



**Pekka Kallioniemi** @P\_Kallioniemi

Jul 28, 2025 • 21 tweets • [P\\_Kallioniemi/status/1949802670241247703](#)

In today's Vatnik Soup, I'll introduce a Russian politician and First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of Russia, Sergey Kiriyenko. He's best known for running both domestic and foreign disinformation and propaganda operations for the Kremlin.

1/20



On paper, and in photos, Kiriyenko is just as boring as most of the Kremlin's "political technologists": between 2005-2016 he headed the Rosatom nuclear energy company, but later played a leading role in the governance of Russia-occupied territories in Ukraine.

2/20



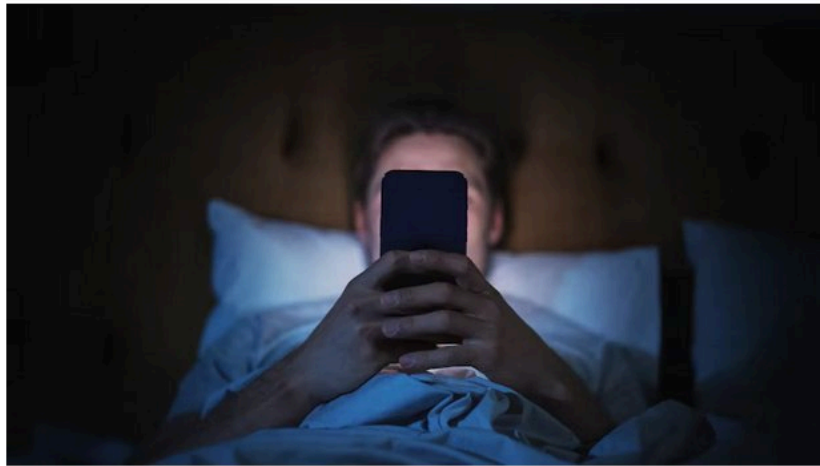


What is a political technologist? In Russia, they're spin doctors & propaganda architects who shape opinion, control narratives, and manage elections — often by faking opposition, staging events, and spreading disinfo to maintain Putin's power and the illusion of democracy.

H... > N... > Russian political technologists – experts in “information warfa...

## Russian political technologists – experts in “information warfare” – prepare for US elections

24 October 2024



Russia’s political technologists were planning last year for influence operations designed to impact the upcoming US elections by exploiting concerns about immigration, identity politics and culture wars.

The concept of political technologist emerged in the 1990s as Russia transitioned from chaos to centralized control. Political technologists blend manipulation, media dominance, and psychological ops to engineer consent and suppress dissent.





Figures like Vladislav Surkov pioneered “post-truth” politics, where reality is fluid, narratives shift constantly, and confusion reigns. The goal of this is to exhaust the public, neutralize resistance, and make alternatives to the regime seem futile or nonexistent.

5/20



After the fall of Surkov in 2016, Kiriienko quickly became “Putin’s right-hand man,” shaping domestic and foreign politics based on political technologist ideology. Inside Russia, his goal was to promote the false idea of “conservatism” and “traditionalism”.

6/20

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## Russia: Censorship of Younger Generation’s Music

Government Intimidation, Concerts Cancelled



Russian musician Nastya Kreslina, member of electronic duo called IC3PEAK performs during a concert in Yekaterinburg, Russia. November 29, 2018. © 2018/AP Photo/Anton Basanayev

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## The Surkov Leaks: The Inner Workings of Russia’s Hybrid War in Ukraine

Alya Shandra and Robert Seely  
16 July 2019 Long Read

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An analysis of leaked emails from the Kremlin provides fresh insights on Russia’s activities in Ukraine.

Russia encouraged pro-Russian demonstrations throughout Ukraine.  
Courtesy of HOBOPOCC/Wikimedia/CC BY-



## Former Prime Minister to Become Putin's Right-Hand Man



By Mikhail Fishman  
Sep. 29, 2016



Sergei Kiriyenko

Mikhail Metzel / TASS

After the launch of the full-scale invasion on Ukraine in 2022, Kiriyenko's work was expanded to the Russian-occupied territories. Like Surkov before, his main duties were to manufacture support for the occupiers and falsely claim they're supported by the locals.

STORIES

## The Viceroy How Sergey Kiriyenko became Putin's point man in the Donbas and plans to shape Russia's 'post-war image'

2:48 am, June 10, 2022 · Source: [Meduza](#)



Sergey Kiriyenko (right) and Denis Pushilin, the head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, at the opening of a humanitarian center in Donetsk. May 5, 2022.

