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# New Eastern Europe

## ALL QUIET ON THE BALTIC FRONT?

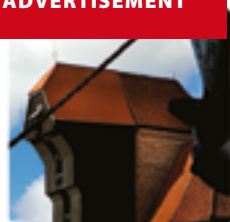
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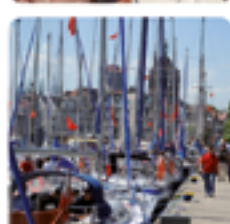
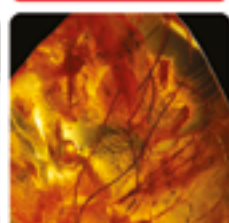
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**Paweł Kowal** Are the analysts to blame? | **Boris Akunin** I have never left Russia



**GDAŃSK**  
city of freedom





### The City of Gdańsk

[www.gdansk.pl](http://www.gdansk.pl)



A city with over a thousand years of history, Gdańsk has been a melting pot of cultures and ethnic groups. The air of tolerance and wealth built on trade has enabled culture, science, and the Arts to flourish in the city for centuries. Today, Gdańsk remains a key meeting place and major tourist attraction in Poland.

While the city boasts historic sites of enchanting beauty, it also has a major historic and social importance. In addition to its 1000-year history, the city is the place where the Second World War broke out as well as the birthplace of Solidarność, the Solidarity movement, which led to the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe.

### The European Solidarity Centre

[www.ecs.gda.pl](http://www.ecs.gda.pl)



The European Solidarity Centre is a multifunctional institution combining scientific, cultural and educational activities with a modern museum and archive, which documents freedom movements in the modern history of Poland and Europe.

The Centre was established in Gdańsk on November 8th 2007. Its new building was opened in 2014 on the anniversary of the August Accords signed in Gdańsk between the worker's union "Solidarność" and communist authorities in 1980. The Centre is meant to be an agora, a space for people and ideas that build and develop a civic society, a meeting place for people who hold the world's future dear. The mission of the Centre is to commemorate, maintain and popularise the heritage and message of the Solidarity movement and the anti-communist democratic opposition in Poland and throughout the world. Through its activities the Centre wants to inspire new cultural, civic, trade union, local government, national and European initiatives with a universal dimension.

### The Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe

[www.kew.org.pl](http://www.kew.org.pl)



The College of Eastern Europe is a non-profit, non-governmental foundation founded on February 9th 2001 by Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, a former head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and a democratic activist.

The foundation deals with cooperation between the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The aims of its charters are to carry out educational, cultural and publishing activities, and to develop programmes which enhance the transformation in the countries of Eastern Europe. The organisation has its headquarters in Wrocław, Poland, a city in western Poland, perfectly situated in the centre of Europe and with a deep understanding of both Western and Eastern Europe.

Dear Reader,

On the pages of this magazine we have many times discussed the different meanings of “East” and “West”. While the latter is generally agreed to refer to an ideal more than a geographic location, greater difficulties arise when we try to understand what is meant by “Eastern Europe”. That is why, in this issue we have decided to cover a region which, from a geographic and axiological perspective, has in recent years been seen as northern Europe but which today finds itself on the edge of potentially becoming “Eastern Europe” again. The countries that comprise it – especially Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – re-emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union and are today full-fledged members of the EU and NATO. In early 2015, more than ever before, we value this membership in western political and military structures keeping in mind that Russia’s attempts to bring them back to its sphere of influence are a test of the western alliance.

This test needs to be passed by politicians, but also analysts. They too, as Paweł Kowal boldly argues, are to blame for our passivity in regards to Russia’s annexation of Crimea last year and – if things do not change and we do not start treating Vladimir Putin’s words seriously – will be to blame if such drastic measures as a nuclear attack are undertaken. Thus, the current conflict in Eastern Europe is not a regional matter anymore. In this regard, we agree with Andrew Wilson, whose newest book *Ukraine Crisis. What it Means for the West* we review and recommend to anyone who today cares for world affairs.

Specifically on Ukraine, Russian writer and intellectual Boris Akunin, poignantly points out that in the wake of last year’s events, Russia has lost its closest friend; perhaps for good. In return, it got Crimea under quite controversial circumstances. As Akunin further argues, the future of both Crimea and eastern Ukraine should be decided on by the people who inhabit those territories and he firmly believes they are finally going to be given that choice.

Sharing these very many points of view we encourage you to continue engaging with us online via our website, Facebook and Twitter. We also invite you to share your thoughts with us via email at: [editors@neweasterneurope.eu](mailto:editors@neweasterneurope.eu).

*The Editors*

# Contents

## Opinion & Analysis

---

### 7 The Poverty of Analysts

Paweł Kowal

*Why did the astonished West helplessly watch Russian troops enter Crimea and Donbas? Why, as popular opinion states, nobody could have foreseen this event? One of the hypotheses that comes to mind is that the analysts are to blame. Will the “Crimea mistake” be repeated in regards to the next moves of Vladimir Putin? Years from now, will we be reading about the “nuclear mistake”; as time and again nobody is taking Putin seriously?*

### 9 Perspective: Our Blindness about Russia is Depressing

Andrew Wilson

### 12 Perspective: Let's Return to our Jobs as Analysts

Balázs Jarábik

### 19 The I-Told-You-So Nation

Ahto Lobjakas

*To say that the current situation in the region does not create a good setting for stable policymaking is to understate the severity of the predicament. It has put enormous demands on Estonian policymakers who can only hope that Russia respects Estonian sovereignty. If not, then Estonia will respond as forcefully as it can.*

### 26 Latvia's Turn to Take the Lead

Diāna Potjomkina

### 34 Vilnius, One Year Later

Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Vytautas Keršanskas

### 42 Rysskräck and Sweden's Ambivalence

Matthew Kott

*Since the upheavals in Ukraine in 2014, tensions have risen markedly in the countries around the Baltic Sea. The annexation of Crimea and the support for the so-called*

*“people’s republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk are seen by many as disquieting evidence of the current Russian leadership’s aggressive intentions. The question now remains: what will Sweden’s role in the region be in the face of growing security tensions with Russia?*

### 51 Controlling the Trolls

*A conversation with Jānis Kārklīņš and Raul Rebane*

### 57 The Riddle of Kaliningrad

Miłosz Zieliński

### 69 Taking the Eastern Partnership Seriously

Rafał Sadowski

### 77 Why Germany Won't Lead the West

Klaus Bachmann

*In the first days of the EuroMaidan Revolution, German media, politicians and the wider public saw the events in Kyiv through a simple and affirmative lens. However, once it became clear that a full-blown conflict between Russia and Ukraine was possible, the German public quickly reverted to its well-known pacifist reflexes. This was the moment when the pro-Russian attitudes of the German public coincided with German materialistic interests in avoiding sanctions and an interpretation of the events became easily susceptible to Russian propaganda.*

### 86 Circuses without Bread

Wojciech Jakóbik

### 94 Exiled in One's Own Homeland

Lily Hyde

*The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation has been difficult for a majority of the Crimean Tatars. Many have lost their jobs, fled or just disappeared. Those that remain, now fear that their homeland, which they fought so hard to get back in Soviet times, has once again been taken away.*

- 105 Are Georgian Politics about to become Boring?**  
Dustin Gilbreath

## Interviews

---

- 112 I Will Be Back**  
*A conversation with Mikheil Saakashvili*  
"The very moment Bidzina Ivanishvili loses power there will be no way to avoid my return to Georgia. I am certain I will return to Georgia, even sooner than the elections."
- 118 I Have Never Left Russia**  
*An interview with Boris Akunin*

## Reports

---

- 124 No Country for Young Men (or Women)**  
Benjamin Cunningham  
*Following mass protests resembling those of Occupy Wall Street or Tahrir Square that began in the summer of 2013 in Bulgaria, one would assume a significant shift in the subsequent parliamentary elections. Yet, following the October 2014 elections, it seems that the biggest winner was the status quo.*
- 132 Walking the Media Tightrope**  
Justin Hyatt

## History

---

- 143 A Balkan-Ukrainian Palimpsest**  
Adam Balcer

## People, Ideas, Inspiration

---

- 153 The Stronger One Wins the Day**  
*A conversation with Zdzisław Najder*
- 161 Latvia's Female Powerhouses**  
Grzegorz Szopiński

## Books and Reviews

---

- 168 Dangerous Myths**  
Iwona Reichardt  
*On Andrew Wilson's Ukraine Crisis. What it means for the West*
- 170 A Testament to Poland's Success**  
William Schreiber  
*On The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention. Ukraine's complex transition. Edited by Klaus Bachmann and Igor Lyubashenko*
- 171 Detecting Russian Imperialism**  
Paweł Kowal  
*On Jan Nowak-Jezioranski's The Atlantic Republic*
- 174 Confession or Justification?**  
Maryana Prokop  
*On Viktor Yushchenko's Non-state Secrets. Notes on the edge of memory*
- 176 Investigating Corruption and Greed**  
Igor Lyubashenko  
*On Sergii Leshchenko's Mezhyhirskiy Syndrome. A diagnosis of Viktor Yanukovich's power*
- 179 Shevchenko Demythologised**  
Eugene Sobol  
*On George G. Grabowicz's The Unknown Shevchenko. Essays on the Poet's Symbolic Autobiography and Reception*
- 182 Alternative View on Politics**  
Dorota Sieroń-Galusek  
*On Karol Modzelewski's We Will Ruin the Jade of the Past. Memoire of a bruised horseman*

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# The Poverty of Analysts

PAWEŁ KOWAL



Why did the astonished West helplessly watch Russian troops enter Crimea and Donbas? How was it that, as popular opinion states, “nobody” could have “foreseen” this event? One of the hypotheses that comes to mind is that **the analysts are to blame**. Will the “Crimea mistake” be repeated in regard to the next moves of Vladimir Putin? Years from now, will we be reading about the “nuclear mistake”; as time and again nobody is taking Putin seriously?



A diagnosis of a situation, the causes of the state of events as well as a prognosis – are the key elements of a classical analysis of an international situation. Today’s world is flooded with information which is available to anyone from open sources, especially the internet. After keying in the right term into a search engine, we receive access to information on practically any topic.

On the one hand, society has an abundance of material and the possibility to supplement it at a relatively low cost. We use sophisticated techniques such as taking photos with drones, seeking additional data through the use of advanced filters and we observe our rivals with the help of satellites. On the other hand – as it is believed – western intelligence services lack good human sources. Recruiting and keeping agents is costly and requires experienced and trained personnel. Hence, since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed a new trend of relying on open sources by many intelligence agencies.



## Analytical gaffe

In 1999 NATO pushed this trend forward by developing its analysis of open sources. The same choice was made by the United States a few years later. This phenomenon is well documented by a Polish diplomat and analyst, Wojciech Zajączkowski, in his book titled *Zrozumieć innych* (*Understanding Others*). On the Russian side, it was the opposite. Piotr Niemczyk, the former director of the Polish intelligence agency, the Office of State Protection (*Urząd Ochrony Państwa*), underscores that in Poland, the network of Russian agents ranges from 100 to 200 – and that is only among the diplomats.

And yet, we are witnessing the biggest “analytical gaffe” of the West since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Back then, the course of events also “surprised” the West. Of course, not everyone should be equally surprised. Reconnaissance maps in Zbigniew Brzeziński’s *The Grand Chessboard* published in 1998 included Donbas and Crimea as areas of potential instability and Brzeziński himself warned of the dangers that could come out of the questioning of Ukraine’s right to Crimea. Hence, the thesis that “nobody” foresaw the events in Ukraine and that the analysts are the only ones to blame is largely far-fetched. Globally, there are several dozen

The thesis that nobody foresaw the Ukraine events and that the analysts are the ones to **blame** is largely far-fetched.

good think tanks no more than a dozen good intelligence services and at most a few hundred departments of political science and international relations. Therefore, the question that needs to be asked now is what factors were decisive in the West’s failure to accurately assess Moscow’s policy direction in the post-Cold War era?

The issue, however, is not about predicting the future. Analysts and social scientists are not fortune tellers. The issue in question is rather the effectiveness of the diagnoses and scenarios which show decision makers different ways in which a situation may develop. A good example is seen in speeches by Angela Merkel and Frank Walter Steinmeier (Germany’s foreign minister), who continue to repeat that there is no security in Europe without Russia’s participation. In a way this assumption is true, but what about a situation when Russia refuses to co-operate? Do we know who in Europe is working on plan B and C and what these plans include? In that case, is there not a message sent to the Europeans that they have to “count on themselves”? From a purely pragmatic point of view would it not be better to send Vladimir Putin a signal that we have worked out several scenarios?

Now let us take a look at the Kyiv protests, the EuroMaidan revolution, for example, in early January 2014. Indeed at that time it was very difficult to provide a

perfect prognosis as what would happen in Ukraine. There were many unknown variables and any sensible attempt to “predict” the future had to be based on at least a few different options. Thus, the analyses of the situation in Ukraine were derived from experiences in other countries with a western style of democracy. The main mistake of these analyses was that they did not recognise the importance of the oligarchy, its attitude towards democratic procedures and the tendency to transform into a tyranny against the will of the oligarchs themselves.

Yet it was enough to read Artistole’s *Politics* and take into account any good social analysis of Ukraine (social attitudes, economic situation, condition of the army) to at least make a prognosis of the protests which could serve as one of the options. The oligarchs had to say “enough” to Yanukovich; their security was endangered. Ordinary people, in turn, had to take to the streets as the authorities lost all connection with society. What is more, Ukraine cannot be treated in the same way as Russia or Belarus. The analysts were ignoring Ukraine’s deeper historical context and treating the country as a typical post-Soviet state, even though Ukraine was the only state from the Community of Independent States that has in its historical memory western electoral procedures; a tradition that Ukrainians are interested in continuing, as was evident during the 2004 Orange Revolution. With the 2010 and 2012 elections, the authorities tried to steal the right to free press and, later,

## Our Blindness about Russia Is Depressing

ANDREW WILSON



Photo courtesy  
of Andrew Wilson /  
ECFR

Russian propaganda, the information war or whatever one chooses to call it, is particularly clever in one sense; it is not primarily Russian propaganda. The motto of RT (formerly “Russia Today”) is not “love Russia” or “believe everything we say”. It is “question more”, which is directed at specific western audiences based on the way they think. More precisely, it targets the “skeptical”, the post-modern person, someone like the British comic Russell Brand who has just published a hilariously incoherent book called *Revolution*. Brand, with his “open mind” about what happened on September 11th 2001, presents a classic post-modern way of thinking which can be reduced to the following statement: “do not believe anything the old guys tell you”.

Russia is also very skillful at nudging anti-establishment forces, including minority nationalists, in the West. To do so the Kremlin pays some people, but in many cases it does not even have to. This is a nudge and is why Russian propaganda is so clever and insidious. It sends different messages to different audiences. If you look at how RT operates in France, you will see anti-Americanism, which clearly is a play on traditional Gaullist sentiments. In Germany the situation is partly the same, but with a different twist; the key issue here is security as well as the recent phone tapping scandal. RT has eagerly exploited the fact that Americans were listening to the German chancellor, which was indeed pretty shocking, but it also eagerly exploits the traditional idea of Russian and German “similar souls”.

Another way in which left-wing audiences in the West are exploited by Russia relies on left-wing stereotypes such as the 1940s anti-fascist myth. In Germany, there is a phrase *Russlandversteher* – “those who understand Russia” – which, in my view, is an incredibly arrogant construct. It basically equates to a passive acceptance



to democracy – hence a social opposition to government decisions should have been expected.

### **Continuation vs. modernisation**

However, even though the Ukrainian dimension of the conflict in Eastern Europe was difficult to predict due to the obvious volatility of events (which eventually took the form of a revolution and a war), the Russian dimension of the conflict was a different story. In 2013 nothing happened on the Russian side that was not a consequence of the Kremlin's practices for the last 15 years, including its neo-imperial ideology. The basis of this had already been created in the Yeltsin era, when the ministers of foreign affairs were Andrey Kozyrev and Yevgeny Primakov. It was not that long ago that the Kremlin declared trade wars (Moldova, Georgia, Poland) and initiated cyber-attacks (Estonia). Russians took over the territories of its neighbours (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) and tried to instigate a rebellion in eastern Ukraine in 2004. Elements of this form of hybrid war were tested during subsequent conflicts in the region while conventional war was practised as part of the Zapad exercises in 1999, 2009 and 2013. All of these facts contributed to an unaccepted, post-Cold War paradigm of understanding the situation in Russia – which is why they were ignored.

With regard to the events in today's Russia, we can say with some simplification that two models of interpretation were used: the first was the "totalitarian" model which originated from the well-known 1965 book by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl F. Friedrich titled *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. Perhaps, the most appropriate name for this model is the "cold war model". It assumed that the system in Soviet Russia does not undergo reform, while some Polish researchers from the interwar period even claimed the continuation of imperial policy in Russia: from the Romanovs to the Bolsheviks. Today, we can add a third empire in the form of Putin's Russia.

On the other side of the spectrum is a model which assumed a revision of the imperial policy (Stephen F. Cohen, Sheila Fitzpatrick) and based on this belief the events that took place in Russia in the 1990s and 2000s were interpreted in a different way, tantamount to turning its back on the first model which was regarded as Cold War thinking. A dogmatism in refuting the model of continuation in Russia was understandable, as it was an attempt to push away the legacy of the previous era, but it also dulled the analysts' sensitivity to Putin's policies.

In the last few years more and more serious claims postulating Crimea's return to Russia have been formulated not only by the nationalist politician Vladimir

Zhirinovsky but also by the influential mayor of the city of Moscow – Yuri Luzhkov. The mistake of the analysts was that they did not put all these facts into one unified whole and did not interpret them together. This overlapped with a terrible lapse in judgement as to what Putin's reaction would be to the Euro-Maidan protests in Kyiv. Putin, however, understood that Russia's silence after 2004, had Yushchenko and Tymoshenko not split the orange camp and had been more effective in their reforms, could have led to Ukraine's complete departure to the West. This time the Russian leader had a different plan while the West, unfortunately, was still considering an older scenario.

To put it simply, in regards to the Kremlin's policies, the analysts made three major mistakes. First, they did not draw conclusions from the colour revolutions that took place in Eastern Europe in 2003 and 2004. Second, they did not risk adopting a different interpretation model than that which was based on the belief in a reforming Russia. Third, they did not take seriously the words of Putin's circle nor the documents that had been prepared by the Kremlin, and believed that energy issues would become the core of politics in modern Russia.

In this context, the fact that Putin's speeches continue not to be treated as a serious prognosis of what will happen next is even more surprising. Putin, like Nikolai Ogarkov in the last years of the Cold War, thinks in terms of building a buffer zone around Russia in order to in-

of Russian propaganda and replaying it. This, in fact, is not understanding. Understanding is about analysis and deeper knowledge. What *Russlandversteher* lacks is the understanding that a lot of what Russia produces is myth and political technology.

The other issue here is the so-called orientalism, or more precisely post-orientalism. In the West it is pretty common to reverse paradigms about the Middle East or the Near East and to look at them as victims of western colonialism. At the same time, there is still a lot of ignorance in regards to Eastern Europe, with even intellectuals being quite blind about this region. It is certainly not given the same weight as other parts of the world. Thus *Russlandversteher* also means giving excessive weight to Russia's voice but not enough to other Eastern European states. Consequently, you do not hear much about *Estonia-versteher* or *Ukraine-versteher*.

A further problem is introspection. Western countries have a lot of their own problems, and economic problems in particular. Thus, since the 2008 economic crisis, we have become more inward-oriented. Foreign policy has been renationalised to become more narrow and selfish. And we have observed a growth of introspective populisms in Europe. Russia exploits all of these tendencies as well as it exploits the freedom of information.

Nonetheless, bearing in mind all of the above, could we have really foreseen what would happen in Ukraine? Some of the events were unpredictable and some things were genuinely unexpected. Think of Viktor Yanukovich's escape from Ukraine. My answer to why he ran away is simply that he had finished packing. He, or his son, gave the order to shoot and on the same day, he gave the order to start packing, which took him about three days to complete. His money and his loot were the most important to him. What happened in Crimea took everybody by surprise, mainly because the operation was so swift. Thus, there are things that anybody would have been surprised by, including me.

What is truly depressing, however, is our blindness about the nature of modern Russia. In my view we should have known better and we should have seen Russia's *modus operandi*. We seem to have forgotten about that. Sadly, that is one of the reasons why the West neither understands nor is able to predict Russia's behaviour.

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## Let's Return to our Jobs as Analysts

BALÁZS JARÁBIK



Policy analysts in fact saw the inevitability of the crisis in Ukraine. What very few predicted or severely underestimated, however, was Russia's reaction to the events in Ukraine. Back in 2011, among others, I wrote about the "looming crisis" in Ukraine, arguing that the "Donetsk rule" was something that Ukrainians would not tolerate for too long. Another prediction that was made by many regional and international analysts was that Ukrainian oligarchs would not likely tolerate the Viktor Yanukovich family's overarching designs on their own "territories". The combination of two domestic factors, namely Yanukovich's U-turn in regards to European integration and the crackdown on students protesting at the Maidan in reaction to this decision, became the mix that later brought about a change of power in Kyiv.

Nonetheless, the main cause of the misunderstanding of the political crisis in Ukraine was that before the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit, which was held in November 2013, western analysts put too much focus on Ukraine's relations with the European Union. As several analysts warned, there was too much "hype" created before the summit. This was mainly because the Eastern Partnership programme was designed as a policy which would keep open the promise of "limited" integration (technically via trade) that was acceptable for member states not favouring further enlargement to the East. The pressure, particularly before the Vilnius Summit, to create "victories" literally led everyone to help that mission. Consequently, analysts turned into advocates. When Russia stepped in to "buy" and (probably) "bully" Yanukovich to make the U-turn and not opt for EU integration, the reaction within the EU was that of: "Putin has stolen our victory". In taking this line, since the Euro-Maidan Revolution and the subsequent Russia's revanchist reactions, the analysts have found themselves under pressure to help Ukraine which hitherto means to punish Russia.

crease its safety. Equally important, in their communication with Putin western leaders have a language problem: his jokes, metaphors or exaggerated statements are not easily understandable even for such people as the former head of the European Commission – José Manuel Barroso.

## Analytical game of truth

Let us now look at these problems from a slightly different, institutional perspective. The process of creating valuable analysis in foreign policy is a complex interaction of over a dozen, or even several dozen, institutional actors who, based on the functions that are assigned to them, can be divided into six categories. The first category includes institutions responsible for the accumulation of knowledge operating in the public sphere: universities and academic research centres. Their main form of work is research. Their staff has access to grants and the results of research projects. Universities accumulate knowledge and in our scheme, in the context of different approaches (historical, sociological, religious, etc.) seek an answer to the question of how things are, as well as the question of the reason for this state of affairs.

The second group of institutions playing an important role in forming diagnoses and preparing adequate responses to a crisis is responsible for synchronisation and making prognoses, and also





for promoting new ideas and programmes. These are mainly the think tanks, but also include independent experts. They combine different elements of academic research with the practical arena and experience from politics. Those in this group acquire their knowledge not only from books and data but also practice, from former politicians, advisors, etc. They confront what is written in documents with reality. Think tanks make simplifications, propose schemes for solving problems, select data and, most importantly, develop different scenarios of events and ways to react to them. To be effective, their work must be free from government influence.

In Europe, especially continental Europe, there are not many such places. Let us take Germany as an example. For years, the paradigm of *Russlandversteher* (those who understand Russia) dominated there. Its practical application was to bring about a change in Russia. This paradigm, which was not affiliated with any political party of the German elite, was also widely accepted by the society. In this context, an analyst who suggests scenarios that are not in line with the official position takes an unnecessary risk. The most important research institutions in Berlin are connected with the government. It is a common characteristic in Germany and in other countries that the people who work for think tanks are employed in the public sector. Hence, analysts whose work is “not in line” with government policy may put at risk their future careers in public institutions. That is why analysts, even when they were drafting “uncomfortable” scenarios, were in the end tweaking their theses in such a way that they could be digestible for the recipient – such as the chancellor’s office or other politicians. And this gets us to the core of the problem. The poverty of the analysts turned out to be the politicians who were ready to listen only to the melodies that they themselves had created.

That is why in the third group of the analytical “game of truth” we find the politicians, responsible for decision making and those who have influence on the government. In fact, it is a small group of people making crucial decisions that has access to the exclusive legal and information base. The fourth group are institutions – the government’s storage batteries – amassing knowledge for the eyes of decision makers only. This knowledge is derived from both open and human sources. In this category we should include the secret services, with a special stress on intelligence and military intelligence as well as governmental analytical centres (in Poland, for example, this would be the Polish Institute of International Affairs), legal advisors, etc. It is in this group where we find the most valuable knowledge, but also, due to the attitude of politicians, the strongest element of self-censorship tuned to the expectations of the decision makers. Governmental analytical centres may work as classic think tanks but because of the links to the government, their strength is in presenting their own proposals and prognoses. However, unlike classic think tanks, they cannot pursue an effective policy of persuasion. Piotr Niemczyk admits



In this process, little actual analysis has been undertaken with regard to some key issues. The cost of the reforms – not only the technical implications – that the Association Agreement would bring about was never calculated in depth, neither on the Ukrainian nor the EU side. When I raised this question in Brussels with the EU's Ukraine Support Group – the answer was plain and simple: look at Poland and what the free market can do. That means we want to believe that the 1990s continue.

John Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, has reminded us of the much overlooked security dimension of the Association Agreement. In the Agreement it states that its aim is to “promote gradual convergence on foreign and security matters with the aim of Ukraine’s ever-deeper involvement in the European security area”. The Agreement further calls for “taking full and timely advantage of all diplomatic and military channels between the parties.” In Mearsheimer’s view, this was understood by Moscow as a “backdoor” to NATO enlargement. Obviously, these statements are far from a NATO membership action plan (MAP) or even an invitation, which has been off the table since 2008. But this issue certainly sheds light on the fact that policy analysts have been seeing Russia and the region from the perspective of our (good) intention and not how these intentions are interpreted in Moscow.

While nobody questions why we all want to help Ukraine, the truth also is that instead of looking at the real state of affairs in Ukraine, we tend to concentrate too much on what to do with Russia. There is also the problem of the lack of a real policy discourse accompanied by an exchange of different opinions based on real life facts. If Americans can “afford” such a diversity of voices, so should Europe. Instead European elites are looking for enemies (and Putin’s useful idiots) and they find them in everyone who dares to have a different viewpoint.

It is clear that Russia has reacted to the events in Ukraine on the basis of its own insecurities. But it is also very clear that in our push for a “victory”, there was also a reflection of our own insecurities – connected to the euro crisis as well as EU structural and coherence challenges. We do not live in the 1990s anymore. Now is the time to correct this mistake and return to our jobs as analysts. This is very important given the gravity of the situation in Ukraine and the fact that our continued competition with Russia may contribute to (although certainly not cause) Ukraine’s potential collapse.

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that for years, intelligence agencies were alarming politicians about the Kremlin’s imperial plans. However, this type of approach to one of the largest countries in the world did not fit the political need for a different, more idealistic, scenario for Russia. It is the politicians who decide on foreign policy and decide on the degree to which they share with others the knowledge that has been generated by security services and other institutions which, by definition, work only for them. Prognoses which are far from political expectations, even if they are the most accurate, do not reach anyone but the decision makers themselves. In practice, the outside world can also use the knowledge generated in the government and thus, they can indirectly influence prognoses made by more independent units such as those from the first and second groups.

The problem here, however, is not only related to sharing this knowledge with actors outside politics, but also to allowing access to it among the opposition. Both the Polish and American examples fit well in this context. After Putin’s visit to Poland in 2002, and later after 2007 and 2008, political forces began using the rhetoric of “change” in regards to Poland’s relations with Russia, despite the fact that the professional analyses of the situation in Russia did not offer any grounds for such a belief. In the United States likewise the reset policy was created not on the basis of expert analysis, but in order to meet the needs of the Obama Administration. Similar to the

third group, the fifth group contains foreign service, security forces and different executive government agencies.

The sixth group of actors, whose importance has grown in recent years, are those involved in implementing propaganda/explanatory functions. This includes opinion journalism and media. Their role is that of spreading propaganda, in other words explaining to the citizens in a simplified form the policies of the government, which is usually up for re-election. Clearly, modern foreign policy is a subject of interest not only for the elite to whom opinion journalism is directed (and which sometimes can be compared to the analysis coming from a good think tank), but also wider social groups. Yet, from a large audience's point of view, the subtle expert analysis has to be translated into simple biblical categories of "yes-yes" and "no-no".

### **Lack of perspective**

A division of tasks between these six groups is quite obvious, with the exception of one: to some extent all these actors take part in the analytical search for success, meaning making adequate prognoses and effective diagnosis – they all collect information. Of special interest here is the example of the media. They are a co-participant in the area of international politics, broadcasting and reporting the revolutions that have taken place in the last decade in the region including, but not only, the Rose Revolution, the Orange Revolution, the Twitter Revolution or the Arab Spring. Only the media are able to do this with such speed. The rise of significance of the media in international relations can only be compared to the rise of importance of NGOs in this field. More than anything else, the media are great collectors of information even though their mission is informing rather than collecting data. It is worth pointing out that we learned about Russia's Crimea strategy in a 1994 article titled "The Plot to Recapture Ukraine", which was published by the *New York Times* and not by an analyst from any think tank.

Yet, the question remains: what does our scheme of six functions have to do with the analytical gaffe at the start of 2014? In Europe, most think tanks have undergone a crisis. Impoverished, they have turned into machines for draining public money, and the cost they pay for this is a loss of independence and a lack of perspective when analysing problems. The connections between the cells responsible for synchronisation (including think tanks) and the politicians/decision makers as well as the connections between decision makers and their information base, such as intelligence agencies, have also failed. Since the beginning of the Yeltsin era, western politicians have been stuck in a paradigm of believing in an unavoidable

modernisation of Russia, which was to take place before our very eyes. And even though they were probably receiving reports delivered to their desks with realistic analysis, they refused to accept any pessimistic diagnoses, discounting any “bad” news. The syndrome of this unwillingness is one of the most serious problems of European politics in the spirit of realism. The influence of big corporations and the appetite for profits in the east have weakened the determination of politicians in democratic states to also take into account risky scenarios. The break-up of ties between the world of politics and the world of analysis resulted in the general weakening of the politicians in the West. Dependent on democratic elections, they prefer to choose “easy scenarios”, not thinking of a war or economic crisis which may cost them a loss of votes. In these conditions of “decisiveness”, the subjectivity of policy shaping may shift to other, more stable, structures such as administration or military; this can already be observed in some countries.

After 1989 the era of great western politicians who remembered the Second World War and its mechanisms came to an end. Among them were François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and even George H.W. Bush. The new generation, raised after the war, became used to the effective arbitration of international institutions and basic legal norms while getting stuck in constructivist error and post-Cold War idealism. What was lacking were brave visionaries who, if needed, could pound the table with their fist and disagree. The belief in Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History* became a virus in modern EU and American policy, especially during the period of the Obama administration.

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The next problem is fear; the omnipresent chancellor of today’s western world. An obvious example was seen recently when Putin made a suggestion on the tactical use of a nuclear weapon. This can be seen as a direct reference to Nikita Khrushchev’s strategy of nuclear blackmail in maintaining the Soviet Union’s position. Reading Putin’s lips is probably not the most

sophisticated research tool, but the events that have unfolded over recent years do not allow us to ignore him. Putin, of course, does not plan to destroy the world, like Nero destroyed Rome as he fiddled. Putin only wants to scare his rivals by talking about nuclear weapons. He knows that nobody will risk a full-scale nuclear war. Western leaders avoid this topic so as not to destroy the sense of security of their own citizens. But do they consider scenarios in which Putin decides to experiment with nuclear weapons? Are the leaders of analytical centres risking good relations with their sponsors and bosses by making such “pessimistic” analyses, even if their probability would be below one per cent?

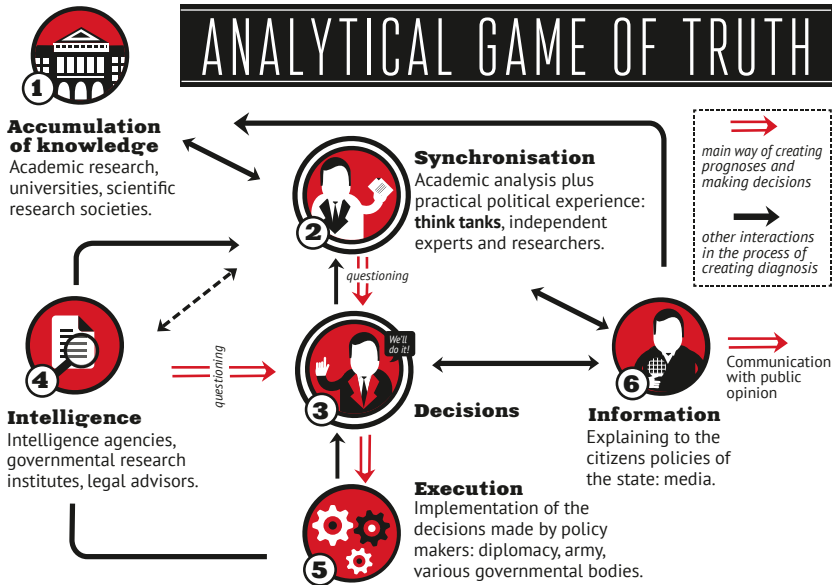
The answer to the last question is of particular importance to our reflections. For modern politicians, a scenario with such a low probability is not worth their attention. A one per cent risk will not “scare” the voters and make them change their views, nor will it justify any additional military spending. Military personnel see this issue differently. The specific nature of the army’s activity during a time of peace forces the military to treat even the least probable event seriously. In this context, the military is like an insurance company which has to make prognoses and act even on the basis of the smallest risk.

Nevertheless, fear has taken over politics in the West. That is why think tank experts and analysts prefer to provide politicians with descriptions of reality and some remarks about its origins but, as far as possible, to avoid prognoses. The ordering of analysis by government agencies became paralysing for the analysts and the schematic images of Russia were additionally weakening political reactions. Another problem was over-specialisation and the narrow profiles of certain think tanks: some were focused only on economic affairs, others on politics, while others dealt with military issues. We live in a time of extensive knowledge and this also refers to analytical institutions. There is no doubt that well-interpreted data from these three areas would have, even very early in 2014, led us to “foresee” the events in Crimea.


A further issue is a lack of recognition of the importance of war and armament in Putin’s policies. Towards the end of the Cold War, national and social processes in the Soviet Union were underappreciated as a result of the overestimation of purely military issues. Today, in reference to Putin’s Russia, the case was the opposite: the military sphere is ignored. Meanwhile with the weakened position of politicians in the modern world, more and more strategic decisions are becoming, without much publicity, the domain of the military (which of course does not run for election, does not deal with the media, and hence can afford less constrained thinking). Today, we can almost speak about the actual disintegration of the world of analysis between military and civilian. The same can be seen in regards to energy analysis which has been excluded from many considerations and treated very superficially. But it is only thanks to this analysis that we can try to understand why the European Commission has, in recent decades, turned a blind eye to the development of the monopoly of Gazprom at the cost of European states. As a result, a stream of resources for armament went to Moscow from the West.

The problem of creating policy with regard to Russia is a sign of the decay of the Atlantic alliance between Europe and the United States. The signal that the West, in the understanding of the world as we have known for decades, has broken apart can be one of the most important factors encouraging Russia to take advantage of “this opportunity”. An important issue in recent years has been the effective analysis of materials obtained from open sources – but it was here where we





lacked efficiency. What was worse, however, was the decision to withdraw from making prognoses, effectively a kind of political correctness in analysis. And there is probably no good analysis without a good prognosis. Those who worry solely about their careers, depriving themselves of one of the most important attributes of professional analysis, are not worthy to be called analysts.

What is most important is that the ties that had connected politicians and the world of experts (as well as the ties connecting the world of politics and military analysis) have been severed. These remarks refer also to the working analysts who come from different agencies: politicians closed their ears to the “bad” news, while the experts cut down their analytical invention, becoming purveyors of exclusively good news. In any case, we will all pay for this western “Crimea error”. The question is how much will we have to pay? 

*Translated by Iwona Reichardt*

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# The I-Told-You-So Nation

AHTO LOBJAKAS

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To say that the current situation in the region does not create a good setting for stable policymaking is to understate **the severity of the predicament**. It has put enormous demands on Estonian policymakers who can only hope that Russia respects Estonian sovereignty. If not, then Estonia will respond as forcefully as it can.

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As a result of the war in Ukraine, Estonia has seen the contours of its *Umwelt* – the world it daily inhabits, knows and recognises – redrawn. To be sure, the map has not changed beyond recognition. There were always dark creatures lurking in the corners, historical nightmares of a traumatised national consciousness. They never really disappeared after 1991 as fear is a form of memory. What has happened though is that in 2014 the “Here Be Dragons” sign has again been moved from the margins of the map to its very centre. What long appeared to be dry land and secure footing has now been revealed to be treacherous, uncharted waters.

In a sense no one in Estonia would seriously claim that the sudden rematerialisation of the Russian threat came out of the blue. Russia was always going to be a threat and if others forgot, we never did. The nation’s leaders in particular like to wear their ostentation on their collective sleeve, never missing an opportunity to gloat before visiting dignitaries and far-flung conference audiences, to upbraid the sceptical masses in the West. “I-told-you-so’s” are notoriously difficult to resist post factum as history itself seems to bestow its seal of approval on one’s prescience and far-sightedness. But these particular I-told-you-so’s come with a bitter aftertaste for Estonia.

## Predicting the unpredictable

This bitter aftertaste works on two levels. First, two decades of hard diplomatic graft has, if not exactly misfired, then at the very least spectacularly failed to deliver. One of the upshots of the Ukrainian crisis has been the throwing into sharp relief of the complete Estonian loss of control over the two main cardinal points on its foreign policy compass. Estonia has suddenly discovered that regardless of past effort, it is in a place where no one can predict with any certainty two things which stable and predictable statecraft in a country neighbouring Russia simply cannot do without: whether the Russians really will come, i.e. whether there will be an attack, be it conventional or “hybrid,” mounted by “little green men”; and, secondly, what the United States would do in such an eventuality. The ramifications of such literal cluelessness can be nothing short of humiliating. Recent suggestions by conference-circuit pundits that Estonia (and the other two Baltic states) could be conquered within hours provoked a cabinet-level emergency, with generals and ministers rushing to deny that is the case. Analyses suggesting NATO’s Article 5 might not work as fast and reliably as Estonian policymakers have publicly assumed cause even greater upheavals.

Such loss of control over one’s strategic environment, sudden as it has been, is a cruel predicament for the Estonian government. It must hope that the Russians will not, in fact come; or that if they do, then Estonia will throw everything into the fight (which will not be a lot, as the Estonian army numbers a little more than 5,000 active troops and the country has no tanks or fighter jets and nothing in the way of effective air defence). Similarly, it can do no more than hope that in such a situation the Americans will do what they have promised, which, it has been intimated to the Estonian public, is to declare war on Russia if its troops as much as set foot on the Estonian side of the border. It remains highly unclear, meanwhile, if that really was what President Barack Obama had in mind in September 2014 when he told an enraptured audience in Tallinn that Estonia could count on the military might of NATO and the United States should it fall under Russian attack. Genral Ben Hodges, commander of US land forces in Europe, recently told journalists in Tallinn he “could not prejudge” the President’s decision.

There is more than ample reason to think that were the Russians to attack, Obama and his advisors would reject the almost Manichean dualism inherent in the Estonian conception of sovereignty. There was more than just a hint in Obama’s Estonian speech of the significance Americans attach to restraint on the part of their allies, as well as reasonableness in the latter’s treatment of their minorities. It is these “ifs” and “buts,” little noticed or commented upon in Estonia itself, which could turn out to be decisive should Russia opt for a Ukraine-style, localised and

initially low-intensity campaign in areas abutting it. Under international law and on any sane interpretation of the notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the township of Narva on the Estonian side of its border with Russia is an inalienable part of Estonian territory. Yet, the fact that more than 95 per cent of its population is Russian-speaking – as is 80 per cent of the wider district of Ida-Virumaa surrounding it – it is likely to play a part in any US calculus of national interest as it weighs the pros and cons of taking on a nuclear-armed and increasingly irrational Russian leadership.

