute¹³⁹ is led by the former State Duma deputy and Vladimir Yakunin’s professional associate, **Nataliya Narochnitskaya**.¹⁴⁰ From 1982-1989, Narochnitskaya worked at the United Nations Secretariat in New York where she most likely developed a professional relationship with Vladimir Yanukin, who served at the USSR Mission to the United Nations from 1985-1991. Narochnitskaya is a member of the Russkiy Mir Foundation’s Board of Trustees¹⁴¹ and director of her own Foundation for Historical Perspective, which focuses on such “nerve centers” of Russian politics as “falsification of history, orange revolutions and strengthening of Russia’s sovereignty.”¹⁴²

The Institute does not disclose its sources of funding and claims that support comes from “private donors.”¹⁴³ Narochnitskaya’s deputy, British Eurosceptic **John Laughland**, helps to broaden the Institute’s outreach in the United Kingdom.¹⁴⁴ He is a harsh critic of “color revolutions” and views them as a Western conspiracy against Russia.¹⁴⁵

According to Marlene Laruelle of George Washington University, “Narochnitskaya systematically upholds the claims of the Moscow Patriarchate, affirms the existence of a specific Orthodox civilization based on the predominance of ethnic Russians and characterized primarily by its anti-Western stance, and has become known for ... her unfaltering support for the [Kremlin’s] two wars in Chechnya.”¹⁴⁶

¹³³ During his closing remarks at the Summit Putin said: “The European Union gives grants to support such institutions [human rights monitors] in Russia. I think it’s time for the Russian Federation to do the same in European Union.” Ekaterina Grigorieva, “Rossiya profinansiruyet evopeiskuyu demokratiyu,” (in Russian) (Russia will finance European democracy), *Izvestiya*, October 29, 2007, <https://iz.ru/news/330162>

¹³⁴ Doklad MID Rossii “O situatsii s pravami cheloveka v ryade gosudarstv mira” (Report “On Situation with Human Rights in Several World Countries”), *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, December 28, 2011, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/humanitarian_cooperation/-/asset_publisher/bB3NYd16mBFC/content/id/175922

¹³⁵ Vladimir Putin, “Rossiya i menyayushchiysya mir” (in Russian) (Russia and the changing world), *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, February 27, 2012, <https://rg.ru/2012/02/27/putin-politika.html>

¹³⁶ Andrey Vinokurov, Aleksandr Braterskiy, Nataliya Galimova, “Missiya zakonchena. Situatsiya s pravami cheloveka v Amerike stala luchshe,” (in Russian) (The mission is over. The situation with human rights in the U.S. has improved), *Gazeta.ru*, June 28, 2015, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/06/25_a_6854653.shtml

¹³⁷ Anatoliy Kucherena, *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatoly_Kucherena

¹³⁸ “Fugitive Ukrainian President Shows Up in Moscow,” *Haaretz*, February 27, 2014, <https://www.haaretz.com/ukrainian-president-sighted-in-moscow-1.5327379>

¹³⁹ The Institute of Democracy and Cooperation, <http://www.idc-europe.org/en>

¹⁴⁰ Personal page of Nataliya Narochnitskaya, <http://narotchnitskaya.com/>

¹⁴¹ Russkiy Mir Foundation, <https://ruskiymir.ru/fund/the-board-of-trustees/>

¹⁴² Institut istoricheskoy perspektivy, <http://www.fiip.ru/>

¹⁴³ Natalya Kanevskaya, “How The Kremlin Wields Its Soft Power In France,” *Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe*, June 24, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-soft-power-france/25433946.html>

¹⁴⁴ Neil Barnett, “United Kingdom. Vulnerable but Resistant,” in: Alina Polyakova, et al, “Russian Influence in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom,” 23.

¹⁴⁵ John Laughland, “The end of rainbow. A guide to the color revolutions,” *Spectator*, February 2010, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2010/02/the-end-of-the-rainbow-a-guide-to-the-colour-revolutions/>

¹⁴⁶ Marlene Laruelle, “Russian Soft Power in France: Assessing Moscow’s Cultural and Business Para-diplomacy,” *Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Relations*, January 8, 2018, https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/russian-soft-power-in-france

The Kremlin's interests in Paris are also represented by the **Association of Franco-Russian Dialogue**,¹⁴⁷ (AFRD) established in 2004 under the patronage of the French and Russian Presidents, Jacques Chirac and Vladimir Putin. Since 2012, the Association has been co-led by French parliamentarian **Thierry Mariani** and **Vladimir Yakunin**.

According to Cecile Vaissie, the author of *The Kremlin's Network in France*,¹⁴⁸ the Association actively lobbies for lifting EU sanctions against Russia.¹⁴⁹ It regularly organizes events to promote the business interests of its members – i.e., those of Gazprom, VTB bank, Renova (owned by Viktor Vekselberg) and Marshall Capital Partners (owned by Konstantin Malofeev, financial supporter of the illegal armed groups and mercenaries used by Russia as part of its hybrid military force to occupy Crimea and to invade Ukraine's Donbas region.)¹⁵⁰

Although the AFRD has limited impact on French society, it is effective at the level of political elites and European parliament.¹⁵¹ Narochnitskaya's activities in Paris helped Russian authorities obtain consultative status for the Institute of Democratic Cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Foreign Minister Lavrov visits the Institute to meet with the educated French public, while Narochnitskaya and her deputy regularly appear in French media and the Kremlin propaganda channel *RT* that now broadcasts in French.¹⁵²

The **Observe think tank**¹⁵³ was established by the Russia-France Economic Council in 2012. It is led by Arnaud Dubien. The Center's Advisory Council is made up of eight French and seven Russian scholars, including the academic director of the Valdai Discussion Club, Fedor Lukyanov.

5.3. Russian Energy Companies and Western Research Centers

In addition to establishing its own think tanks in Paris, the Kremlin pursues a strategy of infiltrating reputable European think tanks. The Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies reported that two Paris-based organizations – **Institut des relations internationales et stratégiques** and **Institut français des relations internationales** – have connections to the Kremlin. The first think tank organized conferences with pro-Russian associations and the international colloquium, where the Director General of RIAC Andrey Kortunov and honorary chairman of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy Sergey Karaganov presented their reports. French daily newspaper *Libération* wrote that the Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques was sensitive to sirens from the Kremlin. The second think tank allegedly received funding from Russia and organized conferences that lobbied for Gazprom's interests.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Association Dialogue Franco-Russe, <http://dialoguefrancorusse.com/Ru/>

¹⁴⁸ Cecile Vaissie, *Les Réseaux du Kremlin en France*, (Les Petit Matines: Paris, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ Anna Stroganova, "Interview with Cecile Vaissie," *Golos a so vsego mira*, April 11, 2016, <http://ru.rfi.fr/rossiya/20160409-sesil-vesse>

¹⁵⁰ Courtney Weaver, "Malofeev: the Russian billionaire linking Moscow to the rebels," *Financial Times*, July 24, 2014, <https://www.ft.com/content/84481538-1103-11e4-94f3-00144feabdc0>

¹⁵¹ Anna Stroganova, "Interview with Cecile Vaissie," *Golos a so vsego mira*, April 11, 2016, <http://ru.rfi.fr/rossiya/20160409-sesil-vesse>

¹⁵² Cecile Vaissie, "Can the Kremlin Influence the French Elections?," *New York Times*, April 14, 2017, <https://www.ny-times.com/2017/04/14/opinion/can-the-kremlin-influence-the-french-election.html>

¹⁵³ The Observe Think Tank, <http://obsfr.ru/fr/observatoire.html>

¹⁵⁴ "The Bear in Sheep's Clothing, Russia's Government-Funded Organizations in the EU," 53-54.

In 2017, the media inquired about the funders of the most influential think tank in the United Kingdom, the **Legatum Institute**,¹⁵⁵ which was known to support Brexit.¹⁵⁶ Reportedly, the Legatum Institute's income had grown significantly in recent years, from £35,000 in 2012 to more than £4 million in 2016. The Institute is financially supported by Dubai-based billionaire Christopher Chandler, who was allegedly linked to Russian intelligence.¹⁵⁷ The same media source also revealed that Christopher Chandler and his brother Richard had close business ties to Russia and that by 2002 the Chandlers were the fourth largest investors in Russia's Gazprom. The Legatum Institute has confirmed this information, but denied the possibility of foreign interference in its activities, stating that Gazprom shares were widely held by major institutional investors around the world and that "one is not in cahoots with Putin merely because one owns publicly-listed shares of a Russian company."¹⁵⁸

Two university think tanks in the UK were also implicated in ties to Gazprom. The **Natural Gas Research Program** at the **Oxford Institute of Energy Studies (OIES)** is co-sponsored by Gazprom M&T and the leading members of the Nord Stream-2 consortium. It consistently issues publications favorable to Gazprom's interests in Europe.¹⁵⁹ The **Oxford Institute of Energy Studies** also faced allegations that it was providing a platform for lobbying on behalf of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline project.¹⁶⁰ According to the German watchdog Lobby Control,¹⁶¹ King's College London lent an appearance of neutrality to a former German MP whose company has commercial contracts with Nord Stream 2, and an energy firm which stood to profit from the infrastructure project across the Baltic Sea.¹⁶²

The Center failed to mention that its director, Friedbert Pflüger¹⁶³ – a former member of the German Bundestag (1990-2006) and deputy defense minister in the first Merkel Government (2005/06) – was also a businessman whose Berlin-based company Pflüger International advises is involved in lobbying on behalf of international energy firms. Under Pflüger's directorship, EUCERS has published a strategy paper¹⁶⁴ on Nord Stream 2 – a new export gas pipeline running from Russia to Europe to be constructed by the international consortium of five major companies Nord Stream AG, based in Zug, Switzerland. The majority shareholder, the Russian OAO Gazprom, holds a 51 percent stake in the pipeline project.¹⁶⁵

The was sponsored by Shell, OMV, Wintershall, Uniper and Engie – the five energy companies that have invested in the planned pipeline. Pflüger rejected the claim that he was a lobbyist for Nord Stream 2 and insisted there was a strict separation between his academic role for EUCERS and activity on behalf of Pflüger International. However, the Lobby Control still questioned the position of King's

¹⁵⁵ Legatum Institute, <https://www.li.com>

¹⁵⁶ Peter Geoghegan, "Legatum: the Brexiteers' favorite think tank. Who is behind them?" *OpenDemocracyUK*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/peter-geoghegan/legatum-who-are-brexiteers-favourite-think-tank-and-who-is-behind-them>

¹⁵⁷ Luke Harding, "Founder of pro-Brexit Think Tank Has Links with Russian Intelligence, Says MP," *The Guardian*, May 1, 2018, <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/01/christopher-chandler-founder-of-pro-brexit-think-tank-has-link-with-russian-intelligence-mp-says>

¹⁵⁸ "Legatum Group's response to the Mail on Sunday article, 26th November 2017," *The Legatum Group*, November 26, 2017, <https://www.legatum.com/news/legatum-groups-response-to-the-mail-on-sunday-article-26th-november-2017/>

¹⁵⁹ Ilya Zaskavskiy, "Corruption Pipeline. The Threat of Nord Stream 2 to EU Security and Democracy," *Free Russia Foundation*, Washington DC, 2017, <http://www.4freerussia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Corruption-Pipeline-web.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ Philip Oltermann, "UK university accused of giving platform to Nord Stream 2 lobbyist," *The Guardian*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/jul/26/uk-university-accused-platform-nord-stream-2-lobbyist-kings-college-london>

¹⁶¹ Lobby Control, <https://www.lobbycontrol.de>

¹⁶² Ulrich von Muller, "Friedbert Pflüger, Gas-Lobbyist mit Doppelrolle," *LobbyControl*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.lobbycontrol.de/2018/07/friedbert-pflueger-gas-lobbyist-mit-doppelrolle/>

¹⁶³ Kings College London, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/warstudies/people/visiting/pflueger.aspx>

¹⁶⁴ Andreas Goldthau, "Assessing Nord Stream 2: regulation, geopolitics & energy security in the EU, Central Eastern Europe & the UK," *EUCERC, King's College London*, 2016, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/warstudies/research/groups/eucers/pubs/strategy-paper-10.pdf>

¹⁶⁵ Nord Stream AG, <https://www.nord-stream.com/about-us/>

College London and criticized it for allowing a commercial lobbyist to present himself as a neutral academic expert.¹⁶⁶

Finally, recent evidence indicates that Russian intelligence services may also rely on some British scholars in their efforts to meddle in Western elections. Aleksandr Kogan, the **Cambridge University** academic whose research helped Cambridge Analytica turn tens of millions of Facebook profiles into a unique political weapon during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, was found to have unreported ties to a Russian university and Russian firm with links to the Kremlin.¹⁶⁷ Kogan served as an associate professor at St. Petersburg State University, where he received Russian government grants to conduct research on social media. He had links to the oil firm Lukoil, owned by Vagit Alekperov, which notably discussed its powerful social media marketing system with Cambridge Analytica.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Philip Oltermann, "UK university accused of giving platform to Nord Stream 2 lobbyist".

