



SEPTEMBER 2020 | THE RETURN OF GLOBAL RUSSIA

# Russia and Europe: Stuck on Autopilot

Andrew S. Weiss

---

# **Russia and Europe: Stuck on Autopilot**

Andrew S. Weiss

---



This publication was funded by the Russia Strategic Initiative  
U.S. European Command, Stuttgart Germany

Opinions, arguments, viewpoints, and conclusions expressed in this work do not represent those of RSI,  
U.S. EUCOM, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

This publication is cleared for public release.

© 2020 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All rights reserved.

Carnegie does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented herein are those of the author(s)  
and do not necessarily reflect the views of Carnegie, its staff, or its trustees.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission  
in writing from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Please direct inquiries to:

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace  
Publications Department  
1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
P: + 1 202 483 7600  
F: + 1 202 483 1840  
CarnegieEndowment.org

This publication can be downloaded at no cost at [CarnegieEndowment.org](http://CarnegieEndowment.org).

Cover photo: YURI KADOBNOV/AFP via Getty Images

## + CONTENTS

Summary	1
Introduction	3
Long-Term Allies, Short-Term Horizons	4
Same as It Ever Was	9
Narrowing Pathways of Russian Influence	12
Conclusion	22
About the Author	25
Acknowledgments	25
Notes	26



## Summary

Many observers predicted that the coronavirus pandemic might lead Russian President Vladimir Putin to rethink his highly opportunistic, zero-sum approach to foreign policy. Such assessments turned out to be little more than exercises in wishful thinking. If anything, the Kremlin's policy toward "core Europe"—Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—has followed the same aggressive, in-your-face approach, leading to growing awareness that Moscow is not at all serious about lowering the tensions that followed the annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine.

Today, Russia's relations with core Europe are getting worse. The Kremlin taunts the West over the attempted assassination of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny using a banned military-grade nerve agent. Its suggestions that he was somehow poisoned in Germany, where he was flown for treatment, have pulled the rug out from under longtime advocates of closer cooperation in the economic and energy sphere, including Germany's Angela Merkel. A controversial attempt by French President Emmanuel Macron to re-engage the Kremlin on a range of strategic and regional issues is also now at risk. The United Kingdom continues to try to push back against Russian malign activities on its territory and to limit undue influence, but a light-touch approach to regulation has made it difficult to achieve major breakthroughs.

Why does the Kremlin pursue policies toward Europe that appear so counterproductive on their face? Instead of carefully seeking to exploit long-standing differences within NATO and the European Union about the proper response to Russian aggression against Ukraine or interference in the affairs of European nations, it is Moscow's own overreach and missteps that time and again encourage greater Western unity, or at the very least leave the allies no alternative to confronting Russia. That pattern, in turn, fosters a dynamic that only makes the Kremlin feel more insecure over the long term.

A contributing factor is Moscow's perennial attempts—unacceptable in twenty-first-century Europe—to treat Germany, France, and the United Kingdom as members of a nineteenth-century-style steering committee of great powers who are entitled somehow to decide the fate of the entire Continent on their own. The Kremlin's approach to Europe highlights its failure to appreciate the importance of the European project for Berlin and Paris. Russian officials appear to believe their own propaganda that the West has entered a period of irreversible decline and division and all they need to do to succeed as a great power is wait out their many adversaries.

The Kremlin's actions point to a major fault in its strategy toward Europe. Its efforts to deepen and capitalize on what in reality are long-standing differences between the leaders of core Europe and Washington are likely to prove shortsighted and backfire. Germany's dual track approach of maintaining strong transatlantic security ties with other forms of close engagement with Moscow has been a key feature of its foreign policy since the 1960s. Likewise, Macron is following in the footsteps of previous leaders like former French president Charles de Gaulle in advocating for a new level of dialogue and détente with the Kremlin. But would a more splintered European order, hastened by the corrosive effects of Russia's policies—without a strong, yet pragmatic, unifying leader like Angela Merkel, who is nearing the end of her tenure—actually be better for Russian interests?

## Introduction

During the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic, there were short-lived hopes that the scale of the crisis might prompt a rethink on the part of Russian President Vladimir Putin of his assertive brand of foreign policy. With much of the global economy at a standstill and oil prices in free fall, many observers suggested that he would be forced to shift his attentions to problems closer to home. Surely, cooler heads in the Kremlin would recognize that Russia's ongoing campaign of mayhem and malign activities in the West—along with more quixotic adventures further afield in parts of the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America—was becoming counterproductive or simply unaffordable.

Yet throughout the crisis the Putin regime has never wavered on its core agenda. The threat of a dramatic drop in oil revenues for the Russian state budget was minimized following an emergency agreement with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on production cuts that helped stabilize the oil market. The government's capable economic team decided once again that it was preferable for average citizens to bear the brunt of the adjustment caused by the crisis rather than dip deeply into the country's hard-currency reserves, which total nearly \$600 billion.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to a weaker ruble, higher government spending, and increased domestic borrowing, the Kremlin has managed to avoid explosive growth in the unemployment rate, to mount a modest public-health response to the pandemic, and to avoid draconian cuts in defense and national security expenditures. The political bill for Putin's aloof handling of the crisis was also delayed, even though his popularity has experienced significant declines.

Even before the virus, policymakers in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (the site of a Russian-state-sponsored attack using a military-grade nerve agent in 2018) had harbored hopes of lowering the temperature with Russia. For these countries, which will be referred to in this paper as core Europe, the pandemic was initially seen as a potential opportunity to break out of the downward spiral created by the Ukraine crisis in 2014. They have thus been caught off-guard by the sharp deterioration of relations that began in August following the disputed election outcome in Belarus and the attempted assassination of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

This paper seeks to assess why Russian policies and behavior toward core Europe have hardened during the pandemic. Rather than dealing with major challenges at home or building bridges to former partners, the Kremlin has instead pursued policies that prioritize short-term advantage over the prospect of re-normalization. The stances of Germany and France on Russia have been widely

criticized in recent years—for example, German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s defense of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline and French President Emmanuel Macron’s attempt to launch a strategic dialogue with Putin—but in the end it is largely the Kremlin’s behavior that has aggravated relations.

Nonetheless, there is value in forming a judgment about the extent to which current European approaches have conformed to or strayed from long-standing patterns. For example, Germany’s leaders have long pursued a dual-track policy of constraining Russia’s foreign policy ambitions and maintaining a strong stake in transatlantic security ties while trying to foster various types of economic and energy cooperation with Moscow. In a similar vein, there are clear parallels between Macron’s efforts and former president Charles de Gaulle’s outreach to the Soviet leadership at the height of the Cold War. And, while the United Kingdom has witnessed the sharpest deterioration in its relationship with Russia, its political economy creates unusual entrée for state-backed and nonstate Russian actors in myriad ways, some of which are potentially quite harmful to its national security.

## Long-Term Allies, Short-Term Horizons

The Kremlin has long preferred to deal with individual European countries rather than the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the European Union (EU). It has treated core Europe very much in the tradition of nineteenth century great-power diplomacy or as the European politburo. This approach is partly utilitarian and partly based on awareness that European leaders see value in maintaining direct lines of communication with Moscow and do not always see eye to eye with Washington.

At the same time, the Kremlin has frequently overestimated the quality of the cards it has to play in Europe. Repeated Russian attempts to split NATO or the EU have fallen flat over the past several decades. The staying power of both institutions—and the European unity that undergirds them—has been quite impressive, even in extreme circumstances like the current pandemic, the annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine in 2014, and the Euromissile crisis of the early 1980s. Along the way, Russian leaders have demonstrated a repeated propensity to shoot themselves in the foot. Their overreach has stiffened European resolve and reinforced the central role of Germany, which precisely because of its special relationship with Russia has been crucial in managing the EU’s ties with a

truculent neighbor. Moscow has also demonstrated time and again that it simply does not get the importance of the EU for Germany and France, and that lack of understanding frequently backfires for the Kremlin.

For their part, U.S. diplomats and military officers have long strived to reconcile the competing priorities and goals of their European allies. As one very experienced NATO hand put it, the leaders of the alliance have generally proved themselves to be masters at

balancing conventional and nuclear defense, balancing détente and defense, balancing the process of European integration which de Gaulle wanted with alliance of the Atlantic solidarity, balancing national interests, which are very strong, with the need for a common denominator of collective security.<sup>2</sup>

With Russian behavior once again posing a direct threat to NATO members, this balancing act has become increasingly important of late, but the alliance has generally succeeded in restoring a proper level of focus to its original core mission of deterrence and collective defense.

The United States has traditionally relied on high-level diplomacy and informal decisionmaking and coordination mechanisms to help shape transatlantic policy toward Russia and to bridge differences with its core European allies. During former U.S. president Gerald Ford's administration, the Quad was created to facilitate regular dialogue among the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom at the level of foreign ministers and senior diplomats. More recently, this mechanism has played an important role in the response to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, including joint U.S./EU economic sanctions, the revitalization of NATO, and steps to improve the resilience of EU and frontline countries to respond to Russian malign activities.<sup>3</sup>

There have long been subtle yet significant differences in the approaches pursued by Germany, France, and the United Kingdom toward Russia. For example, on the Ukraine crisis Merkel took the lead within the EU on forging a unified stance with then U.S. president Barack Obama's administration, using her personal political capital to shape and sustain the sanctions regime while carving out a diplomatic track on the basis of the Minsk accords. At the same time, she has never abandoned close engagement with Russia on energy, trade, and commercial matters, which has frequently ruffled feathers in Washington as well as in Central European capitals.