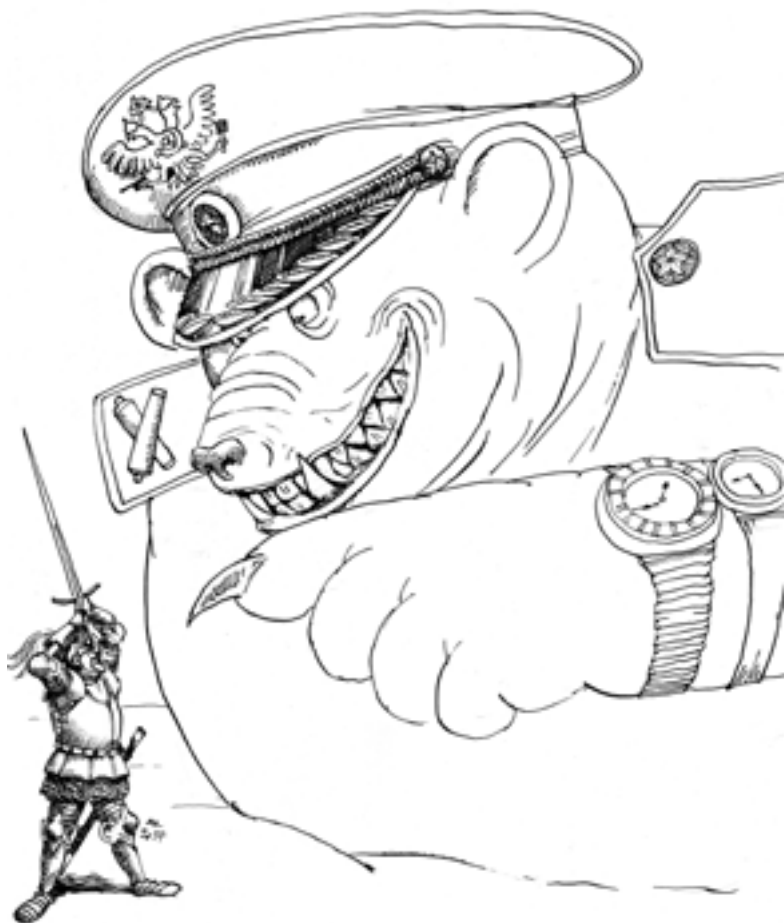
Both Estonian and US policymakers must also contend with an utterly perverse, yet strangely compelling, notion which is not at all easy to dismiss in the current climate. This notion, first raised by the Russian analyst Andrey Piontkovsky and taken demonstrably seriously in places like Warsaw and Stockholm, is that Vladimir Putin may at some point opt for extreme brinkmanship and drop a tactical nuclear weapon on a minor European capital.

No one should doubt that the township of Narva on the Estonian side of its border with Russia is an **inalienable** part of Estonian territory.

### Standing alone

For the past two decades Estonia's foreign policy strategy has been driven by one overarching ambition – to reduce the asymmetry inherent in the long history of the nation's relationship with Russia. "Estonia will never again stand alone" is the hypnotic refrain of this policy, chanted in different settings by the country's leaders. The strategy has two main prongs: first it attempts to increase Estonia's leverage on the international scene via alliances and supranational collaboration. Over the more rational, if that is even the correct term, past decade, the 2000s, that strategy pushed the EU into the foreground. "We must talk to Moscow via Brussels," ran the central foreign policy mantra (so much so that Estonia even began to talk to Finland and Latvia via Brussels). NATO, too was an ever-detectable presence, if a little subdued until about 2008 and the Russian-Georgian war. Towards the end of the decade the lines separating soft from hard security officially became blurred. When Estonia adopted the euro in 2010, the then prime minister, Andrus Ansip, described the move as predominantly driven by security and political considerations.

The second prong, often interwoven with the first, has to do with the security granted by law and order: international structures, agreements and law. It is a strategy which could be described as one aimed at balancing Estonia's legal books,



never to be found wanting in either the economic or political reckonings. Again, the calculation was driven by a hope of reducing Estonia's exposure to the whims of its large neighbour. This bookkeeping-like trend in Estonia's foreign policy was nowhere in clearer evidence than in the now two-decades-long struggle to agree on a border treaty with Russia. Moscow has now come very close to rejecting a done deal for a second time. The first was in 2005, when Estonia attempted to symbolically link the border agreement to the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty signed between the young Estonian Republic and Soviet Russia. The Soviet Union tore it up in 1940 when it annexed Estonia and Russia refused to recognise it since Estonia regained independence in 1991. But if in 2005 Russia's retraction of its signature on the treaty had seemed no more than a temporary setback, then in late 2014 its declining to promptly ratify the re-signed treaty carries with it more ominous undertones. The



move is, presumably, part of Russia's strategy of sowing chaos, fear and confusion in the hearts of its neighbours. If so, then the strategy works, leaving Estonia at a loss as to Russian intent and the implications of this state of affairs. This state of affairs, from Tallinn's point of view, abounds with incalculability.

To say that such a mixture of incalculability and unpredictability does not create a good setting for stable policymaking is to understate the severity of the predicament. It puts enormous demands on the proverbial Estonian policymaker, who over the past ten years or so has been embodied by the centre-right Reform Party (RP) whose prime ministers have led different coalition governments since April 2005. The palpable sense of a loss of control over Estonia's external situation is impelling it to compensate where it can; above all in internal matters.

And this brings us to the source of the other bitter aftertaste of the Estonia's I-told-you-so politics: the impact its de facto barrenness has on domestic politics as it considers the Russian-speaking minority; as if forced to contend with the issue for the first time, having stumbled on the fact that Russian-speakers make up a solid quarter of Estonia's population. The largely unspoken and little-contested national compact which has been in place since 1991 has suddenly begun to unravel. The understanding had seen the Russian-speaking population cleaved into three parts: about 120,000 hold Russian citizenship (but have permanent residency rights), a perhaps slightly smaller number are Estonian citizens and just under 100,000 remain without any citizenship. The plan, Estonian politicians have readily conceded in the past, is to wait for the Russians to assimilate or die of old age. This train of thought and the fact that very little has been done to proactively push Estonian passports on the non-citizen Russian-speakers suggest, among other things, that the Estonian I-told-you-so's are disingenuous. Estonian policymakers have always assumed that time is an ally. That could prove a costly mistake.

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### Questioning identity

This autumn the status and loyalty of the Russian-speakers in Estonia has been put in question, en masse and without distinction. One right-leaning prominent politician called for a nationwide debate on whether Estonians are prepared to accept Russians "with Estonian passports, Estonian education, Estonian identities" as equal partners in society. The formulation was a reference to a well-publicised argument between two government ministers, which had seen the Reform Party

finance minister tell his social democrat colleague, a Russian who speaks flawless Estonian, that as “a son of an immigrant” he should take great care in his utterances when it comes to adjudging Estonia’s Soviet past. The finance minister was forced to retire, but the tensions remain.

A little later, the flagship TV news programme on Estonia’s public TV ran a news item about Russian children taking school photographs in a museum under Estonia’s Soviet-era coat of arms. Neither the news programme nor the prime minister who tweeted about it a little later made any reference to the fact that thousands of Russian-speaking children visit the museum yearly to attend professionally conducted, state-funded integration projects offering an interactive overview of Estonia’s recent history. Nor was any mention made of the fact that according to museum personnel, the children attend these events enthusiastically, happy to adorn themselves in Estonian colours and have their photos taken with Estonian medals which they themselves craft in situ. The dozens of foreign journalists who have visited Estonia in the aftermath of the outbreak of fighting in Ukraine have yet to unearth a single Russian-speaker in Estonia expressing support, either


Foreign journalists  
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speaker **expressing  
support** for a  
Russian invasion.

on or off the record, for a potential Russian takeover of the country. They do occasionally give voice to grievances, such as limitations being put on the use of the Russian language in schools, but do so fully within their rights, especially if they hold Estonian citizenship.

The problem, of course, is that the Russian-speakers are an easy substitute for Estonia’s problems to do with the worsening security situation. External fears are creatively internalised. But there has also been a rich vein of response among the Estonian public, apt to see the Russian-speakers as symbols of a thousand years of historical wrongs visited by Russia on Estonia, most recently in the guise of the Soviet Union. And politicians appear ready to exploit these grievances. Things are not improved by the fact that the country is facing elections in March 2015.

The governing Reform Party has flirted with hardline ethnic politics before and with marked success. Although in its early incarnations a pragmatic, pro-market political force, the RP took a calculated gamble in 2007, shifting to the right and staking out a position which may be described as “tough on immigrants and tough on the causes of immigration” (i.e. the Soviet past). The prime minister, Andrus Ansip, weathered the Bronze riots in April 2007 after he sanctioned the removal of a contentious Soviet war monument (“the Bronze Soldier”) from central Tallinn.

His party made immediate gains in polls, won the 2011 elections and cemented, among other things, one of the central tenets in Estonian politics: that the current fairly restrictive citizenship legislation represents a limit beyond which the average Estonian voter is not prepared to go. Two of the remaining three large parties tacitly agree with this analysis. The fourth, the Centre Party, does not, garnering a large share of the Russian-speaking vote in local (all residents can vote) and national elections (only Estonian citizens may vote), but in the process also ruling itself out as a coalition partner for the other three. The antics of the Centre Party's leader do not help. He frequently visits Moscow to meet people from Putin's inner circle from whom he is alleged to have accepted donations to his campaign fund.

Wittingly or unwittingly, Russia's aggressive rhetoric and actions (NATO has had to scramble jets on 400 different occasions this year alone to intercept or observe Russian aircraft) are increasing the pressure on its smaller neighbours. Add to this the presence of a sizable Russian-speaking minority, whose main sources of information are directly, or indirectly, TV and other news channels susceptible to propaganda commissioned by the Kremlin, and the cards are starting to look seriously stacked against Estonia. And yet, it is the Estonian-speaking community itself that is showing the first stress fractures and other signs of succumbing to pressure even before it has wholly materialised. Ethnic divisions are beginning to undermine civic cohesion. 

Ahto Lobjakas is an Estonian political analyst and columnist for the daily *Postimees*.

# Latvia's Turn to Take the Lead

DIĀNA POTJOMKINA

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In the first half of 2015 **Latvia will hold the Presidency of the EU Council**. Within the country there is a broad political consensus that the EU Eastern Partnership programme affects Latvia's security and economic interests. However, Latvia is not unconditionally supportive of the EU's enlargement towards the Eastern Partnership and it has adopted a more nuanced view that the partner countries must have a perspective of EU membership, but only in cases when they are willing and ready for it.

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On May 22nd 2014 the Riga Eastern Partnership summit will be held in the newly-built "Castle of Light" (the Latvian National Library). Latvia has been among the most vocal and consistent proponents of the Eastern Partnership programme in the EU. Thus, the country treats this summit as one of the central events of its Presidency of the Council of Europe. Indeed, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme was named as one of the central priorities of the presidency very early in the preparation process, in 2013 at the latest, and the initiative enjoys broad support within Latvian policy and opinion-making circles. Latvia is already carrying out intensive diplomatic efforts, explaining its position to both its European and international partners. So far, so good: one need not worry about the dismantling of the multi-lateral EaP format, as Latvia will certainly uphold the importance and the fundamental principles of the initiative and will also attempt to move it forward. Still, the next question is: what will be, and can be, the exact topics and tangible achievements of the Riga summit? Will previous achievements be reassessed and will new initiatives be presented?

## Limited possibilities

The programme of the Latvian Presidency is set to be published only in the beginning of January 2015, and although the plans are frequently discussed in public, at the time of writing the accessible information is still very general. What is more, the outcome of the event does not depend on Latvia alone; the summit is still months away, and circumstances can change due to a number of factors originating from both inside and outside the EU. However, taking into account the current trajectory of the EaP and previous Latvian policies, certain predictions can be made.

Undoubtedly, since the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy took over the chairmanship of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, the Presidency's ability to influence EU foreign policy has seriously diminished. Research carried out by Bruno Vandecasteele and his colleagues shows that now the Presidency can mostly affect the Eastern Partnership agenda and the early stages of the policy-making process (it chairs some of the preparatory Council bodies) and has some influence in bilateral relations between the EU and partner states. Sectoral co-operation can also be pushed forward, since the Presidency chairs all other Council configurations, but more depends on the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and other member states. Examples of the Polish (2011) and Lithuanian (2013) presidencies show just a few breakthroughs in the EaP, such as enhanced co-operation in transportation, visa liberalisation or the inauguration of the European Endowment for Democracy, that can be attributed to these two countries respectively. The Association Agreements, for example, were negotiated by the European Commission. Most likely Federica Mogherini will not put any obstacles in the way of further development of the EaP and she may even want to use this case to shed her (allegedly) pro-Russian image. However, rapid and decisive actions by the whole EU apparatus are needed to achieve tangible process, and this cannot be taken for granted.

Within Latvia, there is a broad political consensus that the country has a direct stake in the success of the Eastern Partnership – it affects our security and economic interests, and it is also relevant to the national cultural and political identity and image as well as domestic social and political processes. Indeed, Latvia's policy towards the EaP is underpinned by several interlinked, although sometimes conflicting,

rationales. Firstly, many players in Latvia are strongly convinced that all European states must be given the opportunity to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration and be able to live in accordance with western values of democracy, economic liberalism

Within Latvia there is a broad **consensus** that it has a direct stake in the success of the Eastern Partnership.

and the protection of human rights. This attitude is based on Latvia's own experience of "returning to Europe" and is largely values-based.

However, the "return to Europe" narrative also has a geopolitical side. Although its official position is that Latvia does not perceive the EaP as directed against any third country (i.e. Russia) and indeed Latvian views on the region have become more nuanced, many players are still in favour of strengthening the EU's influence in the region to counter Russian "imperial" ambitions. As the Latvian foreign minister softly put it in his 2014 annual foreign policy report, the states that face external pressure due to their policy of integration with the EU must receive increased EU support. In any case, Latvians are strongly convinced that the security and prosperity of their neighbours is vital for their own well-being and are wary of potential spillover effects when the situation in the region becomes destabilised.

Thirdly, the Eastern Partners are perceived as an important vector in Latvia's external economic policy, while the promotion of international economic relations became the key task of the foreign service after the crisis. To an extent, this is wish-

Latvia is interested  
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**economic activity**  
in the region and  
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support for the  
Eastern Partners a  
strategic priority.

ful thinking – from the six partner countries, only Belarus has made it into the top ten of Latvia's external trade partners in 2013 (taking tenth place); Ukraine ranked 19th, while the others did not make it into the top 40. Nonetheless, Latvia continues to be interested in expanding its economic activities in the region and thus has placed economic co-operation and support for the Eastern Partners as a strategic priority for the Presidency. Fourthly, Latvia is well-aware of the people-to-people ties (particularly the diasporas) which connect it to its neighbours. Lastly, and somewhat paradoxically, by supporting Euro-Atlantic integration, Latvia wants to distinguish itself from them: support

for the EaP is a way for Latvia to prove its own maturity and Europeanness and even to take the lead within the EU.

### Two sides of the same coin

Latvia's interests to a great extent correspond to the general policies of the EU which are aimed at the promotion of security, prosperity, freedom and human rights within the Eastern Neighbourhood. At the same time, the country's foreign policy towards the region has not been fully Europeanised yet, and sometimes national interests counter the general EU direction. Economic imperatives are particularly



powerful. For instance, Latvia has opposed sanctions against Belarus fearing that they have a detrimental impact on the Latvian economy (Belarus is its second largest transit partner) and the foreign minister held a separate meeting with business representatives to assess the impact of sanctions against Russia in reaction to the Ukrainian conflict. Latvia supported the sanctions but also requested EU assistance for overcoming their negative side effects.

In addition, some players in Latvia are wary of possible Russian retaliation for Latvian support of the EaP and would prefer to “keep silent”; although the government does not succumb to Russian pressure. Also in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, the Lithuanian “milk war” scenario could easily repeat itself with Latvia. Latvian priorities regarding the Eastern Partnership are dictated not only by its partners’ needs but also by Latvia’s own interests; for instance, transport, energy, co-operation at the business level, export of education etc. Thus, within the broad picture of general convergence with the EU, certain interests continue to exist and influence Latvia’s position.

Latvia’s case is not unique. Indeed the other presidencies who have prioritised the EaP also combined pan-European and national agendas. Both major players from the region in recent years – Poland and Lithuania – put an emphasis on integration of the Eastern Partnership states with the EU and were eagerly pushing for expanding co-operation into new sectors. Poland, for instance, achieved good results in prioritising transport and energy co-operation on the EaP agenda, a policy continued by Lithuania. They voiced strong support for liberalisation, convergence with the European norms and in particular, the promotion of human rights in the neighbourhood. Both of them also, in principle, supported giving EaP countries the prospect of accession.

Still, the desire to tie Eastern Partners to the EU as soon as possible has at times led the Lithuanian and Polish presidencies to deviate from the EU’s principle of “more for more”, for the sake co-operation even with those partners who were slacking on necessary reforms. For instance, Poland in its programme set a strict conditionality on relations with Belarus: “The European Union’s aim in regards to Belarus will be to encourage it to cooperate with the West, provided it respects the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights”. Clearly, in 2011, EU-Belarusian relations were frozen after the December 2010 sham elections that ended in mass repression by Belarusian authorities against protesters. At the same time, Poland tried to ensure that Belarus would be represented at the presidential level during the Eastern Partnership summit in Warsaw. It also kept the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement on the agenda despite the imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko.

Lithuania, again, tried to develop relations with its major economic partner Belarus despite the absence of any significant pro-democratic changes. In con-

trast to Poland, it actually managed to bring a high-level Belarusian delegation to the Vilnius EaP Summit in November 2013, and it refrained from criticising the Azerbaijan elections. To an extent, such policies can be explained by a different choice of tactics (co-operation with non-democratic regimes in hope that they will gradually implement necessary reforms), but at least some of these were clearly driven by the various presidencies' narrow interests. Knowing that its competitors within the EU have used the presidency for their own needs, Latvia will have even less incentives to fully "Europeanise" the agenda.

### **Ukraine's struggle is Latvia's struggle**

As mentioned before, the programme of the Latvian Presidency is to be published in January 2015 and there is always a possibility that in addition to the announcements already made some new initiatives will be unveiled shortly before or at the summit. Latvian politicians have voiced their hope that the Riga summit will bring along major advances in Europe's relations with the Eastern Partnership. However, the basic principles of Latvia's engagement with the EaP are already known, and it now seems likely that Latvia will continue its pragmatic, down-to-business approach, without a major overhaul of the fundamental EaP structure. The already published Trio Presidency Programme (an 18-month programme meant to span three presidencies: Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg) does not give any indications to the contrary. It discusses a follow-up from the Vilnius summit, an evaluation of the implementation of the free trade agreements (DCFTA) with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as an abstract "fostering enhanced relations" with other partners.

A large part of Latvia's priorities evidently consists of simply "updating" the relationship with the EaP countries. Latvia is indeed planning to review the implementation of the DCFTAs, although there is no clarity if and to what extent the current policy can be adapted. The Presidency is also planning to produce road maps clearly defining the implementation of the already signed DCFTAs and the next steps for social, political, economic and legal reforms. This entails offering practical assistance and sharing their own transition experience, which has traditionally been a high priority for Latvia. Generally, Latvia, like Lithuania and Poland, has a comprehensive list of issues on the agenda. Economic integration, co-operation on legal and police issues, support for civil society, education, co-operation at the municipality and business levels are just some of them. A special assistance package will be continued and updated for Ukraine. Latvia also prioritises security in the neighbourhood and will likely support international talks on the resolution of frozen conflicts (such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia, or Transnistria). When it comes



Photo: Ernests Dinka, Saeimas Kanceleja (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

Latvian officials have been outspoken in their support of Ukraine's new government. "Ukraine's struggle for the future and independence of its country is also Latvia's struggle," said Edgars Rinkēvičs, Latvia's foreign minister.

to the legal basis of the EaP, it hopes to conclude visa liberalisation agreements with all EaP states, especially with Belarus.

Ukraine will continue to stand out as a separate case. The recent military conflict warrants a special EU policy towards this country and Latvia will maintain this approach. From the very beginning of the conflict, Latvian officials have voiced a very principled and unconditional support to the democratic Ukrainian forces and condemned the policies of Viktor Yanukovich as well as Russia's interference. Indeed the Latvian foreign minister, Edgars Rinkēvičs, even named the conflict "a war" and called for an appropriate UN response. Clearly, Latvia's own geopolitical and security concerns come into play here. In the words of Rinkēvičs: "Ukraine's struggle for the future and independence of its country is also Latvia's struggle". Latvia has already provided some bilateral assistance to Ukraine and strongly supports all EU measures, including sanctions, against Russia. During its Presidency, it aims to develop a separate road map for Ukraine. Importantly, Latvia also strives

to keep the issue of Crimea's annexation on the agenda and does not accept any compromise with Russia in this regard. Some advances are also possible in countering Russia's influence in the Baltics' and Eastern Partners' information spaces; lately, Latvia is paying great attention to this problem and also plans to organise a special conference on press freedom before the summit.

### **A more nuanced view**

One change which it is rather certain will come with Latvia's Presidency is an increasing use of bilateral approaches, keeping within the general EaP framework but at the same time significantly adapting the EU's offer to the partners' needs. Latvia may also depart from the principle of "more for more" and the strict conditionality approach that, until now, has come close to a practice of what we can call "take it or leave it". Partners that are more passive in implementing reforms now get only limited EU support. Latvia will also attempt to engage Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite the lack of progress or even backsliding in these states. Although it still maintains that pro-democratic reforms are an important precondition for co-operation with the EU, it also wants to expand the EU-Belarusian political dialogue. Quite importantly, Latvia is also respectful of the Armenian decision not to sign the EU Association Agreement and wants to prepare a new offer for this state possibly even including new agreements that would not run counter to its obligations within the Customs Union.

A similar approach will likely be taken in regards to Azerbaijan and it will translate into further practical co-operation but not necessarily a view towards closer integration with the EU. In general, contrary to some perceptions, Latvia is not unconditionally supportive of the EU's enlargement towards the EaP; it adopts a more nuanced view that the partner countries must have a perspective of EU membership, but only in cases when they are willing and ready for it.

Latvia has shown  
interest in engaging  
the United States in  
the region, perhaps  
even establishing  
a **Euro-Atlantic  
Eastern Partnership.**


An even more innovative upgrade would come into play if Latvia pushed through its idea for a Euro-Atlantic Eastern Partnership, an idea floated by the foreign minister Rinkēvičs at the Brussels Forum in 2014. Latvia is interested in engaging the United States in co-operation with the Eastern Partners, which is most likely driven by Latvia's security concerns. However, there are currently no indications if and when this initiative would be taken forward, and it must be noted that Latvia and the US have divergent views on

many aspects of co-operation with the Eastern Partners. The US is much more focused on democracy promotion and less interested in economic co-operation.

Another possible development – although not necessarily attributable to the Latvian presidency – could be continuation of dialogue with Russia on the issue of the EaP. In Latvia's view, it is important for the EU to remain engaged as an equal partner in the EU-Ukraine gas talks. Latvia is also ready to negotiate with Russia the implementation of the DCFTAs without any changes to the treaty, but with the aim of reconciling the parties. Moreover, Latvia has expressed an interest in seeking common denominators between the Association Agreements and the norms of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, this should not be perceived as submissiveness to Russian interests – rather as a pragmatic approach to resolving the Russia-West conflict over the region.

### **Pragmatic and balanced**

In general, the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council augurs well for the EaP. Latvia has – or considers itself to have – a stake in virtually all aspects of co-operation between the EaP states and the EU and has a strong drive to build alliances, garner European resources, bring about practical achievements and make the Riga summit at the very least a starting point of reforms of the EaP. It goes beyond just “expressing support” and “voicing concern”. At the same time, Latvian foreign policy in the last years has been very pragmatic and balanced in the good sense of the word. Even if in the Latvian view the Eastern Partnership should be overhauled, it still endorses its fundamental principles and goals.

However, there are still some limitations on what can realistically be achieved during the Latvian Presidency. First of all, the Presidency's objective political role within the EU institutional setting has greatly diminished, and although Latvia is definitely punching above its weight, this does not make it a heavyweight. Secondly, Latvia takes on its Presidency in challenging international circumstances, at a time when the EU is still recuperating from the financial crisis, adapting to its own new leadership and facing challenges around the world, not only in the East. Thirdly, Latvia's own policy towards the EaP is to an extent controversial, as its own narrow interests sometimes contradict the general EU principles of conditionality and support for democratic reforms that it generally espouses. It remains to be seen to what extent the incoming Presidency will manage to harness the EU's resources and to provide a much-needed compelling offer to the six partner states. 

# Vilnius, One Year Later

LAURYNAS KASČIŪNAS, VYTAUTAS KERŠANSKAS



The previous year marked **an important milestone for both Eastern Europe and Europe** as a whole. The conflict that led to an undeclared war in eastern Ukraine, which started when then-president Viktor Yanukovych decided not to sign the Association Agreement in November 2013, is an important wake-up call of a rising revanchism in the Kremlin.



The motives behind Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and the process of the political settlement of the conflict reveal Russia's perception that "Ukraine is too independent and too strong to be absorbed by Russia, yet it is not sufficiently independent to freely choose its geopolitical orientation". Therefore, Russia may agree to Ukraine's formal independence and quasi-statehood, but the latter can always be undermined, if the traditional power balance in the region starts to change to Russia's detriment. This is how Russia viewed the EuroMaidan Revolution and its possible strategic consequences – the signing of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). In this situation, Russia feared a loss of leverage over Kyiv and a disturbance in the geopolitical balance in the region. According to Russian logic, Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries should rather accept their status as buffer zone states.

At the same time, Russia is seeking to acquire an informal veto right over further EU and NATO enlargement to the East. Russian aggression in Ukraine has opened a new page even in terms of the turmoil that has beset Eastern Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union. Vladimir Putin's escalation of the conflict was essentially very different from, for example, the aggression against Georgia in 2008. According to Ivan Krastev, in 2008 Russia drew a "red line" which the Euro-Atlantic integration projects could not cross. Now, Russia in Ukraine has decisively crossed the "red lines" laid down by the West.



## Clear lines

Despite western leaders' call on Russia to halt tensions, the conflict continues, leaving the West with few options (the best of which is to contain the conflict). Already in March 2014, Brookings Institution expert Fiona Hill rhetorically asked: "What can we do? We will talk about sanctions. We will talk about red lines. We will basically drive ourselves into a frenzy. And Putin will stand back and just watch. He knows that none of the rest of us wants a war".

What we did learn, however, is that the year 2014 has become the year of Russian revisionism. This revisionism is driven by several factors: the belief of the Russian elite that the dominating position of the West, especially the US, was coming to an end; that a multipolar world would provide opportunities to expand Russia's influence; the consolidation of the Eurasian ideology; and an acceleration of the country's economic growth due to exports of raw materials.

Russia's actions in Ukraine have influenced the planning of NATO defence policy, especially with regard to defence issues of the Baltic states. The conflict in Ukraine has created a paradoxical situation for Lithuania's security: on the one hand, Russia's aggression was demonstrated more closely than ever and the risk of a conflict is larger than ever. On the other hand, it has given an impulse and an existential goal for NATO which, in recent years in the West, unlike in the Baltic states, has often been considered a rudimentary relic of the Cold War. However, there is no question as to NATO's usefulness in the face of Russian aggression, which was also actually encouraged by the American president, Barack Obama, who demonstrated a move from his failed "reset" policy towards Russia to reassuring American allies in Central Europe.

Clear lines have been drawn for NATO's contingency, which encompass all member states and leave aside other partners. In other words, the Baltic states and Ukraine are in a different league of security. This is part of the deterrence policy towards Russia chosen by NATO as the Alliance's internal integration is strengthened, but is in no hurry to provide new security guarantees for partner states. During the NATO summit in Wales, the heads of states agreed on a defence plan which provides additional security measures to the Baltic region. It was decided that defence plans would be updated regularly in view of emerging threats, and that NATO command and control headquarters would be established in Lithuania and other Baltic states.

Another decision made at the summit was to create a NATO rapid reaction force which could effectively respond to threats and render urgent assistance. There was also an agreement on bolstering the level of defence readiness. These are concrete steps to make the Baltic states fully-fledged members of NATO. Strengthening

NATO's visibility in the region can serve as a measure to deter Russia from potential conflict and provocation. Paradoxically, Russia's intervention in Ukraine has encouraged NATO to return to its roots and solve the problem of Baltic security.

### Energy (in)dependence

A large portion of the state revenue that has financed the Russian military and its modernisation over the last years has come from taxes paid by Gazprom, the Russian-majority-owned gas company. Until recently, the European Union's energy policy has been creating conditions for Gazprom to establish a monopoly in the European market. In this way, EU member states and their energy companies have contributed to the rise of Russia's military power. In the face of Russian intervention in Ukraine, the Baltic states firmly called for serious changes in the EU's energy dependence on Russia. Without any change, Russia's influence in Europe will remain disproportionately high and countries will remain geopolitically vulnerable.

In 2004, Lithuania sold its state-owned gas company Lietuvos Dujos while looking for a cheaper gas supply. The company was sold with all its transmission pipelines to Gazprom and the German-owned E.ON. As a result, of all EU member states, Lithuania had become one of the most dependent on the Russian energy network. It must be noted that even Ukraine during pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich's presidency had managed to keep its strategic gas infrastructure in state hands. The turning point was in 2008 when Lithuania decided to pursue a full separation model, as is provided for in EU directives. Thanks to this model, gas transmission networks returned to state hands and reduced Gazprom's abilities to block the creation of alternative gas supplies, especially the construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal. The LNG terminal began to prove its economic benefit even at the time of construction. In July 2014, Gazprom was forced to provide a 20 per cent discount for gas to Lithuania, as it was already negotiating contracts with alternative suppliers. Today, for the first time in 25 years of Lithuanian independence, the country receives gas from other suppliers than Gazprom.

In general, 2014 can be called the year of Lithuanian energy independence. The implementation of the Third Energy Package in returning strategic gas infrastructure to the state's hands and the building of the

The year 2014 could be called the year of Lithuanian **energy independence**.

LNG terminal have reduced Lithuania's dependence not only on a single gas supplier but also the country's vulnerability to Russian geopolitical pressure. Lithuanian analysts evaluated these achievements as the final establishment of energy independence for the country.

However, not all the Baltic states are in a similar situation. Unlike Lithuania, Latvia has not undertaken necessary reforms in its gas sector and remains the most dependent on Gazprom. Latvia has gas storage capacities which are owned by a company which has a third of its stocks owned by Gazprom. This restricts the ability of all the Baltic states to create a regional LNG supply infrastructure which is independent from Russia.

### Undeclared hybrid war

As the situation unfolded in Ukraine, Russia demonstrated a new type of warfare. One of the most important facets of this undeclared hybrid war is the information war and the use of propaganda in order to fuel the conflict. The division between citizens living in the Lithuanian (European) and those in the Russian sphere of information influence is rather large. It became particularly clear in the context of the Ukraine crisis, where Russia presented a “fascist revolution of *banderovtsi* resulting in oppression against Russians in eastern Ukraine by the Kyiv junta”. Combined with intensified cyber-attacks during Lithuania’s Presidency of the EU and various warnings of espionage and recruitment pursued by Russia, the information war has become a great concern among Lithuanian politicians.

Russian cultural influence in the region is particularly active via television. This narrative formed on Kremlin-controlled TV channels contains Soviet nostalgia, discrimination against Russians via a new wave of “fascism”, as well as the image of a “rotten” West, while Russia is presented as a “traditionalist and conservative” alternative to the western world. In Lithuania, the debate regarding the regulation of Russian media intensified significantly after Russian television aired primetime a propaganda movie about the bloody events of January 13th 1991 in Lithuania on the Russian First Baltic Channel (*Pervij Baltiskij kanal*).

A growing amount of Russian propaganda in the media retranslated into Lithuania elicited various initiatives in response. The most high profile response came from the president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, who introduced an amended law on public media. The law aimed to make 90 per cent of television broadcasts in Lithuania available only in the official languages of the EU (currently about 30 percent of broadcasts are in Russian). However, the law did not pass in parliament, as the centre-left coalition argued that the freedom of speech would be violated this way.

What has changed dramatically in recent years is the fact that Russia learnt the western “rules of the game”. It is now using arguments of freedom of speech to broadcast its propaganda throughout Europe unrestricted. The Department of Strategic Communications of the Military of Lithuania counted that Russia offi-

cially spends more than 15 billion roubles a year (around 280 million US dollars) to support Russian media and culture abroad – this is nearly the same amount as the entire defence budget of Lithuania. Having its broadcasters registered in western European countries, the Kremlin manages to overcome possible restrictions and invests in quality production to present itself as a reliable source of news.

### Minority issues

Due to historical circumstances and political decisions made after regaining independence in the 1990s, the situation of national minorities in Lithuania is very different than the other Baltic states. According to the most recent population census, the biggest national minority groups living in Lithuania were Poles (6.6 per cent) and Russians (5.8 per cent). Compared to Latvia (Russians – 26 per cent of population in 2014) and Estonia (Russians – 24 per cent of population in 2014), Lithuania is the most homogenous of the three Baltic states.

When it comes to national minority issues, the situation of Lithuania differs significantly from other Baltic states.

Moreover, after regaining independence in 1990, all people living in Lithuania who met the criteria were granted full-fledged citizenship, which is not the case in Latvia or Estonia, where numerous inhabitants have the status of non-citizens. The fact that Russia was not talking about the need to “protect” the Russian speaking minority in Lithuania is a consequence of this decision made 24 years ago. There is some representation of the Russian minority in Lithuania, however. The political party, the Union of Russians in Lithuania (*Союз русских Литвы*), was established in 1995, a move encouraged then by the Congress of Russian Communities, led by Dmitry Rogozin, a Russian deputy prime minister and one of the main architects of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. However, because of disagreements, a competing political party, the Alliance of Russians, was established in Lithuania in 2002. As some other parties from the centre-left spectrum of the Lithuanian party system (the Labour party, established by a Russian-born oligarch, and the Social Democrats in particular) also include Russian-born citizens, the Russian community in Lithuania is not highly organised.

However, the representation of the Polish minority is another story. In 1994, a political party called the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (*Akcja Wyborcza Polaków na Litwie*, AWPL) was established which was only represented in districts of the Vilnius region, where the Polish-speaking minority is mostly concentrated. The turning point was in 2012, when a newly-formed coalition of AWPL and the

Union of Russians in Lithuania were elected to the Lithuanian parliament for the first time, gaining more than five per cent of the vote. It is worth noting that both AWPL, and the coalition as a whole, is led by Waldemar Tomaszewski, a Lithuanian representative in the European Parliament who is frequently accused of having ties with Russia. This was clearly evident on May 9th 2014, when Tomaszewski showed up to a ceremony commemorating the victory of the Second World War with a black and orange striped ribbon – the ribbon of Saint George, which is commonly used by pro-Russian fighters in eastern Ukraine – clipped to his jacket.

The poor state of Lithuanian-Polish relations is often linked to tensions regarding the situation of the Polish minority in Lithuania. However, objective statistics prove that discussions around discrimination are more about political gain than anything else. This is crucial for AWPL which is a one-issue party and whose only tactic for survival is to maintain tensions between Lithuanians and Poles. Nevertheless, this situation also serves the interests of the Kremlin, which prefers “ethnic tensions” in Lithuania and divisions among Lithuania and Poland – countries which have the strongest positions regarding Russian aggression in Ukraine. It is becoming clear to both Lithuanian and Polish politicians that improving bilateral relations is an important part of strengthening security in the region.

### **After Vilnius, before Riga**

All three Baltic states have a deep interest in strengthening Europe’s eastern neighbourhood. This is especially reflected in the priorities of both the Lithuanian (2013) and Latvian (2015) presidencies of the EU. Lithuania, together with Poland, remains the main advocate of containing Russia. Both states believe that a quick return to “business as usual” would mean that Russia is granted a veto power on the Euro-Atlantic integration of Eastern Europe and serve as an additional impulse for the Kremlin to pursue an even more aggressive foreign policy in the region.

However, the EU’s Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme faces a serious dilemma. Before the Vilnius summit, it was discussed how the EaP policy should be re-calibrated. However, events in Ukraine have changed the perception and now politicians and analysts are discussing how to keep the policy moving forward. Two main factors have led us to this situation. Firstly, the current EaP toolkit is not sufficient in the region where an alternative integration space is being developed and external pressure remains strong. Secondly, the postponement of the EU-Ukraine Association agreement until January 1st 2016 sets a dangerous precedent, as Russia has become a third party exerting direct influence on bilateral relations between the EU and EaP states. It needs to be recognised that the only

effective way to truly strengthen the EaP is by granting a clear European perspective to the most advanced partner states. In other words, switching on the light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how long the tunnel is.

The only way to truly strengthen the Eastern Partnership is by granting a clear **European perspective** to the most advanced partners.

It is important to emphasise that the Riga Summit should become a continuation of the aspirations of the EaP Summit in Vilnius. The declaration adopted on November 28–29th 2013 stipulates preparation, where applicable, of Association agendas, including monitoring progress to ensure EU support for reforms, supporting steps towards visa-free regimes, the overall strengthening of relations between the EU and the EaP states, and the application of the “more for more” principle. This principle essentially supports an individual approach to each particular country and allows recognition of those countries which have made significant progress and the building of deeper relations with them. It can be said that the development of individual roadmaps suggested during Latvia’s Presidency would essentially comply with the principles of the Declaration of the Vilnius Summit and ensure continuity.

Latvia’s Presidency of the EU and the Riga Summit, given the particular involvement and commitment of the Baltic states with respect to EaP, could provide the necessary impetus to bring about the further rapprochement of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with the EU, through discussion of EU technical standards, such as granting further visa-free travel, border control or a more efficient application of the EU Association Agreement, and the elimination of technical and political barriers. For example, Latvia has expressed a clear desire to assist Ukraine in fulfilling the requirements for visa liberalisation (completion is expected by May 2015). But the biggest boost would actually come from the granting, as mentioned above, of a real prospect of EU membership according to certain defined criteria. Agreements regarding specific roadmaps for each candidate country could be made at the Riga Summit. 

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# Rysskräck and Sweden's Ambivalence

MATTHEW KOTT

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Since the upheavals in Ukraine in 2014, tensions have risen markedly in the countries around the Baltic Sea. The annexation of Crimea and the support for the so-called “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk are seen by many as disquieting evidence of the current Russian leadership’s aggressive intentions. The question now remains: what will **Sweden’s role in the region** be in the face of growing security tensions with Russia?

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*“Sweden, a wealthy country which has long enjoyed the blessings and profits of peace, deprecates any policy that might conceivably involve her with difficulties with Russia, while she would be very reluctant to impair her good relations of long standing with Germany. Although Swedes still maintain excellent military qualities and possess some of the best gun factories in the world, Swedish neutrality is almost a time-honoured axiom of Swedish policy, and the fact that political elements, largely Socialist, usually outweigh the military influence in the country tends to confirm the evidence of recent history, that Sweden prefers a prosperous neutrality to the costs and hazards of war.”*

The quote above, taken from E.W. Polson Newman’s 1930 book titled *Britain and the Baltic*, illustrates a perennial quandary for security and stability in the Baltic Sea region. Sweden, due to its geography and historical position as a major European power from the 1560s to 1809, has many interests throughout the region. At the same time, since its military misadventures during the Napoleonic Wars (particularly the loss of Finland to Russia), Sweden’s foreign policy has rested mainly on a combination of active trade relations and formal military non-alignment. Thus, whilst many actors within and outside the region have naturally looked to Sweden

to take on a leadership role in order to maintain or restore peace and stability in the region, its strong sense of self-interest has meant that these expectations have, time and again, been disappointed.

### Underlying anxiety

This ambivalence on the part of Sweden is encapsulated by the Swedish word “*rysskräck*” – fear of Russians or things that are Russian. It probably stems from the collective memory of trauma caused by Russian raids on the coastal areas near Stockholm during the Great Northern War (1700–1721). As such, it not only implies what the pro-Kremlin commentators today describe as traditional Swedish “Russo-phobia”, but also an underlying psychological anxiety of an invasion of the Swedish heartland from the East that is not easily assuaged. Thus, even though Sweden and Russia can be viewed as traditional geopolitical rivals in the Baltic Sea region, for the past two centuries a declining (in terms of territory and military might) Sweden has nevertheless been unwilling to openly provoke a conflict with its more powerful eastern neighbour. One of the few exceptions to this deep-seated aversion to bear-baiting was the semi-official support for Finland during the 1939 Winter War.

Since the upheavals in Ukraine in 2014, tensions have risen markedly in the countries around the Baltic Sea. The annexation of Crimea and the support for the so-called “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk are seen by many as disquieting evidence of the current Russian leadership’s aggressive intentions and its desire to revise the post-Second World War state system in Europe, and particularly the post-Helsinki order. In Estonia and Latvia there has been unease that Russian-speaking minorities could be used to foment unrest and even provide a pretext for undermining territorial integrity. Economic pressure has been exerted on Lithuania, Poland, and other countries favourably disposed to the new leadership in Kyiv. The European Union has been hamstrung in relation to the deepening crisis in Ukraine due to differences in vested interests among the individual member states.