¹⁶⁷ "Cambridge Analytica: links to Moscow oil firm and St Petersburg university," *The Guardian*, March 17, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/cambridge-academic-trawling-facebook-had-links-to-russian-university>

¹⁶⁸ Carole Cadwalladr, "'I Made Steve Bannon's Psychological Warfare Tool': Meet the Data War Whistleblower," *The Guardian*, March 18, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump>

6. At the Kremlin's Service: Russian Oligarchs and Western Academia

6.1. Viktor Vekselberg: Academic Philanthropy Turned Political Influence

In 2017, Viktor Vekselberg's Charity Fund "Renova" launched a scholarship program for Russian students to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).¹⁶⁹ Vekselberg co-chairs the "Skolkovo" foundation, which financially supports the Skolkovo Innovation Center. The Foundation's Advisory Board is led by Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev and Putin's advisors Vladislav Surkov and Andrey Belousov.¹⁷⁰ In 2011, the Skolkovo Foundation, the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology and MIT embarked on a three-year collaboration project to develop a new graduate research university in Russia. The ceremony was attended by the Skolkovo Foundation President Viktor Vekselberg, SkTech founding President Edward Crawley, and MIT President Susan Hockfield.¹⁷¹

Vekselberg's other charity project in the United States was implemented in California and involved the preservation of the Fort Ross Historic Park – a former Russian settlement 80 miles north of San Francisco. In 2009, Fort Ross was in danger of closing, and Russian government officials negotiated with the then Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, to revive the historical site.

To finance the project, Viktor Vekselberg established the Renova Fort Ross Foundation with a mission to "promote the awareness of California's Fort Ross State Historic Park as an important milestone of friendship between the United States and Russia."¹⁷² In addition to funding works to preserve the park, in 2011 the Foundation supported an academic conference, the "Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum", devoted to the discussion of Russian influences on California's history.¹⁷³ Since then, the Renova Fort Ross Foundation has implemented a number of educational and exchange programs, including a series of annual student experiences at Fort Ross for Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum delegates.¹⁷⁴ It has also organized numerous cultural events, brought Russian folklore choirs and the Saint Petersburg Horn Orchestra, and held VIP luncheons and wine tastings.

Since 2008, Renova has spent \$34.5 million on "social investments" in the United States.¹⁷⁵ Between 2010 and 2015, the Renova Fort Ross Foundation also took in at least \$3.2 million from corporate and individual donors, i.e. the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Thomas Graham (most likely the executive manager of Kissinger Associates) among others.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Renova Foundation, <http://www.bfrenova.ru/directions/stipend/>

¹⁷⁰ Skolkovo Foundation, Advisory Council, <https://sk.ru/foundation/team/p/popechsovet.aspx>

¹⁷¹ "Skolkovo Foundation and MIT to collaborate on developing the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology," *MIT news office*, October 26, 2011, <http://news.mit.edu/2011/skolkovo-agreement-1026>

¹⁷² Renova Fort Ross Foundation, <http://www.supportfortross.org/what-we-do>

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, also see this video about the Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jvlo0V4V14&feature=youtu.be>

¹⁷⁴ "Students from Russia, USA and Canada to work in Fort Ross," *Renova Charity Fund*, March 31, 2017, <http://bfrenova.ru/science/studenti-iz-rf-ssha-i-kanadi-provedut-subbotnik-v-fort-rosse/>

¹⁷⁵ Christina Wilkie, "How a Russian Oligarch Linked to Trump Lawyer Michael Cohen Turned a California State Park into a Mini Moscow," *CNBC*, May 17, 2018, at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/17/russian-oligarch-viktor-vekselberg-chairs-nonprofit-backed-by-us-firms-politicians.html>

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, also see: Renova Fort Ross Foundation, Partners, <http://www.supportfortross.org/partners/>

In 2012, in partnership with Chevron and two Russian state-owned oil companies Transneft¹⁷⁷ and Sovkomflot¹⁷⁸, the Renova Group launched a joint conference called “**The Fort Ross Dialogue**” that brought together diplomats, businessmen and academics from both the United States and Russia “to encourage conversation and collaboration.”¹⁷⁹

The Kennan Institute's director, Matthew Rojansky, has been an active participant in Viktor Vekselberg’s **Fort Ross Dialogue** forum since the date of its inception in 2012.¹⁸⁰ He spoke at Fort Ross Dialogue in 2013¹⁸¹, served as a keynote speaker in 2014¹⁸² and moderated its panel discussions in 2015¹⁸³ and 2016.¹⁸⁴ On October 15, 2018, Fort Ross Conservancy and the Kennan Institute will jointly hold the seventh annual **Fort Ross Dialogue**. **Andrew McGrahan**, President Chevron Neftegaz, **Mikhail Margelov**, Vice President of Transneft and **Nikolay Kolesnikov**, Executive Vice President of Sovcomflot are scheduled to speak there.¹⁸⁵

The U.S. media raised concerns about Renova's attempts to use philanthropy in the United States to gain access to the corridors of American power.¹⁸⁶ It was noted that “the Renova Fort Ross Foundation ... has served as a hub for Russian-themed events and outreach that extend well beyond the park itself... Festivals, exhibitions and academic projects ... have helped raise the profile of the Renova Group in the United States. The goodwill that Vekselberg has accrued through his philanthropy has translated into political access.”¹⁸⁷

An October 2012 gala dinner, chaired by Vekselberg in San Francisco's City Hall, was meant to mark the bicentennial of Russian settlers' arrival in California. The Russian Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinsky, traveled from Moscow to read a statement from President Putin. The dinner guests included several U.S. senators and CEOs from some of America’s largest companies as well as academic institutions, such as John Reed, CEO of MIT – Vekselberg's partner in the high-tech Skolkovo research project.¹⁸⁸

In addition to cultural and academic philanthropy, Vekselberg has spent \$1.7 million on Washington D.C. lobbyists. Reportedly, in 2017, Columbus Nova - the U.S.-based affiliate of the Renova Group - made payments of at least \$500,000 to a bank account maintained by Michael Cohen, Donald Trump’s personal attorney at the time.¹⁸⁹

Vekselberg also attended Trump’s inauguration just days after meeting with Michael Cohen at Trump Tower, and also attended the infamous RT anniversary gala dinner in Moscow in 2015 with Putin and

¹⁷⁷ Transneft, <https://www.transneft.ru/about/management/>

¹⁷⁸ Sofkomflot, <http://www.scf-group.com/en/about/profile/>

¹⁷⁹ Fort Ross Dialogue 2018 Preliminary Program, Fort Ross Conservatory, <https://www.fortross.org/2018-dialogue.htm>

¹⁸⁰ At that moment Rojansky served as deputy director of Russian and Eurasia Program at Carnegie Endowment. See Fort Ross 2012, <https://www.fortross.org/2012-dialogue.htm>; Conference program at: <https://www.fortross.org/document/Program.pdf>

¹⁸¹ US-Russian Fort Ross Dialogue, Vintners Inn, Santa Rosa, Sonoma, California July 28-29, 2013, <https://www.fortross.org/document/fr-dialogue.pdf>

¹⁸² <https://www.fortross.org/2014-dialogue.htm>

¹⁸³ https://www.fortross.org/fort_ross_dialogue_2015.htm

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.fortross.org/2016-dialogue.htm>

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Rachel Gross, “Russians Come to the Rescue of Sonoma’s Fort Ross Park,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/21/us/fort-ross-park-saved-from-closing-by-renova-group-of-russia.html>

¹⁸⁷ Christina Wilkie, “How a Russian Oligarch Linked to Trump Lawyer Michael Cohen Turned a California State Park into a Mini Moscow,” *CNBC*, May 17, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/17/russian-oligarch-viktor-vekselberg-chairs-nonprofit-backed-by-us-firms-politicians.html>

¹⁸⁸ About MIT Skoltech Program, <https://skoltech.mit.edu/about>

¹⁸⁹ Mike McIntire, Ben Protess and Jim Rutens, “Firm Tied to Russian Oligarch Made Payments to Michael Cohen,” *The New York Times*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/us/politics/michael-cohen-shell-company-payments.html>

Michael Flynn.¹⁹⁰ Apparently, Vekselberg was not the only Russian oligarch, who tried to gain access to Trump's inner circle by means of cultural projects. In 2014, Roman Abramovich, founder of the Jewish Museum in Moscow and then-Chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, invited Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner to Moscow. Other guests at Abramovich's high-powered fundraising dinner for Moscow's Jewish Museum included Viktor Vekselberg, Len Blavatnik, Mikhail Fridman, Ekaterina Vinokurova (daughter of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, with her husband Alexander Vinokurov, who then sat on the board of the Alfa Group), and Peter Salovey, President of Yale University.¹⁹¹

6.2. Len Blavatnik's Academic and Political Donations in the U.K. and the U.S.A.

Leonid (Len) Blavatnik's family emigrated from Odessa to the United States in 1978. In 1986, he established the investment company Access Industries. Teaming up with his Moscow school friend Viktor Vekselberg, Blavatnik allied with Mikhail Fridman and German Khan to provide financing for the takeover of state enterprises and grab Russian oil group TNK.¹⁹² In the West, Blavatnik has established a reputation as a respected philanthropist and, on this basis, has helped Fridman, Khan, Aven and Vekselberg to access Western capital markets and its elite establishment circles.

There is a peculiar pattern to Blavatnik's philanthropy: his donations to academic institutions are supplemented with support to frontrunning senators and presidential candidates. In the last five years alone, Blavatnik donated almost \$100 million to American academic institutions: in 2013 he gave \$50 million to Harvard Business School under the Harvard Blavatnik Fellowship in Life Science Entrepreneurship Program¹⁹³; in 2016, he provided \$10 million to Yale University¹⁹⁴ and then again \$15 million in 2018 to expand Yale's fund for innovation in the life sciences¹⁹⁵; in 2018, he offered \$2 million to the University of Pennsylvania¹⁹⁶ and then \$10 million to Stanford's School of Medicine.¹⁹⁷

His history of political donations in the United States is no less impressive: in 2011, Blavatnik financially supported both President Barack Obama and his challenger, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney; in 2016, he gave \$1.5 million in support of Senator Marco Rubio's presidential campaign, as well as \$1 million for Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and \$800,000 for South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham.¹⁹⁸ The same year, Blavatnik donated \$1 million to Donald Trump's inaugural committee

¹⁹⁰ Robert Windrem, "Guess Who Came to Dinner with Flynn and Putin," *NBC News*, April 18, 2017,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/guess-who-came-dinner-flynn-putin-n742696>; Garrett M. Graff, "What Robert Mueller Knows – and 9 Areas He'll Pursue Next," *Wired*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/what-robert-mueller-knowsand-9-areas-hell-pursue-next/>

¹⁹¹ "Roman Abramovich: billionaire oligarch, Chelsea owner, Kremlin ally – and, apparently, pals with Jared and Ivanka," *South China Morning Post*, 18 August, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/russia-central-asia/article/2107335/roman-abramovich-billionaire-oligarch-chelsea-owner>

¹⁹² "How Britain's richest man made his £13bn pile – and got a halo in the process," *MoneyWeek*, May 11, 2015, <https://moneyweek.com/390674/profile-of-len-blavatnik/>

