

The Power of the Meme

Putin as an Object of Derision and Admiration on Social Media



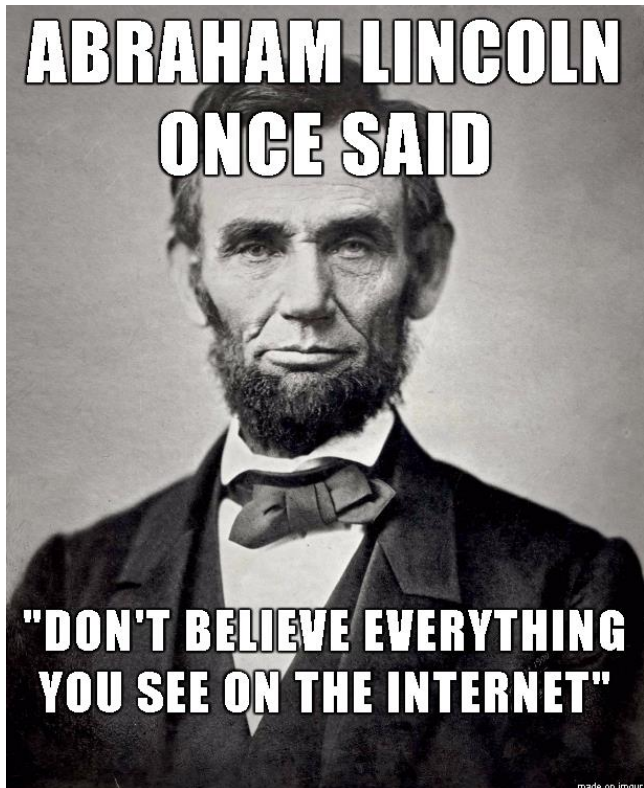
What is a meme anyway?



Richard Dawkins: *The Selfish Gene* (1976)

- Equivalent to genes
- Unit of cultural transmission (ideas, symbols, practices)
- Between individuals & generations
- Replication

What is an internet meme?



Cambridge Dictionary:

Idea, image or video that spreads very quickly on the internet

- Usually image macros
- Oftentimes humorous, sometimes critical and satirical
- Non-mainstream or subcultural

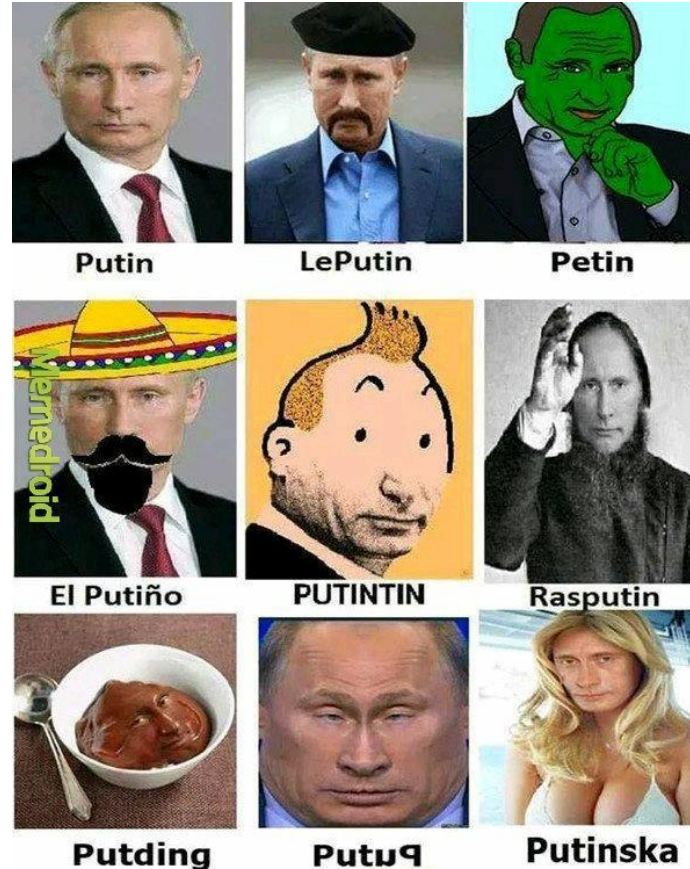
A controversial meme celebrity:

