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New Eastern Europe

THE EVE OF UNCERTAINTY

A debate on Europe's future | The rise of Eurasia | Poland and Germany through thick and thin

Yuri Dzhibladze: Let's not isolate Russia | **Anton Shekhovtsov:** Populism is a language of division

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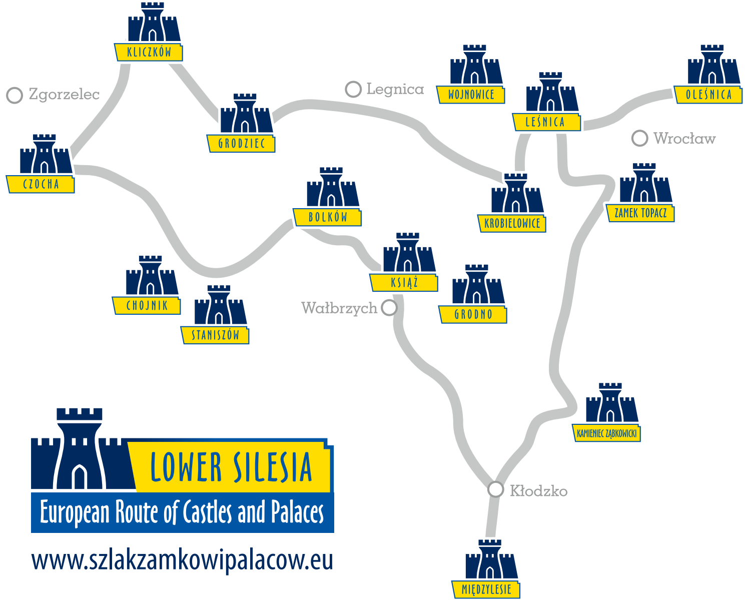

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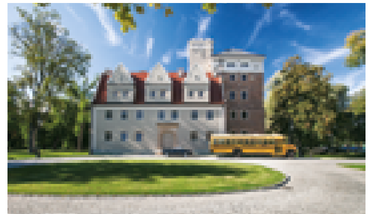
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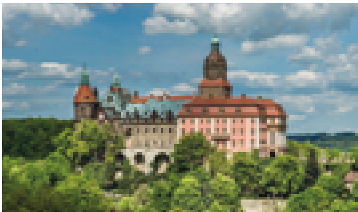
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New Eastern Europe

NEW EASTERN EUROPE IS A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN THREE POLISH PARTNERS

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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

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

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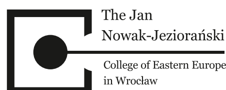

The College of Eastern Europe is a non-profit, non-governmental foundation founded on February 9th 2001 by Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, a former head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and a democratic activist. The foundation deals with cooperation between the nations of Central and Eastern Europe.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

How much control does today's Europe have over its own future? In light of the refugee crisis, risk of a British exit from the Europe Union, Russian aggression in Ukraine, the threat of terrorism and the war in Syria, all of which are connected, we make this the main theme of this issue of *New Eastern Europe*, believing that the old continent is at a historic moment of extreme uncertainty.

Thus, this issue aims at presenting what is at stake by publishing a debate of experts and thinkers from the region of Eastern Europe and beyond. While their voices do not provide much for optimism, they do make it clear that maintaining the status quo in Europe is not an option.

However, there are lessons from our most recent history that can help us comprehend the future direction of Europe in these uncertain times. This year Poland and Germany are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation. In a special section of this magazine, our authors from both Poland and Germany as well as Ukraine, outline the significant impact this treaty has had in shaping the new Europe. The authors also emphasise that in the face of the current crises we cannot forget the heritage of the last 25 years of Polish-German relations which can, as Basil Kerski concludes, serve as an example of how to build good relations in other neighbourhoods.

Also importantly, two authors of this issue highlight the need to reconfigure our understanding of the broader situation in the countries surrounding Russia or under its influence. As Adam Balcer notes, the notion of the "post-Soviet space" is becoming obsolete; while Bruno Maçães argues that Eurasia as a super-continent is re-emerging and the West needs to be prepared for this development. Both authors argue that the changing situation is a result of China's rise and Russia's decline.

Nevertheless, it seems, once again, that the region of Europe's East remains one of the major nexus points in the current geopolitical game: whether it is a shaping of a new world order or a reconfiguration of the current one. This magazine remains dedicated to help you not only understand these processes but also provide you with a wider perspective of their possible outcomes. We always appreciate the feedback we receive from you and always look forward to more. Thus, we continue to invite you to contact us at editors@neweasterneurope.eu.

Let's stay connected and informed!

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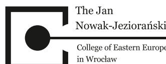

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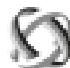

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The return of Eurasia?

BRUNO MAÇÃES

Are we entering a historical period when the supercontinent of Eurasia will make a comeback? In many respects, the answer to this question is a definitive “yes”. However, this process will not happen without difficulties. We should at least try to determine where divisions exist before allowing new historical trends to slowly start removing them.

Is globalisation under threat? We have become accustomed to asking this question in the context of what looks like the return of new forms of nationalism and national politics. However, the threat may actually come from the opposite side. Generally speaking, globalisation stands for a set of neutral rules. It will always be viewed as the opposite of an imperial political vision, which is based on a specific, exclusive vision of global politics, not a set of rules and institutions struggling to remain neutral. If globalisation is under threat, it may be from a new kind of imperial politics.

Unlike a few decades ago, we now understand that such imperial visions have returned to our political discourse. The United States had its universalist imperial moment with the Iraq war, which was always anchored in the attempt to export an “American way of doing politics” to the heart of the Middle East. We remember how in Europe this was heavily frowned upon. Despite this, the European Union was at the same time adopting its own form of universalism by developing an ambitious neighbourhood policy and deliberately trying to export its model of integration to Asia and Latin America. Later in the decade, as if to crown a full paradigm shift, Russia invaded Georgia with the clear aim of embarking on a path to change the world order according to its view of global politics.

Search for universalism

Henry Kissinger has eloquently spoken about the European embrace of multiplicity. The system of nation states that we normally trace back to Westphalia was, by historical standards, highly unusual. In order to understand why, we need to compare the modern system of international relations with modern science and the philosophy of science, whose foundations were being established at the same time. Modern science broke decisively with the notion of local truths. Water boils at different temperatures under different conditions, so we cannot view the knowledge of this law as being anything other than highly local. Modern science was not interested in local truths. In its search for the universal truth, it gradually became more and more abstract, breaking with the intuitions of common sense as it did so, in a process that culminated with Einsteinian physics.

It is remarkable that the same civilisation that became radically intolerant of local truths in science would embrace them so decisively in politics. The search for a universal empire was abandoned and the modern system of nation states enshrined the notion that each country has its own way of life, its own system of beliefs and that we should give up the dangerous enterprise of creating universal political truths. Distinct nationalities and dynasties were no longer seen as an anomaly to be expunged; not as a time of trouble or chaos, but rather as the norm, a form of multiplicity to be embraced rather than resisted. What has happened in recent decades was comparable to the revolutions that occurred in modern science. We once again became interested in the idea of a universal, global political system. Cognisant of the persistence of cultural diversity, the project was to devise a set of very abstract, neutral rules that would be compatible with cultural and religious diversity.

It is remarkable that the same civilisation that became radically intolerant of local truths in science would embrace them so decisively in politics.

Let me now come to my main topic: Europe, Asia and relations between the two. This is a very big topic, one that I can only scratch the surface of in this piece. It is remarkable that we accept these two realities without much discussion. The distinction between Europe and Asia has always been very unstable. During long periods, it simply has not existed, and even when we discover something resembling it in the past, this is often just a form of retrospective projection. Yet despite this, theorists and politicians rarely ask the question that would challenge many of their presuppositions and actions. What is the difference between Europe and Asia? Moreover, where does one end and the other begin?

As Japan and China, followed by most of East and South Asia, passionately embraced modern technology and capitalism, the distinction became increasingly difficult to make. It is certainly not the case that Europe embraces novelty while Asia is rooted in tradition. In fact, the opposite now tends to be true. Nor is there much mileage in grounding any viable distinction in matters such as the role of the extended family or sexual morality.

Are we entering a historical period when Eurasia, the supercontinent, will make a reappearance? In many respects, the answer must be yes. However, this process will not be without difficulties. We should at least try to see where the divisions lie before allowing historical trends to slowly remove them.

Different sensibilities

If one wants to develop a general approach to the different historical developments in Europe and Asia, a more promising route would be, as indicated above, the modern notion of neutrality and abstraction. European politics, philosophy and even art are all heavily indebted to these notions. Much of their strength comes from them, the belief in a quasi-absolute notion of the rule of law or tolerance for different ways of life. However, their weaknesses also seem to be related to the neutrality project. There is a wealth of content in Asian societies that stands in contrast to the cold and empty neutrality of European institutions and the science-like approach preferred by its state bureaucracies.

The main challenge of globalisation was always to reconcile an abstract and universal system of formal rules with a rich variety of people and customs. The conflict between Europe and Asia as it exists today is related to these different sensibilities. The question of how to reconcile them is therefore the great question of our time. Be that as it may, we are no longer so naïve as to believe that a set of rules and institutions can be truly neutral and universal. We live in a new age of empires, one where deeply conflicting and contradictory views of world order attempt to co-exist. Nowhere is this more evident than in Eurasia.

As minister for Europe, I was heavily involved in the preparations for the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in 2013 and I was even able to represent my country at the meeting. To this day, I remain deeply impressed by the extent to which the historical importance of that moment was misjudged and ignored. During the preparatory meetings, it was universally believed that Viktor Yanukovych, who at that time was the president of Ukraine, would ultimately give the nod to the agreement bringing Ukraine closer to the EU. All delays and hesitations were seen as a negotiating tactic meant to extract the most lenient approach possible from

Brussels regarding the required reforms. The EU bureaucracy has a very simple view of the world: states are captured by special interests, they may reform if there is pressure from the outside and if they do, then they will prosper.

In retrospect, we now see that the situation had a rather different historical meaning. On the one hand, it represented a push eastwards by the EU, which was now extending its wings over the borderlands of Europe. On the other hand, this push was bound to bring it into conflict with Russia. Russia, it is important to note, was also extending its wings, and with a lot more conviction.

Putin also sees the world according to two or three very simple notions, but they are almost the exact opposite to those that govern Europeans' views. Firstly, the Russian president does not believe in neutral, universal rules. Neutrality is only a pretence aimed at deceiving others. Power is always personal, but you may find it convenient to hide your power behind supposedly neutral rules and institutions. Secondly, Putin believes that the world of international politics is an arena of permanent rivalry and competition. Vladislav Surkov, a Putin ideologue, has developed an illuminating analogy: sovereignty is the political equivalent of economic competitiveness. If you take the analogy to its logical conclusion, you end up with something very close to the vision of world order that is prevalent in Moscow today: a world where states compete for sovereignty, much like companies compete for market share in the global economy.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Putin does not think along national lines. He thinks in terms of larger blocs and ultimately, in terms of world order. This is the concept about which his views have changed the most over time, slowly coming to the conclusion that if Russia is to preserve its own political order then that order needs to acquire some kind of global projection. You cannot resist the pressures that come from the world order. So either the world order will come to mirror Russia or Russia will mirror the liberal, western world order.

The Vilnius Summit was the moment when these two visions of the world came to a head. In practical terms, neither Russia nor Europe can afford not to think in terms of the coming political organisation for the whole Eurasian space. Both Russia and Europe should by now be fully aware of the extent of interdependency shaping this common space. Globalisation is a process that starts from below, from the clash between different blocs, rather than from universal rules. Yet there is also a radical difference here. While Brussels sees interdependency as a prompt for creating common institutions to manage it, Moscow sees it as a set of vulnerabilities and tries to take advantage of them. As Mark Leonard has argued, Putin is interested in weaponising interdependency.

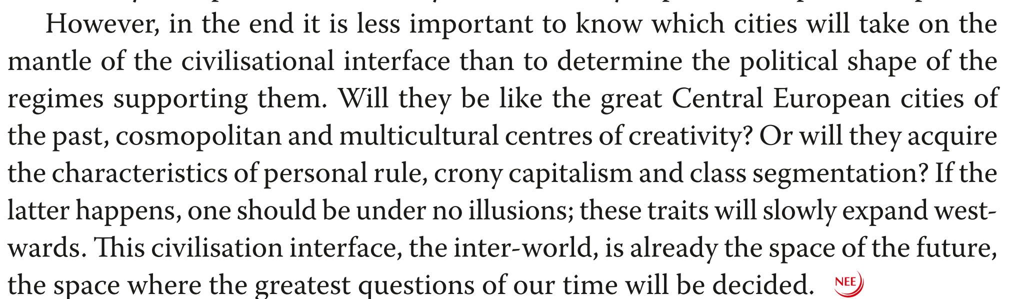
Somewhere between Asia and Europe

Interdependency takes the form of different flows across the Eurasian borderlands. We could say that whoever controls these flows will control Eurasia as a whole. Whoever does not think on a super-continental scale, perhaps in the belief that the flows can simply be stopped, will see their vulnerabilities increase dramatically. It would be difficult to argue that the European Union has been successful in managing the flows crossing the borderlands between Europe and Asia. The refugee crisis was an example of how Brussels was focused on the question of how to distribute the refugee burden within EU borders rather than managing these flows. When it comes to the new trade routes crossing this new supercontinent, it is China, not the EU, that has taken the lead. Ensuring control over energy links between Central Asia and Europe has been neglected in favour of strategically disastrous projects such as Nord Stream. Finally, when it comes to extending military reach over the borderlands, it is Russia that is seriously advancing its interests, most recently in Syria and Armenia.