¹⁹³ "\$50M gift from the Blavatnik Family Foundation," *The Harvard Gazette*, April 29, 2013, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/04/blavatnik_accelerator_donation/

¹⁹⁴ "Blavatnik Family Foundation provides \$10 mln for innovation in the life sciences at Yale University," *Yale News*, August 18, 2016, <https://news.yale.edu/2016/08/18/blavatnik-family-foundation-provides-10-million-innovation-life-sciences-yale-university>

¹⁹⁵ "Blavatnik Family Foundation gives \$15 million to expand fund for innovation in the life sciences at Yale University," *Yale News*, May 9, 2018, <https://news.yale.edu/2018/05/09/15-million-gift-expand-blavatnik-fund-innovation-life-sciences>

¹⁹⁶ "Blavatnik Family Foundation Donates \$2 Million to UPenn for Next Generation of Scientists," *IndiaWest*, August 16, 2018, http://www.indiawest.com/news/global_indian/blavatnik-family-foundation-donates-million-to-upenn-for-next-generation/article_3e8ae1e2-a0dd-11e8-976d-271385e4b206.html

¹⁹⁷ "Stanford Medicine receives \$10 million pledge from the Blavatnik Family Foundation to fuel the next generation of biomedical innovation," *Stanford News*, August 7, 2018, <https://news.stanford.edu/2018/08/07/10-million-pledge-supports-bioscience-students/>

¹⁹⁸ Brian Ross and Matthew Mosk, "Special counsel probing flow of Russian-American money to Trump political funds," *ABC News*, September 26, 2017, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/investigators-follow-flow-money-trump-wealthy-donors-russian/story?id=50100024>

– a transaction now being investigated by special counsel Robert Mueller.¹⁹⁹ According to the American press, Blavatnik, who is also a business partner of one of Vladimir Putin’s closest oligarchs, Oleg Deripaska, gave \$7.35 million in philanthropic support to the U.S. Republican Party.²⁰⁰

In the United Kingdom, Blavatnik has made donations to the Tate Museum, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Opera House, the British Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts, which collectively led to his being knighted in 2017 for services to philanthropy.²⁰¹ In 2018, he gave £45 million to buy one of London’s oldest theatres.²⁰²

In 2010, **Oxford University** accepted a donation of £75 million from Blavatnik for the Blavatnik School of Government, which opened the same year.²⁰³ According to research by Ilya Zaslavskiy, the Blavatnik School ignores the crimes of the Russian government and invites Putin cronies as guest speakers: “Despite initial statements that Blavatnik’s grant will exert zero control on the School’s policy, we now see that [it] avoids any discussion of inconvenient topics on Russia, Ukraine and oligarchs. There is virtually no information on these if one searches these key words on the School’s website.”²⁰⁴

In 2015, a group of Russian and Western scholars, journalists and civic activists published a public petition to Oxford University urging it to review cooperation with Len Blavatnik and his associates from the Alfa Group – Petr Aven and Mikhail Fridman – and to investigate Blavatnik’s and his Alfa Group’s business reputation. The activists urged Oxford University to “stop selling its ... prestige to Putin’s associates ... [and] carry out a new and independent due-diligence investigation with clearly defined ethical norms”.²⁰⁵

A spokesman for the university responded that Oxford University had a thorough and robust scrutiny process in place with regard to philanthropic giving and that its Committee to Review Donations (CRD) conducted appropriate due diligence based on publicly available information.²⁰⁶ However, the activists met with outright censorship efforts from Oxford’s administration and found out that the Committee had not relied on independent experts or Russian language sources.²⁰⁷ Meanwhile, two external members of the CRD – Sir Victor Blank and Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones – had been heavily criticized for failures in due diligence in their main professions and exposed by UK press around the same time when they were part of CRD.²⁰⁸

¹⁹⁹ John Santucci, Matthew Mosk, Katherine Faulders, Soo Rin Kim, “Exclusive: Special counsel probing donations with foreign connections to Trump inauguration,” *ABC News*, May 11, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/exclusive-special-counsel-probing-donations-foreign-connections-trump/story?id=55054482>

²⁰⁰ Ruth May, “GOP Campaigns Took \$7.35 million from oligarch linked to Russia,” *Dallas News*, August 2017, <https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2017/08/03/tangled-web-connects-russian-oligarch-money-gop-campaigns>

²⁰¹ See “Donors and Supporters,” *The Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University*, <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/about/donors-and-supporters>

²⁰² Mark Brown, “Sir Leonard Blavatnik buys one of London’s oldest theatres,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/19/sir-leonard-blavatnik-buys-one-of-londons-oldest-theatres>

²⁰³ Luke Harding, “Oxford University criticised for accepting oligarch’s £75m donation,” *The Guardian*, November 3, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/03/oxford-university-accused-over-oligarch-len-blavatnik-75m-donation>

²⁰⁴ Ilya Zaslavskiy, “Neo-Gulag Values: How Non-State Actors Export Kleptocratic Norms to the West,” unpublished, quoted with the permission of the author.

²⁰⁵ “Oxford University must stop selling its reputation to Vladimir Putin’s associates,” *The Guardian*, November 3, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/03/oxford-university-must-stop-selling-its-reputation-to-vladimir-putin-associates>

²⁰⁶ Luke Harding, “Oxford University criticised for accepting oligarch’s £75m donation.”

²⁰⁷ Megan Izzo, “Blavatnik Protest Receives International Media Attention,” *The Oxford Student*, May 22, 2016, <http://www.oxfordstudent.com/2016/05/22/baroness-royalls-report-rules-oulc-not-institutionally-anti-semitic-2/>

²⁰⁸ Christopher Leake and Mark Hollingsworth, “MI5 ‘vetoed Security Minister over links to Ukrainian oligarchs’,” *The Daily Mail*, August 14, 2010, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1303215/MI5-vetoed-Security-Minister-Baroness-Pauline-Neville-Jones-links-Ukrainian-oligarchs.html>; Peter Osborne, “Sir Victor Blank: The crony with a gift for disaster,” *The Daily Mail*, February 16, 2009, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1146069/PETER-OBORNE-Lloyds-TSB-boss-Victor-Blank--crony-gift-disaster.html#ixzz40ISHI5mK>

6.3. Russian Oligarchs and the Wilson Center

The Wilson Center's close relationship with pro-Kremlin oligarchs dates back to 2005 and 2007, when it awarded its Corporate Citizenship Award to **Vagit Alekperov**²⁰⁹ and **Viktor Vekselberg**, respectively.²¹⁰ On January 29, 2018, the U.S. Treasury Department exposed both oligarchs to scrutiny and potential future sanctions by placing their names on the so-called "Kremlin list," prepared in accordance with the law "On Countering America's Enemies through Sanctions" (CAATSA).²¹¹ The U.S. Treasury Department also sanctioned Viktor Vekselberg on April 6, 2018.²¹²

In November 2015, the Wilson Center gave its Corporate Citizenship award to **Petr Aven**, shareholder of the Alfa Bank.²¹³ The award citation mentioned the Alfa Fellowship Program that brought early career Americans to work in Russia.²¹⁴ The U.S. media reported that in 2015, the Alfa Group ran an ambitious PR campaign to bolster its directors' images as philanthropists and friends of the West²¹⁵ and that it paid the U.S. lobbying firm BGR close to \$6 million to lobby on behalf of "bilateral US-Russian relations."²¹⁶

The award was co-chaired by the former CEO of British Petroleum Lord Browne and former U.S. Ambassador to Russia James F. Collins, a senior associate of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Mikhail Lesin – founder of the state-funded international news network RT, which has come under scrutiny for its role in seeking to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election – was on the guest list of the award dinner. This fact became publicly known only because days later Lesin's body was discovered at his room at Dupont Circle hotel and the FBI began an investigation into the causes of his death.²¹⁷

The Wilson Center turned a blind eye to various reports that implicated Petr Aven of corruption and his ties to the Kremlin. Information about the Alfa Group's involvement in organized crime, narcotics trafficking, money laundering and rigged auctions of state assets through government connections became publicly available in 2000, when the Center for Public Integrity – one of America's oldest investigative news organizations – published its report on the Alfa Group. The Sal'ye Commission documents also demonstrated that Aven made it possible for Putin to originate at least part of his corruption schemes in St. Petersburg.²¹⁸ Finally, the Wilson Center could learn about Aven's connections to Putin's kleptocracy from Karen Dawisha's book,²¹⁹ which was presented by the author at the Wilson Center shortly before the 2015 award.²²⁰ "In normal circumstances such allegations would warrant, at

²⁰⁹ "The Wilson Center to Honor Pickering and Alekperov for Contributions to U.S.-Russian Relations," *Wilson Center*, May 3, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/wilson-center-to-honor-pickering-and-alekperov-for-contributions-to-us-russian-relations>

²¹⁰ "Wilson Center Honors Vekselberg and Cloherty at First Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Awards Dinner," *Wilson Center*, November 15, 2007, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/wilson-center-honors-vekselberg-and-cloherty-first-kathryn-and-shelby-cullom-davis-awards>

²¹¹ Unclassified section of the Report to Congress Pursuant to Section 241 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act of 2017 Regarding Senior Foreign Political Figures and Oligarchs in the Russian Federation and Russian Parastatal Entities, U.S. Treasury, January 29, 2018, <http://prod-upp-image-read.ft.com/40911a30-057c-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>

²¹² "Treasury Designates Russian Oligarchs, Officials, and Entities in Response to Worldwide Malign Activity," U.S. Department of the Treasury, April 6, 2018, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0338>

²¹³ "Wilson Center to Honor Petr Aven and Susan Carmen Lehrman," *Wilson Center*, October 21, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/wilson-center-to-honor-petr-aven-and-susan-carmel-lehrman>

²¹⁴ Alfa Fellowship Program, Cultural Vistas, <https://culturalvistas.org/programs/abroad/alfa-fellowship-program/>

²¹⁵ Amy Night, "Why Muller Named a Russian Oligarch in Court?" *Daily Beast*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-muellers-eye-on-some-russian-oligarchs>

²¹⁶ J. J. Patrick, "Before Paradise: The Tangled Web of Brexit, Trump, and Russia," *Byline*, November 5, 2017, <https://www.byline.com/column/67/article/1928>

²¹⁷ Mike Eckel, "Police Report Details Final Days Of Former Russian Press Minister Lesin," *RL/RFE*, December 5, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/lesin-death-police-report/28898890.html>

²¹⁸ Sal'ye Commission Documents. Miami University. The Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies. <http://mi-amioh.edu/cas/academics/centers/havighurst/cultural-academic-resources/putins-russia/salye-commission-landing/index.html>

²¹⁹ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia*, (Simon & Shuster, 2018), 19-20, 101, 118, 119, 196.

²²⁰ "Putin's Kleptocracy. Who Owns Russia," *Wilson Center*, October 1, 2014, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/putins-kleptocracy-who-owns-russia>

a minimum, some in-depth investigation prior to the bestowal of any award,” argued Lithuanian political analyst Marius Laurinavičius.²²¹

The Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute hosted several events sponsored by the Alfa Group. In January 2018, fifty Alfa fellows enjoyed a dinner reception with Mikhail Fridman, Chairman of the Alfa Group Consortium's Supervisory Board, and a round-table at the Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute to discuss “areas of collaboration in the arts and education.”²²²

6.4. Alexey Mordashov and the Center on Global Interests

The Center on Global Interests (CGI)²²³ was founded in Washington D.C. in 2012 as a nonprofit, non-partisan foreign policy research institution to promote “rigorous study of modern-day Russia and Eurasia”. The CGI does not disclose its donors but maintains that its mission is “scholarly independence” and that it does not accept funding from the U.S. or foreign governments.

The CGI’s Board²²⁴ comprises three individuals, including **Aleksey Mordashov** – Vladimir Putin’s crony and second richest Russian, whose total assets are estimated at \$18.7 bln.²²⁵ He co-owns bank “Rossiya” – the first Russian lender sanctioned by the U.S. government for ties with the Kremlin and support of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula.²²⁶ Since 2005, Mordashov has owned Ren-TV channel – at that time, Russia’s only remaining national broadcaster critical of President Putin.

