



# THE AIR UNIVERSITY



## Russian Soft Power & Influence Operations Against the West



Dr. Mark Conversino  
*School of Advanced Air and Space Studies*  
Maxwell AFB, AL

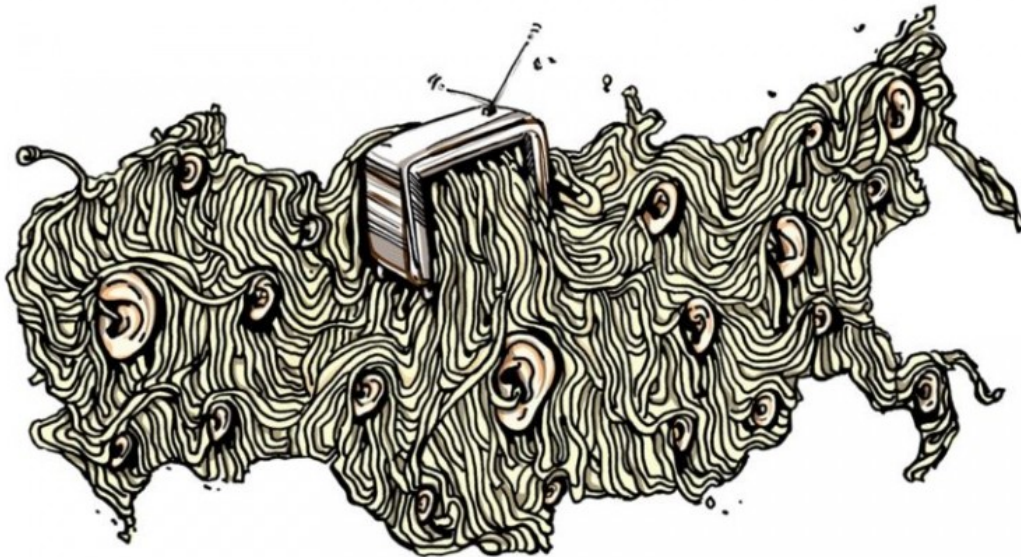
The views and opinions expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the position of the Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, Air University *or Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation.*

# Overview

- **Russian Narrative: Coping with the Loss of Empire**
- **Russian Soft Power: Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove**
- **Why Should We Care?**

&

**What Can We Do?**



# Russia: Post-colonial AND Post-imperial



**Russia Did Not Lose the Cold War. . .  
but Moscow Lost an Empire**

Russia Under Peter the Great  
© 2000 by Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.



# Ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics



David Satter  
It Was  
a Long Time Ago,  
and It Never  
Happened **Anyway**

Russia and the  
Communist Past



“...the ability to make payments. It is not about policies.”



... coercion or  
... political ideals and  
... success in World Politics

### Soft Power: Vladimir Putin's View

“... complex of instruments and methods to achieve foreign policy objectives without the use of weapons, which include information and other means.”

“Unfortunately, these means are used to cultivate and provoke extremism, separatism, nationalism, manipulation of public opinion, [and] direct intervention in the internal politics of sovereign governments.”

“However, the activity of ‘pseudo-NGOs’ [and] other structures which, with outside support, have the aim to destabilize the situation in this or that country, is unacceptable.”