Denis Pushilin's Press Service

For example, he oversaw the Kremlin's sham referendums in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia — staged votes held under military occupation, with no transparency or legitimacy. Designed to justify annexation, they earned him the nickname “Viceroy of the Donbas.”

## Ukraine condemns 'sham' elections in Russian-occupied regions

8 September 2023

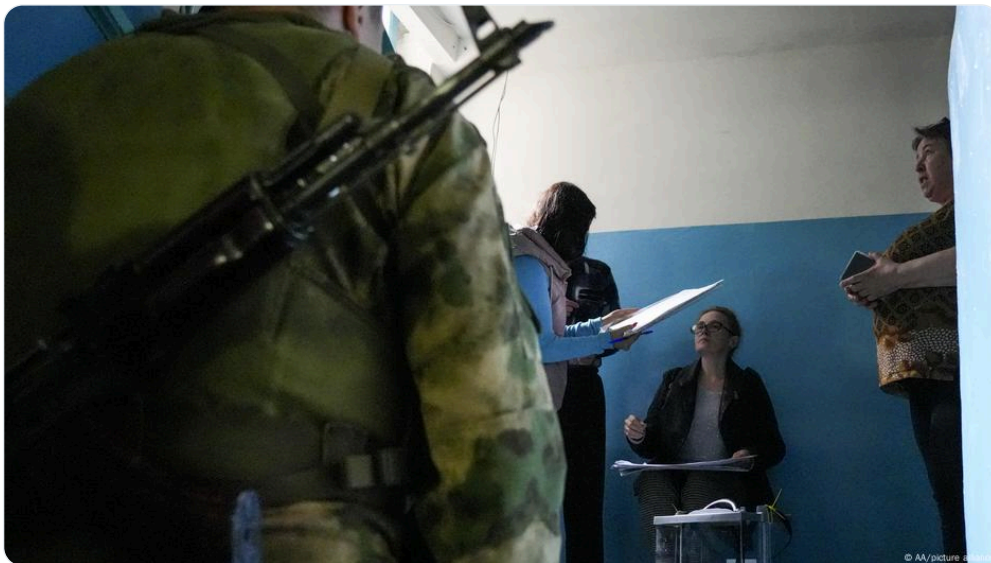
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**Nathan Williams & Sergei Goryashko**  
BBC News & BBC Russian



The elections are taking place in regions of Ukraine that Russia claimed as its own last year

**People living in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine are being asked to vote in what the authorities are describing as local elections.**









**Oleksandra Matviichuk** ✓  
@avalaina



Advertising campaign for “a wonderful life with Russia”. For another 4 days in the occupied Ukrainian territories, Russian soldiers come to people's homes and demand to vote for joining Russia. This is Energodar.



1:44 PM · Sep 24, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

In May and Jun of 2022, Kiriyenko made propaganda trips to occupied cities like Mariupol, where he attended the unveiling of a statue waving the Soviet flag, and Kherson, where he took part in meetings planning to formally annex the territory on Russia's election day.

# Top Kremlin Official Unveils Pro-War Statue in Ukraine's Mariupol

May 5, 2022



The statue of babushka Anya in Mariupol.

t.me/turchak\_andrey



## Occupied Kherson Ready for Vote to Join Russia, Official Claims

June 29, 2022



Russian servicemen standing guard near the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (HPP) on the Dnieper River in Kakhovka, near Kherson, Ukraine.

SERGEI ILNITSKY / EPA / TASS

Southern Ukraine's occupied Kherson region is preparing to vote on officially joining Russia, a Moscow-backed official said Wednesday.

These plans were ultimately thwarted when Ukrainian forces liberated Kherson in a bold and brilliantly executed counteroffensive. Even Elon Musk couldn't stop the operation, despite reportedly disabling Starlink access in the area to prevent a Ukrainian drone strike.

## Ukraine troops enter centre of Kherson as Russians retreat in chaos

Volodymyr Zelenskiy hails 'historic day' as locals raise Ukrainian flags around Svoboda Square

Russia-Ukraine war - latest news updates

Peter Beaumont, Luke Harding in Kherson region, Pjotr Sauer and Isobel Koshiw in Kyiv

Fri 11 Nov 2022 18.59 CET

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Crowds cheer as Ukrainian troops enter Kherson city centre - video

In extraordinary scenes, crowds of jubilant residents greeted Ukraine's armed forces as they reached the centre of Kherson, as Russia's retreat from the key strategic city appeared to have descended into chaos.

