



The Hague Centre
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Putting it together by bringing 'influence' back in

Exploring European influencing options across different future Russias

Authors: Stephan De Spiegeleire, Anna Harmash, Sofiia Horbachova, Glib Voloskyi, Iryna Zaporizka, Yar Batoh

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“Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent's fate.” – Sun Tzu (Chinese general, military strategist, writer, and philosopher, 5th century BCE¹)

“On résiste à l'invasion des armées; on ne résiste pas à l'invasion des idées”. – Victor Hugo (French novelist, 19th century²)

"The Empire used to be kept running smoothly by power," said the Emperor somberly. "Now it must be kept running by a smile, a wave of the hand, a murmured word, and a medal or a plaque." "If all that keeps the peace, Sire, there is much to be said for it". – Isaac Asimov (US scientist and science fiction writer, 20th century³)

¹Sun Tzu, *The Art of War: Complete Texts and Commentaries* (Shambhala Publications, 2005), 108.

²Victor Hugo, *Histoire d'un crime: Déposition d'un témoin*, Préface de Jean-Marc Hovasse. Texte établi par Guy Rosa (La fabrique éditions, 2009), 592, http://www.groupugo.univ-paris-diderot.fr/Histoire_crime/Histoire%20d'un%20crime.pdf?Submit3=Texte+%C3%A9tabli.

³Isaac Asimov, *Prelude to Foundation* (Random House Publishing Group, 2012).

Executive summary

Why it matters

We have witnessed a dramatic deterioration in Russian-Western relations in which the ‘harder’ policy options like coercion and the use of brute force are gaining the upper hand on both sides. A broader, deeper and more systematic examination of all – also ‘softer’ – ways in which Europe could achieve its longer-term policy objectives towards Russia may enable policy makers to design an options portfolio that delivers superior value-for-money.

What we found

- Influencing lies at the very heart of international interactions. This makes it all the more astonishing that the concept has been given such short shrift in the international relations literature.
- The most extensive (also data-driven) research effort – including the most conceptually comprehensive typologies – into the broader phenomenon of human influencing can be found in disciplines studying marketing (advertising and social media influencers) and leadership. Many of the main insights from these disciplines run counter to today’s prevailing thinking (and acting) in international relations and foreign, security and defense security policy (FSDP). The most striking example of this mismatch is that more subtle influencing options that are primarily based on ‘pull’ (and not ‘push’) and that also include healthy doses of commitment, reciprocity, likeability, inspiring, etc. can be shown to generate far superior value for money⁴ in the general literature but are much less prevalent in the FSDP-literature.
- Even in the more applied defense and security literature the most developed taxonomies – and there are only a few of them – do consider a broader range of policy options (not only ‘hard’ ones); but they still also exhibit quite a few gaping holes and tend to focus mostly on the antagonistic side of international relationships.
- Europe still wields unique (also untapped) influencing potential towards Russia – more than is widely acknowledged.
- Europe’s salience in Russian media has declined over the past decade, as Russian media started turning more inward. This point has received remarkably little attention in the analytical community: we (also HCSS⁵) did pick up on Russia’s increasing

⁴We have argued before (Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *Reimagining Deterrence: Towards Strategic (Dis)Suasion Design* (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2020).) that from a ‘longue durée’ perspective the more crude and physically violent forms of making others comply with one’s own preferences have given way to more subtle and less physical ones. This is, we would submit, not because homo sapiens would have suddenly become weaker, softer or more effete. Instead, we suggest it is more likely due to the fact that our species has experientially found out – often the hard way – that it just works much better at a much lower cost.

⁵Stephan De Spiegeleire and Eline Chivot, *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness. Are China and Russia Really Becoming More Assertive?*, HCSS StratMon 2014 (HCSS, 2014); Stephan De Spiegeleire, *From Assertiveness to Aggression: 2014 as a Watershed Year for Russian Foreign and Security Policy* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies,

assertiveness and then its switch to outright aggressive policies, but this important finding has been overlooked. Our systematic analysis of Russian media also shows that Europe still held up longer and to this day still remains quite a bit more present in Russia's media than any other 'great power'.

- The range of plausible 'future Russias' that we have to plan for remains extremely broad, with many 'European+unfriendly' elements strewn across most (but not all) of them. At the same time, however, foresight studies on Russia from the past three years actually show a growing number of silver linings in these mostly gloomy clouds.
- Various ways of using different numeric datasets (including public and elite opinion datasets) as well as natural language processing (NLP) tools applied to various full-text corpora to identify potentially promising areas and targets of influencing show unprecedented and unparalleled promise. But they still require more effort than the currently typical scale and scope of commissioned or academic research projects allow for.
- The initial Russian elite pro-Western and pro-European mood of the immediate post-Cold War era has now (almost) flipped over into an anti-European consensus. The attitude of the Russian population towards Europe, however, remains more benevolent, but with clear and seemingly firm reservations. [We also must remain cautious about these surveys' reliability]
- The main 'fears' expressed by Putin in his public statements – and therefore arguably of particular relevance for Western influencing efforts – are external interference in Russia's domestic affairs and in its self-defined 'influence zone', NATO expansion (with Ukraine increasingly at the heart of those neuralgic apprehensions), externally-imposed sanctions, and missile defense in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Our analysis of what 'official Russia' publicly claims to have found effective in Western influencing attempts over the past two decades suggests that it feels particularly receptive to 'bridging' types of influence. The perceived lack of 'bridging' (particularly in the form of unilateral international actions) is considered as a sign of a hidden malicious agenda in the West.
- Suffering from a 'besieged fortress' syndrome, Russia reflexively tends to interpret any military influencing attempts as direct threats. This type of influence should therefore be considered with particular circumspection, since the probability of retaliation will, as long as this syndrome (some might call it trauma) remains 'untreated', always be high.
- HCSS team's own trade-off analysis ("Which European influencing options score best on different policy criteria in which future Russia (or across all of them?") confirms that Europe continues to have quite a few highly promising influencing options.

2015); Stephan De Spiegeleire, Great Power Assertivitis, HCSS StratMon 2016 (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2016), <https://www.hcss.nl/news/great-power-assertivitis>; Stephan De Spiegeleire, Khrystyna Holynska, and Yevhen Sapolovych, "Taking Russian Assertiveness Seriously – Letting the Data Speak," PONARS Policy Memo (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), September 11, 2019).

- Our analysis suggests that even in the toughest permutations of different future Russias, 'softer' approaches to influencing ('shining', 'persuading', 'attracting') generally outperform harder and non-cooperative ones. On average, these 'softer' options were also seen as the most effective against all policy criteria.
- Our team also assessed European influence on Russia as being most effective when targeted at Russia(s)' economic and societal spheres. The fact that 'economic interest groups' and 'generations' were selected as the most promising European influencing targets across most 'future Russias' only confirms this hypothesis.

What we recommend

- We need to start structuring and thinking through the West's (but especially Europe's) high-level (whole-of-government or – better yet – whole-of-society) policy option space for dealing with different future Russia(s) in a strategic balance-of-investment context: which policy options offer the best 'utils' for our 'euros' (value for money) across the board?
- The policy debate on Russia should move beyond its presentist obsession with Putin's current (post-2014) Russia, and we should instead also keep at least a few (representatively) different future Russias on our radar screen. Not in the least to identify and properly value promising policy options that lean in directions that Europe deems more desirable. Does Europe really want to 'deter', 'coerce' etc. Russia for the next few decades/centuries? Or does it instead want to design more truly sustainable security solutions with a more 'European' Russia?
- We need a more open-minded but critical engagement with the non-IR/FSDP literatures on human influencing and possibly even an alignment of our FSDP strategic options portfolio with those (often empirically far more richly validated) insights.
- Europe should try to 'stay true to itself' and its own uniqueness as much as possible – also in FSDP terms, even towards Russia. This includes:
- Maintaining a longer (both forward and backward) time-horizon than most ("*staying the course*"⁶);
- Reaping the benefits (while at the same time also trying to minimize the drawbacks) of *multi-perspectivism* and *multi-layered agency*;
- Treasuring (based on our its troubled history) Europe's instinctive *skepticism of 'hard' policy options* – NOT because Europe is weak and cannot implement these, but because Europe has learned (the hard way) that there are smarter – more effective and more sustainable – ways to achieve the same (FSDP!) goals;
- *Daring to be different*. European integration remains the single largest, boldest, most successful and enduring policy innovation in how nations interact with each other in (at least) the past three and a half centuries. This painful process has had (and

⁶Stephan De Spiegeleire, "Recoupling Russia to Europe: Staying the Course," *The International Spectator* 38 (July 2003): 79–97, <https://doi.org/10/bjns8j>.

continues to have) its ups and downs and keeps adapting and evolving. But its remarkable success means that always daring to (also) think how the rest of Europe may be able to anchor Russia in a similar evolution continues to deserve all the attention Europe (and the Netherlands – with its special ‘history’ with Russia) can muster.

- In its attempts to influence Russia, Europe should first and foremost leverage the spheres where it has a competitive advantage, i.e. especially the economic sphere. A much more data-intensive approach could yield considerable dividends here.
- Promising ‘targets’ for European *sui generis* influencing in Russia include the younger generations, selected regions, interest groups and even social and political influencers. The first step in this, however, requires doing our homework on all of these in ways that are currently not been done (although this project did at least experiment with this and also documented how these efforts could be expanded).
- Our analysis of Russian perceptions of the effectiveness of the European strategies suggests the potential effectiveness of bridging types of influence and risks of hard militaristic options.
- Mapping the Nth-order effects of various (including influencing) policy options requires significantly more attention.

Bottom line

Given its history, its size, its unique instantiation of international agency, its (global) performance, legitimacy/attractiveness in many areas that matter to most people⁷ (happiness, equality, self-actualization, decent living standards, education, health, transportation mobility, upward social mobility, responsible husbandry of the world’s resources, a ‘human’ *and* sustainable social safety net, etc.), its considerable global influence and ‘soft’ power as well as its residual raw ‘hard power’ – Europe may have comparative (and even competitive) advantages in ‘influencing’ other parts of the world, and within that world especially its own neighborhood, and within that neighborhood arguably even especially Russia. The Netherlands, with its own unique history, still holds a relatively unique and special place in Europe’s engagement with Russia. This paper suggests that Europe should start doing its homework to realize that untapped potential,

⁷“Corruption Perception Index,” Transparency, 2020, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020>; “Ease of Doing Business Rankings,” World Bank, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>; “Energy Transition Index Report 2021,” World Economic Forum, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/fostering-effective-energy-transition-2021/>; “Gender Equality Index,” European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/>; “Global Corruption Index,” Global Risk Profile, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://risk-indexes.com/global-corruption-index/>. Klaus Schwab et al., *Global Gender Gap Report 2020 Insight Report* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2019); “Human Development Report,” Human Development Data Center, accessed June 2, 2021, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/>; “Openness to Trade,” World Integrated Trade Solution, accessed June 2, 2021, <http://wits.worldbank.org/visualization/openness-to-trade-dashboard.html>; “Quality of Life,” Worlddata.info, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.worlddata.info/quality-of-life.php>; “Quality of Life Index by Country,” Numbeo, 2021, https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/rankings_by_country.jsp; “Social Progress Index,” 2020, <https://www.socialprogress.org/>; “Trade Openness,” Our World in Data, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/trade-openness>; “World Happiness Report,” 2021, <https://worldhappiness.report/>; *WORLDS OF INFLUENCE: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-Being in Rich*. (S.I.: UNITED NATIONS, 2021).

and that the Netherlands could benefit from playing a special role in this effort.

Go deeper

See our annotated powerpoint and explanatory video for more details.

Caveat

In the absence of any systematic and validated strategic knowledge base in the (R)FSDP field, any reports on this topic (including the current one) are best seen as opinion pieces. HCSS wants to reiterate that it regrets that the current mode of cumulative knowledge generation (and funding) essentially precludes the creation, let alone curation of such a database. Against all odds, we keep working towards that goal.

Introduction

The relationship between Russia and Europe/the West continues to hit new lows. Even the mainstream Western press no longer shies away from headlines like: “Russia edges closer to war” (The Guardian, Dec 12⁸), “There is a real risk of military confrontation on European soil” (NATO, Jan 18⁹), “Und plötzlich wieder kalter Krieg” (Wiwo, Jan 21¹⁰). Not since the Cuban Missile Crisis has the West taken the risk of a major military confrontation with Russia so seriously. The current policy debate on how to deal with Russia’s unprecedented brinkmanship harks back to the darkest days of the First Cold War with increases in defense budgets now widely seen as acceptable (even imperative), with tougher economic and (also kinetic) military options being upgraded and their use considered, with mutual risk propensity assessments being recalibrated upward, etc.

This new Second Cold War shares many similarities with the First one. Both involve ‘Russia’ and the West. Both are about similar types of enmities: ideological (then: communism vs capitalism/now: ‘reasonable conservatism’ vs liberal democracy), political (then: totalitarianism vs polyarchy/now: ‘managed democracy’ vs polyarchy) and political-economic (then: heavy industry vs diversified market economy/now: oligarchic kleptocracy vs market economy). Both also remain subject to nuclear inhibitions, but still have significant escalatory potential to morph into ‘hot’ wars. Given these similarities, the return to narrower, heavier and harder Cold War rhetoric and options is understandable.

At the same time, however, it is equally clear that these two Cold Wars differ from one another in quite fundamental ways. We no longer live in a bipolar, but a multipolar world, in which Russia’s power has declined significantly and in which it has been replaced by China as the (this time quickly ascending) ‘peer competitor’ and therefore near-all-absorbing focus of the West’s strategic thinking and forward planning. Contrary to the still mostly autarchic Soviet Union and despite Western sanctions having pushed Russia more towards import-substitution economic policies, Russia remains interconnected to the rest of the still far more globalized world in multiple ways¹¹. Also, Russia itself has changed quite dramatically: from imperial it has become distinctly post-imperial; a

⁸ Andrew Roth, “Russia Edges Closer to War as New Arms Arrive on Ukraine’s Border,” *The Observer*, December 12, 2021, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/12/russia-closer-to-war-ukraine-border-putin-buk-missiles>.

⁹ NATO, “Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in the Discussion: “New World (Dis-)Order” Organized by the Körber Stiftung and Der Spiegel,” NATO, January 18, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_190926.htm.

¹⁰ Hauke Reimer, “Reimer direkt: Pippi Langstrumpf zeigt Muskeln,” *Wirtschaftswoche*, January 21, 2022, <https://www.wiwo.de/politik/europa/reimer-direkt-pippi-langstrumpf-zeigt-muskeln/27991110.html>.

¹¹ One of the most compelling authors on these broader geo-dynamic as opposed to merely geo-political issues is Parag Khanna. Parag Khanna, *Move: The Forces Uprooting Us* (Scribner, 2021); Parag Khanna, *Connectography: Mapping the Future of Global Civilization* (Random House, 2016).

‘strong’¹² Soviet Union has made place for a much ‘weaker’ Russia; Russian society is not nearly as isolated any more as Soviet society was; the main forces of change are no longer primarily urbanization and industrialization, but the emergence of increasingly post-industrial urban ‘middle classes’, and the incentive structure of the currently dominant economic interest group (the fuel and energy complex) is quite dissimilar from that of the then leading sector (the military-industrial complex).

All of these transformations raise the question as to whether the return to distinctly ‘First Cold War’ flavors in policy options and capabilities is appropriate and sufficient. Are there ‘softer’ (but maybe at least as promising) policy options out there through which the West might still be able to nudge Russia in a different direction from the one in which it is heading now? How much influence does Europe/the West still have in Russia? If any – where is it to be found? Could it be leveraged? Towards which parts of Russia’s polity, society and economy? By whom? And to what effect(s)?

These are some of the questions HCSS took a closer look at as part of this year’s ‘Progress’ call from the Dutch Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. This paper highlights some of the main findings of our research efforts, more details of which can be found in an annotated powerpoint and a video walk-through of that powerpoint. This synthesis report starts with three sections that set the scene. The first one summarizes some key insights from different fields of study that have (unlike the international relations field) taken closer and deeper looks at what we actually know about human influence/influencing. The second one surveys what we know about Europe as an influencer of Russia – yesterday and today. In the third scene-setting section we shift our attention to Russia’s futures by summarizing the main findings from the key foresight studies from the past few decades and distilling those into four different plausible ‘future Russias’. We then move to the main part of the paper, in which we dive into different datasets (especially the demographics of various Russian public and elite opinion datasets; and an NLP-analysis of a corpus of all Putin’s public statements) to come up with actionable, traceable and replicable ways to identify a ‘menu’ of promising European influencing *policy options* in different future Russias. This part culminates in the presentation of the results of a modest participatory policy analysis effort in which our team tried to find out which of the identified policy options for influencing different future Russias seem most promising based on a set of policy criteria. We conclude this paper with some key take-aways and recommendations.

¹²We use the term here in the ‘political economy’ sense in which it was introduced by Peter Katzenstein and Stephan Krasner in the late 1970s. In this particular meaning, ‘strong’ states (like Japan) are ones that are sufficiently centralized and ‘isolated’ from societal forces to be able to devise and implement economic policies ‘top-down’; whereas ‘weak states’ (like the US) are much beholden to/captured by societal interest groups and therefore less able to push through economic policies. Peter J. Katzenstein, “Conclusion: Domestic Structures and Strategies of Foreign Economic Policy,” *International Organization* 31, no. 4 (1977): 879–920; Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton University Press, 1978).

What do we know about ‘influence’/‘influencing’?

What is ‘Influence’?

‘Influencing’ is a term most of us use on a daily basis. And we tend to do so quite casually. We talk about teachers, colleagues, authors, loved ones that may have had great influence on us in our lives. We brood on how we ourselves can influence others on issues we care about. When somebody around us does something unexpected, we may attribute that to the influence of some third party. Every now and then we may catch ourselves having been unduly influenced into buying something we did not really want – just because of some cunning marketing ploy. We hear more and more about ‘influencers’ on social media and the outsized role they play in different communities’ behavior, but even in their thinking or identity. Influencing is all around us. And yet we all find it particularly difficult to delineate or wrap our mind around this concept, precisely because we intuitively understand it to be so very broad, fluid and diffuse¹³.

In the international realm many hundreds of thousands of international actors constantly both engage in *and* are subject to myriad influencing activities. And yet we will see in the next section that the concept of ‘influencing’ remains poorly developed in the field of international relations (IR), certainly when compared to the (currently) far more central concepts of ‘power’ or even ‘coercion’. Even in the broader (also non-IR) political science or sociological literatures we find different treatments of how ‘power’ and ‘influence’ relate to one another. Some authors see them as synonymous¹⁴ or at least closely related¹⁵. Others consider power as one of many forms of influence; whereas yet another group of authors sees it the other way around: for them, power is the higher-level concept, and influence is one part of it. Finally, some authors also conceive of the two as mutually exclusive concepts – also in many different ways¹⁶.

For the purposes of this project, we – as we have found useful on multiple previous occasions – sought refuge in the field of etymology. Going back to the historical roots of the current-day term ‘influence’, we discovered that the Latin verb *in-fluere* consisted of two parts: 1) *in-* meaning “into, in, on, upon” (from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE)¹⁷ root

¹³For this project, for instance, our team spent many person-weeks using supervised (active learning) natural language processing tools to train binary classification models to identify sentences in our different corpora that either dealt with influence or did not. Despite manually annotating multiple 1000s of sentences, we were unable to train a model to generally accepted standards (AUC > 0.8).

¹⁴David Allen Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton University Press, 1985); Joseph S. Nye, “Power and Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (April 2011): 9–24, <https://doi.org/10/cjpkdg>.

¹⁵In this case, the difference is often seen to lie in the ‘mode’: power is seen as the ability to influence, influence as the actuation of power. For more on this, see Ruth Zimmerling, *Influence and Power: Variations on a Messy Theme*, Law and Philosophy Library, v. 68 (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2005).

¹⁶Also here, see Zimmerling.

¹⁷Proto-Indo-European is the hypothetical reconstructed ancestral language of the Indo-European language family whose time scale is much debated, but thought to be about 7,000 years ago, see J. P. Mallory and Douglas Q. Adams, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto Indo European and the Proto Indo European World* (New York: Oxford University Press,

en*, meaning "in") and 2) *fluere* – “to flow” (from the PIE **bhleu* – “to swell, well up, overflow”¹⁸. This brought us to our own following working definition: “Influence is an energy that flows from actor A to actor B with the potential to change B’s behavior, belief or opinion”. ‘Energy**’ suggests it has the ability to effectuate change. This energy can come in different forms: *positive or negative* (by accentuating or counteracting existing momentum); *passive or active* (“it’s just there” vs. “it has to be generated”); *push or pull* (A is the main actor (pusher) vs. B is the main actor (puller, requester)); *directed or not* (aimed at a specific target or not); *purposive or not* (A wants B to move in a specific direction vs. A is not even aware of her influence on B); etc. ‘**Flow**’ (*fluere*) indicates that this energy is not static but flows dynamically and directionally; whereas ‘**potential for change**’ implies that even when successfully transferred to another actor it *can* effectuate actual impact, but that this impact (let alone the desired impact) is not foreordained. ‘**A and B**’ refers to individuals or groups of ‘agents’ (actors with agency) and by specifying “**behavior, belief or opinion**” we suggest that influence need not just affect actions or decisions but can also go deeper.

HCSS has highlighted on many occasions that the high-level taxonomy of ‘compliance-seeking efforts’ – our own higher-level term for what most states aspire to in their international interactions that tries to stay away from the semantic debates about power, coercion, influencing, suasion, etc. – remains poorly conceptualized and structured in the field of international relations, let alone in foreign, security and defense planning (FSDP)¹⁹. Practically speaking, though, in this project we conceived of influence as *similar* to power in that both aim to achieve strategic outcomes (most of the time seeking compliance with the aspirational influencer’s or power projector’s own preferences) in third parties; and yet *different* in that power aims at more ‘forced’ (more A-centric: A → B), and influence at more ‘voluntary’ (more B-centric: B ← A) compliance. This difference is most intuitive in the case of ‘hard power’ in which brute force is used to overwhelm B’s intentions. But we would submit it also applies to ‘soft power’, which is clearly more subtle than brute force and also more B-sensitive, but still very much has A in the driver’s seat: it is still primarily pushing for B to (want) be pulled, whereas influencing can (also?) be more pull (or even just inspire) than push.

Influence in international relations and defense and security

Attempts to ‘influence’ other (economic, diplomatic, media, military, political, societal, etc.) international actors are really ‘bread and butter’ for the hundreds of thousands of

2006).). For the etymological roots of the word influence, see Douglas Harper, “Online Etymology Dictionary: Influence,” Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/influence#etymonline_v_6455.

¹⁸ We also want to point out that the word ‘power’ derives from the Latin verb *potere*, ‘to be able to’; which in turn comes from the from PIE root **poti-* “powerful; lord”. These antecedents also seem to suggest a more ‘A’-centric and volitional connotation.

¹⁹ See most recently: Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *Reimagining Deterrence: Towards Strategic (Dis)Suasion Design* (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2020).

actors – state, non-state and everything in between – engaged in innumerable international interactions that take place on a daily basis. One would, therefore, reasonably expect there to be a rich literature on this topic in the field of international relations theory. In actual fact there is not. There is a fairly rich theoretical (but definitely not empirical) literature on ‘coercion’, typically defined as the ‘harder’ version of influencing. All students of international relations are exposed to expansive debates on specific forms of coercion such as (the quite theoretical) deterrence theory, as well as to the (also more ‘applied’ and empirical) literature on sanctions. There is also an extensive theoretical literature on international institutions, global governance and economics – all also touching upon aspects of influence, but all predominantly highly abstract and quite far removed from everyday practice.

For this project on influencing a particular country of interest to Europe (Russia), we delved into the entire multi-disciplinary scholarly body of knowledge in search of any insights that might help us in getting a better analytical grip on the influencing phenomenon. The literature on this topic in international relations (IR) as such proved surprisingly scant; the situation in the more applied ‘security and defense policy (SDP)’ literature is slightly better but still exhibits some important lacunae and possible biases. We therefore ended up focusing primarily on the non-IR/FSDP literatures.

In this section, we provide brief overviews of all these literatures, with a special focus on different typologies of influence/ing – in the hope that this might provide us with a way of structuring our own analysis of Europe’s influencing option towards Russia.

International relations

In order to reflect more systematically on how ‘influence’ is dealt with in the field of international relations, our team collected two bibliometric datasets²⁰ on international influence: an ‘international relations’ (IR) one and an ‘IR-Russian’ one, including only IR academic publications in Russian. In the case of the IR dataset, we searched for academic records within the international relations discipline that mention influence-related terms in their titles, abstracts or keywords from 1921 until 2021.²¹ We replicated the same procedure for the Russian dataset, in this case collecting records from 2005 (the earliest date available) until 2021.²² In both cases, we used the Web of Science

²⁰ Bibliometric datasets contain scholarly publications, but only their metadata (title, author, year of publication, publication source, etc. – including their abstracts and keywords) and not their full text. For more, see De Spiegeleire, Stephan et al., “(Russian) Deterrence, We Hardly Know Ye,” in *Russian Concept of Deterrence in Contemporary and Classic Perspective*, ed. Pentti Forsström, National Defence University Department of Warfare Series 2: Research Reports No. 11 (Helsinki: Finnish National Defence University, 2021), 113, <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe202110153138>.

²¹ The general query: (((TS=(Appeal OR warn OR consult OR praise OR endorse OR apologize OR sanction OR blockade OR accuse OR criticize OR denounce OR complain OR reject OR threaten OR ultimatum OR protest OR coerce OR provoke OR normil?e OR leverage OR urge OR persuade* OR dictate*)) OR AK=(influence OR impact OR deny OR demand OR affect OR pressure)) OR TI=(influence OR impact OR deny OR demand OR affect OR pressure)) AND LA=(English)) AND WC = "International Relations"

²² The Russian query: (((TS=(господствов* OR давит* OR давл* OR дикт* OR "ставить условия" OR подчин* OR санкции OR осужд* OR убежд* OR угрожа* OR угроза OR ущемл* OR треб* OR препят* OR давление OR

database – the Core collection for the international dataset and the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) for the Russian dataset. The Web of Science was selected for its consistent data and compatibility with bibliometric applications we applied. All in all, our overall ‘Influencing-IR dataset contained 14,851 records; our ‘Influencing-IR-Russian’ one – 674 ones.

The bibliometric analysis of these datasets revealed the key issues addressed by the literature and the changing relative importance of influence-related issues over time (see Figure 1). From a geopolitical actor point of view, the literature on influence is dominated with discussions on the European Union and its member states, North Korea, South Korea and developing countries. The influence-related discussions involving the European Union are the single largest theme in the literature. “Russia” is absent among the key terms – the fact that reveals the limited attention paid to this country in this context. With regards to the specific factors of influence, the dataset is dominated by economic sanctions, nuclear weapons, climate change, international law, community and organizations.²³

демократизир* OR диктовать OR диктует OR запуг* OR усмирят* OR препятст* OR "ставит условия" OR "ставит условия" OR подчин* OR провоцир* OR уверя* OR доказыв* OR внуша* OR уговарива* OR склоня* OR "вселять страх" OR "вселяет страх" OR "вселяет тревогу" OR "вселять тревогу" OR навяз* OR сдерж* OR манипул*)) OR TI=(влият* OR воздейств*)) OR AK=(влият* OR воздейств*) AND LA=(Russian))) AND DT=(Article)

²³ The relative importance of the theme is indicated by the size of the corresponding box on the graph. It is measured by the tf-idf index (the figures reflected on the graph), which is a statistical measurement designed to evaluate the relative importance of a word in text corpus. This metric can be calculated by taking the total number of time a phrase is mentioned in documents, and then dividing it by the number of documents that contain the phrase.

Key Themes on Influence Studies in International Relations

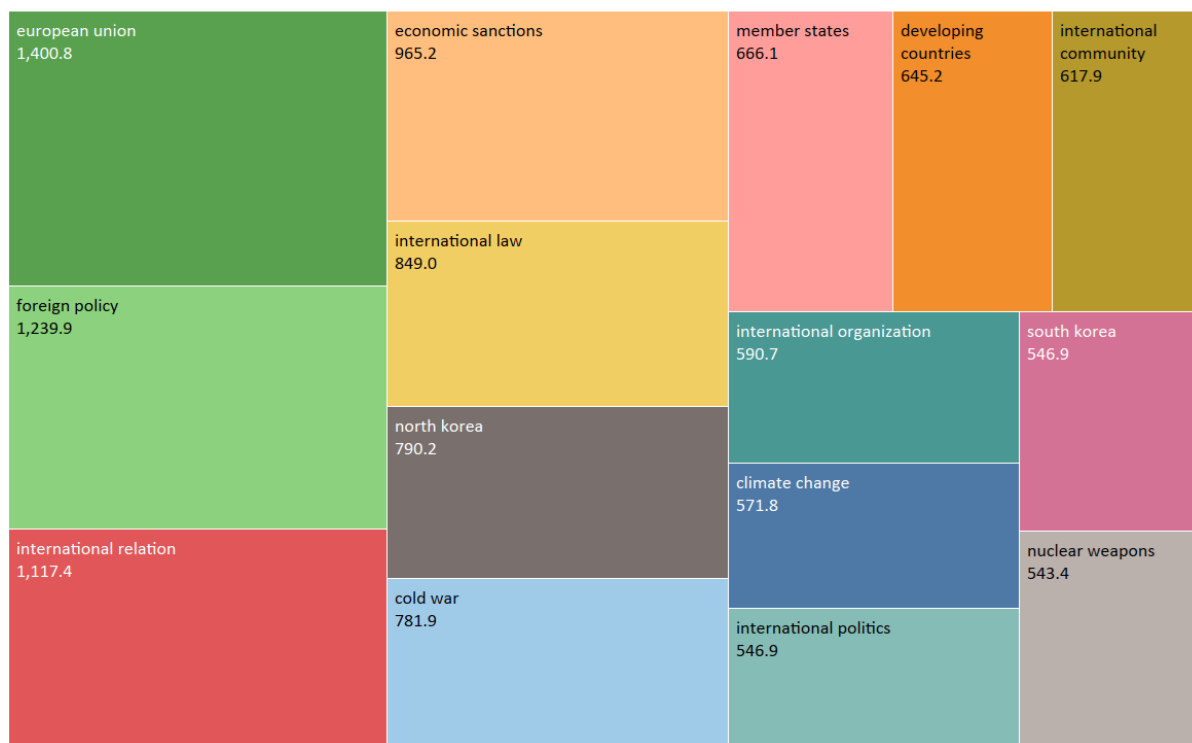


Figure 1 – Key themes from influence-related studies in International Relations

The academic literature authored by Russian scholars displays a somewhat different picture (see Figure 2). It shares an interest in the international community and organizations but pays far more attention to economic issues – economic growth, development, global economy – than the broader international dataset. We note that the Russian dataset is similarly preoccupied with the European Union and developing countries. North and South Korea, however, are absent among the most-common actor-related themes. Instead, Russian scholars are preoccupied with influence in the context of the Russian Federation – which encouraged us to pay particular attention to those publications.