When it comes to the new trade routes crossing this new supercontinent, it is China, not the EU, that has taken the lead.

I spent the last several months traveling across the Eurasian borderlands, from Russia to Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. These are regions that are still lost in the long valley separating the two continents. In their function as transaction nodes, these countries are almost entirely undeveloped and cannot even attempt to bridge different cultures and encourage trade, in goods as well as ideas. What interpenetration we see happening between Europe and Asia will develop here, through a civilisational process that we can encourage and direct. Cities like Warsaw, Kyiv or Baku already see their future development in these terms. Therefore, it is unfortunate that all three find themselves thrown into different layers of political uncertainty, which can only impair their rapid development.

However, in the end it is less important to know which cities will take on the mantle of the civilisational interface than to determine the political shape of the regimes supporting them. Will they be like the great Central European cities of the past, cosmopolitan and multicultural centres of creativity? Or will they acquire the characteristics of personal rule, crony capitalism and class segmentation? If the latter happens, one should be under no illusions; these traits will slowly expand westwards. This civilisation interface, the inter-world, is already the space of the future, the space where the greatest questions of our time will be decided.



Bruno Maçães is the former Europe minister for Portugal and the author of the forthcoming book *The new Eurasian supercontinent*.

A new Eurasian paradigm

ADAM BALCER

The concept of the "post-Soviet space" is becoming obsolete. Now is the time to fully abandon this terminology if we truly want to understand the processes that are currently taking place in the territories between Europe and China, India and the Middle East. In its place, we need to accept a new Eurasian paradigm that would recognise the post-Soviet space as a central part of Eurasia, as well as the fact that the borders between the former Soviet Union states and its neighbouring regions are becoming blurred. The consequences of this Copernican turnover will include a greater understanding of China as the main player in this region.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century according to Russia's president, Vladimir Putin. Even though the political situation in the region has changed dramatically in the last 25 years, the term "post-Soviet" is still being used to define the geopolitical space between the European Union, China, the Indian Peninsula and the Middle East. This post-Soviet paradigm, which unjustly preserves a conviction about Moscow's role as a sun around which the post-Soviet planets orbit, is already outdated. Naturally, Russia is and will remain the key continental power in this geopolitical space. However, its influence in the "near abroad", to use Kremlin terminology, has decisively weakened since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Conversely, the importance of other actors (especially the United States, the EU, China, Turkey and Iran) has noticeably increased. Paradoxically, the more Russia tries to maintain its influence, the more outdated the term "post-Soviet space" becomes. Russia's policies are coming up against increasing levels of resistance in its former colonies, which are searching for support elsewhere.

Lost potential

This situation leads to a waste of Russian potential and hinders the Kremlin's activities aimed at counteracting the influence of "foreign powers". Today, Russia itself is the target of EU, Chinese and Middle Eastern influence. Russia has limited opportunity to shape the policies of these players, a point that was painfully illustrated by the rapid decrease in oil prices supported by the states in the Persian Gulf, the imposition of western sanctions and the conclusion of contracts with China, the terms of which were unfavourable for Russia.

The need to change this paradigm is not just a result of the anniversary of the Soviet Union's collapse. It also stems from the fact that in recent years, all these processes have rapidly accelerated. In 2013 it became clear that the existing post-Soviet model of economic, social and political development was entering into decline. It was then that the current economic crisis affecting Russia, which hit the former colonies, began. In November 2013 Ukrainians started their Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv. These events later developed according to Hitchcock's rule: "A good film should start with an earthquake and be followed by rising tension." There is no doubt that the protests that took place in Kyiv between 2013–2014 caused Ukrainians to turn towards the EU and thus led to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Russia, in conflict with the West, decisively approached China, which further worsened the conditions that the more powerful Beijing decided to dictate. The system of communicating vessels deepened. Increased Chinese influence in Russia translated into China strengthening its position in the whole post-Soviet space, particularly Central Asia. The stronger China's position in Russia's neighbourhood is, the greater its field of manoeuvre towards Moscow.

The main tool facilitating China's expansion into Eurasia is its new, ambitious plan to establish a new economic trading belt, dubbed the "new Silk Road". Its creation was announced by China's president in September 2013, during a visit to Kazakhstan. Beijing has already allocated significant resources to implement it. The concept of the new Silk Road is the creation of a network of transport corridors which would connect China with the EU. This would mean the construction or modernisation of transportation links such as rail (including fast rail) and roads, as well as the creation of a stronger energy infrastructure and telecommunications network.

The foundation of the new Silk Road abolishes the old post-Soviet paradigm. New pathways will connect the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe with the Middle East, the Balkans and Central Europe. The blurring of borders between the post-Soviet space and its neighbourhood has also been confirmed by a decision made in July 2015 by the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, a body established

by the Central Asian countries (without Turkmenistan), Russia and China to accept India and Pakistan to join their group. Quite soon, this may also be joined by Iran, which has recently been freed from international sanctions.

Central Eurasia

Russia's military intervention in Syria is an even more explicit indication that a new Eurasian geopolitical space is emerging. This was the first military operation undertaken by Russia outside the post-Soviet space since the Soviet-Afghan War in 1979. It is also important to note that, among Bashar al-Assad's opponents, there are at least a few thousand fighters from the former Soviet Union. One of them is Omar Al-Shishani, a half-Chechen, half-Georgian fighter who is the commander of the military forces of the Islamic State in Syria.

The phenomena that have been mentioned above are only likely to deepen in the oncoming decades. Furthermore, they will be most likely accompanied by an increase in the deeply diverse Muslim population. Quite soon, there will be as many Muslims in the post-Soviet space than ethnic Russians. Therefore, these processes are creating a need to redefine the post-Soviet space (including Russia), together with its neighbouring regions. A better name for these territories would be Central Eurasia, which would be used in reference to the geopolitical space between China and the European Union which, to a large extent, is an integral part of a deeply diverse Muslim world. Such a redefinition will mean that Central Eurasia becomes, after the Pacific and the Atlantic, the third most important region in the world, where the biggest global actors and regional powers interact.

The territory of Central Eurasia is organised around the Great Steppe, the largest prairie flatland in the world, which spreads from the Carpathians to Korea and smoothly forms part of its neighbouring regions. Therefore, the emerging new order in Eurasia is largely a recreation of traditional historical ties (such as the "wider" version of Central Asia, which is made up of Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, a "Greater" Mongolia that includes the Russian republics of Buryatia, Tyva, Altai and the Chinese regions of Xinijang and Qinghai, northern Afghanistan, north-eastern Iran, the Volga Region, the Caucuses, Iran, Turkey, Manchuria, north-western China and the Russian Far East, as well as the Black Sea region, which includes Ukraine, the Balkans and Moldova).

Today, the term "Eurasia" has been hijacked by Russia, who have used it in the "the Eurasian Economic Union". As a result, the name now has purely negative connotations in the West. Nonetheless, we should use it in a more neutral geographical manner and not treat it as an axiological term. What is more, Europe's posi-

tion on the global stage will, to a great extent, depend on its ability to accept its own belonging to Eurasia and engagement in the geopolitical and economic games which go beyond its southern and eastern neighbourhoods, perceiving the latter as an integral part of a greater whole. If the European Union wants to remain relevant in global affairs, it needs to be active along the whole new Silk Road and define its eastern policy as a policy towards Eurasia, one that goes beyond relations with Russia and the former Soviet republics and is instead aimed primarily at China, Turkey and Iran.

If the European Union wants to remain relevant in global politics, it needs to define its eastern policy that goes beyond relations with Russia and the former Soviet republics.

Cultural influences

Geopolitical changes in Eurasia, aside from their political and economic context, should also be considered from a cultural and historical perspective. The issue of identity is of primary importance. The new Silk Road project is deeply rooted in the history of Central Asia and closely linked with the Great Steppe. The latter has played an important role as a highway during the great migrations from Asia to Europe, the Middle East and India. In fact, the nomads from the Great Steppe established the largest territorial powers in the history of mankind. Consider the Mongol Empire stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, from Vietnam to Lake Baikal. Their global horizons were ahead of their time. The Great Steppe also had a large impact on different forms of culture (clothing, weapons, cuisine, games, values and vocabulary) on both sides of Eurasia, from Eastern Europe to the Far East. Without it, there would have been no Ukrainian Cossacks or sarmatism, which was a unique, deeply oriental part of Polish culture. Japanese samurai culture would also not have existed, shaped as it was by contact with Korea, which was connected with the Manchurian steppe.

It is possible to anecdotally define the borders of the Great Steppe's influence by the places where people eat pierogi, a dish which comes from Central Asia. In this space, Russia is a newcomer. Its conquests are actually something quite novel. Russia conquered Belarus and most of Ukraine by the end of the 18th century, and added Moldova to this in the early 19th century. The conquest of the Caucuses ended in 1864, and that of Central Asia in the 1880s. It was in the 1850s and 1860s when China lost large chunks of territory to Russia in Central Asia, Siberia and the Far East.

Trade also developed at an unpreceded scale on the territories of the Great Steppe. This was an obvious precursor to our modern understanding of economic

globalisation. The network of trade routes that connected Europe and the Middle East with China and India was later called the Silk Road. In Central Asia, it was divided into many branches: through Iran, the Caucuses, Turkey to the Balkans; through Iran, Iraq and onwards to the Middle East via the steppes of present day Russia and Ukraine to Central Europe and finally, through Afghanistan to the Indian Peninsula. For thousands of years, the Caucuses operated on an East-West axis, between the Black and Caspian Seas. Its history was shaped by empires located in Anatolia (Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman) and modern day Iran (the Parthian Empire, the Sasanian Empire and the Safavid Dynasty).

As a result, the Caucuses should be regarded as an integral element of the Middle East. It is no coincidence that Shota Rustaveli, the medieval Georgian author of the epic poem "The knight in the panther's skin" called his work a Persian poem, basing his inspiration on Iranian literature. On the other hand, people from the Caucuses played an important role in the history of the Byzantine and the Ottoman Empires, as well as that of Iran and even the Arab world. A few of the most distinct Byzantine emperors (Hercalius II and Basil II) had Ottoman roots. From the 15th century until 1925, Iran was ruled by Azeri dynasties led by the Safavids. Even today, Iran is inhabited by more Azeri than Azerbaijan. As before, they are overrepresented among the ruling elite. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini was an Azeri. In the 16th and 17th centuries, when Iran was at the peak of its power, the Georgians and Armenians both played key roles; they created a district called New Julfa in Isfahan (central Iran). Its trade representations operated from Calcutta to Acapulco.

Eurasian dragon

Until the First World War, there were more Armenians in Turkey and Iran than there were in Russia. Turkey is responsible for a genocide that defined Armenian identity in the 20th century. However, before this took place, the Armenians had for centuries made a huge contribution to the development of Turkish culture and were the authors of many influential novels, theatre plays, beautiful palaces and mosques. For centuries, the Turkish elite included people of Caucasian origin (Cherkess, Georgians and Abkhazians). Today, we can count famous writers (Orhan Pamuk) and influential politicians (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) amongst their ranks.

For centuries, Central Asia has been closely connected to the Middle East and China, but less so to Russia. It was also the cradle of the two largest civilisations in the history of the Muslim world, the Ottomans and the Mongols. It was Babur, from Fergana in Uzbekistan, who in the 16th century conquered the Indian Pen-

insula, creating the Great Mongol Empire. This also explains why the Muslim version of Hindi is called Urdu, which in Turkish means an army (*ordu*), hence the English word "horde".

Central Asia was also religiously linked with the Middle East. It was home to Zarathustra, the founder of the Iranian religion to whom the three religions of Abraham (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) owe their ideas about salvation, resurrection and heaven and hell. In the early Middle Ages, Central Asia became influenced by Christianity, which gave it the Mongolian alphabet and then Islam. The Muslims from Central Asia also contributed to the development of Islamic theology and mysticism. The latter was shaped by Buddhism, which at the time was very popular in Central Asia.

No state has as much potential and as many strong connections with Central Asia as China.

No state has as much potential and as many strong connections with Central Asia as China. For hundreds of years, China ruled, both directly and indirectly, over a large part of Siberia and Central Asia, which still bear clear traces of Chinese culture. A few of the most important dynasties ruling China had Mongolian, Manchurian and even Turkish, roots. The Qin dynasty, who gave China its name, depended on pro-Turkish people. One of the greatest emperors in the history of China was Kublai Khan (around 1215–1294), grandson of Genghis Khan. He ruled from the capital in Karakorum, then Beijing (called Khanbaliq, the capital of Khan), holding sway over the largest empire in the history of the world.

The empire of Genghis Khan was created on the foundations of the Mongolian-Chinese state of Qara Khitai, which brought the Chinese language, calligraphy and political system to Central Asia, combining them with steppe tradition. Belonging to the steppe tradition is a particularly important strand in China's argument to play the leading role in Eurasia today. Russia, by slowly accepting the role of China as an older brother, also refers to its heritage of Mongol-Chinese rule. Dimitri Trenin, head of Carnegie Moscow, while explaining Russia's point of view towards the West since its annexation of Crimea, described the Chinese-Russian alliance by comparing Putin to "one of the most revered Russian heroes from medieval history, Prince St. Alexander Nevsky, [who] successfully fought western invaders while remaining loyal to the Mongol khans."