Seemingly, under such circumstances now is the ideal time for Sweden to assert clear leadership in formulating a policy position that would promote collective security and political stability in the region. Dominating the heart of the Baltic Sea area, Sweden is neither directly territorially adjacent to Russia, nor dependent on the latter’s hydrocarbon arsenal of economic tools of persuasion. Its economy is robust by

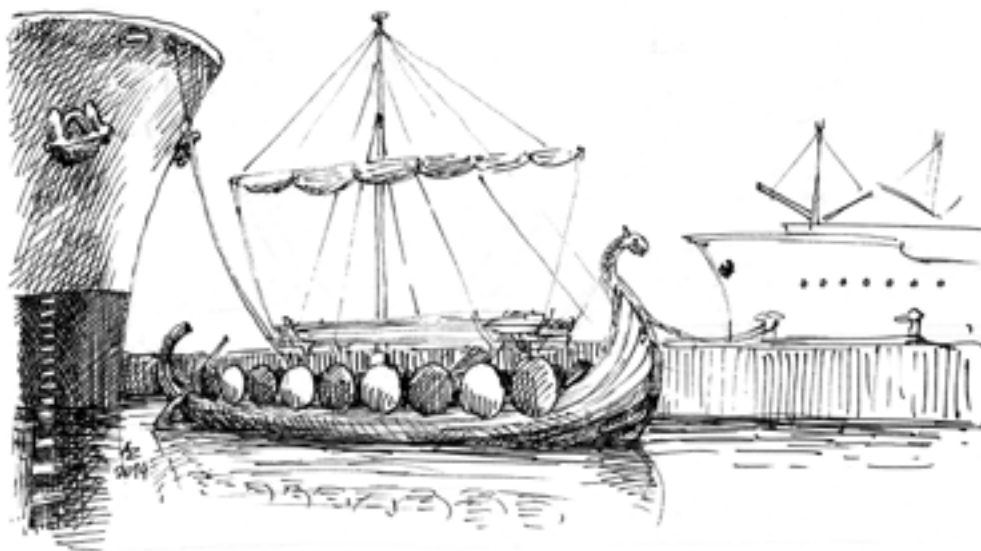
In the current circumstances, it is now an **ideal time** for Sweden to assert clear leadership and promote collective security in the region.

comparison, and it is generally respected by its EU neighbours as a partner. In its regional foreign policy, this “moral superpower” punches above its weight thanks to prominent Swedish diplomats like Rolf Ekéus (formerly of the OSCE), Thomas Hammarberg (formerly of the Council of Europe), and Stefan Eriksson (expelled from Minsk in 2012 following the Swedish PR firm Studio Total’s “teddy bear bombing” over Belarusian territory to raise awareness of the human rights abuses there).

### **Neutral and non-aligned**

In the chaotic aftermath of the First World War, Finns, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Baltic Germans, and die-hard German monarchists all appealed to Stockholm to send military support for their various causes. In the spring of 1919, for example, the fledgling Latvian national government asked Sweden to send regular troops to Latvia as peacekeepers, in the hope that this would thwart the rapid advance of Bolshevik forces that eventually took control of four-fifths of the country. The conditions that Sweden attached to such an expedition, however, were unacceptable to the Latvian side. Earlier that year, the Swedish Foreign Office turned down an Entente initiative for a Swedish-led alliance in northern Europe. Stockholm found broad commitment to supporting these newly proclaimed states (with the exception of Finland) to be too great of a risk to its own security; instead, the Swedish government was even willing to see the Baltic states reincorporated into Russia, if this would in turn secure independence for the Finns. Sweden’s official acknowledgement of the occupation and annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union in 1940 – while allowing the recruitment of Swedes to fight in the Finnish Winter War (1939–1940) and the so-called Continuation War (1941–1944) – can also be seen as part of this policy.

During the Cold War, as during the First and Second World Wars, neutral and officially non-aligned Sweden was the locus of espionage and geopolitical contact-seeking between the two hostile blocs. In order to guarantee its neutrality, or at least deter a Soviet invasion (military planning and exercises always involved confronting an unnamed “enemy from the east”), both an advanced military capability and a strong domestic military-industrial complex was necessary. Even though it is unlikely that after Stalin’s death the Soviet leadership seriously considered making Sweden a satellite state, in the event of a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Sweden was seen as a strategically important territory for both sides. The Soviet Union would be obliged to occupy key parts of Sweden in order to prevent western forces from gaining access to airfields and other infrastructure that could aid the war effort against it.



Perhaps in response to *de facto* but clandestine Swedish (and Finnish) co-operation with the United States and its allies on security issues, the Soviets appeared to have adopted a policy of probing Sweden's defences. One way to do this was to infiltrate Swedish territory using submarines. From the 1960s onward, numerous such incidents were reported, albeit many of them were difficult to confirm. The most spectacular was the "Whiskey on the Rocks" incident in 1981, when a Soviet Whiskey-class submarine S-363, based in the Liepāja, ran aground near the Swedish naval port of Karlskrona, leading to a military and diplomatic standoff. One of those appointed in 1982 to the parliamentary commission on Sweden's defences against foreign submarine incursions was the young conservative politician, Carl Bildt. Throughout the final decade of the Cold War, when the fear of nuclear confrontation between East and West was greatest in Sweden, the number of alleged submarine incidents increased drastically, prompting a major build-up of sub-hunting hardware and manpower. A repeat of Peter the Great's harrying of the Swedish coastline would be prevented.

### **A new orientation**

Sweden developed not only its armed capability, but also its own intelligence gathering, counter-intelligence, and signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities. While Stockholm became a listening post on the Warsaw Pact in the Cold War, the Swedes had themselves used Helsinki and Riga as key points for spying on the

Soviet Union in the interwar period. With the transfer of materials and specialised personnel from Finland in Operation Stella Polaris (1944), Sweden gained a regional advantage in its SIGINT operations against the Soviet Union. This, in turn, made them interesting for western intelligence services, with whom information thereby gathered could be traded. In 1952 two Swedish SIGINT planes were shot down in rapid succession over international waters in the Baltic Sea by Soviet fighters. At the time, the Swedes denied they were spying for NATO, and the Soviets denied they had shot the planes down.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Sweden was again presented with the opportunity to become an important player in post-Cold War regional security. Swedish diplomats like Ekéus worked hard to build a new security arrangement around the Charter of Paris and the OSCE. At the same time, Sweden recognised the independence of the Baltic states and re-oriented itself toward joining the EU. Due to a major financial crisis during the government of Carl Bildt (1991–1994), however, Sweden's ability to project its influence over the region politically and economically – had it wished to do so – was limited. The budget crunch also led to major cuts in the Swedish military, rationalised in part due to a new military doctrine: since the threat from the “enemy from the east” no longer existed now that Russia was democratic, Sweden could reorganise its armed forces into a slimmer, nimbler, more professional structure ready to aid in missions abroad, rather than be a mass reserve based around the idea of territorial defence of the homeland.

This fit well with the policy of joining both NATO's Partnership for Peace and the EU in the mid-1990s; even though this meant the end of Sweden's non-alignment, the new purpose of its military was to serve in peacekeeping and stabilisation missions abroad, also outside the European neighbourhood. The logical extension of this practice was Swedish participation in the new EU rapid-reaction battle groups, particularly as a framework nation for the Nordic Battle Group since 2008.

This about-face in Swedish military doctrine led to a great deal of surplus. Much of the anti-sub hardware was sold off or retired. Other materiel was sold, or even donated, to the Baltic states who were desperately trying to build up western-style

armed forces from scratch, in their aspirations of joining NATO as an assurance against future Russian aggression, something that Sweden and other countries at the time dismissed as unfounded paranoia, since the NATO-Russia Council proved that old enemies could now be partners.

Within the EU, Sweden also took an active role in promoting democratisation and membership for the countries of the former Soviet bloc. In the run-up to

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Sweden has played an active role in promoting democratisation in the post-Soviet states.



the “big bang” expansion of 2004, Sweden, like the UK, was one of the strongest advocates for the Balts and Poles to be allowed to join the EU club. Sweden, Poland, and the Baltic states have also been the most active member states within the Eastern Partnership initiatives of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy directed toward integrating Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and other post-Soviet states into a closer relationship with the EU. Russia has seen this as expansion of the EU’s influence at its own expense, something Sweden has denied. Nevertheless, following the 2008 Georgian crisis, when Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt took a vocal stance on Russian military intervention, *rysskräck* has been returning to the Swedish regional security discourse.

### Complicated relationships

Even in the area of foreign investments in the region, the complicated Swedish-Russian relationship has become a factor. Since the 1990s, Swedish firms like Ericsson (which has had experience in the Russian and Soviet markets since tsarist times) and Telia (later TeliaSonera) expanded aggressively into the former Soviet Union, building up mobile telephony and internet infrastructure. It was later revealed that this allowed Swedish SIGINT to tap into the data traffic via Telia’s servers and networks in Sweden, thereby collecting intelligence on Russia that the Americans wanted.

Scandinavian financial institutions, particularly Swedish banks, have come to fully dominate the Baltic markets. While Swedbank and SEB have been deemed predatory by both Baltic consumers and foreign economic commentators, when the global financial crisis hit the inflated Baltic banking sector, for long a favoured conduit for Russian assets into the EU, did not suffer the same fate as Cyprus, the UK, Ireland, or Iceland. Having parent banks in the relatively economically robust Sweden meant that there were few crashes and government bailouts. At the same time, the hasty retreat from Ukraine (and Russia) by Swedbank in 2013 appears in hindsight to have been an omen of the troubles to come. The global retailing juggernaut, IKEA, has also caused friction with the authorities in Russia, due to complaints of widespread corruption and its suppliers’ unscrupulous forestry practices – the latter also leading to a dispute with officials in Belarus. In the Swedish media, however, national champion IKEA has usually been portrayed as the wronged party, rather than the wrongdoer.

The debates around the NordStream undersea natural gas pipeline concerned not only the environmental impact of the project, but also geopolitical aspects. Politicians of various stripes raised fears that the pipeline could facilitate the ap-

plication of Russian economic pressure on the Baltic states, Poland and Ukraine, by allowing state-owned Gazprom to cut out the transit middlemen in supplying gas to energy-hungry German markets. The pipeline was also considered by some (often pro-NATO) politicians to be a potential security threat, since NordStream was to gain port facilities at Slite on demilitarised Gotland, and there had been talk of Russian naval vessels patrolling the route of the pipeline to protect it. This, it was feared, would result in an increased projection of Russian hard power in the Baltic Sea region.

Even before the beginning of the EuroMaidan protests, the Russian military presence in the region had increased. Not only was there the routine probing of NATO airspace over the Baltic states, but there have also been increasing tensions between Russia and Norway in the Barents Sea in recent years. During the Easter holiday in 2013, Russian military aircraft performed what was described by commentators as a mock attack on Sweden. Whilst the Swedish air force remained grounded, NATO jets scrambled to head off the interlopers. The resulting criticism of Swedish military preparedness forced the Supreme Commander of Sweden's armed forces to admit that his organisation could, at best, defend a limited part of the country for two weeks in the event of a foreign (understood: Russian) invasion. The state controlled Russian media could not control their *Schadenfreude* over Sweden's military impotence: the TV humour show "Yesterday LIVE" produced a sketch about the effeminate Swedish armed forces abandoning their hysterical Russophobia for a pragmatic surrender to Russia instead of hoping for help from NATO. This clip soon went viral on YouTube, since, at the time, its portrayal of "new generation warfare", was considered more humorously absurd, than a realistic hint of things to come.

### Collision course

Throughout much of 2014, Sweden's foreign minister, Carl Bildt, has been one of Sweden and Europe's most outspoken supporters of the EuroMaidan Revolution in Ukraine and critics of what he considers Russia's role in the crisis. This behaviour, not always coordinated with the general government line, again put Sweden on a diplomatic collision course with Russia. Russian infiltrations of Swedish airspace resumed. In October 2014, the Russian navy made an aggressive show of force towards a Swedish-Finnish meteorological survey vessel off Gotland. A few weeks later, a fruitless hunt for a suspected submarine – assumed to be Russian – began in the Stockholm Archipelago, echoing the jitters of the 1980s. By this time, however, the liberal-conservative government in Sweden had been replaced by a new

coalition of the Social Democrats and Greens, the latter of whom are in favour of further disarmament. If Russia hoped this sabre rattling would force the centre-left government to take a more passive stance, however, the plan backfired. The social democratic foreign minister replacing Bildt, Margot Wallström, albeit less idealising of the post-Yanukovych government in Kyiv, is nonetheless unwavering in her criticism of Russia and its aggressive posturing against the countries of the Baltic Sea region.


The question remains: what will Sweden's role in the region be in the face of growing security tensions with Russia? On the one hand, if Russia is too arrogant, it could push Sweden (and Finland) into NATO. This is why a former advisor to Vladimir Putin, Sergei Markov, who had in the summer of 2014 lambasted Sweden for its racist Russophobia, in a much publicised interview on Swedish public service television in November 2014 softened his tone: Russia was not a threat to Sweden, but if Russophobia in the region sparked a new continental war, then the Baltic states would be obliterated. This statement of Markov's must be viewed in the context of the fact that even among Swedish social democrats the prospect of NATO membership is no longer unthinkable: both the Finnish prime minister, Alexander Stubb, and the Swedish prime minister, Stefan Löfven, have made public statements saying that their country would seriously consider joining NATO, should its neighbour apply for membership first. Furthermore, as the recent exercises Joint Action 2014 also demonstrate, Sweden's military is also committed to anchoring itself to the common security policy of the EU in the event of a regional conflict.

At the same time, there is popular resistance to the abandonment of the last vestiges of non-alignment. There are a number of groups in society that contest the critical stance toward Russia. Sweden has a sizeable Russian diaspora, whose organisations have in recent years been gradually co-opted into the Kremlin's *Russkiy Mir* network of influence. In the media, spokespersons from the Russian community often express misgivings about Swedish anti-Russian sentiment and promote the need for greater entente between Sweden and Russia. Furthermore, since Russians in Sweden are not only multi-lingual, but also often new media-savvy, Sweden has become a significant node in the internet information war over Ukraine and the Putin regime. In the pages of the left-wing Swedish press, particularly the culture pages of the leading tabloid, *Aftonbladet*, and *Dagens ETC*, where exiled Russian Left Front dissident Aleksei Sakhnin is a contributor, the crisis in Ukraine is portrayed in a light that to a

Sweden has a sizeable Russian diaspora, which in recent years has been gradually co-opted into the Kremlin's *Russkiy Mir* network of influence.

greater extent emphasises the pro-Kyiv “fascists” and the “legitimate interests” of the separatists and their Russian backers. The Greens, now a junior coalition partner in the cabinet, have no clear policy on regional security, the Ukraine crisis, or Russia. Finally, many Swedish investment companies and pension funds have significant interests in Russia. Taken together, all these groups may use their clout to force the Löfven government to take a more passive, conciliatory, or even isolationist stance vis-à-vis Russia on issues of regional security in the uncertain times ahead.

As such, the introductory quote to this text seems as apposite today as it was in the 1930s. *Rysskräck* can lead to fits of paralysis and indecision as easily as to rash action. Nevertheless, any hope of maintaining prosperous neutrality and avoiding the hazards of war may prove more difficult today than during the Second World War.

On December 3rd 2014, the minority coalition government of Social Democrats and Greens fell due to parliamentary manoeuvring of the far-right Sweden Democrats. In the extraordinary elections scheduled for March 2015, the Sweden Democrats, who already acted as king-makers in the last two parliaments, are expected to make further gains on the 13 per cent of the vote that they won in September. A strong showing by the Sweden Democrats could affect Swedish policy towards Russia and security in the Baltic Sea region, since, like many far right, anti-EU parties, the ranks of the Sweden Democrats also include politicians openly or covertly sympathetic to Putin. 

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# Controlling the Trolls

A conversation with Jānis Kārkliņš, director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) in Riga, and Raul Rebane, an Estonian journalist and communication consultant. Interviewer: Wojciech Przybylski

**WOJCIECH PRZYBYLSKI:** I would like to begin with the goals of the new NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga. What is it and why was it started here?

**JĀNIS KĀRKLIŅŠ:** The purpose of the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence is to contribute to the capability of NATO in the new information age and to achieve their political and military objectives by using existing information disciplines and opportunities with new technology. In practice, this means understanding the new and ever-changing media environment and seeing how to respond to the use of these new media tools by adversaries and to develop methods for how new tools could be used by the Alliance during peacekeeping and others kinds of operations.

Generally, we work in three directions: analytical, operational and educational, which are interlinked, and we

work through engaging with academia and practitioners producing analyses and recommendations.

**To what extent is StratCom's operation activity targeted towards voters and audiences of NATO member states and how much is it to communicate outside the members of NATO?**

**JK:** By definition NATO is not allowed to work and influence its own population; it is simply forbidden. And in order to use military applications in operations outside NATO, to my knowledge, special permission is needed from the North Atlantic Council (NAC). So, this is what differentiates NATO from Russia, which uses information against its own population.

**In fact, we have known this for a year and half, when the Kremlin actually issued a public tenure for the manipulation of pub-**

lic media. What are the countermeasures to trolling and providing false information on the internet?

JK: First and foremost, it is to raise awareness of the methods that are used, explain what trolls are, how they operate and what their targets are. There is one very simple remedy, although it will not have an immediate effect: I strongly believe that information literacy should become a part of every school curriculum, and in their education through primary and secondary school, children need to acquire certain skills that will help them orient themselves in and distil this deluge of information, including the disinformation that is present on the internet.

RAUL REBANE: I would add that in Estonia we have some experience with the information war, especially with our own cyber centre. It started in 2007 when the Estonian state was under cyber-attack for the first time. We saw developments in Latvia similar to what happened in Estonia. We are very happy that Latvia is starting this centre in Riga. And Estonia supports its development. To take it even further, an article was recently published in Estonia in which the former prime minister, Mart Laar, wrote that Estonia needs a psychological defence centre. This is all connected; consider what has been going on in the last year in Russia.

How applicable will your work be to the Baltic states and how will this programme be expandable NATO-wise or Eastern European-wise?

RR: From our point of view we want to see as deep cooperation among the Baltic states as possible, because we have a lot of information. Estonia can work with this new centre in Riga and we will provide our input because we have everyday experience. There was a talk at the Riga Conference 2014 about launching a Russian-language television channel. We did some research in 2006 and 2007 on that. I am not very optimistic about a pan-Baltic channel because the cultural differences are quite large. Two days ago the Estonian government had a meeting about how to strengthen Russian-language media in Estonia and there was quite a lot of money put in different spheres, but the question of channels remains open; it will probably come at the end of 2015.

Russia has been very active in this field for some time. So why are you only starting this centre now? And suppose the conflict between Ukraine and Russia does not last very long and the media war slows down. How sustainable will the centre be in the long term?

RR: The theory of psychological war and operations in the Baltics have been going on for ten to 15 years, maybe longer. It is nothing new to us. But what is going on at the moment in Moscow, the end of media and the end of journalism, is surprising even for us. Some people think that Facebook and Twitter only have another year left in Russia. We cannot imagine this development, but it could be true. We have to learn very fast.



We have to ask ourselves the question: what is journalism? Is it truth? It is a very deep and important question. Journalism is not truth. There are two important parts to journalism: choice and change of meaning. As a journalist, you can choose. There are millions of topics to cover. And then you can change the meaning. You can write about the case of the Estonian security guy who was arrested on Estonian territory, you can say he is an ordinary police worker on the border, or a spy, or hundreds of other things about him. But the question is, we are working with communicable versions of reality, and if you look at the evening news, you will see totally different versions of reality.

**But the point is not about what version is being covered. It is about manipulation...**

RR: And we have to work with that because people believe it. And this is the problem. Around 85 per cent of the Russian people believe that taking away Crimea was the right thing to do. We have to understand the whole landscape around the emotional attitude to information, which has never been like it is now and which is why we need a theoretical, scientific approach; and the people at this centre are doing this.

JK: It is very difficult to talk about journalism in a classical sense because we know what defines a journalist and we know the features of free, independent and pluralistic media. What we see happening now has created a lot of questions whether professional journalism still exists in Russia. And it does in alternative

and online media, but it certainly questions the professionalism of those journalists on the main television channels who do not follow journalistic ethics.

As we saw on a number of occasions in the Ukrainian operation, journalists were simply lying and pictures were used from different parts of the world, even Venezuela, and presented as what was happening in Ukraine. This is not journalism. This is propaganda. And these are not journalists, they are agents of propaganda. The question of journalistic ethics in Russia is also one we may seriously question. Of course, it is up to Russian journalists which way they want to choose and what journalism they want to practice.

RR: I do not think we can talk about journalism at the moment on the main television channels, because in Russia they often use the expression “power vertical.” At the moment, I use the expression “information vertical.” Information comes from top to bottom, and it is quite clear when I see the different television programmes.

**To give you a counter example, when there is big news in Poland, and there are a variety of channels, without Russian intervention, you come to a situation where three or even more media outlets report on the same story in more or less the same way. This is not “vertical power” or “vertical information,” but it is a simple fact that media practice is now of a lower quality and information comes from the national press agency. There is a greater challenge when**

I ask what the audience is, what the scope of interest is, at least, when you prepare analyses and operations, as we are also a fragile western-style democracy.

JK: The internet is changing the media landscape dramatically and it is undermining the existing, long-standing economic model of the media; and unfortunately in the last ten years we have not been able to find another alternative model which would help media outlets survive and maintain the same level of engagement. We have not yet found an economic model which would allow media outlets to get sufficient income to produce high quality products. This is a challenge, indeed. It also influences the way in which the media works and we see it everywhere in the world, including the western democracies.

RR: There is one very basic issue and we have researched it a lot. The issue is: the media structure and objective information cannot work, in many cases, on a market basis in small states, such as Latvia and Estonia. We simply do not have enough resources. This means that public services like broadcasting, for example, are extremely important, and you have to support them. In other words, public services in countries like Estonia and Latvia are a vital part of the information system. We have to pay for them because we are so small.

JK: This new economic model has not yet been found. On the other hand, you have to remember that there are seven-plus billion people in the world and only three billion have access to information

(and not all of those have daily access). I do not expect a revolutionary change in media consumption. Any change will be gradual and we need to find a way of combining the traditional media and the new forms of media to reach out to all populations; otherwise we start discriminating against those who are less technologically advanced.

Research programmes aside, the information war is happening right now. What are your short-term goals? Is there an effect to be expected in the current flow of information and the media war which is currently taking place? Can we expect to see your centre's activities playing a role here?

JK: Our report on what we have accomplished so far contains some practical suggestions on what needs to be done, including in Latvia, and we are talking about improving the public service and paying more attention to the quality of news that the public service prepares in all languages. The report says that we need to think about the professional training of journalists so that they understand what is going on better and can also contribute to the better understanding of the population. And then, of course, there are longer-term objectives or recommendations that cannot be implemented immediately.

RR: I would add, however, that in 2002 and 2006, being on the frontline of an information war already in the Baltic states, we tried to explain to our allies and western partners that the situation was serious. Many people did not

believe us. We had a seminar in 2007 in Tallinn about information wars and there were something like twenty reports and only one about Russia. Nobody considered Russia to be a threat. Back then we were considered to be suffering from post-Soviet trauma and paranoia. But now, our experience and expertise can be very valuable.

The information war is not about journalism or ordinary life. We have to recognise that it is directed, paid, informational influence on our people and our societies. We have to fight new versions of history; we see how the minorities get different types of information and we see the cyber war which is very important to Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. One of the main tasks of this centre is to inform our allies and make them believe that this information war is real.

When you look at what is happening on the internet, the kind of tools that are being used in order to lead people towards another opinion, the role of advertising has played a strong and predominant role. How much time and focus will be on political communication and how broad can you be in the research that you are undertaking? I understand the aims of the centre, but I have some doubts about what the scope of the research when you try to implement it.

JK: It is very difficult to say. Obviously, social media and social networks will be one of the areas of our interest and studies; especially from the point of view of how social media can be misused or used for purposes for which

social media was not intended. When social media emerged, it was to connect people so they could exchange pictures and stay in touch. Now, we see that social media is used for other purposes including disinformation and undermining opinions. We see the existence of people who are specifically paid and tasked to provide or react to messages which are not favourable to an ideology. The phenomenon has a name – trolling. Some are actively using trolls in order to pursue certain goals. First of all, the centre aims to understand this phenomenon and to explain it to those who are not confronted everyday with social media. In that respect we will be at the forefront of research activities related to questions of defence.


RR: I am reminded of a very interesting example that happened in Estonia recently, and is in fact continuing. We have a serious problem with anonymous commenting. A lot of people were insulted and attacked; since media is totally free in Estonia, people can write what they want. It has become a huge problem as many people have actually left media out of fear of being attacked by trolls. We did some research and organised several seminars based on the research and it had a huge impact on society. We discovered that “anonymous serial commentators” make up only a small part of society – 0.3 per cent of all commentators. Within one year, from September 2013 to now, the influence and the fear of this commenting has dropped dramatically. We consider this to be a real

“victory” and a good influence on society. But it needed research and a scientific approach to this problem.

**Does it also apply to hate speech on the internet?**

RR: Absolutely. We simply tried to find out who these people are, why they are doing it, and how many of them there are. It appeared to be an extremely small part of society that has far too much information and power. We consider

this research to be a real success. It was organised by the Open Estonia Foundation who also paid for it. The resonance and feedback in society was immense, with tens if not hundreds of interviews.

As a result, we have now ordered some research on Russian influence on Estonian Russians: how they use media, where they get their information from, and who they believe regarding what is going on in Ukraine. The results promise to be very, very interesting. 

This interview was conducted in conjunction with the Riga Conference 2014. A longer version will be published in the Polish quarterly magazine *Res Publica Nowa* issue 4/2014 which will have a special focus on truth and propaganda.

Jānis Kārklīņš is the director of the recently accredited NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) in Riga.

Raul Rebane is an Estonian journalist and communication consultant.

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# The Riddle of Kaliningrad

MIŁOSZ ZIELIŃSKI

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Kaliningrad is a city which appeared on the map only after the Second World War. Its predecessor, Königsberg, existed for almost 700 years but was wiped off the face of the earth during the war. Kaliningrad became a total denial of it, with a new name, new inhabitants and a new identity. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, however, and the opening of its border with Poland, the city now finds itself *struggling with its identity* as the “Russian West”.

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After a short walk throughout the city of Kaliningrad, one could hardly believe how long and rich is the city's history. The landscape is full of grey blocks of flats constructed in the 1960s and 1970s when Leonid Brezhnev presided over the Soviet Union, at the height of the Cold War when only few believed that the communist empire could ever fall. Its power seemed to be growing. New tanks and ballistic missiles represented a continuation of Stalin's expansionist policy which led the Soviet Union to victory in 1945.

While bargaining over new territorial gains, Stalin argued that victory came at a price high enough to deserve reward. His mantra was that aggressive, militaristic Germany should be punished for the death of the millions of Soviet citizens and should be prevented from waging any future war. The western allies showed a great deal of understanding to this rationale. In a way, this is what led to Soviet acquisition of vast areas of Central Europe, as well as Stalin's most notable gain – the northern part of East Prussia, including its capital city Königsberg.

## A unique entity

Königsberg was founded in 1253 during one of the crusades against the pagan Baltic Prussians. Since then, Soviet propaganda has argued, it had become an outpost of German militarism, a sword directed against the Slavic nations, and Russia in particular. Therefore, Königsberg had to be given to the Soviet Union so that the tragedy of the war would never repeat itself. Ironically, the Soviets fulfilled the goal of emperor Peter the Great who had dreamed of free and unhampered access to the Baltic Sea for Russia. This is why for 45 years of its Soviet existence, the Kaliningrad Oblast resembled a large military base, with the core of the Soviet Baltic Fleet stationed in the harbour of Baltiysk.

Before the Second World War, East Prussia was a unique entity. For over a hundred years, it was a vassal state of the Kingdom of Poland. The university of Königsberg – commonly known as Albertina – became the *alma mater* of many prominent scholars, poets and statesmen of Polish origin. The north-eastern part of Prussia also became the cradle of the 19th century Lithuanian national awakening. Since books written in Lithuanian were forbidden in the Russian Empire at that time, they were printed in Prussia and then smuggled into Lithuanian territories. As the region was largely populated by Lithuanian peasantry, it was often called Lithuania Minor.

Königsberg has a unique scientific significance, too. For many years, the seven bridges of Königsberg provided a scientific riddle on a worldwide scale. The question was how to walk through the city and cross each bridge only once. It was finally solved by Leonhard Euler. By proving that the riddle has no solution, Euler laid the foundations for contemporary topology and graph theory.

Königsberg was also home of one of the most preeminent philosophers of the Enlightenment period, Immanuel Kant. Born in the capital of East Prussia, he hardly ever left it. Kant was famous for his walks where he repeated the same routes. His walks were so regular that Kant's neighbours were believed to have set their clocks by them. Kant was such a loyal citizen of Königsberg that he even swore allegiance to empress Catherine the Great after Russia had temporarily taken control of East Prussia in the Seven Years' War.

After the Second World War, all pre-war inhabitants were deported from Kaliningrad and any buildings that remained were replaced by Soviet architecture.

Yet, roughly 140 years later, very few people remained in the heavily bombarded capital of East Prussia. In order to build a space for a completely new order, the pre-war legacy had to be fully erased. By the decision of Joseph Stalin, all pre-war inhabitants



were deported. It is estimated that 130,000 of those who had not fled East Prussia as the Wehrmacht retreated left for the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany. Most of the buildings which had survived the heavy bombing at the end of the war were to be torn down and replaced by Soviet architecture. The very name of the city had to be changed as well. Just a year after capturing Königsberg, the city ceased to exist. On its ruins Kaliningrad was born – named after Mikhail Kalinin, the nominal head of the Soviet Union responsible for mass terror in the 1930s.

### New symbols

The repopulation of Kaliningrad was carried out mostly by Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. They did not know what to expect in the far west of the empire. Some were lured by the prospect of settling in a well-managed German area, but they were not told about the devastating consequences of the war. In the eyes of the Soviet authorities, the common denominator of the new inhabitants of Kaliningrad was not their ethnic origin. The vast majority of settlers were born after the October Revolution and could not remember Tsarist times; they were raised and shaped by communism and could not know any other reality than that of the great Soviet Union. In fact, their coming to Kaliningrad was a part of the social engineering resulting in the creation of an even more refined citizen, the New Soviet Man – *Homo Sovieticus*, as Mikhail Geller ironically put it.

The circumstances for developing the *Homo Sovieticus* concept – obedience, indifference and passiveness – were more than favourable in Kaliningrad. The old inhabitants disappeared and a new order could be introduced. The Soviet authorities aimed at influencing the everyday life of the new citizens and reminded them that their new homeland is and will be a part of the Soviet Union.

Oddly enough, the destruction of some symbols of the pre-war past was postponed. The ruins of the Königsberg Castle, for example, were left untouched until 1969. Only then did Leonid Brezhnev himself decide to blow them up, which surprisingly sparked protests on the part of the local intelligentsia and students. They argued that the castle was an inseparable part of the city's landscape. In the eastern corner of the former castle, the authorities decided to construct the "House of the Soviets". Designed as a monumental building, its aim was to draw attention away from the old times and become the calling card of the new Kaliningrad. As construction began in 1970, hardly anyone thought the building would outlive the ideology that stood behind it.

The Soviets did not, and in fact could not, destroy another symbol of the old Königsberg. At the very heart of the city, on the island of Kneiphof stood the Ca-

thedral, which housed the tomb of Immanuel Kant. The tomb was built in 1924 to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of the most renowned citizen of Königsberg. Why was it left in peace? Because by devastating it, the authorities would be indirectly taking aim at the founding father of communism, Karl Marx, whose works were greatly influenced by Kant.

Although the tomb survived the furious reconstruction of the city, its surroundings did not. In general, communist plans assumed that much would be destroyed but little would be built instead. The ruins of the Cathedral remained, as opposed to many other churches in the city. Those not bombed or bulldozed were transformed into storehouses, swimming pools or museums. The Kneiphof Island, the most densely inhabited part of the pre-war city, was covered with concrete.

### Rapid changes

In the 1980s the Soviet Union was struck by a deep internal crisis. Mikhail Gorbachev began *perestroika*. The House of the Soviets remained unfinished as financial problems made the authorities suspend all construction work. Yet, the bare walls of the building symbolised the period of rapid changes that Kaliningrad witnessed, alongside other parts of the Soviet Union. However, Kaliningrad took one of the hardest hits with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The region found itself wedged between Lithuania and Poland, becoming a post-Soviet exclave with the Baltic Sea as the only connection with mainland Russia. After the fall of communism, Kaliningrad's fully independent neighbours had set their courses for membership in NATO and the EU. Inevitably, it increased the feeling of isolation among the Oblast's populace.

Uncertainty was so strong that many were suggesting that the end of the Russian Kaliningrad was unavoidable. Rumours were spread about Germans coming back to reclaim their property or Lithuanians and Poles plotting to carve up the region. And, even though it did not happen, some politicians from both Kaliningrad and Moscow exploited the notion of a "besieged fortress" to stoke anxiety among the inhabitants. Geopolitical changes evoked an economic downturn, one that was much more devastating for Kaliningrad than for Russia as a whole. While Russia's gross domestic product stopped decreasing in 1997 for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kaliningrad suffered for two more years. The ineffective collective agriculture system, without painful reforms, remained a burden. The region had to rely on food imports from abroad. Kaliningrad had also inherited a bloated military infrastructure with thousands of soldiers stationed on its territory. Such an extensive military complex largely lost its *raison d'être*,

and Kaliningrad received nothing in return. Seemingly nothing could ease the frustration.

### **A Hong Kong of Central Europe**

Protests against the blowing up of the remains of the Königsberg Castle at the end of the 1960s were no coincidence. The dissatisfaction with the removal of every trace of the pre-war reality grew with the new generation of Kaliningraders – people who had been born and raised in the region. As they became more mature, they started asking questions about the past hardly anyone could answer. They had to conduct their search entirely on their own. However, under communism they had little chance to succeed. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union had new opportunities arose. People were free to discover areas which had remained taboo for 45 years. The exploration of the once officially hated and forbidden past had different faces.

There was, as always, politics. Kaliningrad was probably the most obvious example of polarisation between new democratic, reformist zealots and old communist believers. The former argued that the region was given a unique chance to develop and become something more than a military base. They postulated opening up the harbour of Kaliningrad in order to make it a Hong Kong of Central Europe. Together with a special economic zone, it would boost the regional economy. The latter defended the communist legacy. They warned that any attempt to open Kaliningrad to its western neighbours would result in Russia losing control over the territory.

By the start of the 21st century it became obvious that Kaliningraders perceived themselves as not wholly akin to their compatriots from Moscow, Kazan or Vladivostok. Their feeling of regional identity is strong. And in particular circumstances, most notably when they see their region's interests are neglected, they are ready to stand up and protest. This was particularly the case with Georgiy Boos, who was appointed as governor of the Kaliningrad Oblast by Vladimir Putin in 2005. Boos's first term was largely remembered as a period of decisions taken in line with policies pursued by the central authorities which often had a negative impact on the region. He introduced higher taxes and public utility fees. He was also blamed for narrowing perspec-

By the start of the 21st century, it became obvious that Kaliningraders saw themselves differently than their compatriots from mainland Russia.

tives for economic development. In early 2010 Boos announced he was going to run for re-election. His words, spoken at the City Council meeting, sparked some of the deepest tension in Kaliningrad since 1991. A few days after his announcement, over 10,000 gathered to express their discontent leading Boos to eventually drop out of the running.

During the Soviet times, such attitudes were quintessential for Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians. They were often referred to as “the West Soviet” as they did not fit into the communist system. By the same token, Kaliningrad is sometimes called “the Russian West”. It does not, however, mean that the majority of Kaliningraders would like to become independent from Russia.

### **An opening to the West**

The Kaliningrad Oblast became largely separated from Poland and Lithuania when the two countries entered the European Union and, subsequently, the Schengen Zone. Because of that, they had to introduce a strict visa regime which brought some positive results. Trans-border crime and smuggling were significantly reduced. Yet, it came at the price of limiting border traffic, small trade and person-to-person contact.

It was not until July 2012 that this deadlock was partially overcome. After long negotiations between Poland, Russia and the European Commission, the Small Border Traffic Agreement (SBTA) entered into life. With this, permanent residents of the Kaliningrad Oblast and neighbouring regions of Poland could obtain permits which allowed them to cross the border. Large Polish cities like Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg and Olsztyn are also included in the agreement. In total, around 1.5 million Poles can apply for permits and travel to “Królewiec” – the Polish historic name for Kaliningrad – and around 900,000 Russians have the same opportunities to come to Poland.

The SBTA became a resounding success, mostly due to trade reasons. Kaliningraders started coming to small Polish towns to buy meat and dairy products. Some travelled further to Gdańsk or Olsztyn in order to buy furniture or electronics. But there is a lot more than that. People from both sides of the border finally could learn more about one another. Russians became the largest group of foreign tourists coming to Gdańsk. And Poles could see for themselves that Kaliningrad is not just a military base. It also has a rich history and there is a growing interest in discovering it.

In fact, Poles are learning that the post-Soviet changes that affected Kaliningrad were not only about politics, economy and the struggle for a better everyday life.

For some Kaliningraders, the very possibility of using the word “Königsberg” legally was already something important. In their minds, it was a catchy sound bite that could be profitable. While some resourceful entrepreneurs all across Russia started selling t-shirts with Lenin or Marx, the former East Prussian capital gave its name to a multitude of ventures. It became easy, even trendy to drink “Königsberg” beer or to travel on-board the “König” buses.

### More than a brand

Yet behind this stood something more than just a way of making money. All of a sudden, the old name of the city reappeared in the inhabitants’ consciousness. By using it, many manifested their regional pride and affection to their homeland. Not only did they gain a local brand, but they also began reshaping their identity, something unimaginable prior to the 1990s. For them, “the Russian West” meant more than a different type of Russianness.

In late 2012 a group of social activists convened in the Kaliningrad hotel and discussed the possibility of changing the name of the city back to Königsberg. After fierce discussions they created a petition to the regional parliament which explained their point of view. They argued that it was shameful for the city to take its name from a person responsible for mass terror in the 1930s. They also pointed out that the name Kaliningrad is a historical mismatch, as it erases the pre-war history of the city. It was in fact this history, the petitioners claimed, that Russia should have a notable stake in. The Russian Empress Catherine the Great took control of Königsberg in the course of the Seven Years’ War. Even Immanuel Kant vowed allegiance to her which, in fact, made him a Russian subject.

The petition evoked contradictory reactions. To some, it was an act of civic courage and an initiative deserving support. To others, it was proof of foreign intervention in the region whose aim was to separate Kaliningrad from Russia. A group of moderate voices tried to put the proposal in the frame of a long-lasting debate. They suggested a referendum in 2024, the 300th anniversary of Kant’s birth, so that citizens themselves could decide. The initiative, however, became a fiasco. It turned out that in today’s Russia there is little space for taking such steps. The petition was eventually signed by only 400 people across Russia.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kaliningraders began reshaping their identity, something unimaginable prior to the 1990s.

## Unsolved riddles


Yet the pre-Soviet past is still gaining in importance. The University of Kaliningrad is named after Immanuel Kant again. There have been plans to rebuild the historic centre of the city, thus symbolically re-establishing the spirit of Königsberg. The number of people describing themselves as “west Russian” or “Königsberger” is also increasing. What is more, the region is not a fully isolated island anymore, mostly thanks to the small border traffic agreement with Poland.

There is, however, another side to the Kaliningrad coin. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict now casts a shadow on the future of deepening cooperation between the oblast and its neighbours. The Russian Baltic Fleet is still stationed in Baltiysk.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict casts a new shadow on future co-operation between Kaliningrad and its neighbours.

Ballistic missile launch sites have always been constant in the region. Thus, the prospect of Kaliningrad returning to the status as a Soviet-like military base is still very possible.

Nevertheless, Russian Kaliningrad forms an exciting riddle that we have been able to witness. The riddle from Kant’s time – the Seven Bridges of Königsberg – turned out to be a Gordian knot and was solved only by the calamity of war, during which two bridges were destroyed, making the walk through the Soviet and Russian Kaliningrad and crossing each bridge only once possible.

The contemporary riddle about the future of the identity of Kaliningrad and its inhabitants seems a lot tougher to solve. What results would it bring? Would a new regional identity, influenced by both Russian culture and its Prussian legacy, emerge? What long-term impact would the proximity of the European Union and the Baltic integration have on Kaliningrad? For the time being, these questions will have to remain unanswered. 

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# Taking the Eastern Partnership Seriously

RAFAŁ SADOWSKI

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Russian military moves in Ukraine and their consequences are the key factor which has essentially changed the context of European Union policy in Eastern Europe. The developments in the region have forced the EU to clearly declare its goals, which include making **consistent efforts to integrate with the region**. The question remaining now is whether there is enough will to achieve these goals.

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Recent Russian aggression has not only adversely affected Ukraine's statehood and economy and claimed thousands of lives, but has also undermined European Union foreign policy, including its flagship initiative – the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Russia has also made aggressive moves in regard to the other Eastern European countries covered by the EaP initiative. One of Russia's major goals has been to prevent these countries' integration with the EU. This also has serious consequences for the EU itself. On the one hand, Russian economic sanctions and political pressure, including the threat of military force, are reducing political will among the EU's eastern neighbours to integrate with the EU, and the possibility of achieving this. On the other hand, this poses a challenge to the European Union, forcing it to answer the question of how to effectively protect its interests and pursue its foreign policy goals.

Since the war with Georgia in 2008, Russia has once again been using military force in the region. Its most recent moves have significantly raised the stakes in the process of the EU's implementation of its political projects in the region. To use

a poker analogy, the invasion of Ukraine, with the annexation of Crimea and the use of armed forces in Donbas, is akin to Russia checking what cards the EU has.

The developments in the region have forced the European Union to declare clearly what its goals are in its Eastern neighbourhood. Does the EU really want the countries from this region to become integrated and is it ready to incur the political costs? Or is this merely a meaningless slogan behind which nothing real is being offered and the EU is in fact withdrawing from the region? The answers to these questions will determine what the EaP, which was initially intended as an instrument for integration with the EU, is now intended to be and what its future will look like.