Pepe the Frog



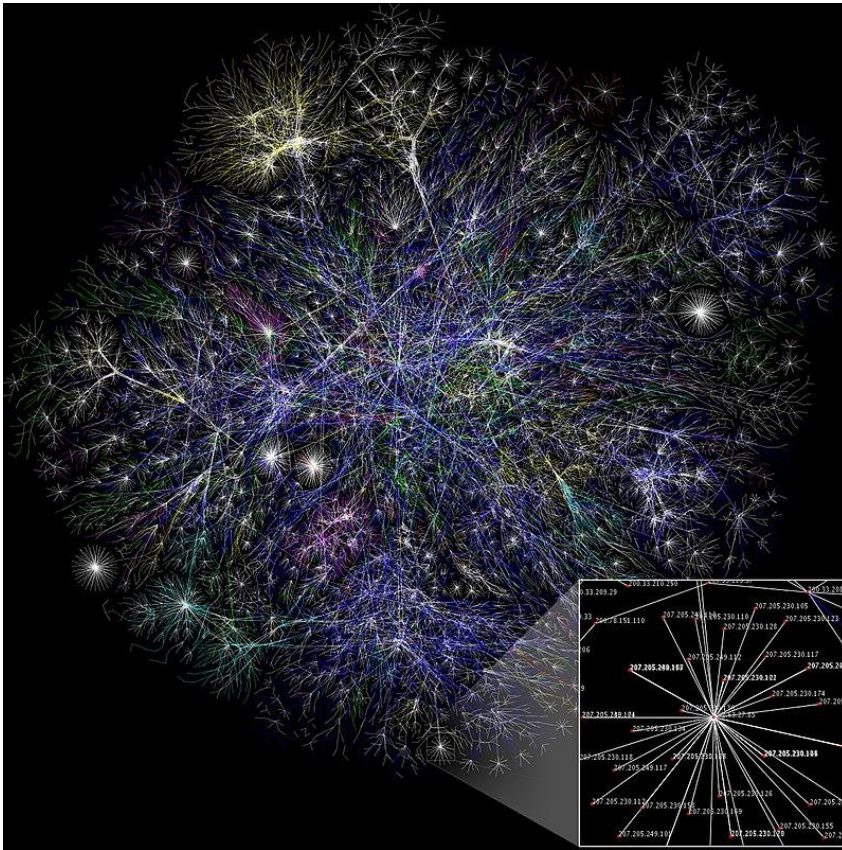
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Another meme celebrity?



<https://es.memedroid.com/memes/tag/putin>

Specifics of on-line communication



Internet isn't mass media,
it's a communication
platform.

- Multi-access
- Multi-directional
- Interactive

2005: 1 billion users
2010: 2 billion users
2020: 4.5 billion users

Are we closer to Habermas's ideal?

Bourgeois public
sphere (18th-
19th century)

Mass society
public sphere
(20th century)

Information society
public sphere (21st
century)