Quoted in Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine*

# EUROMAIDAN, 2013-2014



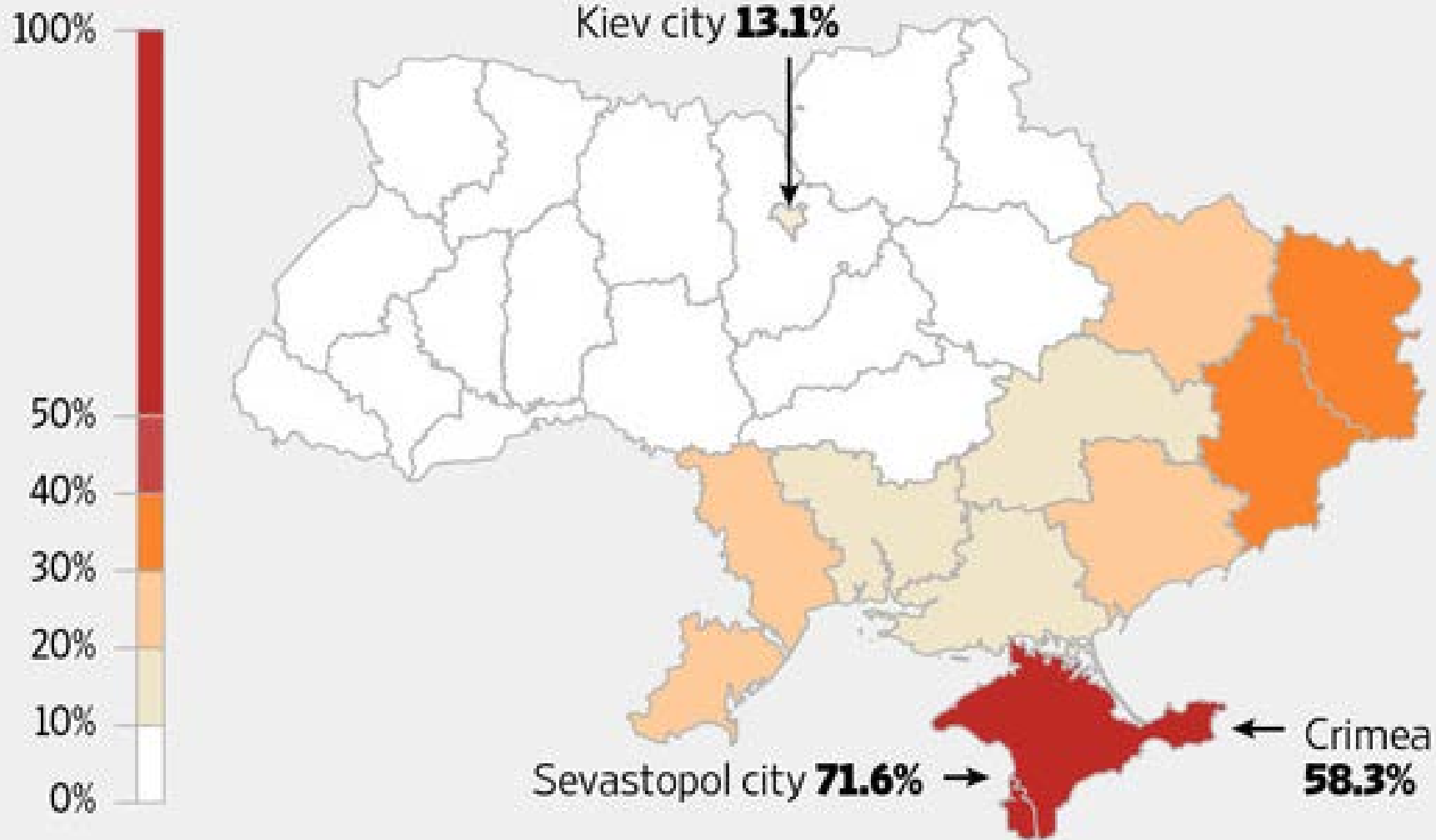


***“...you don't even know whether it is better to talk with the governments of some of these states or with their American protectors and sponsors.”***  
***V. Putin, regarding the clash with Ukraine***





## Ethnic Russian population, by region



Source: Ukraine's 2001 Census (the most recent available)

The Wall Street Journal

A diagram illustrating the components of hybrid war. It features a central green pentagon with five blue circles at its vertices, each containing a different component. The top circle is 'Special forces', the top-left is 'Regular military', the top-right is 'Irregular', the bottom-left is 'Cyber attacks', and the bottom-right is 'Information warfare propaganda'. A central circle at the bottom is labeled 'Diplomacy'.

Special forces

Regular military

Irregular

***“The essence of hybrid, or non-linear war is to wage war without ever announcing it officially. This is why it represents such a challenge for NATO, the quintessentially 20th-century security alliance. . . . Tanks don’t prevent cyber-attacks; you can’t respond to a propaganda campaign with a cruise missile.”***

Mark Galeotti, quoted in Peter Pomerantsev & Michael Weiss, “The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money,” Institute of Modern Russia/The Interpreter Magazine, 2014

Cyber attacks

Information warfare propaganda

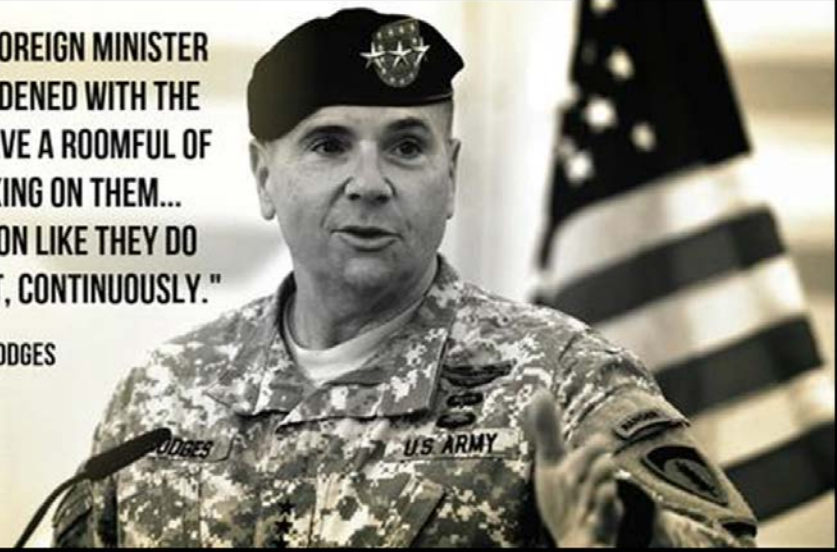
Diplomacy

16 МАРТА МЫ ВЫБИРАЕМ



"PRESIDENT PUTIN & FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV ARE NOT BURDENED WITH THE TRUTH. THEY DON'T HAVE A ROOMFUL OF JOURNALISTS CHECKING ON THEM... THEY USE INFORMATION LIKE THEY DO ARTILLERY – LOTS OF IT, CONTINUOUSLY."

-U.S. ARMY LT. GEN. BEN HODGES



UKRAINE?



# RUSSIA BEYOND THE HEADLINES

a division of Rossiyskaya Gazeta



Russia  
BEYOND  
THE HEADLINES

2011

**TASS** RUSSIAN NEWS AGENCY

**РОССИЯ СЕГОДНЯ**

**LIFE NEWS**

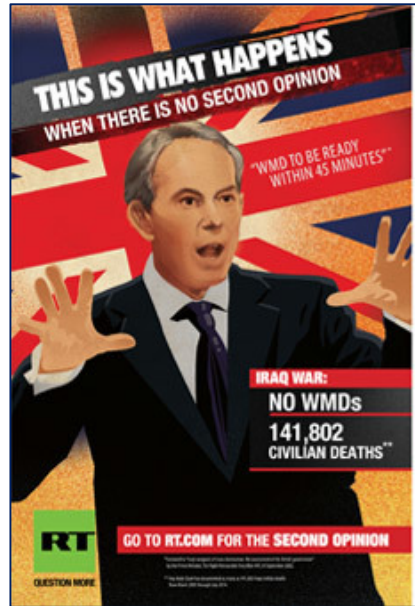


**Russia**  
BEYOND  
THE HEADLINES

Published by  
ROSSIYSKAYA  
GAZETA



**“We fully support our country’s foreign policy.”  
Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief, RT**





**Liz Wahl resigned from RT *on the air***

*"We are lying every single day at RT. There are a million different ways to lie, and I really learned that at RT."*