### The game changers

Russian military action in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and its support of the separatist rebellion in Donbas (including through the engagement of regular armed forces), and the consequences of these actions, are the key factors which have essentially changed the context of the EU's policy in Eastern Europe. Moscow

Moscow is  
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**determination** to  
achieve its political  
goals at any cost.

is demonstrating its determination and strong political will to achieve its political goals at any cost. This changes the nature and the rules of the game in the region, and it is something that EU member states did not expect and were not ready for. Moscow's behaviour has changed with regards to not only Ukraine but also the other countries covered by the Eastern Partnership. Ukraine is the most vivid example in this context,

but Russia had been intensifying its activity even before the Ukrainian crisis, and one of its intentions was to prevent European integration in EaP countries.

Initially, Moscow did not view the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EaP as a political project that could bring tangible results. However, when it became clear that the Association Agreement (AA) and the agreement on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) could indeed be signed, it took more decisive action. Moscow countered with its own "positive offer", namely the launch of the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. These, however, turned out to be insufficiently appealing to the countries in the region and Russia began escalating threats and using instruments of political and economic pressure. Sometimes these efforts were in vain. The economic sanctions imposed on Moldova and Georgia did not deter those governments which are steadfastly continuing their European integration policy. However, in the case of Armenia and



Ukraine under Viktor Yanukovych this proved to be a successful tactic. In 2012, at the last moment, Armenia was forced (or as the Russian side would put it, “convinced”) to withdraw from signing the AA after the negotiation process had been closed and to embark instead upon efforts to join the Eurasian Union. Similarly, the then Ukrainian president withdrew from signing the AA in November 2013, also at the last moment.

The second extremely important game changer in the region is the resistance of selected EaP countries to Russian pressure and the steadfast continuation of a pro-European direction in their policy, including public support for these policies. This concerns above all the three countries that have ratified the AA/DCFTA: Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. The pro-European coalition which has been governing Moldova since 2009 has continued to implement the process of building closer bonds with the EU. In Georgia, regardless of the strong polarisation of its political scene and bitter political rivalries, the key government and opposition forces (who swapped places in 2012) have been continuing the European integration process. In turn, Yanukovych’s decision to withhold from signing the AA/DCFTA provoked enormous protests in Ukraine in the winter of 2013–2014, which led to the change to a new government which supports EU integration.

### **The EU’s response**

The EU’s response to these developments has been two-fold: an intensification of European integration and an attempt to counter Russian pressure on countries in the region through the use of political and economic instruments. The political means have included, above all, speeding up the processes of signing and ratifying agreements and other documents as part of sectoral co-operation with EaP countries (including the agreement on visa liberalisation with Moldova). The AA with Ukraine, which had been rejected by Yanukovych, was signed in two phases: the political part was signed on March 21st 2014, just one month after the new government led by Arseniy Yatsenyuk had been formed, and the entire document, including the DCFTA, was signed on June 27th 2014. The end of the process was marked by the agreement being ratified by the European and Ukrainian parliaments simultaneously on September 16th (without, however, the DCFTA portion).

The AA/DCFTA with Moldova and Georgia were signed and ratified with similar promptness on June 27th 2014. It needs to be admitted that this was an extremely fast pace by EU standards. One could even risk the hypothesis that this would have happened much later if not for the pressure generated from Russia’s aggressive policy and the public support manifested through the success and the

victims of the protests as part of the EuroMaidan Revolution in Ukraine. The EU has also tried to become more engaged in the reform processes and has offered support to the economies of the partner states that are struggling. This support was mainly in the form of financial aid—though possibilities are limited due to the problems inside the EU—and also advisory and technical support, the facilitation of economic co-operation, including the asymmetric implementation of the DCFTA with Ukraine, and increases in the export quotas for Moldovan wine sold to EU markets. Also included was lobbying international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank to become more actively engaged in the region.

The EU and its member states have also been making efforts to contain Russia's aggressive policy, for example by lowering the level of political contacts and imposing economic and individual sanctions.

### **Postponing Ukraine's DCFTA**

The implementation of the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbourhood in the first half of 2014 began losing momentum when Russia employed more intensive measures against Ukraine and also the EU. In August 2014 the military conflict in eastern Ukraine was escalated when regular Russian troops entered its territory. In effect, the Ukrainian government's anti-terrorist operation was halted and Kyiv faced the threat of military defeat. In addition to military operations, Russia imposed economic sanctions on Ukraine and took a hard line during negotiations concerning gas supplies (which were cut in March 2014). At the same time, Russia responded to EU sanctions by imposing its own sanctions on certain EU member states, suspending the import of some food and agricultural products.

As a result of these developments, the EU decided on September 12th to postpone the implementation of the DCFTA agreement with Ukraine until the end of 2015. This decision may have serious consequences for the functioning of the EaP. On the one hand, it is understandable why this decision was made. For Ukraine it was important to reach a compromise that would stop the Russian military offensive. Furthermore, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to implement a complex DCFTA agreement, which entails strenuous administrative effort and high financial and social costs, at a time of war and economic crisis. In turn, the EU wanted to minimise the areas of conflict with Russia and wanted to reduce tension in its relations with Moscow.

Yet on the other hand, this decision will have two serious consequences. Firstly, Russia has been given the opportunity (probably only in this single case) to influence the EU's bilateral relations with EaP countries. And it will try to use this

opportunity in the case of other countries. Russian President Vladimir Putin has already announced that a similar solution should be adopted for Moldova.

The second serious consequence concerns the manner in which this decision was taken by the EU and its member states. Selected member states had the strongest say, while EU institutions acted rather as executors of the political decision. This practice has de facto undermined the significance of the community dimension of the EU's policy and also the significance of the EU institutions in charge of it, such as the European Commission and the European External Action Service. The EU institutions have actually played a secondary role in the political dialogue aimed at resolving the conflict in Ukraine, while a key role was taken by Germany.

And this is the third major factor which forms the new context for the EaP. Strategic political decisions are now taken within the EU at the governmental level, where selected member states have the greatest influence, while the role of community institutions which are in charge of implementing the EaP has been limited.

European institutions have actually played a **secondary role** in the political dialogue aimed at resolving the conflict in Ukraine, while a key role was taken by Germany.

### Dividing lines

As Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia embark upon the implementation of the Association Agreement in 2014 and 2015, the division of the EaP into countries that are truly integrating with the EU and the rest, for whom this initiative is merely a form of dialogue and co-operation, has become a fact. This division is additionally reinforced by the conflict between the EU and Russia over Ukraine and Russia's strong pressure on the countries in the region. Moreover, the latter group is not homogenous. Belarus, which is a member of the Eurasian Union, and Armenia, which aspires for membership of this organisation, are not interested in genuine and deep European integration. Furthermore, given the agreements concerning the Customs Union and the Eurasian Union, from a legal point of view, it is impossible for them to start negotiations and implement an AA with the EU. Azerbaijan, in turn, is attempting to maintain a balance between the EU and Russia. However, in this case the main problem with European integration is posed by the country's internal situation and the authoritarian regime's unwillingness to liberalise its policies, which is a necessary condition for building closer relations with the EU.

Given this situation, the three partner states which will be implementing the AA will be able to participate in the bilateral dimension of the EaP to the fullest

extent. The EaP's bilateral dimension also provides for sectoral co-operation between the EU and its partners in those areas in which both parties are interested, such as education, transport, economic co-operation, small and medium-sized businesses, the energy sector, mobility and visa liberalisation, healthcare, cross-border co-operation etc. Possibilities for this kind of co-operation remain open to all participants of the EaP. However, those countries which have signed the AA will obviously be engaged to a large extent.

As a consequence of the increasing differences between those states which are more engaged in the EaP and those which are less engaged, the significance and the effectiveness of the multilateral dimension of this initiative, such as multilateral EaP platforms and working groups, EURONEST parliamentary assemblies and meetings of local governments as part of CORELAP, will decrease. In fact, at present it appears to be more and more of a loose platform for dialogue. However, considering the differences between the partners, it will be difficult to achieve any tangible results.

In other words, the EaP is beginning to be divided into groups of different speeds. However, a serious problem is inherent even in the progress marked by signing the AA/DCFTA. The EU signed agreements with governments which lack full control over their own territory. All three countries need to deal with internal military conflicts and separatist regions – therefore the full implementation of the agreement, and consequently, of European integration will not be possible in these countries as a whole. At present, there is no chance of resolving these conflicts in the near future and the EU has neither the means nor the political will to lead the process.

### Specific tasks

The Eastern Partnership should be viewed not as a large-scale political project that will solve all the problems the EU has in the region, but instead in a very

The Eastern Partnership should not be viewed as a large-scale **political project** that will solve all the problems the EU has in the region.

utilitarian way – as a project intended to achieve specific goals. This initiative is above all an instrument of EU policy targeted at its Eastern neighbours and aimed at increasing their integration with the EU. Therefore, it should be focused on very specific tasks. At the moment, the implementation of the AA/DCFTA is such a task. The EU's responsibility in this case is very active engagement and support on various levels – political, financial and advisory. Another element is the continuation of the development of sectoral co-operation



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In September 2014, The EU decided to postpone the implementation of the free trade agreement with Ukraine until the end of 2015. This decision may have serious consequences on the future economic development of Ukraine.

with all EaP countries, where possible. Obviously, one should be aware of the fact that this will not bring about the expected change or change the situation in the region soon. However, this will be an important instrument of co-operation between the EU and countries from its Eastern neighbourhood, especially those which have not signed the AA. The other elements of the EaP (for example, the multilateral dimension) will rather play a secondary role and can be seen as instruments which support the implementation of two core elements.

This utilitarian approach to the EaP means that other issues which are not directly related to its basic assumptions should be excluded from this initiative, even if they are essential. However, it is crucial for the EU to deal with these challenges by using different instruments and formats other than the EaP. This concerns the EU's policy towards Russia. This policy uses other instruments and should be conducted consistently on other levels. This also concerns regional security issues. Placing frozen conflicts in Eastern Europe (Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and

Donbas) on the EaP's agenda, while the EU has no real instruments for resolving these conflicts, may lead to blocking the EaP's activity in other areas and ultimately to the practical failure of this initiative (this was partly the reason for the failure of the Barcelona Process and the EU's Southern Neighbourhood Policy). This does not mean that the EU should not address these key issues. It must, but it should employ other formats and instruments besides the EaP in doing so.

The main challenges the EaP needs to face are not the issues which have been pointed out thus far, i.e. the political will and the progress of the reform processes in the partner states, or the shape of the EaP initiative itself, its instruments, allocated funds, the manner of its implementation, etc. These challenges are transferred to a higher level and are linked to the way the EU conducts its policy not only in the region but, above all, towards Russia. The implementation of the key element of the EaP, namely the AA/DCFTA, without which this initiative principally makes no sense, entails rivalry with Russia due to the confrontational policy Moscow has adopted.

Thus, the EU has a dilemma. One option is that it will continue implementing the EaP, which means making consistent efforts to integrate with the region. In effect, it will have to become engaged in a political rivalry with Russia over this region. Another option is that the EU will relinquish this goal, which will mean the gradual disintegration of the EaP. In this scenario, the EaP is likely to share the same fate as the Black Sea Synergy Initiative, which very few remember by now. However, if the EU chooses the latter option, it will not only gradually lose influence within its immediate neighbourhood, but will also lose any credibility as an important actor in international relations. 

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# Why Germany Won't Lead the West

KLAUS BACHMANN

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In the first days of the EuroMaidan Revolution, German media, politicians and the wider public saw the events in Kyiv through a simple and affirmative lens. However, once it became clear that a full-blown conflict between Russia and Ukraine was possible, the German public quickly reverted to its well-known pacifist reflexes. This was the moment when the pro-Russian attitudes of the German public coincided with German materialistic interests in avoiding sanctions and an interpretation of the events became easily susceptible to Russian propaganda.

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Throughout the Ukrainian crisis, from November 2013 through to the de-escalation in Donbas, German public opinion was exposed to four major turning points which revealed serious tensions on two fronts: deep divisions in public opinion polls and the tension between public opinion and the dominant strand of media interpretations about the crisis. What is the most important, however, is that Germany, which had taken a leading (if not the leading) role in the European Union during the euro zone crisis, lost this leadership position to the United States during the Ukrainian crisis as a result of its divided public opinion. This, in turn, inclined the German government to mediate between “the West” and Russia, rather than to represent the West against Russia.

A strong asymmetry between German public opinion and German expert opinion about Eastern Europe had already existed before the start of the Ukrainian crisis. It concerned the relations of the German elite and media towards Russia and Ukraine. Russia in itself is not an important market or sales partner for Germany; at least, it is less important than most medium-sized or large EU member states and it is an economic dwarf compared to the United States.

### **A giant on clay feet**

However, during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, this asymmetry did not play out against Russia, but against Ukraine. For German industry, Ukraine is a minor partner in trade and investment. However, considering economic interests as the sole variable for explaining German politics during the crisis misses the point. German public opinion became divided over the crisis because there has always been a strong corporate lobby. German-Russian economic ties have contributed to the development of strong interest groups, which strive to isolate business from political disturbances and tend to argue in favour of “business as usual” even when strong differences of interest become visible.

No such lobbies exist between Germany and Ukraine. This is due to the structure of German trade with and investment in both countries: German business in Russia is driven by big corporations (often even de facto multinationals) like Mercedes, EON, Ruhrgas, big banking houses and industrial conglomerates with a strong influence on the ruling elite in Berlin, whereas Ukrainian business is driven by medium-sized and small enterprises, which do not have much leverage over the ruling establishment in Berlin. In addition, when larger German corporations invest in Ukraine, the capital they bring in tends to be much smaller than that which they invest in Russia.

This economic and lobbying dimension is reinforced by another, which is much older and has more to do with knowledge, intellectual tradition and, to some extent, nostalgia. German-Russian relations have a long history, which dates back centuries. Their most recent apogee took place in the last quarter of the 19th century, when Otto von Bismarck secured Russian support against France. Much of today's pro-Russian nostalgia is rooted in those days and even allows the traditionally anti-Soviet German conservatives to project their vision of an ancient Tsarist Russia onto Putin's Russia. According to this vision, Russia has always been a huge, foreign and mysterious country, which for various reasons fascinates journalists, intellectuals and politicians, inspires novelists and deserves respect and even admiration.

This admiration is partly mutual. Beginning in the 19th century, Heidelberg became a major destination for Russian students. German spas attracted Russian aristocrats and Berlin became a mecca for Russian traders. As a result of these traditions, almost every serious German university has had a chair, institute or department of Russian studies. Studying Russian culture and language has never been a problem and it is usually much easier than studying that of Poland, Romania or Ukraine. In fact, the latter is a blind spot on Germany's mind map of Eastern Europe. After the failure of Bismarck's plan to involve Russia on Germany's side against France and the dismissal of the Iron Chancellor by the Kaiser, a new intellectual trend emerged in Germany, which saw Russia no longer as a predictable and solid pillar of German security, but a "giant on clay feet" (*eine Riese auf tönernen Füßen*), an empire tormented by ethnic tensions which was about to collapse.

For the supporters of this way of thinking, Germany's task was not to keep Russia on board against France, but to help shatter it and create a German sphere of influence in the European part of the Russian Empire. For them, Ukraine was a cornerstone of their strategy, a part of the empire which could be taken away and which was big enough to confine the remaining part of Russia to Asia and thus isolate it from Europe. They were supportive of Ukrainian nationalism, but from their perspective, Ukraine was not the aim in itself, but rather the instrument of choice to weaken Russia and create German-dominated statelets on the ruins of the Russian Empire.

This is what happened when the Russian Empire, convulsing under the revolutions after 1917, finally collapsed and one part of the empire after another declared independence and began to co-operate with the German occupational administration on its territory. This episode ended with the German defeat in 1918, but some of those traditions reappeared during the 1930s, when the Nazi party, the German Abwehr and German diplomacy sought to support Ukrainian nationalism inside the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, these policies left no traces which could have been invoked today for a German-Ukrainian rapprochement – in fact it was quite the opposite.

### **A European matter**

Today, every attempt to support Ukraine against Russia risks being discredited because of the tainted Nazi past and Ukrainian co-operation during the 1930s and 1940s. After the Second World War, German interest in Ukraine vanished entirely even after 1991. German media, academic institutes, and business groups maintain representations in Moscow, but hardly ever do so in Kyiv. Before the clampdown

on the Maidan in November 2013, no single German media had a permanent correspondent in the Ukrainian capital.

It appears that those Germans who put the Tsarist frame on today's Russia are not the only ones who cherish and promote a distinct vision of Russia which is characterised by the past or even by nostalgia. The conservative image of Putin's Russia as another embodiment of the Tsarist empire lives side-by-side with the leftist vision of Putin's Russia as the continuation of the Soviet Union. Yet, where-

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as this conservative view on Russia is based on respect and admiration for a bigger country, which is difficult to understand and explain, the leftist vision emphasises gratefulness and ideological kinship. These Germans argue that Germany should maintain friendly relations with Russia because Germans "owe" their reunification to Soviet acquiescence and the need to respect Russian security concerns. Strikingly, it is almost impossible to find anybody in Germany who would argue in favour of respect for Ukrainian security concerns or gratefulness for Ukrainian acquiescence to German reunification.

During the first period of the EuroMaidan Revolution, starting with the first violent crackdown by Ukrainian police against the peaceful protesters at the end of November 2013, German media, politicians and the wider public saw the events in Kyiv through a simple and affirmative lens. This allowed them to interpret the protests as democratic and pro-European and believe that the protesters were representative of the whole country and its population. At that stage, the events in Ukraine were seen as a purely internal Ukrainian matter, a struggle of the democratic, pro-western population that wanted to force a corrupt, reluctant and unpredictable dictator to sign the Association Agreement with the EU.

Ukraine's eastern parts were hardly ever mentioned and nobody inquired how the Kyiv protests were perceived there. Nationalism, the problematic symbols of many EuroMaidan protesters brandishing flags of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and hailing Stepan Bandera with nationalist rhetoric, were ignored or downplayed as marginal. In this atmosphere, the Troika initiative of the foreign ministers of Poland, France and Germany (Radosław Sikorski, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Laurent Fabius) to confront Viktor Yanukovych and persuade the opposition and the government into a compromise was praised as a courageous and successful step at de-escalating the conflict and assisting the opposition. The Russian govern-



ment's reluctance to react and its apparent surprise about the rapidness of events unfolding was interpreted as Russian *désintéressement*.

The situation changed with the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. Before the Russian takeover of Crimea, the Obama administration made it clear that it regarded Germany, and specifically German Chancellor Angela Merkel, as the party in the EU that was responsible for managing the crisis and that the crisis was a European matter. Merkel's telephone-diplomacy and her frequent contacts with Vladimir Putin proved quite successful in preventing Russian interference during the Maidan protests, but it failed to deliver as the crisis became a military challenge, shifting from a purely political problem to a diplomatic one.

### Radical reinterpretation

Merkel's failure in the international arena can easily be explained by a number of overlapping factors in domestic politics. First of all, in light of a looming military conflict between Russia, Ukraine and, potentially, the US, the German public quickly resorted to its well-known pacifist reflexes. According to this implicit worst-case scenario – hardly ever mentioned directly, but overwhelmingly present in the public debate – any attempt to contain Russia would lead to a nuclear war.

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Germans have  
**feared** that any  
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to a nuclear war.

That was the moment when the pro-Russian attitudes of the German public coincided with the German economic interests in avoiding sanctions. The very character of the conflict in Ukraine now underwent a radical reinterpretation.

Suddenly, the interim government in Kyiv which had chased away a corrupt dictator became Germany's foe because of its alleged "fascist character". This mood is best reflected in an article published by the most influential tabloid in Germany, *Bild*, in which the elder statesman and widely admired former chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, denied the existence of the Ukrainian nation. In a similar vein, during talk shows on public television, commentators started to claim that "Crimea had always belonged to Russia", or that "Kyiv was the origin of the Russian state" as well as that "Germans owed Russia for its acquiescence to German reunification" equating the Soviet Union with Russia.

Bias and propaganda were everywhere. Leftist politicians condemned Ukraine out of pacifist motives or because of the inclusion of Svoboda-members in the interim government or because they projected their nostalgic attitudes regarding the Soviet Union onto Vladimir Putin's Russia. Public TV ran several shows about the Ukrainian crisis inviting Russian diplomats and even Kremlin sponsored journalists and lobbyists, but refrained from inviting German experts on Ukraine or Ukrainian diplomats or policy experts.

For the government, this sudden shift in public opinion constituted a new challenge. Immediately after the start of the Russian operation in Crimea, Merkel formulated a compromise within the EU which foresaw a three-level system of sanctions. Diplomatic sanctions followed immediately after the invasion. Russia's membership in the G8 summit was suspended. As Russia annexed Crimea, personal sanctions against members of Putin's political entourage (but not against



Putin himself), who faced account blocks and visa bans, followed. Without “de-escalating steps” undertaken by Russia, sectoral economic sanctions against the Russian economy were to be introduced.

As these punitive measures were being applied, the German public opinion and media were afraid of a large scale invasion of Russian troops into eastern Ukraine, a repetition of the Crimea scenario and a full scale Ukrainian-Russian war. NATO urged Russia to withdraw what Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen called its 40,000-strong troop build-up at Ukraine’s eastern border. Instead, Russia began sending weapons and mercenaries to the insurgent pro-Russian radicals, who had occupied public buildings in Slovyansk, Luhansk, Donetsk and Mariupol, empowering them to shoot down Ukrainian Army airplanes and helicopters. It allowed Russian tanks to cross the border and hosted the political leadership of the Ukrainian separatists (many of whom only held Russian citizenship) for press conferences in Moscow. In Germany, however, these activities were not interpreted as the opposite of de-escalation, because if they had been, the German government would have had to support sectoral sanctions and accept the negative effects of these on its own economy, including a fierce reaction from a sanction-hostile, war-fearing and strongly divided public opinion.

Clamped in this clinch between a divided but predominantly pacifist public opinion, a hawkish US government and demands from Central European NATO members to upgrade NATO presence at the Alliance’s eastern front, the German government started to press the weakest link in the chain – Ukraine. After the annexation of Crimea, Germany, just like the US, started to regard the conflict taking place in Eastern Europe as an international matter with Ukraine being the attacked party and Russia being the aggressor. While the American government supported President Petro Poroshenko’s “anti-terrorist operation” and pushed Kyiv to go forward, Berlin (probably fearing more Russian intervention which would require application of sectoral sanctions) urged Kyiv to negotiate a ceasefire.

### Shifting attention

The shift in German foreign policy was in line with public opinion and the mainstream media which, after the armed insurrections in eastern Ukraine, framed the conflict more and more as an internal Ukrainian matter (a civil war) and from now on started to see Ukraine as a failed state. As opinion polls showed, fewer Germans wanted to strengthen ties with the US than with China and close to a majority saw Germany’s place in the world no longer so firmly rooted in NATO and the EU, but rather as a mediator between East and West. Such was also the

line which Merkel and Steinmeier have followed in their policies towards Eastern Europe since the annexation of Crimea.

After the Ukrainian presidential elections in May 2014, the German government was busy downplaying the extent of Russian interference in the conflict. Despite confirmed reports about inflowing mercenaries, volunteers and even regular fighters from Russia, bringing with them tanks and anti-aircraft weapons, Merkel and Steinmeier denied any need for further sanctions and usually referred to the initial sanction scale in order to warn that more interference could lead to sectoral sanctions, but never in order to demand them. This position changed dramatically with the downing of the Malaysian aircraft in July. In fact, the aftermath of the MH17 crash provides a striking example of the impact of the emotionalisation by and of the mass media.

The airplane crash, the first clues pointing to the separatists, the obstruction of an OSCE investigation and the indecent behaviour at the crash site shifted German public opinion away from Moscow. Suddenly, German speaking Ukrainian diplomats started to appear on public TV talk shows together with their Russian colleagues and were applauded by the public. Within the ruling Christian Democrats, policy papers demanding a tougher stance and the imposition of sectoral sanctions on Russia began to circulate. Criticism towards Russia had existed before, but only after the MH17 downing had they a chance to bring about a policy change. The majority of respondents now supported sanctions against Russia.

The conflict in Ukraine remained high on the agenda of quality media and public television, but was somehow side-lined by the Israeli invasion of Gaza. The Ukrainian crisis was also regarded as a smaller conflict in comparison to the crisis in Syria and Iraq. Based on this assumption German media concentrated their coverage on the helpless, innocent and desperate Kurdish refugees from the Kurdish part of Iraq who had escaped to a mountain and were waiting for either help from the West or a certain death at the hands of terrorist and bloodthirsty Islamists. This became a genocide frame, similar to the one that had triggered the bombing of Yugoslavia subsequent to the fight between Serb forces in Kosovo and the Kosovo Liberation Army in 1999. In order to avoid genocide, the US government began bombing the forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) advancing on Kurdish territory, and the German government decided to radically change its arms export policy to allow the delivery of lethal weapons to Kurdish *pershmerga* units.

With Iraq dominating media coverage and political discourse, Ukraine was pushed down the agenda, especially as the Ukrainian government started to implement a

The MH17 crash  
helped **shift** German  
public opinion away  
from supporting  
Moscow's perspective.

negotiated ceasefire with the separatists in Donbas. The ceasefire, together with a far-reaching bill on regional autonomy, turned the Ukrainian advance against the separatists into a frozen conflict. The fragile truce in Donbas between the separatists and the government in Kyiv allowed the German government to refrain from further sanctions and accommodate public opinion. The general focus on Iraq also shifted away attention from Ukraine and enabled the government to show more resolve and action than it had been willing and able to demonstrate during the earlier stages of the Ukrainian crisis. 

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# Circuses without Bread

WOJCIECH JAKÓBIK

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Moscow has always wanted to be seen as a credible European partner that guaranteed the delivery of resources such as natural gas. Yet, in light of the Ukraine crisis, it has revealed its true face, with its actions **causing significant damage to Russian companies**, including Gazprom and Rosneft. Even the best of the Kremlin's propagandists cannot manage to cover up the fact that outdated technology and western sanctions will force Russia to review its energy policy.

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Although the Russian media are full of absurdities, any analyst dealing with Russia and Russian policy needs to follow them because even false news allows a reader to pick up certain signals. Russian propaganda manipulates facts in its press releases and produces counter-releases when information on important issues is not in line with Kremlin interests. In the field of energy policy, which has again become an attractive media topic since the Ukrainian crisis, such manipulations are countless. Russia promotes non-existent successes and covers up its failures. It tests its geopolitical rivals with unbelievable threats and comforts its allies with unfounded assurances. Moscow pays particular attention to the energy sector as it has been trying to deal with increasingly severe problems since the start of the "shale gas revolution" in the United States.

There is no better example of these trends than Russian-owned Gazprom. Gazprom has estimated that as a result of the crisis with Ukraine (and the subsequent decrease in demand), its volume of gas extraction will drop to 463 billion cubic metres in 2014. This would be the biggest drop in Gazprom's history. How-

ever, many analysts claim that the real decrease has been even larger and that the Russian energy giant barely extracted 450 billion cubic metres of natural gas. In order to brighten this gloomy picture, the company announced that in 2015 its extraction level would increase by five per cent. However, as the war in Donbas is still ongoing, this prognosis cannot be accepted at face value.

### Turn to Asia

Any negative news for Gazprom's image cannot be left without a proper come-back which is then exploited by the Russian media. The RT (formerly named Russia Today) television network plays a key role in this information battlefield and the scale of its manipulation nears absurd levels. Frequently inconvenient information, such as failures in the search for new resources, is quickly replaced by a more fortunate, and often completely trivial, story such as the discovery of a new species of animal in the drilling area. In this way, the background becomes the main story and the less favourable information becomes the background.

According to recent press releases issued by Gazprom, the company has recorded serious losses as a result of Russia's actions in Ukraine and international sanctions imposed on Russia. The CEO of Gazprom, Alexey Miller, declared that his company could not be sure of its strategy in Europe. The unfavourable conditions pushed Gazprom to rethink its investments in the production chain. Miller emphasised that it does not necessarily mean that Gazprom was planning to withdraw from European projects, but rather that the company's plans need to undergo certain modifications. Despite these sentiments, Miller depreciates the EU's diversification attempts and suggests that the EU energy market needs to be changed, even though some member states want to include a spot price formula in their contract with Gazprom. The fact that Gazprom has taken offence at the EU is an indirect admission that the company failed in its fight against new market realities, and intense Russian lobbying in Brussels has not helped. The European Commission's stance on the third energy package regulations, which limit Gazprom's monopoly in Europe, remains firm.

In response to this, Russia has declared a shift towards Asia, signs propagandistic deals and spins tales about planned investments. This has its cause in Gazprom's unwillingness to admit that its offer is no longer attractive in a rapidly changing traditional market. A dinosaur such as Gazprom simply cannot keep up with these changes, but Russian propaganda still portrays Gazprom as a perfectly working colossus that pursues ambitious global plans. The problem here, however, is that the facts are different.

Gazprom proudly announced its readiness to increase gas exports to China to 60 or even 100 billion cubic metres per year, but in fact this export has not started yet. Production of natural gas at the Chayanda field in Yakutia, which is supposed to provide China with gas, is expected to start only in 2020, while construction of

Production of natural gas in Yakutia, which is meant for export to **China**, is expected to start only in 2020.

the Power of Siberia gas pipeline has not even begun; nor have the Chinese provided Russia with any pre-payments. The contract with the China National Petroleum Corporation set gas deliveries at the level of 38 billion cubic metres per year. However, independent analysts from the energy consultancy Wood MacKenzie estimate that during the first years of the contract, Russia will be able to provide China with only a

few billion cubic metres per year. The full capacity of the pipeline will most likely be reached only at the end of the 30-year gas deal.

Russians also would rather not recall that the volume of deliveries they initially negotiated was 68 billion cubic metres, but Beijing was not interested in that amount, giving instead preference to natural gas deliveries coming from Turkmenistan. Russian media also did not mention the negotiated gas price which is 350 US dollars per 1,000 cubic metres. This price simply makes this investment unprofitable for Russia. However, Russian media do spread stories about the Altai gas pipeline that will link Russia's gas infrastructure to Asian markets or about the pipeline to India that will have to pass through the Himalayas.

### **A pipeline that never existed**

Once the war in Ukraine broke out, even traditional Russian allies such as Bulgaria stepped back and aligned their energy policies in accordance with EU standards. Despite Kremlin pressure, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov supported the decision made by his predecessor, Plamen Oresharski, to suspend work on the South Stream gas pipeline. Borisov has said that the South Stream violates EU rules and agreed that the pipeline does not meet the requirements of the European Commission.

On October 16th 2014, Vladimir Putin paid a visit to Serbia, the only country that supported the South Stream project unconditionally, ignoring the European Commission's objections. However, several top Serbian politicians already acknowledged that without Bulgaria, it will be very difficult to continue construction on South Stream. Belgrade, like the Kremlin, had expressed hopes that Borisov's gov-



ernment would change its mind on South Stream. Brussels' clear "no" to the South Stream pipeline is not only the result of the Ukrainian crisis, but also of serious reservations regarding subcontractors' tenders. The European Commission also insisted that South Stream operate in the EU exclusively under European rules. Joint efforts made by Germany and Russia to win exemptions from EU regulations, such as the third energy package, had also failed. As a result, Vladimir Putin announced in December 2014 that Russia would abandon the South Stream pipeline.

Another problem for Russia within the EU is the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, who took an unexpectedly decisive stand against South Stream, and co-operation with Russia in the field of energy in general. It still remains unclear, however, what position the new European Commission will take in the long run.

Moscow had wanted to be seen as a European partner which guaranteed certainty of delivery, but in light of the Ukraine crisis, it has revealed its true face. Russian military intervention in Ukraine and Russia's increasingly authoritarian style of leadership has caused significant damage to Russian companies, including Gazprom. Gazprom's weakening position has been also a result of the "shale gas revolution" in the United States and of decreased gas demand in Europe after the economic crisis broke out in 2008. Even the Kremlin's best propagandists cannot succeed in covering up these facts which, sooner or later, will push Russia to review its energy policy.

The Russian military intervention in Ukraine and Putin's increasingly authoritarian style of leadership has caused significant damage to Russian companies.

### Do it yourself

At the end of September 2014, the US oil giant Exxon Mobil suspended its co-operation with Russia's Rosneft on exploratory drilling in the Arctic Ocean as a result of the sanctions imposed on Russia. A few days after the decision, both companies discovered large oil deposits in the Kara Sea. The US Department of the Treasury gave the American company 14 extra days to finalise its work in the Kara Sea. In total, Exxon Mobil halted nine out of ten joint projects with Rosneft. As the sanctions were basically aimed at the oil sector, Sakhalin-1, which is a natural gas project, has remained untouched.

In spite of its problems with its western counterparts, Gazprom is willing to help its rival in Russia. Gazprom officials declared that they would be ready to sup-

port Rosneft in its oil search as early as 2015. The Russian gas giant is open also to co-operation with other Russian companies in the gas sector in case sanctions begin to impact it too. Gazprom has been considering combining LNG projects in Sakhalin, and these are likely to happen as Exxon Mobile withdraws from its work at the Far East LNG plant (Sakhalin-2). This would give Gazprom significant leverage over Rosneft. However, at the same time, it will also generate new costs. Before the Ukrainian crisis broke out, it was Rosneft that was triumphing over Gazprom in financial terms. Now the situation has been reversed, at least as long as sanctions do not affect Russia's gas sector.

Western sanctions have in effect forced Gazprom and Rosneft to co-operate. The consequences of such co-operation might be the permanent linkage of LNG projects in Sakhalin, especially if the sanctions are not lifted. If sanctions against Gazprom also come into force, the two Russian companies will need to even further deepen their co-operation. This scenario, however, remains unlikely as a result of Europe's dependence on Russian gas. Although Exxon is still looking for ways to get back into the Russian market, a massive flight of western investors from Russia is a fact. Yet somehow the Russian media have not seemed to notice this.

Clearly, Russia needs western technology and investments in order to survive. Companies from the United States are the only ones capable of aiding Russia with its own shale gas revolution, which is highly desired by the Kremlin. But, because of the sanctions, this will not be possible.

### **South America tour**

During the FIFA World Cup held in Brazil in 2014, Vladimir Putin visited several South American states. Among the fruits of his trip was permission to search for oil in the deep waters off the shores of Cuba. In Argentina, Russia signed a bilateral agreement on nuclear energy co-operation that could lead to Russia completing the construction of a third nuclear reactor plant – the Atucha II. Support gained from Argentinian President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner is particularly meaningful for Russian propaganda purposes.

During the BRICS summit held in Brasilia and Fortaleza on July 15th and 16th 2014, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa discussed the establishment of a new development bank which would finance worldwide investments of companies coming from these states. The leaders of the Union of South American Nations were also present at this meeting. They openly claimed that their main aim is to undermine the current unilateral world order and put a more pluralistic model in its place. In practice, this means a new division into spheres of influence and



Photo: Daniel Bellinson (CC) [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

Due to tensions with the West, Russia has declared a shift towards Asia. Gazprom proudly announced its readiness to increase gas export to China to 60 or even 100 billion cubic metres per year, but in fact this export has not yet started.

is convergent with Moscow's interests. The new development bank operated by BRICS will then serve mostly as a source of resources for uneconomical but politically important projects, such as the Power of Siberia pipeline. The pipeline is not meant to generate money but to build stronger bonds between China and Russia.


Just as in the case of Russia's shift towards China, Putin's "strategic visit" to South America is nothing more than another propaganda gesture. Several months after the World Cup ended, it is clear that Russia's ploy to gain BRICS support has failed. The few goals that the Kremlin scored were used for propaganda purposes, but have no real relevance in the larger picture.

In November 2013, Brent crude oil slipped to its lowest level since the economic crisis in 2008, dropping to a price of around 83 US dollars per barrel. Within just a few months, by June 2014, it slipped by another 24 per cent and, according to some estimates, it may slip even further and reach 72 US dollars a barrel in the near future. Mikhail Krutikhin from the RusEnergy consulting agency claims that, as a result of so low a price, Russia's oil production will drop by 15–20 per cent within the next ten years. It may also lower Russia's GDP growth by at least two per cent. In contrast, each drop in oil price by \$20 per barrel makes American GDP grow by 0.4 per cent.

## Tough times

Anton Siluanov, the Russian minister of finance, explains that a one-dollar drop in the price of oil causes a 70 billion rouble loss to the Russian state budget. The loss is even more damaging when accompanied by the rouble's rapid depreciation. The rouble has been weakening because exports are the main source of income for the Russian budget. The devaluation of the Russian currency introduced by the Kremlin affects people's pockets, as between 30 and 40 per cent of the goods they consume come from abroad. According to Sergei Khestanov, the director of the Alor Brokerage stockbroker firm, a 20 per cent devaluation of the rouble causes a rise in the price of food of 30 per cent. Sergei Guriev, the former rector of the New Economic School in Moscow, says that devaluation cannot last forever. The Kremlin will have to sooner or later implement budget spending cuts or raise taxes if it does not want to face bankruptcy before 2017. Guriev adds that in spite of the fact that the Russian economy at the time of the crisis was prepared for an oil price at the level of 40–50 US dollars, it then had more resources in its pension funds. Currently, these pension funds are being used to fill gaps in the budget.

Vladimir Putin will have to use his propaganda apparatus once again to calm down social tensions that will be caused by the sanctions. So far, this strategy has brought results. Opinion polls show that most Russians think sanctions have helped the Russian economy improve. Putin's ratings are still officially very high. Even if the results of these polls have been falsified, Russian society has no means to express its hidden frustrations.

Tough times lie ahead for Russia. New market realities and the war in Ukraine are being coped with by hydrocarbon oligarchs whose revenues are falling victim to Putin's imperialist foreign policy. There is one question that appears here: will they obediently accept these losses indefinitely? Or will they perhaps attempt to overthrow their unmanageable leader? One thing is sure – if they do not, then nobody will. 

Opinion polls show  
that most Russians  
think **sanctions**  
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Russian economy.

*Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski*

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# MEET NEW EUROPE 100 CHALLENGERS

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OXSANA FOROSTYNA, OSAMU OKAMURA, GERGELYBÖSZÖRMÉNYI NAGY, JAN FARSKÝ, BERTALAN MESKÓ, ZUZANNA STAŃSKA, JAKUB KRZYCH, ŁUKASZ KOSTKA, JÁN SUCHAL, JAROSLAV KŘIVÁNEK, PETER KOMORNIK, VERONIKA PISTYUR, ALJA ISAKOVIĆ, JUSTAS JANAUSKAS, MILDA MITKUTĖ, TAAVI KOTKA, IVAN STEFUNKO, JIŘI MÁDL, CRISTIAN BOTAN, ADAM REICHARDT, MICHAL STENCL, TEELE PEHK, LENKA RIHOVA, IVAN JELINKOVA, TOMÁŠ BELLA, SARUNAS LEGECKAS, PIOTR CZERSKI, TARVI MARTENS, RAFAŁ TRZASKOWSKI, ILJA LAURS, PRZEMYSŁAW KUŚMIEREK, PETER ARVAI, IRYNA VIDANAVA, MIKULÁŠ KROUPA, RAFAŁ BRZOSKA, PETER BADÍK, KINGA PANASIEWICZ, VERONIKA FRANKOVSKÁ, IONUT BUDISTEANU, NINA NUMANKADIĆ, JAKUB GÓRNICKI, DANIEL MACYSZYN, PAUL-ANDRE BARAN-CANDREA, MICHAELA JACOVÁ, MAREK NOVÁK, KRISTOFS BLAUS, INGA SPRINGE, WAWRZYNIEC SMO CZYŃSKI, ZUZANA WIENK, JAROSŁAW LIPSZYC, MARCIN BEME, KATARZYNA SZYMIELEWICZ, ADAM ZNASIK, PETER HAJDIN, GERGANI PASSY, DARKO PARIĆ, EMIN MILLI, VASSIL TERZIEV, SVETOZAR GEORGIEV, BOYKO IARAMOV, HRISTO KOSEV, RAYCHO RAYCHEV, KIRIL MITOV, EVGENIA PEEVA, LYUBEN BELOV,

# NEW EUROPE 100

VICTOR KISLYI, KAREL JANEČEK, VLADIMÍR KOŘEN, JAN REZAB, PAVEL BAUDIS, EDUARD KUČERA, FEDERICO DÍAZ, PETER PÁNEK, AHTI HEINLA, PRIIT KASEALU, JAAN TALLINN, TAAVET HINRIKUS, SANDOR LEDERER, GYULA FEHER, PETER HALACSY, MÁRTON ANKA, SAULIUS DAILIDE, AIDAS DAILIDE, ANTONS ADAMOVIČS, ULDIS LEITERIS, RAIMONDS KAZE, ALISE SEMJONOVA, LILITA SPARANE, KAMILA SIDOR, RÓŽA RZEPLIŃSKA, LESZEK GRABARCZYK, JOANNA JUREK, OLGA MALINKIEWICZ, MICHAŁ GRZEŚ, ŁUKASZ MĘŻYK, ALEXANDER DIATLOV, ANTON DIATLOV, JOHN PASICHNYK, NAZAR MOKRYNSKYI, PATRYK STRZELEWICZ, MICHAŁ BAŁ, MICHAŁ KASZCZUK, ŁUKASZ OSOWSKI, JAKUB SZAMAŁEK, PAWEŁ WYRZYKOWSKI, MACIEJ MICHAŁSKI, MIKOŁAJ MAŁACZYŃSKI, MIROSLAV TRNKA, STANISLAV BOLEDOVIC, RADOŠLAV BAŤO, IGOR KOCIS, ŠTEFAN KLEIN, ROMÁN SKRÝPIN, MUSTAFA NAYEM, TARAS PROKOPYSHYN, EROLL BILIBANI, VETON NURKOLLAR, ALICJA PACEWICZ, AGATA ŁUCZYŃSKA, IVANA SENDECKA, ROBERT FIRMHOFER

# Exiled in One's Own Homeland

LILY HYDE

The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation has been difficult for a majority of the Crimean Tatars. Many have lost their jobs, fled or just disappeared. Those that remain, now fear that their homeland, which they fought so hard to get back in Soviet times, has **once again been taken away.**

In early March 2014, I brought to Crimea copies of *Dream Land*, my novel about the Crimean Tatars that had just been published in Ukrainian. We had started the Ukrainian translation a year before, hoping to launch it in 2014 to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars. In May 1944, this entire Turkic Muslim nation (240,000 people) was deported overnight by the Soviet authorities, loaded into cattle trucks and sent to Siberia and central Asia. After decades of peaceful protest, over 250,000 returned home to Crimea in the early 1990s. *Dream Land*, which relates these events in fictional form, was published in English in 2008 and Crimean Tatar (which the majority of Crimean Tatars no longer speak) in 2013.