Key Themes of Influence Studies in International Relations (Russian records)

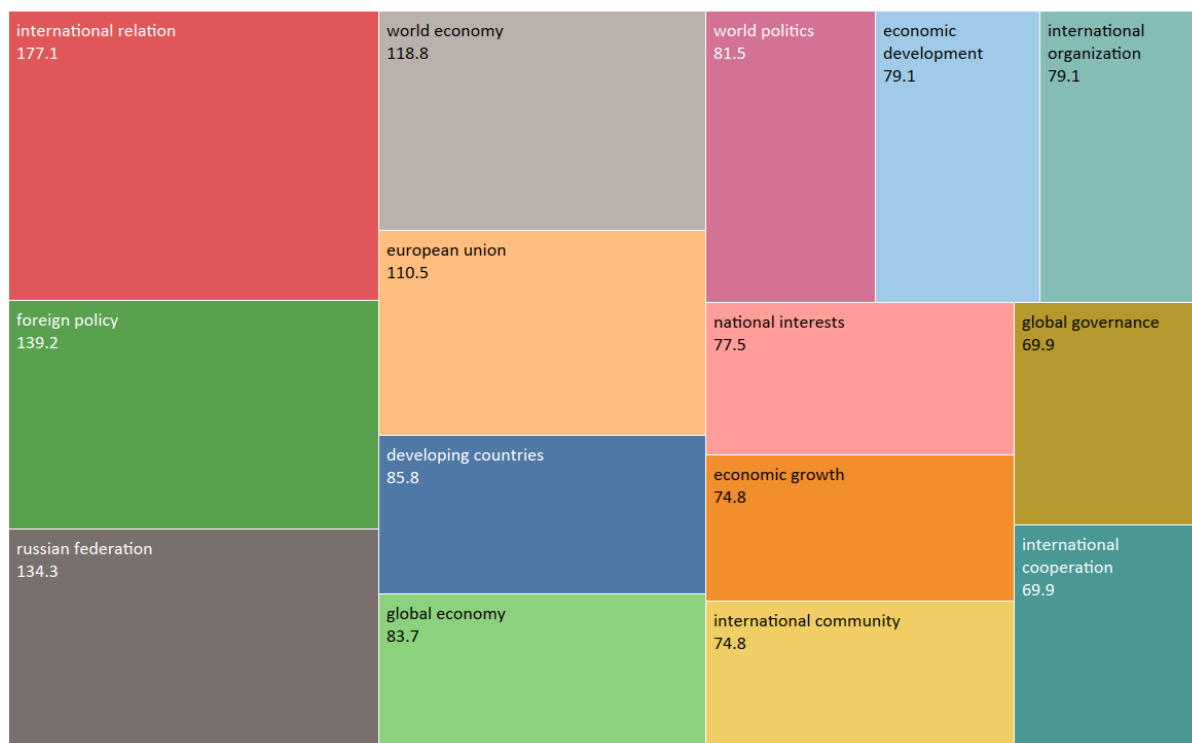


Figure 2 – Key themes from influence-related studies in Russian International Relations

The importance of these themes varied during different periods (Figure 3). “Political impact” is one of the earliest and long-standing interests. However, recently the focus shifted to the impact of social media, the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, and the Trump administration.

Top 15 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

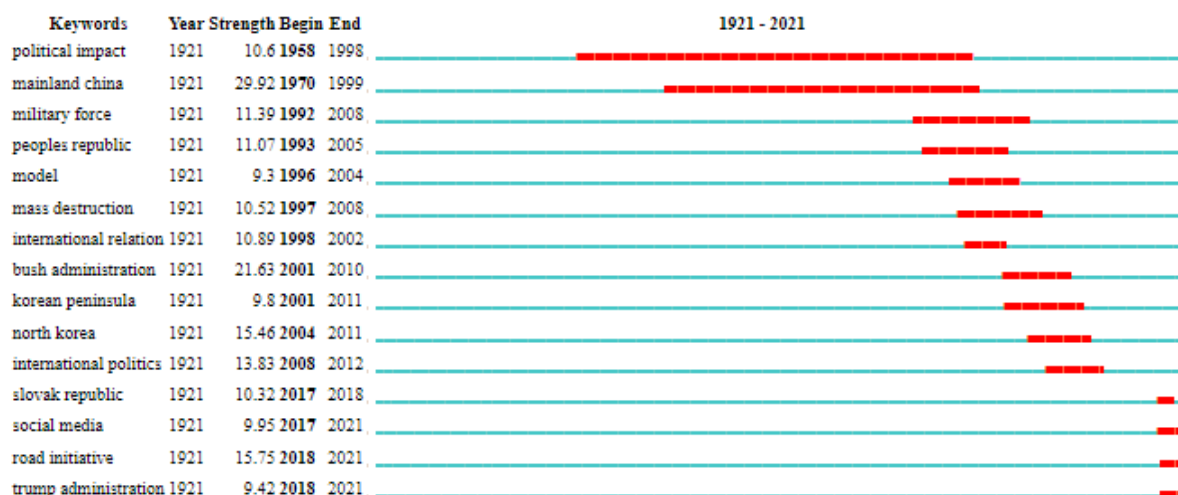


Figure 3 – Top-15 keywords in influence-related studies in International Relations

Russian scholars, on the other hand, are currently interested in trade war, political

influence, and Latin America (Figure 4).

Top 15 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

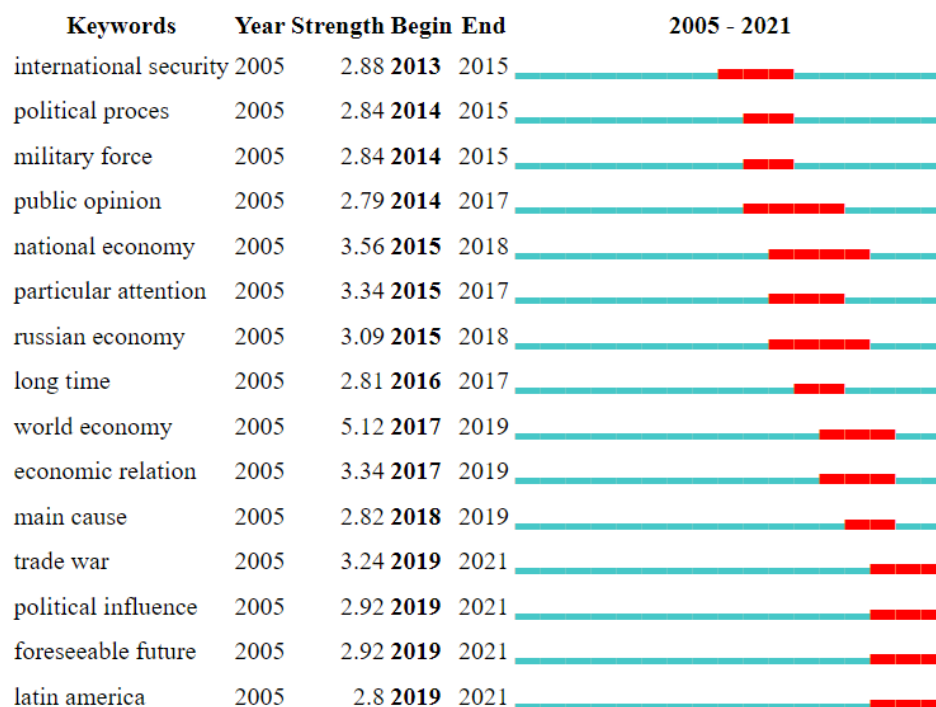


Figure 4 – Top-15 keywords in Russian influence-related studies in International Relations

We regret to inform that the main aspects we went looking for – possible typologies of international influencing, datasets on (at least states’) actual international influencing activities and at least an (inductive or even just deductive) overview of which types of influencing seem to be more effective under what types of circumstances – were nowhere to be found.

The overall insights we harvested from the broader ‘human influence/ing’ literature(s) were surprisingly similar to the ones we gleaned from our more systematic analysis of the deterrence literature²⁴. As in the deterrence case, we found much richer empirical treatment of the everyday practice of human influencing *outside* of the IR-field – especially in the literatures on advertising, social media influencers, and leadership. Whereas we found at least a few (very limited) datasets and modeling efforts on deterrence in the IR literature, we found only one (partial²⁵) dataset on influencing (the

²⁴De Spiegeleire, Stephan et al., “(Russian) Deterrence, We Hardly Know Ye,” in *Russian Concept of Deterrence in Contemporary and Classic Perspective*, ed. Pentti Forsström, National Defence University Department of Warfare Series 2: Research Reports No. 11 (Helsinki: Finnish National Defence University, 2021), 113, <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2021110153138>.

²⁵In the sense that it only captures (as the authors themselves clearly acknowledge) certain aspects of influencing (diplomatic, economic, and military – and not, for instance, ideological, environmental or judicial) through a few – again limited – proxies (e.g. even in the economic realm they only capture a very small number of variables from all available

Pardee's FBIC one, which we will also draw upon in this paper further down) and absolutely no formal modeling. More substantively, we found in the deterrence case²⁶ that (especially physical) fear-based suasion approaches in non-defense and security areas such as criminology, public health, education were increasingly being at least supplemented and in some cases even mostly supplanted by other non-physical-fear based strategies. We also observed a growing recognition of the counterproductive first and Nth-order effects of a fundamental deterrent posture on people's mentalities and behaviors in those literatures. Although there is no 'influencing theory' in IR the way there is a 'deterrence theory', the rich literature on influencing outside of IR similarly provides significant evidence for the higher effectiveness of 'softer', more subtle, bottom-up, empathy- and persuasion-based, inspirational, reciprocal influencing techniques as opposed to 'harder', more top-down, assertive and authority-based ones.

As we did in the case of deterrence, we would therefore also here suggest that there is an urgent need for a more systematic *and* creative effort to re-imagine the higher level strategic FSDP option space from the point of view of creating optimal FSDP value for FSDP money – an effort that may also require more of an alignment with insights on influencing from other walks of life.

Influence/ing in defense and security

In the defense and security literature, the growing 'popularity' (/re-discovery?) of 'influence operations' in the military domain has triggered a somewhat larger focus on 'influencing' than in the IR literature. Even there, however, a recent overview of the field acknowledged: "The fact is, researchers' understanding of influence operations beyond case studies showcasing examples of campaigns is weak... Knowledge about the effects of influence operations also remains limited."²⁷

Our search for typologies of influencing in this literature was only moderately more successful than in the IR literature. As in the 'IR'-case, we – to our relative surprise²⁸ – found no truly comprehensive attempts to structure all possible ways – negative and positive – in which governments can (and do) influence other governments (or societies)

ones). We view that dataset as an extremely valuable step in the 'right' direction but still a fairly modest one in light of the datasets that could be compiled today.

²⁶ De Spiegeleire et al., *Reimagining Deterrence*.

²⁷ Alicia Wanless, "What's Working and What Isn't in Researching Influence Operations?," *Lawfare* (blog), September 22, 2021, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/whats-working-and-what-isnt-researching-influence-operations>.

²⁸ The 'surprise'-part of this sentence refers to the fact that the defense and security community (in a few selected countries) can fall back on analytical support from the operations research/operational analysis community that has been trained in (also) data- and modeling intensive policy analysis techniques. That powerful skill set could also be applied – undoubtedly with more difficulty, but in our opinion still potentially quite usefully – to strategic level questions. But that is where the 'relative' part of this sentence comes from: most of these more rigorous policy analysis research institutions (like the US FFRDCs, or in Europe research organizations like DRDC, FFI, FOI, TNO, etc.) are funded by defense and security organizations who consider (also non-military) strategy as out of their expertise (and comfort) zone. Our foreign policy departments, who should in theory be the ones pushing for this research agenda tend to have significantly smaller research budgets, less experience with commissioning, let alone absorbing the findings of such more rigorous 'policy analysis' research efforts.

in a ‘whole-of-government’ (let alone ‘whole-of-society’) way. What we did find, broadly speaking, were three different approaches that analysts used to come up with ways of structuring the option space. One of those is through ‘flat’ taxonomies; the second one through so-called factor trees, and we ourselves are still working on a third one: a multidimensional option space.

We found a few ‘flat taxonomies’ for different subsets of defense and security influencing options. Some of these are quite simple, such as the one presented in the Oxford Handbook of Cybersecurity²⁹, which just applies to information operations and only differentiates between three types of information warfare and influence operations: propaganda operations, chaos-producing operations, and leak operations. Another broader one was conceived by Paul Davis and Brian Jenkins in an immediate post 9/11 counter-terrorism context (Figure 5)³⁰.

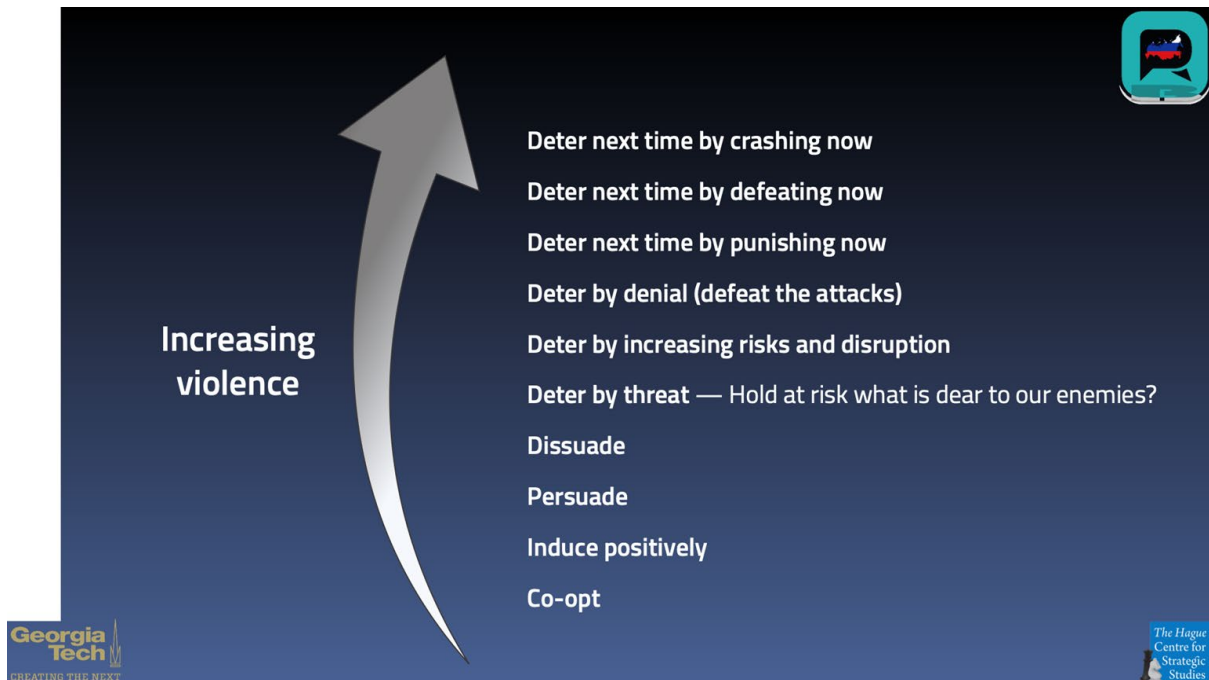


Figure 5 – Davis and Jenkins' taxonomy of influencing options

The best and broadest example we found of a more extensive, multi-layered but still ‘flat’ taxonomy came from the START project on ‘Influencing Violent Extremist Organizations (I-VEO)’ and was authored by Jeffrey Knopf³¹, who came up with a three-layered scheme for influence operations. In total, he identified 24 types that range from dialogue to direct punishment (Figure 6).

²⁹Herbert Lin and Jaclyn Kerr, “On Cyber-Enabled Information Warfare and Information Operations,” *Social Science Research Network*, August 11, 2017, <https://lens.org/177-122-419-440-385>.

³⁰Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, “Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al Qaeda” (RAND Corporation, April 29, 2002), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1619.html.

³¹Gary Ackerman et al., “IVEO Knowledge Matrix,” START National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, August 31, 2012, <http://start.foxtrotdev.com/>.

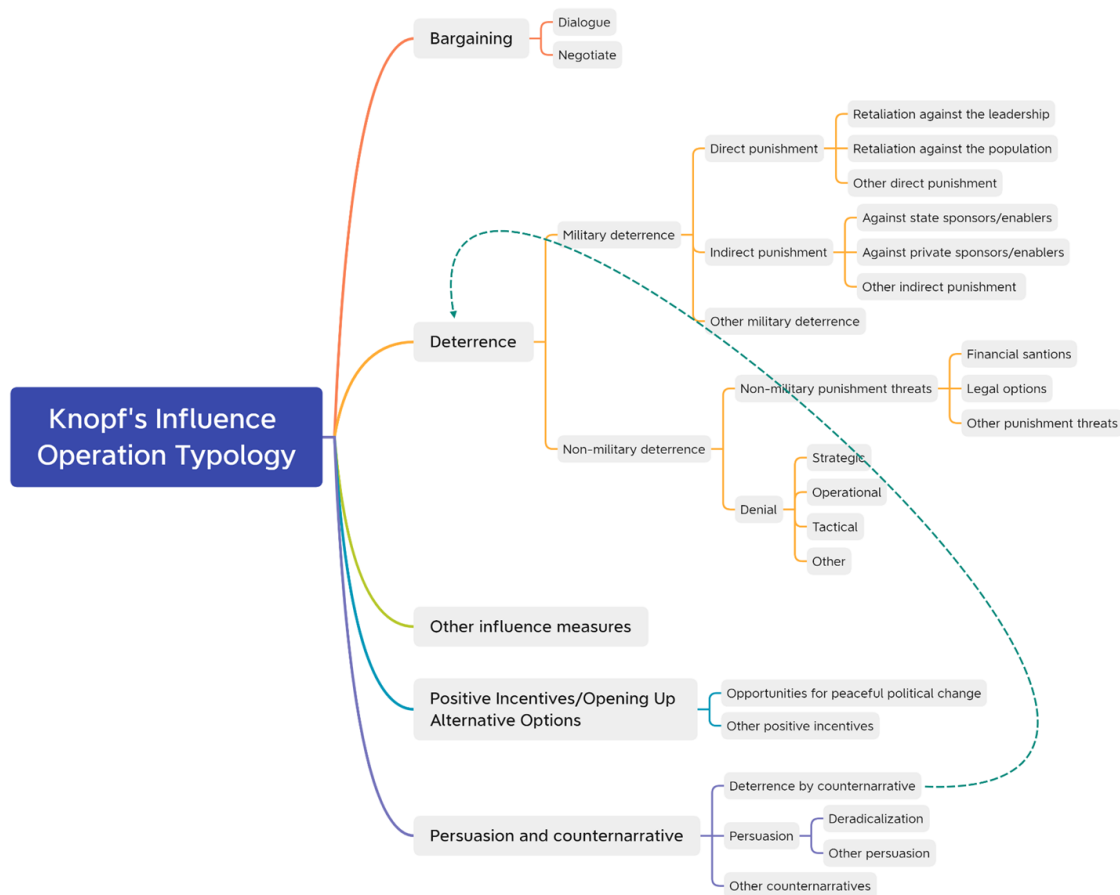


Figure 6 – Knopf's influence operations taxonomy

The second way of structuring influencing options can be found back in more recent work by RAND analyst Paul Davis with assorted co-authors³² over the past decade in which they used so-called factor trees – simple qualitative models that try to systematize the primary factors thought to affect an influencee’s decision-making at different levels of detail. Davis’ more recent computational model instantiating a factor-tree model and a Bayesian model for updating the adversary’s model may finally start giving us a way of thinking through some of these (also theoretically and computationally) extremely difficult policy issues in far more systematic ways.

We also want to reference our own ongoing and more multi-dimensional taxonomic work on structuring what we currently call the ‘compliance seeking efforts’ (CSE) policy options space as a third way of thinking these issues through. In this work, we try to bring together the different (we have 19 so far) taxonomic principles (Table 1 –

³² Davis et al., “Influencing Adversary States”; Paul K. Davis, “Simple Models to Explore Deterrence and More General Influence in the War with Al-Qaeda” (RAND Corporation, July 16, 2010), https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP296.html.

Compliance-seeking options: taxonomic principles)we found in different literatures that that could be used to build a taxonomy³³, but we then intend to visualize these in a knowledge graph.

Principle	Explanation	1..	..3..	..5
Goal similarity	Are both sides' goals (/utility functions') aligned or not?	Diametrically opposed		Closely aligned
Material vs verbal	Do the efforts require mostly material or mostly verbal efforts?	Entirely material	Postural	Entirely verbal
Atoms vs bits	If the efforts are non-verbal, are they more atom-based or bit-based?	Entirely atoms-based		Entirely bits-based
Logos vs Pathos vs Ethos	If the efforts are verbal, are they more based on logos (rationality), pathos (emotions) or ethos (morality)?	Entirely rational	Entirely pathos	Entirely morality-based
Main effort	Who is expected to make the main effort?	Entirely the seeker		Entirely the target
Carrots vs sticks	Are the efforts based more on punishment or on rewards?	Only carrots		Only sticks
Perception-altering	Are the efforts more based on altering perception ("it's good for you too") or not	Entirely perception altering		No perception altering required

³³We are currently expanding this list based on 5 parallel research efforts: 1) an in-depth analysis of various high-level ontologies/taxonomies such as ResearchCyC, Wordnet synsets, SUMO, Verbnet, Babelnet, etc.; 2) our overview of more specific compliance-seeking taxonomies in other disciplines; 3) our coding of the actionable policy options for dealing with different future Russias; 4) our more 'natural language processing' (NLP)-based efforts to explore our both English and Russian text corpora of (mostly) academic and military writings on deterrence in both supervised and unsupervised ways; and 5) our own additional contributions. Readers of this report who might be interested in joining us on any of these efforts are warmly invited to reach out to us.

	("just do it!")?			
Positive vs negative	Are the efforts aimed at making the target DO something, or NOT do something?	Positive		Negative
Coercive intensity	How much coercion is required?	Very high		Very low
Coalition	Is the effort to be made by the seeker alone or with others?	With a very large coalition		Alone
Direct vs indirect	Will the seeker make most of the effort, or somebody else?	Entirely indirect		Entirely indirect
Overt vs covert	Does the seeker want to be known or not?	Entirely overt		Entirely covert
Slow vs quick	Are the efforts supposed to be incremental over time or massive and fast?	Very long-term		Very short-term
Before-during-after	Are the efforts intended to occur before the target does something, in response to something, or does it not matter?	Response	Simultaneous	Preemptive
Active vs passive ³⁴	Are the efforts more active or passive?	Passive		Active
Anti-social vs pro-social/Integrative	Are the efforts more intended to exclude/ostracize the	Inclusion		Ostracization

³⁴ Dominic J. Parrott and Peter R. Giancola, "Addressing 'the Criterion Problem' in the Assessment of Aggressive Behavior: Development of a New Taxonomic System," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 12, no. 3 (May 1, 2007): 280–99, <https://doi.org/10/dwk5z2>.

vs ostracizing	target or to include/integrate her?			
Annoyance-motivated versus incentive-motivated	Are the efforts motivated by the seeker's annoyance with the target or by her desire to obtain something new?	Annoyance-motivated		Incentive-motivated
Targeted versus targetless	Are the efforts targeted at specific targets or not?	Specific targets		No specific targets
More Blue- or Red-driven	Are the efforts more driven by Blue's calculus or by Red's?	Driven by Blue		Driven by Red

Table 1 – Compliance-seeking options: taxonomic principles

In summary: clearly, the more policy-applied security and defense policy (SDP) literature has devoted more systematic attention to the option space available to governments wanting to ‘influence’ others than the IR literature has. But also in that SDP literature we detect holes. Here too, we do not find any systematic data collection efforts to ‘populate’ these abstract ‘pigeonholes’ with real-life cases, or to develop metrics of effectiveness for systematically looking at the outcomes of different CSE-options to ascertain which ones have been successful and which ones have not (and why), or to model the complex adaptive strategic interactions that result from influencing attempts, etc. Last but not least, we also note how a clear (Western but not only) path dependency on certain bodies of literature that current thinking relies on quite heavily may give ‘deterrent options’ an outsized place in the options portfolio. Is the fact that we do have a ‘strategic deterrence theory’, but no ‘strategic persuasion or seduction theory’ a tribute to the superior effectiveness of the former, or a relic of its Cold War popularity? And how could we tell the difference? Do we find it ‘logical’ or ‘good value for money’ that we spend so much more attention to (and therefore also invest significantly more money in) punctual ‘action’-focused options as opposed to more broadly behavioral, attitudinal, ideational or even identity³⁵ CSE-options? To negative (and especially negative atoms-based) ones than to positive bits-based ones?

To give but one example – one that is of critical importance to this paper – of why all of

³⁵We just wanted to include this because it is rarely mentioned in these literatures, and yet is arguably one of the key pillars of European integration – and not just in an abstract way, but in a very concrete way (Erasmus for students, the ‘Eurocracy’- prospect for European civil servants, etc.)

this matters: all of these taxonomies already tend to assume a Manichean/adversarial relationship with the influencing ‘target’. For all intents and purposes, Russia no longer fell in that category from somewhere around the (at the latest) mid noughties. Did our policy-analysis and policymaking communities devote enough attention to the options portfolio that was available then to firmly, preferably organically, anchor Russia in the liberal democratic ‘camp’?³⁶

We therefore decided not to pursue these SDP-derived ways of structuring the options-space in our policy analysis efforts, but to base ourselves on the (significantly) more general, more developed and more empirically substantiated findings from non-IR/FSDP disciplines.

Influence outside of IR/FSDP

Early on in this project, we were surprised to find out that the IR and (especially³⁷) the defense and security literatures had not really come up with any systematic taxonomies of the various ways/techniques/types/styles etc. in/with/through which actors in international interactions engage in influencing efforts. We therefore built a special corpus based on a query looking specifically for influencing typologies, taxonomies, etc.³⁸ in the entire academic literature (all disciplines). It turned out that the most ‘meaty’ insights on human influencing come from a few literatures: 1) the literature on business and management (and especially on leadership); 2) the literature on marketing (including the more recent one on influencers in social media³⁹); 3) the literature on interpersonal relations, including labor relations; and 4) the literature on public policy and power relations.

Our analysis of this corpus identified the following main attempts to structure the ‘influence/ing’ option space, which we have in turn converted in the following 6 main categories:

³⁶ We want to emphasize that this is by no means meant to suggest that this was not done and that Russia is ‘right’ now to ‘blame’ the West for ‘taking advantage of it when it was weak’. It is, however, meant to highlight that we may indeed have a tendency to inflate the ‘negative’, ‘deterrent’, Manichean (black and white) aspects of the way in which we structure our options portfolio at the detriment of the ‘positive’, ‘bolstering’, integrationist, etc. aspects.

³⁷ Given the significant amount of emphasis that especially the ‘operations research’ community tends to expend on such taxonomic efforts – at least at the tactical and operational levels.

³⁸ The full query was: “types of influencing” OR “types of influence” OR “typology of influencing” OR “typology of influence” OR “taxonomy of influencing” OR “taxonomy of influence” OR “influence taxonomy” OR “influencing taxonomy” OR “influence typology” OR “influencing typology” OR “influence types” OR “influencing types” OR “categories of influencing” OR “categories of influence” OR “influence forms” OR “forms of influence” OR “forms of influencing” OR “influencing tactics” OR “tactics of influencing” OR “influence tactics” OR “tactics of influence” OR “tactics used to influence” OR “ways of influencing” OR “ways to influence”. This yielded 27,191 results on the ProQuest Central database, all of which were downloaded in full-text and then (‘manually’) analyzed by our experts in dtsearch, a very flexible and powerful search software program, in search of types, typologies, taxonomies, etc.

³⁹ For a recent overview by an academic and a practitioner with an interesting chapter on how influencers’ actual influence is ‘measured’, see T. Bettina Cornwell and Helen E. Katz, *Influencer: The Science Behind Swaying Others* (New York/London: Routledge, 2021).