By contrast, the United Kingdom's policy and rhetoric on Russia have traditionally been much firmer than Germany's or France's. In a dramatic speech in November 2017, the UK's then prime minister Theresa May portrayed the Kremlin as a threat to the international order, citing the war in Ukraine, election meddling, a "sustained campaign of cyber espionage and disruption," and the weaponizing of information. "I have a very simple message for Russia," May said. "We know what you are doing. And you will not succeed."<sup>4</sup> Yet during this contentious period her eventual successor, Boris Johnson, then foreign secretary, nurtured hopes for a possible reset in relations.<sup>5</sup> Even today some pockets of the foreign policy establishment remain open to turning the page with Russia. It is hard to imagine such an effort succeeding, however, given how the Novichok attack on former Soviet intelligence officer Sergei Skripal in the English city of Salisbury in March 2018 has transformed the domestic political context. Still, as Duncan Allan, a longtime Foreign and Commonwealth Office Russia specialist, has written,

The measures adopted after the Salisbury attack were essentially a sterner version of what was tried in 2007 [following the killing in the United Kingdom of former Russian intelligence officer Aleksandr Litvinenko with radioactive polonium]—broadly 'deterrence by denial' (making it more difficult to conduct future hostile attacks on UK soil). There was minimal resort to 'deterrence by punishment' (i.e., imposing a cost to discourage future unacceptable activities) beyond symbolic steps such as suspending high-level bilateral contacts and not sending ministers or members of the royal family to the World Cup.<sup>6</sup>

A report of the UK parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee published in July 2020—after a lengthy, politically inspired delay—provides a similarly withering assessment of the government's handling of the growing Russian threat. It details the absence of adequate responses to an array of hostile activities by Moscow, including suspected meddling in the Brexit referendum, cyber and information operations, and the reported killings of more than a dozen opponents of the Putin regime on British soil.<sup>7</sup> The report also chronicles the struggles of British law enforcement and security authorities to curb Russian influence in the country and prevent inflows of illicit finance.<sup>8</sup>

As for France, Macron's approach, with its unabashed boldness and risk-taking as well as pointed criticism of the past handling of the Kremlin by the country's "deep state,"<sup>9</sup> has been the outlier among the core Europe countries. In an August 2019 address delivered on the eve of a summit meeting with Putin, Macron asserted that it was unacceptable for the relationship with Russia to stay

frozen. Doing so placed the EU in the middle of a “strategic battle between the United States and Russia.”<sup>10</sup> Following in the footsteps of de Gaulle, who advocated détente and rapprochement with the Kremlin in the mid-1960s, Macron announced that the time had arrived for a strategic dialogue to build “an agenda of trust.”

The provocative analysis and strategic thinking outlined in Macron’s address were overshadowed by a conspicuous lack of diplomatic finesse that ignored the deep divisions on Russia that have plagued the EU for years. Presenting such views without advance consultation with key countries like Germany was counterproductive. Macron exacerbated intra-EU tensions by asserting that some frontline EU/NATO countries were happy with the status quo and supported additional sanctions because they were not interested in the situation ever improving. Macron’s critics said he was offering concessions to the Kremlin ahead of any changes in behavior and trying to foreclose the possibility of future EU or NATO membership for countries like Ukraine and Georgia.

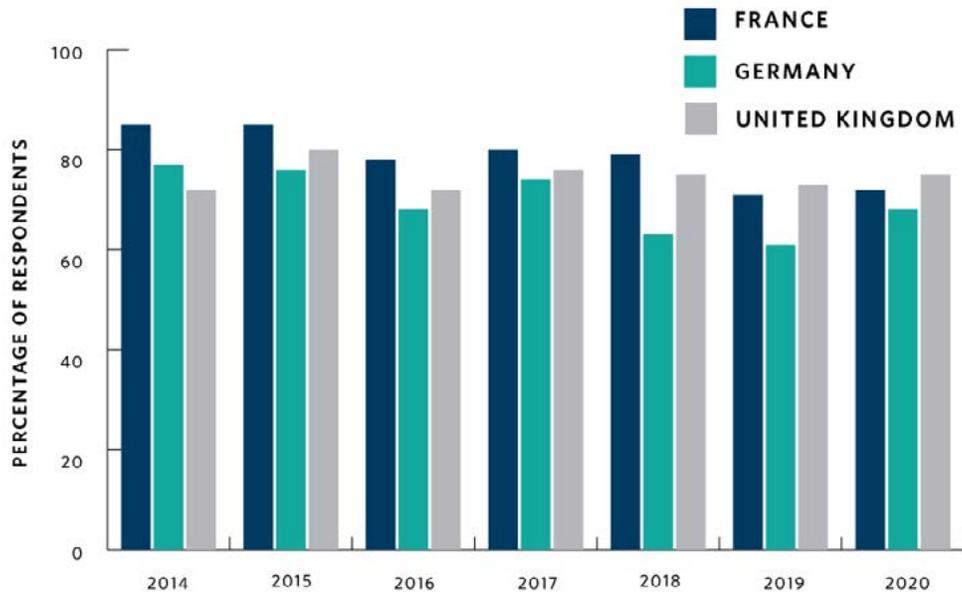
Undaunted, Macron’s government has pursued a series of high-level interactions with Russia, led by a longtime French career diplomat (and fellow Carnegie Endowment for International Peace scholar), Pierre Vimont, and Putin’s chief foreign policy adviser, Yuriy Ushakov. These talks have included exchanges involving foreign and defense ministers, top military commanders, and the intelligence services. The dialogue has covered issues such as arms control and disarmament, regional hot spots, cyber activities and new threats, and the deconfliction of military activities and confidence-building measures. French officials insist that they never expected the relationship would be transformed in short order, but Russian officials have reportedly shown no flexibility in the ongoing discussions. The Kremlin is all too aware that Macron is not in a position to negotiate on behalf of the EU, let alone the United States. As former French ambassador to Russia Jean-Maurice Ripert put it,

The Russians need to regain some form of economic and political legitimacy, because their only way of existing for the past ten years has been through military action. But that requires major bilateral negotiations. The Russians do not want to negotiate security in Europe with us, but with the Americans.<sup>11</sup>

As of July 2020, Macron’s initiative had not produced any concrete signs of progress, according to Defense Minister Florence Parly.<sup>12</sup>

FIGURE 1

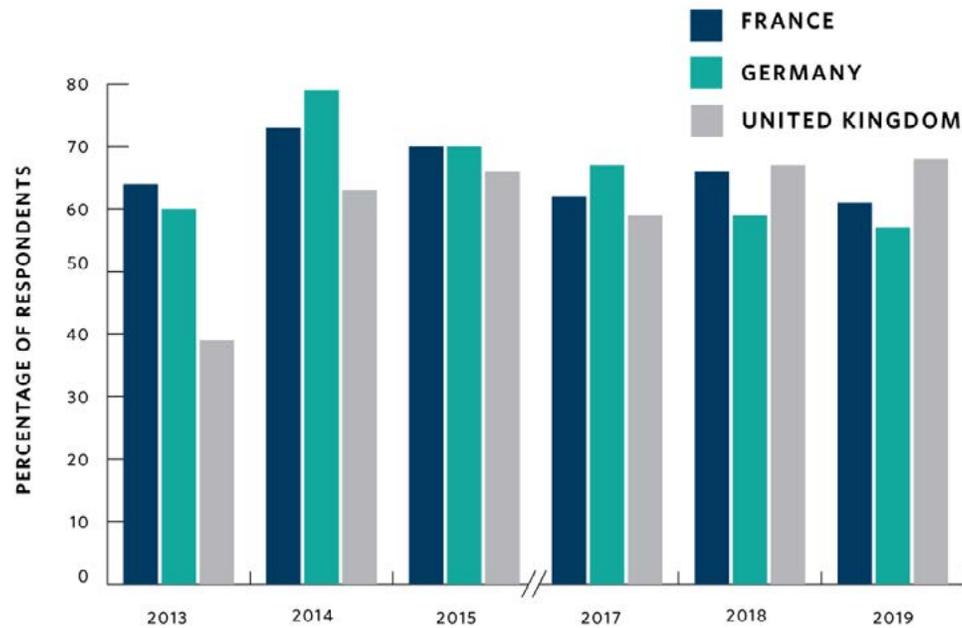
**Percentage of Respondents With Low or No Confidence in Putin**



**SOURCE:** "Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey," Pew Research Center, February 7, 2020, [https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Views-of-Russia-Topline-for-Release\\_UPDATED.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Views-of-Russia-Topline-for-Release_UPDATED.pdf).

FIGURE 2

**Percentage of Respondents with an Unfavorable View of Russia**



**SOURCE:** "Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey," Pew Research Center, February 7, 2020, [https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Views-of-Russia-Topline-for-Release\\_UPDATED.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Views-of-Russia-Topline-for-Release_UPDATED.pdf).

At the same time, trends in public opinion also impose certain constraints on policymaking in the countries of core Europe. On the whole, a lack of trust in Putin and wariness about Russia are easily discernible in public perceptions in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> (See figures 1 and 2.) Yet the level of public concern about the threat posed by Russia is fairly subdued in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Only 33 percent of Germans and 40 percent of French surveyed said Russia was a threat to security in Europe, according to a 2018 poll.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, 50 percent of Germans and 44 percent of French respondents in the same poll said they see the United States as the main threat to European security.<sup>15</sup> In 2017, only 8 percent of German respondents in one poll identified Russia as the country's greatest foreign policy challenge.<sup>16</sup> In the United Kingdom, 33 percent of respondents in a 2020 poll said they viewed Russian military power as a major threat to national security.<sup>17</sup>

## Same as It Ever Was

As discussed above, the coronavirus pandemic has not triggered significant deviations from the Kremlin's full-contact, highly opportunistic approach to foreign policy. Rather, the foreign policy apparatus continues to operate in familiar ways on issues close to home and much further afield. This continuity reflects several factors, including the Russian leadership's well-established view that entertaining, let alone implementing, meaningful policy changes on a given issue will inevitably be perceived as a sign of weakness and an invitation to foreign powers to increase their demands. Over the past fifteen years, the Kremlin has repeatedly demonstrated that it understands three things very well: how to build and exploit leverage, how to create facts on the ground, and how to identify and capitalize on the weaknesses of and vacuums created by Russia's adversaries.