With the Ukrainian version I looked forward to sharing it with a wider audience of Crimean Tatars. I had also been anxious about its reception. The many Crimean Tatars I interviewed for my research had been encouraging, but my more critical friends doubted I could really understand and relate experiences I had not seen myself.

## **A really bad dream**

In Crimea in March 2014, no one had time to look at the book. “Little Green men”, as everyone called the Russian soldiers without insignia, appeared in Crimea,



surrounding Ukrainian army bases and government buildings. Pro-Ukrainian activists were disappearing or being beaten up, while an unelected new Crimean government rushed ahead with a referendum asking Crimean residents to vote to become part of Russia. There was little alternative to Russian propaganda's relentless story of Ukrainian "fascists" about to wipe out the peninsula's Russian-speaking inhabitants. The only organised opposition to the referendum came from the Crimean Tatars, whose governing body, the Mejlis, had called for a national boycott. But the Crimean Tatars, despite being the peninsula's indigenous people, make up only 12–15 per cent of the current Crimea population.

That strange, hysterical week before the March 16th referendum, the Crimean Tatars were in a state of shock and disbelief. "I keep thinking I am going to wake up and find this is all a bad dream," my friend Ayshe said, as we walked around the sixth micro-district, a "samookhvat" or a squatted Crimean Tatar settlement overlooking the ancient Crimean Tatar capital of Bakhchisaray. When the collapse of the Soviet Union accelerated their campaign of civil disobedience and finally allowed Crimean Tatars to return en masse to Crimea, the Ukrainian authorities did not want to give them land, and so Crimean Tatars squatted on unused land and simply started to build. Two decades later, some of these samookhvat still lack basic amenities and legal status, while in others, like the sixth micro-district, orderly rows of houses are interspersed with vegetable plots and flowerbeds. There is water and electricity, but most of the roads are still unpaved.

Ayshe and I passed a man filling in a huge pothole in the dirt track outside his house. "What are you doing – making sure the Russian tanks can drive up here easily?" Ayshe made a desperate joke. "I've been meaning to do this for weeks," he answered, stopping to stare at the half-filled hole. "What else am I supposed to do? Life has to go on."

Indeed, life went on. The referendum took place. The results (a purported landslide "yes") went unrecognised by most of the world, but Russia annexed Crimea less than a week later. Without the cattle trucks and the weeks-long journey into exile in labour camps, that some estimates say wiped out 46 per cent of their nation in 1944, the Crimean Tatars had been deported once again, transferred against their will to another country in which the vast majority had no desire to live.

And the most critical of my Crimean Tatar friends said to me: "Now you'll be able to write a new book about the Crimean Tatars losing their homeland. Only this time you get to witness it happening firsthand."

The Crimean Tatars were **deported once again**, transferred against their will to another country in which the vast majority had no desire to live.

I desperately hoped this was not what I was seeing. Not all Crimean Tatars I spoke to in March were ready to believe their highly-respected leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, that Russian annexation would mean a return to mass repression. Had not President Vladimir Putin personally phoned Dzhemilev to discuss the future of the Crimean Tatars? Had not Russia promised 20 per cent representation in parliament, official status for the Crimean Tatar language and recognition of the Mejlis?

### Only the beginning

On the weekend of the referendum Reshat Ametov, last seen in a one-man demonstration against Russian occupation, was found murdered. Photographs show him in central Simferopol surrounded by the “Crimean self-defence militia” (pro-Russian paramilitary groups set up in March) before he disappeared. At his funeral, human rights activist Ayder Ismailov told me, “We have to come together and consolidate and be on our guard, because I’m convinced this is only the beginning.”

It seems as though Ismailov and Dzhemilev – who was banned in April from entering Crimea for five years – were right. Events forced the Crimean Tatars back into opposition; a place they have occupied ever since Russia’s first 18th century annexation of Crimea pushed them into economic and cultural marginalisation, until they became a minority in their own land. Beginning in the 1950s in exile, the Crimean Tatar National Movement put practically the entire nation in opposition to the Soviet authorities, and the returning Crimean Tatars established only an uneasy truce with the Ukrainian government before 2014. Although Ukraine granted returnees citizenship, it did not recognise their claim to Crimea as indigenous people until March 20th 2014 – when Crimea was de facto no longer a part of Ukraine.

My next arrival in Crimea was on May 18th, for the 70th anniversary of the deportation. A year ago, when I had talked with my Ukrainian publisher about launching *Dream Land*, it was inconceivable that the annual Crimean Tatar march and meeting on the main square in Simferopol could be banned. Yet two days earlier, the new Russian-backed Crimean government had announced a ban on all public meetings for the next month.

I stepped off the train from Kyiv into an eerily empty station, patrolled by the self-defence militia. Outside, in front of a statue of Lenin, were parked three prison vans. The city centre was full of armoured vehicles and riot police who had been brought in for “training exercises” from Russia’s Rostov region. Roads were closed. Posters on deserted bus shelters depicted haunted faces and barbed wire, with exhortations to remember the victims of Soviet forced deportations. The actual victims of those injustices had been forced elsewhere – to hold their 70th anni-

versary meeting in a samookhvat district at the edge of the city. There is a scene in *Dream Land* where Simferopol city centre is similarly filled with riot police bussed in to intimidate the Crimean Tatars. The scene is based on a real event in the early 1990s. I had based my version on eye-witness accounts, but I had not seen it, and had never thought to be an eye-witness to it in Crimea twenty years later.

### Outside politics

I witnessed, too, how difficult the new Crimean reality was for Crimean Tatars who wanted to keep their jobs and businesses and felt that the only way to remain in Crimea and protect their rights was to become part of the new system. If few welcomed Russian rule, some did see possible opportunities. In particular the Russian republic of Tatarstan, where the majority population are Kazan Tatars who share a history and culture with the Crimean Tatars, was offering free trips for lawyers, entrepreneurs, historians and journalists to study Russian legislation and make cultural and business connections. Following the annexation, when each region of Crimea was assigned a “curator” region in the Russian Federation, Tatarstan was appointed Bakhchisaray.

If few welcomed Russian rule, some did see possible opportunities.

Why Tatarstan? I asked Ilmi Umerov, head of the Bakhchisaray administration, a few days after May 18th. “It is like an anaesthetic,” he said, “so we do not feel how much it hurts, not right away.”

Elmira Ablyalimova had recently left her job in the Bakhchisaray administration to become director of the Bakhchisaray cultural reserve. The complex, incorporating over a hundred historical sites, has its offices in the 16th century Crimean Tatar Khan’s palace in Bakhchisaray. Ablyalimova is only the second Crimean Tatar director since the museum was founded in the 1920s (the first, founder Usim Bodaninsky, was removed from his post in 1934 and shot by Soviet authorities in 1938). She is the first ever woman to hold the post.

These two facts should have been cause for celebration. But, appointed after the annexation, she was treading a treacherous path between taking advantage of opportunities offered by the change in authorities and being seen as a collaborationist.

“Culture is outside politics,” she said twice during our interview. Before the annexation she had been a key spokesperson at demonstrations opposing the referendum. Now, she wanted to focus on the state of the museum. She gave me a tour of the closed second floor of the palace, where repairs were last carried out in the 1960s. It was a shocking, heart-breaking sight; the rooms, decorated in layers

of Crimean Tatar-Ottoman-European style, are rapidly deteriorating. Elmira told me the museum has had no Ukrainian budget funding since 2011; all upkeep had to be paid for out of ticket sales. Now Tatarstan had just sent eight million roubles to pay salaries and amenities, plus funding for a project to digitise the museum collections. Ablyalimova said she hoped new connections with Russia would help return to the palace rare manuscripts and artefacts which had long since been taken to Russian museums.

Up the road another museum director, Guliver Altin, had gone a step further. He had signed an agreement with Tatarstan to open a joint Tatar historical research centre on the base of the La Richesse museum, located in the Zindjirli medresse. Altin insisted his museum, consisting of his family's private collection he had brought from France in 2011, was uniquely important both because it was dedicated to the history of Crimean Tatar statehood, and because it was independent, unlike all other Crimean museums which had passed from Ukrainian government to Russian government hands. Keeping it open came before any gestures of opposition to the new regime. "I cannot afford to pay fines, I do not have time to sit in prison, I have a museum to run," he told me.

If in the future the museum and research centre would be a joint project with the Russian Federation's Tatarstan government, how could it remain independent? I wondered. The historic Zindjirli medresse building was rented by the Mejlis' Crimea Foundation; the grounds had recently been restored with a grant from the Turkish development fund. Altin said he trusted neither the Mejlis, nor Europe, to aid him anymore. "Our 'roof' is Tatarstan," he said. "Europe has no influence here anymore, so I have to find internal protection. And that turns out to be Tatarstan, not the Mejlis."

### **Nowhere else to turn**

Altin predicted that the Russian government would confiscate the Mejlis's central building in Simferopol, owned by the Crimea Foundation. Until September, this was the only building in Crimea still flying the Ukrainian flag, and the only resort for Crimean Tatars seeking advice or redress in increasingly repressive circumstances.

Ridvan, who I met there in June, had come because his wife and mother-in-law had lost their civilian jobs in one of the many army bases in Crimea that had switched allegiance. "They said all civilian staff would be laid off and then employed again under the Russian Federation," he said. "But after they started taking people back, they did not take the Crimean Tatars." The new administration had given his family three weeks to vacate their flat, owned by the base.

Ridvan had never been in the Mejlis building before. He had come now on the advice of his neighbour, because he did not know where else to turn. The Mejlis lawyer later told me he had come across several cases like Ridvan's, where Crimean Tatars had been laid off and not rehired as businesses and organisations re-registered under Russian law.

The lawyer was also dealing with close to a hundred court cases brought against Crimean Tatars who had protested the ban of Mustafa Dzhemilev from Crimea. On all sides Crimean Tatars were being pressured – with job loss, fines, detentions and arrests, with searches for Muslim literature that was legal in Ukraine but banned as part of a very long and questionable list in the Russian Federation.

After annexation, many Crimean Tatars had been **laid off** from their jobs and not rehired as businesses and organisations re-registered under Russian law.

Two prominent Crimean Tatars I interviewed in June mentioned that the same day they'd been called to another interview with the Russian security service, the FSB. All members of the Mejlis had been threatened with the Russian law on extremism, which is punishable by a prison sentence but leaves the definition of "extremism" up to the courts. Several had had their houses searched. In September, Altin's prediction came true: FSB agents and police searched the Mejlis building and sealed it off pending a dubious court case into the building's ownership. Other Mejlis buildings around Crimea met the same fate over the next few days. The Crimea Foundation's bank accounts were frozen. The Mejlis lawyer had already resigned, and Mejlis head Refat Chubarov had been banned, like Dzhemilev, from the peninsula. People like Ridvan no longer had anywhere to turn.

### **Moving backwards**

Towards the end of my stay in June, I went to the seaside resort town of Yalta with Arzi, a journalist at the Crimean Tatar editorial of the Crimean State TV company TRK, to meet our friend Dilyaver. It was the beginning of the tourist season, but the beaches were largely deserted and even the most pro-Russian tour agency directors described mass cancellations and empty hotels.

Dilyaver's family lived for generations in a hillside village above Yalta until 1944; he had returned there in the 1990s and built from scratch a new house, a samookhvat, in a steep, overgrown, inhospitable ravine. In parallel, Dilyaver had worked his way up from selling fruit at the market to driving a taxi to representing

a Swedish tourist firm in Crimea. This year, the Swedish firm had informed him that they would not be needing his services for the foreseeable future.


"I suppose I will go back to driving a taxi, and then to selling fruit on the market," Dilyaver said as he showed us his strawberry beds and cherry trees outside the house. "Life has gone into reverse. Soon we'll be back in the Soviet Union."

No one denies that Crimea is going backwards. Much of the Russian population welcomes that return to the past, which they associate with both a lost Russian Imperial glory and the total social security (for those content not to kick against the system) of the Soviet Union. But the Crimean Tatars rejected that security decades ago, turning their backs in the 1960s and 70s on relatively comfortable homes and jobs in exile, in order to fight for a lost homeland. Now, few could tell me how they were going to take up that fight again, only that they had to stay in their hard-won Crimea, whatever the hardships, the compromises or the repression.

Ilmi Umerov resigned as head of Bakhchisaray administration in summer, saying he was unable to work under the new regime. More Crimean Tatars, both known activists and those with apparently no political connections, were arrested

Many Crimean Tatars, both known activists and those with apparently no political connections, have disappeared.

or disappeared; one was later found dead. Arzi, along with most of the Crimean Tatar editorial at TRK, lost her job in September. Other friends have left Crimea after all, to finish their studies, find work, or fight for Crimean Tatar rights through appeals to the UN and other international organisations. Every time Crimean Tatars leave Crimea now, they must wonder, will they ever be allowed back, or will they too be exiled like their leaders.

I often think of writing a new book about the Crimean Tatars losing their homeland, witnessed first-hand this time. And I think back to the man I met back in March in the sixth micro-district of Bakhchisaray, filling in the hole in the road outside his house, not so that the Russian tanks would be able to drive more easily, but because life goes on. This is his home that he built up again from a bare hillside, and that needs constant upkeep; care; love. He is still in Crimea. 

Lily Hyde is a journalist covering Ukraine for English-language media including *The Times*, *Foreign Policy*, and the *New Internationalist*. She is author of two novels on Ukraine, including her latest, *Dream Land*, which has been translated into French, Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian and nominated for book of the year 2014 in Ukraine.



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The heart of the new ECS building is a permanent exhibition dedicated to the history of the Solidarity movement.

# EXHIBITION

## HISTORY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BORING

The exhibition includes a reconstruction of a grocery store from Communist Poland. A shipyard gantry crane cockpit serves as a place to view footage with accounts from the organisers of the August 1980 strike. The round table – a symbol of dialogue – has empty chairs so that the visitors can get a sense of the events that took place there. The history of the Solidarity movement and the changes that it led to in Central and Eastern Europe is presented in seven exhibition rooms on the first and second floor of the new ECS building – on a total of almost 3000 square metres.

Some 1800 exhibits are on display, many of them in an interactive format. There is a very broad range of exhibits, including: memorabilia, photographs, video footage and audio recordings, archival documents, manuscripts, maps, underground publications, newsletters, underground art etc.

Room after room tells the story of the birth of Solidarity, the powerlessness of the oppressed people, the war waged by the Communist regime against its own people, the roads to freedom that had to be traversed and finally the triumph of freedom. The last room – named after Pope John Paul II – is a place of meditation and reflection.

The ground floor will have a children's room, where the youngest visitors can learn and play.



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The nearby Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers commemorates the bloody events of December 1970, when the regime opened fire on innocent people. Next to the Monument is Gate No. 2 of the former Lenin Shipyard, which in the 1980s became an icon in the struggle against the Communism regime. And last but not least, the nearby BHP Hall, where on August 31, 1980 the Inter-Factory Strike Committee signed an agreement with the Polish Communist government, which was so disruptive to the status quo that the dream of freedom became reality. Not even a decade went by before the world changed out of all recognition and Solidarity Square played a leading role in its transformation.

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# Are Georgian Politics about to Become Boring?

DUSTIN GILBREATH

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The **recent political turmoil** experienced by Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream Coalition could be a sign of history repeating itself, yet it could also be the start of the institutionalisation of the party system and political stabilisation in the country. All of this, however, depends on a number of critical political developments that will take place between now and the 2016 parliamentary elections.

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The recent firing of Irakli Alasania, Georgia's former minister of defence, in November 2014 may be just the first tremor in an earthquake about to hit the Georgian political landscape as parliamentary elections approach in 2016. As numerous commentators have pointed out in the aftermath of Alasania's dismissal, coalitions in Georgia have formed around the ousting of the government. Still, this time may be different for Georgia, and the first major break with the Georgian Dream Coalition that occurred when Alasania's Free Democrats left the Coalition may have set in motion a new phase in Georgian politics.

This phase could actually act as a harbinger of party system institutionalisation and political stabilisation in Georgia rather than a renewed cycle of opposition-versus-incumbent politics. Yet this outcome is contingent upon a number of factors, not least the withdrawal of billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili from politics. So, what lies ahead for Georgia as it faces a new critical juncture in its political life?

## Lessons from the past

To understand the current situation, it is important to first take a step back and look at the recent past in Georgia, which may give hints about its future. Specifically, when looking back, a pattern of public unity against an incumbent regime followed by a transition of power leading again to one-party dominance has been the norm in Georgia since independence. Eventually, the opposition-turned-governing-party again becomes the target of a united opposition.

The all-against-one cycle goes back to the overthrow of the Soviet regime, when a near unanimous desire (the Abkhaz and Ossetian populations excepted) to leave the Soviet Union was channelled into popular support for Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Gamsakhurdia was first elected to the Georgian Supreme Soviet Council in 1990 as the leader of the opposition to Soviet rule and then became the first president of independent Georgia in 1991, yet his rule was short lived. In his brief tenure, Gamsakhurdia gradually alienated and excluded those around him through increasingly authoritarian and erratic behaviour.

Overthrown by the elites and warlords who had initially backed him, Gamsakhurdia was removed in a coup which led to the return of the former First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze's arrival was welcomed by the Georgian population, largely with the expectation that stability would come to the embryonic state which had experienced a war of secession in South Ossetia and a civil war in Tbilisi in two short years. In many ways Shevardnadze did accomplish this goal. Over time though, dismay at the lacklustre results of Shevardnadze's governance led to the elite's defection and popular cynicism towards the government.

As time went on, a group of parliamentarians dubbed the young reformers, with backing from NGOs, students and a broader cross-section of Georgian society, removed Shevardnadze in the 2003 Rose Revolution. The Rose Revolution brought Mikheil Saakashvili and his United National Movement (UNM) to power with a mandate for change. Their rule saw significant achievements in forming a state, where only the shell of one had existed before. Yet, gains in state capacity came at the cost of widespread fear and human rights abuses, including systematic prison torture. The shortcomings in the UNM's rule were brought to the fore by a prison torture scandal in 2012, directly before parliamentary elections. The scandal, while not the only cause for the Georgian Dream Coalition's success, sealed their electoral victory and marked the first democratic handover of authority in Georgia since independence. Also important for the Coalition's success was Georgian billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, who, until announcing his intent to form a political movement in 2011, had been known as a reclusive philanthropist.



## Odd bedfellows

At present, the parliament ostensibly has three parties and a number of independents, but this number of parties – three – is misleading. The Georgian Dream Coalition is made up of five factions, and in reality each faction is a different party, bringing the number of parties in parliament to seven. On top of this, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who formally resigned as prime minister in 2013 after Mikheil Saakashvili left office, is widely recognised as the key to the coalition. Ivanishvili is still active behind the scenes as a decision maker or “grey cardinal” in Georgian politics.

Adding even more uncertainty to the mix is the fact that the parties which form the Georgian Dream Coalition make for odd bedfellows. Within a single coalition, the Republican Party of Georgia, widely recognised for its strong democratic credentials and support for Euro-Atlantic integration, co-exists with the Industrialists, a party headed by beer magnate Gogi Topadze, which is openly against Georgia joining NATO and ambivalent about the European Union. The two remaining coalition partners besides the Georgian Dream party, the Conservatives and National Forum, fall somewhere in between with the Conservatives closer to the Republicans and National Forum closer to Topadze.

The coalition’s core, the Georgian Dream party, lies somewhere in the middle ideologically, supporting Euro-Atlantic integration but also voicing support for conservative views. While this constellation of parties made sense in the context of unseating the United National Movement in 2012, its political and ideological schizophrenia bodes poorly for the coalition’s durability in the long-term.

Pushing the envelope a step further is the emergence of ultra-conservative parties in Georgia (as in many other post-Soviet states, political parties in Georgia rarely fit neatly within the traditional left-right continuum). The strongest player in this grouping is Nino Burjanadze and the various coalitions which have surrounded her. Burjanadze grew in stature internationally for her role during the 2003 Rose Revolution when she became interim president during the transition and then speaker of parliament.

In 2008, just days before parliamentary elections, Burjanadze defected from the UNM, and in the aftermath of the 2008 August War with Russia, she emerged as a pro-Russian candidate. Notably, she is the only Georgian politician to have openly met with Vladimir Putin since the war. Today, she heads a party which is as far pro-Russian as is feasible in the Georgian context and has even crossed the standard no-go zone for Georgian politicians on Abkhazia and South Ossetia by

Despite his official departure, Bidzina Ivanishvili is still active behind the scenes as a key **decision maker** in Georgian politics.

blaming Georgia's NATO aspirations for the de facto loss of the two breakaway territories. Burjanadze and her current electoral bloc, the United Opposition, experienced some electoral success recently, winning just over 10 per cent of the vote in 2013 presidential elections and 2014 local elections.

### Conservative values

Burjanadze's party is not the only ultra-conservative party to gain prominence since 2012, however. The Patriotic Alliance headed by Davit Tarkhan Mouravi emerged with nearly five per cent of the party list vote in the 2014 local elections. In Lanchkhuti (in the Guria region) the party managed to force a second round of voting in the *gamgebeli* (head of municipality) race by attracting a Georgian Dream defector and garnering over 37 per cent of the vote – three times that of the United National Movement's candidate. The level of support at the local and national levels evidenced in the 2014 elections suggests that they could potentially pass the five per cent electoral threshold in the 2016 parliamentary race.

There are at least two plausible explanations as to where the growing support for ultra-conservative parties originates. While Georgians report overwhelming support for Euro-Atlantic integration, they generally hold extremely conservative values by European standards. For instance, 88 per cent of Georgians believe that homosexuality can never be justified, while 47 per cent believe that it is never justified to get a divorce (according the 2011 CRRC Caucasus Barometer survey). Both of these parties appeal to those who vote on conservative values. Notably, the United Opposition's Tbilisi mayoral candidate campaigned against homosexuals in the 2014 race.

Not only do these parties speak to many Georgians' values, but growing support for the ultra-conservatives likely reflects the disappointment with which many in Georgia have experienced under the Georgian Dream Coalition's rule. It is quite likely that many former GD supporters who had originally believed that a socially conservative government would be elected are dismayed at what has come to be a middle of the road government which, while not progressive, is not dramatically conservative. Significantly, while in November 2012, directly after GD was elected, 65 per cent of Georgians rated its performance as "good" or "very good", in August 2014 only 23 per cent reported the same, according to National Democratic Institute polls conducted by CRRC-Georgia.

By August 2014,  
approval of the  
Georgian Dream  
Coalition hit 23 per  
cent, the **lowest** since  
it took power in 2012.

### Will the cardinal fly?

Today, Ivanishvili, despite having resigned in 2013, remains a powerful figure in Georgian politics. Should Ivanishvili remain a decisive figure without holding an elected post, it is likely that the Republican Party will leave the coalition. A Republican defection becomes more likely if Alasania experiences success independent of the Coalition, thus demonstrating that it is possible to work without Ivanishvili's support. The Republicans have already expressed frustration publicly at the informality of decision making within the coalition. This frustration was a thinly veiled critique of Ivanishvili's role within the government and coalition decision making despite the fact that he is no longer an elected official.

If the Republicans leave, some parties and individual MPs would likely remain in the coalition, but Georgia's history since independence has shown that when Georgians are fed up with a government, they will at least try to remove them from power, be it by the ballot box or through revolution. Should Ivanishvili remain at the helm of the government, but not in an elected position, he would make both himself and the Georgian Dream, no matter its future configuration, a likely target of another attempt at a transition of authority. The transition would require a broad section of political actors, likely resulting in the reproduction of another ideologically diverse government without a *raison d'être* except for its opposition to the Georgian Dream.

Yet, Ivanishvili has repeatedly stated since stepping down that he intends to support civil society development and that he is no longer a part of the government. While recent political events including Ivanishvili's appearance at the meeting where Alasania's party left the coalition clearly show that Ivanishvili is still involved in politics, he may follow through with his word as he did when he said he would resign as prime minister once Saakashvili was out of office, and when he promised to support Georgia's further Euro-Atlantic integration. If Ivanishvili does step back, the 2016 or possibly 2020 parliamentary elections are likely to give form to something of an institutionalised party system with ideologically diverse options for Georgian voters to choose from.

### And if the cardinal flies?

All indications are that the United National Movement will lose even more seats in 2016, but the Georgian Dream will lose seats as well. Most likely, the ultra-conservative parties will gain seats. If the Republicans do not stay within the Georgian Dream Coalition, they will likely form an electoral coalition with the



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The recent firing of Irakli Alasania, Georgia's former minister of defence, in November 2014 may be just the first tremor in an earthquake about to hit the Georgian political landscape.


Free Democrats, and some individuals from the UNM and GD may defect and join them. While popularity ratings can change overnight, the two most recognised figures from the Republicans and Free Democrats – Davit Usupashvili and Irakli Alasania – have consistently had some of the highest popularity ratings in Georgia (although, at the time of writing, the most recent polling data is from when Alasania was still a Georgian Dream Coalition member). Their popularity suggests that they will be able to gain a number of seats in the majoritarian races as well as break the five per cent electoral threshold for representation in parliament in 2016.

In order to ensure representation in parliament in what will likely be a more competitive political environment, Nino Burjanadze's party may join forces with the Patriotic Alliance. Topadze's Industrialists and National Forum, if they defect from the Georgian Dream Coalition, may do the same or may choose

to make a run on their own. With or without defections, it is highly likely that the next Georgian parliament will contain members of at least Burjanadze's party, if not the Patriotic Alliance.

The United National Movement today is the headless horseman of the Georgian Parliament. Their top leadership is either in prison or exiled abroad, fearing the charges against them which, while quite obviously politically motivated, are in some instances likely the result of actual crimes. Mikheil Saakashvili's return for the foreseeable future to Georgia, let alone Georgian politics, is impossible as he would be arrested upon arrival. Instead, he will likely continue his post-modern exile alternating between Williamsburg Brooklyn and Eastern Europe. This exile, while Saakashvili is the party's head, effectively neuters the UNM as a political force as it prevents the party from apologising to society for excesses of the past. Until that time, the UNM is unlikely to regain political momentum. Still, polling numbers demonstrate that the party maintains a solid base of support in Georgia

with roughly ten per cent of the population positively appraising their performance in poll after poll. Contrary to claims made by Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili during the 2014 local elections, they will not disappear any time soon and will likely maintain a presence in parliament in 2016.

While Georgia's political landscape experiences tremors from moment to moment and earthquakes every couple of years, today the country has the opportunity to break a cycle which has produced political instability time and again. While certain aspects of this scenario, particularly the rise of ultra-conservatives, are not necessarily positive developments, the stabilisation and institutionalisation of the party system is a victory that, in the long-term, far outweighs the composition of any given parliament. If Ivanishvili fails to withdraw from his quasi-post as the grey cardinal, however, we may be having this conversation once again in 2020. 

Despite its turmoil, Georgia may have the opportunity to break its historical **cycle** of political instability.

Dustin Gilbreath is a research consultant at the Caucasus Research Resource Centers-Georgia. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of CRRC-Georgia.

# I Will Be Back

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A conversation with Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia from 2004 to 2013. Interviewer: Bartosz Marcinkowski

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**BARTOSZ MARCINKOWSKI:** There have recently been several developments in Georgia, the state of which you were once president and to which you now cannot return because of charges pending against you. What are your plans for the future and for 2015? Do you see any possibility of return to Georgia anytime soon?

**MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI:** I had several decisions to make in recent weeks. President Petro Poroshenko offered me the post of first deputy-prime minister of Ukraine and it was admittedly very tempting for me to take this post. But after long deliberation, I decided to decline. On the one hand, I really wanted to help Ukraine, and I am helping Ukraine as much as I can. On the other hand, I could not have given up my Georgian citizenship because Georgia also needs help. Giving up my nationality would lengthen the process of my return to Georgia for years. Hence, that was not an option for me.

I am now very actively involved in Ukraine. We have a whole team of former members of the Georgian government taking positions in the Ukrainian gov-

ernment, such as the minister of health and deputy ministers of the interior and justice. We have other people being considered for anti-corruption posts and other areas, so I am advising and assisting how I can. I travel frequently to Kyiv and share my experience with Ukrainian officials. But I am also very actively involved in Georgian politics. I am the leader of the main, best organised and only opposition party that has a chance to win in future elections. I am also helping them to organise more effectively even if I cannot enter Georgia because of the criminal cases against me.

**Does the victory of your party, the United National Movement, in the parliamentary elections mean you will be back in Georgia?**

The very moment Bidzina Ivanishvili loses power, and he is basically controlling everything through his proxies right now, there will be no way to prevent my return to Georgia. I am certain I will return to Georgia, even before the elections. In countries like Georgia or Ukraine, civil societies are much stronger than in Russia. So there is no way that any



authoritarian rule can pre-empt people from getting what they want. We have never tried to do so and we graciously handed over power when the people decided that they wanted a change. In the same way, Ivanishvili, who thinks that he will be in power for life and that the country belongs to him, will have to yield power when his time comes.

The two years of rule by the Georgian Dream Coalition has brought some significant developments from the perspective of Georgia's integration with the West and the European Union in particular. Do you not think that Georgian Dream has been continuing your policy of rapprochement with western structures?

Well, I had a long conversation with Viktor Yanukovych a few weeks before the EuroMaidan began. He was making very pro-European statements, even in private conversations with me. These kinds of rulers can make any kind of statement in favour of Europe, but they will always, in the end, opt for Russia. It is just another way of ruling. It is a mafia style, with total control and political repression. There is no way these regimes can safely enter Europe. The current Georgian government has actually undertaken many steps to isolate Georgia. And we should not be fooled by their rhetoric. In Georgia, the newly appointed minister of defence was blackmailing Georgian officers not to go and fight in Ukraine, as he was telling them that Georgia's foreign policy orientation has changed. The newly ap-

pointed deputy minister of defence basically comes from a totally Russian-financed, pro-Russian party in Georgia. The government is creating a ministry of security again, which we abolished, because Russia demands such a ministry in Georgia. That would be a base for Russian influence inside Georgia. In exchange, Russia promised to lift its visa regime for Georgians.

These are all real facts. The Georgian government is even talking about reopening the railway through Abkhazia, which is a way to give Russia access to its military bases in Armenia and gain access to Iran. For Russian success, all these projects need strong Georgian co-operation. This is the reality and this reality, unfortunately, does not indicate a long-term European vector, but rather points to, at a minimum, appeasement with Russia or, worse, basically complies with Vladimir Putin's direct orders.

How did Bidzina Ivanishvili appear in Georgian politics? His story, in a way, is similar to the story of Renato Usatii, the Moldovan businessman who has done business in Russia and was successfully running in the elections until the court in Moldova ruled him out of the competition.

It is exactly the same thing. Usatii was linked to Russian Railways, just like the Estonian politician Edgar Saavisar. Ivanishvili is linked to Gazprom. He is the biggest private shareholder of that company. So he basically has his business based in Russia and then receives instructions from the FSB (The Federal

Security Service of the Russian Federation). It is a similar pattern everywhere.

**If you had a chance to speak with Vladimir Putin today, what would you tell him?**

By the time we have a government which is, once again, a continuity of progress, I do not think that anybody in the world will still be on speaking terms with Putin. I do not know whether I will be a part of this government or not, which should also be my decision, but I will do my best to get this government in power. The situation is changing very fast. I think Putin is going to have a series of military adventures. He is planning now new attacks on Mariupol, basically to cut off the corridor to Crimea, more or less through Melitopol. He is also trying to take parts of Donetsk and Luhansk. What is more, Putin is currently building a military road for a new attack on Tbilisi and this military road is also the shortest way to attack Azerbaijan. There will also be some additional military provocations; this could be in Moldova.

**How was it speaking with Putin in person? What kind of person is he?**

Putin was always basically saying the same things. He just got more and more arrogant and started to not only say but also do things. He has always said that Ukraine is a territory and not a real country, that he would attack Georgia, or that he would provoke the Baltic states because he wanted to test NATO. My first meeting with him was in 2004. In 2007, he told me that Crimea is a Rus-

sian territory. He was always saying these things not only to me but also to many western leaders. Yet, they did not want to hear it and they did not want to react.

**Would you agree with the statement that today's Putin is different from the Putin of the past?**

Either Putin has changed or the West has misread him. And I think the second is more possible. Putin had always said things, but he was never taken seriously because many thought it was just his manner of speaking. But he does not just say things, he does them; and always crosses red lines. The latest thing he started to say very often recently is the possibility of using a nuclear weapon. I think he is playing with the idea of some kind of use of a nuclear warhead. That is really the last red line and the West should start taking it seriously.

**You mentioned that another attack on Georgia or Azerbaijan is possible. How likely is that scenario in your view?**

It is unfortunately highly possible because when the South Stream pipeline was killed, Europe began to say that Azerbaijan is the main alternative source. Putin also listens to these conversations. I do not think he will occupy Azerbaijan per se, but he might cut off transport, communications or pipelines. The military road that the Russians are building in Dagestan, which could go through Georgia, might be one of the risk factors. Putin is spending three billion US dollars on military roads. He would never

throw away three billion dollars unless he has guarantees that, first of all, the Georgian government would allow him to build also on Georgian territory, since 16 kilometres of this road need to pass through Georgia and, second, if he does not have immediate military plans.

**Is there now any political will to resolve the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia? It seems like these conflicts were forgotten and that no one really has any solutions.**

I think it will be resolved sooner than people expect. We should realise that Russia will get stuck in Ukraine and that Russia will roll back. One thing is very clear to me – it is not only that Russians cannot keep what they hold, but Russia's borders will be reconsidered. There is no other way since Russia has said that borders are up for grabs by military force. Somebody who says that always loses territory. That is what is inevitable in Russia's case. That happened to Slobodan Milošević, that happened to Nazi Germany and that is going to happen to Putin's Russia. It is not only about giving back captured territory or that they will be forced to leave – they will have to withdraw from other territories that today are formally a part of the Russian Federation like the Northern Caucasus or some Muslim autonomous territories. China is also a big factor in the Russian Far East, so I do not know whether Russia can keep Siberia.

**It sounds as though you are predicting the collapse of the Russian state.**



It will mean the collapse of the Russian imperial project. The problem is that with the end of the Cold War, the idea of the Russian empire was never defeated.

**What do you think when such influential people like Henry Kissinger say that the West is also responsible for the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine?**

I think Kissinger often goes too far towards Putin. They have some personal relationship. Russia controls the biggest amount of black cash anybody has ever controlled in history. And this cash is used for all kind of lobbying. Some people make similar claims genuinely, like

Helmut Kohl who may think he owes something to Russia. Others, like Gerhard Schröder, are directly hired and are direct agents of Russia. Henry Kissinger has a big lobbying company and his relations with Putin are not entirely clear to me, so we should always look at what is behind somebody's words.

Generally, of course, there is this school of thinking in the West that says: "It is us who angered Russia." These are the words of the useful idiots. They think that if the West showed even more weakness, Russia would be more normal. It is absurd. The West was as weak as it could get in relations with Russia. More weakness would make Russia even more aggressive. People like Putin do not understand diplomatic language; they only understand force. This is the truth with Putin. This was true of Hitler and this is true of anybody who is on the path of territorial conquest, and who does not care about human lives.

**How do you perceive the engagement of major western actors in resolving the Ukrainian crisis?**

With Germany, there is a big change. Angela Merkel went initially against the business lobby, against the German establishment and the German public opinion. She then somehow got the German public opinion on her side. That is a big geopolitical shift. I think the Americans need to give Ukraine weapons. America has to also work on arming an international military group of Russians, Belarusians and Georgians willing to

fight for Ukraine exactly like Georgian officers fought for Poland in the 20th century.

What we also need is to go after Putin's money. I think America has begun to do it and Europe should follow that example. His money is mostly in European banks. We all know the names through whom he goes, Gunvor and Genady Timchenko for example; these are all well-known things. These people are just figureheads. Putin has up to 50 billion dollars which he spends on bribing or funding people like Marine Le Pen. This is interesting, by the way, because he always goes for far-right groups now, even in Ukraine. I think the next fifth column will not be openly pro-Russian. It will be rather an officially anti-Russian, radical, right-wing group. He needs to undermine the government in Kyiv so he does not care who does it: people from the extreme right or left. The same thing is being done in France.


**You served as president of Georgia for nearly ten years. What was your biggest success as president and what would you say was your biggest failure?**

The biggest success is the mental revolution that happened. Georgia cannot go back and it has found its place on the world map. The biggest failure is that we could not accomplish everything we wanted. We were too focused on the projects and we lost, somehow, the sense of the big idea which we had initially. On the other hand, we should have spent five to ten times more on edu-

cation. Without education, small nations are very easy to manipulate.

**You are now writing your memoir. Do you have an idea for the title?**

Unfortunately I do not have a title yet. But the overall idea is about how the underdogs in a country that did not even figure in people's thinking can fight for that country's position and survive in nearly impossible geopolitical circum-

stances. Going back to Henry Kissinger; he once told Sarah Palin about Georgians. He said to her after the 2008 war that "Georgia is like a small poker player coming to the table with big poker players and no cards in his pockets." That is the kind of cynical approach we very often get from westerners. Trying to fight against all odds and trying to fight for one's place is something which is very important to us. 

Mikheil Saakashvili is a Georgian politician and was president of Georgia for two consecutive terms from January 2004 to November 2013. He is the founder and leader of the United National Movement Party.

Bartosz Marcinkowski is an assistant editor with *New Eastern Europe*.

# I Have Never Left Russia

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An interview with Boris Akunin, Russian writer  
and translator. Interviewer: Daniel Wańczyk

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**DANIEL WAŃCZYK:** The main problem that faces anyone who wants to interview you is how to strike the right balance between two topics – politics and literature. So let me attempt to open the interview in this way: in your novel titled *The Turkish Gambit*, the main character, Erast Fandorin, says to a young woman: “Living in a country requires that you either care for this place or leave it; otherwise you are doomed to parasitism or servile grumbling.” Do these words express your opinion? Do you believe that, as things stand, caring for Russia has become a futile effort and now is the time to leave the country? I am referring here specifically to your recent statements on the blog of Echo of Moscow radio station where you announced that you were leaving the country.

**BORIS AKUNIN:** In the passage you have just quoted, a young 21-year-old Fandorin is talking to a Russian woman who has progressive and revolutionary views. There is a long road ahead of him and on several occasions he revises his opinions, and life teaches him numerous

lessons. As for my opinion now; first of all I think that everyone should do their own job. I am a writer, and the writer’s responsibility is to write. I do not think that writing is a trivial pursuit. Secondly, in a spiritual sense, I have never left Russia. Russia is the cultural and emotional sphere in which I function.

For quite some time now I have been living in a variety of places, not only in Russia, but also in Europe. During the most recent social unrest in Russia, I stayed in the country as it seemed to me that it all made sense. I also believed that I could help the movement that I thought was right. Now, however, I am under the impression that Russia has found itself in a position that can no longer be changed by people like me. There is no one left that I can persuade to accept my opinions. There is no one left to address – as those who we see eye-to-eye with do not need our arguments while those who are duped by propaganda do not hear anything. They are deaf. We



simply have to wait until this current condition, which resembles an alcoholic intoxication induced by the aggressive state campaign, is over. I am convinced that it is not going to last very long.

What has happened then to that positive energy that we all saw at the Bolotnaya Square in Moscow and other places? Why three years after these anti-Putin demonstrations people took to the streets in Moscow shouting "Our Crimea!" or "Take Donetsk!" rather than "We want honest elections!"?

I think that this is a result of an incredible fear that is felt by the whole ruling class in Russia, Putin included. It seems to me that Putin was actually quite frightened by the revolution in Ukraine and he drew the completely wrong conclusions from it. He started believing that the only way to prevent a similar scenario in Russia is to suppress and silence the opposition completely. He determined that this is the most effective method to "preserve" the current government in Russia. It is indeed very easy to break up a peaceful demonstration when everything is in your hands – the police, the army and the legal system.