**Sara Firth resigned as RT's London correspondent**



LIVE



#inthenowRT

@ANOWRT

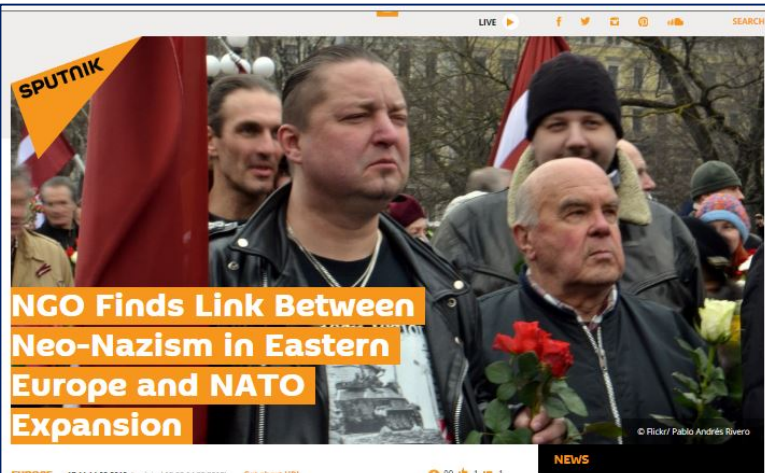


LONDON

19:17

#UKRAINE: REPORTS OF FIERCE FIGHTING IN #LUGANSK AND #DONETSK REGIONS

© RT/Youtube



## NGO Finds Link Between Neo-Nazism in Eastern Europe and NATO Expansion

EUROPE 17:11 14.08.2015 (updated 18:00 14.08.2015) [Get short URL](#) 99 1 1

The administrator-general of the Eurasian Observatory for Democracy & Elections (EODE) Luc Michel said that the glorification of Fascism and neo-Nazism accompanies every stage of NATO expansion to the East.

MOSCOW (Sputnik), Alexander Mosesov — Links between the tend East, can b gene for D Sput

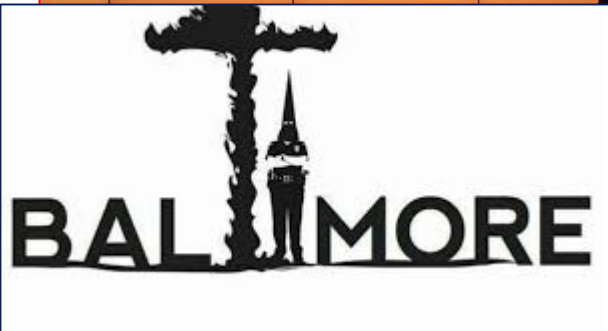
NEWS

LATEST MOST READ

18:41 Anime Legend Hayao Miyazaki Joins Fight Against US Okinawa Base

18:34 British UKIP Party Secretary Resigns After Criticism

17:57 Cutting-Edge Russian Laser Hoax in



## Sputnik Editor-in-Chief Reveals Emails Monitored by Intel Agencies in Baltics

EUROPE 11:18 15.03.2017 (updated 12:07 15.03.2017) [Get short URL](#) 4 0 0 1 1 13

NEWS



POLITICS 17:45 09.08.2015 (updated 07:46 10.08.2015) [Get short URL](#)

Ekaterina Blinova

17 9054 99 17

Playing into the hands of Ukrainian nationalists, a monument to the so-called Ukrainian "Holodomor," one the 20th century's most famous myths and vitriolic pieces of anti-Soviet Propaganda, has been erected in the US capital.

Remarkably, the roots of the "Holodomor" ("deliberate starvation") myth lie in the longstanding Cold War standoff between Soviet Russia and the West. After the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, infamous Nazi collaborators — members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and their paramilitary UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) units —



© IBA NOVOSTI, ANDREY STERELIN

History Shows 'Yanukovich Was Right to Oppose EU Association Deal'



# “Troll Factories” & “Web Brigades”

☰ The Moscow Times 🔍

Apr 19, 2017 05:27 GMT-5

## Revealed: Confessions of a Kremlin Troll

Being paid by the Russian government to troll the internet just isn't what it used to be.