The latest flashpoints in Europe's relationship with Russia—the crisis in Belarus and the attack on Navalny—illustrate the challenge facing Western leaders. Germany, France, and other European countries have repeatedly tried to help defuse the dangerous standoff in Belarus between Alexander Lukashenko and the protest movement, but they have very little leverage, for example, to insist on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the main platform for dialogue. Putin has repeatedly waved off such suggestions, signaling instead his willingness to intervene

militarily if necessary. In the meantime, the Kremlin has spread disinformation about foreign meddling in Belarus, portraying the protests and Western diplomatic outreach as part of an effort to stage a color revolution. In August Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said:

I urge all the people saying that mediation is the only way out of the current situation to not forget how our Western colleagues ‘mediated’ in 2014 during the Maidan in Kiev. Back then, esteemed representatives of the European Union ‘mediated’ and reached agreements, but we all remember what it turned into.<sup>18</sup>

In a similar vein, the Kremlin has dismissed Western concerns about Navalny, who was poisoned on Russian soil and evacuated to Germany for medical treatment. Instead of taking German, French, and Swedish toxicology reports seriously and mounting a credible investigation, Russian officials are sticking to the established playbook from the earlier attack on Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom. Russian officials and proxies engage in over-the-top denialism and disinformation about the use of Novichok in the attack, demanding that Western counterparts share any hard evidence of traces of this banned substance and spreading endless numbers of alternative theories and explanations to muddy the waters. Senior figures such as Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergey Naryshkin and Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin have made preposterous claims that Western intelligence agencies may have staged the attack as a provocation.<sup>19</sup>

What emerges from recent interviews with senior European diplomats is the unmistakable sense that dialogue with Moscow remains almost completely nonproductive and that discussions on the most important issues on the European-Russian agenda have all been moving in the wrong direction. The Normandy process on ending the war in Ukraine has been slowly unraveling following the January 2020 appointment of a new Russian representative, Dmitri Kozak.<sup>20</sup> His antics have largely paralyzed that process, upending initial expectations that he might emerge as a more constructive interlocutor than his predecessor, former Kremlin political guru Vladislav Surkov.

Ongoing attempts to engage the Kremlin about the corrosive impact on relations with core Europe of malign activities such as cyber operations, targeted killings, and the deployment of Russian mercenaries in Libya and other regional conflicts have been met by flat denials, stonewalling and pro forma, tit-for-tat counteraccusations. For Germany, other salient issues on the bilateral agenda include the 2015 hacking of the Bundestag (discussed below) and the 2019 murder of Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, a critic of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and former militant, in broad daylight in central Berlin. When Foreign Minister Heiko Maas visited Moscow in August 2020, he made no headway on either issue.

In recent years the United Kingdom has led coordinated efforts to expose Russian cyber activities. UK authorities formally attributed to Russia cyber operations targeting Ukraine, Georgia, and research institutions involved in coronavirus vaccine development in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. (The Russian government has disavowed any responsibility.<sup>21</sup>) While the United Kingdom's public moves have presumably been accompanied by other undisclosed activities to raise the costs of Russian behavior, there is as yet no indication that formal attribution of attacks involving Russian-government-sponsored hackers APT28 (the group also known as Fancy Bear, which has been linked to Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU<sup>22</sup>) and APT29 (the SVR-linked group also known as Cozy Bear<sup>23</sup>) is producing changes in Russian behavior.

More recently the UK government has publicized Russian interference in the December 2019 general election via a hack-and-release effort involving sensitive U.S.-UK trade documents reportedly stolen from the personal email account of then trade minister Liam Fox. According to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, the documents were "disseminated online via the social media platform Reddit. When these gained no traction, further attempts were made to promote the illicitly acquired material online in the run up to the General Election."<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Corbyn, then leader of the UK Labor Party, sought to capitalize on the documents in the final weeks of the election campaign. "This is not only a plot against our NHS [National Health Service]," said Corbyn in late November 2019. "It is a plot against the whole country." It has not been alleged that Corbyn was aware of the source of the documents.<sup>25</sup>

Russia's recent track record leaves an inescapable impression that the Kremlin is profoundly uninterested in forging any improvement in relations with core Europe. Instead, Russian policy is following well-established priorities that have been such a constant in recent years as to almost seem immutable. These are:

- planting wedges, disrupting the transatlantic relationship, undermining the EU and NATO, and destabilizing the rules-based system devised after the end of the Cold War;
- tarnishing democracy and deepening societal and political divisions in Europe;
- promoting de facto recognition of Russia as a great power entitled to its own sphere of influence;
- leveraging cyber operations as well as traditional forms of subversion, espionage, co-optation, and disinformation; and
- exploiting Russia's leading role in European energy markets.

At the same time, the Kremlin's approach to core Europe appears to be relying on a latter day equivalent of the Roman-era Fabian strategy of fighting a war of attrition rather than frontal assault. Put simply, the Putin regime hopes to prevail in a test of wills with Europe (and, by extension, the United States) just by not losing and outlasting its many adversaries. Moreover, Russian officials often act in high-handed ways that suggest they actually believe the Kremlin's propaganda that says the Western camp is in inexorable decline and that many of its cherished values and ideas are discredited or have been disowned by public opinion.<sup>26</sup>

Such attitudes help explain why there has been so much opportunism and continuity in Russian behavior throughout the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>27</sup> In March, a leaked EU report highlighted an ongoing Russian disinformation campaign intended "to aggravate the public health crisis in western countries, specifically by undermining public trust in national healthcare systems — thus preventing an effective response to the outbreak."<sup>28</sup> Within days, the Russian military launched a series of aid deliveries and troop deployments to northern Italy, Serbia, and Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The deliveries aimed to discredit the EU's accusations and to shine a spotlight on a string of embarrassing everyone-for-himself policy failures by EU member states.<sup>29</sup> Macron and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell responded frostily to the Kremlin's moves, with the latter decrying a "struggle for influence through spinning and the 'politics of generosity'."<sup>30</sup> The launch of the Sputnik-V vaccine in August 2020 (in advance of clinical trials) has confirmed Moscow's continued preference for public-relations stunts that play on raw emotions instead of practical contributions to fighting the pandemic.

## Narrowing Pathways of Russian Influence

### Germany

The combined effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the Belarus crisis, and the Navalny attack have upended Germany's political landscape in ways that are bound to limit Russian influence. Merkel's personal popularity has soared to all-time highs while the fortunes of populist political parties like the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) have ebbed significantly.<sup>31</sup> Although the AfD and Die Linke (the Left) remain resolutely pro-Russian voices in the political debate, they have had practically zero impact on policymaking before and during the pandemic.

The May 2020 indictment in absentia of the GRU hacker responsible for the 2015 Bundestag attack and the upcoming trial of the suspected assassin of Zelimkhan Khangoshvili provide vivid illustrations of how Russian malign activities are touching closer to the heart of German politics and society. The government has tried to handle both cases carefully to limit the impact on other parts of the

relationship with Moscow and to allow the legal process to play out. That balancing act has become more difficult as details about ties between Khangoshvili's alleged killer, Vadim Krasikov, and the Russian state have become clearer.<sup>32</sup> According to the indictment, "State agencies of the central government of the Russian Federation commissioned the defendant to liquidate the Georgian citizen of Chechen origin."<sup>33</sup> The fact that Putin expressed his delight at Khangoshvili's murder has not made the German government's life easier.<sup>34</sup> With the trial likely to bring new details to light, the government will face greater pressure to go beyond the largely symbolic expulsion of two intelligence officers from the Russian embassy in Berlin in December 2019.

In the meantime, the case of Dmitri Badin, the GRU hacker held responsible for the Bundestag hack, has slowly wound its way through the German legal system. (Badin was previously indicted by U.S. law-enforcement authorities for his role in attacks on the Democratic National Committee in 2016 and the World Anti-Doping Agency in 2014–2018.) Following his indictment, Berlin orchestrated the first-ever use of a new EU sanctions mechanism targeting individuals and institutions involved in cyber attacks.<sup>35</sup> During his August 2020 Moscow visit, Maas portrayed the sanctions as "a first shot across the bows of those who believe they can inflict damage in cyberspace with impunity."<sup>36</sup> In response, Lavrov issued flimsy counterclaims about the purported failure of German authorities to address official complaints about cyber intrusions against Russian government institutions from Germany-based IP addresses.<sup>37</sup>

Moscow is also likely on the losing end of a possible generational realignment of Russia policy in conjunction with Merkel's expected departure and the general election in the autumn of 2021. That prospect is already causing disquiet in Russian government circles, reflecting the Kremlin's traditional aversion to the uncertainty of Western leadership transitions and preference for dealing with known quantities. Current trends suggest the emergence of a new governing coalition consisting of the Christian Democrats and the Greens, who have regularly staked out a far tougher line on Russia than Merkel's current coalition partners, the Social Democrats. Green Party co-leader Annalena Baerbock has laid the blame directly on the Kremlin for the Navalny poisoning and called for an end to business as usual with Russia, the cancellation of Nord Stream 2, and the imposition of sanctions and asset freezes against top Russian business figures active in Germany.<sup>38</sup>

The leadership of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) continues to be riven by an unresolved debate about how best to balance the traditional German focus on trade and commercial cooperation with the need to show Russia that its unacceptable behavior has consequences. That split is visible in the conflicting positions staked out by the top contenders to succeed Merkel. Bavarian premier Markus Söder (who leads the CDU's sister party, the Bavarian Christian Social Union) and North Rhine-Westphalia premier Armin Laschet have aligned themselves with Merkel's position that the project is a purely private-sector initiative that should be decoupled from foreign policy issues like

the Navalny attack. Veteran Christian Democrats Friedrich Merz and Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Norbert Röttgen—both, along with Laschet, candidates to succeed Merkel as party chief in December—have called for it to be frozen.