Better off together?

The deterioration in Russia's relations with the West after its aggression towards Ukraine has led to an unprecedented rapprochement between Moscow and Bei-

jing, accelerating processes which have been taking place for the last 20 years. Both countries talk about an alliance of "equal partners" who do not recognise the global dominance of the United States. However, it is an open secret that Washington and Beijing treat each other as first league super powers and see Russia as a second rank player. China's involvement in Russia's trade balance has been growing for many years now. Moreover, China has recently strengthened its position as Russia's most important trade partner. In 2015 its share reached 12 per cent, while the EU's share in Russian trade has been shrinking since 2013. Despite this increase, looking ahead, China will not be as important of a trade partner for Russia as the entire EU. However, most probably China will strengthen its position of the most important economic state partner of Russia at the expense of EU countries.

Based on the estimations of the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation, Chinese investments and contracts in Russia in 2013–2015 reached 18.5 billion US dollars. Before 2013 China would have needed over a decade to invest such sums in Russia. In May and November 2014 China and Russia signed two large energy agreements regarding the construction of two natural gas pipelines. In 2014 China became the main source of credit for the non-financial sector in Russia. Due to western sanctions, a few Russian banks began issuing bonds in Chinese yuan. Russian authorities also announced that by the middle of 2016, they would also start issuing state bonds. Co-operation in the sphere of security has also reached an unprecedented level. For example, Moscow has agreed to sell sophisticated S-400 anti-aircraft missiles and Su-35 fighter jets to Beijing. Further-

more, there has been a clear increase in the number of common military exercises, including, for the first time, manoeuvres in the East China Sea that were directed against Japan and the US.

Within the framework of the new Silk Road, there has been a clear acceleration in the Chinese economic offensive in Central Asia. The aforementioned American think tanks estimated that Chinese investments and contracts in Kazakhstan in 2013–2015 reached nearly $11 billion. By comparison, China invested only slightly more than this in Kazakhstan between 2005 and 2012. What is more, in 2015, China concluded an agreement on economic co-operation with Kazakhstan which had a value of over $50 billion. Since 2013 China has also decisively intensified its economic relations with Uzbekistan, the fourth largest economy in post-Soviet territory when measured by the purchasing power (it recently surpassed Belarus) and the third most populous country. In 2014 China signed an agreement with Uzbekistan worth six billion US dollars, which was to be implemented in 2015–2018. In the same year Uzbekistan decided to increase gas exports to China by 80 per cent. As a result, the total Uzbek export to China more than doubled in the first half of 2015. According to Uzbek data China has surpassed Russia and became Uzbekistan's largest trade partner (with a 20 per cent share).

Even though Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucuses will never be as important for China as Central Asia or Russia, its role in the economies of the Eastern Partnership states has increased. The best example of this is Ukraine. In 2012 China's share in Ukraine's trade balance was 4.5 times smaller than that of Russia. By 2015 this gap had more than halved. As a result, China has become Ukraine's second most important trade partner (nearly ten per cent of its entire trade volume). In Georgia's case, China's share in its trade balance is currently equal to Russia's share. Moreover, this does not refer solely to imports from China. Since 2013 Georgian exports to China have increased fourfold, while Chinese investments constituted around ten per cent of foreign direct investment into Georgia in the period 2013–2015.

Growing divide

When Putin came to power in 2000, Russia's economy was almost 2.5 times smaller than China's. According to forecasts by the International Monetary Fund, by 2020, China's economy will be seven times larger than Russia. Before the crisis, Russia's GDP was growing at more or less two-thirds the rate of China's. However, the 2009 global economic crisis caused an earthquake. Russia's economy shrunk by nearly eight per cent, while China maintained its fast pace of growth

(over nine per cent). In the period 2010–2012 China's rate of development was twice as fast as Russia's. Despite a slowdown in Chinese growth to six/seven per cent per year, if the economy continues to develop at this rate until 2020, the gap in the performance between Russia and China's economies will radically deepen. Most probably, in the middle of the next decade the Chinese will become much richer than Russians. Taking into account these economic indicators, it is likely that the asymmetry in their relations will also increase.

However, nature does not like a vacuum. The worsening economic conditions in Russia will provide more space for Chinese firms and capital in Central Asia, the Caucuses and Eastern Europe. Naturally, Russia's military potential, including the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, is the Kremlin's insurance policy, which protects it against Chinese dominance. There is also a popular belief that it is only a matter of time until Russia extricates itself from its deepening dependence on China, as the West needs Moscow to balance Beijing's influence. However, this theory underestimates China's long-term strategy, which will not allow to impassively observe the weakening of Chinese influence in Russia.

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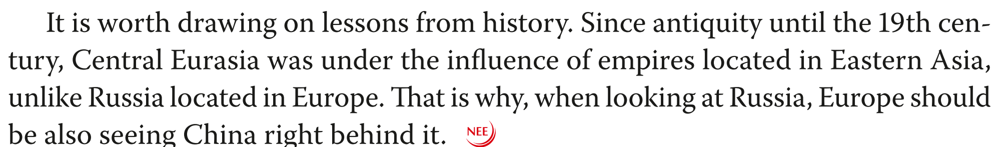
It is worth drawing on lessons from history. Since antiquity until the 19th century, Central Eurasia was under the influence of empires located in Eastern Asia, unlike Russia located in Europe. That is why, when looking at Russia, Europe should be also seeing China right behind it.



Translated by Iwona Reichardt

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A brief history of "Orbanisation"

JÁNOS SZÉKY

As international organisations tend to neglect the institutional quality of democracies almost completely, the Victor Orbán government in Hungary has been able to successfully argue that everything they do is perfectly legal. The reason Fidesz can use this argument is because of the outside world's total ignorance of the unique and undemocratic nature of the Hungarian system of political institutions as a whole. What is more, it was not Fidesz that originally created this system in 2010–11; it dates back to 1989.

On the eve of the European Commission's decision to launch a rule-of-law monitoring process on Poland, Rui Tavares remarked that the EC debate would lead nowhere if Hungary's case was not discussed in parallel. Back in 2013 Tavares was an independent (Green-affiliated) MEP from Portugal and was the rapporteur on the situation of fundamental rights in Hungary. Summing up a very critical report, he proposed setting up the "Copenhagen Commission", a new European institution that would monitor adherence to the Copenhagen criteria of accession in all member states. In his view, the present rule-of-law mechanism, the powers of which are vested in the EC and which concentrates on individual member states, is a "diluted version" of his original proposal and holds no guarantees against double standards.

Anyone familiar with both the Hungarian and Polish situation (and with EU politicking) can see how Hungary got away with offenses whose sum total was much worse than the recent Polish legislation. Yes, both governments targeted the

media and the constitutional court soon after they won elections. However, Polish attempts to control them have been much more limited than what the Hungarian government achieved in 2010. Moreover, Fidesz, with its constitutional majority between 2010 and 2014, had all the means to make the new system unchangeable until another party or coalition won a two-thirds majority, a situation that it also had the power to prevent.

Institutional blindness

Where do these double standards come from? Since the Law and Justice (PiS) government found itself in conflict with Brussels, several observers pointed out something that should have been noticed years ago. Fidesz is a member of the European People's Party, who have many votes in the European Parliament that act like a shield to protect them. This works reliably well in crisis situations, even if Fidesz politicians openly deny some of the basic Christian democratic values summed up in the Bucharest Platform. By contrast, Poland's PiS belongs to the European Conservatives and Reformers party, a much smaller alliance, so it enjoys no such protection.

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Another reason for the lack of effective measures has been Brussels' and Strasbourg's inability to get a grip on the Hungarian situation. The problem comes from their focus on the rule of law. Although Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union also mentions freedom and democracy among the EU's basic values, renitent member-states are criticised mostly (or even solely) for their deficiencies in maintaining the rule of law. This may be due to the fact that making a list of what constitutes "the rule of law" is much easier than evaluating the state of democracy as a complex structure of institutions, values and law. In other words, it is easy to measure a democracy by liberal standards because fundamental rights and the general concept of the rule of law are universal, whereas there are no universal rules for the representative, institutional aspect of democracy.

As international organisations tend to neglect the institutional quality of democracies almost completely (as this enables them to expend the minimum amount of intellectual effort), the Orbán government can argue that everything it does is perfectly legal (for it is seamlessly legal most of the time), as if freedom and democracy were simply a legal matter. The reason Fidesz can use this argument is

because of the outside world's total ignorance of the unique and undemocratic nature of the Hungarian system of political institutions as a whole. By scrutinising the Hungarian government's measures according to a legal standard and nothing else, international organisations have no clue as to what is wrong with Hungarian democracy. Even within Hungary, very few people are fully aware of this, apart from those in Fidesz, who have the power to shape and reshape the system whenever they want. Furthermore, it was not Fidesz that originally created this system in 2010–11; it dates back to 1989.

Unrepresentative democracy

There is an unwritten standard for the system of democratic institutions in the post-communist region, from which Hungary deviates on several key points. In most of these countries, the electoral system is proportional. The number of political parties is more or less in flux, insofar as it is easy to establish a new party, and, more importantly, to get that party into parliament and obtain government positions. The president is directly elected. The legislature is usually bicameral. If it is not, as is the case with Estonia and Slovakia, the freely elected local or regional governments are relatively strong. Apart from the constitution, bills are generally passed with a simple majority, as well as nominations to non-partisan public positions. The constitutional court is full of political nominees, but it operates within the legal sphere. This set-up is based on an unwritten rule so natural that it is taken for granted: that in a democracy, checks and balances should be based as closely on the outcome of free and fair elections (whether legislative, presidential or local) as possible. All the deficiencies in the rule of law can be corrected sooner or later, because the under-structure, representative democracy based on free and fair elections, is sound and solid.

This is not the case with Hungary. The structure upon which the Hungarian reform communist government and the opposition agreed to in the late summer of 1989 (before the Eastern European revolutions took place), which was embodied in a temporary constitution that was only fine-tuned after the first set of elections, was the exact opposite of the "regional standard" described above. This is evidenced by the fact that it remained in force until 2010–11, when Fidesz did not dismantle it (as most observers assumed), but simply made full use of its possibilities and bent it further to meet their own needs.

The Hungarian electoral system is heavily disproportional, as the seats won in a multitude of small "individual" constituencies (46 per cent of the total seats until 2010, 53 per cent since then) are added to seats won through party lists. The electoral

maths favours the largest (or largest two) parties. In this way, the socialist-liberal coalition was able to achieve a 72 per cent majority in 1994 with just 50 per cent of the popular vote and Fidesz was able to secure a narrow two-thirds majority in both 2010 and 2014 with just 54 and 45 per cent of the vote respectively.

The electoral system, combined with Hungary's ideological traditions of nationalist collectivism and statism, also brings a certain rigidity to the party system. It is extremely difficult for a new party to survive, especially one without a populist agenda. On the eve of the 2010 elections, five of the six parties elected in 1990 were still in parliament and not a single newcomer had any seats yet in the House (Jobbik, a "national radical" party emerged as a major force in the previous year's EP elections, while LMP, a declaredly non-liberal and anti-globalist Green Party was also gaining support, so it was also able to achieve the five percent threshold for the first time in 2010). The president is elected indirectly by the parliament. If an attempt at a two-thirds consensus fails, a simple majority is enough in the second round of voting (until 2011, this applied in the third round). The legislature is unicameral while the local governments' functions have been reduced to what Hungarians call *városszépészet* ("city-beautifying", as in beauty parlour), funded almost entirely from the central budget and EU funds. Regional (county-level) self-government is virtually non-existent. Last but not least, there are several dozen "cardinal" laws whose enactment or amendment requires a qualified majority, while nominations to most non-partisan positions, including membership of the Constitutional Court and the presidency of the media council, also require a two-thirds majority.

> Hungary's electoral system, combined with its ideological traditions of nationalist collectivism and statism, had brought a certain rigidity to the party system. It was difficult for any new non-populist party to survive.

Each of these features, or elements resembling them, are part of one or more democratic systems found in other countries (a common argument used by Fidesz's propagandists), but together, they add up to a political structure which is as far removed from the outcomes of free elections as possible. Moreover, this structure was in place well before 2010. The main reason why it did not result in outright tyranny before was the simple fact that no party could achieve a two-thirds majority.

The founding fathers (mostly legal experts) perceived this danger in 1989 and included institutional checks and balances in the system. One was the network of local governments. However, as stated earlier, these were progressively starved and emptied out (in 1990, they received 50 per cent of local income taxes; in 2012, they received zero per cent. Even schools and hospitals were removed from their

control). The other was the Constitutional Court, which became uniquely powerful in the absence of freely elected, powerful institutions or functionaries other than the central government.

The introduction of *actio popularis* made it possible for any citizen to ask for the review of any legislative act, except for the constitution itself. This looks perfectly democratic at first glance. However, as we have seen, members of the court were elected by the parliament in a two-thirds majority electoral process. That is, after secret backroom bargaining between the political parties. So what looked like the empowerment of the ordinary citizen was, in fact, a shortcut between a random extra-parliamentary agent and a body which was not democratically elected, making it possible for political parties to use stooges or dupes to avoid or nullify the democratic processes of legislation.