- ‘Energy’-based:** this taxonomy is based on the situational influence model⁴⁰ which describes a number of ‘influence styles’, each of which come with specific forms of “influence behaviors”. Different forms of ‘influencing energy’ (see also our definition of influence) lie at the heart of this taxonomy: ‘Push’ refers to influencing actors moving other actors towards their influence objectives; ‘Pull’ sees influencers working with other actors to draw them towards their objectives; and ‘Moving Away’ intends to take an influencer’s energy out of a situation. To these different ‘active’ influencing options, HCSS has also added 2 more ‘passive’ ones that are based on the ‘demonstration effect’ through which an actor, whilst maybe even being totally oblivious or uninterested in influencing anybody else, can still wield significant de facto influence on other actors through the attractiveness or repulsiveness of some of its attributes or choices.

The influencing options space

Energy	Influence style	Influence behavior
PUSH 	Persuading	Proposing Reasoning
	Asserting	Evaluating Stating expectations Using incentives (/pressures)
PULL 	Bridging	Involving Listening Disclosing
	Attracting	Finding common ground Sharing visions
MOVE AWAY 	Disengaging	Postponing Giving and getting feedback Changing the subject Taking a break
	Avoiding	Backing down
DEMONSTRATE	Inspiring/shining	-
	Repulsing	-

Figure 7– ‘Energy’-based influencing options

- ‘Tactics’-based⁴¹** – McKinsey's global head of leadership development Claudio Fesser also came up with 9 influencing tactics which he structures in a 2x2 matrix based on, vertically, whether the tactics are ‘hard’ or ‘soft’; and, horizontally, on whether they are more focused on the influencer or on the influencee.

⁴⁰E.g. Nolberto Munier and Fernando Jiménez-Sáez, “Leadership and Negotiation for Project Management,” in *Project Management for Environmental, Construction and Manufacturing Engineers: A Manual for Putting Theory into Practice*, ed. Nolberto Munier (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013), 43–53, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4476-9_3. The visuals and taxonomy are based on ‘The Positive Power and Influence Programme’ from Chartwell Learning & Development Ltd. Chartwell Learning and Development, “About Us,” *Positive Power and Influence* (blog), accessed December 15, 2021, <https://positivepowerandinfluence.co.uk/about-us/>.

⁴¹Claudio Fesser and Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries, *When Execution Isn't Enough: Decoding Inspirational Leadership*, 2016.

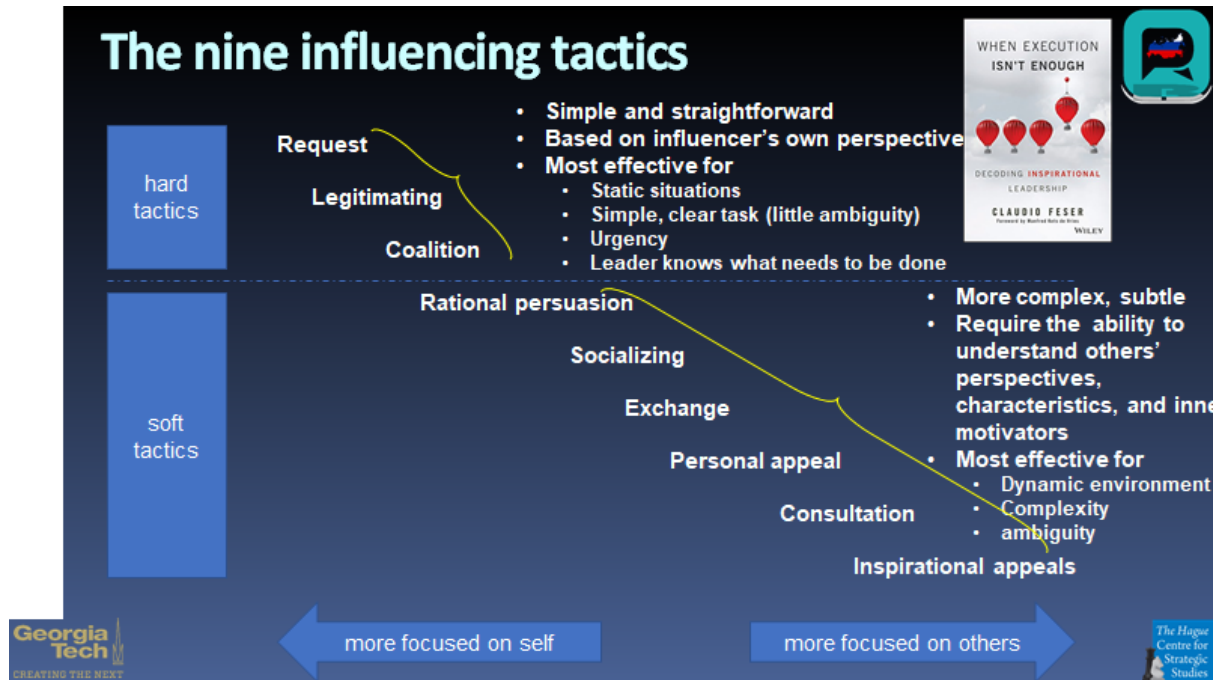


Figure 8 – ‘Tactics’-based influencing options

- **‘Style’-based**⁴² – in a 2017 Harvard Business Review OnPoint collection of HBR articles on “How to Lead Through Influence”, two company executives crystallized five distinct influencing styles from their research. Like most others, they too claim that effective leaders must be able to “understand and comfortably use a variety of styles – as well as recognize when a particular method is ineffective”.

⁴²Chris Musselwhite and Tammie Plouffe, “When Your Influence Is Ineffective,” *Harvard Business Review OnPoint*, Spring 2017, 25–26, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429398599-8>.

5 influencing styles (HBR)

The 5 influencing styles

Communication experts Chris Musselwhite and Tammie Plouffe found that, while at times we use bits and pieces of each, most people rely on one of five influencing styles.

- B** **Bridging** influencers resonate with others by listening and building coalitions.
- R** **Rationalizing** influencers use logic and reason to advocate for a solution.
- A** **Asserting** influencers state their ideas confidently and directly to drive action.
- I** **Inspiring** influencers draw on passion to open people's eyes to new possibilities.
- N** **Negotiating** influencers find favorable compromises without sacrificing the long-term goal.

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Figure 9 – ‘Style’-based influencing options

- **‘Principle’-based**⁴³ – Robert Cialdini, an academic and best-selling author of a number of books on persuasion and marketing claims that both the science and the practice of influencing shows that effective influence is based on seven key principles.

Cialdini 7 principles of influence

Influence

Reciprocity

Commitment and consistency

Social proof

Authority

Liking

Scarcity

- ‘marketeers’ just have FAR more (empirical) data on ‘what works’ in terms of influencing than anybody else
- none of the Cialdini (influencing-human) principles receive much attention in the ‘IR’ literature
- Europe’s ‘ideology’ and ‘practice’ in this field is actually much closer to this
- What does that tell us about ‘narrow’ vs ‘broad’ – HOW different is FSDP?

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⁴³Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence, New and Expanded: The Psychology of Persuasion*, New and Expanded (New York: Harper Business, 2021).

Figure 10 – ‘Principle’-based influencing options

Whereas all of the previous taxonomies really try to break down ‘influence’ generically into the various mechanisms and logics that can be used to achieve and/or wield it, we are also adding two additional ones that are closer to the subject at hand (how Europe might be able to influence Russia) and focus more on the domains in which influence can be exercised and the concrete influencing ‘targets’.

- **‘Functional domain’-based**⁴⁴ – especially during the West’s 20 years of extended expeditionary warfare, increasing emphasis was put on efforts to measure the effectiveness of our various efforts in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. These were (and continue to be) known in military circles under the acronym DIME/PMESII – DIME was an acronym used for the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic levers of power our forward presence there could action and PMESII stood for the Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure effects they could sort.

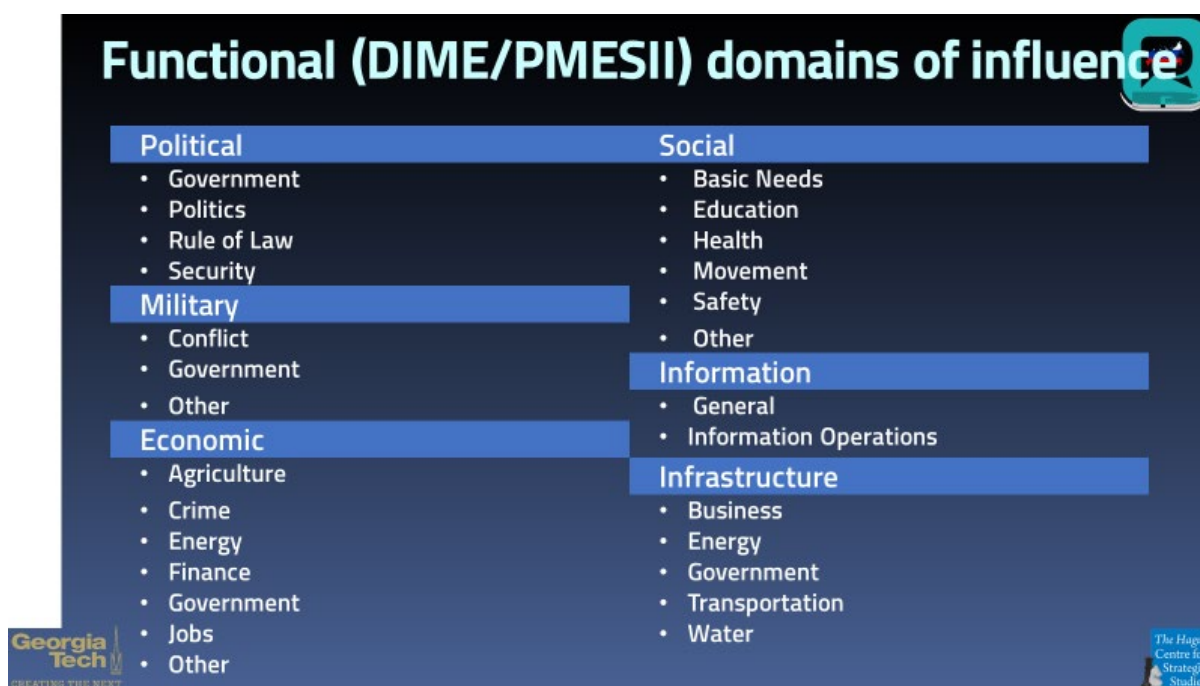


Figure 11 – ‘Functional-domain’-based influencing options

- **‘Target’-based** (HCSS) – our final taxonomy is one of our own making and it zooms on the generational, regional, societal, political-economic segments of Russia that might be susceptible to influencing efforts (see the section on Influencing Russia today).

⁴⁴Dean S. Hartley, “DIME/PMESII Models,” in *Conflict and Complexity: Countering Terrorism, Insurgency, Ethnic and Regional Violence*, ed. Philip Vos Fellman, Yaneer Bar-Yam, and Ali A. Minai, Understanding Complex Systems (New York, NY: Springer, 2015), 111–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-1705-1_5.

Europe's influence on Russia

This project was not primarily about 'influencing' per se, but about how Europe could possibly become more successful in influencing Russia. So what do we actually know about the past and the present of Europe's influence on Russia? This section will focus on three 'empirical' sets of indicators on this: 1) the historical 'influence/ing' record; 2) the recent and current 'influence/ing' record; and 3) the actual 'salience' of Europe in Russia over the past few decades.

Europe's influence on Russia – the historical record

Anybody even remotely familiar with Russia's long-standing (and fluctuating) wrestling with its global identity anchoring knows that debates between the 'zapadniki' (Westernizers – "We're part of Europe/'the West'") and the Slavophiles ("We're different from them") or even Eurasianists ("We're as much Asian as we are European") have always been hotly deliberated in the Russian 'intelligentsia' and in its ruling elites. One of the most widely referenced symbols of Russia's allegedly schizophrenic geopolitical identity is the double-headed eagle that became the emblem of the Russian state in the late 15th century under the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505) and continued to feature as a design motif in the regalia of the Russian Imperial Court until the fall of monarchy in 1917⁴⁵. This was (and still is) typically interpreted as referring to the fact that Russia always looked both East (Byzantium/Asia) and West (Rome/Europe).

For this study, we decided to take a closer look at what the empirical record has to say on this. We collected data on how many European vs non-European neighbors Russia had and with whom it conducted more trade, fought more wars, had more allies, shared membership in international organizations and had more diplomatic representations over the past 200 years. Figure 1 summarizes these findings in a synoptic way. HCSS anachronistically recoded all historical and contemporary geopolitical entities (GPEs) in these different datasets into 'European' and 'non-European' ones based on whether they would today belong to EUR-32 (EU, EFTA and UK) or not. We then calculated what percentage of these GPEs were European or non-European in any given year for any particular indicator and color-coded this based on a gradient color palette transitioning from deep green (100% European) over yellow (50/50) to deep red (100% non-European).

The results clearly show that Russia was historically very much 'European' and – in many important aspects – remains so to this very date. It is only on the bottom two indicators that 'non-European' partners dominate in recent decades – and in both cases that primarily reflects the fact that Russia is an integral part of a world that grew from having some 50-70 sovereign states (many of them European) in the 1940s to about 200 ones

⁴⁵ And in 1992, the Russian Federation restored the double-headed eagle to the state coat of arms.

today. We can also detect quite a bit of non-European ‘red’ in the Russian wars data, but here we would submit that in most people’s understanding fighting a war with another nation is not something positive, meaning that the de-Europeanization of that particular indicator is anything but a negative trend.

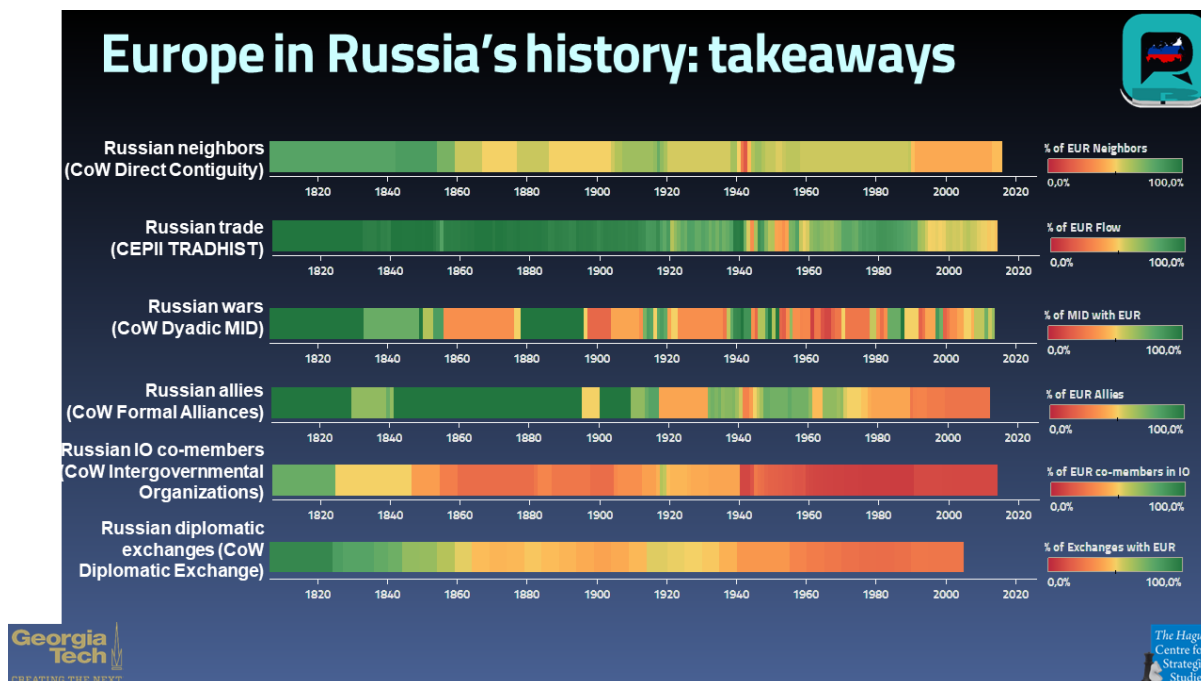


Figure 12 – Europe in Russia's history: takeaways

Past *need* not be prologue. The historical ‘Europeaness’ of Russia, as this visual shows, has already become more ‘mixed’ over the past few centuries. It certainly could become even much more so if the much heralded ‘Asian century’ really were to materialize. But we would still submit that these data reveal a more ‘European’ historical anchoring of Russia than is widely acknowledged.

Europe’s influence on Russia – today and tomorrow

Having noted that Russia has deeper European *historical* roots than most recognize – what do we know about Europe’s influence on Russia *today*? It is increasingly acknowledged that the empirical anchoring of the field of international relations remains weak⁴⁶. HCSS’ work on trying to identify metrics that could help us track some of the main dimensions of geodynamics, for instance, revealed how many of these have weak or even no datasets. Until recently, ‘influence’ was one of them. Thanks to the University of Denver’s Pardee Center, however, we now have a longitudinal, cross-sectional

⁴⁶Brian C. Rathbun, “Empirical Evidence for Empirical International Relations Theorizing: Tests of Epistemological Assumptions With Data,” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, September 26, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.519>, and more in general William R. Thompson, “The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, Oxford Research Encyclopedia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://oxfordre.com/politics/page/973>.

dataset – the Foreign Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) – that at least tries to systematically capture some of the dyadic directed influence between any two countries in 3 important areas of geodynamics: the economic, security and political ones.

Figure 13 shows the aggregated dyadic FBIC between the 27 EU-members as the ‘influencers’ and Russia as the ‘influencee’ between 1992 and 2020. For comparative purposes, we have also added the FBIC scores on Russia for the other ‘great powers’ that HCSS monitors (China, India, Japan and the United States). [We also added the UK to show how Brexit has barely affected the EU’s capacity to influence Russia – as measured by these indicators]



Figure 13 – Influence on Russia: EUR-27 vs. Great Powers

Figure 13 clearly shows how uniquely influential Europe remains in Russia. Its influence has clearly declined since Russia’s annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea and its military interference in Donbas and the (reciprocal) sanctions those events triggered. We also observe how Chinese (especially economic) influence is rising, but for now remains significantly below Europe’s. The more detailed breakdowns in the annotated powerpoint also show the important (and widely underestimated) role the Netherlands (alongside Germany) continues to play in this web of influence.

The FBIC, while a step forward from the ‘cruder’ and non-dyadic datasets that used to dominate the field, clearly still misses many of the less tangible but still important aspects of ‘influence’. The United States’ modest direct economic entanglements with Russia can, of course, not be compared in volume or in importance with those of Europe. But even in the purely economic realm, the US still exerts significant influence over Russia in other ways – through its leading companies in some key sectors, through the

role of the dollar as a waning but still dominant reserve currency, through its leverage over the global financial institutions and ‘the West’ as a whole, etc. We should also note that Europe remains a notoriously intractable ‘statistical entity’ that – given its uniquely hybrid multi- and supra-national nature – fits uncomfortably in most datasets that remain monadically, dyadically or even systemically ‘national’. In some senses, Figure I therefore overestimates Europe’s influence even on those aspects of influence that are (usefully) captured by the FBIC, e.g. by heroically aggregating what is in essence intended to be a dyadic dataset. At the same time, however, we would also submit that the FBIC underestimates myriad other very ‘real’ (and actionable) aspects of European ‘influence’ on Russia that derive from various aspects of contiguity, Europe’s much vaunted ‘normative’ superpower status, and – maybe most importantly – Europe’s continued appeal as an ‘image’ associated with high standards of living coupled with stable, democratic, and high-performance governance mechanisms.

Europe’s salience in Russia

If these statistics suggest that Europe may still have more ‘influencing capacity’ than it arguably even realizes itself, to what extent does that potential influence manifest itself in Russia? Always in search of indicators that might throw some light on these questions, HCSS developed two ‘European salience in Russia’ indicators: one based on how often ‘Europe’ (in its various incarnations) is mentioned in the Russian media; and one based on how often it appears in the public statements of the Russian president.

In the Russian media

We took the largest aggregator of Russian media sources, Integrum Profi⁴⁷, and conducted a keyword query on the terms (“European Union” OR EU) in Russian federal and regional newspapers, TV and radio, and official publications. To ensure that the data reflect actual salience and not just the greatly increased number of published articles over time, our team normalized them by dividing the number of articles containing our search terms by the overall number of articles published for a given time unit (e.g. months). For comparative purposes, we also included the salience of other the ‘great powers’ that HCSS tracks.

⁴⁷Integrum World Wide Information Agency, “INTEGRUM™ Profi (Artefact),” 1998, <http://www.integrumworld.com/>.

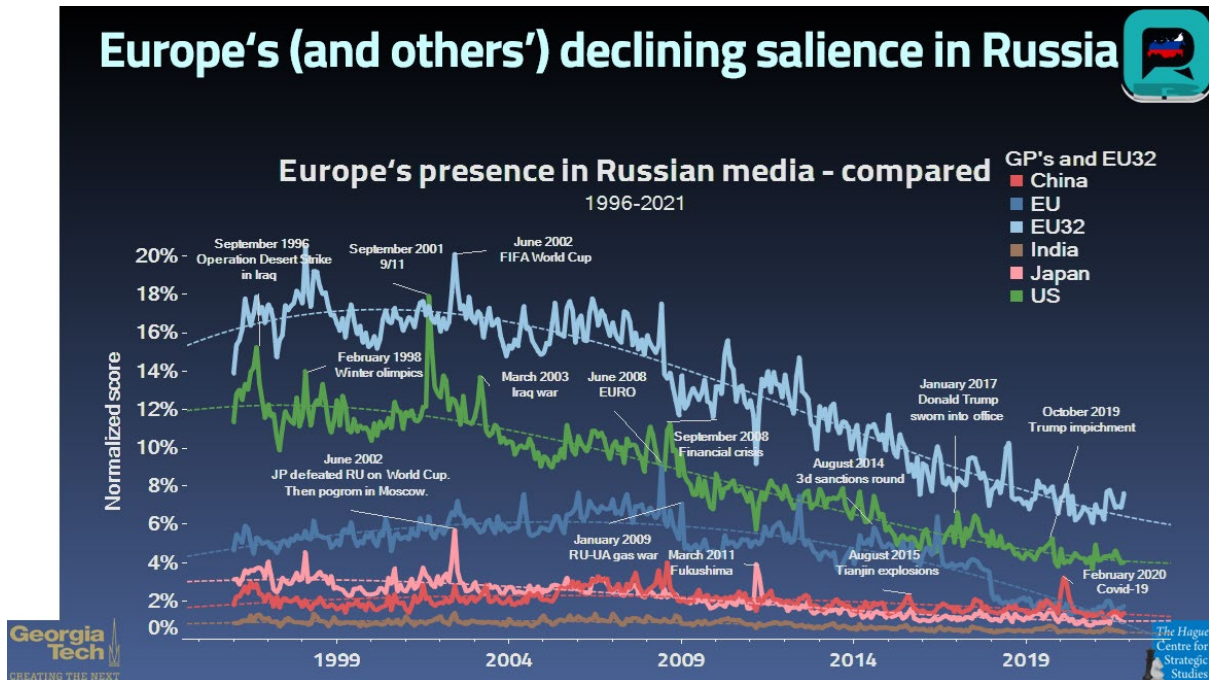


Figure 14 – Europe's (and others') declining salience in Russia

Figure 14 reveals – a point that generally appears to have been underestimated – the extent to which Russian media debates have turned inwards. Mentions of *all* 'great powers' – without exception – trend down over this period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, coverage of the US and especially EUR-32 and the European Union itself (and even Japan to a lesser degree) went up for a while – in the case of the EU until about 2008. But after that we see the Russian press starting to pay significantly less attention to these major powers. Throughout the entire period, the US as the world's sole remaining superpower remains dominant, followed – initially by a large margin, but since 2008 increasingly by a smaller one – by the European Union. If we add our EUR-32 (all EU and EFTA member states plus the UK) to the figures for 'just' the EU, however, we see how Europe in all of its manifestations still towers over the other 'great powers'. Sport events inflate these data, as highlighted in some of our annotations, but even when we take those out (as we do for the Netherlands in Figure 15), Europe's salience in the Russian press remains unparalleled. We also want to point out two other findings that may surprise many: the small share of China and the continued salience of Japan.

We also looked at how the Netherlands fare on this particular salience proxy. Figure 15 suggests a similar downward trend as we saw for the 'great powers' over this entire period. Since we noted that some of the peaks were clearly inflated because of the Netherlands' strong performances in sports events (especially in soccer) that receive a lot of media coverage also in the Russian press, we decided to also display the same data in a 'sport-deflated' way. But here too we see a declining presence of the Netherlands in the Russian media with a few (surprisingly small) peaks – as in 2014 around the downing of MH17.

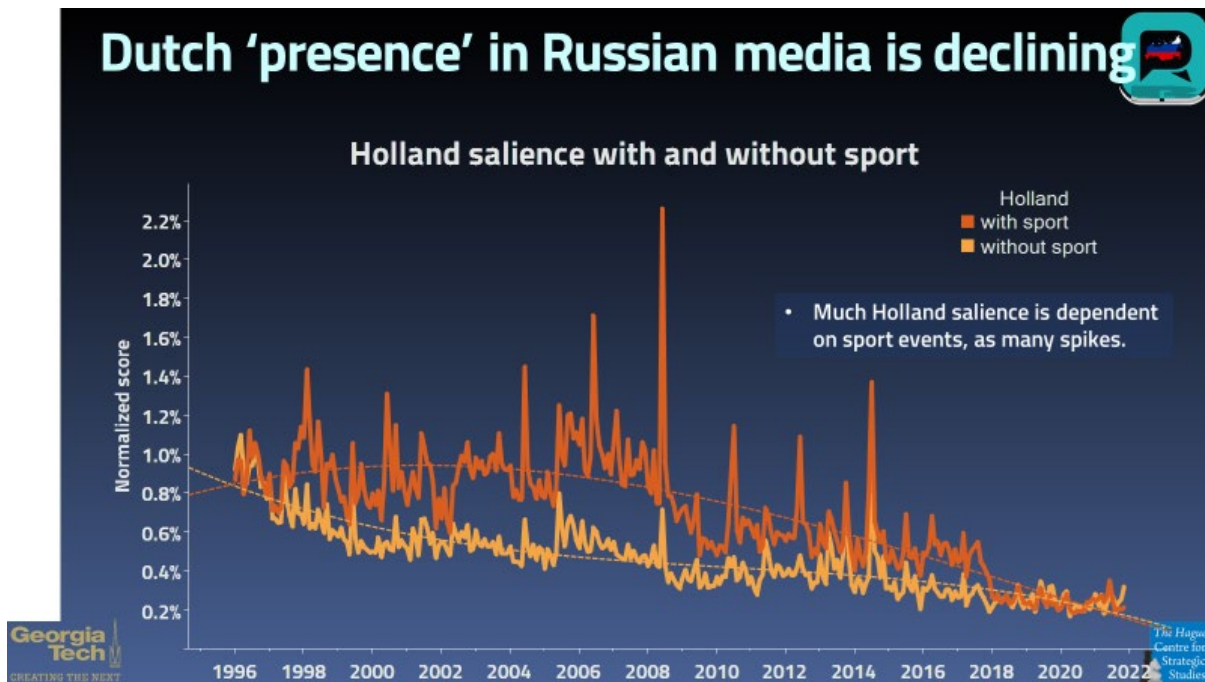


Figure 15 – Dutch declining 'presence' in the Russian media

In the presidents' public statements

Another approach to measure Europe's salience in Russia is to analyze the public statements made by President Putin since 2000. We downloaded the transcripts of all of these as published on the official Kremlin website, counted all mentions of Europe as well as of the other 'great powers' that HCSS tracks from 2000 to 2021 (Figure 16 shows yearly data, a breakdown by months is also available in [Tableau Public](#)) and then divided those by the total amount of words to normalize the values. In general, bilateral visits or multilateral events cause spikes in the data – a natural sign of attention as expressed by a head of state. As can be seen in the visual, Europe's (both the EU and 'Europe') presence in President Putin's statements decreased significantly and is now only slightly above the other 'great powers' he talks about. US salience remained at about the same level after a peak in 2001 due to the 9/11-related events and Afghanistan campaign led by American/NATO forces. Contrary to our findings based on all Russian media, we observe here that China surpassed the USA in terms of mentions by Vladimir Putin in 2014. If we take a look at India and Japan, their salience remains below that of the other dominant powers – Europe, the USA, and China – but arguably still higher than many Western pundits would suspect. We also note that until 2018 (as a result of the bilateral normalization process in that year) Japan was mentioned almost as often as the other 'great powers', but that its salience has declined since then.