Advocates of business interests and proponents of the traditional *Ostpolitik* formula of “change by rapprochement” (*Wandel durch Annäherung*) have been increasingly on the defensive. Their hand has been weakened by the fact that Russian-German trade appears to have peaked following the imposition of EU sanctions in 2014; turnover in 2019 was €54.5 billion, down by roughly 30 percent since 2012.<sup>39</sup> More recently, bilateral trade fell by nearly 25 percent during the first half of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. In the second quarter of 2020, new German foreign direct investment in Russia hit its lowest level since 2000.<sup>40</sup>

Strong countervailing pressure comes from Germany’s energy policy, which is being transformed by a combination of ambitious climate targets and shifting domestic priorities yet also risks tying the country much closer to Russia. Ahead of a planned phasing out of nuclear power by the end of 2022 and of coal by 2038, Germany is seeking to ramp up very quickly the role of renewables in electricity generation and to become an important hub for the trade and distribution of natural gas. However, the country is almost completely dependent on foreign sources of natural gas, which now account for 93 percent of supply.<sup>41</sup>

The share of Russian gas in Germany’s imports has increased significantly in recent years and now stands at 57 percent. That growth, which is partially a by-product of the planned phasing out of the Groningen field in the Netherlands by the end of 2022, is in marked contrast to the overall trend throughout the EU. Russia accounted for only 38.3% of the EU’s natural gas imports in 2019.<sup>42</sup> Critics worry that completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline could lock in this structural dependence for years if not decades to come. At the same time, a global natural gas supply glut and volatile European prices make it difficult to have high confidence about future German gas consumption levels.

There is also growing concern among German law enforcement and national security officials about the increased popularity of homegrown fringe political figures who spread disinformation and conspiracy theories about the pandemic. Russia is contributing in non-negligible ways to this phenomenon, which benefits from savvy use of online platforms such as YouTube and Telegram. Leading grassroots figures involved in the protests against pandemic health-related restrictions receive frequent attention from Russian-state-controlled media outlets such as RT Deutsch and Sputnik Deutschland as well as Russia-aligned anti-establishment media outlets such as *Rubikon* and

*Compact*.<sup>43</sup> Security officials, including the head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency (BfV), have also warned repeatedly that right-wing extremists and neo-Nazi groups are seeking to commandeer the protest movement for their own purposes.<sup>44</sup> Members of some of these extremist groups have received military training in Russia, including at a facility run by the Russian Imperial Movement, which was designated a global terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department in April 2020.<sup>45</sup> The rapid growth of conspiracy-theory groups benefits from loopholes in legislation and regulations aimed at preventing hate speech and political extremism.<sup>46</sup> As already shown in the notorious "Lisa" case in 2016 during the height of the migration crisis, Russia-tied actors are highly opportunistic, operating mainly in plain sight of the authorities.

## France

Macron has frequently turned himself into a lightning rod thanks to his knack for provocative statements, such as proclaiming the brain death of NATO, that challenge or criticize policy orthodoxy. His stance on Russia has generally followed this pattern. Macron's initiative to launch a strategic dialogue with Putin was partially borne of frustration with what he perceived as policy gridlock within EU institutions. In early 2016 EU leaders agreed on five guiding principles that called for full implementation of the Minsk agreements as a prerequisite for any improvement in relations, stronger ties to Russia's neighbors, stronger EU internal resilience in areas such as energy security and hybrid threats, selective engagement with Russia on major policy issues where there is a clear EU interest, and increased support for Russian civil society and people-to-people contacts.<sup>47</sup> In his August 2019 speech, Macron essentially argued that the divisions within the EU were rendering institutions such as the European External Action Service far less effective even as Russia has remained extremely active in various parts of the world, often at Europe's expense.

[Russia] has gained room for maneuver thanks to our weaknesses. In the past five years, Russia has played an unprecedented role in every major conflict; it has played an unprecedented role because the United States of America, Britain and France have been weak. We set red lines, they were crossed and we did not take action. They understood this very well, they advanced. . . . In the current situation, Russia has maximized all its interests: it has returned to Syria, it has returned to Libya, it has returned to Africa, it is present in every crisis because of our weaknesses or mistakes.<sup>48</sup>

Macron's attempt to forge a new strategic dialogue with Russia is quite similar to the approaches pursued by his predecessors. It also is informed by the outlook of conservative French political elites, who have never been shy about their anti-Americanism, desire for autonomy from transatlantic

structures, and generally friendly attitude toward Moscow.<sup>49</sup> Macron's advisers also emphasize that Western policies have not produced a change in Russian behavior and that the status quo is unacceptable. In the words of former foreign minister Hubert Védrine, who serves as an informal sounding board for Macron,

It's not about loving the Russian regime or Putin, or stopping our calls for the Russians to become more 'democratic,' but to know what kind of relations we want to have with this great neighboring country, and if it is up to the United States alone to redefine this relationship.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, the existence of multiple pathways for Russian influence in French political and corporate circles tends not to set off alarm bells in Paris. Issues such as terrorism, China, and the challenging relationship with the United States are widely seen as France's most pressing foreign policy priorities, which means in practice that Russia simply does not preoccupy French leaders or the political class the way it does those in Berlin, London, or Washington.<sup>51</sup> However, while Macron and other senior members of his team have on occasion made skeptical noises about EU sanctions against Russia, they have not tried to block their regular renewal out of deference to Merkel.

French-Russian trade ties have been largely stagnant for the past several years and are only one-fourth the size of the bilateral trade relationship between Russia and Germany. The trade and commercial relationship was fairly limited even before the coronavirus pandemic due to Russia's extended economic doldrums and the ruble devaluation that accompanied a sharp decline in energy prices in 2014. Since 2010, total trade turnover has declined by nearly one-third, and it was roughly €13.8 billion in 2019. Russia was France's eleventh-largest trading partner in 2018; by comparison, trade volume with China was more than four times greater.<sup>52</sup>

Russia's involvement in French politics has remained fairly subdued throughout the pandemic. Russian-sponsored disinformation and propaganda efforts aimed at the French public have been limited. That stands in marked contrast to the huge political outcry caused by a false posting about the French government's handling of the pandemic that appeared on the website of the Chinese embassy.<sup>53</sup> During earlier periods Russia's political leaders, state propaganda apparatus, and proxies have left much more conspicuous fingerprints. For example, in 2017 a murky alliance of Russia-based hackers and U.S. alt-right activist hackers interfered in the presidential election by releasing emails stolen from Macron's campaign on the eve of the second round of voting. Russian state-controlled media also spread rumors in an attempt to damage Macron's candidacy.<sup>54</sup> And in 2018–2019 Russia-connected media outlets frequently amplified the disruptive protests of the Yellow Vests movement.

The Russian government has long-standing ties to French far-right politicians. Six weeks before the 2017 election, Putin met in the Kremlin with Marine Le Pen, Macron's challenger and longtime leader of the National Rally (formerly National Front.) The cash-strapped party also received a €9.4 million loan from a shadowy Russian bank in 2014. More recently, the National Rally has continued with its well-established cheerleading for the Kremlin's actions. For example, a large delegation of its members in the European Parliament visited Moscow and Crimea in July 2020 to observe the referendum on extending Putin's time in office.<sup>55</sup> (Far-right politicians from Germany, Italy, and other countries made similar pilgrimages.<sup>56</sup>)

At Macron's first meeting with Putin in 2017, he chided the Russian leader over the Kremlin's blatant interference in the election. "The situation was so serious because during the democratic campaign some so-called media outlets interfered, acting under the influence of certain political interests," Macron said. "In other words, Russia Today and Sputnik did not behave as the press or as journalists should. They behaved like bodies of influence, bodies of propaganda, that is, bodies of false propaganda, no more and no less."<sup>57</sup>

Macron has pressed for a credible Russian investigation of the assassination attempt on Navalny and threatened unspecified consequences, aligning himself closely with Germany and postponing the next round of so-called two-plus-two talks between the French and Russian ministers of foreign affairs and defense. The Kremlin's allies in the National Rally have prioritized trying to shield Moscow from foreign pressure, warning against any rush to judgment. For example, Thierry Mariani, a member of the European Parliament and former minister, tweeted "Who can prove the Russian government's involvement in the poisoning of #Navalny? No one! Stop accusations without proof! Those nostalgic for the East/West confrontation are ready to exploit all the dramas to manufacture a new cold war."<sup>58</sup>

One area where France's preoccupation with counterterrorism has aligned with Russian interests is in Libya. Since the mid-2010s, the two countries have been de facto allies, thanks to their clandestine support of General Khalifa Haftar, the leader of the Libyan National Army, though both have also engaged with and supported the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), which Haftar opposes. Along with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, France and Russia have supplied Haftar's forces with weapons, military advisers, and other material in violation of a United Nations (UN) arms embargo.<sup>59</sup> While providing lip service and formal recognition to the GNA, France has justified its actions as part of the fight against terrorist and criminal groups operating in Libya and Chad, though an undercurrent of ideological affinity, including anti-Islamism and a pro-strongman bent that is evident in France's broader Africa policies, also cements this partnership.