The guiding principle in the selection of constitutional judges was supposed to be parity (one from the Right, one from the Left), but in 2004, after EU accession, the socialists made the mistake of sending one of "their" judges, an eminent legal scholar, to the EU General Court in Luxembourg. This meant that from then on, Fidesz sympathisers were in the majority. That is, in de facto opposition to the socialist-led governments that ruled until the 2010 elections. As any public mention of political bias in the court's deliberation was taboo, this was celebrated as a textbook example of the separation of powers by Fidesz, who used this mechanism quite frequently and profited from it. It was also grudgingly acknowledged by the government, which did not want to look undemocratic.

An improbable referendum

Those who find parallels between the Hungarian and the Polish case cite "strikingly similar attacks against the Constitutional Court", yet they seldom know (or remember) what comprised these attacks in Hungary. Some months after the 2010 elections, following a court ruling about the unconstitutionality of new special taxes, the Fidesz-dominated parliament, through a constitutional amendment, simply deprived the court of its powers to nullify budgetary and tax legislation, except for cases of infringements on fundamental rights. There was outrage at home, especially within the legal profession, and abroad, where observers only seemed to notice the "attack against the rule of law," or "dismantling the system of checks and balances". However, the average voter did not care and the opposition parties did not press the issue for too long. Neither did the Constitutional Court, apart from some mild grumbling, as if the amendment was more or less normal, which, in fact, it was.

Photo: P. Tracz/KP

Meeting of Prime Minister of Poland Beata Szydło with Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán on February 8th 2016.

What foreign observers did not know, and the Hungarian public did not (want to) remember, was the history preceding the government's decision. In 2006 the socialist-liberal coalition introduced a small fee, approximately one euro, for a visit to one's general practitioner or a medical centre. They also introduced a similarly low contribution to hospital expenses, though not for the medical care itself. In late 2006, after Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's notorious secret speech leaked out, in which he confessed, "we lied in the morning, at noon and in the evening", Orbán announced that Fidesz would initiate a referendum against the government's austerity measures, including the medical "visitation fee", hospital fare, and college tuition fees, with the explicit intention of forcing the government out of office. As the constitution and the Referendum Act prohibited holding referenda on issues that concerned the budget, or the government's programme once it is officially submitted to parliament, political observers were left wondering what kind of legal trickery Fidesz's lawyers would use to get around the prohibition. Yet there was no need for that.

Péter Paczolay, another eminent legal scholar and a Fidesz nominee to the Constitutional Court, managed to think up suitably contorted interpretations for the terms "budget" and "the government's programme". According to his logic, the "budget"

equals the Budget Act for the current fiscal year plus budget expenditures beyond that, but not budget revenues (so "visitation fees," as revenue, are not a budgetary matter). He also concluded that the government's programme is, "in its substance", not the programme of the government as one might naively think, but rather an occasion for an initial vote of confidence, so all of its constituent parts can be put to a referendum separately and the prohibition is valid only for the "whole" of it. Clearly, these arguments go against the foundations of representative democracy, where taxation is not a matter of consensus and where the government, which can implement its programme as a result of winning free elections, cannot be legally bound during its ruling term by referenda initiated by the opposition whenever they think it is convenient, especially on economic matters.

Soon after the referendum that dealt the coup de grâce to Hungarian representative democracy with an overwhelming majority of "ayes" ("Do you want to stop paying these fees?" "Yes, of course!") was held in April 2008, Paczolay, who was seen as a moderate conservative and therefore acceptable to the government, was elected president of the Constitutional Court. He maintained this role after the elections, when the Orbán government prevented the court from making any further decisions concerning taxation and the budget. In 2007 they needed it. Now, they do not.

The case of the media

In 2010 legislation was passed in Hungary that made it possible for a media council, whose members were nominated by a single party (and a ministry-like media authority to back it up) to control the whole media, including commercial and NGO radio and television stations, large websites and even the print press. Alongside this, the political programmes on Hungarian public radio and television (including the state news agency) were being transformed into vehicles of unabashed government propaganda, yet this did not even reach the European Commission's threshold of consciousness. Some of the planned measures were so atrocious (including potentially crippling fines for newspapers that committed certain vaguely defined offences) that the journalistic profession abroad was outraged. Brussels could not afford to ignore the scandal, but the European Commission was able to find only three or four points where the voluminous legal text (255 articles put together) explicitly contravened EU law (Note: there is no EU directive about the freedom of the press as it is taken for granted).

What they did not know, and what people in Hungary wanted to forget, were the events leading up to the creation of the new media law. Much like the entire

system of political institutions back in 1989–90, the "old'" Media Law of 1996 was the result of a hard-earned compromise between the main political parties which, just like the general political set-up, became obsolete within a few years but remained in force much longer. The parties in the mid-1990s were interested in large terrestrial television channels and, to some extent, radio stations with nationwide coverage because they could reach most people and were considered to be highly profitable once commercialised. As the printed press had a much smaller audience and was suffering from increasing losses, it was left alone.

In the spirit of a snarling compromise, the 1996 law made a fetish out of "balancedness", which meant either the absence, or mutual neutralisation, of discernible political opinions. Of course, this makes a mockery of press freedom. The law also provided for a parity (or at least relative balance through the two-thirds rule) between the government and the opposition in the National Radio and Television Board (ORTT) and the trusteeship boards of public radio and television, which inevitably resulted in shady backroom deals, both political and financial. That way, it was easy to control the public media, which at the time consisted of two large terrestrial television stations and two nationwide commercial radio companies, but the advent of online media, the development of cable networks with a host of small stations and the prospect of digitalisation made this arrangement useless, except for the old games of corruption and creeping political occupation.

Fidesz, with its deep benches of dynamic and unscrupulous businessmen and lawyers, began to encroach on the public media and tilt the balance in commercial media methodically in its favour. By contrast, the Hungarian Socialist Party was foolishly self-confident, did not sense any change and thus gradually lost ground. The socialists' media experts co-operated with those in Fidesz in writing progressively more repressive and censorship heavy drafts of a new "up-to-date" media law. The most recent version, completed in early 2009, was almost as vicious as Fidesz's own media laws turned out to be less than two years later.

Just months before the 2010 elections, by which point their shattering defeat already looked certain, the socialists made a backroom deal with Fidesz about the frequencies of the two nationwide commercial radio stations. One frequency package was allotted to a company close to Fidesz and one to a firm close to the socialists. The ruse was there for everyone to see, since it was clear that their business plans were absurd, not viable in a free market and that the companies would only avoid short-term bankruptcy with the help of massive government intervention (through non-business-related ads). The president of the ORTT resigned in protest. Under the new government, the "socialist" radio frequency duly went bankrupt in 2012, an event that seemed grimly inevitable to everyone except the socialists.

When Fidesz won the elections in 2010, the leftist-liberal audience, which had once taken its dominance for granted, was left with a small radio station (Klubrádió), a small TV station (ATV Magyarország) and two quality newspapers whose circulation was dwindling. With the exception of ATV, which has been supported by the Congregation of Faith, a large, charismatic Pentecostal church, they were all hit hard by the loss of government sponsorship and had little or no influence in the public sphere. By the time liberal-minded people in Hungary and abroad began to mourn the demise of media freedom, the vast majority of the Hungarian public and even the media professionals had long forgotten what freedom of the press was all about. They could rightly have asked: what is there to mourn?

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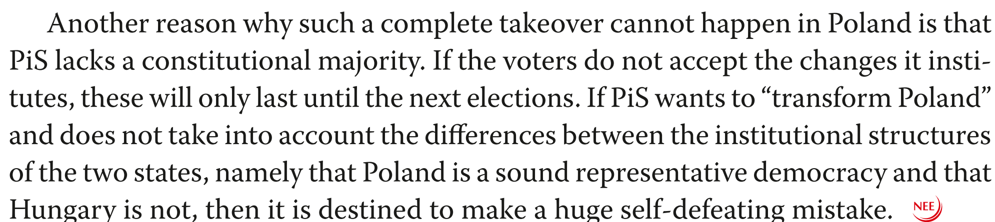
Two fundamental differences

In this context, it is difficult to consider the term "Orbanisation" valid, or to contemplate that there is a real threat of such a process occurring in Poland. The concept is based on the assumption that Orbán did something radically new to Hungary; he "Orbanised" it (a transitive verb with an object) and shaped it in his own image. In reality, "Orbanisation" is something that "Hungary" (the Hungarian political community) has done to itself since 1989. Orbán just developed the possibilities already present in the pre-2010 system. He began to do that well before 2010 and was met with no effective resistance, either at home or abroad.



Another reason why such a complete takeover cannot happen in Poland is that PiS lacks a constitutional majority. If the voters do not accept the changes it institutes, these will only last until the next elections. If PiS wants to "transform Poland" and does not take into account the differences between the institutional structures of the two states, namely that Poland is a sound representative democracy and that Hungary is not, then it is destined to make a huge self-defeating mistake.

János Széky is an editor at *Élet és Irodalom* (*Life and Literature*), a weekly Hungarian newspaper about literature and politics.

Seeking the truth in Nemtsov's assassination

VADIM PROKHOROV AND ANASTASIA SERGEEVA

The official investigation into the death of Boris Nemtsov has concluded that it was an assassination, however all attempts are being made to bury any links to Ramzan Kadyrov and the Kremlin and only prosecute the assassins who carried out the crime. Yet, the evidence shows that justice should be found beyond the perpetrators. In this text, on behalf of the Nemtsov family, we present the facts known from the preliminary investigation in the hope that this material will help preserve the truth about Boris' assassination.

By the end of 2014 the Russian society faced a serious economic downturn for the first time since the crisis of 2008. The Kremlin turned out to be unable to solve the issues, such as a drop in state revenue, the devaluation of the rouble and inflation. The challenges that had been outlined by leading Russian economists earlier in 2011–2012 became the new reality. Despite a massive propaganda campaign, reinforced with pseudo-patriotic actions against neighbouring countries, the Kremlin could not continue controlling the situation, even among the regional elite, without new repressions.

At the same time, Vladimir Putin and his inner circle faced a new threat: the so-called "non-systemic" opposition (opposition groups that are not controlled by the Kremlin). Despite the constant persecution of their leaders and activists, these groups continued to function and even began planning a large coalition campaign.

Its agenda planned to show a positive alternative to the current form of social-economic development in Russia. They aimed to provide a glimpse of the future in Russia after Putin and wanted to reach a wider range of citizens than their previous messages, based on fundamental human rights and democracy promotion.

Pain and tragedy

In February 2015 the oppositional democratic movement was busily preparing the first large rally of its campaign. This process was accompanied by outside attempts to discredit the movement by creating internal doubts, conflicts and disagreement. Regardless, it moved forward and the new outlines of a future democratic coalition were taking shape. For the first time since 2012, activists and leaders set out the task of engaging new social groups. In order to solve this knotty issue, canvassing was conducted in crowded areas of Moscow and other cities. The final days before the rally were dynamic and active. Leaflets and posters for the March 1st event, called "Spring" (Весна), attracted people with their colours and ideas to wake up society after a long, wintery depression.

The evening of February 27th in Moscow was wet, warm and foggy. As night approached, Muscovites returned home from their offices and Friday parties. A tweet by opposition leader Ilya Yashin exploded on social media and immediately spread offline. It read "Nemtsov is shot. He's dead." These words represented all the pain and tragedy that was shared by thousands of people around the world. One year after the tragedy, this pain has not lessened, although Boris is still alive in the memory of those hundreds of thousands of people.

Despite his death, his role in Russia is still very meaningful. An unofficial monument has been sustained at the assassination site throughout the whole year; flowers, candles, portraits and photos, posters and personal letters have been brought and delivered to it from all manner of different places. Although the local authorities are trying to eliminate it, activists keep returning with new photos and flowers. They guard the memorial, day and night, to prevent its destruction by either the public authorities or hooligans. People who come to Moscow are bound by honour to visit and leave something for Boris.

Meanwhile the official investigation continues. The case files are growing and new verifications of the links between this crime and high-level Kremlin officials are emerging. In this situation, attempts by Vladimir Putin and Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic, to escape a serious conversation look like a confession to those who are well-informed about the crime and close to its investigation. Unfortunately, there are not many of them, either inside or outside of Russia.

Nevertheless, there is material evidence which is ready and it is important to share it with a larger audience. When it was being prepared, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation announced the end of its investigation, concluding that it was an assassination, and opened a new separate case to search for those who had ordered the assassination and those who had carried it out. The official announcement showed attempts to bury links to Kadyrov and the Kremlin and to only prosecute the assassins. The Nemtsov family's lawyers will be able to read the case files and then they see if they are relevant. For now, we can only present what is known from the preliminary investigation. We hope this material will help preserve the truth about Boris' assassination.

Putting the pieces together

The direct perpetrators of the murder were caught by the Investigative Committee a week after the tragedy. During the first part of March 2015 the preliminary picture of the crime and the preparations for it were reconstructed. Five suspects were detained in connection with the assassination, all of them from the Chechen republic. Their names were Zaur Dadaev, Anzor Gubashev, Shadid Gubashev, Tamerlan Eskerkhanov and Khamzat Bakhaev. A sixth suspect, Beslan Shavanov, blew himself up with a grenade according to the official version of events, but there is also a possibility that Special Forces officers were ordered to kill him.