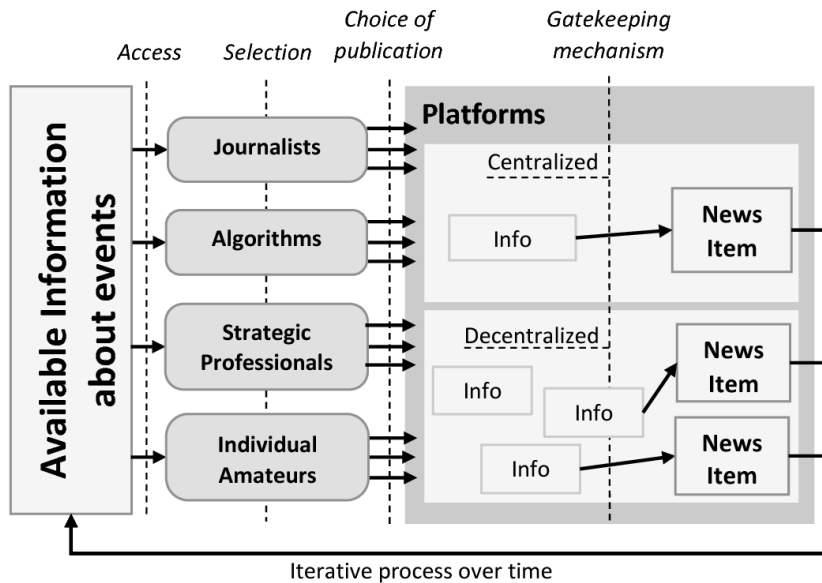
Rational &
critical

Emotional &
consumerized

Consumerized &
critical?

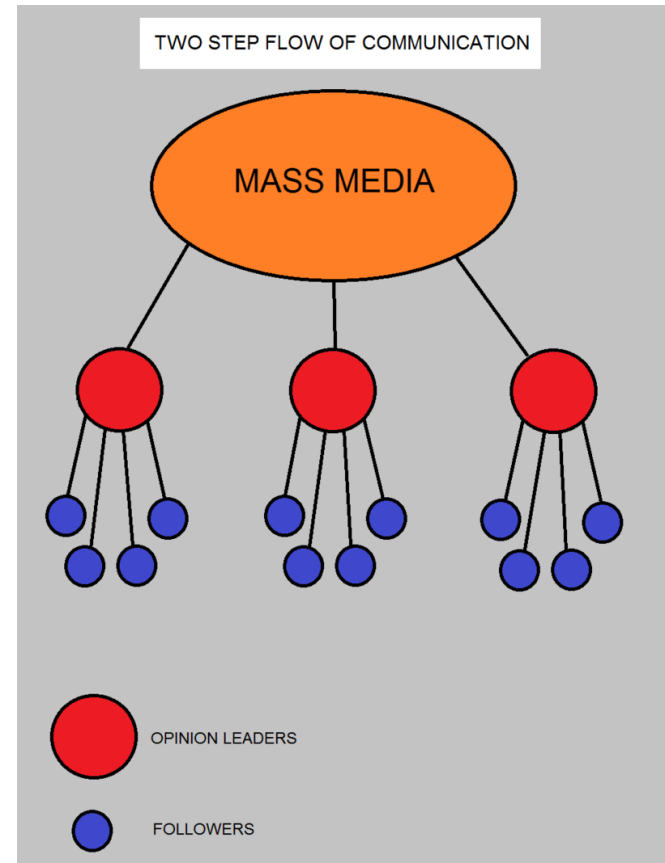
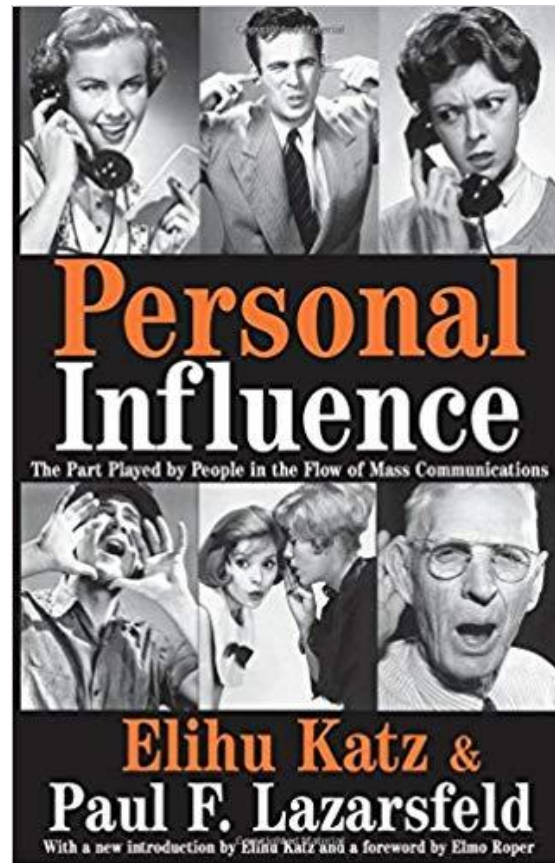
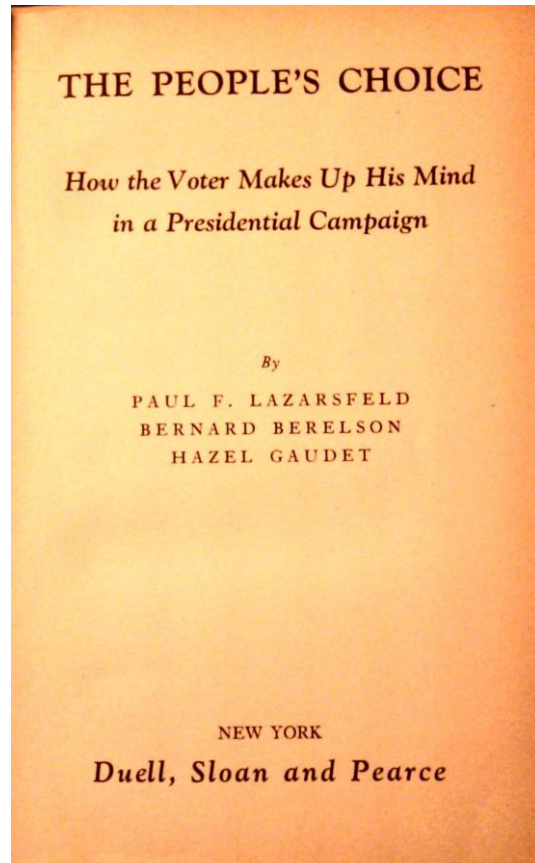
How does communication work today?