At the same time, increased Russian adventurism in Africa is generating considerable irritation and mistrust in Paris. In 2017–2018 France’s leadership was blindsided by what it described as “predatory” Kremlin maneuvers in the region, including anti-French information operations and the deployment of mercenaries from the Wagner Group to the Central African Republic, a former French colony. Since then Russia has effectively replaced France as the country’s chief security partner. The French government sees the Central African Republic as an important test case of the Kremlin’s intentions. In the words of Chief of the Defense Staff General Francois Lecointre, the country is a “laboratory to test the goodwill proclaimed by Russia to be a partner in the resolution of crises, and not [a power] that wants to use these crises for the purposes of destabilization.”<sup>60</sup>

While the intensity of anti-French influence operations in the Central African Republic has declined somewhat in recent months, the Kremlin is increasingly stoking anti-French sentiment in West Africa, which is generating considerable high-level concern. The fight against terrorism in the Sahel has been a priority area in recent years for Paris, which has dispatched some 5,100 troops to the region.<sup>61</sup> Macron has complained publicly that foreign powers are trying to push European countries out of the region “because they have their own agenda, an agenda of mercenaries.”<sup>62</sup>

Russia has sold modest amounts of military equipment and provided limited opportunities for joint military training across the region in recent years, but it has not created a large-scale footprint there. Nor are there concrete indications that the Kremlin is actively trying to supplant France’s leadership of the multinational anti-terrorism mission in the Sahel. Rather, it appears that stoking instability and causing trouble for France are simply ends in themselves.

The Kremlin’s preferred means in the Sahel include old-fashioned cultivation of regional officials and low-cost tools such as inauthentic social-media campaigns. Materials created by the Russian Internet Research Agency that Facebook took down in August 2020 included an example of a Mali-related, anti-French posting in Arabic (see figure 3).<sup>63</sup> Traces of pro-Russia influence operations, disinformation, and propaganda about the security situation in the region are relatively easy to find on social media. For example, social-media posts disseminated images of the Russian flag and pro-Putin signs that featured prominently in celebrations in Bamako following the military coup in August 2020.<sup>64</sup> Facebook posts at the time also spread fake claims that Russian troops had landed in Mali in the aftermath of the coup (see figure 4).<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, a group calling itself the “Groupe des Patriotes du Mali” posts a steady stream of harsh anti-French and pro-Russian materials on Facebook (see figure 5).<sup>66</sup>

To be sure, France’s operations in the Sahel face considerable challenges that have little to do with any problems generated by Russia. These include mounting public anger over civilian casualties, governance and partner capacity shortcomings, and the possible scaling back of U.S. contributions

such as strategic airlift and intelligence support. At the same time, it is clear that Russian mischief in the region is not a peripheral concern for Paris, which has seized on it as one of the criteria for whether it can restore trust to the bilateral relationship. Whether or not they are part of a well-coordinated and strategic approach, Moscow's actions in the Sahel are having a corrosive effect on relations with the Macron government.

FIGURE 3  
**Internet Research Agency (August 2020 Facebook Post)**



Translation:

Page Title: "The gold behind the French presence in Mali"

Caption: "France left most of its colonies in Africa in the fifties and sixties. This was its official departure, but the reality has been the opposite. Paris's influence and sway over most of those countries remains because its mission is still ongoing."

FIGURE 4  
**Fake Posting About Arrival of Russian Soldiers in Mali (August 2020 Facebook Post)**



FIGURE 5  
**Groupe des Patriotes du Mali (November 2019 Facebook Post)**



## United Kingdom

Pathways for Russian influence in the United Kingdom have become an increasingly prominent topic in recent years. Although it is widely assumed that relations were spoiled by the war in Ukraine and the Skripal attack, the roots of the current antagonism go deeper. Former prime minister Tony Blair was the first prominent Western leader to court Putin during his early years in power. The culminating moment came in 2003 when Blair and Putin personally oversaw the launch of a major energy joint venture, TNK-BP. The result of an arranged marriage between a Western oil major and a top Russian company, TNK-BP was hailed as the largest single foreign direct investment in the Russian economy at the time.<sup>67</sup> Yet the burgeoning relationship was disrupted months later when British courts granted political asylum to Boris Berezovsky, a political nemesis of Putin's, and to a prominent Chechen separatist.<sup>68</sup> Putin regarded these decisions as an act of personal betrayal, and his relationships with UK counterparts never recovered.

Russian officials have long made clear in private that the Kremlin does not view the United Kingdom as a great power but as a country that largely implements the will of the United States. Yet events in recent years have shown that the United Kingdom is, in fact, capable of exerting significant influence over the policies of its allies and partners. In the most widely publicized example, creative UK diplomacy after the Skripal attack led to the coordinated expulsions of dozens of Russian intelligence personnel from more than twenty countries. UK law enforcement, intelligence and strategic communications officials also worked aggressively to turn the tables on the GRU, exposing it to outright ridicule for the botched attack. The United Kingdom's considerable capabilities in the cyber domain have been marshaled for similar purposes in the hope of limiting the Kremlin's ability to operate with impunity. UK specialists have also worked behind the scenes to strengthen the resilience of frontline countries and others in Russia's neighborhood, helping them to combat disinformation and other types of malign activities.

At the same time, the UK authorities have made little headway in constraining Russian malign activities conducted inside the country, let alone establishing a proper level of oversight of the extensive Russian presence there. For decades, the Russian elite has had nearly wide-open access to the UK's economy and to key players in elite political and business circles. Prominent members of the Conservative Party, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson, have been widely criticized for their chummy relationships with prominent well-to-do Russians, many of whom have connections to the Russian government.<sup>69</sup> These ties run the gamut from glamorous social connections to more problematic activities such as political fund-raising and lucrative business relationships.<sup>70</sup> The ISC report states: "It is notable that a number of Members of the House of Lords have business interests linked to Russia, or work directly for major Russian companies linked to the Russian state."<sup>71</sup>

As discussed above, the extensive presence of wealthy Russian business figures and corporate interests throughout the United Kingdom is a feature, not a bug, of the country's light-touch regulatory framework. The British leadership has long actively sought to promote the United Kingdom as a global financial and business center yet failed to anticipate the harmful second-order effects on the country's governance, sovereignty, and national security. For more than a quarter-century, the government has put out a welcome mat for Russian and other wealthy foreign nationals, providing preferential access to visas in return for relatively small investments of 2 million pounds. Today Russian money and corporate interests are a major factor across the breadth of the British business world, the energy sector, the financial services industry, and the high-end real estate market. This presence also helps support an industry of so-called enablers who provide legal, consulting, accountancy, security, and other services to Russian high-net-worth individuals, families, and corporations. Despite the imposition of blocking sanctions on high-level Kremlin-tied figures in 2014–2015, there are indications Putin associates like Arkadiy Rotenberg have managed to move significant amounts of money through UK-based financial institutions.<sup>72</sup>

As documented in the 2020 report by the parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), officials have often talked big about creating arsenals of legal, diplomatic, and law-enforcement tools to make the United Kingdom a less hospitable jurisdiction for unsavory or illicit Russian interests. Such tools were rolled out with great fanfare after the Skripal attack. Yet the United Kingdom has struggled, for example, to launch a public registry of beneficial-ownership information that would provide transparency about who actually stands behind a vast array of foreign-owned real estate and corporate vehicles. Another much-touted measure, unexplained wealth orders, has been far less useful than UK officials originally suggested. They were devised to

allow UK law enforcement to investigate how 'politically exposed persons' suspected of involvement in foreign corruption, as well as suspected criminals, have acquired significant real estate interests and assets that are disproportionate to their lawful incomes. Targets of unexplained wealth orders are required to prove the circumstances surrounding ownership of such property and assets, which can be seized by the authorities under a court order.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, several of the early targets have mounted successful challenges in the UK courts, diminishing the value of the new tool.<sup>74</sup>

More recently, the National Crime Agency has relied more heavily on a different tool known as account freeze and forfeiture orders, which can be secured in lower courts without having to prove criminal wrongdoing. The government also has occasionally used visa policy to send messages to prominent Russian business figures, such as Roman Abramovich, who had long been accustomed to

using the country as a base outside Russia. Still, the outsized lobbying power of the UK financial, real estate, and corporate sectors has made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to overhaul the existing regulatory framework or to make the United Kingdom a less welcoming jurisdiction for Russian petro-dollars and illicit funds.

The ISC report also draws attention to the weakness of the UK legal framework for responding to national security threats posed by Russia and other hostile foreign powers. It quotes then MI5 director general Andrew Parker, who said that the Official Secrets Act is “dusty and largely ineffective” because “it was drafted for First World War days and was about sketches of naval dockyards, etc.”<sup>75</sup> The law’s shortcomings are particularly acute in light of the extensive Russian presence that moves freely in and out of the United Kingdom: “Under the Official Secrets Act as it exists now, anyone who is not a British national or a public servant does not commit an offence if they engage in espionage against the UK while abroad.”<sup>76</sup> The ISC report also recommends that the United Kingdom develop a legal mechanism for disclosure by individuals acting on behalf of a foreign power modeled on the U.S. Foreign Agent Registration Act, which would be a positive step but hardly a decisive one.

Meanwhile, Brexit is having a significant impact on how the United Kingdom operates on the global stage even as it further aggravates internal political divisions. For decades, the country grew accustomed to leveraging its role within the EU as a means to institutionalize its policy ideas and priorities globally via a powerful multilateral mechanism. The United Kingdom’s impact is now being inexorably reduced as result of leaving the EU. The trusting relationship with key partners like Germany and France is also being severely tested by the increasingly acrimonious negotiations over the post-Brexit relationship with the EU.