Mordashov is a board member of the Aleksandr Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund and his company is an official partner of the Valdai Discussion Club. The second member of CGI’s board, former U.S. diplomat Thomas Pickering, served as U.S. Ambassador to Russia from 1993 to 1996. In July 2018, Pickering was a guest at the Gorchakov Fund's conference on U.S.-Russia arms control.²²⁷ In 2015 he received the Wilson Center’s corporate citizenship award (together with Lukoil president Vagit Alekperov).²²⁸

In April 2004, Mordashov joined the board of directors of the New York-based East-West Institute²²⁹ that has a special “Russia and the United States” program.²³⁰ At the moment, the Institute's Board of Directors includes Alexander Voloshin, the former Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin (until 2013).²³¹

The CGI is led by Nikolay Zlobin, a graduate of the Moscow State University.²³² Zlobin moved to the United States in the early 1990s and worked at several American universities as a visiting lecturer and

²²¹ Marius Laurinavičius, “Whitewashing Putin's Kleptocracy,” *American Interest*, November 2, 2015, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/11/02/whitewashing-putins-kleptocracy/>

²²² “Alfa Fellowship Program Celebrates 15 Classes of Fellows in Collaboration with the Kennan Institute,” *Wilson Center*, January 22, 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/alfa-fellowship-program-celebrates-15-classes-fellows-collaboration-the-kennan-institute>

²²³ The Center for the Global Interests, <http://globalinterests.org/>

²²⁴ Board Members, the Center for the Global Interests, <http://globalinterests.org/2014/01/06/the-center-on-global-interests-announces-new-board-members/>

²²⁵ Aleksey Mordashov, Forbes list 2018, <http://www.forbes.ru/profile/aleksei-mordashov>

²²⁶ Groendahl, Boris, and Irina Reznik, “Bank Rossiya Is First Russian Lender Under U.S. Sanctions,” *Bloomberg*, March 20, 2014, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-03-20/bank-rossiya-becomes-first-russian-lender-under-u-s-sanctions>

²²⁷ “The Russian-U.S. Conference on Arms Control. Speeches and comments,” *The Gorchakov Fund*, July 24, 2018, <https://gorchakovfund.ru/en/news/view/the-russian-u-s-conference-on-arms-control-speeches-and-comments/>

²²⁸ “The Wilson Center to Honor Pickering and Alekperov for Contributions to U.S.-Russian Relations,” *Wilson Center*, May 3, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/wilson-center-to-honor-pickering-and-alekperov-for-contributions-to-us-russian-relations>

²²⁹ Aleksey Mordashov, Neftegaz, <https://neftegaz.ru/persons/view/694-Mordashov-Aleksey>

²³⁰ Russia and the United States Program, East-West Institute, <https://www.eastwest.ngo/pillars/russia-and-united-states>

²³¹ Aleksandr Voloshin, East-West Institute, <https://www.eastwest.ngo/node/1301>

²³² Nikolai Zlobin, *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Zlobin

developed professional relations with various U.S. experts and politicians. Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Eric Rubin, characterized Nikolai Zlobin as a “U.S. resident but ‘United Russia’-connected analyst”.²³³ Zlobin is a regular participant in the Valdai Discussion Club, where he is always given the chance to pose a question to Vladimir Putin.

At the CGI’s opening session, attended by Russian Ambassador Kislyak, Zlobin said the Institute’s mission was to “go beyond Cold War thinking”, “break down stereotypes” and “provide a strategic, long-term vision for U.S.-Russian relations” at a time when global elite thinking was “characterized by a certain impotence ... and lack of vision.”²³⁴

The CGI’s website is not regularly updated and carries only 30 articles by virtually unknown experts. It does not give the impression of an active and vibrant analytical institution.

Having lived in the United States for almost 30 years, Zlobin has not published a single academic monograph on Russian politics in the English language.²³⁵ The scarcity of his analytical articles in Western media is juxtaposed by the frequency of his appearances on Russian radio and state TV channels. It is highly likely that the CGI’s key mission is to “legitimize” Zlobin as a reputable “American” expert in the eyes of the Russian TV audience to give his statements an aura of “independent thinking” or “unbiased expert opinion.”

In 2014, Zlobin co-authored a book titled “The Russian Turn. Where is Russia going?”²³⁶ with one of the Kremlin’s most notorious propagandists, Vladimir Solovyov, who hosts a primetime debate show on the state-owned Rossiya-1 TV channel. Solovyov is a harsh critic of the West and Ukraine’s Euro-maidan revolution, who loyally constructs “suitable interpretations” of the Kremlin’s policies for domestic media consumption in Russia.

²³³“Medvedev’s Address and Tandem Politics,” Cable of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, November 19, 2008, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08MOSCOW3343_a.html

²³⁴ Nora Fitzgerald, “A New U.S.-Russia Think Tank is Launched for ‘Fresh Vision’,” *Russia Beyond*, March 18, 2013, https://www.rbth.com/international/2013/03/18/a_new_us-russia_think_tank_launched_for_fresh_vision_23989.html

²³⁵ Based on our searches on Amazon and the Library of Congress.

²³⁶ Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolay Zlobin, *Russkiy virazh. Kuda idet Rossiya* (In Russian) (The Russian Turn. Where Is Russia Going) (2014) <http://flibusta.is/b/370336>

7. Russia Sympathizers, Lobbyists and Cultural Diplomats in the United States

7.1. The Center for the National Interest

The Center for the National Interest (CFTNI) is a non-partisan public policy institution established by former President Richard Nixon in 1994. It publishes the bimonthly magazine *The National Interest* and its companion online version. The CFTNI has six programs, including the “U.S.-Russia program” led by the Center's executive director Paul J. Saunders.²³⁷ Henry Kissinger serves as the Center’s Honorary Chairman.

Dimitri K. Simes is CFTNI's President, CEO, and publisher of *The National Interest*. Born in Moscow, Simes is a graduate of Moscow State University.²³⁸ He was a researcher at the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations and deputy secretary of the Institute’s Youth Leninist League committee. In 1973, Simes immigrated to the United States, where he held several academic posts and rose to the position of President Nixon’s informal foreign policy advisor. In 2005, *The Moscow Times* and *Kommersant* wrote that Simes had met with Kremlin adviser Gleb Pavlovsky and Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, Putin’s close ally and Paul Manafort's business partner, to discuss the possibility of forming a Russian-funded think tank.²³⁹

The CFTNI has been known to encourage America’s greater engagement with Russia. During the 2016 election campaign, CFTNI helped organize the first presentation of Donald Trump’s foreign policy doctrine, which emphasized the need to improve U.S. relations with Russia and China based on “common interests.”²⁴⁰ The Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, attended the presentation and watched from the front row.²⁴¹

It is rumored²⁴² that the strategy was written for Trump by Richard Burt,²⁴³ chairman of CFTNI’s advisory council and member of the senior advisory board of the Russian Alfa Bank. Allegedly, Burt was invited to join Donald Trump’s presidential campaign by Paul Manafort.²⁴⁴ In December 2016, Paul Saunders praised President-elect Donald Trump for being “remarkably courageous” in consistently calling for “easing of tensions and improved relations with Russia” despite widespread criticism among Washington’s foreign policy establishment.²⁴⁵

²³⁷ The Center for the National Interests, <https://cftni.org/programs/u-s-russia-relations-program/>

²³⁸ The Center for National Interest, <https://cftni.org/expert/dimitri-k-simes-2/>

²³⁹ Zarina Zabrisky, “Nixon Center-Kremlin-Trump,” *Medium*, March 9, 2017, <https://medium.com/mosaic2/nixon-center-kremlin-trump-35018040f65e>

²⁴⁰ The Center for the National National Interest was supposed to carry the video of the speech, but it is no longer available on the website. Check <https://cftni.org/videos/donald-trump-delivers-foreign-policy-speech-2/>

²⁴¹ James Garden, “Trump Attempted a Foreign Policy Makeover Today. Did it Work? Who’s advising this guy?,” *The Nation*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.thenation.com/article/trump-attempted-a-foreign-policy-makeover-today-did-it-work/>

²⁴² Ben Schreckinger and Julia Ioffe, “Lobbyist advised Trump campaign while promoting Russian pipeline. Richard Burt helped shape the candidate’s first foreign-policy speech while lobbying on behalf of a Moscow-controlled gas company,” *Politico*, July 10, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/donald-trump-campaign-lobbyist-russian-pipeline-229264>.

²⁴³ Richard Burt, McLarty Associates, <http://maglobal.com/team/richard-burt/>

²⁴⁴ James Kirchick, “Donald Trump’s Russia Connections,” *Politico*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trumps-russia-connections-foreign-policy-presidential-campaign/>

²⁴⁵ P. Saunders, “Staffing Will Be Key to Trump’s Russia Policy,” *The National Interest*, December 12, 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/staffing-will-be-key-trumps-russia-policy-18719>

The Russian political expert Andrey Piontkovsky once observed: “Undoubtedly, Simes leads the Kremlin’s Washington-based propaganda network.”²⁴⁶ On March 7, 2017, CFTNI hosted a rather interesting panel discussion on the Trump administration’s policy options in dealing with Moscow.²⁴⁷ The event also served as an occasion to present the Center’s report “A New Direction in the U.S.-Russia Relations?”²⁴⁸ with contributions from Thomas Graham (Kissinger Associates, Inc.), Nikolas K. Gvosdev (U.S. Naval War College), Michael Kofman (CNA Corporation, formerly Kennan Institute), and Matthew Rojansky (Kennan Institute).

Speaking there, Dimitri Simes and Matthew Rojansky informed the audience about their “last week” visits to Moscow and used the opportunity to convey Moscow’s messages to American leadership.²⁴⁹ Simes mentioned his meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov and communicated Moscow’s serious concerns about “attacks” against the Russian ambassador Kislyak. Rojansky talked about Moscow’s enthusiasm about the possibility of the Trump-Putin meeting and prospects of the “phased-in” relief of sanctions in return to certain concessions on the Russian side.²⁵⁰

In July 2018, CFTNI found itself in the midst of a scandal related to the arrest of Russian spy Maria Butina, accused of establishing unofficial lines of communications with U.S. politicians to advance the interests of the Russian Federation.²⁵¹ CFTNI was clearly implicated in activities that went beyond its analytical mission and resembled lobbying on behalf of the Russian state. The press reported that in 2015, CFTNI arranged a meeting between Butina and her boss Alexander Torshin, the deputy governor of the Central Bank of Russia and also Putin’s associate, with the then Federal Reserve Vice Chairman S. Fischer.²⁵² The meeting happened about a year after President Barack Obama’s administration imposed sanctions on Russia for its annexation of Crimea. Dimitri Simes also sought to use his connections with Butina and Torshin to advance the business interests of Maurice Greenberg, Chairman Emeritus of CFTNI’s Board of Directors.²⁵³

Almost immediately after Butina’s arrest, Simes left the United States and flew to Moscow. On September 3, 2018, he became a moderator of a political program *The Big Game* on the Russian state-owned TV Channel 1.²⁵⁴ The second moderator of this propaganda show is Vyacheslav Nikonov, director of the Russkiy Mir Foundation.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁶ Yuri Felshinsky, “Who is Dimitri Simes and Why Is He Trying To Sink Mayflower?,” *Gordon*, August 24, 2018, <https://english.gordonua.com/news/exclusiveenglish/who-is-dimitri-simes-and-why-is-he-trying-to-sink-mayflower-investigation-by-yuri-felshinsky-316154.html>

²⁴⁷ “A New Direction in U.S.-Russia relations,” *The Center for the National Interests*, March 7, 2017, <https://cftni.org/recent-events/a-new-direction-in-u-s-russia-relations/>

²⁴⁸ Paul J. Saunders, (ed.) “A New Direction in U.S.-Russia Relations? America’s Challenges & Opportunities in Dealing with Russia,” *The Center for American Interest*, (2017).