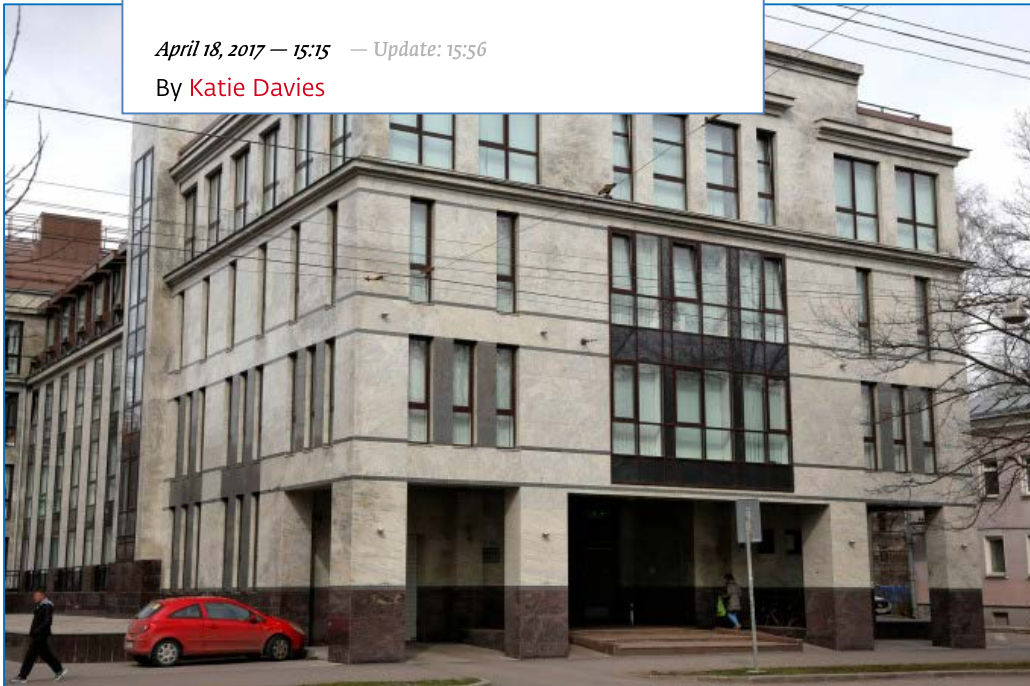
April 18, 2017 — 15:15 — Update: 15:56

By [Katie Davies](#)



*“On an average working day, the Russians are to post on news articles 50 times. Each blogger is to maintain six Facebook accounts publishing at least three posts a day. . . On Twitter, the bloggers are expected to manage 10 accounts with up to 2,000 followers and tweet 50 times a day.”*

Max Seddon in *Buzzfeed*





**“Information war is now the main type of war, preparing the way for military action.”**

Dmitry Kiselyov, head of *Rossiya Segodnya*, quoted by Peter Pomerantsov, in “Inside Putin’s Information War”, *Politico*, Jan 2015



**“[The Russian media is] yet another weapon, yet another unit of the Armed Forces.”**

Sergey Shoigu, Russian Min of Defense, quoted by Vitaliy Portnikov, “Media as an Arm of the Russian Armed Forces,” *Radio Svoboda/RFE*, Mar 2015

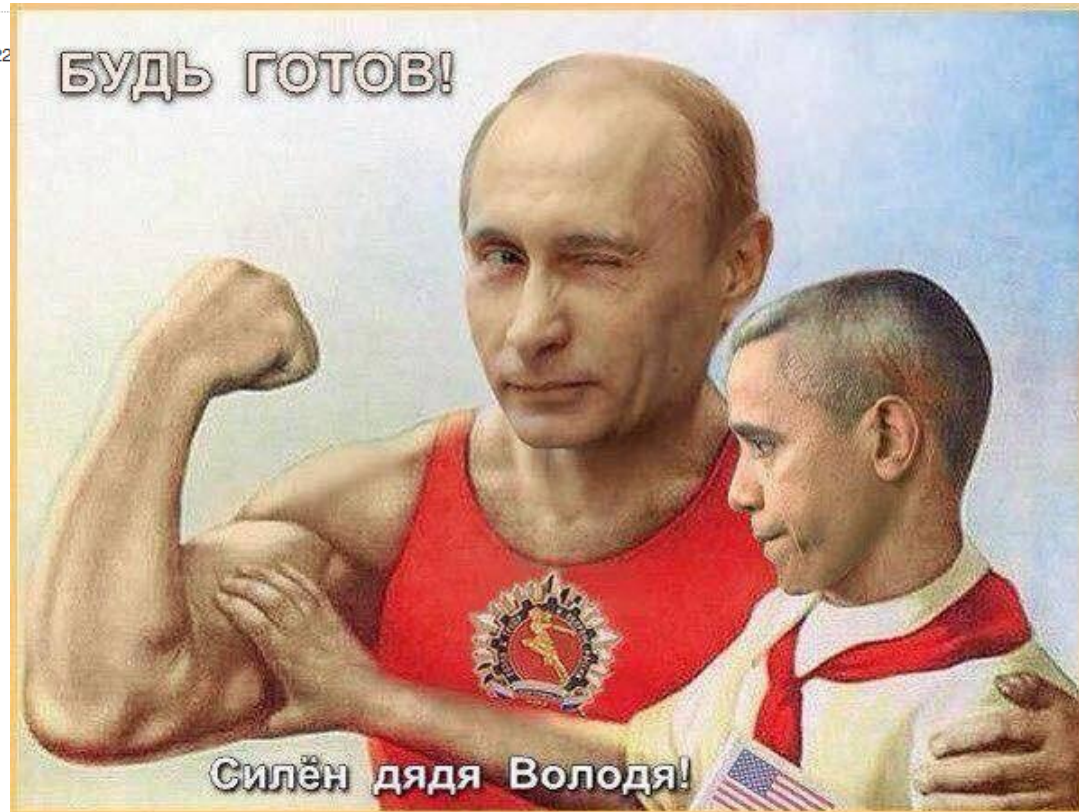


# Putin Gains Record Support Among Russians Over Syria, Poll Shows

by Alexei Anishchuk

October 22

*“Political commentator Yulia Latynina said Russia wants to see the destruction of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ‘Only this will allow Putin to achieve the desired result, to show Obama how he, Putin, **a real man**, succeeded where Obama was disgraced,’ she said in her program Saturday night on Ekho Moskvyy radio.”*