And that is exactly what our protests were – a peaceful demonstration. After all, we were wearing white ribbons, we were all in a good, cheerful mood. We had no revolutionary plans and no one wanted to set up barricades. As I said before, protests like that are very easy to break up, even though doing it is absolutely senseless. It is as if an ill person purposely broke a thermometer so that

it would not show a fever, and based on that he would decide that he is not sick anymore. This kind of behaviour is symptomatic of a hysterical reaction. What it manifests is not strength but weakness and fear.

Yet in Russia now we are dealing with a situation where practically all power is concentrated in the hands of one person who, as you say, tends to react hysterically. On the other hand, there are all these "intoxicated" masses subjugated to him and with whom it is impossible to enter into any reasonable dialogue. To me this does not sound like an optimistic diagnosis.

If we look at the situation from the historical perspective it becomes clear that the essence of the problem is that the demand for true democracy is still lacking in Russia. It is for the very same reason that Russia's democratic movement in the 1990s turned out to be a failure. This is what the objective circumstances look like, it is our basis, so to say. Additionally, we can point to a subjective factor, that is the dictatorial power and a system that is absolutely anachronistic in the 21st century and completely impractical for a country as large as Russia.

An extensive territory like that cannot be ruled by one person or a narrow group of people. You cannot govern a country without a real separation of powers. Otherwise, your governance will be totally inefficient. Our people, however, still have not grasped this simple truth. The final exam in democracy is still well

ahead of us. Sadly, it is quite obvious that it will not be easy to get a good grade. In any case, I strongly believe that it is finally going to happen as we live in the 21st century where development and evolution are inevitable.

**Does it mean then that you believe in some objective laws of social development that Russia is not exempt from?**

Naturally, each country is unique in its own way, meaning it has some characteristics that cannot be encountered anywhere else. At the same time, however, there is also a general line of development that all countries are subject to regardless of their regional differences. Sure we can speak of various traditions, histories, mentalities (the latter, as a matter of fact, stem from both tradition and history), but to talk in the 21st century that a large country will take a totally separate path of development is pure nonsense. For that matter it is not even possible to imagine Russia without the internet – if that were to happen, the state would collapse within a week.

**As I have touched upon historic factors, let me make a reference to your new book on the history of Russia where you state that your country owes most of its heritage to the Tartar-Mongol tradition rather than the Byzantine tradition as a majority of scholars would argue. What does this thesis tell us about today's Russia?**

First of all, there is no need to be particularly afraid of seeing things that way as the bad reputation assigned to the Ta-



Photo: S. Strunin / Courtesy of Krakow Festival Office

Born Grigory Chkhartishvili, Boris Akunin has written under various pen names and is best known for his fiction and detective writings.

tars is undeserved and greatly exaggerated. Second, the Tartar-Mongol system of power might not be a bad idea as far as ruling such an extensive and internally complex country as Russia is concerned. I find the idea of a strong state very useful – the state whose strength is not understood as its capacity for military intervention but rather as its ability to assume authority in multiple areas and to fulfill various functions, to form the central governing body that would work efficiently on the basis of good and transparent regulations.

On the other hand, many characteristics of the traditional Mongol system of power (known as the Horde) – some of which are still present in today's Russia – are purely anachronistic and stand in the way of effective development. What are some examples? Suppressing individuals and individuality, the sacralisation of power, the absence of legal norms, authoritarianism, etc. I am fully aware that these are all obvious statements and clichés, yet Russia has come to such a point in its development that it needs to reach back to these basics.

Is there a politician or a social activist in today's Russia that you see as particularly promising? Or, perhaps, is it better to wait before we are ready to announce new leaders?

It might be well worth waiting indeed as the activities of our current authorities are so terrible that they seem to be heading for ultimate self-destruction. I do not think we should prevent them from doing that. In Russia we have always been looking for some kind of a role-model, a leader, an idol and I think it is high time we grew out of this and overcame this paradigm. What we need to do is to learn how to judge politicians not through the prism of their image, but through the prism of our views and beliefs. We need to understand their take on different issues and make our choices accordingly.

There are some politicians, of course, for whom I have a liking – Alexsei Navalny for example – he is a brave, talented

and cheerful man. That does not mean that I am going to support all of his political ideas as some of them I find wrong and harmful. In a similar way, I think highly of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, though I would not give him my unconditional support. One has to see politics from the angle of constantly changing contexts. Our political scene still lacks normality and plurality which would offer a wide range of choices – also when it comes to specific projects and solutions.

Our conversation has been inevitably approaching the most urgent political problems of today. Thus, it seems that I cannot avoid asking you about Ukraine. How would you solve the situation with Russia's neighbour? After all, it is a well-known fact that many oppositionists see you as the best candidate for Russia's future president?

Let me answer the second part of your question first. I want to make a very firm statement that I am never going to become an active member of the political scene, I have no intentions of running for any public office, nor joining any political party. I have lived long enough and I am able to see perfectly well what I can still afford or aspire to do, what I am able to do well and what I cannot. I have found my place and I am not going to change it. I am also fully aware that I do not have the sufficient organisational skills or enough energy to engage in politics. I am a man of literature, not a man of political action.

Now, regarding the situation in Ukraine; I think that a horrible tragedy

has happened there. Ukraine is one of the countries that is the most similar to Russia. In this way, in the wake of last year's events, we have lost our closest friend; perhaps for good. And what did we get in return? We got back Crimea under quite controversial circumstances. In my view this was not good neither for Russia nor for the inhabitants of Crimea who are the ones to suffer the most from the political and bureaucratic upheaval. While there is enormous economic and political potential in Crimea, it now seems that its chance to progress has been squandered for the unforeseeable future. What we are dealing with in the east of Ukraine is even more complex, but I still hope for this problem to be solved by the people when Russia finally enjoys a stable democratic system.

The future of both Crimea and eastern Ukraine should be decided on by the people who inhabit those territories – they have every right to do so and nobody else should be able to make that decision on their behalf. I am a strong supporter of a real referendum in Crimea. One that would be preceded with a long, pluralistic election campaign closely observed by international organisations. Let the people of Crimea decide if they want to live in Ukraine or in Russia, or if they want to have an independent state. I firmly believe they are finally going to be given that choice.

Let us put politics aside for a moment and talk about literature. As the scope of your work is so vast and varied, I will al-

low myself to make a small summarisation here. If I am correct, as of today you have written 70 books and are the author of 30 translations; you wrote 15 books as Grigoriy Czchartashvili, 49 books as Boris Akunin, three books as Anatoliy Brusnikin and three books as Anna Borisova. Which of these projects have you completed and which are to be continued?


Two of these projects – Anatoliy Brusnikin and Anna Borisova – are already closed as it would make no sense to carry on with the game after my real name has been exposed. Generally speaking, these were literary experiments which gave me an opportunity to try something new, adopt a new style and to try out some new kinds of narration. Apart from that, it was also an experiment for the publisher – an attempt to introduce a new, unknown name on the market. What is essential here is that two different marketing strategies were used in each case – a lot of money was invested in Brusnikin. There was a great promotional campaign and a really large edition was put on the market. Some 700,000 copies of the first novel were sold as a result. Anna Borisova, on the other hand, went to bookshops with virtually no advertising activities and the sums invested in this project were symbolic. The books were published in much smaller numbers but the publisher still managed to make some profit off them. However, this is all in the past and I am now busy working on two new literary undertakings. The first one is a history of Russia. It is an extensive project that

consists of two different parts, with the first being strictly historical and the second being fictional. Another thing that I am working on is a series of “serious” stories (not crime stories this time). The first one has already been published. In addition, I have also been working on the last books of the Fandorin crime series and, as I have already announced, there are going to be two more books published.

**So far 14 crime stories have been published in the Fandorin series. When can we expect the next one?**

I think it might be in the spring of 2015.

**Since our conversation is taking place in Kraków my last question to you today is whether Fandorin is going to follow your steps here?**

Now you gave it away! Yes, Fandorin is indeed coming to Kraków. The plot of the final part of the 15th volume of his adventures is going to take place here. It is the second time that I have been in Kraków and I can already sense that distinct atmosphere of this place – a Galician city. I am still looking around to find some suitable locations here. 

*Translated by Agnieszka Rubka*

Boris Akunin (born Grigory Chkhartishvili) is a Russian writer and translator. He has written under various pen names and is best known for his fiction and detective writings.

Daniel Wańczyk is a PhD student at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków. In his research he focuses on Russian identity.

# No Country for Young Men (or Women)

BENJAMIN CUNNINGHAM

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Following mass protests resembling those of Occupy Wall Street or Tahrir Square that began in the summer of 2013 in Bulgaria, one would assume a significant shift in the subsequent parliamentary elections. Yet, following the October 2014 elections, it seems that the biggest winner was the status quo.

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Some 18 months of intense civic anger in Bulgaria culminated on election night in October 2014. For much of that time youthful and angry street protestors had sought to bring down a scandal-mired Socialist-led coalition government and, eventually, they succeeded. The government fell and a caretaker cabinet took its place in August. Activist stamina proved greater than that of the corroded establishment and October 5th was meant to be the coup de grace, a Waterloo for politics hitherto and the coronation of a more transparent, responsive, representative direction for politics – but it was not.

Weeks before polls had even opened it was clear the status quo would be the big winner. On election night, the man who would be sworn in as prime minister a month later, Boyko Borisov, insisted he would not hold a post-election press conference – there was no reason to celebrate his party's 33 per cent share of the vote, he said, and the results were inconclusive, with much work left to be done. Then, in the middle of the international election press centre that had been set up in Sofia's awkward, monolithic National Palace of Culture, Borisov promptly stood



and took questions from reporters for 45 minutes in something that very much resembled a press conference – complete with cameras, flashes, microphones, reporters, politician, questions and evasive answers.

## Quagmire

By November 7th, Borisov and his GERB party (a centre-right party) would go on to form a coalition with the so-called Reformist Bloc, an ad hoc grouping of liberals, ex-protestors, old anti-communists and peasants – in other words, not really a unified bloc at all. To complicate matters even more, this nominally centre-right coalition does not control a majority in parliament and sits as a minority government dependent on support from the left-leaning Alternative for Bulgarian Revival, and the virulently nationalist Patriotic Front – making it your standard establishment, anti-establishment, leftist, far-right coalition government.

Borisov's previous government had itself left office amid protests in March 2013. While he would nominally win elections in May of that year, he was unable to form a coalition. Instead the socialists formed their own with a party representing the country's Turkish minority, but this too needed support from a different right-wing extremist group – Ataka, one financed by the Kremlin. In short, things were, and remain, a quagmire. Within weeks of taking office that government, led by Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski, was assailed by protests that would largely continue until the government resigned in July 2014. While there were some specific triggers to the public outcry – see below – the prevailing mood was one of disgust with the political establishment. Like Occupy Wall Street in New York, Cairo's Tahrir Square protests and the Gezi Park occupation in neighbouring Turkey, the gatherings were symptomatic of a populace that felt that the governing elite was increasingly divorced from reality.

Just as elsewhere, converting these common feelings of alienation into actual action proved difficult. As leaders of the Reform Bloc sought to harness the energy of the protestors, and as members of the bloc marked out turf within the movement, they began to increasingly resemble the very people they claimed to oppose. "The protests were moral in nature and thus hard to translate into a political programme," said Ivan Krastev, one of Bulgaria's leading intellectuals. "The more the Reform Bloc tried to behave as the voice of the protests, the less people were ready to identify with them."

Unsavoury as they may have been, among educated, globally savvy twenty and thirty-somethings in the capital, the Reformist Bloc was a near inevitable choice during voting in October. "I will not vote in favour of anybody, but I will vote against

some,” Velislava Popova, editor of the Dnevnik daily, said on the eve of elections. More striking than the reluctant support for the Reformist Bloc was the general acknowledgment before the election even took place that the best case scenario for reformists would be to join a coalition with Borisov, the most powerful man in the country and a person that is, by any reasonable definition of the term, the establishment.

### **Balkan Berlusconi**

It is true that Borisov is likely the only force able to hold together a government in the current circumstances and this means he offers a measure of stability. Though

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it is not clear that this is what the protestors would have wanted, Borisov is nevertheless the centre around which Bulgarian politics orbit, and if not quite a celestial being certainly a point of gravity. People are for or against Borisov, but they never ignore him. “You accept that Borisov is here and just will be for a certain period of time,” said Angel Petrov, 25, a journalist for Novinite.com, a news portal.

Borisov, 55, is barrel-chested, with a grey buzz cut and the jaw of a James Bond villain. Before entering politics he worked for the police and then, in the early post-communist years, in the bastion of integrity that is the private security industry. He is a seventh degree black belt in karate and as recently as 2013 played for FC Vitosha Bistritsa, a second division football club. His popularity is such that in 2011 fans actually voted him Bulgaria’s footballer of the year – over Dimitar Berbatov who was the top scorer in the English Premier League for the 2010–2011 season while playing for Manchester United.

Borisov’s gaudy man-of-the-people image comes complete with the requisite questionable past. A May 2006 US State Department cable, written when Borisov was mayor of Sofia, connected him with “oil-siphoning scandals, illegal deals involving [Russian state-owned] Lukoil and major traffic in methamphetamines.” The cable goes on to say: “Borisov is alleged to have used his former position as head of Bulgarian law enforcement to arrange cover for criminal deals, and his common-law wife, Tsvetelina Borislavova, manages a large Bulgarian bank that has been accused of laundering money for organised criminal groups, as well as for Borisov’s own illegal transactions.” One high level Bulgarian diplomat I spoke to called him “a Balkan Berlusconi.” In other words, he is perfect for contemporary

Bulgarian politics. As Krastev puts it: “Democratic politicians resemble the society from which they come.”

But the current state of politics and society is precisely what the youthful protestors of Sofia were purportedly against. The initial wave of marches was triggered on June 14th 2013 after Delyan Peevski – a hybrid media mogul, politician and organised crime figure in the classic strongman mould – was named head of the state security agency. Bulgarian politics have rarely been a tidy affair, but in this case the government had gone so far as to bypass even the pantomime protocols of regular politics. Rage ensued. “After he was announced, my neighbour stopped me in the hall, she was really shocked,” says Yvo Bojkov, 32, a television personality who also ran for, but failed to reach, parliament. “It was not only a thing that politically active people reacted to.”

Bulgarian politics have rarely been a **tidy** affair.

### Protesting Peevski

If Borisov has a colourful past, Mr. Peevski possesses a near-psychedelic present. Borisov may be barrel-chested, but Peevski is the whole barrel. In addition to dabbling in the dark arts (politics or organised crime, as you prefer) he owns the dominant nationwide chain of kiosk-style tobacco and newspaper shops. This is pretty much the Balkan equivalent of owning Starbucks. Peevski is married to a ridiculous turbo-folk star named Tsvetelina Yaneva and his image fairly stands-in for all that ails Bulgarian society. A typical explanation for why his appointment as top cop spurred such anger includes phrases like “in your face,” “the last drop,” “perverted” or, as the aforementioned diplomat opined, “Beyond the pale for already low standards.”

Within days, by June 19th 2013, the government had already retreated and Peevski stepped down, but the protests were already off and running. In July, demonstrators besieged parliament. In August, they followed vacationing politicians to the Black Sea coast. In October, students occupied Sofia University after the Constitutional Court ruled that while Peevski had resigned as head of state security, he could stay on as a member of parliament. The situation continued like this with the government pretending not to notice until they finally resigned a year later. While most could be considered elite, not all the protestors fit the youthful pattern.

“I was there, I’m happy young people are not apolitical anymore,” said Ekaterina Angelova, a stylish, turquoise-scarfed 76 year-old grandmother of four. She voted for Borisov who she said had the sense to “keep his dignity” and resign when he faced protests in early 2013.

Absorbing as the occasionally carnival-like atmosphere may have been at the protests that began in June 2013, and determined as the protestors were, demonstrations were largely contained to Sofia. Even at their peak, when they reached the tens of thousands, the gatherings were drawing an extreme minority of the country's seven million people – and mostly from the educated middle and upper classes. Even Angelova, for example, previously worked as a banking expert and is hardly an average senior citizen.

“It never spread enough to be able to make a real change,” said Bojkov, who initially gained fame by live streaming protests on the internet, but has since began hosting a live public affairs show on cable television. He edits some segments of the show on his iPhone.

After the most recent elections, it has become even more apparent that the protests failed to foment a larger shift in circumstances and one is left wondering what, if anything, could institute change. Venelin Ganev, a Bulgarian political scientist based at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, says that the protests are a hopeful sign and are indicative of “resistance by civil society” rare elsewhere in today's Central and Eastern Europe. There is something to this point as prolonged and committed displays of collective will in the region have largely gone the way of bread lines since 1989.

However, Bulgarians may also simply have more to be aggrieved about. Per capita GDP is about 16,000 US dollars annually, the lowest in the European Union.

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The country is also the worst performing EU member state when it comes to press freedom and ranks 100th out of 180 on the Reporters Without Borders global list, nine spots below Kuwait and three worse than Kyrgyzstan. In 77th position, Bulgaria trails non-EU Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Even as the October 2014 vote was meant to be so

consequential, it did not prove substantive. OSCE monitors concluded “there was little campaigning on issues and the media showed no interest in reporting on the elections except for in paid coverage”.

### Post-accession hooliganism

Bulgaria is among the most serious transgressors in what Ganev calls “post-accession hooliganism”, a reference to the tendency for EU candidate states to vigorously reform in pursuit membership, but revert back to old – or develop new – negative

habits once in the EU. In the Bulgarian case, Ganev refers to the “two mafias” that continue to plague the political system, “Russian money and embezzled EU money.” Indeed one of the Bulgarian electoral system’s party stalwarts, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which claims to represent the country’s Turkish minority, has turned the funnelling of EU funds into a fine art. “It is more profitable and predictable than the other option and your daughter will not be killed in the process,” Ganev said. The infamous Peevski, who is not Turkish, served two terms as an MP for the party and their skilled deployment of clientelism was good enough for 14.8 per cent of the vote in October 2014, enough to finish third and well over the Reformist Bloc’s 8.9 per cent (the Socialists finished second with 15.4 per cent).

If, as Krastev says, democratic leaders serve as stand-ins for the societies they represent, among Sofia’s young, educated elites it is hard to find doppelgangers for Borisov, let alone Peevski. Despite the utmost due diligence and conversations with dozens of Sofian urbanites, it was impossible to find a single methamphetamine trafficker or martial artist among them. In fact they more closely resemble their contemporaries elsewhere in Europe than anything that was visible on election night – though they do admittedly live in a slightly different neighbourhood than, say, Luxembourg.

“We are stuck between Putin, Erdogan and the European Union,” said Magdalina Guenova, 38, a project manager at a tech firm who writes a notable blog under the name “Nervous Shark”. She too sees no way forward for the reform-minded other than to ally with Borisov. “We are making a lot of compromises because the situation is so bad,” Guenova said.


Where those compromises will lead is difficult to say, but the results of a recent survey by the Bulgarian Industrial Association are clear. It found that 86 per cent of the country’s university students are considering relocation. For any Bulgarian hoping for an economy based on something other than remittances, this is a frightening number. It is unlikely that anywhere near a majority of these people will actually opt to leave the country, but the responses are indicative of dejection setting in. Given the apparent impossibility of influencing things via the ballot box, it is understandable. “To me there was no next time,” said Tsveta Petrushinova, a 32-year old HR manager at KPMG who frequently posts comments on politicians’ Facebook pages.

At the same time, neither age nor social class leads to differences on the list of grievances at the top of Bulgarian’s lists. There are not enough jobs and pay is not enough to cover the cost of living. Media and the judiciary are politically-charged tools for those rich and powerful and, not to mention, trashy. Then there is the ongoing scandal surrounding Corporate Commercial Bank, where both the state itself and everyday account holders saw their deposits pilfered. As much as grievances

are agreed, however, solutions remain evasive and contradictory. For example, at least one of the Reformist Bloc parties, the Bulgaria for Citizens Movement, calls for the direct election of Supreme Court judges. It is not clear how this would make the judiciary less, rather than more, political.

Malaise-fueled mass emigration for those who can appears a possibility. “Bulgaria is driven by civic disruption and government attempts to adapt,” Krastev said. “However, this civic energy has been exhausted.”

Reform fatigue, activist exhaustion and the like come at a crucial time too. Bulgaria sits at the fulcrum of geopolitics surrounding Gazprom’s proposed South Stream pipeline, giving even the most sceptical realists in the rest of the world reason to care about what happens. There are also more than a few international entrepreneurs, from Moscow and elsewhere, attempting to alter the equation by throwing money and weight around. “Some pro-Russian sentiment has always been in the country, but the new thing is disappointment with the west,” Krastev said.

After millennia, the Balkans remain a strategic crossroads between east and west. If nothing else, the potential detachment of the young and educated represents a waste of civic energy, intellect and human capital that could yet be channeled toward social good. “In Bulgaria, wasted is a synonym for stolen,” said the erstwhile parliamentary candidate Bojkov. 

Benjamin Cunningham is a Prague-based writer and journalist. He covers Central Europe for *The Economist* and also writes for *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Time* magazine and *Body*.

In 2014, he was a visiting fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna.





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# Walking the Media Tightrope

JUSTIN HYATT

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In the last few years in Hungary, political power has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the right-wing Fidesz government, causing concern on many levels of society. The field of media and journalism has not been spared the upheaval and today **many journalists have to tread carefully**, finding their work often irrelevant or succumbing to self-censorship.

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It is not so simple these days to be an independent journalist in Hungary. In the wake of the massive political and social restructuring that occurred after the right wing party Fidesz came to power in 2010, a new media law was passed by the parliament. It instituted tight controls and established a new oversight board, with wide-ranging powers to monitor all forms of media, including TV, radio, newspapers as well as commercial online journals and blogs. The media oversight board, known as the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, is composed entirely of members appointed by the ruling party and has full authority to dispense costly fines if content is deemed inappropriate or inaccurate. While these have so far not been seen on a grand scale, the threat is widely known.

To further exacerbate the situation, another legal burden, stemming from criminal and civil codes, stipulates that when the media reports on an event or relates political developments, all information must be one hundred per cent verifiable. If pressed for evidence, and any level of ambiguity is discernible, the burden lies

squarely on the shoulders of the journalist who might quickly find herself or himself on the losing side of a libel lawsuit.

### **Seeds of self-censorship**

A recent example in a small Hungarian town demonstrated the real threat of this law's application. When a local newspaper, published by a father and his son, ran a story which questioned the financial credibility of the city's mayor who was receiving large bonuses while the ledger of the town's bank account was clearly in the minus, the paper was sued for libel due to the wording of a particular sentence which, it was claimed, could not be proven. The court sided against the paper, but this was eventually overturned by the constitutional court, though only after the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU) stepped in on behalf of the accused.

A further lever of the government in the media sphere is the assignment of radio and television frequencies. The exact configuration of each frequency is of no small significance for a radio station, and if that frequency is changed or reduced in scope, that will translate into a stark decline among its listeners. One consequence of this is that radio stations will tend to stick to music and entertainment, leaving out political coverage. Another hurdle that media outlets face is the salient issue of advertising revenue. In Hungary, as anywhere else, advertising can make or break a media company. The availability or needs of advertising often feature more prominently in management discussions than actual news content.

In Hungary, the largest advertisers are either state-owned companies or large companies with close links to the state. Thus, advertising has become another possible tool of control. If a radio or TV channel carries a story with content that is uncomfortable for the government, one phone call is all that would be necessary for an advertising contract to be cancelled. This has led to a situation where a certain level of caution, compliance and self-censorship has emerged among journalists and media organisations. Therefore, the ramifications of tighter control over the media, coupled with the fear of facing sanctions, have had a greater effect than any penalties actually applied.

One of the largest media scandals in Hungary in 2014 involved the sacking of the editor-in-chief of the

If a TV channel carries a story with content **uncomfortable** for the government, one phone call is all that would be necessary for an advertising contract to be cancelled.

country's largest online news portal. The news web site *Origo* had been reporting on a major political story which involved the prominent Hungarian politician János Lázár. It was discovered that Lázár had paid large amounts of public money for a hotel room abroad. When a judge ordered him to disclose the circumstances of his foreign dealings, he balked and opted to pay retroactively out of his own pocket rather than admit the nature of his trips. In the midst of the series of the unfolding events and the ample coverage given to it, the editor-in-chief of *Origo*, Gergő Sálíng, was relieved of his duties. While no one can prove that Sálíng was fired for political reasons, nonetheless few of his colleagues had any doubts about this, and what followed was a fairly unique incident in the recent history of Hungarian media. The entire crew of *Origo's* political affairs columnists – 30 staff members – walked out on the job in solidarity with Sálíng.

This was followed by small-scale street protests in front of Magyar Telekom, which is both the parent company of *Origo* and a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom. The protests fizzled out and while several internet news portals covered the developments, *Origo* itself, with a diminished staff and compromised in its level of journalistic freedom, had almost overnight transformed its format to cover stories that had little political implication. Although the HCLU would have assisted with a lawsuit concerning the case, Sálíng himself was obliged in his release agreement not to speak out on the issues regarding his departure. Thus any chance of properly building a case was hampered from the outset.

### Behind the scenes

This was not the first time an *Origo* editor-in-chief was sent packing. A previous editor named Balázs Weyer, who led *Origo* for 13 years from its founding, was also let go in 2011. To this day Weyer admits that there were no explicit reasons communicated to him regarding his forced departure. His release did however occur around the same time that *Origo* was the main source covering the Wikileaks cables for Hungarian audiences.

A media consultant who requested that they remain anonymous shed further light on the *Origo* affair by alluding to the government's practice of installing a plant in prominent media organisations. The main objective is to ensure that the government's interests are cared for, with the key person also acting as a go-between whenever necessary. In the case of *Origo*, there was initially no such person keeping tabs from the inside. That has also changed with time and thus *Origo's* loss of autonomy is thought to be the precursor of the events which later unfolded. The experience with *Origo* has led independent actors in the realm of media to view

political and economic pressure as an intrusive bedfellow of journalism, albeit one often below the level of visibility, as the conflicts between newsroom and head office usually remain in closed quarters. The *Origo* affair seems to be the first instance where it came out in the open.

Many hope that at least one good thing has come out of this scandal: people can finally see that journalists stand up for values in a sometimes opaque media landscape. In a very direct way, the *Origo* affair also sent a message to those who hold power in the media world that attempted interference in editorial matters will not always end happily. Today, *Origo* is no longer as important of a player in the Hungarian press as it once was. The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU) is an organisation that has been monitoring developments in the media sphere and freedom of speech issues for many years. From their perspective, the *Origo* case has offered a glimpse behind the scenes of the media world. On the other hand, this exposure was still quite limited in scope, generally due to the digital divide still visible in Hungary and which primarily manifests itself in the division of city versus countryside. Those who are virtually well-connected typically live in Budapest or other large cities; while those who get their information primarily from print or TV tend to live in the countryside. For the majority of the latter, the *Origo* case is not a familiar subject.

The changing media landscape, coupled with rising levels of internet usage as well as shifting electoral allegiances, have pointed to the writing on the wall: that these worlds would eventually collide. Seemingly this is what unfolded in November of 2014, when the government had decided to introduce a new internet tax, giving way to mass street protests. While initially the plan was to charge for every uploaded or downloaded byte of traffic, it was quickly modified to include only an extra monthly flat-rate tax for individuals and companies using the internet. However, by this point it was already too late. Thus, even with a certain degree of backpedalling on the proposed tax, protestors felt they had been stung one too many times and vented their fury against the government. In some of the more visually enticing acts of protest, some citizens even threw computer monitors through the windows of the Fidesz party headquarters.

### **All about control**

At the time of this writing, the protests are still ongoing and any outcome is difficult to predict as, there are no distinct leaders. In fact, every protest has been organised by different people. Importantly, however, new patterns of protest have emerged. One blogger noted that the algorithm of typical small protests involving

speeches, clapping and then going home was broken by a series of larger gatherings, where no one really cared about the prepared speeches, and people gave free rein to their pent-up anger

One noteworthy development to come out of the protests was an intriguing declaration made by Zsolt Várady, who was one of the creators of iWiW – a Hungarian social media platform that predated Facebook. Várady revealed that he and others are currently preparing a new project aimed at providing a space and platform for those who are critical of the system, yet do not know how to make their voices heard. Várady alluded to the creation of a forum where people will be able to carry on the discussions that have started during the protests.

Réka Papp Kinga is an independent journalist and media advisor whose own theories as to why the government launched its newest and extremely unpopular tax initiative boil down to the same familiar theme: control. Since a large swath of small media outlets and independent blogs coalesce around the internet, slapping extra fees on its daily use would have a marked effect on making dissent more costly. Yet Kinga also believes that this could lead to an eventual unraveling of control, as the government's misstep goes to show that they are far from competent in digital matters.

Kinga also claims that while previously one might have spoken of oppositional media (connected to a specific opposition party) as opposed to generally non-

Parties in political  
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aligned independent media, those distinctions have now become blurred. Currently parties in political opposition to Fidesz are at a historical weak point and the government's strong hand in all sectors of society has driven a wedge in the media. As a result, media outlets will either side with the government or sound highly critical notes. There is not much space in between.

One blessing in disguise for media not aligned with the government is that they are now inundated with material to work with. This, in turn, produces results that are a lot more interesting than what is being offered by government-friendly media. Kinga and others hope that eventually the right-wing media will also get inspired to attempt reform and develop critical voices.

Indeed, there are plenty of news sources or blogs that have sprung up over the past few years to provide their own coverage of affairs that were otherwise ignored in the mainstream. Salient examples include Kettős MÉRCE (*Double Standard*) as well as *atlatszo.hu* (*transparent*) and *444.hu*. All these portals aim to include controversial stories that otherwise would not be covered. It was *444.hu* which first



Mass street protests have been taking place in Budapest, starting in November of 2014 when the government decided to introduce a new internet tax. In some of the more visually enticing acts of protest, citizens even threw computer monitors through the windows of the Fidesz party headquarters.

Photo: Bálint Kaszics



The protests in Hungary are still ongoing and any outcome is difficult to predict as there are no distinct leaders. In fact, every protest has been organised by different people.

Photo: Bálint Kaszics





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Many in Hungary hope that at least one good thing will come out of the recent media scandal: people can finally see that journalists stand up for values in a sometimes opaque media landscape.

Photo: Bálint Kaszics





reported on the political scandal that *Origo* later picked up. Also noteworthy is the fact that at the time of the protests against the internet tax, Kettős MÉRCE received an upsurge in readership, comparable to that of the well-established index.hu.

### Depressed state of affairs


It is the mainstream media, however, which provides the clearest cases for understanding the government's attempt at control. One example can be seen with RTL Klub, a German-owned TV station that, along with TV2, make up the two most popular and widely available TV stations in Hungary. Both of these stations have for years made inroads into households where the internet has never set foot. Up until recently, RTL Klub's main productions included human interest stories devoid of critical political discussion. No representative of the opposition would have ever mistaken them as an ally. All of this changed abruptly when in 2013 the government initiated a new advertisement tax (a few months before the internet tax was proposed). This law was geared especially towards large media outlets. Not surprisingly, RTL Klub felt that it was being targeted exclusively by cutting into their profits, potentially reaching 40 per cent.

In an intriguing turn of events, RTL Klub abruptly began running programmes that covered sensitive political topics and critical voices, which was a dramatic shift in their practice and stunned many media observers. Dalma Dojcsák, a specialist in freedom of speech at HCLU, concurs that it is thanks to RTL Klub that controversial topics, such as corruption, are suddenly being heard now by wider audiences in Hungary.

From HCLU viewpoint, the disturbing issue that emerges from these developments is how hastily drawn up the new laws and tax initiatives are. It has been a long-time job of the HCLU and other civil organisations to scrutinise the newly proposed laws, provide feedback, and thus advise the government and the public on the way forward. Yet, since 2010, after the sweeping changes brought in by the newly elected Fidesz government, laws are rushed through the parliament with little debate. Dojcsák laments that her organisation has lost its constructive role in the law-making process.

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Both Dojcsák and Kinga agree that while civil activism or legal action to protect the rights of consumers and citizens is important, at the same time a lot of ground

to be covered concerns the consumers, not the producers of media. The reason for such a state of affairs is probably the fact that a majority in society are not attuned to the need for an independent media, which can be linked to the often-cited political apathy of Hungarians. As political experiences have shown us worldwide, apathy may turn into anger, especially if the streets continue to be filled by a restive population. Independent journalists now see their mission more clearly than ever. They are devoted to ensuring that the general public understands why Hungarian society is in desperate need of an independent media that includes critical discussion and freedom of speech. 

Justin Hyatt is a freelance journalist based in Budapest.

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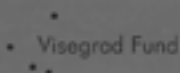
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# A Balkan-Ukrainian Palimpsest

ADAM BALCER

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Ukraine is, first and foremost, seen through the prism of its location between Russia and Poland, a country between East and West. However, the country's location by the Black Sea has contributed to its amazingly intensive and **fascinating relations with the Balkans**.

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Ukraine's relations with the Balkans date back to antiquity. They are linked to the Greek colonisation of the Ukrainian coast as well as the fact that Ukraine was a homeland for Balkan Slavs and Turkic Bulgarians who after their migration to Bulgaria underwent a process of Slavisation. In the Middle Ages, these relations evidently contributed to the Rus's acceptance of Orthodox Christianity, a religion which had originated from the Byzantine Empire. Naturally, with the introduction of the new religion, Byzantine cultural patterns were also transferred to Ukraine. They influenced all aspects of life, including art, social-political organisation and literature.

Following Christianisation, the Church Slavonic language and the Cyrillic alphabet, also originating from the Balkans, started to be used in Rus'. The Church Slavonic language, in different editions, had for centuries played the role of the main literary language of the Orthodox Slavs both in the Balkans and Rus'. Geographic proximity was the main reason why until the 19th century southern Ukraine and the Balkans had remained within the framework of one state organism – first the Roman and Byzantine Empire, then the Bulgarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the presence of the Greek, Bulgarian, Gagauzian and Albanian peoples in southern Ukraine is a reflection of the centuries-long Black Sea community

stretching between the Balkans and Ukraine. Coexistence and confrontation with the Muslim world is an extremely important link connecting both the history of Ukraine and the Balkans. This experience heavily influences these regions. Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, a founding father of Ukrainian historiography, modern statehood and political thought was, to a large extent, right when he pointed out that Ukrainians, next to Serbs and Bulgarians, are the most oriental European nation.

### **Greeks: the sons of the Roman Empire**

Among all Balkan nations, Ukrainians have the strongest historical connections with the Greeks. These are a result of the religious and cultural influences of Byzantine as well as the early Greek settlements in Ukraine. In 988, Kyivan Rus' adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Greeks. Byzantine Crimea was also the place of the baptism of Volodymir the Great, who married the sister of Basil the Porphyrogenitus, one of the most distinguished Byzantine emperors. In the following centuries, marriages between the Rurik dynasty and the Byzantine elite were not a rare practice. The Greek language was introduced as an obligatory curriculum element in elite education in Rus'.

The Greek Mount Athos, which was the centre of monasticism in the Orthodox world, was a very important place in regard to the contacts between Ukrainians and Byzantine. In the 11th century, the St Panteleimon Monastery was built there, which for a very long time became the main monastery of the whole Rus'. One of the first Ruthenians who lived on Mount Athos was the monk Anton – the founder of Pechersk Lavra monastery in Kyiv. A second important figure in Ukrainian history whose life was connected with Mount Athos was Ivan Vyshenskyi – a distinguished Ukrainian writer living at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. He rediscovered for Ukraine its name from the Middle Ages, namely Little Russia, which was originally Greek.

Since the Christening of Rus' until 1686, the Orthodox Church in Ukraine was subordinate to the Constantinople patriarchate. It subsequently fell under the auspices of the Moscow patriarch, which meant that it lost its autonomy. However, until the mid-15th century a large majority of Kyiv metropolitans were Greeks. Among the most important of these was Isidore, who was a supporter of the 15th century union with Rome. He came to Constantinople as a cardinal and papal legatus, where he introduced a brief union between the patriarchate and the Roman Catholic Church. By the end of the 16th century Greeks had already played a very important role in the development of the key Orthodoxy centre in Ostroh

(Volhynia) that was fighting against the church union propagated by the Roman Catholic Church. Dionysius Palaiologos was a Greek clergyman who participated in the creation and printing of the famous Ostroh Bible, which was the first complete edition of the Holy Scripture in the Church Slavonic language. Upon his return to the Balkans, Dionysius became an archbishop in Bulgaria and one of the leaders of the anti-Ottoman uprising. Cyril Lucaris was a lecturer at the Ostroh Academy, which at that time was the most important educational institution in Ukraine. Lucaris later became the patriarch of Constantinople. He participated in the 1596 Brest Council during which, without much success, he opposed the church union. As a patriarch he supported the Orthodox brotherhoods in Kyiv and in Lutsk. He was executed in 1638 by the Ottomans who accused him of co-operating with the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

Greek Orthodox priests often visited Ukraine in the 17th century. Their mission was to support the Orthodox Church in its conflict with the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania. Among them was the patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophanes the Third, who in 1620 was the architect of a re-establishment of the structures of the Orthodox Church which had been liquidated by the Brest Union. The Constantinople patriarchate also supported the Cossack uprisings. In 1651 when the Cossacks lost the battle of Berestechko, the most important figure among the fallen was the Greek archbishop of Peloponnese. These activities of the Greek priests were often supported by the Ottoman sultans, who were seen as patrons of the patriarchate.

The Greek colonies established along the Ukrainian shore over two and a half thousand years ago were the first cities on Ukrainian soil. It was the end of the 18th century when Tsarist Russia started to recognise these old traditions by giving Greek names to cities located in the vicinity of the Black Sea (among these were Odesa, Sevastopol, Simferopol and Kherson). Up to the 19th century the largest Greek community lived in Crimea, and in the late Middle Ages, they even created their own principality there, whose name, Theodoro, was a clear reference to the Byzantine tradition. The principality was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1475 and, consequently, it went down history as the last but – at the same time – the least known Byzantine state.

Greeks were trade intermediaries between Ukraine and the Ottoman Empire. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Greek merchants settled on the trade route that led through Podolia to Crimea. Constantine Korniake who during that period settled in Lviv was the most important among them. Korniake became one of the wealthiest inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, to the point that even the Polish king, Sigismund Augustus the Second, would borrow money from him. Korniake funded buildings which became symbols of Lviv. They included the tower of the Assumption Church and the Korniake Palace, which is the most beau-

tiful example of Renaissance architecture in Ukraine. After the Russian conquest of Crimea, the Greeks were relocated to the areas near the Sea of Azov, especially in the surroundings of Mariupol, a city where for some time they had enjoyed autonomy. At that time another wave of Greek immigrants from the Ottoman Empire settled in the cities on the Black Sea shore, with quite a large settlement established in Odesa. It was inhabited mainly by traders who clearly contributed to the development of the city. In 1814 the independence organisation, *Filiki Eteria* Association of Friends was created in Odesa. Its activists greatly contributed to the launch and success of the 1821 uprising which resulted in an independent Greece.

### Highway exit

Ukrainian open plains are part of the Great Steppe which stretches from the Carpathians to Manchuria. It acted like a highway exit for the nomadic people (including the Bulgarians) migrating to Europe. As a result Bulgarians, before they settled in the Balkans in the 7th century, had created their own state on Ukrainian soil. This was conquered by other nomads – the Khazars – who expelled the Bulgarians to the Balkans. However, the Bulgarian state established in the Balkans did not give up its aspirations regarding the steppe of southern Ukraine. In the 9th and 10th centuries Bulgaria, at the peak of its power, had stretched all the way to the Dnieper River. The area of Budzhak located between the Dnieper and the Prut was for a significant time under Bulgarian control, where it remained from the 12th to the 14th centuries, during the period of the second empire. A few centuries later, this region became a new homeland for Bulgarian refugees. At the turn of the 18th and the 19th centuries they escaped from Bulgaria, fearing Turkish repression for their support towards Russian military forces fighting with the Ottoman Turks.

In the 12th and the 13th centuries new nomadic waves reached Bulgaria, this time in the form of the Polovtsi, who were also known as the Cumans. These were, for two centuries, variously fighting and co-operating with Ukrainians. They would enter into many inter-dynastic marriages, trade and fight with common enemies or engage in domestic wars on the other side of the border.

The Ottomans, on the other hand, were gradually welding Budzhak, Yedisian (comprised of areas between the Dniester and the Dnieper) and north-eastern Bulgaria into one province of Silistria, with Ukrainian Ochakiv becoming its capital. It was not an accident that in the 19th century the Crimean Tatars were migrating or escaping in large numbers to Dobruja. Some of the Tatars from Dobruja, like Mehmet Niyazi, played a key role in the Tatar national movement in Crimea in the first half of the 20th century.

The direction of expansion was not limited solely to the route from the Balkans to Ukraine. In the 9th and 10th century the rulers of Rus', the Varangians, were making regular looting expeditions to Bulgarian shores. By the end of the 10th century Sviatoslav, the Prince of Rus', had even conquered the Danube mouth and tried, without much success, to establish a state on Bulgarian territory. In the 16th and the 17th centuries the steps of the Varangians were followed by the Cossacks who on many occasions looted the Bulgarian coast.

Religious relations between Bulgarians and Ukrainians were almost as intense as the relations Ukrainians had with the Greeks. First of all, it was in Bulgaria where the Cyrillic alphabet and the Old Church Slavonic language based on the Old Bulgarian language were created. Until the mid-15th century four of Kyiv's metropolitans were Bulgarian. Two of them, Cyril and Gregory Tsamblak, were the main representatives of the Tarnovo Literary School, one of the most important cultural phenomena of Bulgaria in the late Middle Ages. They both transferred the ideas of this school into Ukraine.