²⁴⁹ See video recording of the debate “A New Direction in U.S.-Russia Relations,” *Youtube*, March 7, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FVLMWqD7xk>

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Haley Samsel, “Recent AU Graduate Charged With Acting as Russian Agent in U.S.,” *The Eagle*, July 16, 2018, <http://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2018/07/recent-au-graduate-charged-with-acting-as-russian-agent-in-united-states>

²⁵² Sarah N. Lynch, “Exclusive: Alleged Russian agent Butina met with U.S. Treasury, Fed officials,” *Reuters*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-butina-exclusive/exclusive-accused-russian-agent-butina-met-with-u-s-treasury-fed-officials-idUSKBN1KC0DC>

²⁵³ Betsy Woodraf, “Maria Butina: Private Messages Reveal Accused Russian Spy’s True Ties to D.C. Wise Man,” *Daily Beast*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/maria-butina-private-messages-reveal-accused-russian-spys-true-ties-to-dc-wise-man>

²⁵⁴ Yuri Felshinsky, “My name is Fedyashin, Anton Fedyashin.” Who Is Anton Fedyashin and What Was He Teaching Maria Butina?” *Gordon*, September 21, 2018, <https://english.gordonua.com/news/exclusiveenglish/my-name-is-fedyashin-anton-fedyashin-who-is-anton-fedyashin-and-what-was-he-teaching-maria-butina-investigation-by-yuri-felshinsky-342703.html>

²⁵⁵ “Bolshaya igra,” (in Russian) (The Big Game), *Perviy kanal*, <https://www.1tv.ru/shows/big-game/o-proekte>

7.2. Whose “National Interest”?

The Center for the National Interest regularly hosted Russian propagandists and Kremlin-linked “experts.” In 2017, it invited Andrey Sushentsov, a program director at the Valdai Club,²⁵⁶ and in July 2018 welcomed a delegation of unnamed Russian academics for an off-the-record event and follow-up meetings with representatives from the State Department, the National Security Council and both houses of Congress.²⁵⁷

The Center also closely cooperated **Andranik Migranyan**, former director of the New York office of the Kremlin’s Institute for Democracy and Cooperation.²⁵⁸ CFTNI sometimes hosted Migranyan for off-the-record events²⁵⁹ or invited him to speak on the current state of U.S.-Russia relations.²⁶⁰

Since 2008, *The National Interest* has published thirty of Migranyan’s articles that echo the Kremlin’s propaganda playbook. In one piece, he compared Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008 to an attempt to resolve a “local problem” and ensure stability and security along Russia’s borders.²⁶¹ In another, he blamed America’s secret services for working “without accountability to society and controlling the lives of every individual.”²⁶² In a diatribe against the American media, Migranyan accused it of biased coverage of Russian politics that made Russian people see “the American media and American propaganda as the equivalent of the Soviet propaganda.”²⁶³ In 2013, he lambasted President Obama’s foreign policy in a series of publications titled “McFaul’s Costly Mistake in Russia,” “Scandals Harm U.S. Soft Power,” “America’s Hypocrisy on Russia,” “The Myth of American Exceptionalism,” etc.

Migranyan claims that after Ukraine’s Euromaidan revolution of 2013-2014, power in Kyiv was seized by “armed radical nationalists” and that the Kremlin was “under immense pressure to act to protect *its own people* [emphasis added].”²⁶⁴ After Russia annexed Crimea, he exulted over “Putin’s triumph” in Ukraine and accused the West of setting “a time bomb on Ukraine’s territorial integrity.”²⁶⁵

American media and the expert community patiently tolerated Migranyan’s shameless lies for a long time. A scandal finally erupted in April 2014, after *Izvestiya* carried Migranyan’s article,²⁶⁶ written in response to Russian historian Andrey Zubov, who lost his job at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations for comparing Putin’s annexation of Crimea to Adolf Hitler’s seizure of Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland in 1938. In his piece, Migranyan proposed to distinguish between the “good Hitler” and the “bad Hitler,” saying that Hitler succeeded in gathering German lands “without a single drop of blood” and that “he would be remembered in his country’s history as a politician of the

²⁵⁶ A Discussion with Andrey Sushentsov, *The Center for the National Interest*, October 4, 2017, <https://cftni.org/recent-events/a-discussion-with-andrey-sushentsov/>

²⁵⁷ U.S.-Russian Dialogue, *The Center for the National Interest*, <https://cftni.org/recent-events/u-s-russian-dialogue/>

²⁵⁸ James Kirchick, “Donald Trump’s Russia Connections,” *Politico*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trumps-russia-connections-foreign-policy-presidential-campaign/>

²⁵⁹ Dinner with Andranik Migranyan, *The Center for National Interest*, <https://cftni.org/recent-events/dinner-with-andranik-migranyan/>

²⁶⁰ “Russian Perspectives on U.S.-Russia Relations,” *The Center for National Interest*, January 11, 2018, <https://cftni.org/recent-events/russian-perspectives-on-u-s-russia-relations/>

²⁶¹ A. Migranyan, “Russia Makes Partner,” *National Interest*, October 24, 2008, <http://nationalinterest.org/article/voices-from-afar-russia-makes-partner-2892>

²⁶² A. Migranyan, “Kennedy’s Death, revisited,” *National Interest*, November 21, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/kennedys-death-revisited-9441/page/0/2>

²⁶³ A. Migranyan, “Putin is Russia’s Reagan,” *National Interest*, February 21, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/putin-russias-reagan-9914>

²⁶⁴ A. Migranyan, “Moscow Doesn’t Want to Intervene, But...,” *National Interest*, February 28, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/moscow-doesn%E2%80%99t-want-intervene-but%E2%80%A6-9967>

²⁶⁵ A. Migranyan, “Putin Triumphs in Ukraine,” *National Interest*, March 6, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/putin-triumphs-ukraine-10009>

²⁶⁶ See Vladimir Kara-Murza, “Putin and the ‘Good Hitler’,” *World Affairs Journal*, April 4, 2014; Brian Whitmore, “The Kremlin, Crimea and ‘The Good Hitler’,” *RFE/RL*, April 5, 2014.

highest order,” had he stopped there.²⁶⁷ In response, *The Washington Post* wrote it was “frightening” that “the head of a think tank associated with Vladimir Putin” could talk about Hitler in positive terms and overlook his record as a killer of Jews, dissidents, and communists.²⁶⁸

After this publication, Migranyan found himself ostracized by reputable Western intellectual circles. The Kremlin, as a Russian political spin-doctor put it, had to replace him with someone “better trained” and experienced in working “under siege.”²⁶⁹ The “siege”, did not last long, however. Three years after the “good Hitler” scandal, Migranyan is invited again to CFTNI’s off-the-record dinners.²⁷⁰

7.3. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace was the first major Western think tank to open a branch in Russia following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Carnegie’s office in Moscow became the leading center of research providing independent and reliable analysis of Russian domestic politics and foreign policy. It began to undergo serious changes after Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, evolving “from a hub of Russian liberalism into an accommodationist, intellectually-compromised think tank.”²⁷¹

The Carnegie Moscow office, unlike many other Western organizations, was not affected by the “foreign agents” law.²⁷² In 2014, the office dismissed its two internationally renowned critics of Putin’s revanchist regime, namely Lilia Shevtsova and Maria Lipman, and mostly avoided addressing sensitive issues such as Russian domestic politics and the ongoing war in Ukraine.²⁷³

Garry Kasparov, co-organizer of the “Free Russia Forum,” opined that the Carnegie Moscow office has served as an “independent and even American” channel through which Russian intelligence and influential actors in the Kremlin communicate their messages to the West.²⁷⁴ The key agent in managing this balancing act is **Dmitri Trenin** – the Moscow Center’s director who spent more than twenty years in the Soviet army, achieving the rank of colonel.

Carnegie’s conciliatory approach towards the Kremlin was also observed in the writings and public presentations of its leading figures in Washington: namely, **Andrew Weiss**, the Carnegie Endowment’s vice president for studies, **Eugene Rumer**, director of Carnegie’s Russia and Eurasia program and **Deana Arsenian**, vice president of the international program and director of the Russia program at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, that funds Carnegie Endowment’s projects.²⁷⁵

In the summer of 2014, shortly after Russia annexed Crimea, Thomas Graham, a former senior associate in the Russia/Eurasia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1998-2001)²⁷⁶, Andrew Weiss and Deana Arsenian participated in the **Boisto Group meeting** in Finland,

²⁶⁷ Andranik Migranyan, “Nashi Peredonovy,” (in Russian) (Our Peredonovs), *Izvestiya*, April 3, 2014, <https://iz.ru/news/568603>

²⁶⁸ Richard Cohen, “A Putin affiliate evokes Hitler. The West should be worried,” *Washington Post*, April 21, 2014.

²⁶⁹ Andrey Vinokurov, Aleksandr Braterskiy, Nataliya Galimova, “Missiya zakonchena. Situatsiya s pravami cheloveka stala luchshe,” (in Russian) (The Mission is Over. The Situation with Human rights has improved) *Gazeta.ru*, June 28, 2015, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/06/25_a_6854653.shtml

²⁷⁰ Dinner with Andranik Migranyan, The Center for National Interest, <https://cftni.org/recent-events/dinner-with-andranik-migranyan/>

²⁷¹ James Kirchick, “Donald Trump’s Russia Connections,” *Politico*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trumps-russia-connections-foreign-policy-presidential-campaign/>

²⁷² James Kirchick, “How a U.S. Think Tank Fell for Putin,” *Daily Beast*, July 27, 2015, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-a-us-think-tank-fell-for-putin>

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Thomas Graham, Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/people/thomas-e-graham>

which produced a 24-step plan to resolve the so-called “crisis in Ukraine.”²⁷⁷ On the Russian side, the delegation included, among others, Alexei Arbatov, a scholar-in-residence at the Carnegie Moscow Center, and Vyacheslav Trubnikov, a former head of the country’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).²⁷⁸

There were no Ukrainians present at the Boisto meeting. By excluding participants from Ukraine, “the Boisto initiative signatories lent credence—wittingly or not—to the Russian view that Ukraine is not a real country and that outside forces can determine its fate.”²⁷⁹ Most of the Boisto proposals were amenable to the Kremlin line. For instance, the document called for the non-bloc status of Ukraine, preservation of Russian-Ukrainian economic relations and their defense-industry cooperation, removal of Ukrainian National Guard units from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (de-jure Ukraine’s territories) and withdrawal of regular Russian and Ukrainian army units to an agreed distance from conflict zones.²⁸⁰ Clearly, in calling for both sides to withdraw forces from the territory of Donbas, “the signatories treated aggressor and victim as moral equals, likening Russian removal of its soldiers with Ukraine’s withdrawing troops from its own, sovereign land.”²⁸¹

On August 7, 2018, just one day before the Trump administration announced it would impose more sanctions on Russia under a chemical and biological warfare law following the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the UK earlier this year,²⁸² Eugene Rumer published an article arguing that anti-Russian sanctions produce no desired results and that sometimes they even backfire.²⁸³

Carnegie’s soft approach to the analysis of the Kremlin’s domestic policies is mismatched with its hard line on the study of Ukraine’s post-Euromaidan reforms. In 2018, Ukrainian experts – Yuriy Dzyhyr (currently the Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Finance) and Kateryna Maynzyuk (advisor to the Health Minister of Ukraine) – accused Carnegie’s Reforming Ukraine team²⁸⁴ of conducting “highly subjective, shallow and speculative” analysis of Ukraine’s post-2014 developments.²⁸⁵ Dzyhyr and Maynzyuk argued they “increasingly felt like an analytical screen to cover a suspicious political project” because “the analytical part of the reports seemed subordinate to its propagandistic part”:

“In December 2015 we participated in a project advocacy visit to Brussels and Berlin. “Post-truth” was not yet in the air; the world seemed complex but not delusional. And there, at meetings in the European Parliament, European Commission, German Chancellery and German Foreign Affairs Committee – the agencies each having powerful strategic significance for Ukraine – we started hearing statements from others in the delegation which were not agreed within the team, not included in the Monitor, and were not (in our view) evidence-based. These statements had a clear signal: since Maidan, Ukraine is heading towards power consolidation, rampant ultranationalism, oppression of free speech and human rights. We did what we could to debunk these with facts. But it felt more like all-in wrestling, than professional teamwork.”