Dadaev and Shavanov are officers in the "North" battalion. Officially, this is part of the internal army of the ministry of internal affairs but in reality, they are the private troops of Ramzan Kadyrov. The head of the battalion is Alibek Delimkhanov, the brother of Adam Delimkhanov, an MP who is essentially the second-in-command of Chechnya after Kadyrov. According to the official investigation, Zaur Dadaev was the direct perpetrator of the assassination, the person who fired six shots into the back of Boris Nemtsov, with five of them reaching their target. Another suspect, Tamerlan Eskerkhanov, was a policeman in the Shelkovsk regional department of interior affairs in the Chechen republic. The head of this department is Vakha Geremeev, a cousin of Adam Delimkhanov, the MP, and a brother of Sulejman Geremeev, a senator. Sulejman Geremeev is a person of interest in several other criminal cases, including the assassination of one of the Yamadaev brothers.

From the very beginning, the official investigation into Boris Nemstov's assassination has held the view that Ruslan Geremeev, another cousin of Adam Delimkhanov and a nephew of Sulejman Geremeev, was also part of the group of assassins. His whereabouts are currently unknown. According to the official investiga-

tion, the organisers and perpetrators of the assassination are still unidentified. On October 31st 2015 charges were brought against Ruslan Mukhudinov in absentia, who, according to the official investigation, was one of the organisers of the crime. His whereabouts are also unknown. Insiders believe that Mukhudinov was the driver and assistant to Ruslan Geremeev, who they argue could not have acted alone in this case. Apparently, he had also taken part in the preparations, but had no personal motive to eliminate Nemtsov; he was just carrying out orders.

Taking all of this into consideration, it was quite absurd to think that Zaur Dadaev suddenly decided to kill Nemtsov as revenge for his "active support of the *Charlie Hebdo* campaign", an issue on which Nemtsov did not actively comment. Nevertheless, this was the initial explanation for the motives underpinning the assassination announced by the authorities. Moreover, this version was used by the official investigation until it became clear that it was untenable. It was later revealed that the initial preparations for the murder took place in September 2014. It was also embarrassing for the officers of the Investigative Committee, as well as for the official speaker of the committee, Vladimir Markin, who had said that Mukhudinov was an organiser and perpetrator of the assassination.

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Clan system

Why did the investigation, which was so effective at the beginning, suddenly stop and begin to look like a farce? The answer lies on the surface. The Chechen Republic is a clan based society and every person has strong ties within his/her clan. Based on clan tradition, by skilfully dividing, suppressing and playing them off against each other, Ramzan Kadyrov has created a system that can now reveal the path to the actual interested parties in Nemtsov's assassination. The investigation has now been blocked so as to avoid any possible leaks emerging from intermediaries in Kadyrov's clan.

As mentioned above, all the participants in the assassination are closely connected to Kadyrov's closest partners and friends, Adam Delimkhanov and Sulejman Geremeev. Chechnya's clan system is organised in such a way that no clan members can act without the permission of the clan authority. In other words, Ruslan Mukhudinov and Ruslan Geremeev would not have been able to organise the crime without a direct order from, as well as close consultation with, Alibek,

Delimkhanovs or Geremeev. Moreover, they belong to the close circle of Ramzan Kadyrov and are under the full control of the "master" of the Chechen Republic.

Therefore, it is becoming clear that the assassination could not have been prepared without a direct order from and coordination with the leader of Chechnya and his inner circle. This is further evidenced by what happened after investigators attempted to interrogate Ruslan Geremeev, who was openly "covered" and supported by the head of the Chechen republic with both words of approbation and by his personal guard, when they refused to let investigators into the village where Geremeev was hiding. It is obvious that together with the arrest of Geremeev, the investigators should interrogate Ramzan Kadyrov and those closest to him, namely Alibek, Delimkhanov and Geremeev.

It is becoming obvious that the assassination could not have been prepared without direct orders from and coordination with the leader of Chechnya and his inner circle.

On April 22nd 2015 Vadim Prokhorov and Olga Mikhailova, the lawyers representing the Nemtsov family, requested the interrogation of several people, including Ramzan Kadyrov. However, the Investigative Committee refused, stating that the "investigation is substantive in its actions and there are no grounds for an interrogation of Kadyrov and his inner circle". The court approved the decision of the Investigative Committee and also supported Kadyrov. The decision of the court demonstrates an unwillingness on the part of the Kremlin to guide the investigation in the direction of Kadyrov. By contrast, the head of the Yaroslavl region was immediately questioned in connection with the assassination (Nemtsov was an elected official in the Yaroslavl Regional Duma).

Presentation of facts

When speculating about whether the decision to assassinate Boris was made in Grozny or Moscow, let us return to the beginning. From the Kremlin's perspective, the social and political situation in Russia could become "unstable" and "unreliable" at the start of a parliamentary campaign. For many people in government, the only "right" reaction to this challenge was to strengthen their repressive mechanisms and engage in a show of force, both inside and outside the country.

One of the shadowy figures involved in these policies is Victor Zolotov, a former head of Putin's security service and the current first deputy chief of the ministry of internal affairs and commander in chief of the interior army (special troops designated to maintain order inside the country). In the 1990, Zolotov maintained close

Photo: Krassotkin (CC) commons.wikimedia.org

One year after the tragedy, this pain has not lessened, although Boris is still alive in the memory of hundreds of thousands of people.

links with both Putin in the St Petersburg administration and Roman Tsepov, a member of the criminal community in St Petersburg. Since then he has taken part in "solving issues", first at the local level and then later, at the federal one. His close links to Putin were discussed in the media in 2014, following his appointment. Since then, rumours about his successive promotion to a ministerial position have been floated, with emphasis placed on the possible mass repressions that could follow.

We try to avoid rumours and deal solely with facts:

1. Victor Zolotov is closely connected with Ramzan Kadyrov. He is also the direct boss of some of the suspects in the assassination case, namely those who are from the "North" battalion, a division of the internal forces of the Russian Federation. Zolotov provides patronage for Kadyrov to Putin and often plays the role of intermediary between the heads of Russia and Chechnya.
2. Zolotov's previous position as head of the presidential security service meant that not only was he close to President Putin, but he also had access to all the information about monitoring systems around the Kremlin and had the opportunity to coordinate the processes with the security service, including preparations for the assassination.

3. When the Investigative Committee conducted an official operation on the territory of the Chechen Republic with the aim of searching for Ruslan Geremeev and Ruslan Mukhudinov (officers of the "North" battalion), Viktor Zolotov suddenly organised an unscheduled inspection of this battalion's troops. The inspection was announced by Kadyrov on one of his social networking accounts. His post suggested that there were also some additional closed-door consultations that took place in order to protect the "North" battalion from representatives of the Investigative Committee.
4. Between 2000 and 2013, Victor Zolotov was head of presidential security, as well as being the deputy chief of the federal protective services (ФСО), and therefore had access to information about the entire monitoring system (including video monitoring and the disposition of officers and soldiers) around the Kremlin, including the location of Nemtsov's assassination.

All the facts described above were cited in Zhanna Nemtsova's appeal about the necessity to interrogate Victor Zolotov in connection with the assassination. Despite this, the appeal was rejected on the same grounds as the previous one.

Alternative motives

Another potential motive for the assassination was to scare the elite and opposition at the onset of an economic crisis, as well as to increase "the stakes in the game" and demonstrate "the force of the people's hate". On the same day as Nemtsov's assassination, several regional opposition leaders who took part in the preparations for the upcoming rally were attacked and beaten. This could be the realisation of a campaign to scare and intimidate anyone interested in political change, conducted by the "true defenders of the state", i.e. groups of hitmen with unlimited power and opportunities.

Another version of the story suggests that the killing may have been revenge for some harsh comments made by Nemtsov about Vladimir Putin in the spring of 2014 to Ukrainian journalists. When looking at how the crime was prepared, with evidence from the official investigation, specific features of the lifestyle and worldview of the people who likely took part in the decision-making process for the assassination support this version. If you believe that Putin and his associates deal with "threats" in the same way a prison gang might, this version of events fits perfectly. The criminal leader will punish any person who has insulted him publicly, or else risk losing his authority and being deposed.

It is also important not to forget that often the most hellish acts have financial motives. The Kremlin's current financial interests dictate that it keep the country

under absolute control by dividing the opposition and sowing conflict and disagreement among them. From this point of view, Boris Nemtsov was not just an opposition leader, but also a friend, partner and authority for many of the numerous political and civic groups that constitute the opposition. He had no difficulty communicating with political and civic actors with different approaches and ideologies to his own. He worked closely with human rights defenders, NGO leaders, experts and journalists. He could find compromise, persuade, reconcile and negotiate with all kinds of people. Bearing this in mind, the perpetrators may have believed that assassinating him would spoil communication inside the democratic opposition movement and halt the coalition building processes.

An additional aggravating circumstance to consider is the long-term hostile pressure that Boris Nemtsov felt from Kadyrov, pro-Kremlin journalists and even Vladimir Putin. The atmosphere of hate and intolerance towards political opponents, particularly opposition leaders and human rights defenders, has increased the possibility and acceptability of violence and terror as a method of political struggle.

The prevention of further degradation

Without the help of the international community, it is going to be difficult to discover who really killed Boris Nemtsov and why. Just like in other political assassinations in Russia, those who are closely connected to representatives of the so-called "political elite" in modern Russia will remain untouchable, as the investigation materials concerning them will stay sealed and be placed on a shelf in the Investigative Committee's offices. As was the case with other political assassinations in Russia, after the initial wave of attention and scrutiny, public interest dies down. As a result, there is a greater risk of the case being closed without finding the real perpetrators (those who organised the assassination not just carried it out), of changes being made to the investigative team, or of important documents mysteriously going missing.

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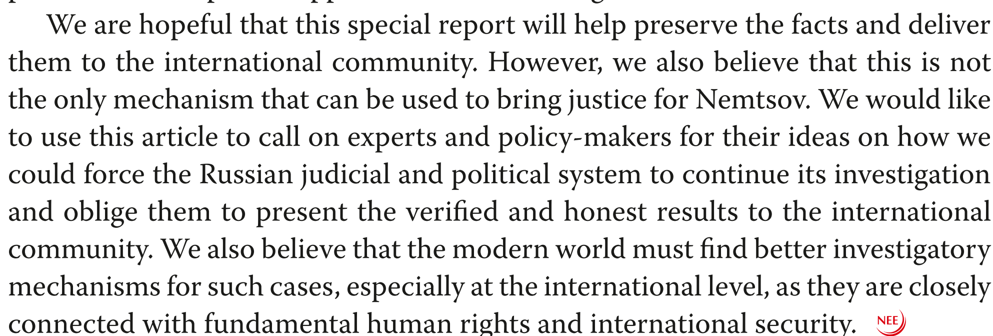
We would like to discover and bring to light as many facts about this case as possible, in addition to maintain public interest in it. Moreover, we also want to highlight the multitude of similar political assassinations that have taken place over the last ten years, including those of Anna Politkovskaya and Natalia Estemirova, since they both have a strong connection with the Chechen Republic and Ramzan Kadyrov personally.

The fact that a country which is a leading UN member, a member of the Council of Europe and the OSCE and which is so deeply incorporated into the international legal system, could fall so far from grace and all but sanctify the assassination of political opponents, something which is seemingly becoming increasingly normal, dispirits us very deeply. However, we still believe that the international legal system has been formed specifically to deal with such cases and that it could help prevent our state's further degradation.

During the preparation of this article, Zhanna Nemtsova, together with Nemtsov's lawyers and closest colleagues, attended a session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and presented the situation regarding the investigation into her father's assassination. The group of PACE delegates appealed for the appointment of a special rapporteur on the investigation.

We are hopeful that this special report will help preserve the facts and deliver them to the international community. However, we also believe that this is not the only mechanism that can be used to bring justice for Nemtsov. We would like to use this article to call on experts and policy-makers for their ideas on how we could force the Russian judicial and political system to continue its investigation and oblige them to present the verified and honest results to the international community. We also believe that the modern world must find better investigatory mechanisms for such cases, especially at the international level, as they are closely connected with fundamental human rights and international security.



Vadim Prokhorov is the lawyer representing the family of Boris Nemtsov. He had also served for many years as the lawyer to Boris Nemtsov before his death.

Anastasia Sergeeva is a board member of the association "For a Free Russia". She emigrated from Russia after 2012 due to the political situation. She previously worked as a political consultant and an activist of the Republican Party of Russia.

Debate on the Future of Europe

An alternative in a world without alternatives

TOMAS VENCLOVA

Photo courtesy of Tomas Venclova

In these less fortunate times, all I can say with certainty is that the 21st century will not be easy. In the worst case scenario, it will be as difficult as, or possibly even more so, than the 20th century, even though we all thought that the horror of the previous 100 years could never be repeated. Due to my age, I will not see a great deal of this new century. Nonetheless, I care about the future of my grandchildren (one of them lives in Russia). I believe that we will be able to avoid the worst case scenario only if we do not get infected by the spirit of the enemy.