## Musk ordered Starlink shutdown during Ukraine's 2022 Kherson counteroffensive, Reuters reports

July 25, 2025 5:20 pm • 2 min read



by Tim Zadorozhnyy



A portrait of Elon Musk taken in Krakow, Poland, on Jan. 22, 2024, alongside Russia's national flag, is shown for illustration. (Beata Zawrzel/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

Incidentally, Elon Musk allegedly communicated directly with Kiriienko. According to multiple sources, they discussed topics ranging from business to geopolitics. Did Kiriienko suggest shutting down Starlink in Ukraine - or did that idea come from somewhere else?



## Elon Musk has been in regular contact with Putin for two years, says report

Alleged talks between billionaire and Russian president could have enormous security implications

Julian Borger

Fri 25 Oct 2024 16.47 CEST



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Elon Musk may be given a role in the US administration if Donald Trump is re-elected on 5 November. Photograph: Sean Simmers/AP

Elon Musk, the world's richest man who is now central to **Donald Trump's election campaign**, has been in regular contact with Vladimir Putin for the past two years, according to a report in the US.



**Elon Musk**   @elonm... · 09 Oct 22 ·

Replying to @EvaFoxU

Feels so long ago. A pleasant memory :)

 556  452  14.7K  




**Elon Musk**   @elonm... · 09 Oct 22 ·

Replying to @elonmusk and @EvaFoxU

I've been up all night trying to think of any possible way to de-escalate this war

 10.4K  4,502  23.3K  



**Ian Miles Cheong**  

@stillgray

Replying to @elonmusk and @EvaFoxU

Might be a good idea to take Starlink offline for the terminals used on the frontlines. Could encourage them to reconsider their position on advancing towards Crimea and leading the world further into the brink of total war.

17:40 · 09 Oct 22

**38** Retweets **2** Quotes **526** Likes

Under Kiriyenko's direction, the occupation administration began forcibly Russifying the seized territories, introducing Russian school curricula, distributing Russian passports, replacing mobile networks, and imposing Kremlin-controlled governance structures.

## JUNE 25, 2025



TIME

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## A person in military gear stands near a damaged car in a courtyard with a Ukrainian flag.

A Ukrainian flag hangs in Donatek Ohlset on Dec. 25, 2022. Viktor Erishchen—Global Images Ukraine/Getty Images



# Ukraine: Older People unable to afford food, medicines, other essentials

Older women, people over 70, and older  
people with disabilities at greater risk.

**Published** 23 February 2023

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Europe

# Insight: They call it 'The Hole': Ukrainians describe horrors of Kherson occupation

By **Jonathan Landay** and **Tom Balmforth**

November 17, 2022 12:39 AM GMT+2 · Updated a year ago

## Summary

- Residents describe detention, torture and death in Kherson
- Nine-month occupation ended on Friday as Russians retreated
- Among those detained were suspected resistance fighters
- Russia denies mistreating detainees
- U.N. officials say both sides have abused prisoners of war

KHERSON, Ukraine, Nov 16 (Reuters) - Residents in Ukraine's southern city of Kherson call the two-storey police station "The Hole". Vitalii Serdiuk, a pensioner, said he was lucky to make it out alive.

"I hung on," the retired medical equipment repairman said as he recounted his ordeal in Russian detention two blocks from where he and his wife live in a tiny Soviet-era apartment.

The green-roofed police building at No. 3, Energy Workers' Street, was the most notorious of several sites where, according to more than half a dozen locals in the recently recaptured city, people were interrogated and tortured during Russia's nine-month occupation. Another was a large prison.

Two residents living in an apartment block overlooking the police station courtyard said they saw bodies wrapped in white sheets being carried from the building, stored in a garage and later tossed into refuse trucks to be taken away.

Reuters could not independently verify all of the events described by the Kherson residents.

As Surkov before him, Kiriienko is also running the Kremlin's global troll farms. Under his direction, Russia's influence ops have become more sophisticated, covert, and tech-driven. Under his supervision are organizations like the Social Design Agency and Structura.