Digital Gatekeeping



- There are more active participants.
- Old gatekeepers lose control.
- Agenda-setting becomes more complicated.

Multi-step flows and opinion leaders



What does it mean for our discussion?



- Chaotic environment
- Limited control



The construction of a public persona is a cultural battlefield with a multitude of conflicting images.

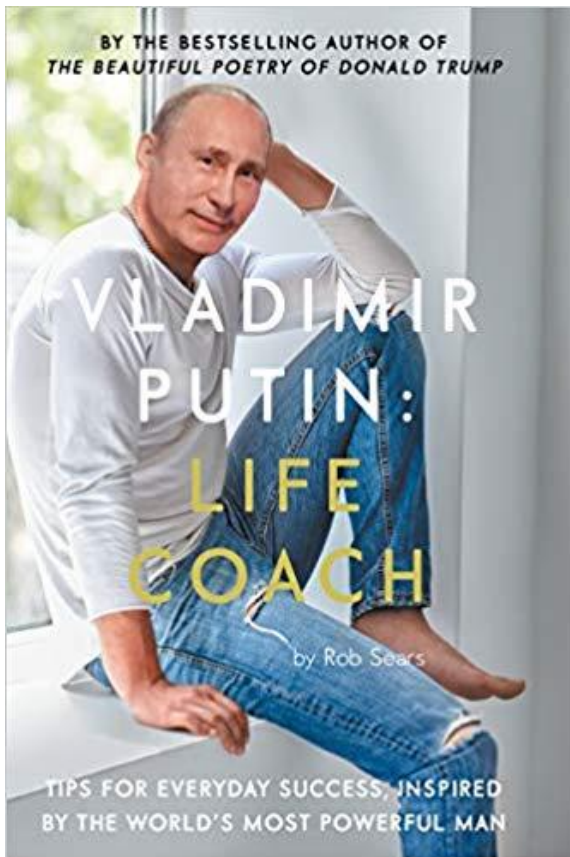
In Putin's own words



“In contemporary conditions my image and name are a widely marketed brand used by anyone who feels like it.”

(Putinki 2004: 71)

Putin memes: where to start?