This means that we should avoid panic and hysteria, not succumb to archaic stereotypes, restrain from judging others based on group criteria, try not to see the fifth column in every nook and cranny and not practice national hurly-burly, or to put it another way, engage in false verbal patriotism. Instead, we should calmly and without fuss grow in power and become civilised, so that when necessary, we can defend ourselves, and even in the face of defeat, our essence will remain untouched. In such a scenario, our loss will only be temporary. Irresponsible politicians are willing to risk this with an escalation of secondary issues using simple gestures (by posturing with symbols of times gone by) which may improve their election chances but not guarantee anything essential.

We are Europe and Europe's fate is our fate. Thus, even when Europe makes one or two steps that we do not like or makes a tactical compromise that we disagree with, we should not fall under the impression that we are smarter or more experienced than those making the decisions. I have faith that values

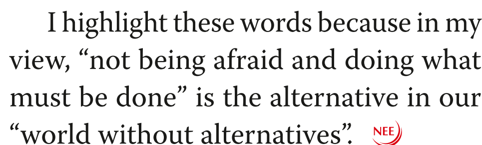
such as democracy and freedom remain in Europe's flesh and blood, something that has been absorbed for centuries and cannot easily be destroyed. If we found ourselves on the frontlines and in the trenches, then discipline, prudence and calm endurance are necessary qualities to possess, as well as co-operation with our allies, especially those on our flanks.

Unfortunately, our political identity is not yet fully European. Thus, hysteria and demagogy are still in vogue. We partially live in the 19th century, as evidenced by that century's categories regarding the survival of the fittest, spheres of influence, territorial expansion, "sacred national missions" and other such things. Such is the world of Vladimir Putin. It is not worth copying, since it is a path that leads to a dead end. In our world, those who claim that they are the steadfast guardians of values are usually fulfilling their own desires or are seeking repentance for their earlier collaboration(s).

Let me quote the words of the Russian poet Nikolay Gumilyov, who was shot by Putin's direct predecessors, the St Petersburg Cheka, and who, in his poem "My Readers", wrote:

"but when bullets whistle,
When weaves crack in ships,
I teach them not to be afraid,
not to be afraid, and to do what must be done"

I highlight these words because in my view, "not being afraid and doing what must be done" is the alternative in our "world without alternatives".



Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Tomas Venclova (born in 1937) is a Lithuanian poet, prose writer and literary translator.

This text has been adopted from the book *Poszukiwanie optymizmu w epoce pesymizmu. Europa Wschodnia – przeczucia i prognozy* (*Searching for optimism in the times of pessimism. Eastern Europe – intuitions and prognoses*) which is a collection of letters between Tomas Venclova and Leonidas Donskis. The book was published by the Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe in 2015.

European ideals are now being tested

ASLI ERDOGAN

Anything can happen at any moment. Even the most careful analyses may turn out to be wrong. In physics, there is something akin to a state of equilibrium when you can make observations and experiment. By contrast, Europe is currently experiencing a state of chaos. It does not look positive to me at all.

Photo: Iwona Reichardt

The rise of nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia in Eastern Europe is alarming. In some ways, it is similar to the situation in Turkey, where the same processes are happening. One response to an identity crisis is to create an identity at the expense of others. In this instance, the scapegoat are refugees. Some statements currently being made by public authorities remind me of Europe in the 1930s; "Muslims cannot adapt, they will never be able to integrate, etc."

I am from a Muslim country and I do not feel fundamentally different from someone who has grown up in England or the Czech Republic. When you meet Syrians, they are just like you. It is a superficial way of thinking to claim that their culture is totally different. Now, we all know that most Jews are a part of European culture, but back in the 1930s, this was not so clear.

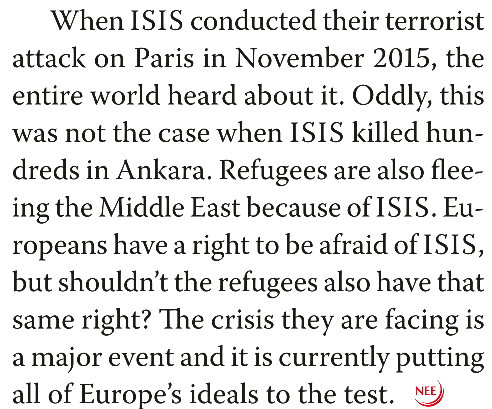
The European Union is based on certain ideals: brotherhood, fraternity, equality and freedom. It is also founded on the conviction that all human beings have rights because they are human. The EU has always been opposed to borders, yet now it is building heavily guarded borders to keep non-Europeans out. Europe is undermining itself and its own values. It is a European ideal to take care of war refugees and help if somebody's life is under threat. Isn't that a lesson from the Second World War? If you do not open your borders, millions of people could die. Europe seems to have forgotten about these ideals.

To a foreigner, it looks like nationalism is much more attractive to the average Pole or Hungarian than those ideals on which the EU has been built. Hubris is dangerous. It does not matter if you are a proud Pole or Turk; hubris is the same wherever you are from. Europe's identity crisis and the rise of extreme right-wing ideas pose the gravest threats to its survival at present. The European

ideal of democracy is now being put to the test. Maybe Europe needs to look in the mirror. Perhaps it is the Middle East that will be Europe's mirror. Maybe it was too quick to conclude that it had created the best political system. It is also possible that this phase of right-wing resurgence will simply pass.

Europe can see how it dealt with its colonial past. If democracy is such a great idea, then why not export it? The more countries adopt democracy, the happier Europe should be. For example, as far as Turkey is concerned, I feel cheated by Europe. The EU was like a teacher for Turkey, stating for years that "you are not democratic enough", as though it were a mantra. Of course, this was true but now, when Turkey is further away from democracy than it has been for years, the EU is bribing it.

I realised it was not a question of democracy at all. It was more like a "don't cause us any trouble" attitude. In regards to the refugee situation Turkey is facing, thus far, Europe has demonstrated nothing but hypocrisy. However, Europe seems to be very tolerant of all the awful things currently happening in Kurdistan.



When ISIS conducted their terrorist attack on Paris in November 2015, the entire world heard about it. Oddly, this was not the case when ISIS killed hundreds in Ankara. Refugees are also fleeing the Middle East because of ISIS. Europeans have a right to be afraid of ISIS, but shouldn't the refugees also have that same right? The crisis they are facing is a major event and it is currently putting all of Europe's ideals to the test.

Aslı Erdoğan is a Turkish writer, human rights activist and former columnist for the newspaper *Radikal*.

The perils of invoking “European values”

LUIZA BIALASIEWICZ

Photo courtesy of Luiza Bialasiewicz

The past months have been heralded as an “existential crisis” for the European project, with countless appeals regarding the need to “affirm” or “protect European values” made by political leaders at both the national and European levels. Whether in deliberating EU member states’ appropriate reception of refugees or the challenge of preserving open societies in the face of internal and external security threats, a significant part of the political response has been articulated precisely within the language of values. Yet, there are dangers inherent in even the most well-intentioned of such appeals.

Some of these dangers have already been eloquently highlighted by prominent commentators such as German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas who, at the apex of the “refugee panic” in September 2015, publicly chastised EU leaders, noting that in deliberating the reception of the refugees arriving at the EU’s borders “talking about European values was grossly misplaced”. The EU as a political institution, he admonished, “should be speaking of legal and political rights, and states’ obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights” – not “of abstract values”. Others, like Médecins Sans Frontières co-founder Didier Fassin, also warned against facile appeals to generically-defined “solidarity” which, he admonished, all too easily and quickly elides into short-lived charity.

Yet it was appeals to the “values” of European solidarity and compassion that dominated the political debate on the refugee question throughout the autumn of 2015, prominent in official pronouncements such as European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker’s State of the Union address titled “Time for Unity, Honesty and Solidarity”. This is how Juncker concluded his address:

“Europe is the baker in Kos who gives away his bread to [the] hungry. Europe is the students in Munich and in Passau who bring clothes for the new arrivals at the train station. Europe is the policeman in Austria who welcomes exhausted refugees upon crossing the border. This is the Europe I want to live in. […] when, generations from now, people read about this moment in Europe’s

history books, let it read that we stood together in demonstrating compassion and opened our homes to those in need of protection."

The "Europe" Juncker evoked in his speech was the Europe of the countless acts of small and large kindness demonstrated by individual Europeans, not the response of states and institutions. It is crucial to make this distinction. For as laudable as the sentiments (and actions) of individual Europeans and countless organisations may have been, the problem with appealing to individual compassion and charity, rather than rights and legal obligations, is that compassion and charity are quickly exhausted.

Charity is made of absolutes; in this particular case, it relies on a simple scenography of the figure of the innocent and needy refugee to be saved and redeemed, with us Europeans as the gracious saviours. It is a political and geopolitical rubric that does not admit complications such as the realisation, for example, that among those fleeing the violence in their homelands are frequently both the victims and the onetime perpetrators (as various reports by migrants' rights organisations have noted). Or that those offered hospitality by European states (recently, or somewhat less recently) are not simply the passive victims that we have "saved" (and thus not necessarily all "nice guys").

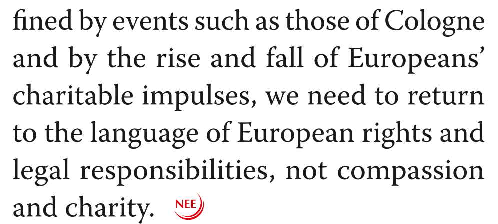
The popular and political reaction across Europe to the criminal events that took place on New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne and several other cities is, I believe, illustrative of the perils of conceiving the question of migrant reception in the value-laden language of charity and compassion: charity that turned very quickly to anger and, as various newspaper stories following the events highlighted, "feelings of being betrayed".

The Algerian writer Kamel Daoud, commenting on what happened in Cologne, captured this dynamic perfectly in his editorial published in a number of European newspapers, noting how the much lauded European openness and hospitality of the previous months were "both naïve and self-serving". In that (again, value-laden) narrative, the migrants were victims to be saved – and they should behave accordingly, befitting a recipient of charity. But, as Daoud pointed out, we should not delude ourselves that "by giving asylum to the physical bodies of these men, and some pieces of paper, we [Europeans] can be redeemed, and our collective conscience assuaged" without considering "what comes later". And what comes later demands long-term institutional and legal responses, not simply a momentary outpouring of charity.

Moreover, the rubric of "European values" is also perilous because it risks feeding directly into the politics of the far right; first, because it is all too easily presented as an "elite" discourse enforced by "liberal Europe"". Secondly, these forces very ably claim it as their own – whether in France, the Netherlands, Hungary or Poland, where right wing politicians are all claiming to be de-

fending European civilisation and European values from an impending "Islamic invasion".

To make sure that the debate in Europe over refugee reception and migration more broadly does not become defined by events such as those of Cologne and by the rise and fall of Europeans' charitable impulses, we need to return to the language of European rights and legal responsibilities, not compassion and charity.



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The centre cannot hold

SAMUEL ABRAHÁM

Photo courtesy of Samuel Abrahám

Reflecting on the turmoil occurring in Europe today, one is prone to ask whether it is a symptom of the larger global crisis or a sign of the European Union's systemic weakness to withstand pressure from within. In particular, has the influx of refugees in 2015 manifest Brussels' lack of will, means or both to take the lead in resolving the crisis? There seems to be no European government in charge, no leaders to rally other leaders to co-ordinate or compel them to act. The EU Lisbon Treaty, which in theory gives more power to the centre, has done little to weaken the old concept of sovereignty in practice. Indeed, what we witness is that individual member states are taking charge of the crisis and deal with it according to their governments' predisposition and outlook. Unfortunately, political leaders have so far neither provided a united voice nor a scenario regarding how the crisis might come to an end. There seems to be a moment coming when we sadly, yet again, might recite William Butler Yeats' words:

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity."

Indeed, by only observing the current status quo, it would seem that with one or two more waves of refugees like those we witnessed in 2015, the EU is bound to collapse. Not because Europe lacks the capacity to absorb refugees. On the contrary, more than half a billion aging EU citizens are leaving plenty of room for young immigrants. But the point is that the capacity and willingness to accept refugees are two distinct issues and that it is the majority population's unwillingness and fear – real, imagined or enticed – which dictates the shape of the crisis. As we witness time and time again, if under threat, the majority chooses security rather than freedom. As Richard Rorty argues, "The fear that there will be not enough to go around" is a great enemy of liberalism and ultimately of liberal democracies. The resulting feeling of insecurity, he continues, "makes people claw back at what there is, for use by people 'like us'". This real and psychological threat would prevent

us from sharing with others when we feel that we might lose everything.

What are the causes and what are the prospects for Europe? And where does Central Europe, or the Visegrad countries (V4), stand in all this? Europe was caught off guard in 2015 with the flood of refugees coming, especially from the Turkish coast. A number of EU countries, Germany and Sweden in particular, offered humanitarian help and welcomed refugees in the best European tradition and in accordance to international law. Others, and in particular the V4 countries, reacted also in the European tradition, but in its darker rendition. We might expect that the western EU members which offered humanitarian help will not forget the behaviour of those closing their borders and unwilling to share the burden of accommodating refugees. They might not reprimand Hungarians or Slovaks now (in fact, there are no legal measures to do so). Yet, in due course, when the EU finds itself at a crossroads again, in need of reshaping its structure and borders, a notice will surely be presented to the selfish V4 countries lacking solidarity with their European partners.