²⁷⁷ Uri Friedman, “A 24-Step Plan to Resolve the Ukraine Crisis,” *The Atlantic*, August 26, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/a-24-step-plan-to-resolve-the-ukraine-crisis/379121/>

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ James Kirchick, “How a U.S. Think Tank Fell for Putin.”

²⁸⁰ Uri Friedman, “A 24-Step Plan to Resolve the Ukraine Crisis.”

²⁸¹ James Kirchick, “How a U.S. Think Tank Fell for Putin.”

²⁸² Watkins, Eli, and Nicole Gaouette, “Trump administration slaps more sanctions on Russia after Skripal poisonings,” *CNN*, August 9, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/08/08/politics/us-state-department-russia-sanctions/index.html>

²⁸³ Eugene Rumer, “Here we go again with Russia sanctions that will do nothing,” *The Hill*, August 7, 2018, <http://thehill.com/opinion/international/400773-here-we-go-again-with-russia-sanctions-that-will-do-nothing>

²⁸⁴ The team is made of Thomas de Waal, senior fellow with Carnegie Europe; Balazs Jarabik, a visiting scholar focusing on Ukraine; Eugene Rumer, director of Carnegie’s Russia and Eurasia Program, and Andrew S. Weiss, vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment. See: <http://carnegieendowment.org/specialprojects/ukraine/carnegie>

²⁸⁵ Kateryna Maynzyuk, Yuriy Dzyhyr, *Facebook*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/kateryna.maynzyuk/posts/10213834366685856>

Ukrainians maintained that the Carnegie team intentionally distorted conclusions about Ukraine's reforms by headlining only those parts of the analysis that presented Ukraine in a negative light. In their opinion, this approach was devised to convince readers that “after Maidan, Ukraine’s state was failing; society was sinking into nationalistic psychosis, and moved towards totalitarianism.”²⁸⁶ All of these are narratives regularly and insistently promoted by the Kremlin’s propaganda.

7.4. The Kennan Institute and Kissinger Associates

Founded in 1974 to improve American expertise about the Soviet Union, the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute provides policy advice on Russia and the wider post-Soviet region. The Wilson Center is a federally funded think tank with two-thirds of its operating funds coming from private donors.²⁸⁷

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kennan Institute opened two offices abroad: in Moscow and in Kyiv. In 2014, the newly appointed director Matthew Rojansky decided to close the Institute’s Moscow office – a decision that Kennan Institute alumni in Russia saw as “inappropriate, ill-timed and extremely harmful to the long-term prospects of U.S.-Russian relations.”²⁸⁸ The Kennan Kyiv office was closed in March 2018,²⁸⁹ following a massive outcry on behalf of the Kennan Institute’s Ukrainian alumni community in protest of the dismissal of the Kyiv office director (and author of this report)²⁹⁰ at the background of the Institute’s growing pro-Kremlin policies.²⁹¹

Matthew Rojansky, is a former Deputy Director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.²⁹² He is a close associate of Thomas Graham, managing director of Kissinger Associates (since 2007), senior lecturer in Russian and European Studies at Yale University, fellow at the Yale Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, and a former senior associate in the Russia/Eurasia program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (from 1998-2001).²⁹³ Rojansky and Graham co-organized conferences, co-authored policy research articles²⁹⁴ and jointly promoted the idea of enhanced U.S. engagement with Russia.²⁹⁵

Thomas Graham is a managing director of the secretive U.S. lobbying firm Kissinger Associates, founded by Henry Kissinger in 1982. Through his close relationships with foreign governments and

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodrow_Wilson_International_Center_for_Scholars. The Institute’s director Matthew Rojansky often complains about depletion of government funding in support Russia-related academic programs. See: Matt Rojansky, Kenneth Yalovitz, “The Slow Death of Russian Eurasian Studies,” *National Interest*, May 23, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-slow-death-russian-eurasian-studies-10516>

²⁸⁸ Andrew Roth, “U.S. Center for Russian Studies to Shut Moscow Office,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/12/world/europe/kennan-institute-named-for-author-of-containment-to-close.html>

²⁸⁹ Matthew Kupfer, “Kennan Institute to Close Kyiv Office After Accusations of pro-Russia Bias,” *KyivPost*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/kennan-institute-close-kyiv-office-accusations-pro-russia-bias.html>; Statement on the Status of the Kennan Institute’s Ukraine Office by Director, President and CEO of the Wilson Center Jane Harman, Wilson Center, March 1, 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/statement-the-status-the-kennan-institutes-ukraine-office-director-president-and-ceo-the>

²⁹⁰ The author served as director of the Kennan Institute’s office in Kyiv since December 1, 2015 until February 28, 2018. The details on her dismissal and the closure of the Kennan office in Kyiv can be found in: Kateryna Smaglyi, “Goodbye to the Kremlin Institute,” *KyivPost*, February 28, 2018, at: <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/kateryna-smaglyi-bidding-goodbye-kremlin-institute-formerly-known-kennan-institute.html>

²⁹¹ “Alumni: We Are Deeply Concerned by the Kennan Institute’s Growing Pro-Kremlin Policies,” *KyivPost*, February 27, 2017, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/alumni-deeply-concerned-kennan-institutes-growing-pro-kremlin-policies.html>

²⁹² “Matt Rojansky Appointed to Head Kennan Institute,” *Wilson Center*, June 14, 2013, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/matt-rojansky-appointed-to-head-kennan-institute>

²⁹³ Yale University, Thomas Graham, <http://jackson.yale.edu/person/thomas-graham/>

²⁹⁴ T. Graham, M. Rojansky, “America’s Russia Policy Has Failed,” *Foreign Policy*, October 3, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/13/americas-russia-policy-has-failed-clinton-trump-putin-ukraine-syria-how-to-fix/>

²⁹⁵ “Russia: Time to Contain?,” McCain Institute, October 3, 2017, <https://www.mccaininstitute.org/events/russia-time-contain/>

extensive knowledge of foreign affairs, Henry Kissinger offered geopolitical insight and advice to numerous global companies including ITT, American Express, Anheuser-Busch, Coca-Cola, H. J. Heinz, Fiat, Volvo, L. M. Ericsson, Daewoo and Midland Bank.²⁹⁶

Kissinger Associates assists clients in identifying strategic partners and investment opportunities and advises them on government relations.²⁹⁷ In recent years, Henry Kissinger has obtained more than a dozen meetings with President Putin.²⁹⁸ It has been noted that Kissinger's consulting firm "could get a bump in business" from a new reset with Russia.²⁹⁹

In March 2016, Henry Kissinger met with Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, at a lunch organized by the Center for the National Interest. In the weeks following, Kushner and Dmitri Simes discussed the possibility of an event hosted by the Center for National Interest to give Donald Trump a chance to lay out a cohesive foreign policy speech.³⁰⁰

Political expert Andrei Piontkovsky remembers:

*"Thomas Graham is a former diplomat. I know the day when he was bought by the Kremlin. He did not last through the end of President Bush's term. He was what is called a 'Russian Tzar' and he left in the middle of the second term when he received an offer from Kissinger. On the day when he left, I ran into him on the Metro. He is usually quite a reserved person. He did not look like himself on that day, he was in a total euphoria and, unexpectedly, mentioned to me several times that he switched jobs and that he is making at his new job several times more than he did when he worked for President Bush."*³⁰¹

Rojansky and Graham belong to the "pragmatist" camp of American experts on Russia. In Rojansky's opinion, "the policy of isolating Russia ... makes the U.S. appear weak and inconsistent" and thus, for the U.S. government, the key questions to ask should be "what the Russians want [and] how the Russians are thinking about challenges like Ukraine, Syria and counterterrorism".³⁰²

As opposed to "normativists", who stress the importance of a values-based approach to international political developments and foreign policy, "pragmatists" consider the balance of power and the status quo to be the basis for international relations. They support Moscow's claims of its "sphere of influence" and warn that excessive criticism and punishment of Russia may escalate the crisis and usher the United States into a new Cold War. This helps explain why "Western pragmatists frequently find themselves echoing statements made by their Russian counterparts (or even by the Kremlin itself)."³⁰³

In the summer of 2015, Matthew Rojansky and Thomas Graham attempted to convince senior members of President Petro Poroshenko's administration that Ukraine should drop the idea of joining

²⁹⁶ Jeff Gerth and Sarah Bartlett, "Kissinger and Friends and Revolving Doors," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1989, <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/30/us/kissinger-and-friends-and-revolving-doors.html>

²⁹⁷ Kissinger Associates, *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kissinger_Associates

²⁹⁸ "Kremlin comments on Kissinger's role in arranging Putin-Trump meeting," *TASS*, June 30, 2017, <http://tass.com/politics/954144>;
²⁹⁹ "Putin Receives Former U.S. Diplomat Kissinger in Kremlin," *Reuters*, June 29, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-kissinger-idUSKBN19K2QN>

²⁹⁹ Mahal Toosi and Isaac Arnsdorf, "Kissinger, a longtime Putin confidant, sidles up to Trump," *Politico*, December 24, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/trump-kissinger-russia-putin-232925>

³⁰⁰ Caleb Melby, David Kocieniewski, and Gerry Smith, "Kushner Foreign Policy Role Grew After Kissinger Lunch," *Bloomberg*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-13/kushner-foreign-policy-role-grew-after-kissinger-lunch-correct>

³⁰¹ Yuri Felshtinsky, "Who is Dimitri Simes and Why Is He Trying To Sink Mayflower?" *Gordon*, August 24, 2018. <https://english.gordon.com/news/exclusiveenglish/who-is-dimitri-simes-and-why-is-he-trying-to-sink-mayflower-investigation-by-yuri-felshtinsky-316154.html>

³⁰² What does the World Expect of President-Elect Trump," *Wilson Center*, November 8, 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/what-does-the-world-expect-president-elect-trump-russia>

³⁰³ This classification was used by Lilia Shevtsova, see "How the West Misjudged Russia," part 2 "The Pragmatists," *The American Interest*, January 20, 2016, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/01/20/how-the-west-misjudged-russia-part-2-the-pragmatists/>

NATO and EU.³⁰⁴ At their meetings with President Poroshenko's advisors in the summer of 2015, Rojansky and Graham presented a document titled "Strategic Vision of Partnership between the USA and Ukraine."³⁰⁵ The document advocated Ukraine's return to a "multi-vector" foreign policy and doing "business as usual" with the Russians. It never once mentioned joining the European Union and NATO as foreign policy goals for Ukraine. Similarly, it did not list defensive military assistance from the United States as a priority, even though Ukraine's eastern borders were regularly being shelled from the Russian-controlled regions of Donbas.

Matthew Rojansky also helped **Paul Manafort** advocate for his Russia-friendly client – Ukraine's former president Viktor Yanukovich.³⁰⁶ Since 2004, Manafort served as a political consultant to both Yanukovich³⁰⁷ as well as Putin's closest ally, Oleg Deripaska.³⁰⁸ According to reports and documents released by Special Counsel Robert Mueller's team in September 2018,³⁰⁹ Manafort solicited assistance from two Washington D.C. lobbying firms to lobby in the U.S. on behalf of President Yanukovich and edited numerous ghost-written op-eds for publication in U.S. newspapers.³¹⁰

In April 2013 Manafort wrote to the chief of Yanukovich's presidential administration: "This week we directed the efforts of a number of positive news articles that appeared in several prominent publications and in the digital media space."³¹¹ To illustrate his point, Manafort listed four articles: two press releases, a piece published by the now-defunct organization Center for the Study of Former Soviet Socialist Republics, and Rojansky's op-ed, titled "Will Ukraine Seize Its EU Chance?", published on CNN's Global Public Square blog.³¹² At that time, Rojansky served as deputy director of Carnegie's Russia and Eurasia Programs.³¹³ Interestingly, in February 26, 2013, Manafort reported to Yanukovich's aids about his meeting with the former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, James Collins, referring to him as "a major sponsor of Carnegie."³¹⁴

Matthew Rojansky appears to enjoy a close partnership with the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC). RIAC's Director General, Andrey Kortunov, was invited to Kennan's conference "A Kennan for Our Times", where he had the privilege of speaking during the opening panel immediately after Rojansky's introductory statement.³¹⁵ Kortunov maintained that George F. Kennan's "containment policy" is not applicable to contemporary Russia and should be revised.