Societal fault lines exposed by Brexit, such as the possibility of a renewed push for Scottish independence, are also likely to prove quite harmful. For its part, the Kremlin typically relishes watching longtime adversaries experience such turmoil. It is hard to imagine that Moscow will not use some of the tools at its disposal, including information and influence operations, to amplify the United Kingdom’s current misfortunes. It remains to be seen whether the Kremlin will go to great lengths to achieve its goals or simply decide to let the United Kingdom stew in its own juices.

## Conclusion

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Russia’s policy toward core Europe has appeared to be stuck on autopilot. Instead of nimbly trying to exploit Europe’s obvious internal divisions and ongoing tensions with the United States, the Kremlin has simply followed time-worn patterns, acting as

though its most important goals could be accomplished simply by sticking to its guns and waiting for Europe to fall apart under the weight of the pandemic and other burdens.

Yet this approach is not at all mindful of the galvanizing effect that the protests in Belarus and the attempted assassination of a major opposition political figure is having on German, French, and UK policy. Just as it was blindsided by the extent of Western unity in the wake of the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Kremlin today seems oblivious—or simply indifferent—to what its actions will mean for relations with core Europe.

Nonetheless there is still considerable concern in some quarters in Berlin, Paris, and London that the Russian government may yet be able to capitalize on an approach that emphasizes strategic patience. After all, the Kremlin is betting, not unreasonably, that one of these days, the West will simply downgrade its long list of irritants and unresolvable disputes with Russia as it has in the past. In the meantime, the Putin regime is trying to intimidate European leaders, playing on perennial fears that things might get out of hand. The Kremlin also wants to convince Western counterparts that they have very little leverage over Russian behavior and to exacerbate the divisions that it believes can keep NATO and the EU bogged down in internal debates and disagreements.

What is missing from the Kremlin's analysis of the current state of affairs is much self-awareness about how its recent behavior is potentially creating an epochal moment comparable to the events of 2014 in Ukraine. The Navalny attack and the crisis in Belarus have stripped away, practically overnight, the credibility of voices in Europe that traditionally advocate on behalf of preserving the status quo. In Germany, for example, the greatest pressure will not be faced by increasingly marginal constituencies like the *Putinverstehers* but rather by Christian Democrat stalwarts like Merkel and Economy Minister Peter Altmaier who call for finding ways to continue cooperation with Russia. Following the Navalny attack the percentage of Germans polled who want to tighten sanctions on Russia more than doubled to 34 percent compared with June 2019, according to a survey conducted in September 2020.<sup>77</sup> It is increasingly unclear whether arguments in favor of the status quo will hold sway as the end of the Merkel era and the general elections draw nearer.

In France, these events are greatly complicating Macron's strategic dialogue with the Kremlin. It is hard to see how French officials can successfully argue within the Quad or in Brussels in favor of a more lenient approach on Russian matters at a time when Moscow's heavy-handed handling of the Navalny attack and the Belarus crisis generates such intense anger and frustration. In the meantime, Macron is gearing up for reelection in 2022 and appears to hope that he will once again face Le Pen, who has extremely limited ability to appeal to centrists or left-of-center voters. Still, if the impact of the pandemic continues to hang over French society and the economy, it is conceivable that Moscow will once again seek to play on societal divisions and amplify populist voices.

At best, Russia's relations with Germany, France, and the United Kingdom will stay as they are now regardless of whether or not large-scale projects like Nord Stream 2 are frozen. In the same vein, Merkel's long-standing approach of balancing a tough-minded approach with various types of economic and energy cooperation is becoming more contested. In the run-up to next autumn's German elections, the stage is potentially being set for an approach toward Russia that prioritizes hard security, treats the Kremlin as an irredeemably dangerous and kleptocratic regime, and supports the imposition of ever greater economic and political costs for Russian misdeeds. At the same time, it is unlikely that mainstream political leaders from Germany, France, or the United Kingdom will be all that interested in resetting ties or that Moscow will succeed in pushing the EU's post-2014 framework to the breaking point.

Still, Europe's leading powers remain challenged by their inability to mobilize the kind of hard power that matters most in today's world, especially for building leverage with Russia. It often appears that the leaders of Europe have forgotten how to play the game of power politics. As they find themselves being sucked once again into an era of so-called great-power competition, the Kremlin's *modus operandi* in foreign policy is likely to provide significant advantages.

Against this backdrop, it is questionable that the biggest challenge for the transatlantic relationship is to hold another arid debate between the United States and its European allies on whether it is necessary to push back on a more assertive Russia. As Macron frequently likes to point out, European leaders are not naïve. They have a very solid grasp of whom they are dealing with in the Kremlin. Rather the real question for Western policymakers is how best to devise a proportionate and sustainable response to the threat posed by Russia and to manage ongoing tensions skillfully while preserving the unity of purpose that has served previous generations of Western leaders so well.

## About the Author

**Andrew S. Weiss** is the James Family Chair and a vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he oversees research in Washington and Moscow on Russia and Eurasia.

## Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to Grace Kier and Aleksandar Vladicic for their dogged and relentless research assistance during the preparation of this report. Not-for-attribution interviews with French, German, and UK officials who generously made themselves available amid pandemic-related restrictions were an essential part of the research process. Without their insights this paper would simply not have been possible. Other experts also shared a great many thoughts and insights, including Duncan Allan, Emmanuel Dupuy, Liana Fix, Kier Giles, Benjamin Haddad, Sylvie Kauffmann, Monika Richter, and Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer. The author bears full responsibility for any remaining errors of fact or judgment.

## Notes

- 1 “International Reserves of the Russian Federation (End of Period),” Bank of Russia, last updated September 1, 2020, [https://www.cbr.ru/eng/hd\\_base/mrrf/mrrf\\_m/](https://www.cbr.ru/eng/hd_base/mrrf/mrrf_m/).
- 2 Jamie Shea, “1967: De Gaulle Pulls France Out of NATO’s Integrated Military Structure,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 3, 2009, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_139272.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_139272.htm).
- 3 Among the first topics tackled by the Quad in the mid-1970s was the possibility that pro-Moscow groups might end up taking power in a NATO country during the heyday of Eurocommunism, the need to mobilize support for pro-democratic forces in Portugal and Spain, and contingency planning for possible Soviet military intervention in Yugoslavia in the event of the death of Josip Tito. See James Dobbins, *Foreign Service: Five Decades on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017) 48–49, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Foreign\\_Service/edUBDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=diplomatic+quad+nato+soviet&pg=PT59&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Foreign_Service/edUBDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=diplomatic+quad+nato+soviet&pg=PT59&printsec=frontcover).
- 4 Theresa May, Speech to the Lord Mayor’s Banquet 2017, November 13, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-the-lord-mayors-banquet-2017>.
- 5 Boris Johnson, “I Was Wrong About Russia,” *Spectator*, December 22, 2019, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/boris-johnson-i-was-wrong-about-russia>.
- 6 Duncan Allan, “Managed Confrontation: UK Policy Towards Russia After the Salisbury Attack,” Chatham House, October 30, 2019, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/managed-confrontation-uk-policy-towards-russia-after-salisbury-attack>.
- 7 For a detailed account of Russian targeted killings in the UK, see Heidi Blake, *From Russia With Blood: The Kremlin’s Ruthless Assassination Program and Vladimir Putin’s Secret War on the West* (New York: Mulholland Books, 2019).
- 8 Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, “Russia,” July 2020, <https://docs.google.com/a/independent.gov.uk/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=aW5kZXBlbmRlbnQuZ292LnVrfGlzY3xneDo1Y2RhMGEyN2Y3NjM0OWFl>.
- 9 In remarks before French ambassadors, Macron said: “I know that certain foreign theoreticians would say that we too have a Deep State. And that sometimes the President says things, travels somewhere and says something, and there’s a collective tendency to say, ‘He said that but we know the truth, things will still be done the way they’ve always been done.’ . . . I know that many of you made your careers working on dossiers whose every aspect fostered a mistrust of Russia, sometimes rightly so. And since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have structured our relationship on the basis of that mistrust, through a series of misunderstandings.” Speech by Emmanuel Macron, August 27, 2019, <https://lv.ambafrance.org/Ambassadors-conference-Speech-by-M-Emmanuel-Macron-President-of-the-Republic>.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Piotr Smolar, “La Campagne Russe d’Emmanuel Macron : Retour Sur le Pari Diplomatique le Plus Incertain du Quinquennat” [Emmanuel Macron’s Russian Campaign: A Look Back On The Most Uncertain Diplomatic Bet of the Five Year Term], *Le Monde*, February 14, 2020, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/02/14/la-campagne-russe-d-emmanuel-macron\\_6029580\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/02/14/la-campagne-russe-d-emmanuel-macron_6029580_3210.html).
- 12 “A Year After Russia Reset, France Sees No Concrete Results: Minister,” Reuters, July 2, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-russia/a-year-after-russia-reset-france-sees-no-concrete-results-minister-idUSKBN2431AI>.
- 13 “U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly,” Pew Research Center, September 15, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/15/us-image-plummets-internationally-as-most-say-country-has-handled-coronavirus-badly/>.