1. Studying communicators?

Problem: unclear authorship

2. Studying impact?

Problem: wide-range empirical study necessary

Content and context study more feasible

Mind the socio-cultural context

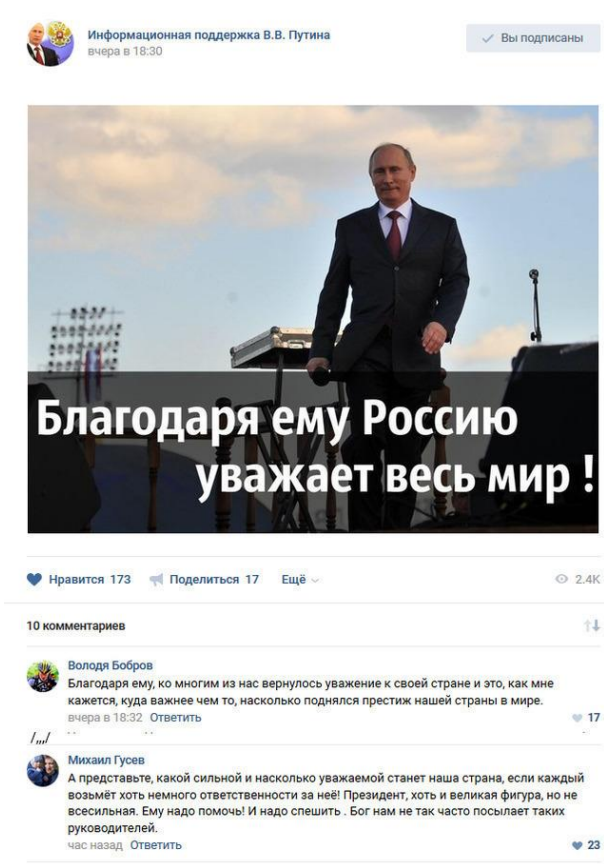


No meme here, just a casual picture of Vladimir Putin ...

21st-century communication:
rhetorical and philosophical indeterminacy

Difficult to distinguish between positive and negative connotation, derision and admiration

Putin's intended image



Technocrat

Doer

Strongman

Muzhik

Patriot

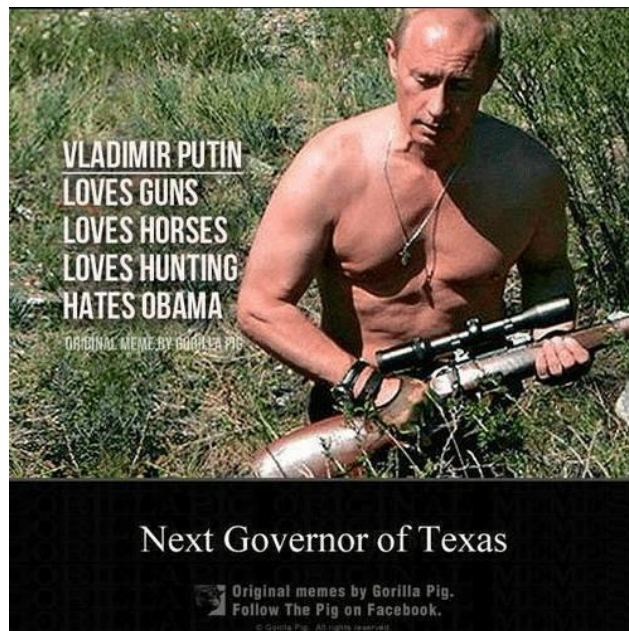
(Gorham 2013)

<https://cont.ws/@berkot78/741464>

Putin's unintended intended image



<https://me.me/t/putin?s=new&since=0,9dbdca23e17a422ca159a1a8addf1e55>



<https://me.me/i/vladimir-putin-loves-guns-loves-horses-loves-hunting-next-governor-3925111>

How democrats imagine Putin:



Admin - @young_patriot_

<https://me.me/i/how-democrats-imagine-putin-admin-young-patriot-5700943>

Russian takes on Putin (I)



https://pikabu.ru/story/di_kaprio_rasskazal_o_svoikh_mechtakh_3929784 (2016)

Russian takes on Putin (II)



<http://www.yaplakal.com/forum27/st/50/topic376791.html?hl=%EF%F3%F2%E8%ED+%E8+%F5%F0%E5%ED%FC> (2011)

Russian takes on Putin (III)



Why is Putin a crab?

<https://memepedia.ru/putin-krab/>



Toiling like a slave on a galley...