# *Why Should We Care? What Can We Do?*





# Russian interference looms over European elections

BY MORGAN CHALFANT - 04/21/17 06:04 AM EDT

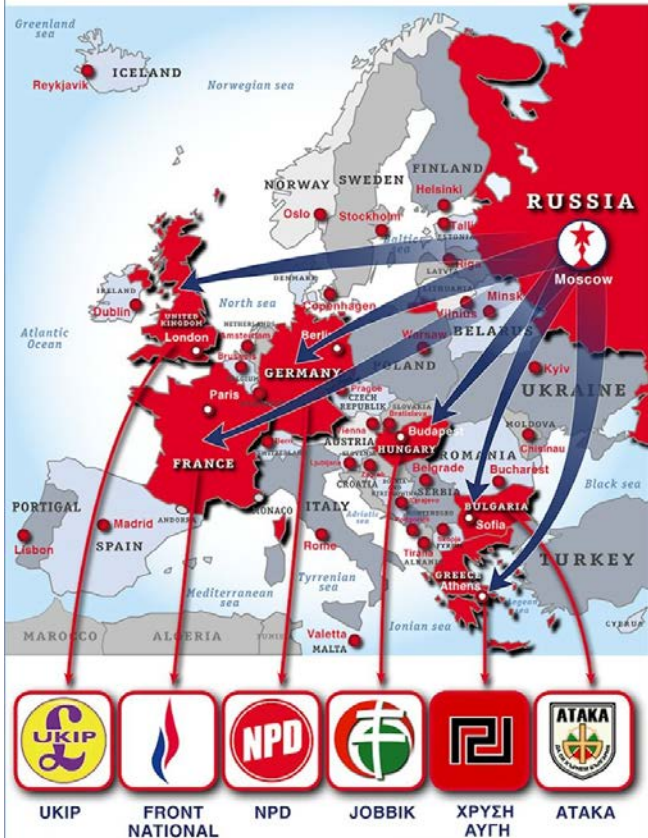
The Great Debate

## Russia having success in hybrid war against Germany

By Lucian Kim | February 7, 2016



### FAR-RIGHT PARTIES, LOBBYING FOR THE INTERESTS OF RUSSIA IN EUROPE



Who Will "Break" First? Russia or the West?



# CAN FANCY BEAR BE STOPPED? THE CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER OF RUSSIAN INFO OPS

JOSHUA FOUST

SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

*Russia is engaged in an unprecedented, sophisticated attack on the American political system. Defeating it won't be easy.*



Jennifer Palmieri  
@jmpalmieri

# "Fake News"?

Friends, please remember that if you see a whopper of a Wikileaks in next two days - it's probably a fake.

RETWEETS 900 LIKES 1,091

5:59 AM - 6 Nov 2016

Philadelphia, PA



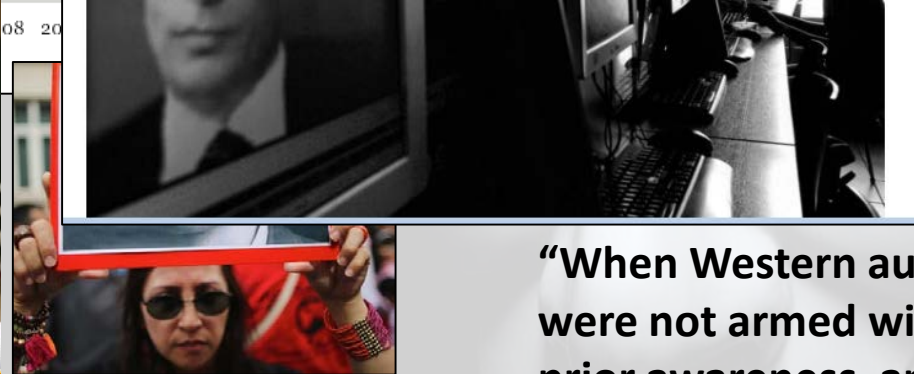
## DNC apologizes to Bernie Sanders amid convention chaos in wake of email leak

Sanders' supporters boo Vermont senator and adopt Trump's 'lock her up' chant as FBI launches investigation into leak of emails that led to ouster of DNC chair



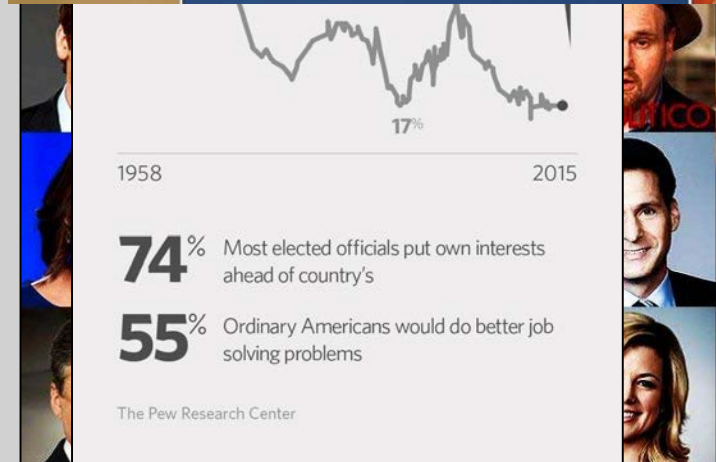
Debbie Wasserman Schultz jeered at a breakfast for the delegation from her home state of Florida.

OUT RUSSIAN











"When Western audiences were not armed with this prior awareness, and as a result began to question in their own minds whether they had their facts straight, Russian disinformation objectives were achieved."

Keir Giles, *The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare*



### Official list of “undesirables”

Based

Institute of Modern Russia <b>April 27, 2017</b>	U.S. 
Open Russia <b>April 27, 2017</b>	U.K. 
Open Russia (Civic movement) <b>April 27, 2017</b>	U.K. 
International Republican Institute <b>August 22, 2016</b>	U.S. 
Media Development Investment Fund <b>August 22, 2016</b>	U.S. 
National Democratic Institute <b>March 17, 2016</b>	U.S. 
U.S. Russia Foundation <b>December 7, 2015</b>	U.S. 
Open Society Foundations (subsidiaries) <b>December 1, 2015</b>	U.S. 
Open Society Foundations <b>December 1, 2015</b>	U.S. 
National Endowment for Democracy <b>July 29th, 2015</b>	U.S. 