- 14 “Security Radar 2019,” Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, [https://www.fes-vienna.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/Security\\_Radar\\_2019\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.fes-vienna.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Security_Radar_2019_Booklet.pdf).
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 “The Berlin Pulse 2017,” Koerber Stiftung, p. 8, [https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/koerber-stiftung/redaktion/berliner-forum-aussenpolitik/pdf/2017/The-Berlin-Pulse.pdf](https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/koerber-stiftung/redaktion/berliner-forum-aussenpolitik/pdf/2017/The-Berlin-Pulse.pdf).
- 17 Respondents were presented with a list of issues and asked which represented “critical threats” to UK security. In rank order, they were international terrorism (53 percent), cyber attacks (47 percent), North Korea’s nuclear program (42 percent), and Middle East political instability (42 percent). Sophia Gaston, “UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Affairs: Annual Survey - 2020,” British Foreign Policy Group, June 2020, p. 51. <https://bfpgrp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BFPG-Annual-Survey-Public-Opinion-2020-HR.pdf>.
- 18 “Lavrov Suggests Mediation Bids be Offered Directly to Minsk, Not ‘Through the Microphone,’” TASS, August 19, 2020, <https://tass.com/politics/1191449>.
- 19 “Naryshkin Dopustil Prichastnost’ Zapada K ‘Otrpravleniyu Naval’nogo” [Naryshkin hypothesized the involvement of the West in the ‘poisoning’ of Navalny], RIA Novosti, September 3, 2020, <https://ria.ru/20200903/Navalniyy-1576681398.html>; “Russian State Duma to Probe Navalny’s Poisoning for Foreign Interference,” Moscow Times, August 26, 2020, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/08/26/russian-state-duma-to-probe-navalnys-poisoning-for-foreign-interference-a71245>.
- 20 “Kozak Zayavil o Bykhode iz Peregovorov s Yermakov po Donbassu” [Kozak announced his exit from negotiations with Yermak on Donbass], Strana.ua, July 30, 2020, <http://web.archive.org/web/20200731132609/https://strana.ua/news/281603-kozak-napisal-pismo-uchastnikam-normandskoho-formata-i-zajavil-o-vykhode-iz-perehovorov.html>.
- 21 “V MID RF zayavili o neprichastnosti Moskvyy k atakam na gruzinskiye sayty” [The Russian MFA announced that Moscow was not involved in attacks on Georgian website], Interfax.ru, February 20, 2020, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/696178>; “Peskov nazval obvineniya Londona v kiberatakakh goloslovnymi” [Peskov called London’s accusations of cyberattacks unfounded], RIA Novosti, February 20, 2020, <https://ria.ru/20200716/1574455614.html>.
- 22 The UK announcement on APT28 was joined by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. “UK Condemns Russia’s GRU Over Georgia Cyber-Attacks,” UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, February 20, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-condemns-russias-gru-over-georgia-cyber-attacks>.
- 23 “UK and Allies Expose Russian Attacks on Coronavirus Vaccine Development,” UK National Cyber Security Center, July 16, 2020, <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/uk-and-allies-expose-russian-attacks-on-coronavirus-vaccine-development>.
- 24 See Dominic Raab, “Cyber Security: Update,” UK Parliament, July 20, 2020, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-07-16/HCWS384>.
- 25 Frances Perraudin, “Jeremy Corbyn Reveals Dossier ‘Proving NHS Up For Sale,’” *Guardian*, November 27, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/nov/27/jeremy-corbyn-reveals-dossier-proving-nhs-up-for-sale>.
- 26 In a June 2019 interview, Putin proclaimed the death of the liberal idea, which he said had “outlived its purpose” and “become obsolete” because “it has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population.” Vladimir Putin, “Interview with Financial Times,” President of Russia’s official website, June 27, 2019, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60836>.
- 27 See Dmitri Trenin, Eugene Rumer, and Andrew S. Weiss, “Steady State: Russian Foreign Policy After Coronavirus,” Carnegie Moscow Center, July 8, 2020, <https://carnegie.ru/2020/07/08/steady-state-russian-foreign-policy-after-coronavirus-pub-81890>.

- 28 Michael Peel and Sam Fleming, “EU Warns of Pro-Kremlin Disinformation Campaign on Coronavirus,” *Financial Times*, March 17, 2020.
- 29 Maxim Samorukov, “Ventilator Diplomacy in the Balkans,” Carnegie Moscow Center, July 8, 2020, <https://carnegie.ru/2020/07/08/ventilator-diplomacy-in-balkans-pub-81895>.
- 30 Josep Borrell, “The Coronavirus Pandemic and the New World it is Creating,” European Union External Action, March 23, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/76379/coronavirus-pandemic-and-new-world-it-creating\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/76379/coronavirus-pandemic-and-new-world-it-creating_en).
- 31 Deutsche Welle, “Most in Germany Back Berlin’s Coronavirus Response,” September 4, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/most-in-germany-back-berlins-coronavirus-response/a-54810793>. Roughly 20 percent of the German electorate currently supports populist groups, down sharply from 33 percent in 2018. “Sharp Decline in Populist Attitudes in Germany,” Bertelsmann Foundation, September 3, 2020, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/topics/latest-news/2020/september/sharp-decline-in-populist-attitudes-in-germany>.
- 32 “‘V’ For ‘Vympel’: FSB’s Secretive Department ‘V’ Behind Assassination Of Georgian Asylum Seeker In Germany,” Bellingcat, February 17, 2020, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2020/02/17/v-like-vympel-fsbs-secretive-department-v-behind-assassination-of-zelimkhan-khangoshvili>.
- 33 Bojan Pancevski, “German Prosecutors Say Man Charged in Berlin Murder Was Acting for Moscow,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/german-prosecutors-say-man-charged-in-berlin-murder-was-acting-for-moscow-11592487050>.
- 34 In December 2019, Putin said, “He [Khangoshvili] was an absolute bloody killer. . . . We see that the people you just mentioned—terrorists and murderers—walk freely around European capitals. As far as I know, he was killed in central Berlin. Picture such a person strolling down the streets of a European capital. Would you like the prisoners from these [terrorist] camps [in Syria] to come to you? Will you also let them walk freely around your cities?” Vladimir Putin, “Vladimir Putin’s Annual News Conference,” President of Russia’s official website, December 19, 2019, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62366>.
- 35 “EU Imposes the First Ever Sanctions Against Cyber-attacks,” Council of the EU, July 30, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/07/30/eu-imposes-the-first-ever-sanctions-against-cyber-attacks/>.
- 36 It remains a mystery why materials stolen by the GRU that might have been damaging for Merkel and the CDU were not leaked ahead of the September 2017 federal elections. Some observers suggest that a near-unanimous vote by the U.S. Congress on Russia sanctions legislation in July 2017 encouraged Russian authorities to think twice about potential downside risks. Heiko Maas, “Interview with Interfax,” German Federal Foreign Office, August 11, 2020, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/maas-interfax/2374058>.
- 37 Sergei Lavrov, “Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a Joint News Conference Following Talks with Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Heiko Maas,” Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 11, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4282429](https://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4282429).
- 38 “Deutschland Darf Dieses Korrupte Regime Nicht Weiter Unterstützen” [Germany Must Not Support This Corrupt Regime], *Der Spiegel*, September 4, 2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/annalena-baerbock-zu-russland-und-nawalny-gruenen-chefin-will-nord-stream-2-stoppen-a-53cc7c66-ef92-4662-8807-e81b7645389b>.

- 39 “Russia-EU—International Trade in Goods Statistics,” Eurostat, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Russia-EU\\_%E2%80%93\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics#Trade\\_with\\_Russia\\_by\\_Member\\_State](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Russia-EU_%E2%80%93_international_trade_in_goods_statistics#Trade_with_Russia_by_Member_State); “Record Levels for Trade in Goods Between EU27 and Russia in 2012,” Eurostat, June 3, 2013, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/5165358/6-03062013-AP-EN.PDF/33db85e7-252a-4a59-a7f3-3a01093abf18?version=1.0>.
- 40 German-Russian trade in the first half of 2020 declined by 24 percent on a year-on-year basis. “Deutsche Unternehmen Investieren Deutlich Weniger in Russland” [German companies invest significantly less in Russia], Reuters, August 30, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/deutschland-russland-investitionen-idDEKBN25R12Z>.
- 41 “Germany 2020: Energy Policy Review,” International Energy Agency, February 2020, p. 15.
- 42 The actual size of European natural gas imports from Russia is presumably higher thanks to sizable imports from Ukraine and Belarus (the bulk of which may consist of Russian-origin natural gas). These volumes accounted for an additional 16 percent of total imports by the EU. See “EU Imports of Energy Products - Recent Developments,” Eurostat, June 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU\\_imports\\_of\\_energy\\_products\\_-\\_recent\\_developments#Main\\_suppliers\\_of\\_natural\\_gas\\_and\\_petroleum\\_oils\\_to\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_imports_of_energy_products_-_recent_developments#Main_suppliers_of_natural_gas_and_petroleum_oils_to_the_EU).
- 43 Maik Baumgärtner, et al, “Protests in Germany See Fringe Mix with the Mainstream,” *Spiegel International*, May 14, 2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-corona-conspiracy-theorists-protests-in-germany-see-fringe-mix-with-the-mainstream-a-8a9d5822-8944-407a-980a-d58e9d6b4aec>.
- 44 The German political establishment was repulsed by an attempt by a small group of protesters to storm the Bundestag in August. “Extremists Could Hijack Coronavirus Rallies in Germany, Warns BfV Head,” Deutsche Welle, September 1, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-reichstag-protests/a-54783070>.
- 45 Josef Hufelschulte, “Putins Schützenhilfe: Russische Extremisten Trainieren Deutsche Neonazis in Geheimcamp” [Putin’s rifle aid: Russian extremists train German neo-Nazis in secret camp] *Focus*, June 6, 2020, [https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/toeten-lernen-im-camp-partizan-putins-schuetzenhilfe-fuer-deutsche-neonazis\\_id\\_12067725.html](https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/toeten-lernen-im-camp-partizan-putins-schuetzenhilfe-fuer-deutsche-neonazis_id_12067725.html); “Designation of the Russian Imperial Movement,” U.S. Department of State, April 6, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/designation-of-the-russian-imperial-movement/>.
- 46 Tyson Barker, “Germany Is Losing the Fight Against QAnon,” *Foreign Policy*, September 2, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/02/germany-is-losing-the-fight-against-qanon/>.
- 47 Federica Mogherini, “Remarks at the Press Conference following the Foreign Affairs Council,” European Union External Action, March 13, 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5490\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5490_en).
- 48 Speech by Emmanuel Macron, August 27, 2019 <https://lv.ambafrance.org/Ambassadors-conference-Speech-by-M-Emmanuel-Macron-President-of-the-Republic>.
- 49 See Sophie Meunier, “The Distinctiveness of French Anti-Americanism,” in *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).
- 50 Hubert Védrine, “Vladimir Putin: Un Epouvantail Bien Utile” [Vladimir Putin: A Very Useful Scarecrow], *L’Obs*, December 20, 2019, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/ils-vont-faire-2020/20191220>.