<https://mayday.rocks/pensionnaya-reforma-i-prestarelye-raby-na-galere/>

Russian takes on Putin (IV)

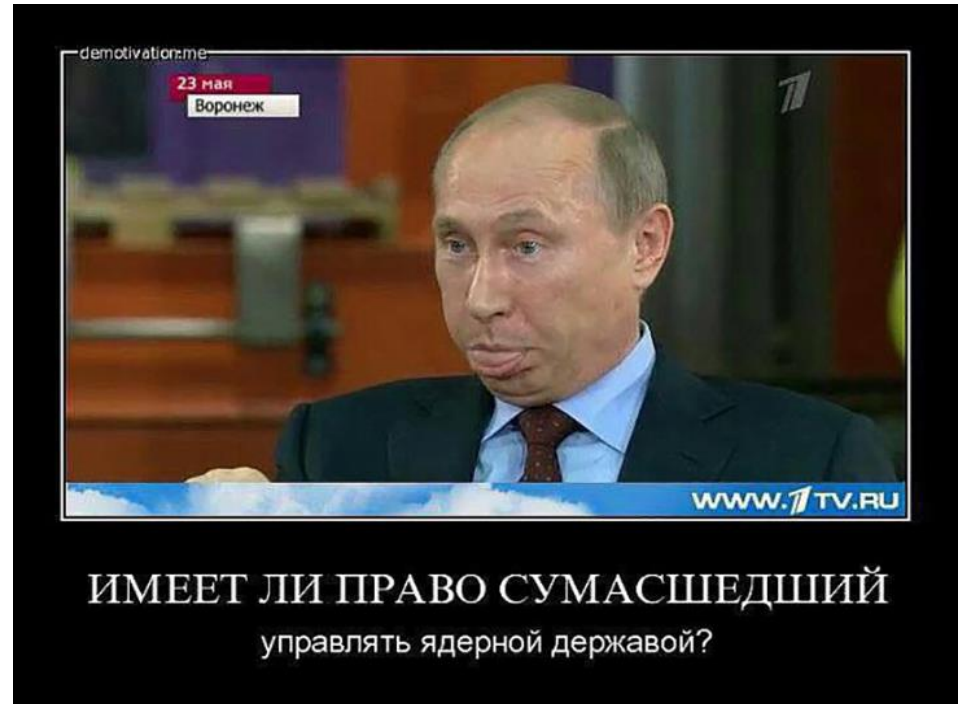


<https://www.rosbalt.ru/like/2017/06/23/1625467.html> (2017)

Greetings from Ukraine



<https://bessarabiainform.com/2015/03/luchshie-fotozhaby-na-putina-k-15-letiyu-koronacii/>



<https://www.dsnews.ua/world/kak-sotsseti-privetstvuyut-putina-s-dnem-rozhdeniya-fotozhaby--07102017114000>

Under Western Eyes (I)

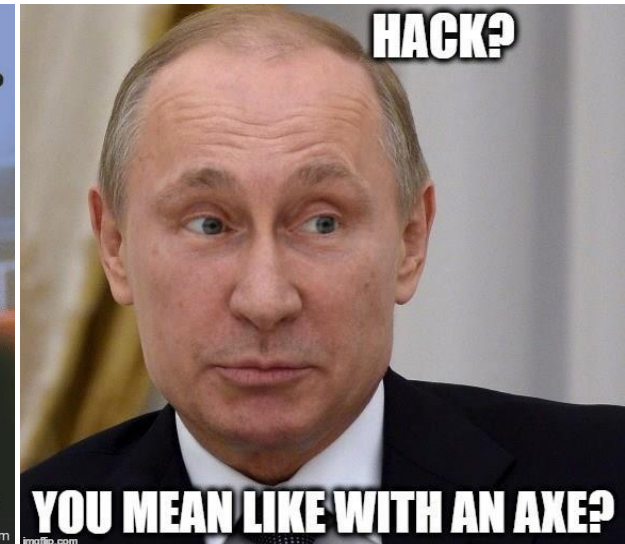


<https://www.tumblr.com/search/vladimir%20putin%20meme>

<https://me.me/i/your-country-contains-vodka-it-should-be-part-of-russia-db94fe14ae8741019e8ac3a8c0439680>