### Groups put on a July 2015 “patriotic stop list” for possible “undesirable” designation

Based

Open Society Foundations	U.K. 
National Endowment for Democracy	U.S. 
International Republican Institute	U.S. 
National Democratic Institute	U.S. 
MacArthur Foundation*	U.S. 
Freedom House	U.S. 
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	U.S. 
Education for Democracy Foundation	Pol. 
East European Democratic Center	Pol. 
Ukrainian World Congress	Can. 
Crimean Field Mission On Human Rights	Ukr. 
Ukrainian World Coordinating Council	Ukr. 

Note: The “patriotic stop list” is a list of foreign NGOs that Russia’s Federation Council recommended be investigated for possible “undesirable” designation. It is unofficial and not legally binding.

with

n risk  
in civil

Haram.  
eria face  
tion.

s an  
r mind.

ate for  
want it  
Red

s were  
mite.





Putin Vladimir

November 19, 2015 · 🌐

"To forgive the terrorists is up to God, but to send them to him is up to me."



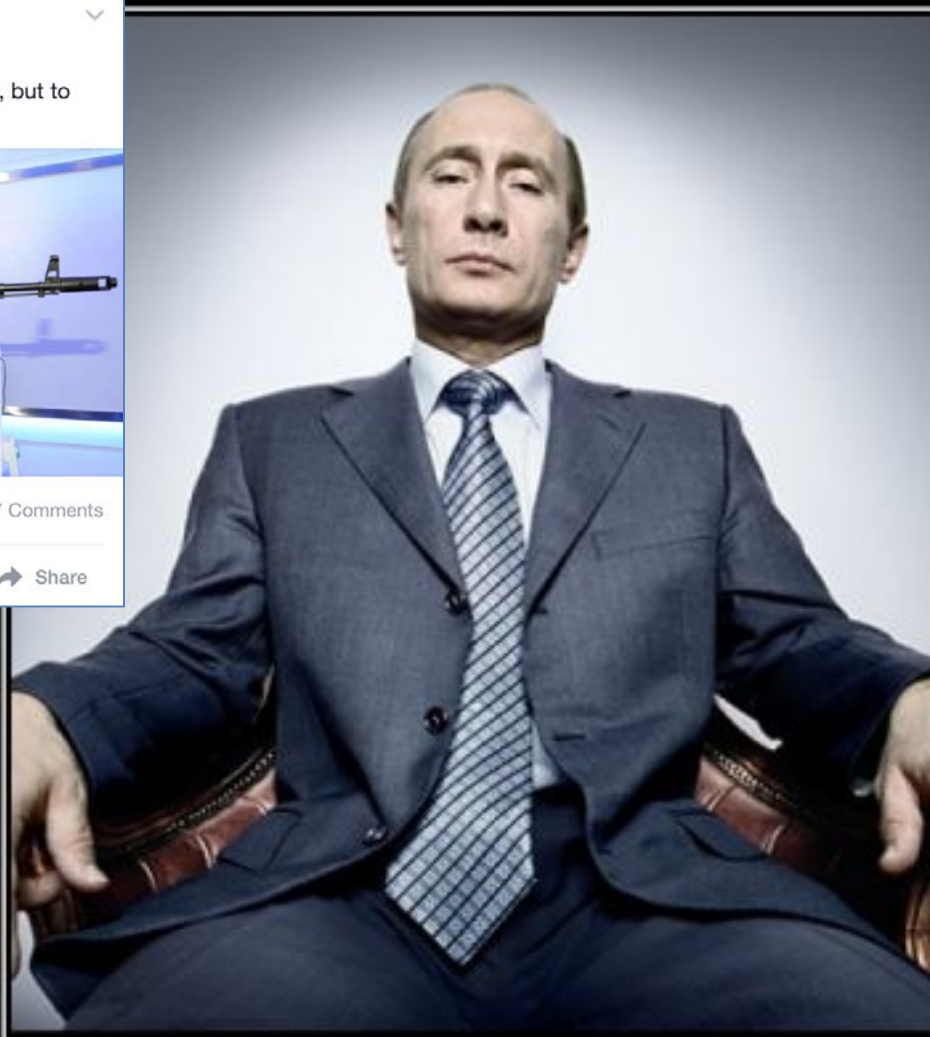
👍❤️😬 5.1K

797 Comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



# I AM VLADIMIR PUTIN

WHERE IS YOUR GOD NOW?

An outwardly strong but internally brittle, personalized and unstable regime



# Thousands Protest in Moscow, Putin Warns of Arab Spring Chaos

Bloomberg  
Politics

Markets

Tech

Pursuits

Politics

Opinion

Businessweek

## Putin Takes Tough Stance on Protests, Warns of Arab Spring Chaos



“Suddenly there's a sense that Vladimir Putin's regime feels threatened. But . . . the regime is very dangerous when it feels threatened.

Because everybody knows how 2011-12 ended: with a harsh crackdown on dissent followed by a military adventure in Ukraine.”