EXCLUSIVE

# Russian trolls target U.S. support for Ukraine, Kremlin documents show

April 8, 2024   More than 1 year ago

12 min   ↗   📌   📄



A Russian police officer stands guard on Red Square outside the Kremlin in Moscow on April 3. (Maxim Shipenkov/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock)

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The Kremlin turned in earnest to undermining American support for Ukraine in January 2023. Sergei Kiriyenko, the Kremlin's first deputy chief of staff, called in the team of political strategists already working on campaigns to weaken backing for Kyiv in Europe, including Gambashidze, and asked them to expand their efforts, the documents show. The strategists employ dozens of troll farm employees and translators.

The Moscow spin doctors were soon ordered to create media content for Americans that would promote corruption allegations involving the Ukrainian leadership — “the sale and theft of weapons” given to Ukraine, one document shows.

The strategists were told to cultivate an environment in which “Americans are not ready to sacrifice their well-being for the sake of the conflict in Ukraine,” as well as representing Russia's increasingly close relationship with China as a new threat “created by the U.S.'s own activities.”

Remember that anti-Zelenskyy meme that Elon shared on X and that got around 100 million views, making Russian propaganda TV very happy? That, and thousands of others, were



actually manufactured by the propagandists at Social Design Agency.

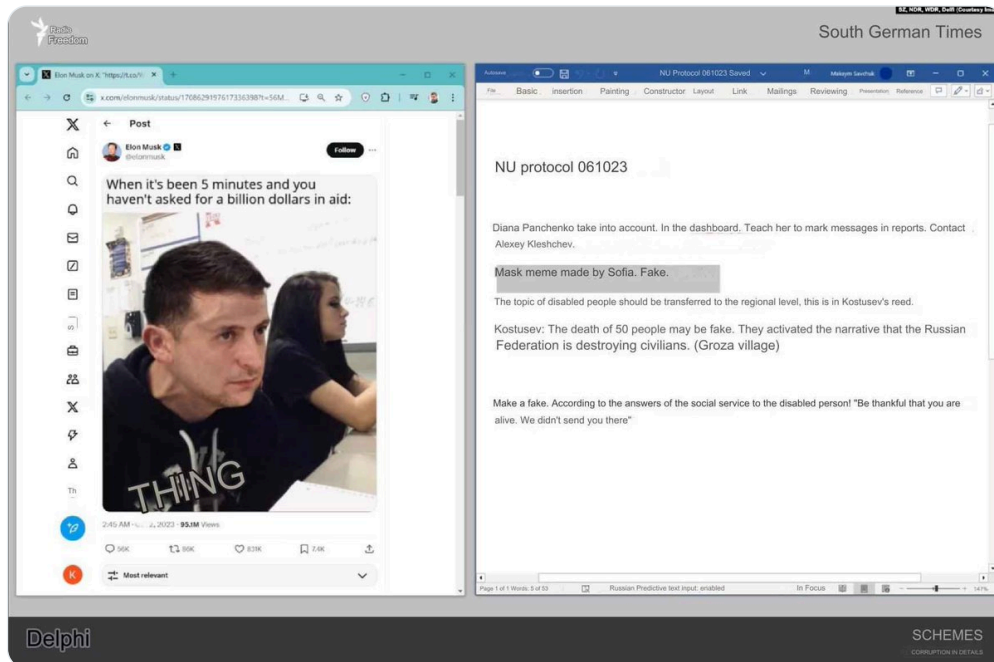
14/20

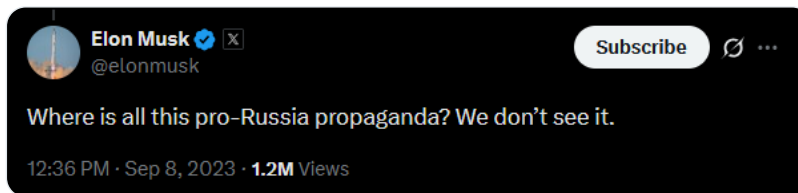
A trove of leaked records from a Russian disinformation campaign reveals how Moscow sought to discredit Ukraine and Western governments that support it while also trying to boost support for far-right political parties in the European Union.

The documents obtained by a consortium of European media outlets and **shared with Schemes**, the investigative unit of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, highlight the internal operations of the Social Design Agency, a Moscow-based company that **the United States says** has led the propaganda campaign at the Kremlin's behest.

The campaign included a diverse mix of memes, falsified videos and government documents, and a network of websites impersonating legitimate news outlets across Europe to disseminate fake stories aimed at undermining Western support for Ukraine after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The records state that one meme denigrating Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky **that was shared on X by its billionaire owner, Elon Musk**, and garnered 86,000 reshares was a creation of the Social Design Agency.