Vladimir putin Memes



<https://memebase.cheezburger.com/tag/Putin>

Under Western Eyes (II)



Russian meme names. Weird
russian singer. 2019-02-15



<https://www.tumblr.com/search/vladimir%20putin%20meme>

<https://me.me/i/ladimir-putin-dadimir-putin-sadimir-putin-madimir-putin-eatlp-gladimir-aad676fcc7d14db690ade7720f1372c3>



https://www.boredpanda.com/putin-trump-helsinki-meeting-funny-reactions/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

Latino vision

**EN LA ESCALA DE VLADIMIR
PUTIN ¿CÓMO TE SIENTES HOY?**



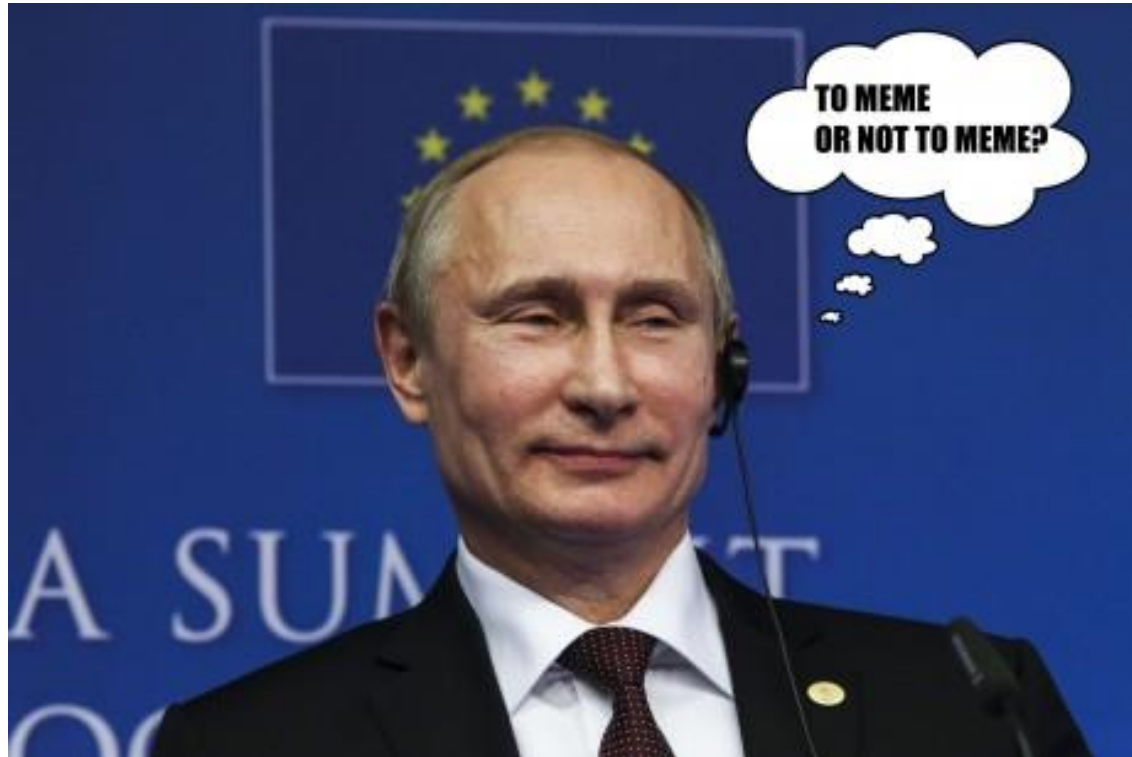
<https://www.dopl3r.com/memes/graciosos/en-la-escala-de-vladimir-putin-como-te-sientes-hoy/81904>

El sol recibiendo los rayos de Putin



<https://www.dopl3r.com/memes/graciosos/sol-recibiendo-los-rayos-de-putin/103971>

Shakespearean dilemma



<https://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/vladimir-putin-chuck-norris-and-the-real-world-power-of-internet-memes>

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