*Brian Whitmore, Radio Free Europe, 30 Mar 17*

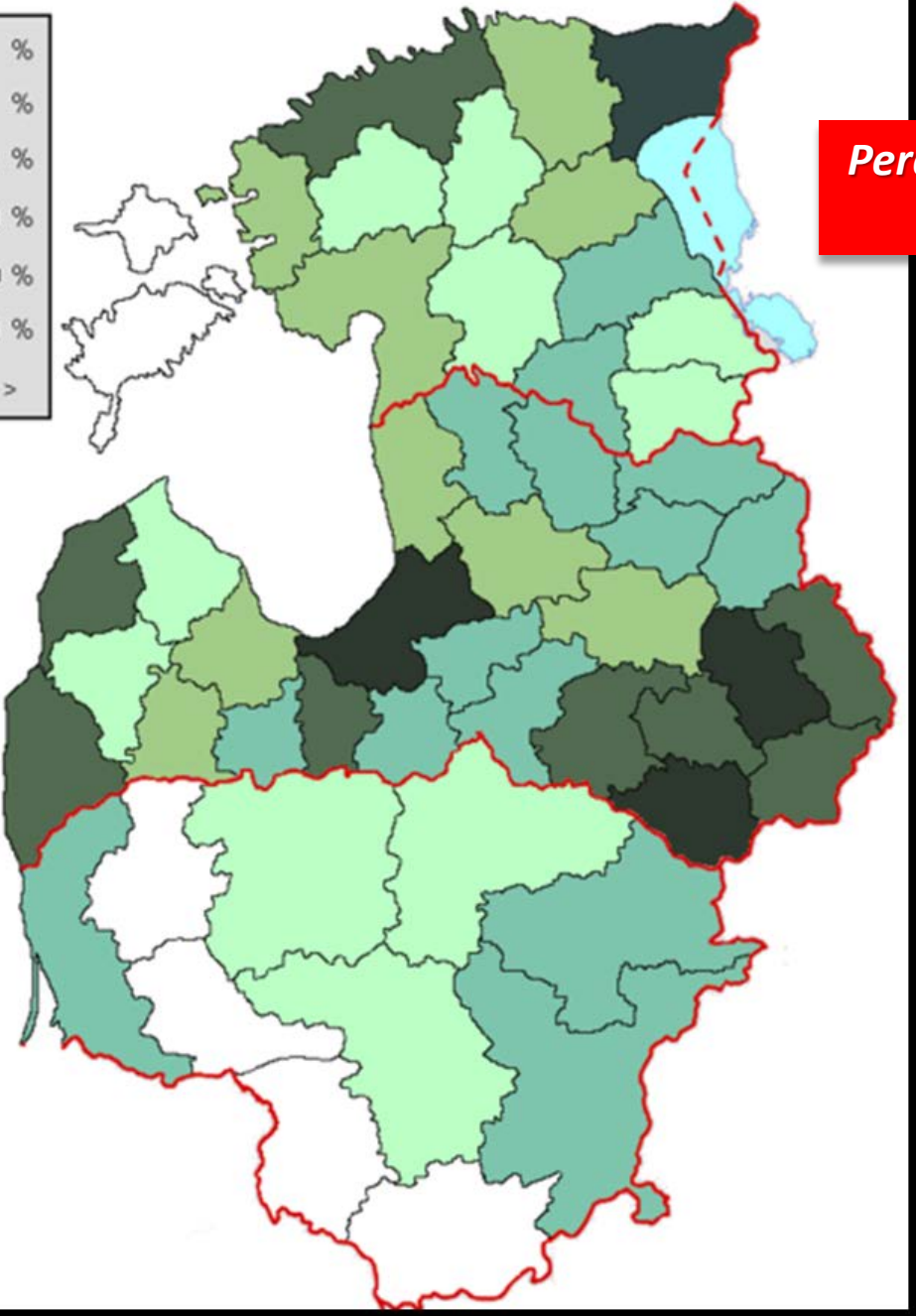
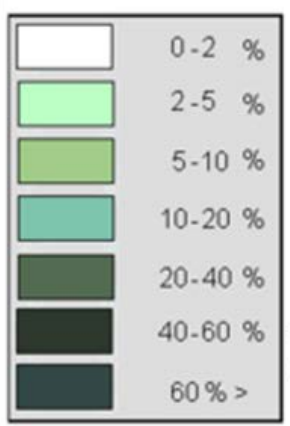
The Atlantic

### Anti-Corruption in Russia

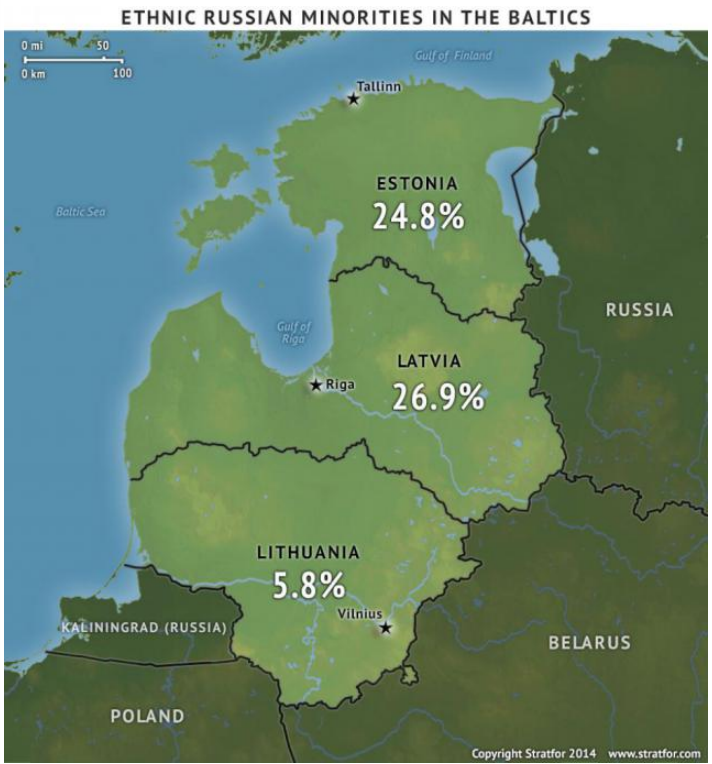
ALAN TAYLOR | MAR 27, 2017 | 28

On March 26, 2017, thousands of protesters gathered in Moscow to demand an end to government corruption, in one of the largest demonstrations in the city since the 2011-12 protests.