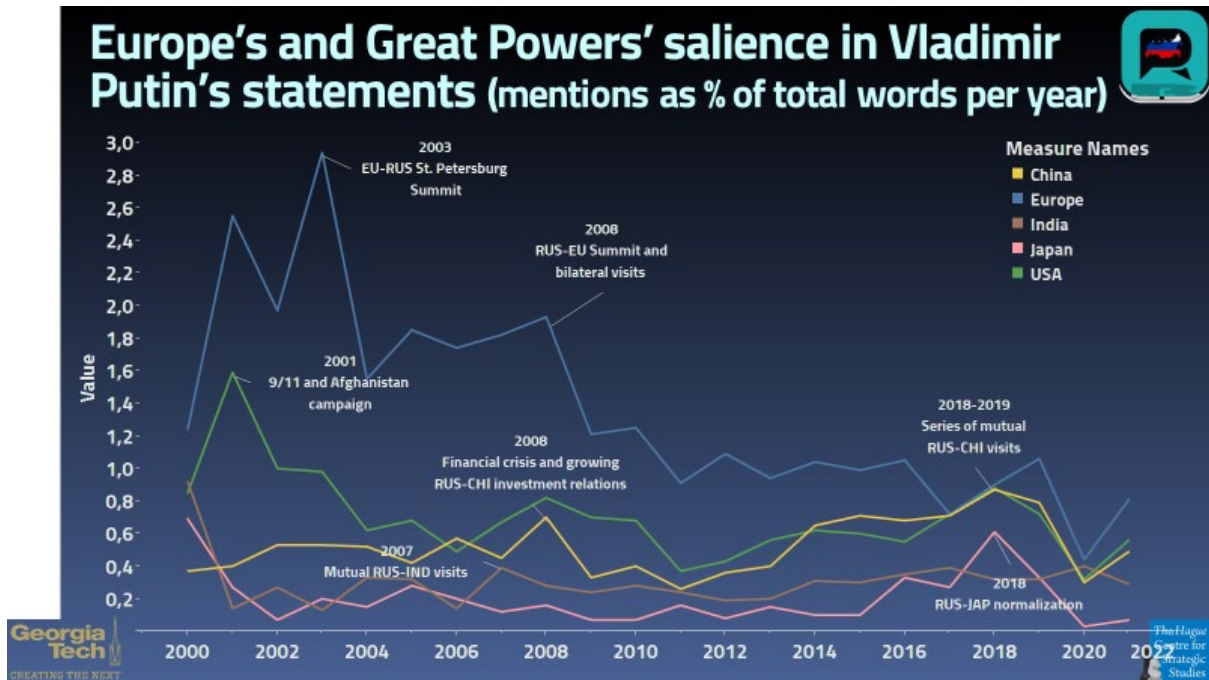


Figure 16 – Europe's and Great Powers' salience in Putin's public statements

Russia's futur(ible)s/Future Russias

One of the tasks in this project was to sketch a number of plausible and stretching future scenarios for Russia – as an exercise in its own right, but also as a background to examine different future European influencing options against future Russias.

FutureBase Russia

HCSS has been coding Russian foresight exercises for the past 15 years based on our collaborative MetaFore protocol, qualitative data analysis software programs (currently atlas.ti) and an HCSS-developed coding scheme that tries to capture the 18 main elements (we call them 'futuribles') in Russia's future polity, economy, society and interaction with the world that we consider to be of relevance to Europe. Each of these elements receives a 'tone' value from 1-3 based on what we see as broad European normative preferences: e.g. the highest value '3' represents a future 'Europe-friendly' Russia that would be more democratic, more stable, less militaristic, with a more diversified economy, open to international investment, etc. The results of this coding effort are deposited in our FutureBase Russia, which allows us to map the bandwidth of views on various *futuribles* at any given moment in time, but also to track changes over time, across different groups of studies (e.g. Russian vs. Western; official vs non-official, etc.), etc.

For this study, the HCSS team coded 22 recent (from 2014-2021) and serious foresight studies in English and in Russian based on the HCSS MetaFore coding scheme. The

results can be interactively explored [here in Tableau](#). Like we do for all of the other data-intensive sections in the report, we limit ourselves in this paper to a few selected highlights in our findings. More insights can be found in the accompanying powerpoint slidedeck. We do want to already point out, however, that attention devoted to ‘Russia’s role in the world’ (as opposed to more domestic *futuribles*) in this dataset has increased in this period, suggesting that while the salience of the ‘outside world’ in Russia’s media may have declined, interest in the ‘foreign policy’ aspects of Russia’s futures has actually gone up.

As Figure 17 shows, the overall average ‘tone’ of these futuribles is below 2 (i.e. more Europe-unfriendly than Europe-friendly), with Russian authors striking a slightly more ‘positive’ tone than their Western colleagues.

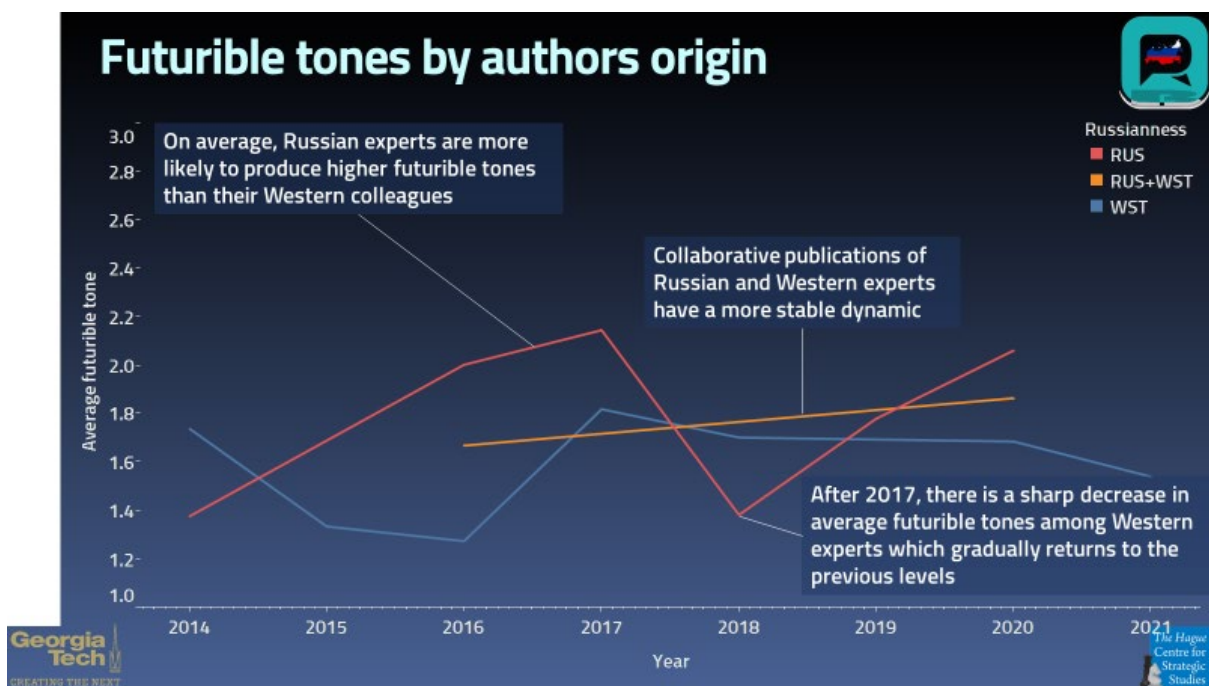


Figure 17 – Futurible tones by authors’ origin

Our findings also reveal that these foresight studies generally anticipate more dire future Russias in the economic and the international realms. The polity realm looks slightly less gloomy, but still has 44% Europe-unfriendly excerpts vs 26% Europe-friendly ones.

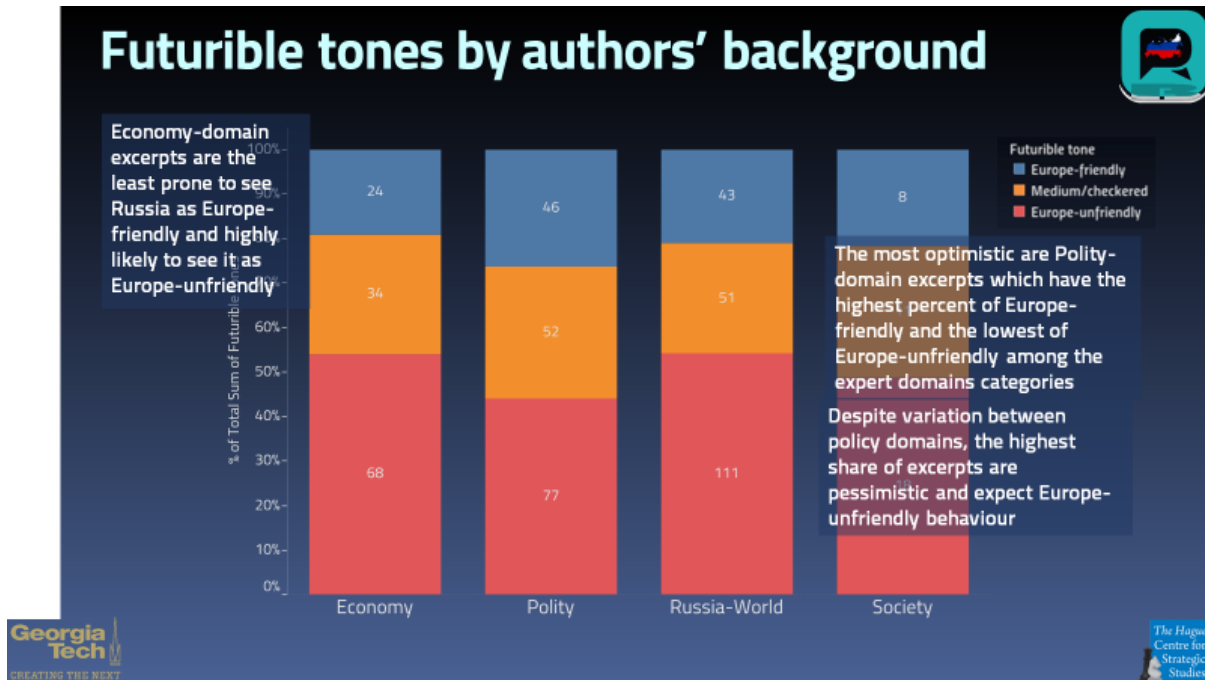


Figure 18 – Futurible tones by authors' background

However gloomy this meta-analysis may look, it still shows that more negative future Russia's are not the only ones discussed, and that various experts still 'foresee' more hopeful futures. One (modest) silver lining in this overall still fairly cloudy future is also that the foresight studies from past few years (2019-2021) actually see the overwhelming majority of *futuribles* (including relations with the West) crawl upwards – with 4 important exceptions: democracy, market freedom, regime stability and (especially) population growth. While noting that all of these recent values still remain in 'Europe-unfriendly' (i.e. < '2') territory, we still see this marginal improvement as quite counterintuitive given the deep 'gloom and doom' that still pervades today's more recentist and presentist discussions about Russia. This may also reflect foresight practitioners being more 'contrarian' in nature (as we also saw in Figure 19 that as Russian-Western relations took a nosedive after Russia's land grab in 2014 the average tone of futuribles went up in Russian and after 2016 also in Western studies).

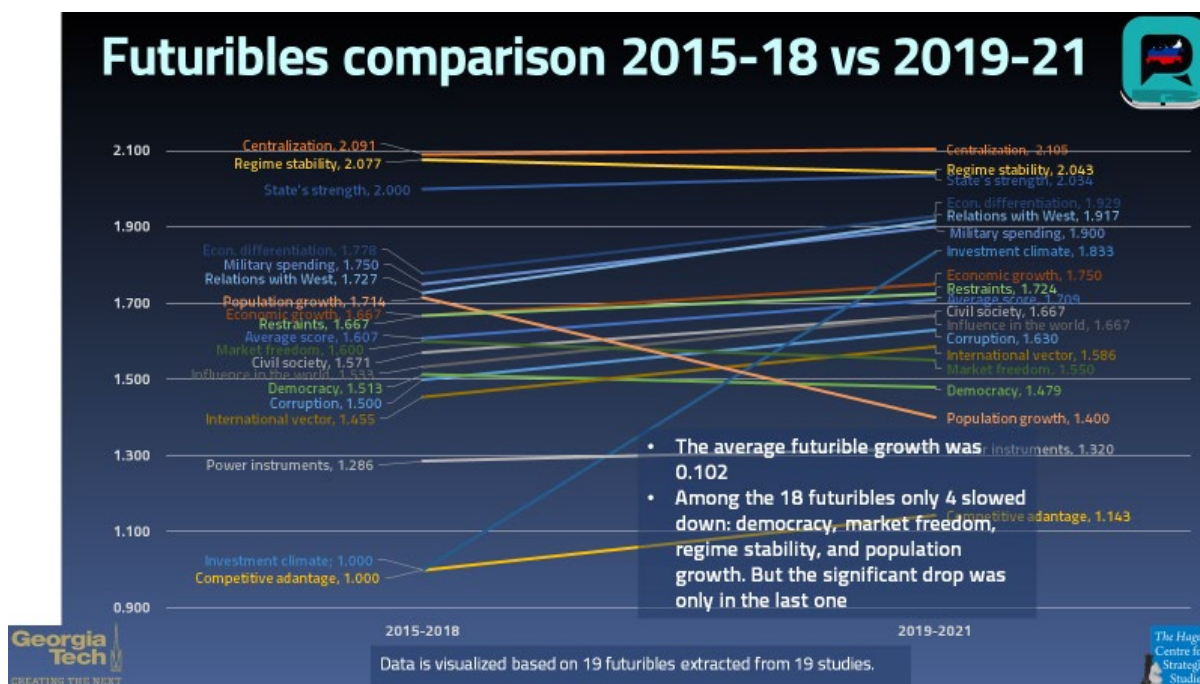


Figure 19 – Futuribles comparison: 2015-18 vs 2019-21

From the point of view of this study, the main question in all of this remains to what extent external (and especially European) influence/ing is likely to assist or impede these (modest) improvements.

From MetaFore to 4 'Future Russias' scenarios

One of the – in our view – useful applications of our MetaFore work (“taking futures work seriously”) is that it allows us to either generate or update a set of scenarios that can be used to ‘test’ various policy options – including influencing ones. If ‘the future’ (also of a country like Russia) is typically viewed – also by policymakers – as a single dot on ‘the’ horizon, our *futuribles* can be seen as different dimensions of a far more dynamic ‘futurespace’ in which myriad future Russia’s can be ideated and positioned. Since human cognitive limitations do not allow us to work with 10s of 1000s of futures simultaneously, foresight studies must select a few. To be useful for ex ante policy evaluations, we argue that the retained scenarios should ideally be at least somewhat representative of the entire futurespace⁴⁸. Our MetaFore efforts may provide us with some analytical insights into the deeper trends that experts seem to detect in these *futuribles* and that can therefore be leveraged to make sure that the retained scenarios reflect these.

⁴⁸De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Duijine, Freija van, and Chivot, Eline, “Towards Foresight 3.0: The HCSS Metafore Approach – A Multilingual Approach for Exploring Global Foresights,” in *Anticipating Future Innovation Pathways Through Large Data Analysis*, ed. Tugrul U. Daim et al. (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/2.1.2054.5605>.

In 2018, HCSS created a set of MetaFore-based Russia scenarios for two 'strategic design sessions' on Russia that we conducted in The Hague and in Kyiv. This yielded 4 'post-Putin' scenarios with the following main narrative elements:

- Putinism forever
- The current political system remains in place – autocratic, corrupt and centralized
- The economy stagnates as the government continues to rely on natural resources
- Civil society is neither developed nor completely oppressed
- Russia continues its geopolitical adventures, but with diminishing resources it is de facto downgraded to a regional power
- Stalinism on AI steroids
- Russia is a high-tech super-centralized totalitarian state that has taken AI even further than the current 2022 Chinese leadership has
- Its economy is boosted by advances in AI
- It is hard to tell whether any discontent exists at all in the country as it is very closed to the outside world
- Russia doubles down on its efforts to destroy liberal democracies
- Raspad – Russia implodes
- The regime collapses and Russia disintegrates into many state(let)s
- All these state(let)s are extremely diverse in terms of their economies, political systems and foreign policy preferences
- The only thing that unites them is the lack of resources to exercise power on a global scale and pursue aggressive foreign policies
- The legacy of the Russian army (and WMD-legacy) remains a key international challenge
- (Re-?)Turn to Europe
- The government embraces democratic and liberal reforms, including decentralization, reinstating the rule of law and embracing the eradication of corruption
- The economy becomes diversified and flourishing
- Russia starts developing a robust civil society
- Russia pursues normalization with the West, stops destabilization efforts in the post-Soviet space and relies primarily on soft power means

Based on the findings of our 2019-2021 FutureBase-Russia coding update as well as a brainstorm with some representatives of the Dutch MFA and MoD, we decided that these 4 scenarios still capture usefully different areas of Russia's futurespace. We did, however, decide to make some modifications to the same 4 scenarios:

- The 'Population decline (<145M)' *futurible* was added to scenarios 'Raspad' and 'Stalinism on AI steroids'
- The 'Xenophobia' *futurible* was added to scenario 'Stalinism on AI steroids'
- A scenario 'Back to Europe' renamed to '(Re-?)Turn to Europe'
- The 'Eurasian vector' within the above-mentioned scenario was changed to

'European vector'

Looking for possible Russian influencing 'targets'

Having sketched four different 'future Russias', let us now return to the different policy options that Europe might be able to pursue in these scenarios. How could one even go about finding empirical evidence for 'weak spots' in an authoritarian regime one is trying to influence – segments of a society, economy or even policy that might be susceptible to divergent messages coming from the 'outside'? To answer this question, we first dug back into our Russian influence corpus with a bibliometric tool (CiteSpace) and visualized the concepts related to influence on Russian foreign policy in an automatically generated concept tree (based on co-occurring noun-phrases within sentences in all abstracts).

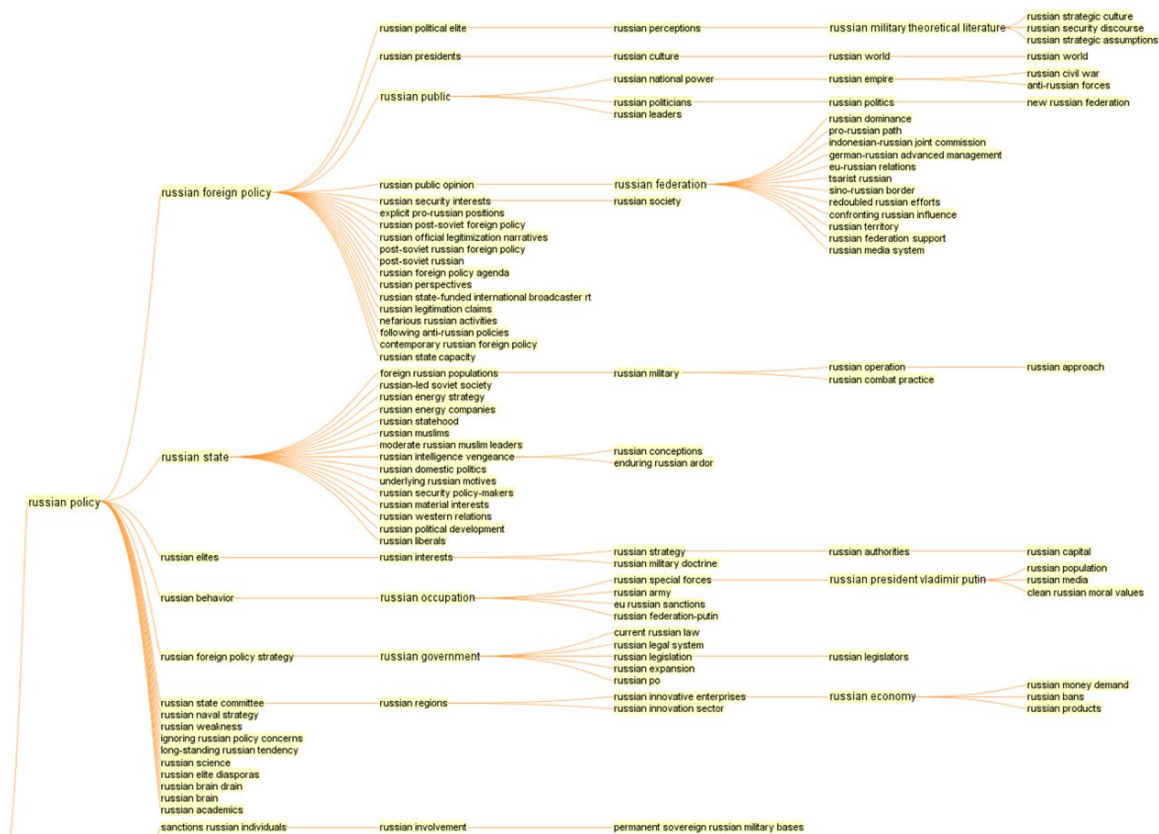


Figure 20 – Concept tree from the Russian influence bibliometric dataset

The concept tree suggests three potential influence objects: public opinion, Russian elites, and the president. Supplementing this list with our own ideas, we opted for 3 different research angles of attack:

- The 'demographics' (which groups in surveys answer Europe-relevant questions differently from the mainstream) of
- Public opinion surveys and

- Elite surveys;
- An analysis of what Putin's public statement tell us about the areas of external influence that he worries about; and
- An internal HCSS brainstorm on this.

Russian public opinion and Europe

There is much skepticism about the use of public opinion data, especially in countries like today's Russia. We 'know' from a very broad and mature literature that sociological surveys in authoritarian regimes are even more problematic than in open societies/polities.⁴⁹ We also 'know' that Russia is no exception to this rule. Our own HCSS take on this is that the impact of public opinion in **open societies** is typically overestimated. Yes, it matters, mostly through regular (and truly competitive) electoral cycles, but even in steady-state situations (policy-makers leveraging focus groups, etc.); and yes, it tends to matter more than in non-democratic regimes. It is still routinely overruled, however, by 'elites', not in the least in FSDP, which most publics – across the globe – are really only modestly interested in. At the same time, we suspect that the impact of public opinion in **authoritarian regimes** is typically underestimated. Especially in this day and age – as the literature on authoritarianism 2.0⁵⁰ shows – it cannot be just ignored anymore and is not quite as malleable anymore as it used to be. It operates in somewhat different ways, with the regime's paranoia often as a key factor. This also seems to be the case in Russia, as the regime's attitude towards Naval'nyy, local protests, freedom of expression, etc. shows. We therefore continue to pay close attention to (especially) the Levada polls, which are widely recognized as being somewhat more reliable – their overall findings, but especially also their 'demographic' breakdown, as a more fine-tuned understanding of generational, gender, geographical, etc. differences can also help Western policy 'targeting'. More details can be found in the powerpoint deck; we limit ourselves to a few key substantive findings with special focus on the demographics of the polls (where available).

Having selected 13 Europe-relevant questions that have been asked since 2010, it became clear that Russians do not consider themselves European. Quite surprisingly, the biggest share of those who do is actually found among the oldest age groups (40-54 and 55+).

⁴⁹ Darrel Robinson and Marcus Tannenber, "Self-Censorship in Authoritarian States: Response Bias in Measures of Popular Support in China," *V-Dem Working Paper*66 (2018); Ammar Maleki, "How Do Leading Methods Mislead? Measuring Public Opinions in Authoritarian Contexts," in *IPSA 2021-26th World Congress of Political Science*, 2021.

⁵⁰ Andrew Mertha, "Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0: Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process*," *The China Quarterly*200 (December 2009): 995–1012, <https://doi.org/10/c3pmgh>. For an application to Russia, see Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, "Informational Autocrats," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*33, no. 4 (2019): 100–127, <https://doi.org/10/ggqrhq>.

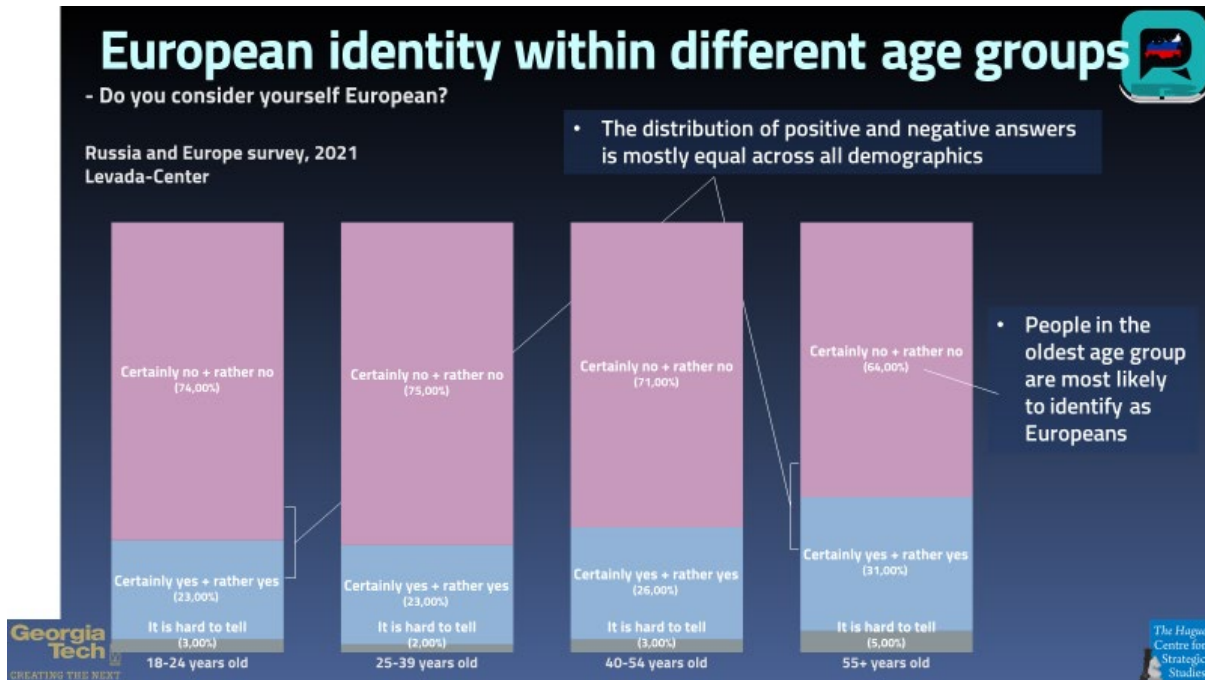


Figure 21 – European identity within different Russian age groups

Russians' views about which nations they consider hostile to Russia have fluctuated over the years. Yet not a single European country has ever received more responses than the United States of America. In fact, in 2020, the combined percentage of those who mentioned Great Britain, Germany and France as countries that have unfriendly attitudes towards Russia was still lower than the share of those who picked the USA. Although the share of those who thought that the Netherlands had unfriendly attitudes had doubled by 2020, it still amounts to the lowest 0.8%. The absolute leaders among the Europe-32 countries have always been the Baltic countries and Poland. However, the percentage of the respondents who chose the Baltic states had been steadily decreasing until 2019. As for Great Britain, France and Germany – the opposite is true.

Nonetheless, public attitudes towards both the European Union and the United States remain largely similar – the 'mostly positive' response has dominated throughout the years, albeit by a small margin. Still, more respondents share negative views on the U.S. Over time the number of people who think of the EU and the USA in a negative manner decreased, and more respondents began to have positive outlook on both – a stark contrast to the Russian leadership's current unprecedented hostile attitude towards the West.

When it comes to assumptions about Russians' attitudes towards the West, the oldest generation (55+) are the most likely to hold the opinion that negative emotions such as fear, anxiety and contempt are dominant. The youngest generation (18-24 years old), however, gave the biggest share of responses in favor of 'contempt'. The respondents from that age category also cast their vote for 'respect' more than any other group. The youngest people, therefore, appear to be the most polarized in their understanding of

societal attitudes towards the West in Russia.

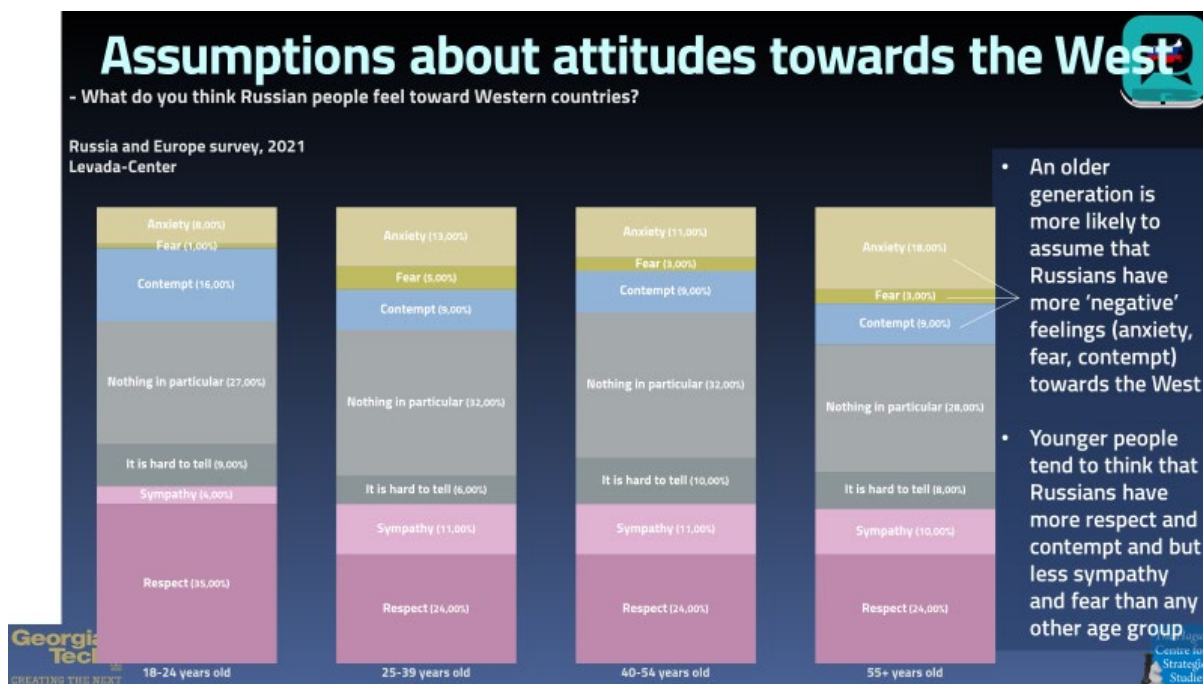


Figure 22 – Russians’ assumptions about attitudes towards the West

It is important to stress that there is little Russian public support for a more hostile policy towards the West. The Russian public as a whole agrees that Russia should improve its relations with Western countries – and considering the increasing ‘apathy’ towards Russia’s isolation – this judgment is not influenced by Western sanctions.