Kiriyenko oversees the Presidential Directorate for Public Projects, which coordinates state-controlled narratives online. He has also been leading one of the most infamous Russian online influence operations, Doppelgänger, famous for spreading pro-Kremlin BS online.

# Political bloc without borders and boundaries

Andrey Pertsev examines Sergey Kiriyenko's empire

[Читать на русском](#)



By **Andrey Pertsev** 08 March 2024



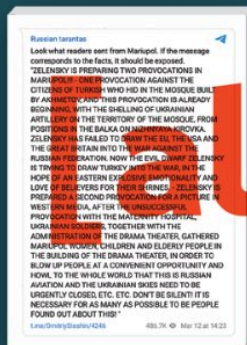
Photo: Scanpix

In Ukraine, the influence operations overseen by Kiriyenko have also had huge negative impact. A 2024 report by Global Rights Compliance found systematic disinformation tied to Kiriyenko's structures aimed at "manufacturing impunity" for Russian forces.



# MANUFACTURING IMPUNITY: RUSSIAN INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN UKRAINE

RUSSIA'S USE OF INFORMATION ALIBIS  
AND HOW THEY MATERIALLY CONTRIBUTE  
TO THE PLANNING, EXECUTION AND  
COVER-UP OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMES



Kiriyenko's tactics aren't limited to Ukraine. In Moldova, Russian-backed media and troll farms, connected to his networks, have pushed narratives to undermine the pro-EU president Maia Sandu and pro-European forces ahead of the 2025 elections, per @IGTDS1.