³⁰⁴ Author's interview with Brian Mefford, non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, August 31, 2018.

³⁰⁵ "Strategic Vision of Partnership Between the U.S.A. and Ukraine," <https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/8b3f25a4-ae05-4f7c-bc6d-0decb2871752>

³⁰⁶ Betsy Woodruff, "Paul Manafort in an Email to Pro-Russia Client: Non-Partisan Think Tank Work Did My Bidding," *The Daily Beast*, September 15, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/manafort-in-an-email-to-pro-russian-client-non-partisan-think-tank-work-did-my-bidding>

³⁰⁷ Manafort's work for Yanukovich is detailed in: Craig Unger, *House of Trump. House of Putin. The Untold Story of Donald Trump and the Russian Mafia*, (Dutton: New York, 2018), pp. 180-190.

³⁰⁸ Jeff Horowitz and Chad Day, "Before Trump Job, Manafort Worked to Aid Putin," *Associated Press*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.ap-news.com/122ae0b5848345faa88108a03de40c5a>

³⁰⁹ United States of America Versus Paul J. Manafort, Jr., <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4883087/Manafort-DC-Superseding-Criminal-Information.pdf>

³¹⁰ United States of America Versus Paul J. Manafort, Jr., <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4883087/Manafort-DC-Superseding-Criminal-Information.pdf>, p. 23.

³¹¹ United States of America Versus Paul J. Manafort, Jr., <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4883087/Manafort-DC-Superseding-Criminal-Information.pdf>, pp. 68-69.

³¹² Matthew Rojansky, "Will Ukraine Seize its EU Chance?" *CNN*, April 12, 2013, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/04/12/will-ukraine-seize-its-eu-chance/>

³¹³ Matthew Rojansky, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/experts/487>

³¹⁴ United States of America Versus Paul J. Manafort, Jr., <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4883087/Manafort-DC-Superseding-Criminal-Information.pdf>

³¹⁵ Other speakers included St. Petersburg's European University professor Ivan Kurilla, Georgetown University professor Angela Stent, and former U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Tefft. "A Kennan for Our Times. Celebrating the Legacy of George F. Kennan," *Wilson Center*, February 13, 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/kennan-for-our-times-celebrating-the-legacy-george-f-kennan>

On the eve of the July 2018 Helsinki Summit, Rojansky and Kortunov co-authored an article on the benefits of President Trump's meeting with Vladimir Putin, which was published by *The National Interest*.³¹⁶

7.5. The Dartmouth Conference and the Russian Union of Oil and Gas Producers

The Kennan Institute is an active promoter of U.S.-Russia dialogue within the framework of the Dartmouth Conference.³¹⁷ This “track two” diplomacy effort was launched in 1960 at the height of the Cold War with the secret support of President Dwight Eisenhower and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. First held at New Hampshire’s Dartmouth College in 1972, the conference continued as a public diplomacy effort administered by the Kettering Foundation and the Sustained Dialogue Institute,³¹⁸ where Matthew Rojansky serves as Advisory Board member.³¹⁹

The Dartmouth conference, which was also co-led by Henry Kissinger and Yevgeniy Primakov (Russian Foreign Minister from 1996-1998 and Director of Russian Foreign Intelligence Service from 1991-1996), ceased to exist after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The conference was suddenly renewed in 2014 – the year of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and subsequent European and American sanctions.³²⁰

The Dartmouth Conference’s Executive Secretary on the American side is Matthew Rojansky.³²¹ On the Russian side it is represented by Yuri Shafranik – Russia’s former energy minister and current chairman of the Russian Union of Oil and Gas Producers.³²² Shafranik also gets speaking opportunities at the Kennan Institute.³²³ The Dartmouth Conference is nontransparent. It does not have an official website and no information is available about its participants, agenda, dates or official donors.

When held in Russia, the dialogue treats its American attendees with “five star” hospitality. This is how Jill Dougherty, former CNN Moscow bureau chief and current member of the Kennan Institute’s Advisory Council, described the atmosphere at one of the recent seminars held at the former government country retreat, Zavidovo, two hours from Moscow in October 2017:

“Fuelled by coffee, tea, Russian cuisine, and long walks through birch forests, our Russian and American participants, some of whom have helped mold their governments’ foreign policy, covered multiple issues on which our countries disagree.”³²⁴

Dougherty's report on the Zavidovo conference, published shortly after her visit to Russia as a Dartmouth participant, is a good illustration of how uncritically some American experts convey the Kremlin's propaganda doctrine. In her article, one can read about:

³¹⁶ Matthew Rojansky, Andrey Kortunov, “These Are the Benefits of a U.S.-Russia Summit,” *The National Interest*, June 21, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/these-are-the-benefits-us-russia-summit-26371>

³¹⁷ Dartmouth Conference, *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dartmouth_Conferences_\(peace\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dartmouth_Conferences_(peace))

³¹⁸ Sustained Dialogue Institute, <https://sustaineddialogue.org/about-us/>

³¹⁹ Sustained Dialogue Institute, Advisory Board, <https://sustaineddialogue.org/team/advisory-board/>

³²⁰ Vitaliy Tretiyakov, “Posle pereryva v 24 goda vozobnovlena rabota Dartmutskoj konferentsii” (in Russian) (After 24 years the Dartmouth Conference renewed), *Livejournal*, June 12, 2014, <https://v-tretiyakov.livejournal.com/1628087.html>

³²¹ Wilson Center, Matthew Rojansky, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/matthew-rojansky>

³²² “Russia is interested in improving relations with the United States”, *RIA novosti*, September 29, 2017, <https://ria.ru/world/20170929/1505835693.html>

³²³ “US-Russia Relations: Regional and Global Conflict,” *Wilson center*, October 31, 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/us-russia-relations-regional-and-global-conflict>; “A Discussion with Yuri Shafranik,” *Wilson Center*, February 7, 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/discussion-dr-yuri-shafranik>

³²⁴ Jill Dougherty, “Dartmouth Conference: From Escalation to Dialogue,” *Intersection Project*, October 11, 2017, <http://intersectionproject.eu/article/russia-world/dartmouth-conference-escalation-dialogue>

- “laughable” FBI and congressional investigations of Moscow’s possible role in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the totally “Russophobic” U.S. Congress;
- the scary possibility of the U.S.-Russia conflict “degenerating into something of an uncontrolled nature, with unforeseen consequences”;
- the role of U.S. media in whipping up fear of Moscow in the United States;
- how the United States is suffering from the “lost empire complex”;
- concerns about the quick erosion of American vaunted democracy.³²⁵

Based on their dialogues at Dartmouth, conference participants submit “policy recommendations” to government officials in their respective countries “on how Russia and the United States can cooperate on issues as diverse as arms control, regional conflicts, educational exchange, religious dialogue, and public health”.³²⁶ Unfortunately, the recommendations are not publicly available to allow external assessment of their merit.

7.6. The Carmel Institute of Russian Culture and History at American University

The Russian Embassy and the Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak have been instrumental in promoting the image of Russia as a “cultural superpower” in Washington D.C. It is evident that Kislyak played a critical role in the opening of the **Carmel Institute of Russian Culture and History at American University**. The U.S. media has characterized the former Russian ambassador to the U.S. as a “puzzling figure” in the investigation conducted by special counsel Robert Mueller. Kislyak’s meetings with Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and now-attorney general Jeff Sessions, as well as telephone calls with Michael Flynn, have endowed the former Russian Ambassador with “a shadowy Rasputin-like presence in the entire affair.”³²⁷

In 2011, following Ambassador Kislyak’s proposal, American philanthropist Susan Carmel Lehrman donated \$2 million to American University³²⁸ to launch the Initiative for Russian Culture. Lehrman remembered that she sympathized with Ambassador Kislyak’s vision of “enhancing greater relations between Russians and Americans, particularly among younger generations”³²⁹ and that, as a philanthropist, she always had a “personal desire to continue to assist in creating stronger cultural bonds and greater understandings between people of different cultures.”³³⁰

In 2012, only six months after launching the Initiative for Russian Culture (IRC), Lehrman received two diplomatic awards – the first from France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy, and the second from the Russian Foreign Ministry.³³¹ In 2015, Lehrman received a corporate citizenship award from the Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute (together with Petr Aven, the Kremlin-linked oligarch and co-owner of the Alfa

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Garrett M. Graff, “What Robert Mueller Knows – and 9 Areas He’ll Pursue Next,” *Wired*, July 16, 2018,

https://www.wired.com/story/what-robert-mueller-knows-and-9-areas-hell-pursue-next/?mbid=email_onsiteshare

³²⁸ “Europe loves Susan Lehrman: Washington socialite gets medals from France, Russia in same week,” *The Washington Post*, April 25, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/reliable-source/post/europe-loves-susan-lehrman-washington-socialite-gets-medals-from-france-russia-in-same-week/2012/04/25/gIQAUwNbhT_blog.html?utm_term=.31b22bcc40e1

³²⁹ “The Carmel Institute: A Video Introduction,” American University, <https://www.american.edu/cas/carmel/>

³³⁰ “Global Woman: Susan Lehrman,” *Diplomatic Courier*, March 8, 2012, <https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/global-woman-susan-lehrman/>

³³¹ “Europe loves Susan Lehrman: Washington D.C. socialite gets medals from France, Russia in same week,” *The Washington Post*, April 25, 2012.

Group). In 2016, Lehrman was awarded the Russian Order of Friendship, which was personally handed to her by Putin at the Kremlin.³³² She sat next to Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev at the ceremony.³³³

The IRC focused on fostering “lasting connections between Russian and American youth through music and theatre performances, film screenings, conferences, and student exchanges.”³³⁴ Speaking at the Initiative's inaugural event at the Library of Congress in October 2011, Ambassador Kislyak indicated that his plan was to create “a consortium of American universities interested in the study of Russian culture.”³³⁵

From 2011-2014, more than 14,000 students and guests in the Washington D.C. metro region attended the Initiative's social events, dinners and networking evenings.³³⁶ In 2015, Lehrman rebranded the Initiative and turned it into the Carmel Institute of Russian Culture and History. In the words of its newly appointed executive director **Anton Fedyashin**, the Center will now endeavor to “expose American students to Russia as a cultural superpower.”³³⁷

The figure of Anton Fedyashin deserves attention. He was born in the USSR and came to the United States as a child in the mid-1980s together with his father, Andrey Fedyashin, who was a staff reporter at the Soviet news agency TASS first in the U.K. and then in the U.S.A.³³⁸ His grandfather, Georgy Fedyashin, was a General at the First Chief Directorate of the KGB.³³⁹

In 2015, 2016 and 2017 Fedyashin was a visiting lecturer at the MGIMO. His publications and media interviews give an impression he is “a professional Kremlin propagandist, who is well trained in turning the logic on its head and proving to his audience that black is in reality white, and vice versa.”³⁴⁰

Anton Fedyashin was linked to the alleged Russian spy Maria Butina, who studied at the American University and who could work with Fedyashin (and the Rosstrudnichestvo office in Washington DC) on selecting potential Russian intelligence recruits from the university's student body.³⁴¹

³³² Eleonora Goldman, “Vladimir Putin presents the Order of Friendship to Susan Lehrman,” *Russia Beyond*, November 8, 2016, https://www.rbth.com/news/2016/11/08/vladimir-putin-presents-the-order-of-friendship-to-susan-lehrman_646061

³³³ “Presenting state decorations and the prize for contribution to strengthening the unity of the Russian Nation,” *The Kremlin*, Moscow, November 4, 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53212>; Presenting Order of Friendship to Susan E. Lehrman, *Youtube*, November 6, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1n6NKby155s>

³³⁴ The Carmel Institute for Russian Culture and History, American University, <https://www.american.edu/cas/carmel/>

³³⁵ “Bolee 500 chelovek prishli v biblioteku Kongressa na film 'My iz dzhaza'” (in Russian) (More than 500 people attended the ‘We are from jazz’ movie screening at the Library of Congress), *Ria Novosti*, October 1, 2010, <https://ria.ru/culture/20111001/447086450.html>