One should also note that EU countries can quite easily prevent or minimise this flood. However, it would be a difficult and painful process, as the EU is often plagued with procrastination and indecision. The resolution would require harsh anti-immigration measures, even the use of force to prevent the new influx of refugees. These steps would certainly undermine common European values, the notion of solidarity with those whose life is threatened by war or natural catastrophes.

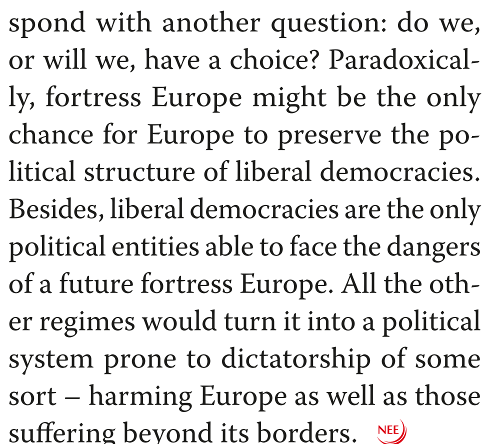
Yet, there seems to be an alternative perception of this grim prospect, which was envisioned in the 1990s by Irish philosopher and diplomat Connor Cruise O'Brien in his book *On the Eve of the Millennium*. O'Brien argues that the West – we can say Europe – will survive only if it becomes "a guarded palace, in a city gripped by the plague;" a fortress keeping out poor, would-be immigrants. O'Brien argues that opening the gates would cause the plague to spread and we would all perish. Yet we realise that keeping the immigrants out is in conflict with our ethical and moral codes of solidarity. Most of us would feel guilty – consciously or subconsciously – for consenting to the "dirty work" done behind our backs, by immigration officers, border controls and armed boats keeping the gates locked.

The impact on the EU would be profound. It would not be a pleasant picture but, for different reasons, the vast majority of Europeans would acquiesce. The right would present the need for a fortress in order to prevent terrorists to enter Europe while the left and liberals, uncomfortably, would simply claim that more refugees would undermine liberal democracy and the EU's structure. The result would clash with our current ethical code on how to treat those who are genuinely in need of help.

O'Brien asks us to face the harsh reality. He advised us back in 1994: "The first

thing to feel clearly is that we do have a lot to feel guilty about. The second is that most of the guilt is inseparable from our condition." Refusal to openly recognise this moral quandary and to believe that we stand on a high moral ground, he claimed, is an illusion cultivated by moderate politicians and the majority of public intellectuals.

One could ask: could our liberal democratic tradition and values prevent the rise of fortress Europe? One could re-



spond with another question: do we, or will we, have a choice? Paradoxically, fortress Europe might be the only chance for Europe to preserve the political structure of liberal democracies. Besides, liberal democracies are the only political entities able to face the dangers of a future fortress Europe. All the other regimes would turn it into a political system prone to dictatorship of some sort – harming Europe as well as those suffering beyond its borders. NEE

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No longer seen as second-class

NATALIA SNIADANKO

At present, we are starting to see more and more uniformity in Europe. Old Soviet roads and asbestos-covered houses in Eastern Europe are gradually disappearing and are being replaced with colourful facades, supermarkets and petrol stations. They all look alike, regardless of country or location. At the same time, Europe is becoming increasingly politically radical as the right-wing experiences a resurgence, a fact that is made evident by the results of recent elections in many countries. In Eastern Europe, the process of decommunisation is underway and even in the most remote corners, monuments of Lenin and other Soviet symbols are being removed. On the other hand, Russia is decisively trying to defend its spheres of influence and applies increasingly more radical methods to this end; propaganda alone is seemingly not enough.

Photo courtesy of Natalia Sniadanko

Overall, Europe's western flank is changing at a slower pace than its eastern counterpart. Here, many states still need to develop and shed their communist past. Western Europe has started to slowly eliminate some Cold War stereotypes, which explains why those who come from the East are no longer seen as second-class citizens. Thus, we now have a class of young, educated migrants who go to the EU not to take illegal employment but because they have been invited to take professional jobs. They are not escaping poverty but are instead looking for better career opportunities.

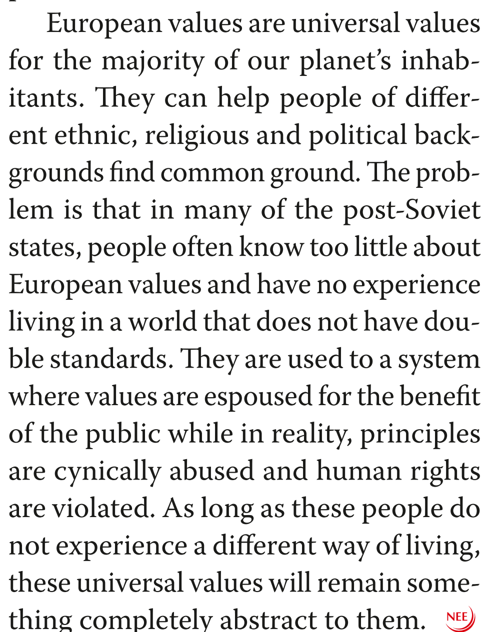
For this generation, Western Europe is no longer seen as a colourful paradise full of bananas and supermarkets. More and more young people from the East have experienced travelling, living and working abroad, which has without a doubt contributed to the regions' mutual destruction of old stereotypes. Western Europe is slowly opening its labour market to these newcomers. Thus, the phenomenon of migration in the old communist sense of the word is disappearing and is no longer seen as a forced and painful escape without a right of return. Instead, there are new opportunities and free choices when it comes to residence and employment.

I am hopeful that in the next decade, these positive processes will become deeper and faster, while all the negative

tendencies slow down. In my view, the most painful problem that we are faced with right now is a lack of tolerance. In a globalised world, there are opportunities for people of different cultures to live together, but there are still not enough functioning mechanisms that enable us to accept our differences. I think that the radicalisation and revanchist attitude of right-wing forces is, to a large degree, related to the fear of others, a fear of somebody unfamiliar and different, somebody who lives nearby but has a different worldview. Accepting this is the most important, and simultaneously most difficult, barrier Europe must overcome in the near future.

The most important lesson for us all of recent years is realising the need for a more active dialogue between European countries. This is especially true of Ukraine. Regions where the presence of European social and cultural initiatives are most keenly felt are mentally very different from those that are under the influence of Russian propaganda. A lack of information fosters stereotypes and fear, which can generate dangerous phenomena.

European values are universal values for the majority of our planet's inhabitants. They can help people of different ethnic, religious and political backgrounds find common ground. The problem is that in many of the post-Soviet states, people often know too little about European values and have no experience living in a world that does not have double standards. They are used to a system where values are espoused for the benefit of the public while in reality, principles are cynically abused and human rights are violated. As long as these people do not experience a different way of living, these universal values will remain something completely abstract to them.



Translated by Iwona Reichardt

Natalia Sniadanko is a Ukrainian poet, writer, journalist and translator.

A struggle for ideals

MATTHEW KOTT

In early 1916 a book of lectures by a Swedish professor of politics, Rudolf Kjellén, was published as *Die Ideen von 1914*. Reflecting on contemporary events, Kjellén argued that it was time to reject the individualistic, cosmopolitan and morally confused liberal order that had brought the nations of Europe to conflagration. Instead of freedom (*liberté*), equality (*égalité*) and brotherhood (*fraternité*) – the discredited "ideas of 1789" which, in the liberal interpretation, promoted a selfish, permissive, universalist mindset – Europeans should embrace the ideals of order (*Ordnung*), justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) and duty (*Pflicht*). Freedom, equality and brotherhood were to be subsumed into the new ideas of 1914, which for the radical conservative Kjellén represented a kind of Hegelian synthesis, rather than merely being the antitheses of the deprecated ideas of 1789. The society Kjellén viewed as most representative of these new ideals was Wilhelmine Germany, on whose side he hoped Sweden would enter the war.

Photo courtesy of Matthew Kott

It may be tempting to dismiss such ideas from a century ago as irrelevant for the situation in Europe, particularly its east, today. Nevertheless, Kjellén has left his mark: geopolitics – a term he coined – is something that is perennially discussed with regards to Eastern Europe, more so since the crisis in Ukraine began. Echoes of Kjellén's attack on liberal individualism, permissiveness and decadence can also to be found in a variety of present-day expressions. Viktor Orbán's ambition to create an illiberal state in Hungary is the clearest example, but the current government in Poland – appropriately named the Law and Justice (PiS) party – also leans heavily in the same ideological direction. Latvia's National Alliance brings to the government coalition Kjellénesque tendencies as well. Preliminary survey data from 2013 suggests that Lithuanians in their 20s today are less tolerant of rights for sexual minorities than their compatriots who came of age in the 1990s. Similarly, many of those who voted for PiS in the last elections were not just older, rural types, but also disaffected youth.

This is by no means an exclusively Central or Eastern European phenomenon, as most countries in the EU have experienced an upswing of support for populistic parties of the right with a nationalist, social conservative, Eurosceptic or anti-immigration profile. Young West-

ern Europeans like *identitaire* ideologue Markus Willinger have declared a generational "war against the '68ers" – where the purported ideas of 1968 resemble those of 1789 for Kjellén.

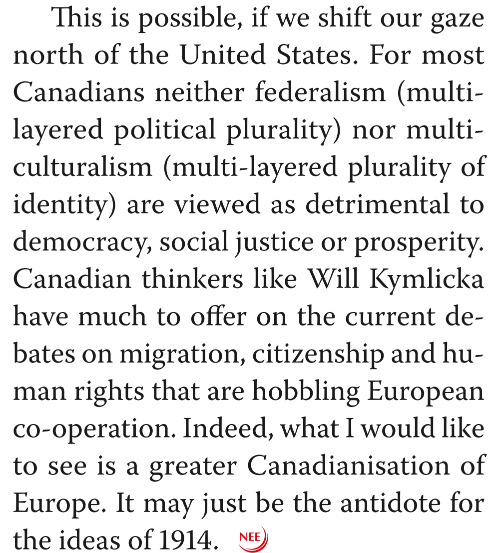
Nevertheless, the phenomenon in the post-2004 new member states is somewhat different from the mid-life crisis of the "old" EU. From 1989 to 1991 the societies in Central and Eastern Europe embraced slogans about liberalisation and democratisation in a spirit of optimism about the new era that appeared to be dawning. "Returning to Europe" was perfunctorily equated with integration into structures like the Council of Europe, NATO and especially the EU, and many reforms and sacrifices were made in the name of joining these clubs of the winners of history as soon as possible.

Yet, instead of internalising the new values required to fully integrate with the EU, the Council of Europe and NATO – we may call these the ideas of 1989 – many in Central and Eastern Europe primarily wanted to be rid of the former communist regime, its mindset and cadres. Instead of becoming what Christopher Bickerton terms member states, these societies longed for independent nation-statehood first and foremost. This desire for national statehood – recently enshrined in the Latvian Constitution with the neologism *valstsgriba* – has little or no coupling to broader liberal values. Indeed, since the historic ideal for many of these countries is the period of independence between the world wars, where liberal democracy more often than not had failed, it would seem then that Kjellén's ideas of 1914 have a greater emotional resonance and legitimacy than those of 1989.

A fundamental problem with the current structure of the EU is that it remains a confederation of national states that retain so much sovereignty that common actions required to meet today's problems are almost doomed to fail acrimoniously. The nation state, it is argued, is the best guarantor for democracy and human rights – at least for its own citizens. Yet human rights are meant to be universal and no one country alone can handle the challenges of the globalised economy, climate change or the current migration crisis. As a result, nation states turn inwards and adopt beggar-thy-neighbour policies, like closed borders and self-interested disengagement, similar to what Europe saw in the immediate run-up to both world wars.

Anyone who has studied interwar European history knows that the nation state as a form of polity can also be a vehicle for illiberalism, authoritarianism and repression as much as it can be a context for democracy, civic rights and advanced welfare. Unfortunately, for the eastern members of the EU, it is precisely these regimes of the 1930s that the modern Kjelléns hold up as an idealised national Golden Age that anachronistically serves as a legitimating frame of reference for the future: an imagined pristine time before communism, but also, ominously, a time before the Holocaust.

How to prevent the EU from going the way of the League of Nations? One way forward, away from the brink, would require Europeans to embrace fully the need for deeper, real integration at the expense of the nation state as the primary repository of popular sovereignty. European federalism – the proverbial United States of Europe – is an old bugbear for many. Understandably so, as, unlike anything that has happened before, it would be entirely voluntary and based on principles of democracy and human rights: the ideas of 1789 and 1989 combined.



This is possible, if we shift our gaze north of the United States. For most Canadians neither federalism (multi-layered political plurality) nor multi-culturalism (multi-layered plurality of identity) are viewed as detrimental to democracy, social justice or prosperity. Canadian thinkers like Will Kymlicka have much to offer on the current debates on migration, citizenship and human rights that are hobbling European co-operation. Indeed, what I would like to see is a greater Canadianisation of Europe. It may just be the antidote for the ideas of 1914. NEE

Matthew Kott is a historian and researcher with Uppsala University.