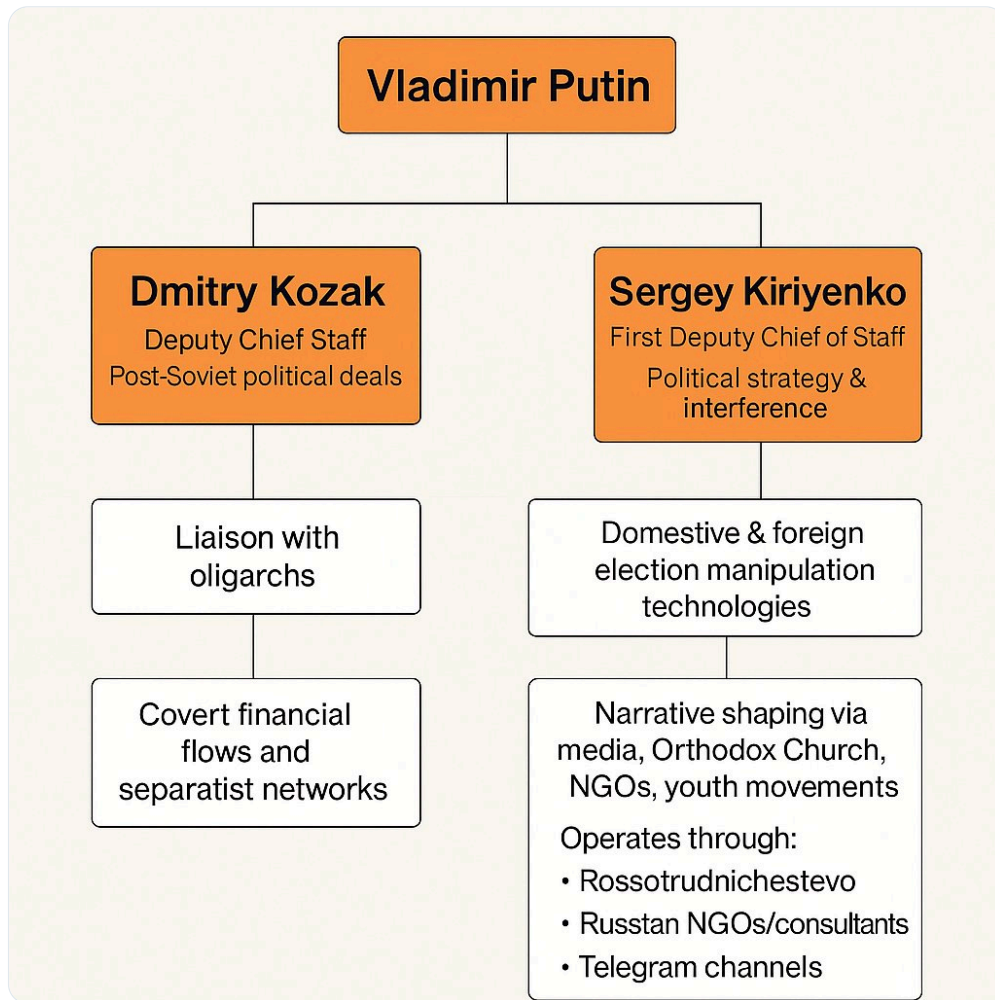
Governance

Intelligence ops

# The Consolidation of Pro-Russian Forces in Moldova: Implications for the 2025 Elections

July 23, 2025





In addition, Kiriyenko now chairs the supervisory board of Russia's revived Intervision Song Contest — a Kremlin-backed alternative to Eurovision, promoting “traditional values” and resisting “woke” culture, serving as ideological soft power against the West.



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## Russia to relaunch Soviet-era Eurovision Song Contest rival in Moscow under Putin's orders



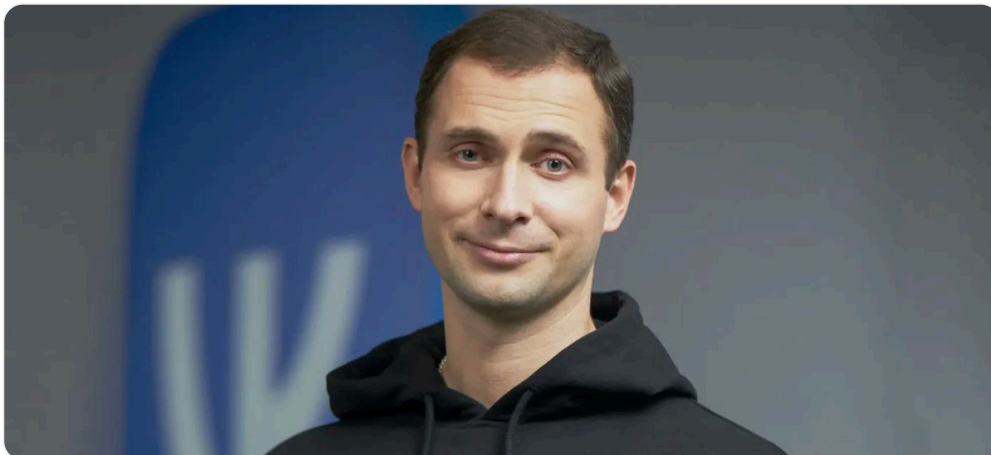
Copyright Credit: AP Photo

By [Theo Farrant](#)

Published on 05/02/2025 - 12:02 GMT+1

As is tradition in Russia, Kiriienko's son, Vladimir, was appointed the CEO of VK, Russia's flagship social network, in 2021. The Kremlin leadership likes to keep things in the family, especially when it comes to controlling key media platforms.

19/20



Vladimir Sergeevich KIRIYENKO is the CEO of VK Company Limited. VK Company Limited is a Russian internet company, with a major presence in the Russian speaking segment of internet. VK projects collectively had the largest audience in Russia and captured the most screen time. VK's sites reach more than 90 % of Russian internet users on a monthly basis and the company is in the top 5 of largest internet companies, based on the number of total pages viewed. It controls and operates the three largest and most popular Russian social networking sites, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki and Moi Mir, as well as the email service and internet portal mail.ru. Vladimir Sergeevich KIRIYENKO is therefore involved in economic sectors providing a substantial source of revenue to the Government of the Russian Federation. The Russian government is increasing its influence over media and social networks. VK Company is controlled by Gazprom Media (a State-owned company which is the major source of income to the Russian Government). Vladimir Sergeevich Kiriyenko therefore supports Vladimir Putin's aim for greater control over the internet. Vladimir Kiriyenko therefore actively supports, materially or financially, or benefits from Russian decision-makers responsible for the annexation of Crimea or the destabilisation of Ukraine. As VK Company is owned by the State-owned Gazprom group, the revenue it generates is an important source of revenue for the Russian Government. Vladimir Kiriyenko is the son of Sergei Kiriyenko, currently First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Office. Sergei Kiriyenko is reported to be Vladimir Putin's domestic policy curator.

— [Swiss SECO Sanctions/Embargoes](#), 2024-08-23

To conclude: What sets Kiriyenko apart is his fusion of old-school political technology & modern information warfare. He effectively blends domestic repression, foreign manipulation, and digital propaganda into a seamless strategy to protect the regime and export chaos.

20/20



The 2nd edition of "Vatnik Soup — The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation" is officially out!

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