³³⁶ Helen Dodson, “Unique Gift from Susan Carmel Lehrman to AU Establishes the Carmel Institute of Russian Culture and History,” *American University, College of Arts and Sciences*, March, 2015, <https://www.american.edu/cas/news/carmel-institute.cfm>

³³⁷ “The Carmel Institute: A Video Introduction”, <https://www.american.edu/cas/carmel/>

³³⁸ Yuri Felshtinsky, “‘My name is Fedyashin, Anton Fedyashin.’ Who Is Anton Fedyashin and What Was He Teaching Maria Butina?” *Gordon*, September 21, 2018, <https://english.gordonua.com/news/exclusiveenglish/my-name-is-fedyashin-anton-fedyashin-who-is-anton-fedyashin-and-what-was-he-teaching-maria-butina-investigation-by-yuri-felshtinsky-342703.html>

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*; Josh Meyer, “Accused Russian Agent Met with Suspected Kremlin Spy,” *Politico*, July 28, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/28/mariia-butina-russia-kremlin-suspected-spy-746043>

7.7. The American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation and Pro-Kremlin Propaganda

Susan Lehrman also fosters U.S.-Russia dialogue as the main sponsor of the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation (ARCCF). The Foundation's social events are often co-sponsored by entities and oligarchs deeply loyal to the Putin regime, including **Viktor Vekselberg's** Renova, **Petr Aven's** and **Mikhail Fridman's** Alfa Bank, **Len Blavatnik's** Access Industries and the Blavatnik Family Foundation, **Vagit Alekperov's** Lukoil Americas Corporation, and **Vladimir Yevtushenkov's** Sistema.³⁴²

Russian media reported that in 2012, Putin's campaign managers recruited several dozen prominent celebrities, including the world-famous pianist Denis Matsuev, St. Petersburg Mariinsky conductor Valery Gergiev, jazz musician Igor Butman, and opera star Anna Netrebko, to rally in support of Putin.³⁴³ The ARCCF and the Carmel Institute never demonstrated an interest in introducing the work of cultural figures who stand in opposition to the Putin regime.³⁴⁴ Their events in Washington D.C. featured exclusively pro-Putin artists, notably including Matsuev, Gergiev, Buntman, and filmmaker Karen Shakhnazarov.³⁴⁵

On November 14, 2017, the Carmel Institute of Russian Culture and History, together with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation, the Sustained Dialogue Institute, and the Kennan Institute held the "For Unity!" concert, featuring Mariinsky Theatre conductor Valeriy Gergiev and pianist Denis Matsuev – Putin's cultural "envoys," who have publicly supported Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and who were declared "persona non grata" in Ukraine.

"It was an unusual event ... based on an ambiguous premise. What, exactly, does "unity" mean?" wrote *The Washington Post* correspondent Anne Midgette.³⁴⁶ Ukrainian and Russian diaspora groups protested against the concert while the Embassy of Ukraine to the United States regretted that American nonprofit organizations provided a "platform for Russian propaganda and manipulation of U.S. public opinion."³⁴⁷

³⁴² Ilya Zaslavskiy, "Kislyak's Spider Web of Networks of Oligarchs and Putin's Apologists in the U.S.," *Free Russia Foundation*, March 15, 2017, <http://www.4freerussia.org/kislyaks-spider-web-of-networks-of-oligarchs-and-putins-apologists-in-the-u-s/>

³⁴³ "No Political Harmony Among Cultural Elite," *The Moscow Times*, February 20, 2012, <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/no-political-harmony-among-cultural-elite-12730>

³⁴⁴ Katherina Saltzman, "The Russia-AU connection: University's Russian cultural institute stirs controversy," *The Eagle Online*, May 23, 2017, <http://www.theeagleonline.com/article/2017/05/the-russia-au-connection-russian-cultural-institute-at-au-stirs-controversy>

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Anne Midgette, "The concert was about unity; the message was all Russian," *The Washington Post*, November 14, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/music/the-concert-was-about-unity-the-message-was-all-russian/2017/11/14/a14ca8a4-c949-11e7-b244-2d22ac912500_story.html

³⁴⁷ Embassy of Ukraine to the United States, *Facebook*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/ukr.embassy.usa/photos/a.817869281589639.1073741921.211311782245395/1580305332012693/?type=3&theater>

8. Final Remarks

Twenty-seven years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we are now living in a new and almost “upside down” reality. For decades, the Soviet government spent millions of dollars to jam the signals of foreign radio stations and prevent Soviet citizens from gaining access to alternative foreign media broadcasts.³⁴⁸ Today, Russia invests millions of dollars to have its propaganda delivered to Western audiences under the guise of more “nuanced” interpretations of politics and international events. Despite the ruble in freefall and anti-Kremlin sanctions, Russia is diligently continuing to increase state funding for its propaganda machine by around 30 percent per year.³⁴⁹

Regrettably, not only Russian but also Western reality is becoming paradoxical. Consider the case of two reputable British publishing houses, Manchester University Press (MUP) and Cambridge University Press (CUP), which found themselves facing severe criticism for very different reasons: the first for publishing the pseudo-academic book *Flight MH17: Ukraine and the new Cold War*,³⁵⁰ and the second for refusing to publish the remarkable study *Putin’s Kleptocracy* by American scholar Karen Dawisha.

The first “analysis” evaluated the tragic shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 through the prism of “America’s drive for global domination” and “political corruption of state-directed oligarchic capitalism in Ukraine” coupled with “the self-interest of a neo-liberal driven European Union.”³⁵¹ In 2018, the Dutch and Australian governments held Russia accountable for its responsibility in the downing of flight MH17, yet this utterly deceptive monograph is still available for online purchase. Neither MUP nor the author rushed to apologize for publishing outright lies or retracted their misleading conclusions presented under the guise of a legitimate academic study. As one critic put it, MUP published a “toxic, made-to-order, propagandist book, using academic freedom as an excuse and shedding all responsibility,” sarcastically pointing out that one could make more profit and cause less damage to one’s name by publishing “peer reviewed horoscopes.”³⁵²

In Karen Dawisha’s case, CUP scandalously delayed and then refused to publish her study on Russian corruption – one of the most exhaustive investigations into the patterns of Putin’s plutocracy and authoritarianism. The publisher said the legal risks were too great, “given the controversial subject matter of the book, and its basic premise that Putin’s power is founded on his links to organized crime.”³⁵³ In response, Dawisha stated her regret that CUP declined to proceed with a book “not because of its scholarly quality ... but because the subject matter itself is too hot to handle.”³⁵⁴

Whereas some universities have begun censoring themselves, others invite pro-Kremlin propagandists to help their scholarly debates become more “nuanced.” In January 2017, the Paris School of International Relations cancelled a presentation by American investigative journalist David Satter, the author of *The Less You Know, the Better You Sleep: Russia’s Road to Terror and Dictatorship Under Yeltsin and*

³⁴⁸ George W. Woodard, “Cold War Radio Jamming,” in: Johnson, A. Ross, and R. Eugene Parta (eds.), *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 53.

³⁴⁹ In 2015 the annual budget of *Rossiia Segodnya* and *RT* channels was set at \$170 million and \$400 million respectively. See: “Looking West, Russia Beefs Up Spending on Global Media Giants,” *Moscow Times*, September 23, 2014, <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/looking-west-russia-beefs-up-spending-on-global-media-giants-39708>

³⁵⁰ Kees van der Pijl, *Flight MH17. Ukraine and the new Cold War. Prism of Disaster*, (Manchester University Press, 2018), <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526131096/>

³⁵¹ Book review by Kate Hudson, General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Media Officer of Left Unity and Visiting Research Fellow at London South Bank University, <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526131096/>

³⁵² Oleksiy Kurka, *Facebook*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/oleksiy.kurka/posts/10155743668354926>

³⁵³ “A Book Too Far,” *The Economist*, April 3, 2014, <https://www.economist.com/eastern-approaches/2014/04/03/a-book-too-far>

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Putin, allegedly in order to protect the university's exchange programs with three Russian universities.³⁵⁵

Uppsala University, meanwhile, faced criticism for inviting Vanessa Beeley (an RT-linked blogger turned pro-Kremlin propagandist and conspiracy theorist) to provide a guest lecture during its 2018 Summer School program.³⁵⁶ To their credit, the university administrators later issued an apology, acknowledging that Beeley's lecture contained "unscientific views" and that it was "completely unacceptable" to invite her.³⁵⁷

Even think tanks with a clear-eyed view of the Kremlin's dangerous policies, like the Atlantic Council, for example, can occasionally make a faux pas, as demonstrated by the Atlantic Council's May 21, 2018 off-the-record dinner with Mikhail Fridman and Petr Aven, devoted to the subject of sanctions.³⁵⁸

To a significant degree, Russia is testing the Western intellectual community and its ability to resist the Kremlin's many temptations and co-optation strategies. The birth of a new phenomenon of *Putin-verstehers* – or pro-Kremlin communicators, sympathizers and lobbyists – demonstrates that to a significant degree, the Kremlin has succeeded in recruiting the necessary number of Western experts to advance its foreign policy interests.

However, at this point, defenses of naivety or "keeping dialogue open" are no longer valid excuses for either conscious or unwitting engagement in Russia's influence campaign against other countries and international organizations. It is high time to acknowledge that participation in Kremlin-linked debate venues such as the Valdai Discussion Club, as well as invitations of Russian "hybrid" analysts to the West, almost exclusively leads to uncritical propagation of Moscow-friendly narratives, spreading more disinformation and polluting the information space with specious narratives.

Some may argue that the best response is to simply ignore pro-Putin propagandists, but we believe that the Russian disinformation machine and its various purveyors and proxies can and must be contained. The strategy of shedding light on what pro-Kremlin experts say, write and advocate is likely to prove much more effective, not least because it ensures that the truth is out there to set the record straight. Closer media scrutiny of the Western think tank community is in itself a huge antidote to the possibility of shadow political lobbying.

We encourage scholars to regularly monitor the activities of pro-Kremlin experts and actively fight back against Putin's attack on the truth. As Timothy Snyder has argued, "if we allow ourselves to be convinced that nothing is really true, everything is permitted, it doesn't really matter, if we all become cynical, then our institutions will collapse."³⁵⁹ It is our duty to do our utmost to defend them.

³⁵⁵ Paul Aveline, "One of France's Top Universities is Canceling Anti-Putin Speakers," *BuzzFeed*, January 30, 2017, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/paulaveline/the-paris-school-of-international-affairs-cancels>

³⁵⁶ During her lecture at the Summer School "War and Peace Journalism in an Age of Global Instability", held at Uppsala University in June 2018, Vanessa Beeley – a freelance blogger with no professional media experience – claimed that the Soviet Union and Russia have always been promoters of world peace, that Human Rights Watch is part of a Jewish conspiracy, that the UN is an anti-Russian organization and that there was a free referendum in Crimea on joining Russia. "Kurs izvestneishego universiteta okazalsia propagandoi" (in Russian) (The course of a famous university turned out to be propaganda), *Postimees*, June 28, 2018, <https://rus.postimees.ee/4510859/kurs-izvest-nevshego-universiteta-okazalsya-propagandoy>

³⁵⁷ "Concerning Vanessa Beeley's lecture at the summer school 'War and Peace Journalism in an Age of Global Instability'," *IREs Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.ires.uu.se/about-us/news/?tarContentId=720434>

³⁵⁸ The Atlantic Council event and the list of guests were discussed by Karina Orlova, "Sanktsii gryadut: rossiiskie oligarkhi edut v Vashington" (in Russian) (Sanctions are coming: Russian oligarchs go to Washington), *Echo Moscow*, May 22, 2018, https://echo.msk.ru/blog/karina_orlova/2206898-echo/; Also see: Rafael Saakov, "US Think Tank Takes Heat for Hosting Putin-Linked Oligarchs," *Voice of America*, May 26, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-think-tank-takes-heat-for-hosting-putin-linked-oligarchs/4406945.html>

³⁵⁹ "The triumph of 'nothing's really true' politics. Interview with Timothy Snyder," *CNN*, April 3, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/vid-eos/world/2018/04/03/timothy-snyder-intv-amanpour.cnn>