Russian elite opinion and Europe

The incredulity towards public opinion data that primarily stems from the fact that the public has little to no say in decision-making processes (especially in FSDP) is also the reason why studying elites in such non-democratic states as Russia can shed more light on a country’s policy preferences. We should caution, of course, that whereas some elites, also in authoritarian states, undoubtedly have more ‘inside information’ than the public at large, this does not mean they will necessarily be more forthcoming towards ‘outsiders’.

In the Russian case, we are particularly fortunate that there we can consult a public cross-sectional, longitudinal dataset that has been canvassing Russian elites at regular intervals between 1993 and 2020. The Survey of Russian Elites⁵¹ was developed and implemented by William Zimmerman from the University of Michigan. In each iteration, the team commissioned ‘one-on-one’ interviews lasting for over one hour with a few

⁵¹ [Zimmerman, William, Rivera, et al., 2021 Survey of Russian Elites, Moscow, Russia, 1993-2020. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor]]

100s of representatives of the Russian 'elites' based on a questionnaire covering both domestic and international issues. One of the interesting aspects of this dataset for our study is that each (otherwise anonymous) respondent also answered a whole set of demographic questions, allowing us to slice and dice their responses by professional groups (i.e. representatives from the military and security forces, the legislative and executive branches of government, scientific and educational institutions, state-owned enterprises and private business, and the media); by different age categories; etc.

To find out whether the views of Russian elites on Europe are polarized or coherent, to trace the evolution of opinions and thereby possibly detecting 'Achilles' heels' that may be susceptible to European influencing, we selected the following recurring Europe-relevant questions on Russia's futures and Europe's role in them, assumptions about the EU's attitudes towards Russia, and perceptions of NATO and the EU getting closer to Russia's borders:

- There are various opinions concerning the relations that Russia should have with the European Union. Which position is closer to your point of view: Russia should become a member of the European Union in the future OR Russia and the European Union should be completely independent from one another?
- As one of the most powerful actors in international politics, Russia develops relationships with all other actors in world politics. However, if you had to choose, with which of these would you prefer to form a coalition?
- For each country or international organization that I will name, please tell me how friendly or hostile you think it is toward Russia today (European Union): very friendly, rather friendly, neutral, rather hostile, very hostile?
- What is your attitude toward the decision to admit the Baltic states into NATO: very positive, rather positive, both positive and negative, rather negative, very negative?
- What is your attitude toward the entry of the Baltic countries into the European Union: very positive, rather positive, both positive and negative, rather negative, very negative?

The survey's findings suggest that Russian elites have fairly similar views on EU-Russian relations. Prior to 2012 Russian elites were very supportive of a potential future membership of Russia in the EU – the degree of support across different professional backgrounds varied from 60% to 88% in 2004-2008. Overall, the idea of Russia's European integration started to steadily lose support in 2012 across elites of all professional backgrounds, leaving the media, state-owned enterprises and private businesses as the most hopeful about Russia's European future. The biggest skeptics of Russia's European aspirations have always been the legislative and executive branches of government as well as the military and security agencies, making these groups a tough but potentially worthwhile target for Europe's influencing efforts (not least because of their key role in Russia's policymaking). We also want to point out that – contrary to common assumptions – elites belonging to the youngest age group have tended to be among the biggest opponents of integration into the EU, and some of

those who are either 65+ or within the 40-54 age group remain most reluctant to further distance Russia from Europe.

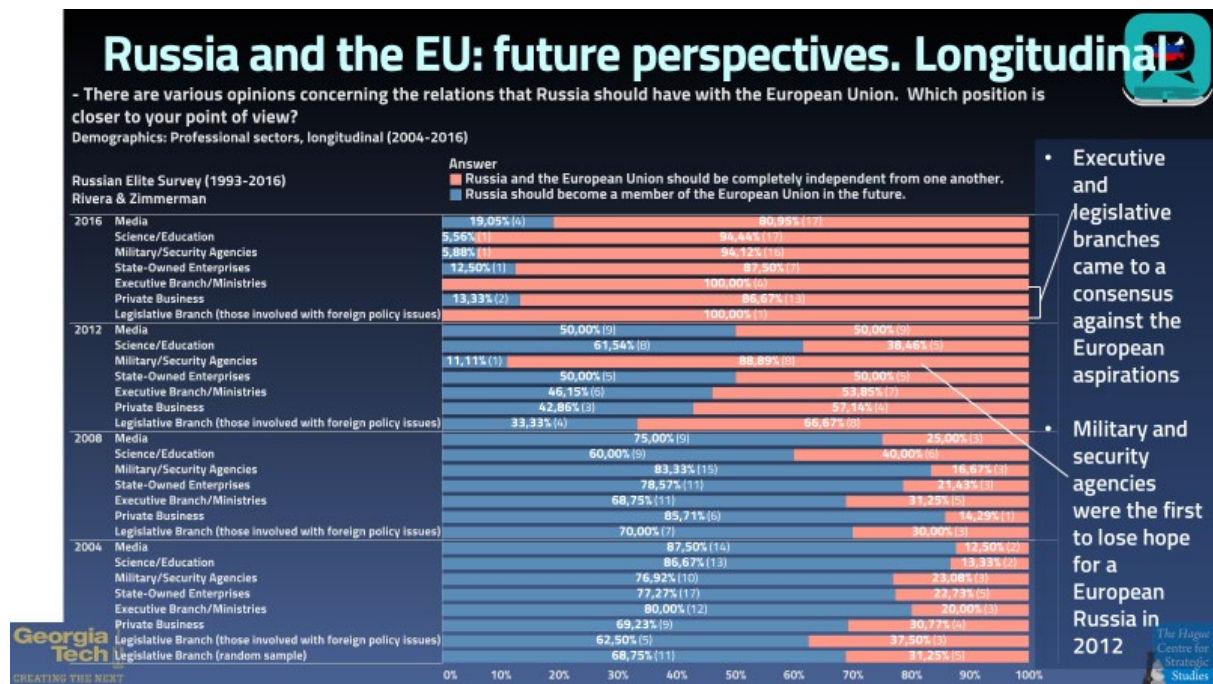


Figure 23 – Russia and the EU: future perspectives (Russian elite views, longitudinal)

Comparing the answers of 2012 and 2016, Russian elites of all backgrounds and ages began considering the European Union as a less attractive coalition partner. Yet, on average, the EU together with China are among the two most popular ‘real’ alternatives. The elites within the media as well as in education and science prefer Europe to China by 13-22% margins. For those employed in the military and security agencies and also state-owned enterprises the situation is the opposite. Respondents from the governmental branches do not seem to want to commit themselves to any of the suggested options, and their support for potential coalition with the EU decreased the most (in line with official policy guidance). Still, the legislators involved with Russia’s foreign policy issues prefer to see the EU as the country’s ally more than any other state or organization. As for the age categories, the share of those who were supportive was equal across all groups in 2016.

Elites’ assessments about the EU’s policy towards Russia have become grimmer over time. Elites from all walks of life first came to a widely shared understanding that European policy was neutral towards Russia, but they eventually stopped thinking that it was very positive altogether. Here too, the media category has the biggest percentage of those who believe that the European Union pursues a rather friendly policy towards Russia; somewhat surprisingly, about the same percentage as elites from the military and security agencies. During the 2016 wave of the survey, increasingly more respondents from all professional categories started to believe that the EU’s attitude was hostile with a few responses from the military and the science and education

groups in favor of the ‘very hostile’ option which had not been selected during the previous waves. The elites within the ‘40-54’ age category gave the least negative opinions during the interview in 2016. The responses indicate a trend of increasingly negative assumptions about the European Union’s intentions towards Russia. The survey findings also suggest that the percentage of those who believe that Europe’s attitudes are hostile is the lowest among the elites from the governmental branches. Yet, there were no responses from those professional groups that had any ‘friendly’ assessments.

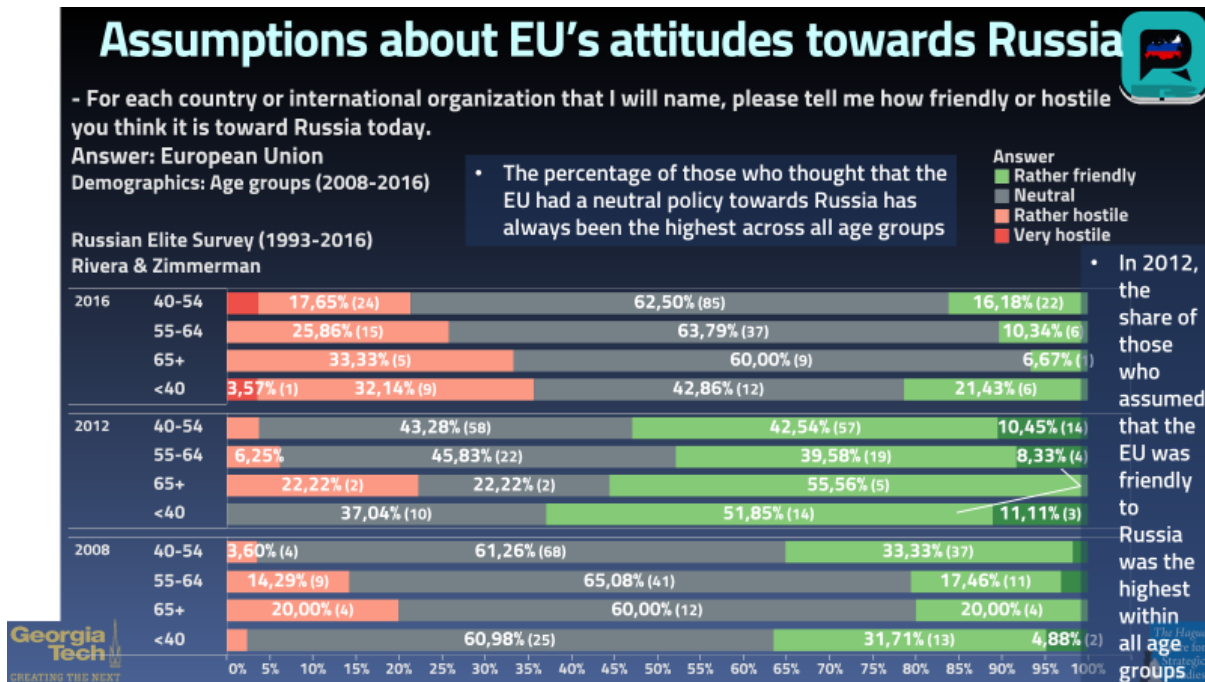


Figure 24 – Assumptions about the EU's attitudes towards Russia (Russian elite views)

Our findings suggest that elites from the media, state-owned enterprises and private businesses as well as science/education have always been more sensitive to Western/European influence. Further demographic analysis shows that those respondents, as a rule, belong to the older age categories. Their views have also been the most flexible over time, pointing to their potential to be more easily swayed.

Looking for Achilles Heels in Putin’s public statements

A final source we turned to in order to identify – in this case – not groups that could be influenced, but areas in which the Russian leadership feels pressured, was the supreme leader himself. HCSS maintains a corpus of the official transcripts of all of Russia’s presidents’ public statements – interviews, speeches, published articles, etc. – from 2000-2021 (so far 11,442 documents).

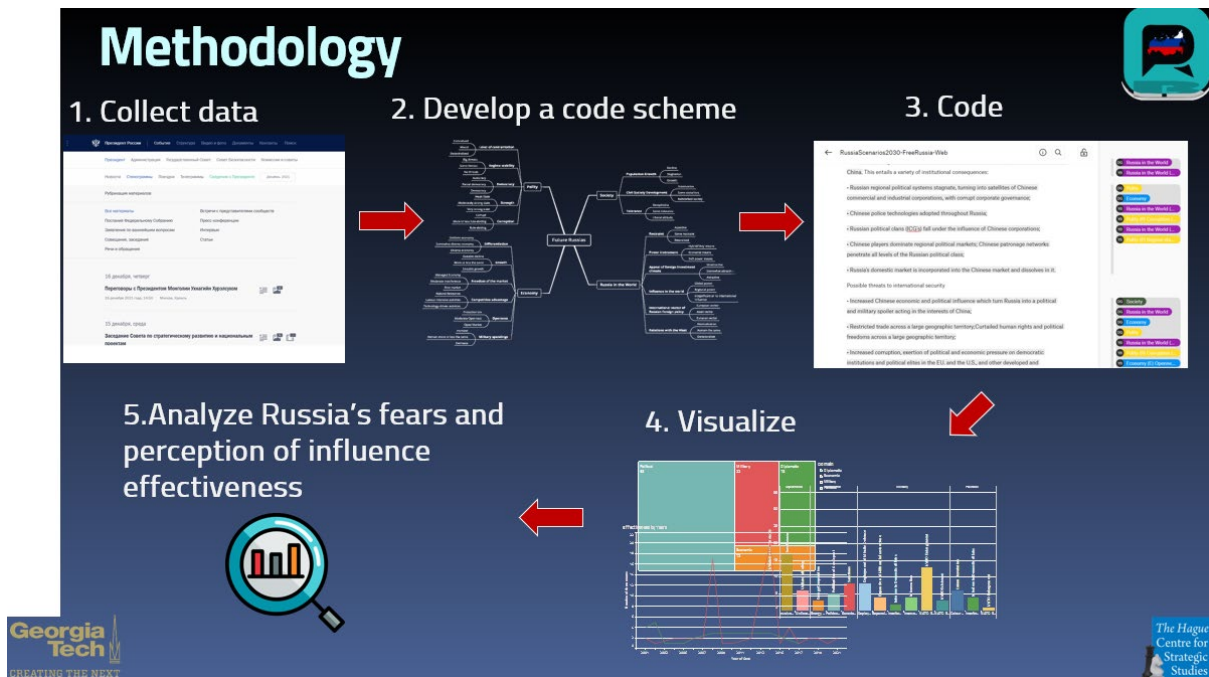


Figure 25 – HCSS Metafore protocol

Alongside more automated NLP analyses of this corpus (on which we will report in more detail in future publications), our team also manually coded all of Putin’s statements containing assessments of areas where he felt/feels the ‘West’/Europe is trying to influence/pressure Russia.

Our analysis focused on two particular topics: the most ‘neuralgic’ issues we can find back in Putin’s public statements about Russia; and the dominant style features he uses when he talks about them.

What are his neuralgic points?

In order to analyze the main areas in which the Russian leader feels threatened, we first manually identified all ‘fear’-relevant statements from our corpus of Putin’s public statements and then classified them by two criteria – the domain and the type of ‘fear’.



Figure 26 – HCSS coding tree for Putin’s public statements

Figure 27 shows that the political domain accounts for more than a half of total mentions. We find most expressions of apprehension about Europe in the political domain throughout the whole period of 2001-2021 with only a few exceptions. It remained the dominant area of ‘fears’, followed by the military and diplomatic domains. The share of the economic domain remained relatively low compared to other areas.

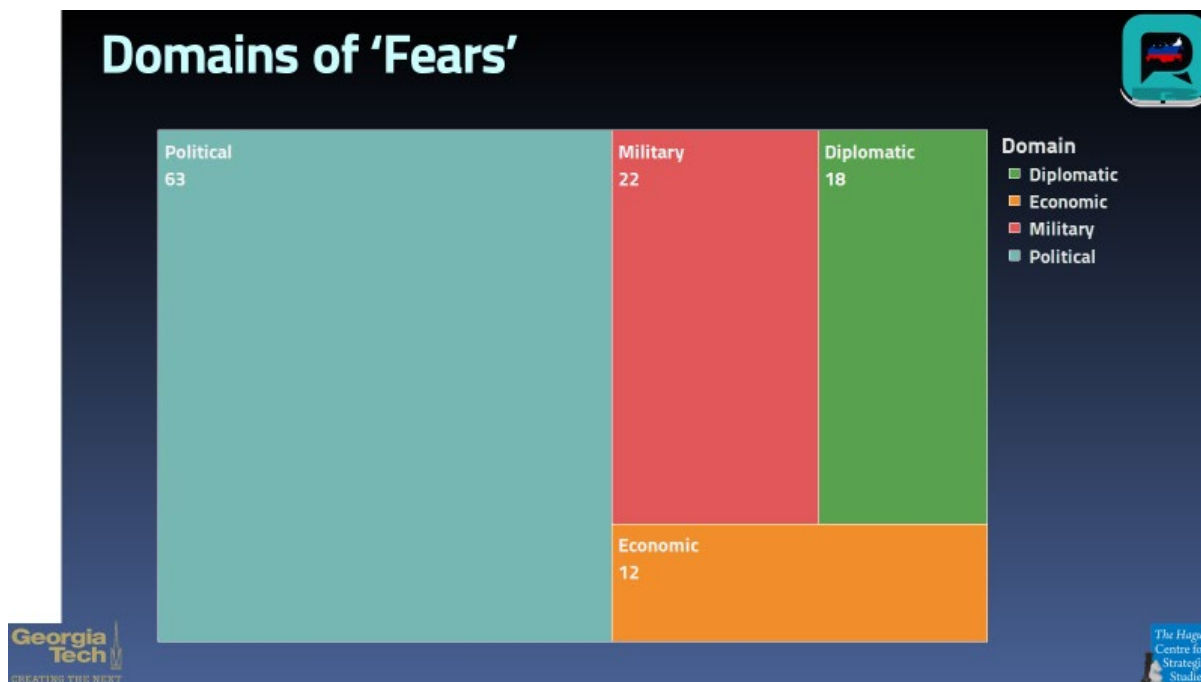


Figure 27 – Putin’s public statements: Domains of apprehensions

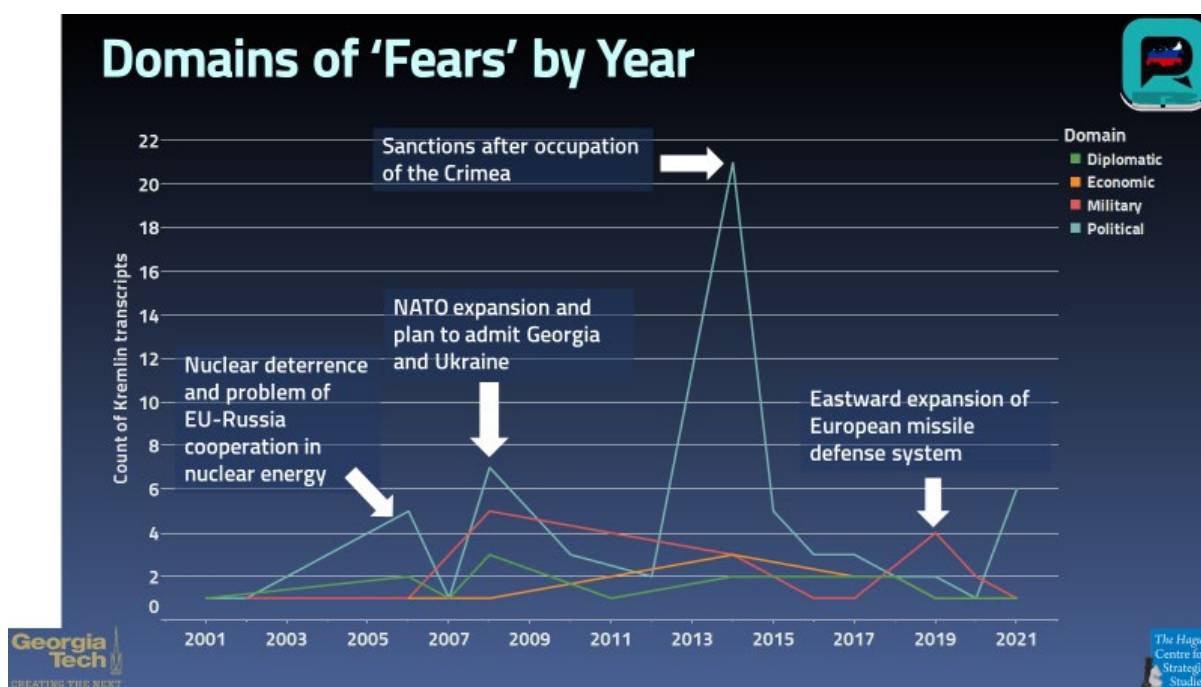


Figure 28 – Putin’s public statements: Domains of apprehensions over time

The spikes in mentions of these political ‘fears’ in Putin’s statements are related to the issues of nuclear deterrence in 2006, the prospects of Georgia and Ukraine joining NATO in 2008, and sanctions against Russia introduced in 2014 as a result of occupation of the Crimea. The peaks of military ‘fears’ in 2008 and 2019 are due to the eastward expansions of NATO and the positioning of missile defense systems in Europe, respectively. Also, the growth of the economic domain in 2014 is primarily

related to sanctions against Russia after the occupation of Crimea.



Figure 29 – Putin’s public statements: Types of apprehensions over time

While NATO eastward expansion and European missile defense along with nuclear deterrence issues dominated Putin’s ‘fears’ in the earlier period, sanctions, ‘color revolutions’ and interference in domestic affairs are more widely mentioned after 2014 (Ukraine and Euromaidan). The peak of energy security in 2019 is related to the Nord Stream-2 issue, while the mentions of opposition in 2021 have to do with the case of Alexei Naval’nyy.

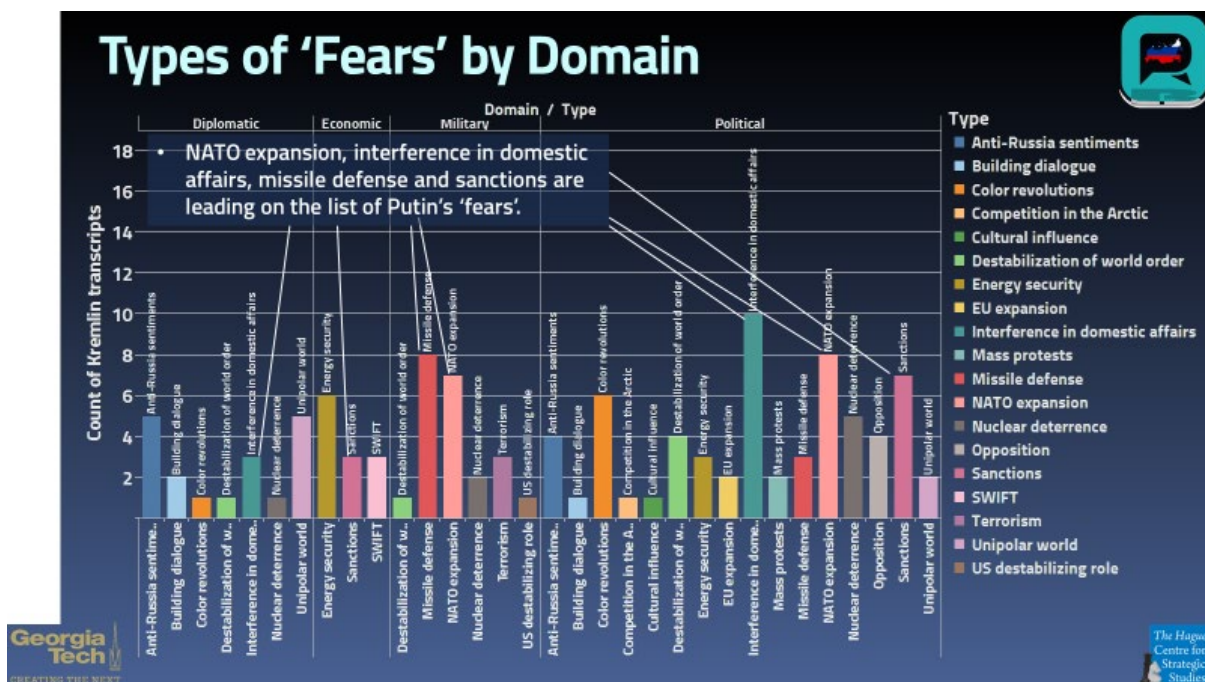


Figure 30 – Putin’s public statements: Types of apprehensions by domain

NATO clearly tops Putin’s ‘fears’. Mentions of NATO and its eastward expansion can be traced to as early as 2001 – early on in his first presidential term. We still note some changes in his rhetoric, however: if back in the 2000s Putin talked about NATO in terms of the impact its expansion might have on the European post-Cold War security system in an era of strengthening mutual trust between Russia (and the former socialist block) and the West, in the 2010s (and especially after 2014) he focuses more specifically on the military threats NATO expansion represents to Russia and interprets it as being primarily intended to draw NATO forces closer to Russian borders and not to increase the security of the newly accepted Central European states.

At the same time, most of Putin’s ‘fears’ lay within the expected area of threats as perceived by Russia. They include, among others, EU eastward expansion and, after 2014, the EU-Ukraine association agreement as a potential threat to Russian economic interests as well as the fear of interference in Russian ‘near abroad’ as its ‘natural’ sphere of influence; support and growth of anti-Russian sentiments, economic and propagandistic pressure, growing criticism and opposition on domestic level, and spread of dissent (*‘inakomysliye’*) in Russian society; ‘color revolutions’ and development of Western oriented regimes in post-Soviet space; establishment of unipolar world and hegemony of one state which would lead to the decline of the global stability, etc.

Some ‘apprehensions’ that may not have made as many headlines include Putin’s remarks in 2008 on the West’s attempts to eliminate Russia’s role in G8 and exclude it. Some other rare mentions include cultural influence on Russia, competition in the Arctic, and US destabilizing role.

How does he talk about them?

Putin’s rhetorical style elements when talking about these neuralgic issues do not exhibit much change over time. Semi-rhetorical questions remain his preferred rhetorical device, which the Russian president typically prefers over giving a direct answer himself – thus leaving more room for ambiguity in interpretation. Putin’s targeted audience in all of this is not only Russian domestic public opinion, but he also engages with Western elites who are increasingly characterized by him as ‘fools’ (and the Russian leader does not hesitate to openly call them so) playing political games with Russia. This clearly stands out in contrast with Putin’s characteristic of himself as a pure and trustworthy ‘expert’ (in all spheres).

A particularly interesting feature of Putin’s style on these issues is his choice not to explicitly mention certain apprehensions by name. A vivid example is his refusal to ever call the opposition leader Alexei Naval’nyy by his name (the so-called ‘Voldemort’ approach). A similar example of more relevance to this project includes SWIFT. It is only mentioned thrice – and then only in the context of Russia working on the development of alternative systems, from which all the countries would benefit. Along with this tendency to avoid or downplay certain possible fears, Putin’s manner of denial of fear and trying to

come off as fearless is worth mentioning too, since the president notes that Russia is not the country to be frightened.

The method of juxtaposition is another rhetorical device to be noticed in different variations. First, we can see the line drawn between the ‘good Samaritan’ Russia trying to work on building trust and stability, and the ‘evil’ West neglecting the agreements and undermining confidence in bilateral relations and in global stability. Second, there is a message Putin is sending to the international partners that Russia is not the one who will make the first step to escalation; however, if pressured, it is ready to act. Finally, some double standards are visible, especially in Putin’s rhetoric on sanctions that are described as a necessity to preserve the global stability if applied against the rogue states, but perceived as politically biased when introduced against Russia in 2014.

Influencing Russia today

One of the West’s – and even Europe’s – most prevailing (and damaging) traditions is to simplistically ‘reduce’ Russia to its supreme leader, to the Kremlin, to Moscow. Russia’s reality has always been far more multifaceted and dynamic, as one would expect from a country whose “soul is damaged by its amplitude”⁵².

We already pointed out that Europe may very well underestimate the latent significant economic, political and societal influence it still wields over Russia below that country’s political surface, which in many ways remains *terra incognita* – not because it is enigmatic and unknowable, but because it remains massively understudied. Many Westerners (including Russia-experts) like pointing out that the West’s impact on Russia is limited and that we are prone to overestimating it. Russia’s ruling regime’s increasing paranoia and (proto-totalitarian) repression reveal a diametrically opposite assessment of its own political and societal ‘influenceability’. Russia’s neuralgic conniptions on the issue of Ukraine’s independent domestic and international choices to ‘return to Europe’ also clearly illustrate the unrivalled (latent) influence that country retains over its ‘giantist’⁵³ Eastern neighbor. The same paranoia can probably also be inferred from Russia’s reaction to and military intervention in the Kazakhstan riots in early 2022.

Part of this project therefore went in search of various possible ‘Achilles heels’ in today’s Russia – areas where Western (and especially European) influence might actually stand a chance to yield some beneficial dividends in nudging Russia back towards not only just

⁵²“Но необъятные пространства России тяжелым гнетом легли на душу русского народа. В психологию его вошли и безграничность русского государства и безграничность русских полей. Русская душа ушиблена ширью, она не видит границ, и эта безгранность не освобождает, а порабощает ее.” Николай Александрович Бердяев, “О Власти Пространств Над Русской Душой. Судьба России,” Москва, 1990, http://rulibs.com/ru_zar/prose_rus_classic/berdyayev/0/j65.html.