Between the 15th and the 19th centuries, the territory of Bulgaria was for the most part subordinate to the Constantinople patriarchate. This led to a greater Hellenisation of the Bulgarian elite and, as a result, a weakening of Bulgarian-Ukrainian ties. They experienced a revival in the 19th century along with the development of the modern national identities of both nations and a mass migration of Bulgarians to Ukraine. Yuriy Venelin, who came from Carpathian Ruthenia and who was best known for his research on Bulgaria, had a great impact on the development of the Bulgarian national identity. In 1829 he published his opus vitae titled *Ancient and Modern Bulgarians' Political, Ethnographic, Historical and Religious Relations with Russians*.

This contributed to the "discovery" of the Bulgarian identity among the young intelligentsia that had previously been strongly influenced by Greek culture. This experience was described by Vasil Aprilov, a Bulgarian activist of the first half of the 19th century who for many years lived in Odesa. Especially important for the tightening of ties between the Bulgarians and Ukraine was the migration of tens of thousands of Bulgarians and Gagauzians to Budzhak, the coast of the Azov Sea, Crimea and Odesa. Bulgarians from Budzhak are often called Bessarabians, which is a clear reference to the historical land that includes Budzhak and the territory of Moldova between the Dniester and the Prut. On the other hand, the Bulgarians living by the Azov Sea and in Crimea were called the Taurian Bulgarians, which is a reference to Tauris, the ancient name of Crimea and later the Tsarist governorate. Today, in Ukraine there are around 200,000 Bulgarians (by comparison, in Bulgaria there are over five million Bulgarians) and over 30,000 Gagauzians. Bulgarians from Budzhak played a very important role in the history of Bulgaria

in the first half of the 19th century, comparable to the role played by Galicia for Poles and Ukrainians.

A few Bulgarians from Budzhak provided significant input into the creation of modern Bulgaria. Among them was Aleksandar Mailinov, who graduated from university in Kyiv. In the first half of the 20th century Mailinov was one of the most important Bulgarian politicians. He served as prime minister for five terms and was also the speaker of the parliament. He was head of the Democratic Party, one of the most important parties in the history of Bulgaria. Among other prominent Bulgarians who came from Budzhak we should mention also General Danial Nikolayev, a long-term minister of defence. His key role in the building of military forces in Bulgaria at the turn of the 19th and 20th century is the reason why he gained the nickname “the patriarch of the Bulgarian army”. During the very same period the famous linguist Aleksander Teodorov, a Bessarabian Bulgarian, became the first rector of the university in Sofia.

Nonetheless, educational relations between Bulgarians and Ukrainians were not solely limited to the influence of Budzhak on Odesa and Bulgaria. By the end of the 19th century Mykhailo Drahomanov, a famous Ukrainian historian and politician, lived for almost seven years in Sofia where he was involved in politics and lectured at the university. From the early days of his professional career, Drahomanov was interested in the Balkans. He regarded the Slavic nations as natural allies of the Ukrainians. His aim was to convince the Bulgarians and the Serbs that the authoritarian Tsarist Russia treated them instrumentally as a tool of expansion.

### **Serbian ties**

Ukrainian-Serbian relations date back to antiquity and just as in the case of Ukrainian-Bulgarian relations, they are based on linguistic, cultural and religious communities. The Serbs adopted Eastern Orthodoxy at the turn of the 12th and 13th century. As a result, Ukrainians had a greater impact on the Serbs than the other way round. In the 12th and 13th centuries it was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet that had already been shaped under the influence of the Ruthenian alphabet. Ukrainian-Serbian relations intensified in the first half of the 16th century in the framework of a united Jagiellonian dynasty of Central and Eastern Europe. At that time, Serbian princely dynasties (Berislavić, Branković) who came from southern Hungary (an autonomous Serbian region, today Vojvodina, a province in Serbia) often entered into marriages with aristocratic families from Ukraine.

In the 18th century, Ukrainians were being seen as a window to the West for Orthodox Serbs. At that time, Ukrainian instructors from the Myhola Academy



arrived in Vojvodina and implemented the reforms which modernised the Serbian educational system. The most notable of these was Emanuel Kozachynski, who established the first theatre in Serbia and was the first playwright in the history of Serbian literature. The new literary language, known as the Slavonic-Serbian language, a mixture of Ruthenian and Serbian versions of the Old Church Slavonic language with elements of colloquial Serbian, also took shape under Ukrainian influence. Until the 1860's, Slavonic-Serbian played the role of the official language of high culture for Serbs. The latter, inspired by the term Slav-Russians/Ruthenians coined at the end of the 17th century in Kyiv, also adopted the name Slav-Serbs for themselves. It appeared for the first time in *Synopsis*, a very important historical work. It had a revolutionary character as it treated inhabitants of Ukraine and Russia as one nation, existing through the ages, in spite of it having two religious and political capitals – Kyiv and Moscow. The leitmotif of *Synopsis* was a hard-hitting confrontation with Islam and the Ottoman Empire. *Synopsis*, by promoting the idea of an anti-Islam crusade, had to refer also to Pan-Slavism, which is why the term Slav-Russians, describing all Slavs was created. Such a message was attractive to Serbs at that time as an ideological justification for the fight against Muslims. What is more, *Synopsis* linked, within the Serbian nationalism, an antipathy to Islam with the idea of the unity of all.

The most important student of Kozachynski was Jovan Rajić a famous historian who continued his studies at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy. At that time Kyiv was the most popular destination for Serbs to study abroad. Rajić was the author of a monumental work titled *The History of Various Slavic Peoples, especially Bulgars, Croats and Serbs*. Another prominent Serb who arrived in Ukraine in the 18th century was Sava Raguzinsky, who served as a diplomat for hetman Ivan Mazepa. However, when Mazepa rebelled against Russia, Raguzinsky joined the side of Tsar Peter the Great, an act for which he was rewarded with land ownership in Ukraine. In 1722

In the 17th century, Kyiv became the most popular **destination** for Serbs to study abroad.

Raguzinsky translated into Russian the key work of proto-Yugoslavism entitled *The Realm of the Slavs* and written by Mavro Orbini in the early 17th century. The introduction to this translation was written by Theophan Prokopovich, an Orthodox archbishop from Kyiv and rector of the Mohyla Academy. He was the most important advisor to Peter the Great on church reform and one of the founders of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Prokopovich is regarded as the father of the idea of Russians as a trinity nation comprised of three elements: Ruthenians (Russians), Malorussians (Ukrainians) and Belarusians. The book described the legendary powerful state of Slavs which united Slavic tribes under one state identity. For

Prokopovich it was a source of inspiration for his idea of there being one common identity of Eastern Slavs. Prokopovich was an inspiration for Dimitrije “Dositej” Obradović, the most important Serbian Enlightenment thinker.

Serbs did not go to Ukraine solely to study. In the middle of the 18th century in Ukraine two large Serbian military colonies were established: Slavo-Serbia in today’s Donbas and Nova Serbia near Kirovohrad. Their inhabitants came mostly from Vojvodina and the neighbouring Croatian Slavonia. They gradually underwent assimilation, leaving behind traces of Serbian surnames and names of different localities that can be found throughout the area to the present day.

At the same time, the regions from which these Serbs originated became inhabited by colonists from Carpathian Ruthenia and, to a lesser extent, Galicia and Bukovina. Today some of them consider themselves Ukrainians while others consider themselves Ruthenians. The language of the latter is very similar to Ukrainian and is one of the six official languages of Vojvodina. These migrations were linked by having the same genesis: the settling of an “empty” land which had been taken away from the Turks by the Habsburgs and Romanovs. The Habsburgs continued this colonisation policy in the Balkans after taking over Bosnia in 1878, when nearly 10,000 Ukrainians, mainly from Galicia, settled there. In the 19th century the dynamic development of Serbian national identity became an inspiration for the weaker Ukrainian national movement. In the 1870s Drahomanov created a new Cyrillic alphabet for the Ukrainian language, which was called drahomanivka, or hercegovinka in reference to the Hercegovina region, a place where the most well-known Serbian linguist, Vuk Karadžić, came from. Eventually, Drahomanivka was not adopted but it was used by, for example, Ivan Franko, one of the most famous writers in the history of Ukraine. That is why we can see it even today on the 20 hryvna banknote, which also includes a picture of the poet.

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### Common elements

Ukrainian-Albanian relations generate, at first glance, the greatest surprise. However they are not as weak as they may seem. In fact, there are several dimensions: Moldovan, colonial, highlander and Muslim. Moldova has had relations not only with Greek culture, but also through it with Orthodox Albanians who lived in the

sphere of the latter. Some of the most well-known Moldovan rulers were actually Albanians. Among them, the most important was Vasile Lupu, Moldova's prince from 1634 to 1653. His biography is closely linked to the history of Ukraine. His family came from Epirus, a Greek-Albanian borderland. As a result, Lupu spoke perfect Greek. He himself was born in the village of Arbansi (literally Albanians) in north-eastern Bulgaria. Lupu was an ally of the hetman Bohdan Chmielnicki (Bohdan Khmelnytsky). His daughter was married to Timophiei, the son of a hetman. The latter died in Moldova supporting his father-in-law who was fighting against a rebellion of his political opponents. Lupu founded an academy and, next to it, the first printing house in Moldova. His academy was based on the model of Kyiv's Mohyla Academy. Lupu was also the founder of St. Paraskeva Church, one of the most important Eastern Orthodox churches in Lviv.

In the early 19th century, Orthodox Albanians living in north-eastern Bulgaria emigrated, together with Bulgarians and Gagauzians, to Budhzak and Odesa. To the present day, there are Albanian villages in Budhzak. Bishop Fan Noli, who was one of the most important activists of the Albanian national movement in the 20th century and a reformist prime minister in the interwar period, served there as a priest. The Albanian nature of that community was presented in the stories of Milto Sotir-Gurra who, for several years, lived in Odesa and who was one of the most important Albanian writers of the interwar period.


Ukrainian-Albanian relations were also a spin-off of the role of the Carpathians as a bridge connecting Central Europe with the Balkans. It was via the Carpathians that the Roman shepherds (the Vlachs) wandered through, gradually undergoing Ruthenisation by mixing with the Slavs. Their successors are the Hutsuls, Lemkos and the Boykos. Their culture shows many common elements with Balkan highlanders. Before the migrations, the Vlachs lived in symbiosis with Albanian shepherds in the Balkans. Both peoples influenced one another, while different borrowings from Albanians came with the Vlachs to Ukraine. The name of the mountain range Bieszczady, for example, probably comes from Albanian and means "sheep meadows".

Ukrainian-Albanian relations were built via the Carpathians, which was a bridge connecting Central Europe with the Balkans.

Ukrainian-Albanian relations also developed in the framework of the Muslim elite of the Ottoman Empire. Albanians were clearly over-represented among the Ottoman civil and military servants. In the second half of the 17th century a key role in the reform and the subsequent wave of expansion of the Ottoman Empire was played by Köprülü – an Albanian dynasty of great viziers. They came to power thanks to Turhan Valide Sultan, the mother of the sultan who was Ukrainian, tak-

ing over the office when the state found itself in serious crisis. At that time, the sultans' mothers had a great influence on the Ottoman court. Two of the most powerful were Ukrainian and they had a knack for personal politics. In the 16th century Hurrem, known in Europe as Roksolana, the (Ruthenian) wife of Suleiman the Magnificent, the greatest Ottoman sultan, was one of the most important Ukrainian women in world history – he made her son-in-law Rüstem Pasha, a Croat who converted to Islam, a great vizier. He was one of the most successful viziers in the history of the empire.

At times relations between Albania and Ukraine took on quite an astonishing nature. The author of the music to the Albanian national anthem was the most well-known Romanian composer of the 19th century, Ciprian Porumbescu. Porumbescu was born in the Ukrainian part of Bukovina; his surname was Gołęmbiowski. As an adult he literally translated it into Romanian. His father, an Orthodox priest, taught at a secondary school in Lviv.

In 2013 the Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe published a book in which Iza Chruślińska interviews the famous Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko. The title of the book is *Ukrainian Palimpsest*. The titled word palimpsest means, metaphorically, a phrase that has many meanings and multi-level semantics. Such, in Zabuzhko's view, is the Ukrainian culture. The same can be said about Ukrainian-Balkan relations, which resemble a complex network. 

*Translated by Iwona Reichardt*

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# The Stronger One Wins the Day

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A conversation with **Zdzisław Najder**, Polish literary historian, critic, political activist, and head of the Polish-language section of Radio Free Europe from 1982 to 1987. Interviewer: Grzegorz Nurek

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**GRZEGORZ NUREK:** What are your first memories of listening to Radio Free Europe?

**ZDZISŁAW NAJDER:** As a matter of fact, I am not a very regular radio listener. From birth, I have had pretty bad hearing. I am more of a visual person; I connect to the world through writing rather than sound. That is why for me radio was less important as a source of information. I listened to it, but only when particularly dramatic events were taking place and I mostly listened to the BBC. But I had heard about Radio Free Europe, especially the bombshell confessions of Józef Światło on the world of the secret services and policy-making in communist Poland. When the strike broke out at the Gdańsk shipyard in 1980, I learnt about it also from the BBC. I then got into my car and headed to Gdańsk.

Radio Free Europe became important to me when I got involved in politics. In

1975 I formed an anti-communist organisation called the Polish Independence Agreement (PPN: Polskie Porozumienie Niepodległościowe). That was when I realised that Radio Free Europe was an important source of information about Poland. Voice of America, on its part, was dealing with topics generally related to the United States. For Radio Free Europe the focus was much more on Poland. There were even rumours that the top party apparatchiks listened to Radio Free Europe to learn what was going on in their own country as well as within the communist party. There was a story about Józef Cyrankiewicz, then the prime minister of Poland, who was approached on the stairs of the Central Committee building by a seamstress who had heard on the radio that a button had fallen off his suit.

With my colleagues from PPN we wrote a paper evaluating Radio Free Eu-

rope broadcasts. It was quite critical and addressed to only two people: Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, who at that time was the head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and Jerzy Giedroyc, the editor-in-chief of Paris-based *Kultura*. This paper was published only after 1989. It was mostly the work of Jan Józef Szczepański, but others had also provided their input. The main thesis was that Radio Free Europe had great potential and much better use could be made of it. We argued that the radio could be more informative and less opinionated; by that time in Poland we had known that communism was a bad thing. We also noted that the radio did not provide enough information on the political situation in the West, the process of European integration, or Polish-German relations. These were serious weaknesses of the radio.

When I became the head of the Polish-language section of Radio Free Europe in 1982, we started broadcasting on European integration. I also noticed that at its beginning Radio Free Europe frequently referred to the Polish government in exile, but later it was as if this topic evaporated. That was one of the exact goals of the communists in Warsaw – to present the London-based Polish government as irrelevant and superficial.

In your critical analysis you also accused Radio Free Europe of not covering the situation of the millions of people living in the Soviet Union such as Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Estonians or Russians...

Yes, but not only that. There was also too little coverage of the situation of the Polish diaspora in the East. I changed that as soon as I became director.

In 1983 a military court in Poland sentenced you to death in absentia under charges of espionage. "Taking into account the generally known fact that Radio Free Europe is an organisation subordinated to the intelligence services of the United States and that all previous directors of the RFE Polish section have been career intelligence officers, an investigation of Zdzisław Najder was initiated," the court stated its justification. The reversal of the sentence became possible only after 1989.

It was indeed a sensation when I became director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe. It was the first time that someone from behind the Iron Curtain with broad academic and political experience was assigned to this position. This is why the communist government in Poland wanted to punish me. I was sentenced to death in absentia, disenfranchised and all my property in Poland was confiscated by the state.

I am rather astonished by the attitude towards the radio presented by some prominent Americans of that time. For example, Senator James William Fulbright, famous for his efforts to establish an international exchange programme with scholars from our region, saw no point in the existence of Radio Free Europe.

Fulbright was a supporter of open dialogue. He thought that political ten-



sions would disappear if we stopped positioning ourselves as the enemy of communism. He thought that it would be easier to “civilise” the communists this way. However, it was a naive perception of reality.

Radio Free Europe was an American institution and, even if indirectly, it depended on the mood of the influential circles in Washington. And those were often divided. The US Department of Defense was always ideologically stronger than the State Department which was more willing to negotiate and use diplomatic means to pursue its goals. Attitudes towards the radio also depended heavily on certain presidents and their advisors. The greatest support for Radio Free Europe did not come from Ronald Reagan but from Jimmy Carter as his foreign policy advisor was Zbigniew Brzezinski who knew very well how important Radio Free Europe was and wanted it to be less dependent on the will of American diplomats.

In 1981 I was in the United States on a scholarship sponsored by the State Department. I was working on a book on William Faulkner. For a month, I travelled all around the United States following Faulkner’s trails. It was truly fascinating, though unfortunately I never finished the book. At the end of my scholarship, I was invited to Washington for a meeting at the State Department. Around 20 people listened to me speak about Poland and the situation of the Solidarity movement. Then I said to them: “I hope you all are thinking about what will happen

when one day the Soviet Union collapses.” They looked at me with complete bafflement. One of diplomats at the meeting explained to me how silly I sounded. “The Soviet Union has existed and will continue to exist,” he said. We later met again after many years and he was quite ashamed of his words. But back then officials at the State Department really could not imagine that the Soviet Union could collapse one day.

**What was the most exciting political event that took place during your five years as the director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe?**

First of all let me say this: the situation in Poland changed radically in 1976 when opposition within the system emerged and the Workers’ Defence Committee (KOR: Komitet Obrony Robotników) was established. This organisation was a child of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. However, for Polish émigré circles the role of the Accords was controversial. Giedroyc, for example, distanced himself from it. For those of us who supported the Accords they were a success as the communists agreed that they would not arrest anyone for more than 48 hours without a trial. We perceived this as a step towards civilised rules, which were better than no rules at all.

Without a doubt, the most important political event that took place during my time at Radio Free Europe was the imposition of martial law in Poland and its social consequences. The period of martial law destroyed the dreams of

many Poles. Thousands of my compatriots emigrated and the country suffered a severe demographic loss. In essence, martial law broke the backbone of Polish society. Oppositionists were cynically offered a one-way ticket abroad and if they stayed in Poland they had two choices: either agree to cooperate with the Secret Service or face imprisonment. Sometimes all three ways were used to break the dissidents. It was a time of demoralisation.

The first years of Radio Free Europe are not widely known nor are the different languages the radio was broadcasting in. Let me recall some data: the first broadcasts were prepared in 1950 in Romanian, Czech and Slovak, then in Polish, Bulgarian and Hungarian and, from 1951, in Albanian as well. Clearly, it was impossible to maintain a radio signal behind the Iron Curtain without American financial support. Thus, the first broadcasts were recorded in New York and transmitters were primarily placed in American military bases in Germany.

“American support” is a euphemism. Without money from the US we simply could not operate. Back then, American embassies had large cultural sections where we could get valuable books and have access to libraries. The CIA also financed many magazines in Paris, London and Vienna. Keep in mind, however, that these were not propaganda materials, but truly cultural journals. Of course, the fact that the headquarters of Radio Free Europe was based in West Germany made it an easy target for communist

propaganda. For Americans, however, it was clear that the closer to the Iron Curtain we were, the stronger our signal could be. It was also cheaper to base everything in Europe than the US. On the other side of the curtain, however, Soviet propaganda, as well as the propaganda of other communist states, loudly declared that the enemy is broadcasting from the territory of Nazi Germany.

That is quite ironic given the fact that, for example, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, director of the Polish Section of Radio Free Europe from 1951 to 1976, had worked during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising with the radio station “Błyskawica” (“The Lightning”) which had been set up by the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa), an organisation that Jeziorański himself was a member of.

That is true indeed as also is the fact that the first team of Radio Free Europe was very professional.

The communists made attempts to kidnap first Jan Nowak-Jeziorański and, later, you. Can you tell me a little more about what this attempt was like in your case?

I had to go to Berlin for some specialist treatment related to my eye cancer. This trip required a special permit from the Americans. I had to watch out, be extremely careful and cautious. As far as I know, my kidnapping was planned twice: once in Sweden and once when I was supposed to be taken to East Germany. There was even a special glade cut through the forest at the German border to smuggle me through. The kidnapping

was designed by the Polish Secret Service but the Soviets put a stop to the plans. Probably they did not want to make too much noise in the West.

There are different data showing that at peak moments as much as 60 per cent of the Polish population listened to Radio Free Europe. Under the leadership of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, the Polish section of Radio Free Europe employed more than 100 people. What was this institution like when you worked there?

I am not a historian and I was never into the history of Radio Free Europe so I do not know all the data. However, I can tell you that when I was the director of the Polish section, around 100 people worked there as well. What is more interesting, however, is that there was no co-operation between the different national sections of the radio. When I noticed that the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian sections belonged to Radio Liberty (Radio Svoboda), which was addressed mainly to the inhabitants of the Soviet Union, I wrote to the front office that such a division was senseless because the US had never recognised the annexation of the Baltic states. As a result, those sections were moved to Radio Free Europe. But it was done quietly, so as not to provoke the Russians.

In 2014, we celebrated 100 years of the birth of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, and this year in 2015 we commemorate the tenth anniversary of his death. How would you characterise your relationship with this man



Photo: Michał Józefaciuk (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

Zdzisław Najder was head of the Polish-language section of Radio Free Europe from 1982 to 1987.

who for the long 90 years of his life indeed did a great deal for Poland? You worked with him for some time but I also heard that you two often disagreed with each other. However, to my knowledge it was also thanks to you that Nowak-Jeziorański changed his mind on such an issue as the US intervention in Iraq.

Well, we had to agree on many things since it was Nowak who strongly encouraged me to take the position of the director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe. He also supported me later, when I took the office. We both had some

problems with the staff. The editorial office was sunk into arguments and the employees were capricious. It was even more difficult to manage our section when Germany introduced new labour laws which stated that the only reason for an employee's dismissal could be an offence such as drinking alcohol on duty. The editorial team was isolated and had, in fact, zero contact with the audience. It was not a healthy atmosphere. Also the general quality of broadcasting was going down. And on top of that, these tensions were exploited by agents of the communist secret services.

Could we say that you were more critical towards the Americans than Nowak?

It depended. At the beginning, Nowak was also critical, but he later realised that it was in Polish interests to protect the institution, to discuss things and make concessions. I was quite rebellious towards the Americans. When they hired me it was a partnership-based deal so I thought that the moods or feelings in the State Department were not my concern. Between 1986 and 1987 the State Department put a lot of pressure on Radio Free Europe because they wanted to pursue a softer policy towards communist Poland. My position as director became an inconvenience for Americans. In addition, when American diplomats were visiting Warsaw, they would often hear from their Polish counterparts the following words: "You have a criminal down there, in Radio Free Europe, who was sentenced to death by Polish courts."

Both Americans and Poles wanted me out. I decided to resign, but I did not want the whole section to suffer because of me. After one year, Radio Free Europe asked me to provide commentaries on a weekly basis.

Coming back to Nowak-Jeziorański, no one questions his difficult personality. But we all agree that he has done a lot of good for Poland; first as an emissary of the Polish government in exile during the Second World War, then as the director of the Polish section of the BBC and later Radio Free Europe; finally as a pro-Polish lobbyist in the U.S. Also, Radio Free Europe's broadcasts about Józef Światło, a high-ranking official of Ministry of Public Security in communist Poland who was known for supervising the torture of inmates and who, in 1953, fled to West Berlin, became a great success mostly thanks to Nowak.

The Americans were initially blocking access to Światło because they were afraid his defection was a communist provocation. Among Polish émigré circles there were also opinions that Radio Free Europe should not give voice to someone like Światło, who was famous for brutal investigations. But Nowak-Jeziorański was stubborn, he said it did not matter who was talking about it, for him it was important to go public with what was happening behind the scenes of communist Poland.

Nowak was a great patriot, a very hard-working man and he deserved respect, no matter what our views about him are. And no one doubts it. The dif-

ferences between us were twofold. I thought it was necessary to strongly oppose the Americans when they pressured journalists. We had also different opinions on Polish attitudes towards international affairs. Nowak could never really understand the importance of European integration and the Polish-German reconciliation. To me, these things were absolutely crucial. I have an impression that until his death Nowak believed that Germany was a threat to Poland. In my view, on the other hand, Germany is a key partner for Poland to overcome threats. I even once wrote that there is no free Poland without a united Germany, and that integration with the EU would be the best protection for Poland. Nowak perceived the US more as a guarantor of Polish security.

Later in life, we seriously differed on Polish engagement in Iraq. I thought it was pointless. And at first he criticised me for that but years later he agreed with me. In any case, when the war started, almost everyone in Poland supported it. There were just a very few politicians who were opposed to it from the beginning. There was, of course, vocal criticism expressed by Pope John Paul the Second, but nobody listened to him. In the Polish Sejm Jarosław Kaczyński even declared that "This is our war!"

Since 1995 the headquarters of Radio Free Europe have been based in Prague. Nowadays the station's broadcasts may play an important role in such countries as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan. Are you

interested in the radio's current activity or is it a closed chapter in your life?

I do not have time now to follow it. Times are different; radio has become much less important than other media such as television or the internet.

But looking at authoritarian states like Belarus, it seems that it is still important to reach their societies and spread independent information. Radio Free Europe and similar institutions are still needed.


Yes, and there are TV and radio stations even operating from Poland which broadcast in the Belarusian language: The television station Belsat and the radio station Racja. When they were being established I was actually more a supporter of strengthening the signal of Polish television than creating separate national channels, but this was impossible mainly for financial reasons. Russia remains a problem with its media totally dominated by government propaganda. It has a wide territory, almost completely closed to free and independent information.

This is why so many commentators stress the necessity of democratic changes in Ukraine. If it succeeds, it could be a role-model for its neighbours, Belarus and Russia included.

Ukraine is searching now for an independent voice that is not culturally subordinated to Russia. But the Euro-Maidan is not enough. Poles were under three partitions for many years, but they basically had one vision of their future

state. Ukrainians have one enemy, but it is more difficult for them to imagine a united Ukrainian state. Ukraine's east is different from its west. We need to let Ukrainians define themselves. I hear voices complaining that Poland is not taking part in multilateral negotiations on Ukraine but we have already said what we needed to say: we support an independent Ukraine and we advocate

for Ukraine's democratic efforts. We also do not have the means to influence the EU to provide Ukraine with more help against Russian domination.

In the East, it is still a different world. There it is plain and simple: the stronger party wins the day. In the EU, pure strength is balanced by rules and laws. The sad thing is that the EU is weak and it is not united on the Ukrainian issue. 

*Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski*

Zdzisław Najder is a Polish literary historian, critic, political activist and member of the editorial board of *New Eastern Europe*. Between 1982 and 1987 he served as the head of the Polish-language section of Radio Free Europe.

Grzegorz Nurek is a journalist who regularly contributes to *New Eastern Europe*.



# Latvia's Female Powerhouses

GRZEGORZ SZOPIŃSKI

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Unlike in many other European countries, the **tradition of women having a strong role in the society** has a long history in Latvia. Today, this role is exemplified by the number of high positions women hold in the country's public life. In fact, Latvia is among the very few European states which have already had both a female president and prime minister.

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Latvia, a small and sparsely-populated country somewhere on the north-eastern periphery of the European Union, is not often an object of interest in the global media. More than 50 per cent of the state's area is covered by forests with a coastline almost the same length as Poland's – a country that is five times larger than Latvia. Life here has its own rhythm and is definitely close to nature. Even Riga, the capital of the country inhabited by almost half of the Latvian population and probably the most metropolitan capital of all the three Baltic states, does not seem like a typical European capital. Full of parks, wooden architecture and houses with gardens, Riga guarantees a quiet, comfortable life, which today is almost impossible to find in any big European city.

There is, however, one specific characteristic that positively distinguishes Latvia from other European countries. This idiosyncrasy is the active role of women in politics. And, as we will later see, it is not limited to modern times.

## Unusually high position

Powerful goddesses, such as Mara, who was the faithful companion of the highest god Dievs, Saulē, the goddess of the sun, and Laima, the goddess of fate and fertility, were popular heroines of old Latvian myths. Respect towards women was also paid in Latvian folk songs and poems, called *dainas*, in which a woman was, first and foremost, presented as a mother giving new life and determining the fate of a newly born child. *Dainas* also presented the woman at the moment of death, as a mother of the grave, the earth or soil.

The unusually high position that women enjoyed among Latvians could not yet be easily seen on the surface. It was somewhat hidden in the society as for centuries Latvia was dominated and governed by others: the Germans, first represented by the knights of the Brotherhood of the Sword and later by the noblemen of the Duchy of Courland, then the Poles, the Swedes and, finally, the Russians. In 1918, in the aftermath of the First World War, Latvia became an independent country. Independence, however, did not last long. In the summer of 1940, the country was occupied by the Soviet Union and submerged for half a century within its structures as the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic.

On November 18th 1918, with the proclamation of the first independent Republic of Latvia, Latvian women obtained the right to vote. Exactly one month later, on December 18th, they were legally entitled to run in elections. Latvia then found itself – together with Poland – in the group of the most advanced countries

In 1918 Latvia was one of the most advanced countries in the world regarding the implementation of women's rights.

in the world regarding the implementation of women's rights. Characteristically, quite soon Latvian women showed that they were able to actively use their rights. Even though in the 1920 elections to the Latvian Constituent Assembly the Women's Union – a movement declaring itself as feminist – was able to gain only 0.1 per cent of support and zero mandates, some well-known and respected women became engines of other popular political parties.

Among them was Elza Piekšane (better known as Aspazija) of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party (LSDSP). At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Aspazija was one of the most famous Latvian poets and playwrights and was widely known for her active participation in the women's emancipation movement. Aspazija, who in Poland is remembered as the talented translator of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* into Latvian, was the wife of Janis Rainis, also a well-known poet, playwright and politician. Throughout her life Aspazija was actively engaged in politics, being elected to all subsequent Latvian parliaments through to 1934.

Another female leader of the Social Democrats and the winner of the 1920 elections was Klāra Kalniņa. As a member of the party's Central Committee Kalniņa was an eloquent defender of women's rights.

From 1920 to 1922 five of the 150 seats in the Latvian Constitutional Assembly were occupied by women. In elections to the following four Saeimas (Latvian parliament) in 1922, 1925, 1928 and 1931, with the exception of Aspazija, only one other woman found herself at the core of Latvian politics. This woman was Berta Pipiņa, president of the Women's Union, who was elected to the Saeimas in 1931. Yet even this short period of success came to an end when Kārlis Ulmanis, the first Latvian prime minister and leader of the conservative Latvian Farmers Union, carried out a successful coup d'état in March 1934 and on May 7th of the same year introduced martial law, dissolving parliament and all political parties. The country was then transformed into an authoritarian dictatorship with an omnipresent cult of the leader and the promotion of traditional values – interpreted in a typical patriarchal manner even though, as stated before, in Latvia there had been a long tradition of respect towards women's role in the society.

### **Impressive careers**

On May 4th 1990, taking the opportunity of the surprisingly dynamic collapse of the communist bloc in Central Europe and the significant weakness of the Soviet Union, the Supreme Council of the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic declared a restoration of the country's independence. Although Moscow did not want to accept this move (which was most evident on the “day of the barricade” as the tragic events that took place in Riga in January 1991, when the OMON forces unsuccessfully tried to regain control of the country, came to be known), the new Latvian authorities managed to carry out a referendum in March during which 74 per cent of voters supported the re-establishment of Latvian statehood. The Soviet Union eventually accepted the independence of its former republic, which became reality after the failure of the communist coup d'état on September 6th 1991.

During the Soviet period it was declared that women in Latvia, as throughout the whole of the USSR, enjoyed all civil rights. With the restoration of the democratic system, which also meant a reintroduction of the rule of law and real respect for human rights, women's rights were also theoretically maintained. And indeed, in the very first years of Latvia's independence it was already clear that the number of female politicians elected to the Seimas was increasing year by year: in the years 1990–1993 women accounted for five per cent of all parliamentarians (10 out of 200), while in the 5th Saeima (1995–1998) this number increased to 15 per cent.

A record was set in the 11th Saeima (2011–2014) where women occupied 25 per cent of all seats.

In Latvia women not only vote on bills but are also leaders of the legislative branch. In fact, since 1990 four women have already held the position of Speaker of Parliament. They include: Ilga Kreituse (1995–1996); Ingrida Ūdre (2002–2006); Solvita Ābolīņa (2010–2014), who is also the leader of the most popular party amongst Latvian-speaking citizens of the country – Vienotība (Unity); and Inara Murniece from the National Alliance, who is the current Speaker and has held this position since November 6th 2014.

Women are also active in the executive branch – the majority of cabinets governing the country in the last 24 years have had women members. Women have

Over the last  
24 years **women**  
have held ministerial  
positions more than  
50 times in Latvia.

held ministerial positions more than 50 times, being at least once in charge of almost all of the ministries. Some of them are genuine powerhouses who have had impressive careers.

Powerhouse number one: Karina Pētersone. Born to a Riga artistic family and a daughter of Pēteris Pētersons (a famous theatre director and playwright), Pētersone was Latvia's minister of culture in three consecutive governments. Widely recognised and respected for playing a significant role in the Latvian First Party – the Latvian Way – led by the famous oligarch Ainārs Šlesers, she has been the deputy speaker of the Latvian parliament and even a candidate for president. Since 2010, Pētersone has been in charge of the Latvian Institute, an institution responsible for the promotion of the Latvian “brand”.

Another powerhouse is the charismatic Sandra Kalniete. Born in 1952 in Siberia where her parents were deported, Kalniete came to Latvia when she was a small child. In the late 1980s Kalniete was actively engaged in the pro-independent organisation, the National Front, and later became the first and only female Latvian minister of foreign affairs. In 2004, when Latvia joined the European Union, Kalniete became the country's first EU Commissioner, responsible for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries. She was also twice a member of the European Parliament where she was very active on such issues as the Eastern Partnership programme, the internal market, rural development and protection of human rights. In 2008 Kalniete established her own party, the Civic Union, which in 2011 merged with two other movements to become Vienotība (Unity).

Kalniete is also known as a talented writer. One of her books, *With Dance Shoes on Siberian Snow*, tells the story of her family's deportation and their attempts to return to Latvia. The book was translated into several foreign languages and topped the best-seller list in Sweden. Kalniete became so popular that Dominique Blanc,

a well-known French actress and film director, made a documentary movie about her titled *Sandra Kalniete. Lady from Latvia*; it was shown both on French and Latvian TV.

### The list goes on...

It is worth mentioning also Helena Demakova. Originally from Latgale (a multi-ethnic region in the south-east) Demakova, an art historian by education, was an active member of the People's Party and temporarily served as the deputy speaker of parliament. From 2004 to 2009 Demakova was minister of culture in three governments. She was the main initiator of the construction of the National Library – an impressive, although by some seen as megalomaniac, building on the edge of the Daugava River which was opened to the public in the summer of 2014 and which will serve as a key locale during the six months of the Latvian presidency in the Council of European Union in 2015. Demakova's plans were even more ambitious than the construction of this building; she wanted to construct a museum of modern art and a much needed concert hall in Latvia's capital. Although these ideas have not been implemented yet, it suffices to say that the National Library is something that not only boosts Latvians' national pride but is also useful from a practical point of view. Although some of Demakova's ideas, and especially the way she reacted to criticism regarding a lack of financial transparency, have raised controversy, it cannot be denied that she is a quite effective politician.

A discussion of powerful women in Latvian politics cannot omit Ita Kozakiewicz. Born to a Polish-Latvian family Kozakiewicz became the first chair of the Union of Poles in Latvia. After receiving a degree in French at the Latvian University, she began her professional career as a translator and became known as a true polyglot able to communicate in Latvian, French, Russian, Polish, Belarusian, Georgian, German, Spanish and Ukrainian. Already during her university studies Kozakiewicz became actively engaged in organising the Polish minority in Latvia. She was the first chair of the Association of Poles in Latvia. In 1990 she was elected chair of the Union of Poles in Latvia, an organisation which was re-established after a 50-year break. Kozakiewicz was also one of the leaders of the Union of National-Cultural Associations of Latvia, a group representing different minorities living in Latvia. Her role in the organisation was so important and her impact so large that today it is named after her.

In March 1990 Kozakiewicz was elected to the Supreme Council of the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic where she firmly supported Latvia's independence. In 1990 she was named Latvia's "woman of the year" and became one of the most

recognisable figures in the country. Unfortunately, her star was extinguished before it could really shine. On October 28th 1990, at the age of 35, Kozakiewicz died tragically in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Her legacy has, however, endured as it is believed that it was thanks to Kozakiewicz's deep dedication to Latvian independence that the Polish population is perceived today as a loyal minority that can fully enjoy its national and cultural rights.

### Unique personality

Throughout Latvia, women are active at all levels of public service, including the head of local authorities. A good illustration is Daugavpils – Latvia's second largest city and the capital of the Latgale region – which has already twice been governed by a woman: in 2003–2009 by Rita Strode and in 2011–2013 by Žanna Kulakova. Another good example is the most famous Latvian resort, Jūrmala, which in 2005–2006 was governed by Inese Aizstrauta, and the district of Kuldīga, the first capital of the Duchess of Courland famous for its wooden architecture, which has been governed by Inga Bērziņa for almost seven years now.


Most importantly, Latvia is in the privileged club of the still very few European states which has had both a female president and a female prime minister. In January – November 2014 the Latvian government, the centre-right coalition of four “Latvian” parties (Vienotība, the Reform Party, the Union of Greens and the Farmers and the National Alliance) was led by Laimdota Straujuma, who enjoyed – thanks to her pragmatism and conciliatory nature – quite extensive popular support. After the parliamentary elections held on October 4th 2014 Straujuma was able to form her second cabinet – this time a coalition of three parties (Vienotība, the Union of Greens and the Farmers and the National Alliance), which was confirmed by the Saeima on November 5th 2014.

From 1999 to 2007 Latvia had a female president. The state was headed by Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, a woman who is not only a charismatic leader but also has, unquestionably, a very unique personality. Vīķe-Freiberga was born in 1937 in Riga. In 1944, at the age of seven, she fled from Latvia with her mother and her mother's partner. She arrived first in Germany, then in Morocco and finally settled in Canada. There she studied psychology at the University of Toronto, but her academic career is more associated with the University of Montreal. In Canada, Vīķe-Freiberga was president of three important organisations: the Canadian Psychological Association, the Canadian Federation of Social Sciences and the Association for the Study of the Development of the Baltic states. Interestingly, her academic interests were not only limited to psychology, but also included folklore.



Viķe-Freiberga returned to Latvia in 1998 and was nominated the first director of the Latvian Institute. In 1999 she was first elected a member of the Latvian Academy of Science then the president of the Republic of Latvia. She was unquestionably the most popular and recognisable head of the Latvian state. During her presidency, Latvia joined the European Union and NATO as well as signed an agreement with Russia regarding its borders. In 2005 Viķe-Freiberga was named Special Envoy to the Secretary General on United Nations reform. In 2006 she was the official candidate of three Baltic states for Secretary General of the United Nations.

After completing her terms as president, Viķe-Freiberga was nominated deputy chair of the group for the future of the EU. Still active in public life, together with her husband, Imants Freibergs, she now leads VVF Consulting – a company offering professional analysis in the field of political science, international affairs and diplomacy. Despite such an impressive career, she has managed to create a happy personal life. Married for 44 years already with the same husband, she has two children and can be considered a real renaissance woman.

The story of strong and politically active women in Latvia definitely does not end today. Although it is always impossible to fully predict the future and how people's careers will develop, it is certainly worth paying attention to Dana Reizniece-Ozola who is the newly appointed minister of economy in the second cabinet of Laimdota Straujuma. Even though she is only 33 years old, Reizniece-Ozola has already been elected to three constitutive Latvian parliaments (in 2010, 2011 and 2014) and appointed parliamentary secretary of the Latvian Ministry of Transport (2010–2011). She was also member of the board of some Latvian companies and worked in the Ventspils council – one of the most important Latvian harbours. Reizniece-Ozola is also widely known for her enormous passion for chess (she is a four-time Latvian champion) and her deep interest in space technologies. All in all, this mother of four and polyglot is more proof that women in Latvia like power, and not only in politics. 

Vaira Viķe-Freiberga unquestionably became the most popular and recognisable head of state in Latvia's recent history.

Grzegorz Szopiński is the first secretary at the Embassy of Poland to Latvia. He wrote this text in a personal capacity.

## Dangerous Myths



*Ukraine Crisis. What it means for the West.*

By: Andrew Wilson.

Publisher: Yale

University Press,  
New Haven and  
London, 2014.

*Ukraine Crisis. What it Means for the West* by Andrew Wilson should be seen as obligatory reading for anyone, not only for the readers of this magazine who, undoubtedly, have a natural interest in the region of Eastern Europe. With the upcoming first year anniversary of the change of power in Kyiv and Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea, some theses that are put forward in this book appear particularly valid in the East and West alike.