**Percentage of Ethnic Russians Living in the Baltic (NATO) States**



# Russia Walks the Line Between War and Peace in the Baltics

March 19, 2017 · Joel Harding



## Lithuania fears Russian propaganda is prelude to eventual invasion

The Kremlin's attempts to rewrite history are seen as threats by Baltic states similar to its justification for annexing Crimea

Moscow switches from unfriendly rhetoric to state-sponsored lies

Vladimir Sazonov for StopFake.org



US army forces during military exercises in Lithuania in November 2016. Photograph: Sea

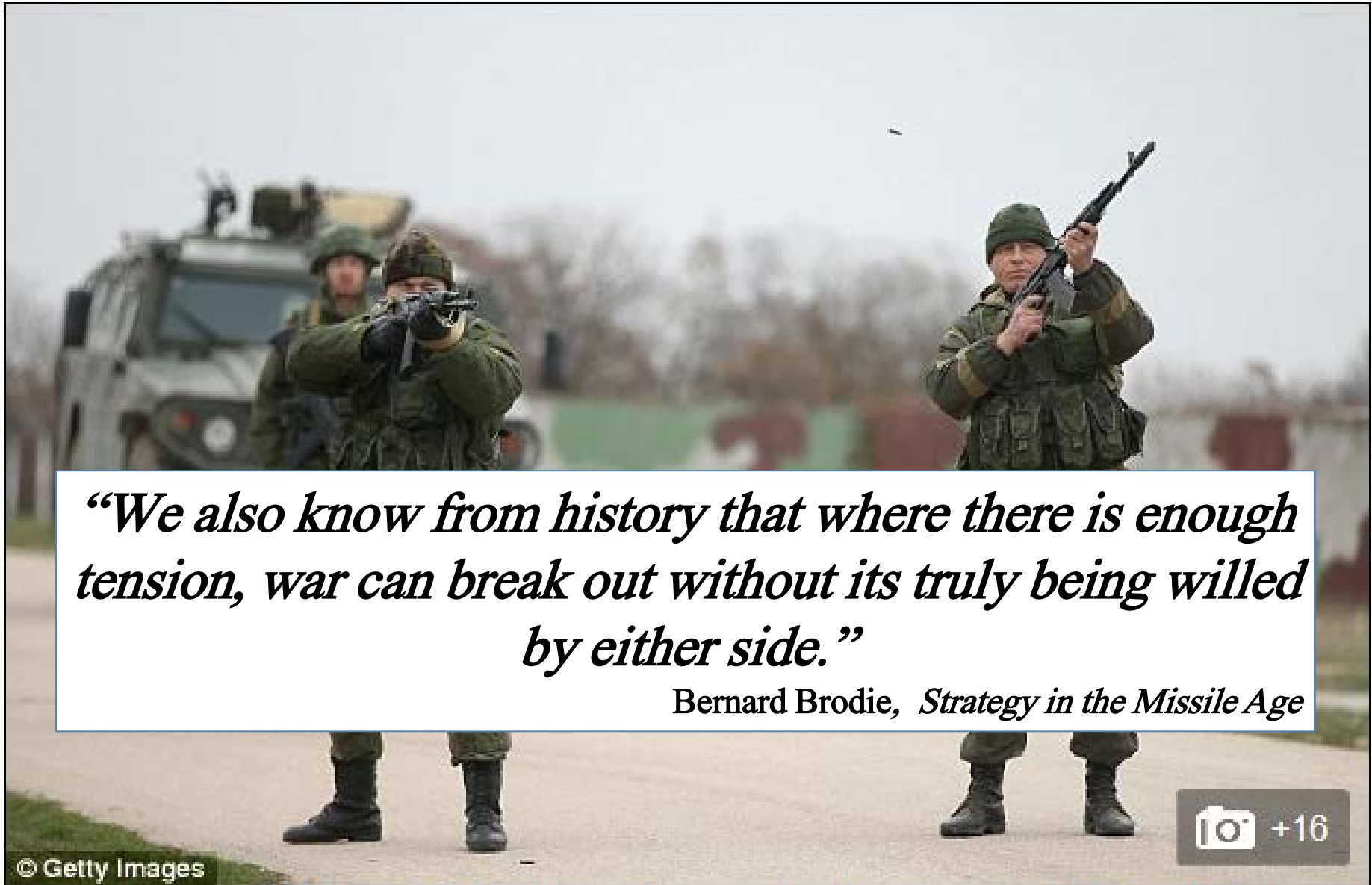
THE BALTIC  
**Times**

ESTONIA LATVIA LITHUANIA BUSINESS ANALYSIS

## Re: Baltica: Baltic Russian-language news sites Baltnews linked to Kremlin's global propaganda network

2017-04-07 BNS/TBT Staff





*“We also know from history that where there is enough tension, war can break out without its truly being willed by either side.”*

Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*



© Getty Images

**Russia’s message to Nato will be simple — are you really willing to risk World War III in order to keep us from holding sway in the former Soviet empire?**

**Source: The UK Daily Mail**



# THE AIR UNIVERSITY



**All too often, the view of  
Russia does not  
correspond to reality:  
information on Russia is  
either distorted or  
incomplete or just  
nonsense.**

QUOTEHD.COM

Margarita Simonyan