⁵³ On the – grossly understudied – problems associated with ‘giantism’ (also in international relations), see John P. Lewis, “Some Consequences of Giantism: The Case of India,” *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (1991/1990): 367–89, <https://doi.org/10/b3z5nx>.

less retrograde *actions*, but also '*behaviors, opinions and beliefs*' (see our working definition of 'influence'). Based on our analysis of the demographics of Russian both public and elite Europe-relevant opinion surveys and on our systematic coding of Russian President Putin's own neuralgic points as stated in his public statements, this section tries to identify potentially promising 'targets' for European influencing efforts, as well as functional domains where such targeting might usefully be directed toward.

Generationally

There is abundant empirical evidence that – just like in the West – Russia's younger generational cohorts (Gens Y, Z, and Alpha) differ from older ones. They were born in a very different Russia; they spend their time very differently (much more online); they receive their information about the world through channels (social networks) that are very different in nature from the more traditional print media or radio/TV; they have (slightly) different values that are (a bit) closer to the West; on some issues they are politically somewhat more liberal; they resent corruption; and they have also shown an unexpected degree of political activism during the last waves of street protests in Russia.

At the same time, however, Russia's youth also remain a small (and dwindling) part of the population; they are far from homogeneous; and it is impossible to predict how these aforementioned differences may evolve as they grow up. We have also seen in the demographics of the public and elite opinion polls that they cannot necessarily be seen as 'pro-Western' or even as advocates of Western values. A recent Levada poll demonstrates that of all age groups the 18-29 generational group has the highest share (50%) that consider themselves to be democrats. At the same time, however, the share of respondents of that age who do not think of themselves as democrats is also very high (46%) and higher than in the 'older than 55' group. Another poll from the Levada Center confirms the widely accepted idea that younger people in Russia are more favorable towards Europe and the US.⁵⁴ But even in this poll, almost one in four in this age group had a negative attitude towards the West in general.⁵⁵

We should also not underestimate that a significant segment of these younger generations has, importantly, built up a certain amount of 'immunity' against crass attempts by the Russian authorities to 'influence' them in more bureaucratic ways – a 'thick skin' that presumably also makes them less susceptible to similar Western 'bureaucratic' attempts to sway them. At the same time, however, they are demonstrably displaying fairly high degrees of openness to more sophisticated 'influencers', especially on social media – quite in line with their Western counterparts.

⁵⁴“Демократия, Социализм и Рыночные Реформы —” (Левада-Центр, October 19, 2021), <https://www.levada.ru/2021/10/19/demokratiya-sotsializm-i-rynochnye-reformy/>.

⁵⁵“Международные отношения: август 2021” (Левада-Центр, August 9, 2021), <https://www.levada.ru/2021/09/08/mezhdunarodnye-otnosheniya-avgust-2021/>.

Russian authorities' attempts at creating a 'sovereign Russian internet' and at targeting these younger Russian age cohorts with 19th-century 'patriotic' propaganda laced with 21st media steroids show how afraid they are of 'losing' that demographic. Making sure that these up-and-coming generations of Russians are not cut off from the global Zeitgeist and are in position to make their own (generationally sovereign) choices may therefore be a critical 'battlefield' in the decades to come. All too often, Western contemporary efforts in this area still seem mostly anchored in the recipes of yesteryear (educational exchange programs; Western information campaigns in traditional (or even social) media; etc.). One could wonder whether working with the social media giants to make sure that real-time Russian translation algorithms of 'Western' social media content or (translated) closed-captioning software remains widely available may not provide better value for money.

Regionally

Another (also politically) critically important dimension of Russia in which European influencing options abound is the geographical one. It should not come as a surprise that a country that still covers 11 time zones; has a maximum east-west length of some 9,000 km and a north-south width of 2,500 to 4,000 km; has 37 regions (44.5% of all its 83 regions) that directly abut 14 different countries (including Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway that currently belong to our EUR-32 grouping; but also Belarus, Ukraine and even Georgia and Azerbaijan – that some people would also consider to be 'European'; and then also China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and North Korea as presumably more Asian ones), hosts more than 120 different ethnic groups speaking 100 languages – cannot 'just' be a monolith that is entirely controlled with an industrial-age 'power vertical'.

If one only looks at the political surface, one may come to the conclusion that the international political wriggle-room for these regions has been significantly curtailed under the Putin regime and that any attempts to 'influence' them would be in vain. Similar errors in judgment were made in Tsarist Russia, which looked highly centralized on paper, but where the acting motto in most regions was "Бог высоко, а царь далеко" (God is high up; and the tsar is far away), and where – especially as Russia started opening up and industrializing in the beginning of the 20th century – many European entrepreneurs struck deals with regional governors. Also in the Soviet period, it took until the 70s of the previous century for Western historiography of the Soviet Union to recognize that even within the Communist Party, most regional First Party Secretaries were adept political entrepreneurs engaged in 'real' politics – both horizontally and vertically. Similarly, today the (at least equally 'real-life') realities of geographical distance from Moscow and (sometimes even cultural, linguistic, etc.) proximity to these 'foreign' neighbors, the harsh exigencies of fiscal federalism, etc. certainly mean that these geopolitical entities truly are true 'subjects' 'from' and not just 'of' the Russian Federation. The repeated protests against decisions from 'Moscow' in the Russian Far East – as recently as in the summer and winter of 2020/2021 in the city of Khabarovsk, when many 10s of 1000s of

protesters took to the streets against the replacement and then arrest of the popular local governor (despite the fact that originally he was a ‘technical’ candidate who won as a result of a protest vote) – are a clear indication that this regional dimension remains very much of relevance.

One of the important ‘weapons’ that can be used in such regionally-targeted influence efforts is hard-nosed evidence-based information. For instance, Russians living in many ‘subsidized’ regions (where inflows from the federal budget exceed outflows) still only have a dim idea about the real cost (let alone the opportunity cost) they themselves pay for President Putin’s assertive foreign, security and defense policy. The annexation of Crimea, for instance, meant that this region had to be heavily subsidized out of the federal budget with money that could then no longer be redistributed to other regions. Any further annexations, but also continued high military expenditures would only strengthen that fiscal trend. There are still a few brave Russian economists who work in this sphere and speak out regularly in the media (the most shining example being Natalya Zubarevich, the director of the regional program of the Independent Institute for Social Policy (Moscow)). Many prominent Russian economists who fled the country, like former EBRD Chief Economist Sergei Guriev, also occasionally weigh in on these distributional aspects across the Russian Federation. But this is an area where Western research institutions could certainly play an important role in making sure high-quality evidence-based research continues to be conducted and disseminated – especially in Russia – on these issues.

Beyond leveraging the power of evidence-based knowledge more generally, Europe’s multi-level governance⁵⁶ seems ideally suited to collect and learn from the experiences of many instantiations of European agency in dealing with specific Russian regions. In certain cases, for instance, territorial propinquity and/or cultural affinity may work to the benefit of any Westerly nudging effort, in others the opposite may be the case. Being in a better position to find out “what works” here would enable European actors at all levels to calibrate their influencing efforts in those regions in a more evidence-based way.

We want to add a note here on an often underestimated aspect of the ‘regional’ soft underbelly of the Russian Federation: its major cities and what some have called the ‘internal emigration’ – a term first used for an analogous phenomenon in Nazi-Germany, but then also applied to successive generations of Russian intellectuals – that has grown roots in them. As Russia became more and more authoritarian over successive Putin presidential terms, a growing number of often highly educated Russians who disagreed with this trend but were unwilling to emigrate or even publicly protest ‘retrenched’ into their own worlds. Whereas in the totalitarian Soviet Union, that internal emigration

⁵⁶ Ian Bache, “Multi-Level Governance in the European Union,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Governance*, 2012; Ian Bache, Ian Bartle, and Matthew Flinders, “Multi-Level Governance,” in *Handbook on Theories of Governance* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016).

essentially had to occur within a person's internal mind, in today's Russia there are still various oases of relative liberalism in the – often highly developed, affluent, transforming and thriving – mega-cities. Russia has 15 cities with more than a million people, for instance, in which urban 'hipsters' of all stripes have been able to carve out cultural microcosms within Russian urban physical and virtual landscapes.⁵⁷ Many of these hipsters may at first glance still strike many of us as quite 'Russian patriotic' by Western European standards, but they often do speak English, they travel (all over the world) and bring back those diverse impressions to Russia. They are also one of the very few groups in Russia to whom critical thinking comes naturally. While that does not make them easily influenceable from the outside (as their critical thinking often also strikes against Western liberal democracies), it does give them an influencing place of pride within these Russian cities and the younger generational cohorts that are growing up there.

Societally

Western – including European – stereotypes about Russia's society tend to be excessively monolithic. The – indeed very real and nigh-universal – nationalistic fervor that gripped Russia after the 2014 'Krym nash'-related knee-jerk 'rally around the flag' reflex reinforced Western stereotypes of Russians as a drab, subservient, collectivist, cold, insensitive, self-obsessed, uncouth, jingoistic, corrupt, humorless, non-smiling, etc. people living on the periphery of Europe.

Anybody who has had even a bit more than the most superficial exposure to Russia's rich societal tapestry realizes how widely off-the-mark these stereotypes are. On this societal dimension as well, Russia has always been far more variegated than most outsiders acknowledge. It also is changing under the very same pressures we see at work in other parts of the world, where we clearly witness the impact of 'hard' factors like technological change, data explosion, changes in employment patterns, etc.; but also of 'softer' ones like various forms of 'liquid' identity (Bauman), the return of fear, the fading away of 'truth', the emergence of new values (e.g. on the environment), etc.

It is precisely in this dynamic and fluid environment that independent 'Influencers' are emerging in some of the most unexpected corners of Russian society. Their impact is more often than not primarily non-political, as that may very well be the only way to become so influential in today's Russia (and not only there). But their societal appeal and authority is such that some of their non-political content also spills over into the political realm. One of the main Russian influencers, for instance, is the vlogger (and former (sports!) journalist) Yury Dud'. One of his most popular (3-hour long) videos saw him visiting Silicon Valley in the US and interviewing Russian entrepreneurs there on why they left Russia, why they were so much more productive in the US, etc. By late 2021,

⁵⁷ "100 Крупнейших городов России по населению 2021 список РФ," statdata.ru, accessed December 16, 2021, http://www.statdata.ru/largest_cities_russia.

that video had gathered 42 million views (for perspective – there are 144 million inhabitants in the Russian Federation today). Mega-influencers like Dud’, but also Nastya Ivleeva, Valentin Petukhov, Danya Milokhin, etc. all manage (typically through social media) to combine elements of humor, music, technology, design, fashion, food, gaming, sex, sports into (sometimes) powerful social commentary and influence.

The very strength of these ‘independent’ influencers derives from the very fact that they are organic fibers of the Russian social fabric. Any attempt to instrumentalize them for other third-party influencing purposes, let alone to emulate them ‘artificially’ from the outside (or even the inside – as the Kremlin’s attempts have shown) is therefore more than likely to fail or even backfire. Their presence, persistence and resilience does indicate, however, that Russian society remains influenceable. The massive Russian propaganda machine had already amply demonstrated that the more docile segments of the Russian society proved remarkably – and from our point of view disappointingly – susceptible to the messaging emanating from the Kremlin. De-zombifying these segments of Russian society is bound to take decades. These independent influencers, however, also show that there are, today, ways to reach the more creative, forward-leaning – even if not necessarily politically, etc. segments of Russian society as well. Studying them and their influencing dynamics more closely is therefore likely to yield new – also actionable – insights in what works and what does not work “in the wild” in Russia’s society.

Politically

The Russian regime’s own rhetoric on how the reimposition of the infamous ‘vertical of power’ has re-domesticated the ‘wilder’ (and – in the eyes of many Russians – more pernicious) forms of political pluralism from the Yeltsin era had initially been widely accepted in the Western mainstream. A more recent real (resurgent; but also still very much tentative, and by no means comparable in size nor in quality to the Soviet-era) research effort on ‘deep Russia’ is rekindling interest beyond ‘the leader’ and the ‘power vertical’. Such models include concepts like ‘the administrative regime’ (Sakwa⁵⁸); ‘Politburo 2.0’ (Minchenko⁵⁹), ‘the clan system’ (Thomas Graham⁶⁰ etc.), ‘the network state’ (Kononenko/Moshes⁶¹), ‘sistema’ (Ledeneva⁶²), ‘the neo-feudal state’ (Owen Matthews⁶³), etc. These models suggest that EVEN in authoritarian regimes (like

⁵⁸Richard Sakwa, “The Dual State in Russia,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 185–206, <https://doi.org/10/ckgh9g>.

⁵⁹Minchenko Consulting, “The Politburo 2.0 and the Anti-Establishment Wave,” Politburo 2.0 (Moscow: Minchenko Consulting, Summer 2019), https://minchenko.ru/netcat_files/userfiles/PB_2.0_summer_2019_ENG.pdf.

⁶⁰Thomas Graham, “Who Rules Russia?,” *Prospect Magazine*, January 20, 1996, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/whorulesrussia>.

⁶¹Vadim Kononenko and Arkady Moshes, eds., *The Formation of Russia’s Network Directorate* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230306707_2.

⁶²Alena V. Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernise?: Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511978494>.

⁶³Owen Matthews and Anna Nemsova, “The New Feudalism; Forget Corruption. in Putin’s Russia, the Nexus of Payoffs

Russia's) there are still various interest groups that pursue parochial goals that may differ from those of the 'leader' AND that they may also manage to successfully pursue even in that system.



Figure 31 – Influencers (even in authoritarian regimes)

All of these structuring schemes suggest that politics is NOT dead in Russia, that top-downism may be dominant but not all-powerful, and that many of the political dynamics have just moved 'underground'. What this suggests, from our point of view, is that more of an analytical effort may be required to map the new 'political economy' of the current Putinist system anno 2022. Russia's powerful oligarchs, for instance, are currently often viewed as having acquiesced and aligned themselves with the Putin regime's priorities. It stretches credulity, however, to accept that these outsized egos, most of whom had wet their global appetites and sharpened their teeth in the dog-eat-dog world of the Yeltsin and the early Putin-eras, and who had – de facto – become real 'world players' would now happily accept being relegated to national champions in an import-substitution 'small Russia'.

A recent HCSS research project on Russian policy towards the MENA region⁶⁴, for instance, used some natural language processing tools to identify a number of key 'influencers' in Russian decision-making towards that region. Also for this group, tracking all public statements by these inner-circle influencers would enable Europe to get a

and Patronage Is Almost Medieval, Touching Every Aspect of Life," *Newsweek*, October 23, 2006, International edition, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/214014180/4E9EEE74FEDF4377PQ/1?accountid=11107>.

⁶⁴De Spiegeleire, Stephan et al., "Russia and the MENA-Region. Post-Imperial Overstretch?," HCSS Report (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, January 20, 2021).

more fine-grained (public) sense of their respective positions – and maybe even impact. This in turn could enable Europe’s still quite unique multi-level governance layers to ‘target’ some of the most promising ones.

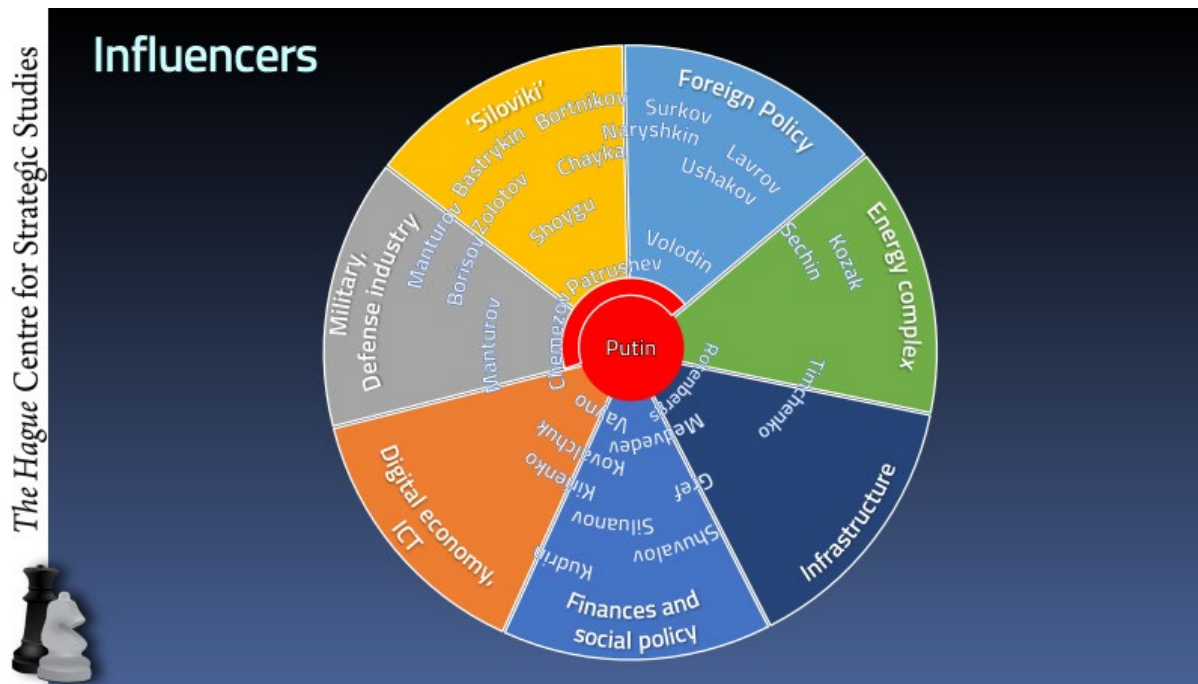


Figure 32 – Russian policy influencers

What do we know about Nth-order effects?

Efforts to influence somebody else are never one-shot events. The influencee clearly also has a say in the outcome of any attempt to influence her, and her response is in turn likely to prompt reactions from the influencer – an action/reaction pattern that is likely to continue for quite some time. Various third parties may also be affected directly or indirectly and may react in expected and unexpected ways that may in turn impact the original influencer in equally expected and unexpected ways. The resulting multi-shot complex and adaptive iterations invariably continue for long periods of time – inevitably much longer than the initial decision-maker envisaged. Some of these longer-term iterations may even lead to emergent characteristics of either the actors themselves or the system within which they interact. As we know from systems theory – but also from everyday common sense – these can almost by definition not be predicted. But some 2nd and 3rd order effects clearly can – and arguably should – be mapped. This section uses two approaches to explore these Nth-order effects. The first one just analyzes the Russian leader’s own assessment of the effectiveness of Western/European influencing attempts. The second one offers some additional food for thought on this ‘wicked’ problem that has, in our opinion, been gravely underestimated in the decision-making literature and – even more damagingly – practice.

Russian Perspective

One of the approaches to estimate the effect of various influence strategies is to analyze how the target – in this case Russia – itself assesses them. For this sake, we once again turned to the aforementioned corpus with transcripts of all of Russia’s presidents’ public statements. Our team identified those text excerpts that in one way or another imply a judgment about the effects of Western/European actions. All those were then coded to reflect the type of influence, its domain, and effectiveness.

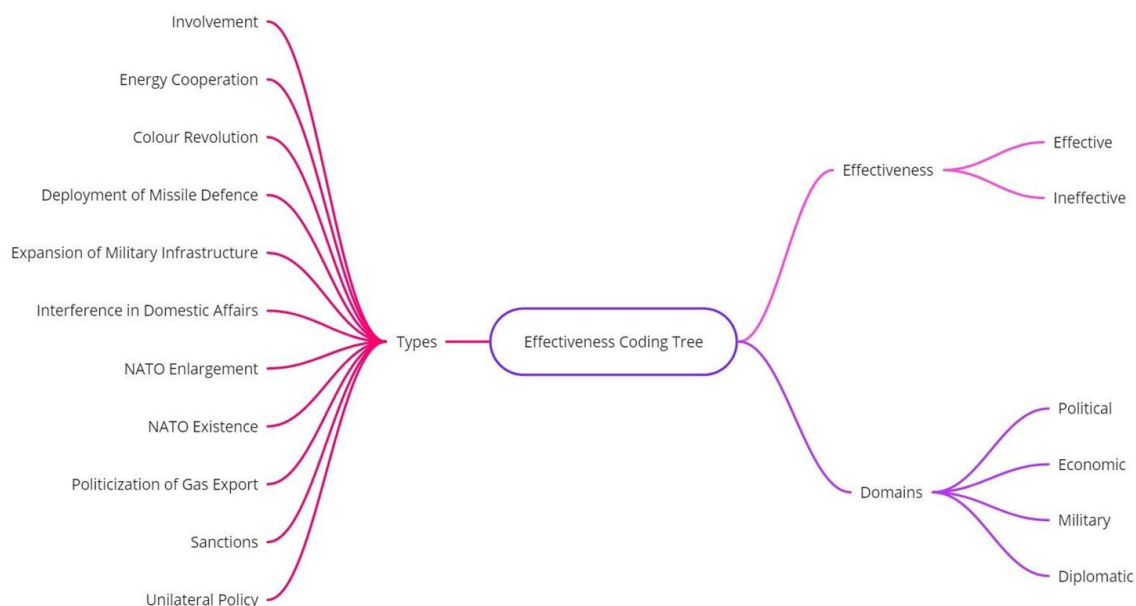


Figure 33 – HCSS effectiveness coding tree

We define effectiveness here as success in achieving the objectives of the influence-action. Considering that this analysis is based on Russian statements, the "objectives of influence" reflect the Russian perception of the goal of these actions and of their effectiveness. The types were extracted from Putin’s statements; the specific wording was designed to most closely resemble the language used by Putin.

Our analysis shows that the overwhelming majority of all European actions are considered to be ineffective by the Russian side.

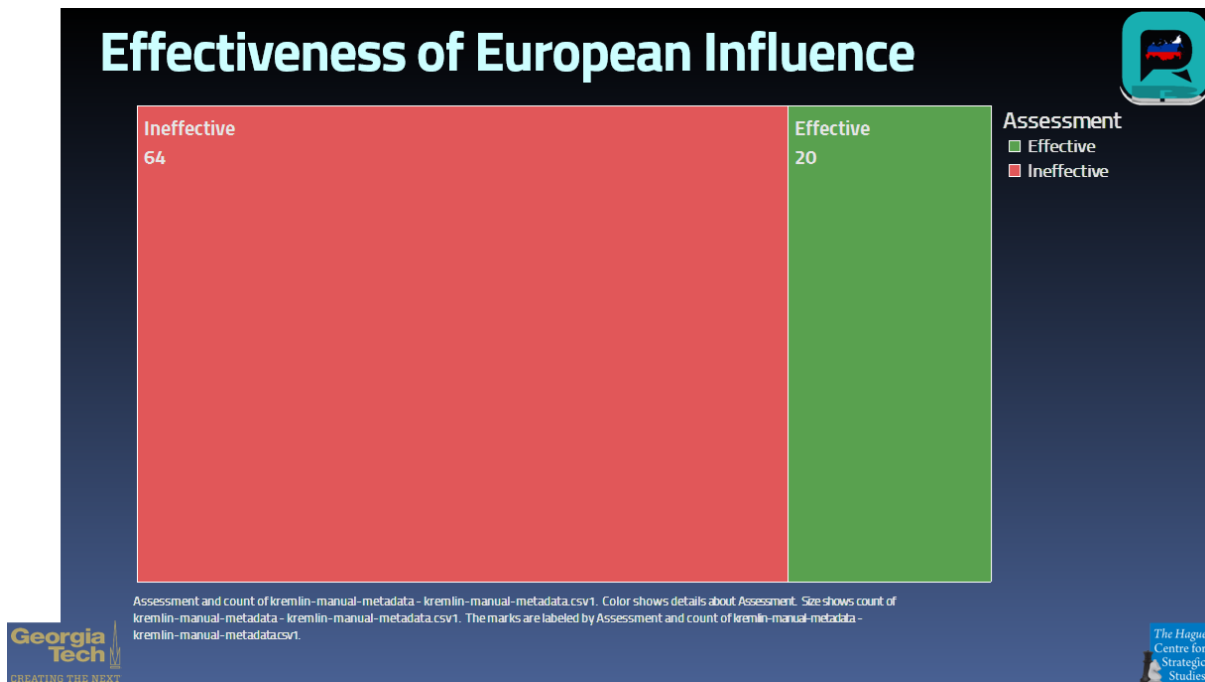


Figure 34 – Putin’s public statements: Stated effectiveness of European influence

When we look at the trend over the past two decades, we note that European influence was considered more positively at the beginning of the 2000s and during the "Russian Reset" between 2009 and 2013. Besides those short moments, the negative perception of European influence prevails. More specifically, there were no statements that would express a positive attitude since 2017. The current assessment of European influence is absolutely negative.

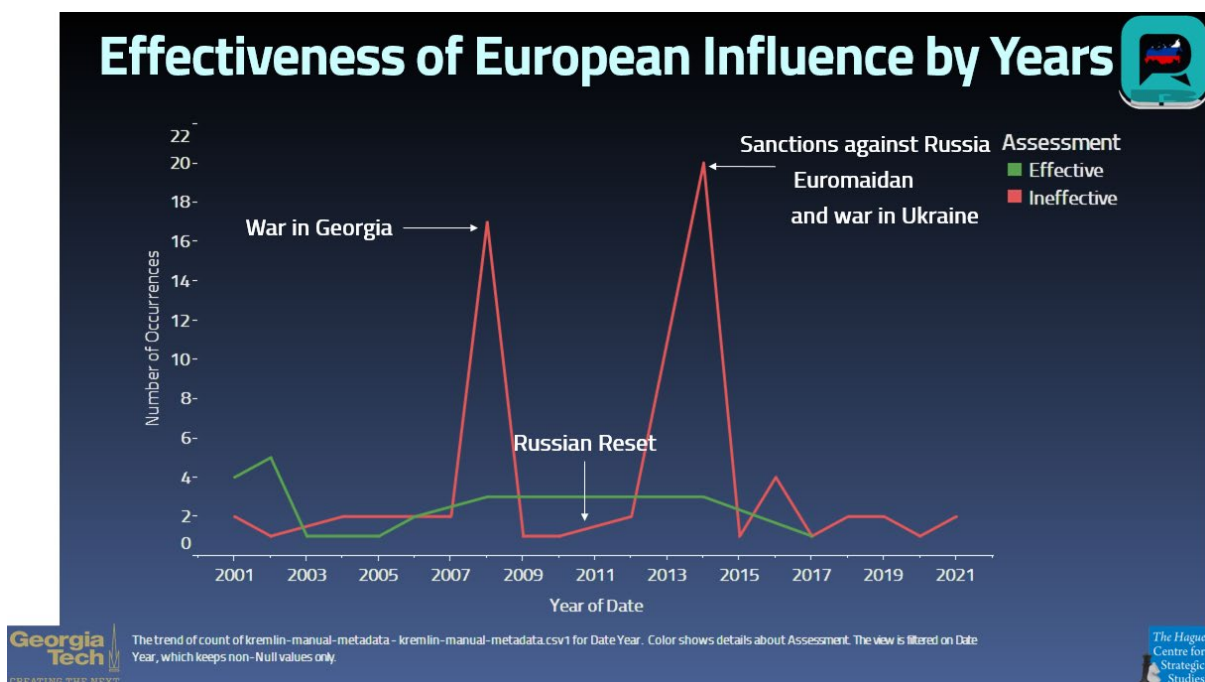


Figure 35 – Putin’s public statements: Stated effectiveness of European influence over time

Russia considers diplomatic measures to be generally effective. And it sees some effective economic measures, even though generally speaking most are still considered to be predominantly ineffective (due to the sanctions). Military and political actions are considered ultimately ineffective.

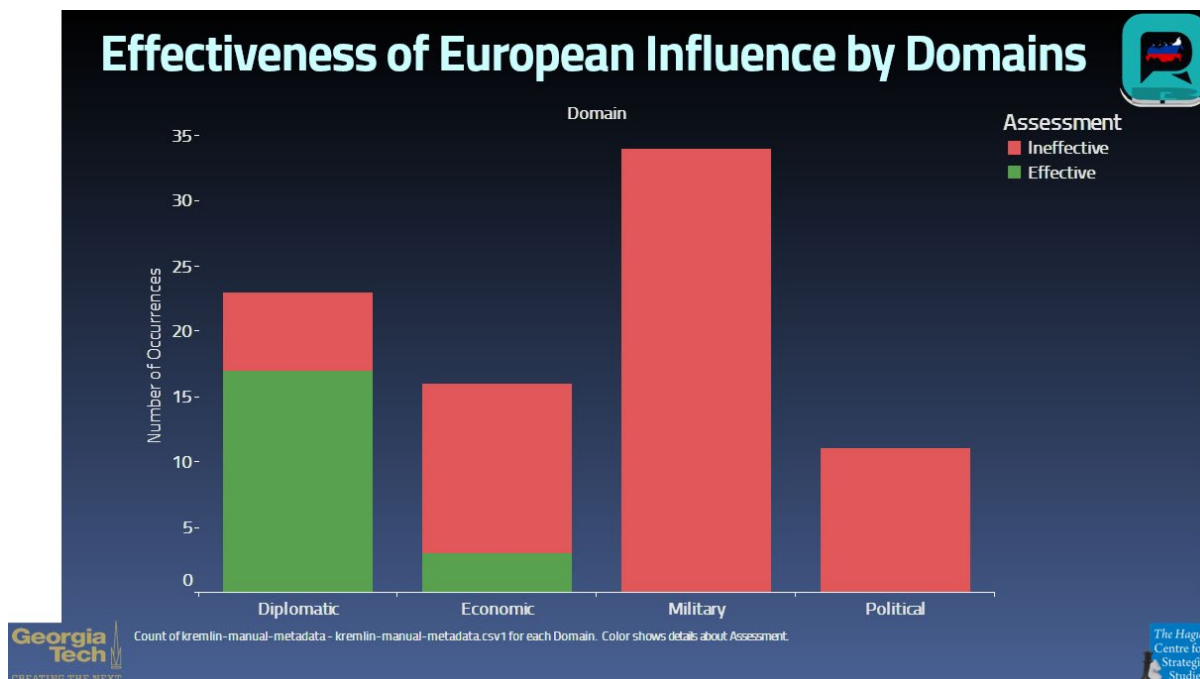


Figure 36 – Putin’s public statements: Stated effectiveness of European influence by domain

On some specific points, Russia was highly positive about its involvement in the decision-making process (e.g. NATO-Russia Council, information exchange with Europe, place at G8 Summit). The same goes for energy cooperation with Europe. It was believed to promote trust, further cooperation, and stability in Europe. The rest of Europe-ascribed influence-actions – color revolutions, deployment of missile defense, military interventions (e.g. Kosovo, Libya), the politicization of gas export, sanctions, and unilateral decisions were considered negative. It is worth emphasizing that Russia is highly consistent in its assessments: the influence types were assessed either negatively or positively without regard to their context or historical period.