In the book Wilson, a distinguished British analyst of Eastern Europe, presents probably one of the most accurate analyses that can be found on the western publishing market of the conflict in Eastern Europe which – keep in mind – at the time of his writing was still evolving. Kudos to the author for his courage and the effort. Anybody who has in one way or another been involved in analysing such a dynamic event as war or revolution knows what a sweaty endeavour that can be; and not always worth it given the high risk and the unpredictability of future events that automatically jeopardises the credibility of the conclusions that the author attempts to draw. Wilson has not fallen into that trap, most likely thanks to the analytical approach that he adopted in the book, which is a bit inaccurately titled *Ukraine Crisis*, and which allowed

him to put the events in Ukraine in the much broader context of Russia's political technologies and the Kremlin's increasing spending on soft power.

Thus, the key to understanding the Ukrainian crisis is not necessarily found in the chapters focusing on the EuroMaidan Revolution. This, of course, is not to say that these chapters have a lesser analytical value. Political scientists, for example, will greatly appreciate the analysis of the nature of last year's protests in Kyiv, which are described in the book as a "curious concoction of a revolution" and which are best understood if elements known to both past and contemporary anti-establishment movements are considered. Other readers, specialists in the region or not, will probably devour the on-the-scene descriptions of protesting Kyiv, which Wilson happened to eye-witness for one week in February 2014.

However, as was mentioned earlier, the value of this book is truly to be found in the chapters devoted to Russia and the Kremlin's *modus operandi*. Of special interest here is the chapter wittingly titled "Russia Putinesca" which, characteristically for Wilson's writing style, starts with a blunt and not particularly politically correct statement: "The key to understanding modern Russia is to realise that it is run by some very weird people." In explaining what this weirdness means Wilson, referring to his earlier publications on political technologies and managed regimes, unmasks the art of manipulation that the Kremlin has mastered in regards to information. It is nudging, as he likes to call the reshaping of narratives that has intensified in Russia in recent years.

Wilson also further explains that the lack of recognition, or proper understanding, of the

manipulated messages that were sent from the Kremlin to western audiences, as shameful as it is, was possible thanks to the artful work of “the army of interferers”, that is the many financiers, official scriptwriters, Kremlin bloggers and trolls who have become masters of applying modern technologies to good, old-fashioned propaganda. Today, Europeans are probably more and more able to distinguish these trolls’ presence and influence, although the degree of that recognition seems to be correlated with geographic location, Wilson argues in the book as well as in his short text “Our Blindness about Russia is Depressing”, published in this issue of *New Eastern Europe*. However, we still seem to remain ignorant of another important, yet painful truth about the Kremlin which Wilson formulates as follows: “...however good the Kremlin was at manipulating the virtual world of ideas and narratives, it would always clash with events on the ground, particularly if the Kremlin rulers got trapped in a feedback loop; not only believing their own propaganda, but setting policy within the world of myths they had themselves created. This, then, was the background to the crisis of 2014.”

The narrative that kept coming back for quite some time in Russia, and which was finally used to anchor the Kremlin’s new foreign policy, was the belief that in the 1990s Russia was humiliated by the West as it had lost control over the territories of the former Soviet Union. Thus, the crisis, which emerged from the seemingly innocent student protests in Kyiv in late 2013, has turned not only into a Ukrainian affair but also, as Wilson argues, a major crisis for Europe and the world. He further argues that the international dimension of the con-

flict became most visible in March 2014 with the annexation of Crimea, where, counter to Russian propaganda, a real coup d’état took place. An act of that sort had not been seen in Europe since the Second World War. The EU’s passivity in this regard, which characterised it through the entire year of 2014, is hard to excuse. In Wilson’s view it is depressing and dangerous; as dangerous as the myths that Russia is addicted to and which make today’s Europe a dangerous place.

To reduce this threat, according to Wilson, post-modern Europe needs to get its act together, start learning how to cope with old-fashioned hard power and improve its own soft power. In other words, the West needs to change its thinking, which lately has been increasingly based on the false assumption that there is no one truth. We need this mental change not only to understand Russia’s *modus operandi* but also to effectively counteract it. At the time of Wilson’s writing of this book, we clearly failed in this regard. Hopefully, experience has taught us something and while reflecting on the one year anniversary of the events he has described in it, we will be able to overcome our old habits. Only a serious mental change will allow us to start adequately reacting to Russia and its actions in Eastern Europe, which still remains an open chapter in the narrative of “Russia’s near abroad”.

Iwona Reichardt

## A Testament to Poland's Success



*The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention. Ukraine's complex transition.*

Edited by: Klaus

Bachmann and Igor Lyubashenko.

Publisher: Peter Lang, Pieterlen,

Switzerland, 2014.

It is always a hopeful sign when Poles and Germans discuss Eastern European politics together – both nations have a long and disastrous history of talking over their neighbour's shoulder. And that makes this edited collection of essays, with its stated mission to correct the "huge asymmetry" of information available to the Western European punditocracy, between the abundant (at least in relative terms) expertise available on Russia and the "scarce, scattered knowledge about Ukraine," all the more noble a project.

The editors themselves, Klaus Bachmann and Igor Lyubashenko, who made their way to Poland from Germany and Ukraine respectively, both exemplify the way in which Warsaw has become something of a Mecca for Eastern European studies. Indeed, at least since Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski's mediation in the Orange Revolution, Poland has sought to make its name in foreign policy as the European Union's resident expert on Eastern Europe in general and on Ukraine in particular. The challenge was communicating to Brussels, Berlin and Washington through the

language of conference panels and white papers an understanding that initially relied on a fair degree of Slavic intuition and a common history recollected with stark differences in Poland and Ukraine.

This collection stands as a testament to Poland's success to date in substantiating and professionalising its leadership role in the West's eastern policy. The assembled authors present a strong representative selection of the scholarship on East Europe that Poland can boast today.

Chapters by Maciej Wapiński, Andrzej Szeptycki and Igor Torbakov offer something of an extended introduction to the contemporary history of independent Ukraine. And while these chapters bring no revelations in terms of historiography, they do a good job of assembling English-language resources and presenting Polish analysis that may be unfamiliar to the majority of readers outside Poland. Adam Balcer offers an exceptionally thorough account of the country's demographic and cultural currents that should be required reading for any journalist that dares diminish Ukraine's complexities to a simple East-West split.

But the larger portion of the book is devoted to an analysis of the events in Ukraine over the tumultuous past year, focusing on the EuroMaidan Revolution and Russia's annexation of Crimea. As a result of the timing of its publication, this volume mentions the war in Donbas only peripherally, in the introduction and in discussing the consequences of Crimea's annexation.

Other chapters offer some background on Ukraine's domestic political parties and the response of the international community

to the crises, including the United States, the European Union and NATO. Paweł Kowal, a former Member of the European Parliament and previous chair of its delegation to Ukraine, makes a notable attempt to trace the development of oligarchy as a political (sub)system in Ukraine. The result is a laudable and academically serious study of a prickly concept often given a wide berth by politicians and diplomats.

But as much as this fine cast of authors showcases Poland's emerging talent on eastern policy, it also alludes to some of the enormous challenges facing Warsaw if it is to keep its role as a regional leader. In her chapter on Poland's presence at the EuroMaidan, Maria Przelomiec notes that Viktor Yanukovich's fateful decision in November 2013 not to sign the Association Agreement at the Eastern Partnership summit "was a blow not only to all EU-related plans in Ukraine, but also to Polish Eastern policy ... since 1990. It also undermined Poland's position in the EU as an expert country for Eastern affairs."

Indeed, it was Poland's creation of the Eastern Partnership programme, together with Sweden, which symbolised for many that Warsaw was taking its rightful place at the table, at least where the EU's eastern policy was concerned. This was in 2009, during the final exasperating days of the failed Orange team, the depressing inevitability of the Yanukovich administration and a thick blanket of "Ukraine fatigue" that was covering much of the West. The reality that will face Warsaw in 2015 is a world where greater powers have developed a sudden and intense interest in Ukraine – and the fact that explosive results were sparked, however tangentially, by Poland's signature foreign policy initiative in the region.

If Poland is to keep its equity in the conversation on Ukraine and the wider European future, it can no longer depend on simply filling a vacuum with what was once considered a niche specialisation. In what will inevitably become a newly competitive marketplace of ideas and strategies for eastern policy, Poland will rely on voices like those in this collection to keep it competitive. Whether the intended Western European audiences in Berlin and Brussels will listen is another matter.

*William Schreiber*

## Detecting Russian Imperialism



*Rzeczpospolita atlantycka (The Atlantic Republic)*. By: Jan Nowak-Jeziorański. Edited by: Zbigniew Rokita. Publisher: Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe, Wrocław, 2014.

When we come back to older texts written on foreign policy in Eastern Europe, we often do so with caution. We sometimes think they were too naïve or they were in conflict with the reality of the times. However, we can read Jan Nowak-Jeziorański's writings on this subject without any fear. Nowak-Jeziorański was able to detect threats flawlessly, especially the threat of Russian imperialism. At the same time, he had no illusions about his home country and did not see Poland's position in Europe

through rose-tinted glasses. Instead, he posed challenges to his country. As time goes by, his thoughts and writings become yet more up-to-date rather than outdated – and this is the core of the selection of his writings recently published in *Rzeczpospolita Atlantycka*.

Following Nowak-Jeziorański's return to Poland in 1989, he often hosted guests in his flat located in Warsaw's Powiśle. His home was full of clocks which, in a way, indicated that he wanted to be sure that Poland would not miss its chance in history for a second time. He was a frequent guest on TV and radio, he attended numerous conferences and this is probably why his texts could not break through, being lost in such a slew of obligations. Nowak-Jeziorański was always on tour, travelling between Annandale Maryland, Washington DC and Warsaw. In this regard, he was a countertype to Jerzy Giedroyc, who did not leave Maisons-Laffitte, even in the last years of his life, and was living an ascetic life, plunged into Polish affairs. But of course, that was not the key difference between these two men, these two pillars of contemporary Polish security and foreign policy doctrine which has so influenced Polish policy today.

A central problem of Poland after 1989 was its attitude towards Russia. The dominant answer to that issue was Giedroyc's doctrine, adopted by the elite of newly independent state. But what did this doctrine actually entail? Nowadays, it is very often misinterpreted. Hence, in order to truly understand it properly, it is necessary to go back and read the texts published by Giedroyc's *Kultura* years before the fall of communism; such as the texts by authors like Father Józef Majewski, Józef Łobodowski and Juliusz Mieroszewski.

This doctrine was based on the assumption that Poland needs to abandon any territorial claims over parts of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine (a controversial position at that time). Therefore, the self-determination of nations living between Russia and Poland was perceived as the best antidote to Russian imperialism. In that sense, Giedroyc's doctrine created a link between Poland's sovereignty and the independence of post-Soviet states. It is not only about Polish-Russian relations but also about Poland's relations with its eastern neighbours. Both Giedroyc and Jeziorański share then the same conviction that a key condition for the prosperity of Poland after 1989 was the secure development of Belarus, Ukraine and other states of the region as well as the abandonment of imperialist goals by Russia.

*Rzeczpospolita Atlantycka*, published by the College of Eastern Europe, shows the realism of Nowak-Jeziorański's thought. Unlike Giedroyc, Nowak-Jeziorański was not so sure that relations between Poland and its eastern neighbours could be established effectively in a short period of time. Yet he did not ignore Poland's eastern partners. His texts on Belarus are very interesting, even though his ideas and hopes can be seen as slightly exaggerated. We could say that Nowak-Jeziorański's articles give us a "Giedroyc doctrine 2.0"; according to which the best way to eliminate the threat of Russian imperialism was to quickly integrate with the European Union and NATO. His years of experience in America certainly influenced this way of thinking.

Immediately following 1989, Nowak-Jeziorański claimed that Poland needed to take the historical step and do what it can to join NATO as quickly as possible, especially con-



sidering that Russia was relatively weak at that time. Particularly important is Nowak-Jeziorański's text of 1991 where he reacted to the newly formulated Soviet doctrine which was later inherited by Russia. The core of this Soviet doctrine can be reduced to the need to maintain a zone of influence over the Warsaw Pact and post-Soviet states, and the use of energy blackmail in Central and Eastern Europe as a tool to guarantee that the post-communist states would be still under the Kremlin's control. Although partially forgotten, this doctrine was a specific continuation of the Brezhnev Doctrine and the political last will of the Soviet Union.

In other texts, Nowak-Jeziorański returns to the experiences with the allied powers and the Soviet Union he gained during the Second World War. During these turbulent times, he realised that Poland could only secure its sovereignty during short periods of freedom and peace. What is surprising in his writings is the criticism of the West's (and the US's in particular) mistakes in relations with Russia at the beginning of the 1990s. He was raising the issue of Russian imperialism a long time before the thaw in Polish-Russian relations came in 2002, and then again in 2007.

However, Nowak-Jeziorański's strengths were not his moods, but his cold realism. It is said nowadays that Russia's actions in Georgia and Ukraine were shaped by crises and the colour revolutions that took place in those countries between 2003 and 2005. Some recall that the major turning point was the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, Yuri Luzhkov's speech given in Crimea in 2008, or the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Looking from this perspective, Nowak-Jeziorański was like a

seismograph that could detect the threats of Russian imperialism a decade before others. Politicians could have avoided many mistakes if they had only read Nowak-Jeziorański's text published in the early 1990s.

Everyone who reads this book – and not only looks at the contents – will confirm with absolute certainty how important it is that the College of Eastern Europe remains faithful to its founder and returns to these valuable writings. It is important to note that on the day of his 100th birthday, at one of the most important Polish universities, there was a lecture given on Polish foreign policy, but Nowak-Jeziorański was not mentioned once. This is why readers should receive an introduction which could provide them with a solid historical background showing the conditions in which Nowak-Jeziorański worked after 1989 and how the public debate in Poland looked at that time.

It would be also important to underline why the articles he wrote on Russia or Ryszard Kukliński were so important. When it comes to Polish foreign policy it would be necessary to especially note his input as it was quite ambiguous between 1989 and 1991. One thing is certain, while reading Nowak's texts written nearly two decades ago, we feel as if they could have been written today.

*Paweł Kowal*

*Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski*

## Confession or Justification?



*Недержавні  
таємниці.  
Нотатки на  
берегах пам'яті  
(Non-state Secrets.  
Notes on the  
edge of memory).*

By: Viktor Yushchenko. Publisher:  
Folio, Kharkiv 2014.

Without a doubt, Viktor Yushchenko has been one of the key figures in the history of modern Ukraine. At the peak of his career, Yushchenko was seen as a hope for the Ukrainian society and a symbol of democratic change. He climbed high and profited, but he lost it all very quickly, slipping into political oblivion. When he ran for president of Ukraine in 2004, Yushchenko enjoyed 51.99 per cent support. Six years later, he received a mere five per cent in presidential elections while his political party, Our Ukraine, got 13.99 per cent. Things worsened in 2012 when Our Ukraine received slightly more than one per cent of the vote.

What happened in Ukraine that forced such a dramatic change of attitudes between 2004 and 2012? Why did the leader of the opposition, then the head of state, perform so poorly and disappoint Ukrainian society? Another question that comes to mind here too is why are there still people in Ukraine for whom, despite his undeniable failure, Yushchenko continues to be a credible politician?

Yushchenko's book, *Non-state Secrets. Notes on the edge of memory*, which was published this year in Ukraine, can be seen as an attempt

to answer these questions. On the back cover of the book we can see what we will find inside: "an honest conversation about Yushchenko's private life: love, career, life and death of the people closest to him." But is it really a frank confession or rather a justification of the things that Yushchenko did in the past? It is also quite interesting to consider how much attention the book has received in Ukraine. Its first edition (3,000 copies) sold out within two weeks and became a true bestseller, which is quite a puzzle given how unpopular Yushchenko was in 2010 and 2012. Thus, to properly assess this book it is worth putting aside all personal feelings and emotions we have towards its author and maybe even look at the book as a literary work. Certainly, the presentation of Yushchenko's presidency in this book should not be treated as a faithful reflection of reality.

*Non-state Secrets* is unquestionably a book that reads well. Evidently, Yushchenko did not write alone. Indeed, the spokesperson of Folio, the publishing house that published *Non-state Secrets* admits that it was put together by the well-known historian and journalist Alexander Zinchenko. Nonetheless, while reading the book we can clearly see Yushchenko's way of thinking as well as his style. Thus, we cannot say that the portrait of the politician that we get from the book is completely false.

*Non-state Secrets* presents Yushchenko's life chronologically. Overall, the numerous memories, anecdotes, dialogues and reflections make this book truly interesting and a good read. From its pages we learn a lot about Yushchenko's childhood and adolescence, and his professional and private life. In regards to the latter, Yushchenko's memories of his upbringing in a teachers' family are quite

interesting. In fact, as we learn from the book, the president's parents were his biggest role models and they taught him patriotism and respect for human dignity. In the background of these personal memoirs we also get a dynamic picture of Ukraine and see how this country has changed over the last 60 years; from the grey Soviet reality to the harsh period of independence and ineffective efforts to build Ukrainian democracy.

Another positive thing that can be said about the book is that it does not focus exclusively on Yushchenko, but also includes information about the lives of others such as his family and friends. Put together, these memories present a multi-dimensional picture of the life of the Ukrainian people: how they survived Holodomor (a famine in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1932 and 1933), what they believed in and how the Ukrainian national identity was shaped under communism. In this context Yushchenko also recalls the life of his father, Andriy, who was imprisoned in Soviet and German concentration camps during the Second World War, but managed to escape. These experiences, as we also learn from the book, did not break Andriy Yushchenko. Indeed, quite the opposite was the case: they shaped his national identity which he later passed on to his son. After the war, Yushchenko's father worked as a teacher in western Ukraine, but was constantly under the watchful eye of the Soviet security service because of his past history and position.

As a young man, Yushchenko dreamt of becoming a geographer or an archeologist. Instead, his mother chose for him the career of an accountant. Thus, Yushchenko graduated from the Ternopil National Economic Univer-

sity. After his service in the Soviet army at the Armenian-Turkish border he worked for many years at a bank. He later became the director of the National Bank of Ukraine. It was at that time, as he admits in the book, when Leonid Kuchma, then the president of Ukraine, offered him a position as prime minister, which Yushchenko refused. He only accepted the offer after he had been told that "there were no other candidates for this office."

Yushchenko claims that his government paid off Ukraine's debt within the first three months of his rule, as well as succeeded in implementing serious reforms and creating a schedule for solving the issue of unpaid pensions and salaries. In July 2004, he officially announced his candidacy for president. Three months later, in September 2004, he was the victim of dioxin poisoning. Yushchenko explains this event as an attempted political assassination and claims that he has knowledge of who is responsible for the act. He does not reveal the name of the perpetrator but, however, he claims that the person is also aware that he knows. Nonetheless, he decided not to withdraw from the presidential race, assuming that if he did, the country would become mired in stagnation.

Yushchenko also describes his first months in power after the Orange Revolution and the decisions he then made. They included: the round table talks and the reform of the constitution which seriously limited the president's power in favour of the prime minister. Clearly, Yushchenko believed then that one of his allies would become the head of the government. There were two serious candidates for this office, namely: Petro Poroshenko and Yulia Tymoshenko (who eventually did become

prime minister). Yushchenko admits that cooperation with Tymoshenko was his biggest political mistake. The failure of the “Orange” coalition was caused by personal ambitions, Yushchenko believes. He says that after the dismissal of the government, Tymoshenko went to Moscow where it was decided that Yushchenko’s movement had to be discredited.

Interestingly, in his book the former Ukrainian president tries also to answer such intriguing questions as why he decided not to restore Ukraine’s constitution from 1996. Clearly, the 2004 Amendment of the Constitution of Ukraine was an accommodating solution and had a more democratic nature than the 1996 constitution. Yushchenko also makes some references to the situation in Georgia and points out that Mikheil Saakashvili was successful as the country’s president and it was thanks to him that the Georgian nation became more consolidated.

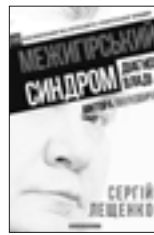
The title of Yushchenko’s book *Non-state Secrets* captures the essence of the book very well. The former president does not unveil any secrets of his life as president nor does he present any sensational information from his personal life. The book is a collection of Yushchenko’s memoirs, mostly based on his personal reflections and views. Thus, it is difficult to say how frank his comments really are and that is why it is probably better to look at this book more in terms of it being an attempt to justify some of his actions and decisions. Without a doubt this is a very successful attempt, especially when we think about the time when Yushchenko served as head of the National Bank of Ukraine. The reduction of inflation, reform of the banking system, and the introduction of the hryvnia are just a few of

his achievements. He was also quite successful as prime minister. When we think about Yushchenko’s presidency, we tend to forget about these previous accomplishments, yet it is fair to have them in mind while discussing his time in power, and the book here reviewed may serve a useful purpose in this regard.

Maryana Prokop

Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski

## Investigating Corruption and Greed



*Межигірський синдром. Діагноз владі Віктора Януковича (Mezhyhirskyy Syndrome. A diagnosis of Viktor Yanukovich's*

*power)*. By: Sergii Leshchenko. Publisher: Брайт Букс (Bright Books), Kyiv, 2014.

*Mezhyrskyy Syndrome (Mezhyhirskyy syndrome. Diagnoz Vladi Yanukovycha)*, the title of the latest book by Sergii Leshchenko, a Ukrainian journalist turned politician, could be considered somewhat misleading. The book’s subtitle, *A Diagnosis of Viktor Yanukovich’s Power* is much more accurate. Even though the narrative concentrates on Mezhyhirya, the infamous residence of Ukraine’s former president, Viktor Yanukovich, this short book is in fact a telling account of the essence of Ukrainian politics in the last quarter of a century, with special attention paid to the last decade. Enormous, luxurious, yet lacking the slightest sense of

good taste, *Mezhyhirya* is nothing more than an illustration and an exemplification of the real ambitions of the Ukrainian political elite.

When we look back at the events that took place in the last decade, we realise that the phrase “Ukraine at the crossroads” was probably the most telling expression that was used to characterise the situation within this post-Soviet state. The problem with such thinking, however, is that it suggests that the Ukrainian political elite were facing a permanent dilemma in choosing the right direction and path of development while manoeuvring around obstacles to arrive at a strategic destination. Having read Leshchenko’s book, we might have the impression that these dilemmas were exclusively virtual, which is also a perfect confirmation of British analyst Andrew Wilson’s thesis about virtual politics in the post-Soviet world. At the same time, the well-hidden essence of the system (i.e. fights to control the state’s financial resources, with the ultimate goal of increasing a ruler’s personal wealth) was too often neglected by western observers. From this perspective, “crossroads” could actually be regarded as a goal of Ukrainian politics.

Leshchenko, popularly known as the star of Ukrainian journalism, is undoubtedly one of the most accurate observers of the Ukrainian political scene. Consequently, with his newest book we receive a piece of high quality investigative journalism. The foundation of the book is the collection of documents found by civic activists at *Mezhyhirya* after Yanukovych fled Ukraine in February 2014. The book, however, is not a mere compilation of facts discovered in the recent months. In fact, the documents that were found at *Mezhyhirya* only complete the bigger picture and are important pieces

of evidence supporting the author’s analytical investigations carried out since 2000.

Three main themes can be identified in the book. The first one refers to the core of Ukrainian politics – its oligarchic system. The book starts with a short, but very informative, analysis of the Ukrainian oligarchy, which includes information on the main “clans”, their background and roots and the scope of their influence. This part could be of special interest to anyone keen to understanding the phenomenon of post-Soviet oligarchy without getting into too many details. Probably the most remarkable conclusion that can be drawn from a reading of this section of the book is that there are no permanent unions or patterns between or within the oligarchic clans. Conversely, the picture presented by Leshchenko shows a complex system of relations as well as evolving mutual dependencies, resembling the European power system of the 19th century where the overall balance of power helped maintain a general patchwork of different interests without major conflict. Thus, while the oligarchy will most likely remain a serious problem for Ukraine’s democratic transition, any attempt to analyse its political impact, as Leshchenko’s analysis suggests, should be done in a dynamic perspective rather than through a simple deconstruction of a snapshot taken at any particular moment.

The second main topic of the book is the rise and fall of Viktor Yanukovych as a politician. In this section, Leshchenko has again managed to tell the story not only of one political figure, but has also detailed some of the idiosyncrasies of post-Soviet politicians. Yanukovych’s rise cannot be explained by merely focusing on his competence as a political leader. On

the contrary, in Leshchenko's analysis, Yanukovich appears as a political "product" or an "instrument" created by one of the oligarchic clans – the Donetsk "Family". However, Yanukovich should not be regarded exclusively as the result of the political and business games that took place in Ukraine. An obvious political instinct and ability to use circumstances to maximise personal benefit were among Yanukovich's strengths. Looking back on the former president's career, we notice a clear sequence of cause and effect relationships. Yet, at the start of 2005, it would have been extremely difficult to predict the developments as we know them now.

From this perspective, Leshchenko tells the story of the mutual relationships between Ukrainian politicians, who often represented camps theoretically hostile to each other. Due to the lack of clear ideological divisions, which had been replaced by business interests, Yanukovich managed not only to politically survive defeat after the 2004 Orange Revolution, but also to finally triumph in 2010. Leshchenko clearly suggests that it was his unrestrained ambition that finally brought down Yanukovich in February 2014. Yanukovich's political instinct clearly failed him and this failure ultimately led to the destruction of the fragile balance of power between Ukrainian oligarchs.

The third topic of the book may help us understand the source of the failure of Yanukovich's political instinct. It is a topic that lies at the surface of the book and is presented to us in the story *Mezhyhirya*. The scale of abuse and fraud of a financial, legal and moral nature that took place during its construction is almost beyond comprehension. From this perspective, the *Mezhyrsky Syndrome* is the first

step into uncovering the tremendous extent of the industry of robbery that embraced the whole state. Anyone who is familiar with the analysis of another Ukrainian star journalist, Vitaly Portnikov, may have a sense of déjà vu when reading Leshchenko's book. It provides perfect confirmation of Portnikov's thesis that in order to understand the essence of Ukrainian politics one should use the tools that are necessary to understand the functioning of a limited liability company.

The book does not tell us anything about the future of Ukrainian politics and its possible transition to full democracy. However, the general impression, as well as the rich factual material provided, leaves the reader a pessimist at worst and a cautious realist at best. Evidently, it is not the tremendous challenges that have been brought upon Ukraine by the recent war and the severe economic crisis that pose the biggest threat to the state. It is rather the society's tolerance of corruption. Even if *Mezhyhirya* is regarded as excessive, its very existence would not have been possible in any society that refuses to accept corruption on such an unimaginable level. A general pessimism towards human nature (not expressed directly, but discernible between the lines) is probably the only reservation that can be directed towards the author. Nevertheless, would it be possible to conduct investigative journalism in Ukraine without such pessimism?

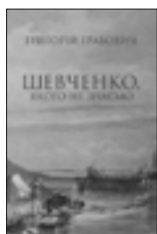
Leshchenko's book is certainly a must-read for all students of contemporary Ukrainian politics. It may not provide complete explanations or theoretical deliberations on the quality of post-Soviet politics, but these shortages should not be seen as a weakness of the book. Instead, the book gives the reader an oppor-



tunity to understand the logic of Ukraine's decision makers. Such an understanding is probably even more important than a deep knowledge of the formal dimensions of the institutional setup of the country.

Igor Lyubashenko

## Shevchenko Demythologised



Григорій Грабович,  
Шевченко, якого не  
знаємо. З проблематики  
символічної  
автобіографії та  
сучасної рецепції  
поета (*The Unknown*

*Shevchenko. Essays on the Poet's Symbolic Autobiography and Reception*). By: George G. Grabowicz, Second edition, revised and expanded. Publisher: Krytyka, Kyiv 2014.

It seems that in the last two decades, post-Soviet countries have seen a peaceful and smooth symbiosis of communist symbols with elements of western liberalism and the free market economy. Today in many cities in Eastern Europe, we still can see Lenin monuments next to McDonald's restaurants. In Ukraine, however, recent changes have shown that in this country such a co-existence is no longer possible.

It was the EuroMaidan Revolution that triggered the phenomenon called "Leninopad" – the tearing down of monuments of the much-disliked Bolshevik leader. Nonetheless, while the act of knocking down a monument takes

relatively little time, the process of repairing people's thinking, contaminated with communist doctrine, does not. This process has been estimated to take at least a few decades. Taking this fact into account, we can say that the book by Harvard University professor, George Grabowicz, titled *Шевченко, якого не знаємо* (*The Unknown Shevchenko*), recently published in Ukraine, is an attempt to dethrone the socialist dogmas that have long existed in regards to the works of Ukraine's national poet – Taras Shevchenko.

After having read this book, I believe that Grabowicz has set for himself an even greater aim, namely to de-Sovietise Ukrainian humanities and liberal arts and finally allow them to enter the global current of thought and intellectual discourse, and further to change some tools and terminology of academic research. Undoubtedly, this process has already taken place in some areas of Ukrainian literary studies but Shevchenko studies have, for many reasons, remained a very conservative branch, insensitive even to the earlier social transformations which took place in Ukraine.

Overall, in his book, Grabowicz distinguishes three main models regarding the history of the reception of Shevchenko's works. They include: a socialist realist model, a nationalist model and a *narodnik*-like model. Importantly, all of these models have one feature in common; they emerged from totalitarian and authoritarian tendencies in Ukrainian literary studies which primarily put an emphasis on the social aspect of Shevchenko's poetry. This, in turn, has diminished its artistic value. As a result, in the Soviet Union a paradigm (the socialist realist model) was developed in the field of Shevchenko studies which presented the poet with much

pathos and hyperbolisation. It was followed by political rhetoric and without much reflection is included in the two models which are dominant in Ukrainian literary studies today. To illustrate this tendency Grabowicz tracks down the distortions that he has discovered in the books written about Shevchenko from the perspective of social realism. Not surprisingly, in these works the poet is shown as a revolutionary and a fighter against social injustice.

Grabowicz proposes yet a very different approach to studying Shevchenko. In his book, he uses a felicitous trick as he has decided to study the image of Shevchenko by analysing museum exhibitions and albums. Applying such an interdisciplinary approach has allowed Grabowicz to expose many falsifications that have been used in regards to Shevchenko and his image by both communist and imperial ideology. Thus, we are presented with a large number of paintings depicting Shevchenko as a child or a poorly dressed youngster who is accompanied by handsome adult Russians who are, not surprisingly, lecturing him. In analysing these works, Grabowicz finds a hidden message which is to show the childishness and immaturity of the Ukrainian people and which also explains why even today Ukraine is treated by Russia as its "little sister" rather than a sovereign state.

Grabowicz also discovers that in social realism paintings the middle-aged Shevchenko was portrayed slightly differently. Here his image was that of a static statue which is stone-cold and immobile; just as Lenin was often portrayed, but on a smaller provincial scale. In fact, social realism, by presenting the poet as a scary and terrifying individual, dehumanised him.

Further, having proven the inapplicability of the terminology developed by social realism to contemporary studies of Shevchenko, Grabowicz calls for the creation of a new research paradigm which would be based on methodologies developed within contemporary literary studies. He presents his own exploratory interpretations in this regard and uses some approaches that have been popular in the United States since the 1980s, namely: autobiographism, gender studies, comparative studies, textual studies, reception studies, as well as archetypal criticism. Undoubtedly, the pluralism in the selection of interpretation schools is very different from the ideologised "objective" narrative of social realism. However, the unavoidable question that comes to mind here is whether such a wide methodological approach is a strength or rather a weakness of Grabowicz's study?

By introducing the notion of autobiographism that is hidden, symbolic and coded in the texts, Grabowicz proposes his own interpretation of two Shevchenko poems, namely "Tryzna" and "Maria". In the first poem Grabowicz finds a phantasm of his own funeral as well as the fear of being raped. Hence, he raises the question of the poet's sexual orientation, if we interpret this piece of writing with the help of psychoanalysis. In the second poem there is an issue of gender trans-location as well as the projection of one's own fate onto the figure of the mother of Jesus Christ. In this poem she dies of starvation. Post-mortem, the priests dress her in royal robes and crucify her. However, in the hearts of the common folks, Mary has resurrected. Hence, in the poem Grabowicz notices an analogy with the cult of Shevchenko in communist Ukraine where

the Soviet dictators performed, in a similar way, a symbolic killing of the poet on the cross of social realism.

Grabowicz decided to apply his own concept of symbolic autobiography in comparative studies, using it to interpret the writings of two national poets: Poland's Adam Mickiewicz and the main subject of his analysis, Ukraine's Taras Shevchenko. Grabowicz's choice of these two poets is based on the assumption that they both struggled with the heavy burden of being national prophets. In his study Grabowicz seeks an answer to the question he asks: why Shevchenko succeeded at creating his own image as a national poet while Mickiewicz became silent in 1839. In regards to the part of Grabowicz's study that is being reviewed here it needs to be noted that while stating that Mickiewicz studies lack papers touching upon the notion of autobiographism, the researcher has failed to take into account some books that have been released recently as he bases his opinion primarily on the works published in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Notwithstanding this drawback, the comparative analysis of the works of both poets that Grabowicz presents in the book has allowed him to draw some very interesting conclusions. First of all, the researcher points out that the social role of a bard which Mickiewicz imposed on himself proved lethal for his talent. Shevchenko, on the other hand, understood his mission differently. He saw himself more as an apostle, even though the collective ethos of the Ukrainian society was by far weaker than that of the Poles.

Polish literature is another area of Grabowicz's academic interests. Thus, the researcher makes an attempt to apply to the studies of

Shevchenko some terms which were coined by Polish writers such as, for example, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński who in the interwar period was trying to "demystify" Polish society or Witold Gombrowicz, who came up with the term *upupienie* (a descriptive translation of this term is the imposition on somebody of the role of somebody inferior or immature – editor's note) to show the still infantile nature of the society. In fact, we may risk a statement that the state of Shevchenko studies speaks volumes of the state of the Ukrainian society which unconsciously defends itself from westernisation and modernisation since it has, to a certain extent, accepted the paternalistic Soviet model. This simply reflects the fear of maturity and responsibility that also characterises Ukrainian academic studies, as can be seen for instance in the practice of tabooing Shevchenko's intimate life.

Undoubtedly, Grabowicz has managed to decentralise the social realism myth of Shevchenko which was based on a false puritanism and bigotry by pointing to the self-portrait of the poet which he found in the archives of a museum and where the poet is presented stark naked while taking a stroll along the coastline of the Aral Sea, a place where he was forced into exile. Grabowicz states that in Shevchenko's case the source of poetic inspiration was the border – between the "autobiographical me" and the social role, the past and the future, the awareness of being chosen by the muses and the memory of being a serf.

In the book Grabowicz also presents some findings from the extensive and rigorous studies on the perception of Shevchenko's works that he conducted in Ukraine. As part of his

research he participated in a discussion on the poet's *Collected Works* where he rejected the canon of Shevchenko's works proposed by Ukrainian researchers. Such an approach, however, would probably go against the will of the poet himself who repeatedly rewrote his poems and narrative poems, thus creating their different versions. Grabowicz still believes that such polyphony is the result of the strategy of repeating symbolic autobiography.

While reviewing studies of Shevchenko which have been released in Ukraine in recent years, Grabowicz observes that their fundamental feature is eclecticism. They resemble a bricolage. In other words, they are a controversial combination of contradictory elements that belong to different traditions. For instance, the editors who prepared the *Shevchenko Encyclopedia* applied the terminology of social realism as if they were afraid of western-oriented literary studies. This situation has its origin in the hidden inferiority complex that characterises Ukrainians and which is a consequence of the many centuries of colonial dependency. As a result numerous books on Shevchenko that are published in Ukraine take the form of illustrated albums. Most of them, however, contain poorly written texts with inaccurate information dominated by a simplified, positivist way of thinking visible in a random combination of biographical facts predominantly highlighting the social aspects of the poet's writing.

While interpreting Shevchenko's poetry from the angle of archetypal criticism, Grabowicz reaches a revealing conclusion that the poet himself became an archetype of a prophet who offered a basis for the national identity of Ukrainians. The year 2014 turned out to be

a landmark year for Ukraine as it was also the year of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Shevchenko. The celebrations that had been prepared for this occasion might have encouraged the people who joined the EuroMaidan Revolution and overthrew the corrupt regime of Yanukovich. The leaders of the protest often quoted "Kobzar" (a nickname of Shevchenko) in their speeches. We also saw numerous hints of his writings in the patriotic poetry written by EuroMaidan-inspired citizens. Hence, I believe that the process of demythologising the Ukrainian poet called for by Grabowicz has already begun.

Eugene Sobol

Translated by Justyna Chada

## Alternative View on Politics



*Zajeżdżimy kobyłę historii. Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca (We Will Ruin the Jade of the Past. The memoir of a bruised horseman).*

By: Karol Modzelewski. Publisher: Iskry, Warsaw, 2013.

Writing for youth is not a common practice these days. However, Karol Modzelewski's book appears to be a mature attempt to speak to the young people who will soon take responsibility for the country's politics and participate in the democratic transition. This is probably why this book was so widely praised by critics and readers. And this is also probably why it was

honoured with the Nike Literary Award, the most prestigious award for Polish literature.

Its strange title refers to a poem by Vladimir Mayakovsky. Modzelewski, interpreting the metaphor from the poem, observes that “the jade of the past is a wild, unstoppable, mustang. We can jump on its back and even stay there for a while, but we cannot steer its direction. In the end, we will land in a place we did not plan to land. This is how – in a brief way – I interpret my own life experience.”

The book is an autobiography. The author tells us about himself in a chronological way: starting with kindergarten in the Soviet Union, then his school years and university in communist Poland, his later political engagement against the regime and so on to the present day. He comes back to his early moral dilemmas – strange social inequalities in the world where equality and brotherhood are at the very heart of the official narrative.

During his studies, he undertook his first attempts to criticise the Polish United Workers’ Party which was the communist party ruling Poland until 1989. At the University of Warsaw he met Jacek Kuroń, Andrzej Garlicki, Andrzej Krzysztof Wróblewski and Krzysztof Pomian, and created with them a revisionist movement. He paid a high price for these activities. In 1965, he was imprisoned for three years for his *Open Letter to the Party* (his release came after two years and several months). In 1968, he was imprisoned again for three and a half years as he took part in the Polish 1968 political crisis, the so-called March events. In 1981, after martial law was introduced in Poland, he was imprisoned for a third time under charges of an attempt to overthrow the political system of the People’s Republic of Poland.

But the story of Modzelewski is not a simple story of disagreement and rebellion: it does not show only a revisionist or a revolutionary. Modzelewski confesses that in his life, he had to choose between the paths of a social activist and a historian. During difficult moments in prison, this split appeared to be particularly beneficial. Although he had no freedom, he was not inactive. In prison, he prepared a paper on the structures of power in Poland between the 10th and 13th centuries which was delivered to the head of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Aleksander Gieysztor, by a prison priest and then presented at a conference in Rome. In prison, he also prepared his book *Chłopi w społeczeństwie polskim* (*Peasants in Polish Society*) which was published in 1987 and was the foundation for his nomination as a professor.

Such a rich biography is an excellent appendix to our knowledge about historical events. We get a personal side to countless events: the March 1968 demonstrations; the boycott of a ban of Adam Mickiewicz’s *Dziady* play being performed in the National Theatre; the signing of an open letter to the communist party; the establishment of Workers’ Defence Committee (KOR); and the genesis of Solidarity from behind the scenes. We can observe the roundtable talks and many other events that are crucial for contemporary Poland. Following them, the author leads us to the present – the creation of democratic Poland, but we may feel a strain of bitterness or even disappointment in this narrative. Here, the mare of history appears another time and does not want to take us to the point we want to see.

The last pages of the book provide a critical examination of Leszek Balcerowicz’s economic

plan which transformed Poland from a centrally-planned economy into a free market capitalist one without taking into account social costs. But what is important in Modzelewski's book is that its purpose is not to evaluate the events in which the author participated. Modzelewski tries to look at these events from a distance. This book can be read as a treaty about political activity based on values. All the decisions made by the author and his colleagues were in accordance with higher goals. Interim goals such as financial or private benefits were simply not their point of reference. Modzelewski tried to embody in the social sphere certain virtues such as solidarity and social responsibility. He and his colleagues were not afraid to risk everything in order to make this dream come true.

His book is a testimony in many aspects. Yet first of all it is a challenge. It shows an alternative way of thinking about politics. Looking at politics through the prism of virtue is currently in opposition to mainstream thinking which is focused on short-sighted interests. Thus, such a view is no less risky than the opposition activities described by Modzelewski. Responsibility, rational disagreement, altruism, a sense of shame – these are the author's axiological references. A sense of shame is described by

his "superior feeling." "In the circle of European culture we do not believe in group responsibility. We think that wrongdoers should take responsibility for their actions. However, if we really feel like a member of a national community, we should feel ashamed of crimes committed by other members of this community in its name," Modzelewski writes. According to Modzelewski, altruism "is an uncommon phenomenon. It appears in special circumstances, in the atmosphere of a common holiday, when ceremonial patterns of human behaviour come to light." The time of the Solidarity movement was an example of such a holiday.

Modzelewski has always been very challenging to himself when it comes to morality. On the one hand, he gives a testimony of the responsibility of engagement, on the other, his ability to analyse political reality in a detached manner is surprising. This is an unusual autobiography also because Karol Modzelewski enriches his book with a number of mini-essays, dedicated to the Polish Jews and two important Polish traditions: romanticism and positivism.

*Dorota Sieroń-Galusek*

*Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski*





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