- OBS22583/vladimir-poutine-par-hubert-vedrine-un-epouvantail-bien-utile.html.
- 51 See Emmanuel Macron, “Speech During Ambassadors’ Week 2017,” September 4, 2017, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/news/ambassadors-week/prior-editions/ambassadors-week-edition-2017/speech-by-president-emmanuel-macron-ambassadors-week-2017/> and Emmanuel Macron, “Speech to Ambassadors’ Conference 2018,” French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs August 27, 2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/news/ambassadors-week/ambassadors-week-edition-2018/article/speech-by-president-emmanuel-macron-ambassadors-conference-2018>.
- 52 “France Exports, Imports and Trade Balance By Country and Region 2018,” World Integrated Trade Solutions, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/FRA/Year/LTST/TradeFlow/EXPIMP>; “Russia-EU International Trade in Goods Statistics,” Eurostat, March 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Russia-EU\\_%E2%80%93\\_international\\_trade\\_in\\_goods\\_statistics#Trade\\_with\\_Russia\\_by\\_Member\\_State](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Russia-EU_%E2%80%93_international_trade_in_goods_statistics#Trade_with_Russia_by_Member_State); “Record levels for trade in goods between EU27 and Russia in 2012,” news release, Eurostat, June 3, 2013, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/5165358/6-03062013-AP-EN.PDF/33db85e7-252a-4a59-a7f3-3a01093abf18?version=1.0>.
- 53 “Outraged French Lawmakers Demand Answers on ‘Fake’ Chinese Embassy Accusations,” Reuters, April 15, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-china/outraged-french-lawmakers-demand-answers-on-fake-chinese-embassy-accusations-idUSKCN21X30C>.
- 54 Russian state-controlled media energetically sought to damage Macron’s candidacy, including by spreading rumors about his sexuality. The French authorities never formally attributed the hack-and-release effort to the Russian government. The head of France’s cyber security agency (ANSSI) said in June 2017, “the attack was so generic and simple that it could have been practically anyone. . . . To say Macron Leaks was APT28, I’m absolutely incapable today of doing that. . . . I have absolutely no element to say whether it’s true or false.” For a detailed account of the failed cyber operation, see Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer, “The ‘Macron Leaks’ Operation: A Post-Mortem,” Atlantic Council and Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM) joint paper, June 2019, [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The\\_Macron\\_Leaks\\_Operation-A\\_Post-Mortem.pdf](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The_Macron_Leaks_Operation-A_Post-Mortem.pdf).
- 55 Anne Renault, @AnneRenaut, Twitter post, July 1, 2020, 09:32 a.m., <https://twitter.com/AnneRenaut/status/1278320621768884224?s=20>.
- 56 Elizaveta Fokht, “Druz’ya Putina i Ul’trapravavye. Kakikh Inostrantsev Rossiya Priglasila Nablyudat’ Za Golosovaniem,” BBC Russian Service, July 1, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-53242482>.
- 57 Vladimir Putin, “Joint News conference with President of France Emmanuel Macron,” President of Russia’s official website, May 29, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54618>.
- 58 Thierry Mariani, @ThierryMARIANI, Twitter post, September 3, 2020, 06:01 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ThierryMARIANI/status/1301460360369762304?s=20>.
- 59 Frederic Wehrey, “‘This War is Out of Our Hands’: The Internationalization of Libya’s Post-2011 Conflicts From Proxies to Boots on the Ground,” New America, September 14, 2020, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/this-war-is-out-of-our-hands/>.
- 60 “France to Further Boost its Anti-Jihad Force in Sahel,” RFI, January 22, 2020, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/wires/20200122-france-further-boost-its-anti-jihad-force-sahel>.
- 61 “France’s Action in the Sahel,” French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, last updated April 2020,

- <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/terrorism-france-s-international-action/article/france-s-action-in-the-sahel>.
- 62 Bénédicte Lutaud, “Sahel: Macron Dénonce des ‘Puissances Etrangères’ Alimentant les Discours Antifrançais” [Sahel: Macron Denounces ‘Foreign Powers’ Fueling Anti-French Speeches], *Le Monde*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/sahel-macron-denonce-des-puissances-etrange-res-alimentant-les-discours-antifrancais-20200114>.
- 63 “August 2020 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report,” Facebook, August 2020, <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/August-2020-CIB-Report.pdf>.
- 64 Andrew S. Weiss, @andrewsweiss, Twitter post, August 23, 2020, 04:38 p.m., <https://twitter.com/andrewsweiss/status/1297634340814364673?s=20>. Small numbers of Wagner personnel reportedly arrived in late 2019 in Bamako, ostensibly as technicians for Russian-supplied MI-35 attack helicopters. See “France Slams ‘Unacceptable’ Claims Against Troops by Mali,” AFP, February 27, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/20200227-france-slams-unacceptable-claims-against-troops-by-mali>.
- 65 “Des Soldats Russes Envoyés au Mali Pour Soutenir L’Armée?” [Russian Soldiers Sent To Mali To Support The Army?], AFP, September 2, 2020, <https://factuel.afp.com/non-larmee-russe-na-pas-ete-envoyee-au-mali-apres-le-putsch-du-18-aout>.
- 66 Groupe Des Patriotes Du Mali G.P.M, photo posted on November 15, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/Groupe-Des-Patriotes-Du-Mali-GPM-188590811615393/photos/pcb.726941411113661/726941177780351>.
- 67 Shamil Yenikayeff, “BP, Russian Billionaires, and the Kremlin: A Power Triangle That Never Was,” Oxford Institute of Energy Studies,” November 2011, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/BP-Russian-billionaires-and-the-Kremlin.pdf>.
- 68 Melissa Kite and Richard Beeston, “Asylum for Tycoon Threatens Blair’s Links with Putin,” *The Times*, September 11, 2003, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/asylum-for-tycoon-threatens-blairs-links-with-putin-625lz5l358g>; Alan Cowell, “Russia Loses Fight Over Chechen’s Extradition,” *New York Times*, November 14, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/14/world/russia-loses-fight-over-chechen-s-extradition.html>.
- 69 See Catherine Belton, *Putin’s People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020), 344–364; and Jim Waterson, “Johnson Peerage for Lebedev Crowns Mutually Beneficial Friendship,” *Guardian*, July 31, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/jul/31/johnson-peerage-for-lebedev-crowns-mutually-beneficial-friendship>.
- 70 Catherine Belton, “In British PM Race, a Former Russian Tycoon Quietly Wields Influence, Reuters, July 19, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/britain-eu-johnson-russian/>; “FinCEN Files: Tory Donor Lubov Chernukhin Linked to \$8m Putin Ally Funding,” BBC, September 20, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54228079>.
- 71 “Russia,” Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, p. 16.
- 72 “Sanctioned Putin Associate ‘Laundered Millions’ Through Barclays,” BBC, September 20, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54225577>.
- 73 See Jarrett Blanc and Andrew S. Weiss, “U.S. Sanctions on Russia: Congress Should Go Back to Fundamentals,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 23, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/03/u.s.-sanctions-on-russia-congress-should-go-back-to-fundamentals-pub-78755>.
- 74 Tom Keatinge, “Get Serious: Illicit Finance is a UK National Security Threat,” Royal United Services

Institute, July 28, 2020, <https://rusi.org/commentary/get-serious-illicit-finance-uk-national-security-threat>; Sean O'Neill, "£1.5m Legal Bill Forces Rethink Over McMafia Wealth Orders," *The Times*, July 13 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/1-5m-legal-bill-forces-rethink-over-mcmafia-wealth-orders-x02gc8s23>.

- 75 "Russia," Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, p. 33.
- 76 Owen Bowcott, "Call for UK's 'Antiquated' Official Secrets Act to be Updated," *Guardian*, September 1 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/sep/01/call-for-antiquated-uk-official-secrets-act-to-be-updated>.
- 77 For June 2019 data, see "Politbarometer Juni II 2019" [Politbarometer June II 2019], Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, press release, June 21, 2019, [https://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Umfragen/Politbarometer/Archiv/Politbarometer\\_2019/Juni\\_II\\_2019/](https://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Umfragen/Politbarometer/Archiv/Politbarometer_2019/Juni_II_2019/); for September 2020 data, see "Politbarometer September 2020," Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, press release, September 17, 2020, <https://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Aktuelles/Politbarometer/>.



1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW | Washington, DC 20036 | P: +1 202 483 7600

[CarnegieEndowment.org](https://www.CarnegieEndowment.org)