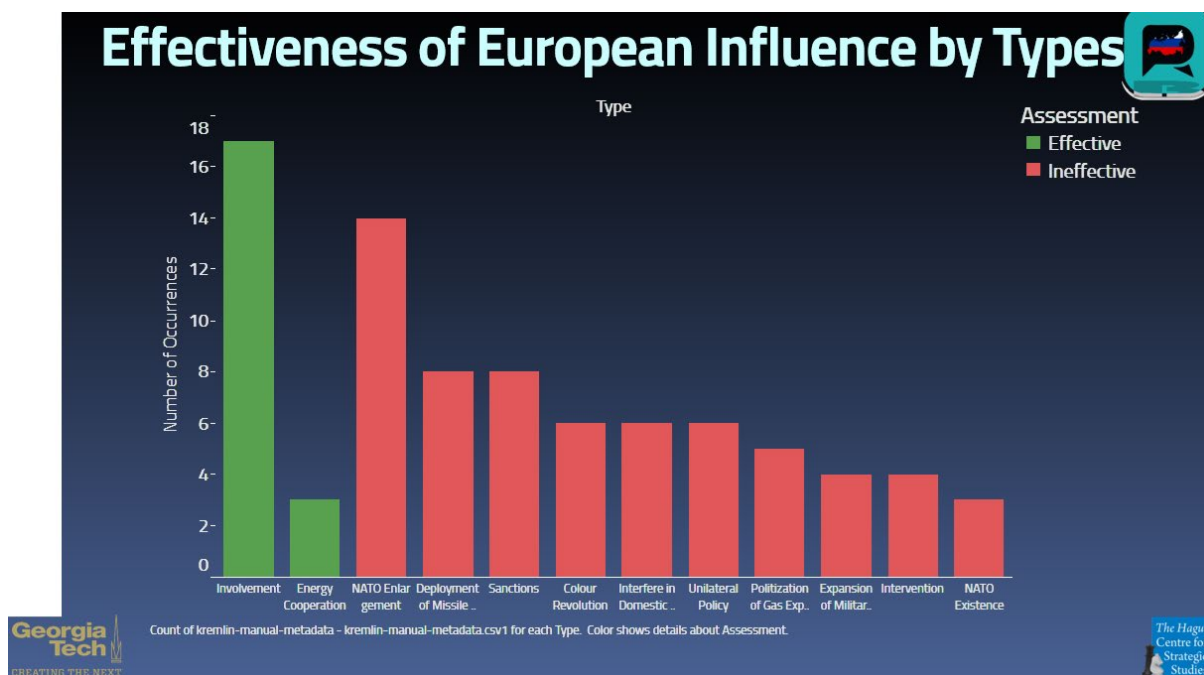


Figure 37 – Putin’s public statements: Stated effectiveness of European influence by types

This assessment, of course, should not be taken at face value. Russia has incentives to misrepresent the actual results of European actions. At the same time, it might misperceive Europe’s goal. Yet these assessments indicate what types of influence are perceived to be particularly problematic from the Russian side and thus likely to cause retaliation, considerably increasing the price of these actions.

General musings on Nth order effects

How can prudent strategic decision-makers responsibly deal with not only the immediate effects of their actions, but also with their second-order, third-order, etc. effects? The recent dramatic deterioration in Russian-Western relations highlights how important and relevant this seemingly abstract question can become in the real world. Is the Russian leadership correct in claiming that the West insufficiently or incorrectly calculated the impact of successive waves of NATO enlargement on Russian security? Put in different terms: did the West conduct sufficient ‘due diligence’ in its ex-ante evaluation of various ‘intervention’ (in the policy analysis sense) options prior to that strategic decision⁶⁵? Put more broadly: do current-day governments pay enough attention in their decision-making to ‘strategic due diligence’ – i.e., anticipating and thinking through, based on all available evidence, the possible mid- to long-term repercussions of various decisions on themselves and others? And in doing so – are they also making enough of an effort to overcome their own biases and anticipate those

⁶⁵ As it is elegantly formulated in one of the widely used policy analysis textbooks “what is involved is the empirical testing of the relevance of the intervention hypotheses (did the target groups [in this case: Russia – *note of the authors*] react as anticipated?) and causality hypotheses (do the end beneficiaries [in this case: ‘the West’ - *note of the authors*] see their situation improving?)” Peter Knoepfel, ed., *Public Policy Analysis* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007), 222.

of others⁶⁶?

One of the fundamental problems here is that actual policy practices in most countries' FSD policy cycles⁶⁷ diverge even more dramatically from the canonical precepts advocated in policy analysis textbooks than in most other areas of public policy. The policy formulation stage – where 'effects' should presumably play a big role ("what are we trying to achieve, and how would we know that we are getting there?") – is typically done quite impressionistically and is driven far more by national and multi/supra-national *bureaucratic* and downright *political* politics than by hard-nosed and foresightful policy analysis.

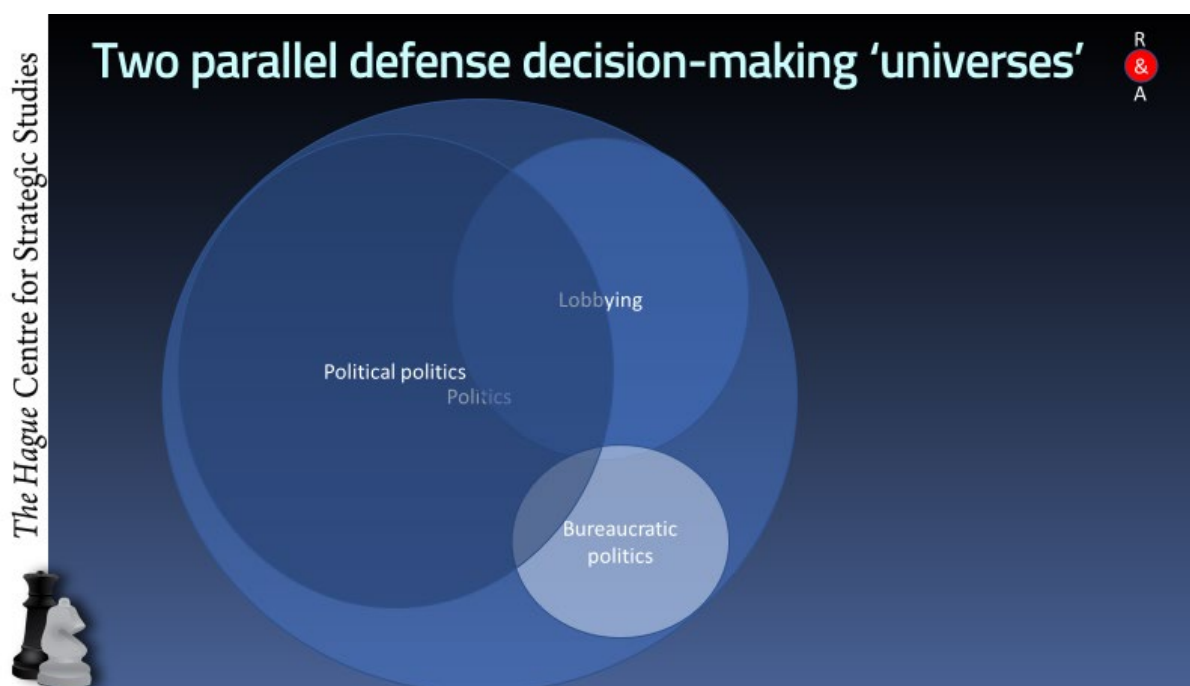


Figure 38 – Two parallel defense decision-making 'universes'

FSDP adoption documents typically do not even contain evaluation metrics that would allow key stakeholders to ascertain whether intended effects are being realized⁶⁸. FSDP macro-evaluations (let alone strategic balance of investment analysis) at the strategic level are virtually unheard of – just try finding any governmental 'audits' of the results of NATO enlargement. In the absence of any systematic data collection efforts on influencing attempts (which international actor tried what, when, in which circumstances,

⁶⁶ For a good recent overview of cognitive biases as applied to strategic decision-making and how to mitigate them, see Daniel Kahneman et al., *A Structured Approach to Strategic Decisions* (MIT Sloan Management Review, 2019).

⁶⁷ The policy cycle comes in various guises, but the main stages typically tend to be described as: 1) problem identification, 2) policy formulation, 3) policy adoption, 4) policy implementation, 5) policy evaluation and 6) policy calibration, succession or termination

⁶⁸ For an example of how even 'best of breed' FSDP documents fail on this, see Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., "Implementing Defence Policy: A Benchmark-'Lite,'" *Defense & Security Analysis*, February 2019, 1–23, <https://doi.org/10/gft4wf>.

to achieve what, in what way, etc. to influence another international actor – and to what effect?); of any (synthetic or ‘real-life’) modeling/gaming efforts of these mid- and long-term complex adaptive interactions, or of any guidance in actual policy documents on how to evaluate the effects – any attempt to evaluate the effects (whether ex ante or post hoc) is essentially doomed.

We would still submit, however, that such an effort is not impossible. Many of the most impactful strategic policy decisions tend to be punctuated and reactive in response to major events (e.g., a pandemic; a major international crisis, etc.). These periods are typically characterized by enormous time and political pressure – not exactly elements that are conducive to the more deliberate modes of decision-making that Nobel-prize laureate Kahneman calls ‘system-2’ or ‘slow thinking’⁶⁹. What should still be possible, however, especially in relatively open and high-performance⁷⁰ governments (like many European countries), is to conduct evidence- and knowledge-based ‘strategic portfolio design’ discussions amongst multiple stakeholders on the pros and cons of various strategic intervention – in this case influencing – options, in which ‘modeling’ those or at least thinking those through might be part of the effort. The next section of this paper reports on an attempt to do the latter.

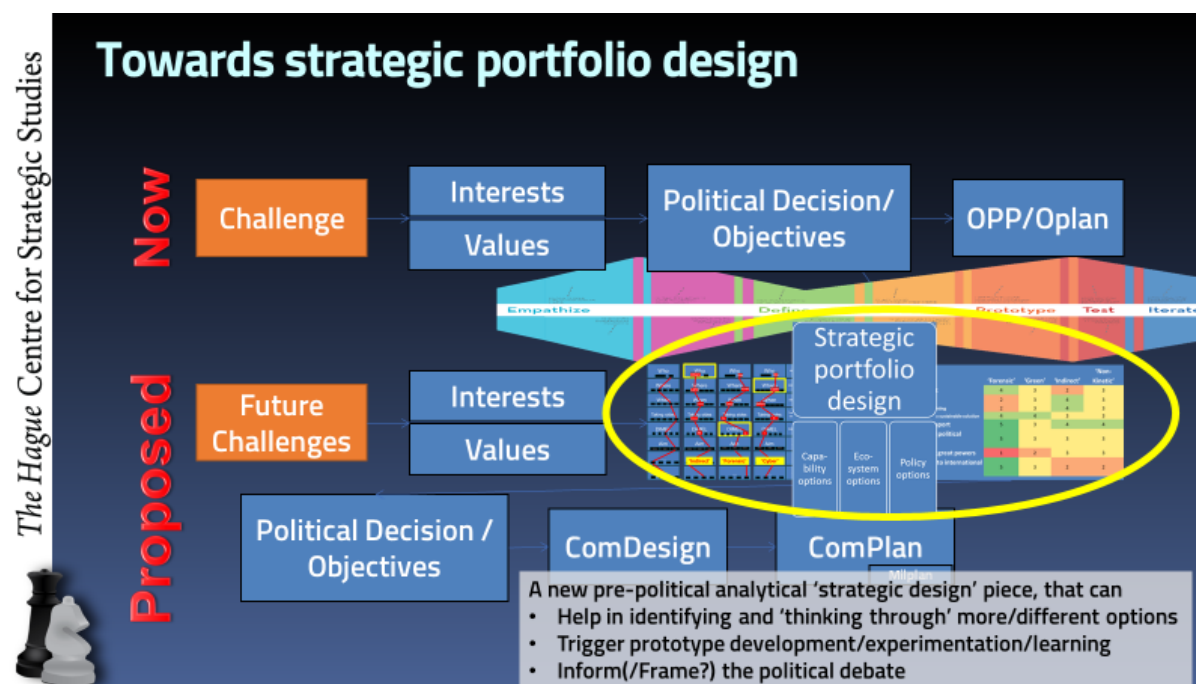


Figure 39– Towards strategic portfolio design

⁶⁹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 1st edition (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

⁷⁰ Kamiljon T. Akramov et al., “High-Performance Government: Structure, Leadership, Incentives” (RAND Corporation, January 5, 2005), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG256.html>; Janine O’Flynn, “High-Performance Government,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, September 29, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1375>.

Towards Policy Analysis

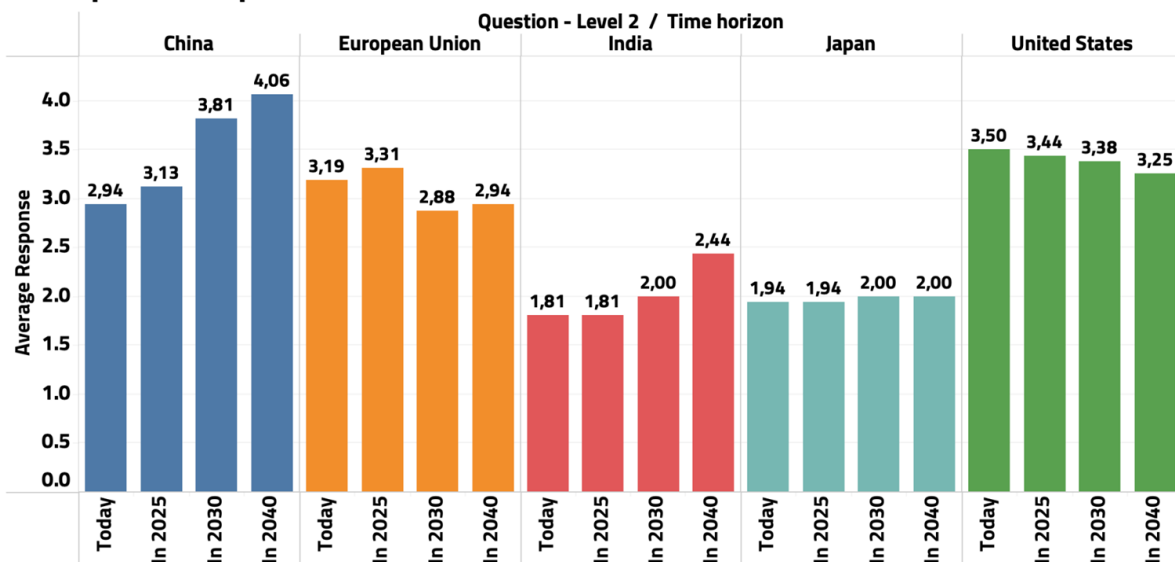
The initial ambition of this project was to conduct a participatory policy analysis in which various representatives of various Dutch stakeholders dealing with or studying Russia would be asked to assess the attractiveness of a number of different influencing options against a set of policy criteria. Our four different future Russias would represent four of these criteria – the question here being: “how useful do you think this influencing option would be in this particular Russia”.

For a variety of practical reasons the response rate of our initial exploratory survey was extremely low: 8 HCSS staff members, 2 non-HCSS academics, 2 MoD and 3 MFA representatives completed the first round of our survey in which we solicited input for the second round in which they would score the final matrix. In this section, we will therefore only briefly report some of the findings of the first round and will present our own reading of the HCSS-only second and final round.

Expected Great Power influence on Russia

Respondents currently see the US as having the most influence on Russia, with the European Union a relatively close second. As they look towards the future, however, they see China’s (and India’s – but at a lower level) influence on a steady increase and the US on a steady decrease. Europe’s influence on Russia is expected to slightly fluctuate without major changes but to remain below China and the US.

Great powers' expected influence on Russia



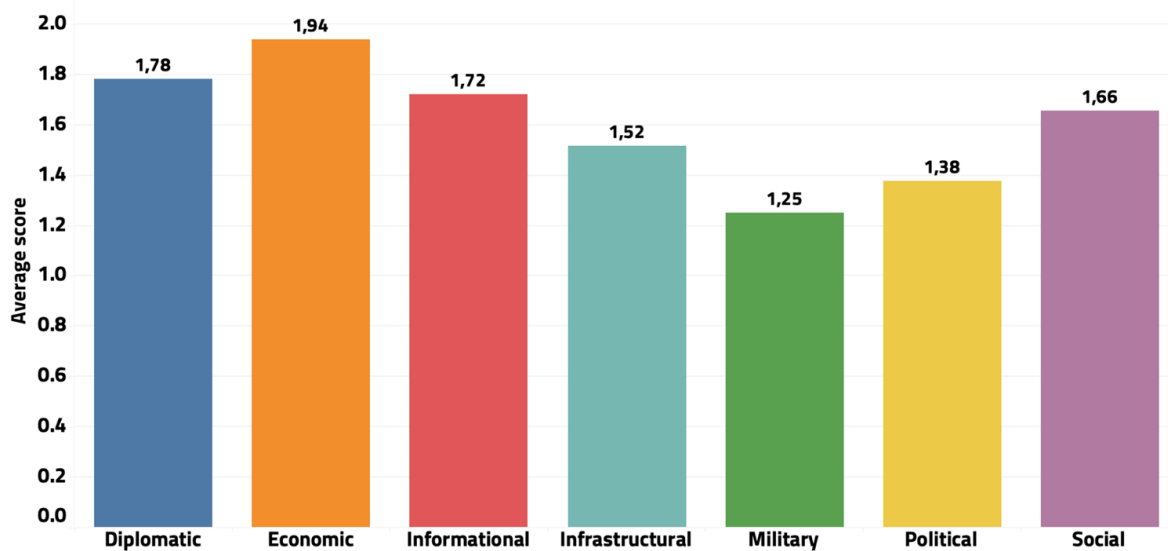
Average of Response for each Time horizon broken down by Question - Level 2. Color shows details about Great powers. The marks are labeled by average of Response. The data is filtered on Question - Level 1 and Question - Level 3. The Question - Level 1 filter keeps Q1. How do you assess the influence of the following actors on Russia (irrespective of domains or scenarios)? The Question - Level 3 filter keeps no members. The view is filtered on Question - Level 2, which keeps no members.

Figure 40 – HCSS policy survey: Great powers' expected influence on Russia

Europe’s expected influence on different future Russias

The first round of our (aborted) survey also contained a question on how respondents anticipated Europe’s influence in different policy domains and how that might vary across different conceivable Future Russias. Our (modest) findings show that our respondents thought that overall, Europe would be likely to have the most influence in the ‘(Re-?) Turn to Europe’ scenario, with the disintegration-focused ‘Raspad’ scenario a relatively close second. In the other two Future Russias, Europe’s influence was thought to be low.

Europe’s expected influence on Russia (by policy domain)
Question - Level 2

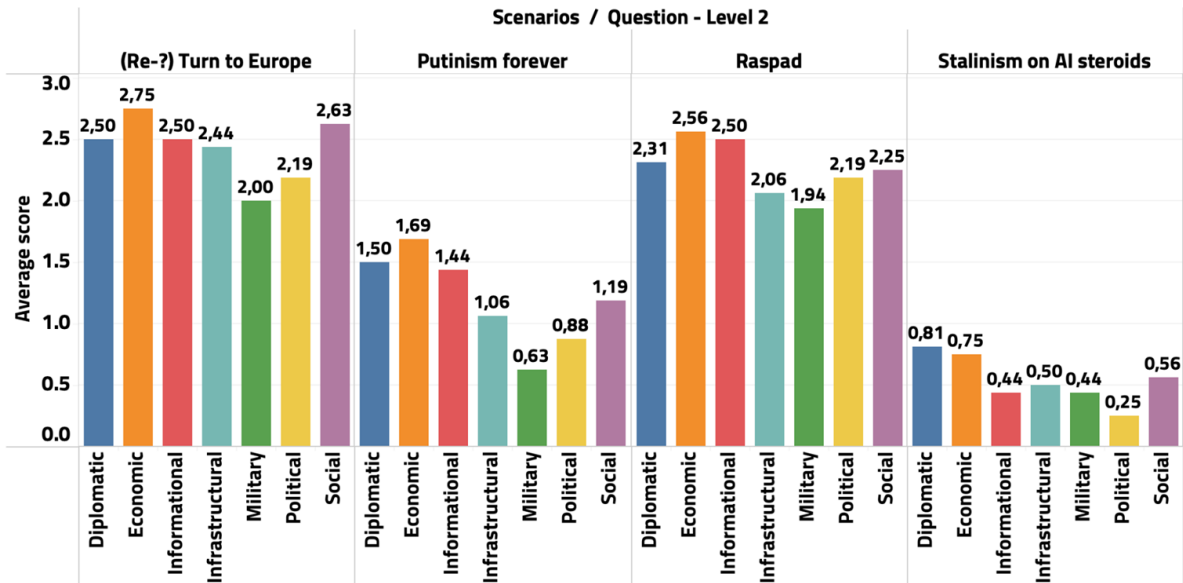


Average score for each Question - Level 2. Color shows details about Question - Level 2. The marks are labeled by Average score. The data is filtered on Question - Level 1 and Question - Level 3. The Question - Level 1 filter keeps Q2. Will Europe be able to influence future Russia's?. The Question - Level 3 filter keeps multiple members. The view is filtered on Question - Level 2, which keeps no members.

Figure 41 – HCSS policy survey: Europe’s expected influence on Russia (by policy domain)

With respect to the functional domains in which Europe could presumably try to influence Russia, respondents indicated they thought Europe’s influencing potential was low across the board, with the economic, diplomatic, informational and social domains (in that order) looking slightly more promising; and the military and political ones less so.

Europe’s expected influence on Russia (by policy domain and by Future Russia)



Average score for each Question - Level 2 broken down by Scenarios. Color shows details about Question - Level 2. The marks are labeled by Average score. The data is filtered on Question - Level 1 and Question - Level 3. The Question - Level 1 filter keeps Q2. Will Europe be able to influence future Russia's?. The Question - Level 3 filter keeps multiple members. The view is filtered on Question - Level 2, which keeps no members.

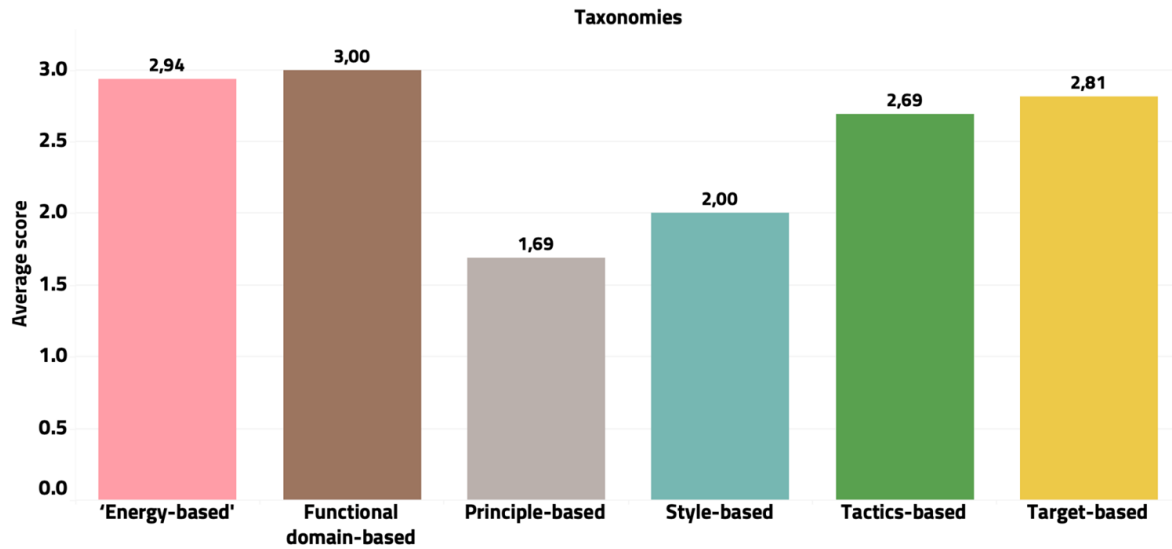
Figure 42 – HCSS policy survey: Europe’s expected influence on Russia (by policy domain and by Future Russia)

When we plot these policy domains and future Russia’s against one another we note that in the two conceivable future Russias in which our respondents felt Europe might still make at least some difference, the economic, informational and societal domains were thought to hold most promise – a finding that only reinforces this project’s overall conclusion that our current ‘influencing’ portfolio may be in need of some recalibration. We also observe that the military policy domain scored (surprisingly?) low across all scenarios.

Policy options and criteria

Despite the disappointingly low response rate of our first round, we still feel that the outcome of our attempt to find out which policy option schemes and which policy criteria our respondents considered to be most useful still deserves some attention.

Preferred taxonomies - overall

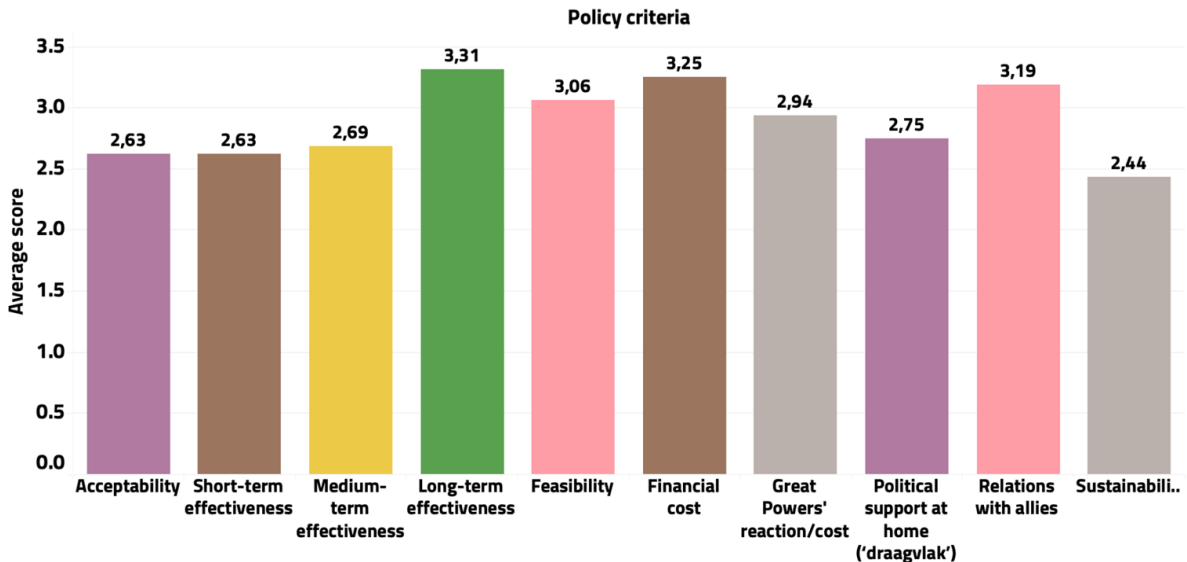


Average score for each Taxonomies. Color shows details about Question - Level 2. The marks are labeled by Average score. The data is filtered on Question - Level 1 and Question - Level 3. The Question - Level 1 filter keeps Q3. Which of the following 4-level ways of 'structuring' Europe's influence/ing option space do you find more useful for our policy trade-off analysis?. The Question - Level 3 filter keeps multiple members. The view is filtered on Question - Level 2, which keeps no members.

Figure 43 – HCSS policy survey: Preferred taxonomies – overall

From the various available 'influencing' taxonomies, we found the functional domain-based, 'energy'-based and 'target'-based to be the most promising ones.

Preferred policy criteria - overall



Average score for each Policy criteria. Color shows details about Policy criteria. The marks are labeled by Average score. The data is filtered on Question - Level 1, Question - Level 2 and Question - Level 3. The Question - Level 1 filter keeps Q4. Which of the following criteria to assess the relative attractiveness of different actionable influence/ing options do you find more useful for our policy trade-off analysis?. The Question - Level 2 filter keeps no members. The Question - Level 3 filter keeps multiple members.

Figure 44 – HCSS policy survey: Preferred policy criteria – overall

With respect to policy criteria, our Dutch respondents indicated that they prioritized ‘long-term’ over ‘short-’ to ‘medium-term effectiveness’; that ‘cost-effectiveness’ was the second most important policy criterion and that ‘relations with allies’ and the actual ‘feasibility’ of various policy options were close contenders. We would submit that these extremely pragmatic policy priorities are long-standing hallmarks of Dutch policy-making more generally speaking (not just in foreign, security and defense policy), and that they have served the country remarkably well. The real challenge at hand here is to find out which actual policy options for dealing with today’s and tomorrow’s Russia live up to those standards.

Towards a policy trade-off analysis

As we pointed out, we were (thus far) unable to carry out the second round of our survey, in which we intended to ask our academic and governmental colleagues to score the selected influencing options against the prioritized policy criteria. Since part of this project’s remit was to perform this trade-off analysis, we still proceeded with this step within our HCSS team (6 respondents). The following stoplight chart shows the results of this (even more modest) trade-off analysis.

Influencing options	Policy criteria									
	Future Russia - (Re-?) Turn to Europe	Future Russia - Putinism forever	Future Russia - Raspad	Future Russia - Stalinism on AI steroids	Feasibility	Financial cost	Long-term effectiveness	Relations/cost with Allies	Averages	
Demonstrate - repelling	1.33	1.83	1.33	2.00	2.83	2.67	1.83	2.17	2.00	
Demonstrate - shining	4.33	3.67	4.17	2.67	3.67	3.00	3.83	3.67	3.63	
Move away - avoiding	1.33	2.33	1.33	2.67	2.17	3.67	2.00	2.00	2.19	
Move away - disengaging	1.50	2.17	1.67	2.50	2.50	3.67	2.17	2.33	2.31	
Pull - attracting	4.67	3.67	4.33	2.17	3.50	3.17	4.17	3.17	3.60	
Pull- bridging	4.00	2.67	3.50	1.83	3.00	3.17	3.67	2.50	3.04	
Push - asserting	3.33	3.00	3.50	1.83	2.67	2.83	2.33	3.17	2.83	
Push - persuading	4.33	2.50	3.50	1.67	2.67	3.67	2.83	3.33	3.06	
diplomatic	4.50	2.83	3.83	2.00	2.67	3.67	3.00	3.50	3.25	
economic	4.50	3.33	4.33	2.00	3.50	2.83	4.00	3.00	3.44	
informational	4.17	2.67	3.67	1.33	3.17	2.67	3.33	3.50	3.06	
infrastructural	3.83	2.33	3.17	1.67	3.00	1.83	3.67	2.33	2.73	
military	3.00	2.33	3.67	2.00	2.83	1.67	2.83	2.33	2.58	
political	4.17	2.50	3.50	1.67	2.83	2.67	3.17	2.83	2.92	
social	4.50	3.17	3.83	1.50	3.33	3.00	3.83	3.50	3.33	
economic interest groups	4.67	3.17	4.17	1.83	3.33	3.00	3.67	3.50	3.42	
generations	4.17	3.33	3.00	1.67	3.50	3.33	3.83	3.83	3.33	
political actors	4.33	2.83	4.00	2.00	2.67	3.17	3.50	3.33	3.23	
regions	3.67	2.50	4.17	1.67	2.50	2.83	3.50	3.33	3.02	
societal influencers	4.00	2.83	3.33	1.50	3.67	3.67	3.17	3.83	3.25	
Averages	3.72	2.78	3.40	1.91	3.00	3.01	3.22	3.06	3.01	

Table 2 – HCSS policy survey: Trade-off analysis

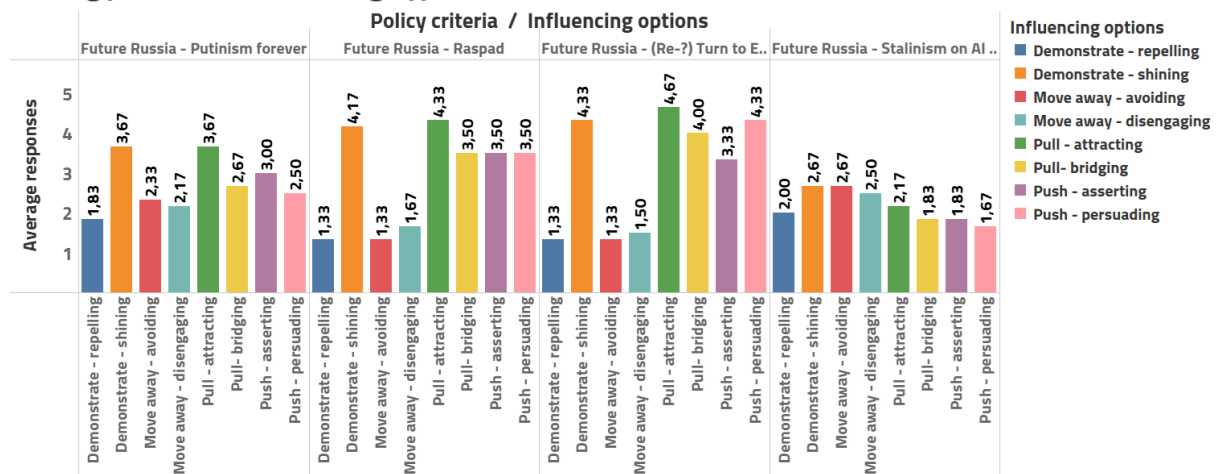
The color-codes in Table X represent the average values given by all respondents for each cell, with the value ‘5’ (dark green) representing the most influential/useful response and ‘1’ the least (dark red) policy options (in the rows) against the

scenarios/policy criteria (in the columns). The overall optical paucity of dark red cells across the spotlight chart already highlights that our team thinks that Europe does indeed have significant influencing options. The overall average is 3.01, which stands for ‘somewhat’ attractive, with the extreme scores being almost mirror images of each other, the lowest score being 1.33 and the highest 4.67.

Another striking finding is that ‘soft’/cooperative influencing options generally tend to receive higher scores than ‘hard ones’. ‘Shining’ scores better than ‘repelling’, ‘attracting’ and ‘bridging’ than ‘avoiding’ and ‘disengaging’, ‘persuading’ than ‘asserting’, ‘economic’ and ‘diplomatic’ options better than ‘military’. This general finding, however, has to be qualified by scenario: it is not at all true for a ‘Stalinism on AI steroids’ future Russia and not always true for ‘Putinism forever’. These ‘softer’ options are therefore expected to be more successful in future Russias in which Europe is considerably stronger than Russia (either ideologically by serving it as a role model in ‘(Re-?)Turn to Europe’ or stronger across the board than any post-Russian statelet that came out in ‘Raspad’). It is still worth pointing out, however, that ‘soft’ options perform consistently better on long-term effectiveness.

Looking at scenarios, we immediately see that ‘Stalinism on AI steroids’ represents the toughest case across the board – across all different influencing options, and also across all taxonomies. The expectation is that European options to influence Russia in this scenario would be very limited. On the other hand, the ‘(Re-?) Turn to Europe’ and ‘Raspad’ future Russia(s) offer the best influencing options across the board. ‘Putinism forever’ is seen as a problematic case, but one in which Russia can still be influenced.

‘Energy’-based influencing types



Average responses for each influencing options broken down by Policy criteria. Color shows details about Influencing options. The marks are labeled by Average responses. The data is filtered on Questions - Level 2 and Questions - Level 1. The Questions - Level 2 filter keeps 20 of 20 members. The Questions - Level 1 filter keeps Energy-based' options/policy criteria. The view is filtered on Policy criteria, which keeps Future Russia - (Re-?) Turn to Europe, Future Russia - Putinism forever, Future Russia - Raspad and Future Russia - Stalinism on AI steroids.

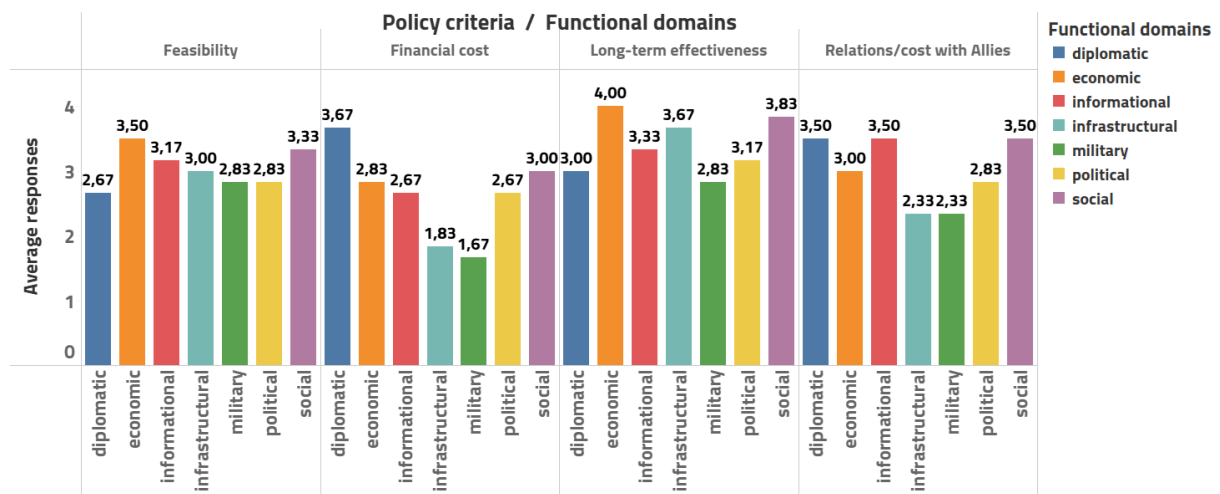
Figure 45 – HCSS policy survey: Assessment of ‘energy-based’ influencing options

We see that most influencing options bear potential for influencing Russia and that the scores are almost identically distributed for different scenarios and policy criteria. Demonstrate – shining and Pull – attracting are leading among the overall ‘energy-based’

influencing options (3.63 and 3.60, respectively). Three options are practically non-starters in any case – ‘repelling’, ‘avoiding’, ‘disengaging’ (averages of 2, 2.19, 2.31). When we look slightly deeper in our results, we find that communicative approaches (‘bridging’, ‘persuading’) are seen as the least effective in scenarios where Russia is highly centralized (‘Putinism forever’, ‘Stalinism on AI steroids’). However, even authoritarian closed states may be influenced through communication. The economic and diplomatic domains are considered ‘dialog windows’ since they achieved the highest scores across all other domains in those scenarios.

Avoidant approaches received higher marks in scenarios where Europe’s overall expected influence potential is lower (<2.78 – ‘Putinism forever’, ‘Stalinism on AI steroids’). They were ranked as the most cost-efficient but less favorable for ‘relations/cost with Allies’ (scoring even lower than ‘hard’ repelling options) and less effective in the long run. These influencing options were estimated as the least feasible even in comparison with opposing approaches (‘asserting’, ‘repelling’), indicating the weaknesses of ‘hard’ power influence.

Functional domains



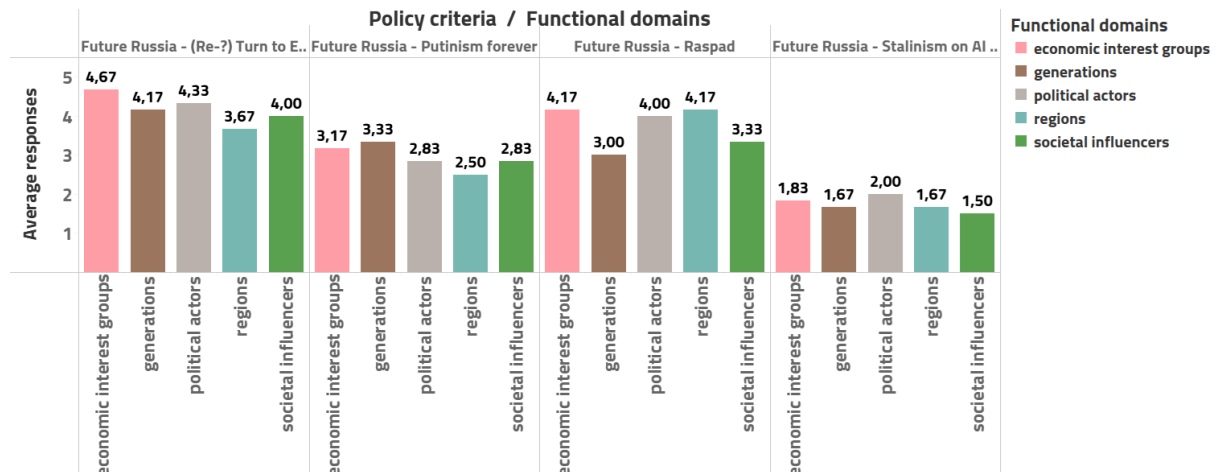
Average responses for each Functional domains broken down by Policy criteria. Color shows details about Functional domains. The marks are labeled by Average responses. The data is filtered on Questions - Level 2 and Questions - Level 1. The Questions - Level 2 filter keeps 20 of 20 members. The Questions - Level 1 filter keeps Functional domains /policy criteria. The view is filtered on Policy criteria, which keeps Feasibility, Financial cost, Long-term effectiveness and Relations/cost with Allies.

Figure 46 – HCSS policy survey: Assessment of ‘functional domain-based’ influencing options

Our team considered the economic sphere to be the single most promising one among all Europe’s influencing options. It dominates across functional domains and we also find ‘economic interest groups’ are the most promising targets for influencing. The most positive aspect of economic options lies in their long-term effectiveness. The flipside of that is that this influencing strategy is also thought to have Europe incur higher financial

costs. Other promising long-term effective influencing options are also found in the social domain, where influencing was seen as moderately financially demanding. In sum, our team identifies the economic and social domains as the most promising choices for European influence. That is even the case in ‘Stalinism on AI steroids’, even though their effectiveness there is still expected to be very low.

Possible influencing targets



Average responses for each Functional domains broken down by Policy criteria. Color shows details about Functional domains. The marks are labeled by Average responses. The data is filtered on Questions - Level 2 and Questions - Level 1. The Questions - Level 2 filter keeps 20 of 20 members. The Questions - Level 1 filter keeps Target-based' options/policy criteria. The view is filtered on Policy criteria, which keeps Future Russia - (Re-?) Turn to Europe, Future Russia - Putinism forever, Future Russia - Rospad and Future Russia - Stalinism on AI steroids.

Figure 47 – HCSS policy survey: Assessment of ‘functional domain-based’ influencing options by future Russias

In our ‘target’-based influencing options, our team felt that all identified targets have potential in terms of being influenced by Europe. Especially ‘economic interest groups’ (the top target in ‘(Re-?)Turn to Europe’ and ‘Raspad’) and ‘generations’ (leading in ‘Putinism forever’, but scoring much lower in ‘Raspad’) are considered to be Europe’s most promising influencing options. ‘Stalinism on AI steroids’ immediately stands out as the least likely case for influencing across all targets, but even in that case ‘political actors’ are still thought to be potential targets. In ‘(Re-?)Turn to Europe’ that ‘target’ group also bears the biggest, and in this case also ‘real’ potential. ‘Regions’ are thought to be among the attractive options across most future Russias, even if at noticeably lower levels than other options (with the one exception of the ‘Raspad’ scenario). Another important general drawback of influencing ‘regions’ concerns its ‘feasibility’ (which is also true for ‘political actors’) and ‘financial cost’. ‘Long-term effectiveness’, however, is an issue for ‘societal influencers’ – they score lowest on this criterion among the entire ‘targets’ category.

When we look at our results from the point of view of the *policy criteria*, we observe that ‘long-term effectiveness’ and ‘feasibility’ score the highest in this whole category. That shows that, on average, the suggested options are considered feasible and effective in the long-term, especially for economic and social influencing domains together with ‘generations’ as a target of influencing. However, effective long-term policies are more

likely to cause higher financial expenses together with having a stronger impact on relations with allies. Financially, 'diplomacy'-influencing is assessed as far more costly (3.67) than the other domains, especially military and infrastructural ones. At the same time, diplomatic, informational and social domains are felt to have the biggest significance on the 'Relations/cost with Allies' policy criteria.

We encourage our readers to interpret these findings primarily as illustrative of a more systematic way to first identify and structure, and to then 'weigh' the various policy options that are available for dealing with policy challenges against various policy criteria that are deemed to be important. Since it unfortunately proved impossible to solicit wider inputs from across the epistemic and policy-making communities dealing with Russia within and around the Dutch government, this table only represents the consolidated views of the HCSS team that has been working on this topic for the past year – views that are inevitably also quite primed by the homework we did and documented in our deliverables.

We would still submit that the real promise embedded in such an analytical effort to structure the available option space actually starts where we currently leave it. Doing more homework by data- and text-mining what we know about different policy options and criteria could set up a trade-off matrix like the one we drew up here. That matrix could then in turn provide a better evidence-based starting point for more systematic 'strategic portfolio design' discussions between the various key stakeholders within and outside of the government. At the very least, these (public and/or more 'limited-visibility') discussions would allow all stakeholders to start moving towards a shared analytical framing/framework of the issue at hand and to acquire a better appreciation of the different points of view about 'what could/should be done', about how sustainable different options might be in a particular (in this case Dutch) policy context, and what type of political 'deals' could be struck. At best, they could inform the actual policy-making process.

Conclusions

Why it matters

We have witnessed a dramatic deterioration in Russian-Western relations in which the 'harder' policy options like coercion and the use of brute force are gaining the upper hand on both sides. A broader, deeper and more systematic examination of all – also 'softer' – ways in which Europe could achieve its longer-term policy objectives towards Russia may enable policy makers to design an options portfolio that delivers superior value-for-money.

What we found

- Influencing lies at the very heart of international interactions. This makes it all the more astonishing that the concept has been given such short shrift in the international relations literature.
- The most extensive (also data-driven) research effort – including the most conceptually comprehensive typologies – into the phenomenon of human influencing can be found in disciplines studying marketing (advertising and social media influencers) and leadership. Many of the main insights from these disciplines run counter to today’s prevailing thinking (and acting) in international relations and foreign, security and defense security policy (FSDP). The most striking example of this mismatch is that more subtle influencing options that are primarily based on ‘pull’ (and not ‘push’) and that also include healthy doses of commitment, reciprocity, likeability, inspiring, etc. can be shown to generate far superior value for money⁷¹ in the general literature but are much less prevalent in the FSDP-literature.
- Even in the more applied defense and security literature the most developed taxonomies – and there are only a few of them – do consider the whole range of policy options (not only ‘hard’ ones); but they still also exhibit quite a few gaping holes and tend to focus mostly on the antagonistic side of international relationships.
- Europe still wields unique (also untapped) influencing potential towards Russia – more than is widely acknowledged.
- Europe’s salience in Russian media has declined over the past decade, as Russian media started turning more inward. This point has received remarkably little attention in the analytical community: we (also HCSS⁷²) did pick up on Russia’s increasing assertiveness and then its switch to outright aggressive policies, but this important point has been overlooked. Our systematic analysis of Russian media also shows that Europe still held up longer and to this day also still remains quite a bit more present in Russia’s media than any other ‘great power’.
- The range of plausible ‘future Russias’ that we have to plan for remains extremely broad, with many ‘European+unfriendly’ elements strewn across most (but not all) of them. At the same time, however, foresight studies on Russia from the past three years actually show a growing number of silver linings in these darkish clouds.

⁷¹We have argued before (Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *Reimagining Deterrence: Towards Strategic (Dis)Suasion Design* (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2020).) that from a ‘longue durée’ perspective the more crude and physically violent forms of making others comply with one’s own preferences have given way to more subtle and less physical ones. This is, we would submit, not because homo sapiens would have suddenly become weaker, softer or more effete. Instead, we suggest it is more likely due to the fact that our species has experientially found out – often the hard way – that it just works much better at a much lower cost.

⁷²Stephan De Spiegeleire and Eline Chivot, *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness. Are China and Russia Really Becoming More Assertive?*, HCSS StratMon 2014 (HCSS, 2014); Stephan De Spiegeleire, *From Assertiveness to Aggression: 2014 as a Watershed Year for Russian Foreign and Security Policy* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015); Stephan De Spiegeleire, *Great Power Assertivitis*, HCSS StratMon 2016 (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2016), <https://www.hcss.nl/news/great-power-assertivitis>; Stephan De Spiegeleire, Khrystyna Holynska, and Yevhen Sapolovych, “Taking Russian Assertiveness Seriously – Letting the Data Speak,” PONARS Policy Memo (The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), September 11, 2019).

- Various ways of using different numeric datasets (including public and elite opinion datasets) as well as natural language processing (NLP) tools applied to various full-text corpora to identify potentially promising areas and targets of influencing show unprecedented and unparalleled promise. But they still require more effort than the currently typical scale and scope of commissioned or academic research projects allow for.
- The initial Russian elite pro-Western and pro-European mood of the immediate post-Cold War era has now (almost) flipped over into an anti-European consensus. The attitude of the Russian population towards Europe, however, remains more benevolent, but with clear and seemingly firm reservations. [We also have to remain cautious about these surveys' reliability]
- The main 'fears' expressed by Putin in his public statements – and therefore arguably promising areas of Western influencing efforts – are external interference in Russia's domestic affairs and in its self-defined 'influence zone', NATO expansion (with Ukraine increasingly at the heart of those neuralgic apprehensions), externally-imposed sanctions, and missile defense in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Our analysis of what Russia publicly claims to have found effective in Western influencing attempts over the past two decades suggests that it feels particularly receptive to 'bridging' types of influence. The perceived lack of 'bridging' (particularly in the form of unilateral international actions) is considered as a sign of a hidden malicious agenda in the West.]
- Suffering from a 'besieged fortress' syndrome, Russia reflexively tends to interpret any military influencing attempts as direct threats. This type of influence should therefore be considered with particular circumspection, since the probability of retaliation will, as long as this syndrome (some might call it trauma) remains 'untreated', always be high.
- HCSS team's own trade-off analysis ("Which European influencing options score best on different policy criteria in which future Russia (or across all of them?") confirms that Europe continues to have quite a few highly promising influencing options.
- The analysis suggests that even in the toughest permutations of different future Russias, 'softer' approaches to influencing ('shining', 'persuading', 'attracting') generally outperform harder and non-cooperative ones. On average, these 'softer' options were also seen as the most effective against all policy criteria.
- Our team also assessed European influence on Russia as being most effective when targeted at Russia(s)' economic and societal spheres. The fact that 'economic interest groups' and 'generations' were selected as the most promising European influencing targets across most 'future Russias' only confirms this hypothesis.

What we recommend

- We need to start structuring and thinking through the West's (but especially Europe's) high-level (whole-of-government or – better yet – whole-of-society) policy

option space for dealing with different future Russia(s) in a strategic balance-of-investment context: which policy options offer the best 'utils' for our 'euros' (value for money)?

- The policy debate on Russia should move beyond its presentist obsession with Putin's current (post-2014) Russia, and we should instead also keep at least a few (representatively) different future Russias on our radar screen. Not in the least to identify and properly value promising policy options that lean in directions that Europe deems more desirable. Does Europe really want to 'deter', 'coerce' etc. Russia for the next few decades/centuries? Or does it instead want to design more sustainable security solutions with a more 'European' Russia?
- We need a more open-minded but critical scrutiny of the non-IR/FSDP literatures on human influencing and possibly even an alignment of our FSDP strategic options portfolio with those (often empirically far more richly validated) insights.
- Europe should try to 'stay true to itself' and its own uniqueness as much as possible – also in FSDP terms, even towards Russia. This includes:
- Maintaining a longer (both forward and backward) time-horizon than most (“staying the course”⁷³);
- Reaping the benefits (while at the same time also trying to minimize the drawbacks) of multi-perspectivism;
- Treasuring (based on its own troubled history) the instinctive *skepticism of 'hard' policy options* – NOT because Europe is weak and cannot implement these, but because Europe has learned (the hard way) that there are smarter – more effective and more sustainable – ways to achieve the same (FSDP!) goals;
- *Daring to be different*. European integration remains the single largest, boldest, most successful and enduring policy innovation in how nations interact with each other in (at least) the past three and a half centuries. This painful process has had (and continues to have) its ups and downs and continues to adapt and evolve. But its remarkable success means that continuing to (also) think how the rest of Europe may be able to anchor Russia in a similar evolution continues to deserve all the attention Europe (and the Netherlands – with its special 'history' with Russia) can give it.
- In its attempts to influence Russia, Europe should first and foremost leverage the spheres where it has a competitive advantage, i.e. especially the economic sphere. A much more data-intensive approach could yield considerable dividends here.
- Promising 'targets' for European *sui generis* influencing in Russia include the younger generations, selected regions, interest groups and even social and political influencers. The first step in this, however, requires doing our homework on all of these in ways that are currently not been done (although this project did at least experiment on this and documented it).

⁷³Stephan De Spiegeleire, "Recoupling Russia to Europe: Staying the Course," *The International Spectator* 38 (July 2003): 79–97, <https://doi.org/10/bjns8j>.

- Our analysis of Russian perceptions of the effectiveness of the European strategies suggests the potential effectiveness of bridging types of influence and risks of hard militaristic options.
- Mapping the Nth-order effects of various (including influencing) policy options requires significantly more attention.

Bottom line

Given its history, its size, its unique instantiation of international agency, its (global) performance, legitimacy/attractiveness in many areas that matter to most people⁷⁴ (happiness, equality, self-actualization, decent living standards, education, health, transportation mobility, upward social mobility, responsible husbandry of the world's resources, a 'human' and sustainable social safety net, etc.), its considerable global influence and 'soft' power as well as its residual raw 'hard power' – Europe may have comparative (and even competitive) advantages in 'influencing' other parts of the world, and within that world especially its own neighborhood, and within that neighborhood arguably even especially Russia. The Netherlands, with its own unique history, still holds a relatively unique and special place in Europe's engagement with Russia. This paper suggests that Europe should start doing its homework to realize that untapped potential, and that the Netherlands could benefit from playing a special role in this effort.

Go deeper

See our annotated PowerPoint and explanatory video for more details.

Caveat

In the absence of any systematic and validated strategic knowledge base in the (R)FSDP field, any reports on this topic (including the current one) are best seen as opinion pieces. HCSS wants to reiterate that it regrets that the current mode of cumulative knowledge generation (and funding) essentially precludes the creation, let alone curation of such a database. Against all odds, we keep working towards that goal.

⁷⁴“Corruption Perception Index,” Transparency, 2020, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020>; “Ease of Doing Business Rankings,” World Bank, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>; “Energy Transition Index Report 2021,” World Economic Forum, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/fostering-effective-energy-transition-2021/>; “Gender Equality Index,” European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>; “Global Corruption Index,” Global Risk Profile, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://risk-indexes.com/global-corruption-index/>. Klaus Schwab et al., *Global Gender Gap Report 2020 Insight Report* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2019); “Human Development Report,” Human Development Data Center, accessed June 2, 2021, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>; “Openness to Trade,” World Integrated Trade Solution, accessed June 2, 2021, <http://wits.worldbank.org/visualization/openness-to-trade-dashboard.html>; “Quality of Life,” Worlddata.info, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.worlddata.info/quality-of-life.php>; “Quality of Life Index by Country,” Numbeo, 2021, https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/rankings_by_country.jsp; “Social Progress Index,” 2020, <https://www.socialprogress.org/>; “Trade Openness,” Our World in Data, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/trade-openness>; “World Happiness Report,” 2021, <https://worldhappiness.report/>; *WORLDS OF INFLUENCE: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-Being in Rich*. (S.I.: UNITED NATIONS, 2021).

Annex 1 – Datasets and corpora downloaded for this project

Green: newly created HCSS-datasets/corpora; others: datasets used

Dataset/corpora	Source	Timespan	Number of documents
1. Influence-Human/Bibliometric	Lens	1950-2021	632,433
2. Influencing-IR/Bibliometric (English)	Web of Science – Core Collection	1921-2021	14,851
3. Influencing-IR/Bibliometric (Russian)	Web of Science – Russian Citation Index	2005-2021	674
4. Influencing-broad (English)	ProQuest	1910-2005	23,285
5. Influencing-international (English)	ProQuest	1900-2021	37,942
6. Influencing-international (Russia)	Integrum	2010-2021	34,923
7. Influencing-IR-Russia-broad (English)	ProQuest	1900-2021	25,841
8. Influencing-IR-Russia-precise (English)	ProQuest	1900-2021	3,010
9. Influencing-IR-Russia-reverse psychology (English)	ProQuest	1900-2021	8,274
10. Influencing-IR-Russia (Russian)	Integrum	2010-2021	15,430
11. Influencing-IR-Russia-reverse psychology	Integrum	2010-2021	21,319

(Russian)			
12. Influencing typologies (English)	ProQuest	1900-2021	27,191
13. Influence-Defense (English)	Google Scholar, ProQuest, Jane, AUL	1900-2021	1,795
14. Russian presidents' speeches corpus	kremlin.ru	2000-2021	11,442
15. Dataset of Putin's speeches on influencing	kremlin.ru	2001-2021	114
16. Influencing taxonomies	ProQuest	1900-2021	27,191
17. FutureBase Russia	Google Scholar, Integrum, ProQuest, Google, Lens	2014-2021	22
18. Russian wars	CoW Military Interstate Disputes	1816-2014	
19. Russian foreign trade	TRADEHIST	1827-2016	
20. Russia's formal alliances	CoW formal alliances	1816-2012	
21. Russia's neighbors	CoW Direct Contiguity	1816-2016	
22. Russia's and Europe's co-membership in the international organizations	CoW Intergovernmental organizations	1815-2014	
23. Russia's diplomatic exchanges	CoW Diplomatic exchange	1817-2005	
24. Russian public opinion on	Levada Center	2010-2021	13

Europe			
25. Russian Elite Survey	Russian Elite Survey	1993-2020	

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