Angst and hope on the edge of Europe

MARÍA DO MAR CASTRO VARELA

"It is not so much the European "origins" (Genese) of the norms of human rights or democracy that compromise their "validity" (Geltung), but much more the "normative violence." (Nikita Dhawan)

Photo courtesy of María do Mar Castro Varela

The question as to whether Europe is changing can be answered quickly. Yes, Europe is as a matter of fact persistently changing. For the very simple reason that Europe, after all, is nothing but an imagination – a part of what Edward Said once called "imaginative geography". The conflicts surrounding the construction of the European Union and the rising question as to which nation states really belong to Europe are symptomatic here. Europe is not only a powerful idea but also a picture in constant transformation and blurred around the edges. Interestingly, debates on the expansion of the EU are seconded by serious exit debates: Grexit and Brexit, for example. Although none of the states have taken this step, at least not yet, some conservative pundits seem to suggest that belonging to the EU challenges the integrity of a singular nation state.

Nowadays, it is very common to see not only the right wing, but also liberals and the left, ventilate their indignation against the EU. Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz party in Hungary, who celebrated a landslide victory in that country's last elections were not only able to play on resentment towards the left, they also efficiently made use of an anti-EU discourse which characterises the latter as a western evil which threatens sovereignty, the nation and Hungarian culture's core values. This is by far not a phenomenon limited to the East. In France we are confronted with Marine Le Pen's Front Nationale and in Germany with the AfD (Alternative for Germany), both strong political forces which stand for severe anti-left and simultaneous anti-EU positions.

Of course, it is also the enormous loss of trust in left wing politics that enabled the rise of these parties, which for a long time were rather marginalised on the political scene. Concurrently, left wing parties accuse the EU of being coercive and the enemy of "the people". In Spain, the new party Podemos won several municipal elections targeting the corruption of the state and public servants, but also the EU as a violent and coercive institu-

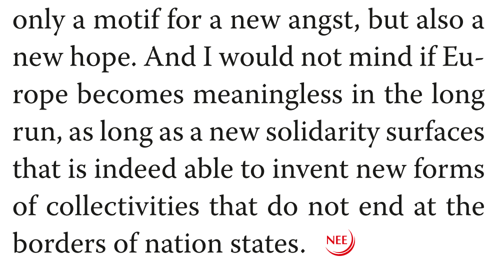
tion. Like Syriza in Greece, Podemos and its leader Pablo Iglesias are the voice of an important group of highly educated young people who are still searching for an alternative.

Hence, the genuine and simultaneously uncanny question is: in which direction is Europe going? Uncanny questions are questions that trouble us; queries we do not want to confront as we fear the possible answers. These queries are unsettling and betray the fragile reconciliation we have made with a disturbing past. In light of the violence that is unfolding before our eyes, it seems to me that to radically challenge Europe as the source of the Enlightenment, progress and democracy is a fairly good idea. As we all know, violence is an essential part in the making of Europe. Colonialism and Nazi terror may serve here as evidence that the ideals of the Enlightenment have always been corrupted.

The so-called refugee crisis again defies Europe's claim to be a fountain of humanism. Not only Hungary and Poland are to blame for their anti-refugee response, even Germany is not really a worthwhile aspirant for the Nobel Peace Prize. After the first wave of solidarity subsided, not only did the number of attacks targeting refugees skyrocket, but also the internal political debate on migration became ugly and distasteful. Angela Merkel and her party, the CDU, began undoing laws that served to protect people who for good reasons are fleeing: Germany re-committed to the Dublin-III treaty, secured its borders in a martial manner, suspended the Schengen Agreement, make family reunions illegal if asylum is not granted (which can take years) and are planning to deport thousands of refugees who are said to be "economic refugees". Last but not least, Germany made a shady deal with Turkey – a state which is unleashing incredible violence against their own minority populations and are ready to stop the refugees who head towards Europe if Europe does not intervene in what the governing AKP party – Justice and Development – says are internal affairs, such as the bombing of the Kurdish population.

Simultaneously, the European mainstream media like to describe the refugees as a flood that destabilises the European community. To me it seems the contrary. The arrival of so many people from outside Europe can be a real opportunity for the region. After all, we have to re-evaluate Europe as a peace project and are forced to rethink the very fundamentals of this powerful idea. The outcome of such an enterprise could be a new debate on European values. As we know, values are persistently invented and re-invented; they are bound to the history of an imagined community and function like a lute. If the European house shall not collapse, as some intellectuals are already predicting, we have to recalibrate the crisis as an opportunity and re-configure the construction of Europe. The refugees coming from war zones outside Europe confront us with our violent past and violent present.

Undeniably, in countries like Germany, Austria and Spain, civil society has been awakened. The right and left are fighting for significance and a meaningful position in the struggle for political acknowledgement. The outcome remains open. But the unfolding dynamics are not only a motif for a new angst, but also a new hope. And I would not mind if Europe becomes meaningless in the long run, as long as a new solidarity surfaces that is indeed able to invent new forms of collectivities that do not end at the borders of nation states.



Prof Dr. Castro Varela, María do Mar is a political scientist at Alice Salomon University in Berlin and a fellow at the Institute for Human Science in Vienna.

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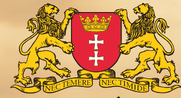

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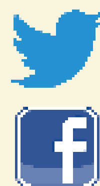

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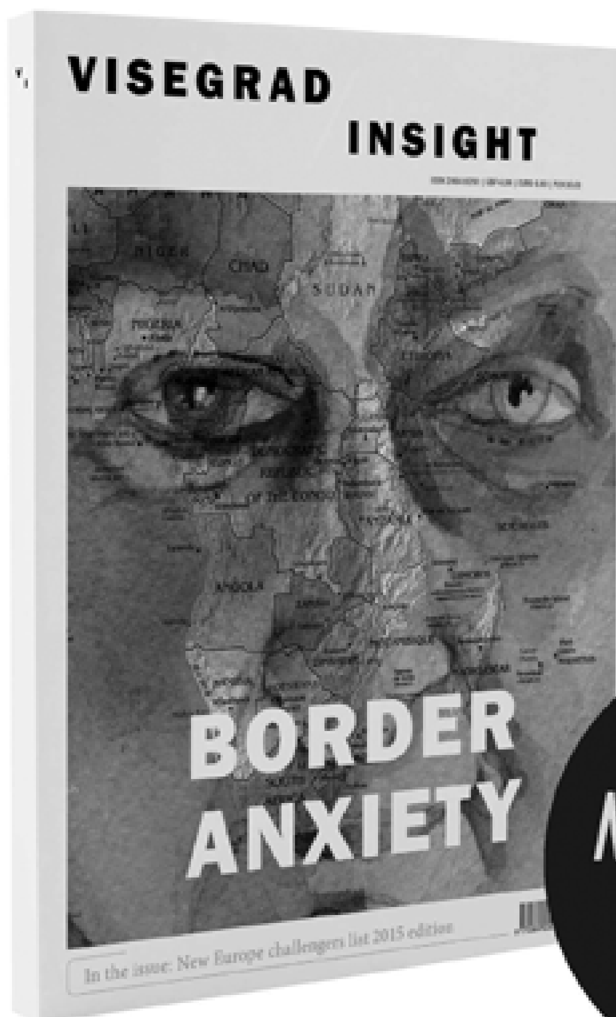
BORDER ANXIETY



On Schengen, TTIP, and euro

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DOUBLETAKE: A revival of nation state ideology

ANTON SHEKHOVTSOV

The future of the European Union as a political project is at risk. Yet the rise of far right and far left parties in Europe is only one factor eroding the EU. Indeed, the rise of radical parties is a worrying sign, but not a new phenomenon. Moreover, it is the knee-jerk reaction of the mainstream forces to the electoral successes of the radicals that creates a pathological effect on European politics.

The debate on the future of Europe has begun. Thus, on the pages of this issue of *New Eastern Europe* there is a series of texts aimed at getting deeper perspective in this debate. In some arguments we hear that the revival of the nation state ideology, the rise of radical politics on both the left and right and the illusion of multilateralism are all key indicators that the EU's end is nigh. To that end *New Eastern Europe* asked Anton Shekhovtsov, an expert on radical ideologies, to challenge these assertions in the aim of truly understanding the future path of the European project.

Assertion one: There is a revival of nation state ideology which is leading to the end of the post-Cold War order dominated by globalisation and international institutions.

Yes, this is the end of the post-Cold War order, but this is not exactly the end of globalisation and international institutions. In the natural course of events, glo-

balisation is irreversible – it has been the backbone of development of human civilisation since its birth. Eventually, only two events can stop or even reverse globalisation: a global environmental catastrophe or a total (nuclear) war.

Only two events can stop or even reverse globalisation: a global environmental catastrophe or a total (nuclear) war.

The revival of the "nation state ideology", however, is taking place and manifests itself through three major forms. First, this ideology is part of the doctrine of various radical right-wing populist parties in Europe. Their idea of Europe is "a Europe of fatherlands", implying that they favour the project of a united Europe but are disgruntled with the European Union as the means to implement this project. Their discontent with the EU results from their nativism, which is one of the key foundations of radical right-wing populism. The nativist understanding of society implies an ethnically and culturally homogeneous body that is thought to best be protected from pernicious alien influences by a nation state free of excessive international obligations. For radical right-wing populist parties, the nation state concept does not exclude pan-European co-operation, but discards the existing integrationist institutions like the single currency and the Schengen free movement zone.

Second, "nation state ideology" is promoted with varying degrees of consistency, determination and a departure from liberalism by a number of European state leaders predominantly from the conservative camp. British scepticism about the EU is not limited to Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement of a referendum on a possible "Brexit" (where the United Kingdom would vote to stay or leave the EU). The UK is neither a part the Schengen area nor the Eurozone; it has consistently been the policy of the UK as an EU member to opt out of these treaties. However, the announcement of a referendum on the Brexit, Cameron's proclaimed unwillingness to make the UK a part of a European "super-state" and his consequent attempts to renegotiate the conditions of the UK's EU membership testify to the revival of the concept of the nation state in the UK as an instrument of returning certain political powers from Brussels back to London.

However, there are less liberal trends in the moderate Eurosceptic camp as well. For Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Czech President Miloš Zeman, or Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, the "nation state ideology" is a conceptual tool to defend themselves against EU criticisms of their illiberal policies. This form of "nation state ideology" is essentially non-ideological and is different from nativism; it is a pragmatic and often cynical way of confronting criticism. Neither Orbán nor Zeman challenge their countries' EU membership – not least because they significantly benefit from it in economic terms – but their pronounced anxiety about

the perceived loss of sovereignty allows them to play a populist card and mobilise support in their respective societies. The problem for leaders such as Orbán or Zeman is that they cannot turn to populism the way radical right-wing populists normally do. For the latter, populism is a language of dividing society into common people and the elite, and since the far right are not in power, it is easy for them to "defend" the common people against the elite represented by the political incumbents. This tactic is inaccessible for Orbán or Zeman, however, as they are the elite. To take advantage of populism's mobilising capabilities, they internationalise the "common people vs. the elite" conflict and present their countries as the "common people" making a stand against the "elitist" Brussels.

> Moscow exploits "nation state ideology" in its bid to undermine the West in general and the European Union in particular.

Finally, the "nation state ideology" is used by Moscow in its bid to undermine the West in general and the EU in particular. Moscow does not apply this ideology to its own society because it understands the dangers pertaining to its implementation; Russia is, after all, a multi-ethnic state. As Timothy Snyder argues, "a return to the nation state in Europe would be a catastrophe for all concerned", and that is why various Russian actors promote the "nation state ideology" among European nations, providing support to a wide range of anti-western, anti-EU, anti-American, Eurosceptic, separatist, isolationist, far-right and illiberal forces in Europe.

Assertion two: Multilateralism is an illusion.

No, multilateralism is a reality and remains the only method of constraining aggressive powers. So far, multilateralism also remains the major reason why there has been no world war since the end of the Second World War. However, contemporary history has consistently demonstrated the limits of multilateralism on a global level. Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" never occurred: the conflict between political modernities of western liberalism, Islamism and the (post-)communism of China and Latin American countries makes the development of global political multilateralism virtually impossible. Organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and World Health Organisation provide a window of opportunity for global multilateralism to function rather efficiently in the economic and humanitarian spheres, but their powers are limited in the area of global politics. Much less efficient are the Kyoto Protocol and International Criminal Court (ICC). The latter is especially problematic because influential countries such as the United States, China, India and Russia either did not sign the Rome Statute, which put the ICC into force, or did not ratify it. The United Nations, ar-

guably the most important global multilateral organisation, is in crisis. It survives because of its contributions to solving military and humanitarian regional crises, especially in Africa, but is unable to tackle major conflicts in which great powers are involved, especially those wielding veto powers in the UN Security Council.

The Russian-Ukrainian war is an evident example of the UN's crisis. Today, this organisation resembles the League of Nations at the end of the 1930s: the League failed to respond to the German annexation of Austria and occupation of Sudetenland in 1938. Similarly, the UN has failed to respond to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the occupation of eastern Ukraine in 2014. The Russian-Ukrainian war is also an episode of the ongoing hybrid war Russia wages against the West through various means. These include hindering the process of western integration of post-Soviet countries such as Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine; corrupting western politicians and entrepreneurs; weaponising information and the refugee crisis; supporting intrinsically illiberal and subversive movements in Europe, etc. Moscow's aim is to undermine the unity of transatlantic relations with the objective of making the EU face Russia alone without support from the US and then weaken the EU to the point where each European nation must deal with Russia on a bilateral level.

However, the fact that Moscow is trying to undermine both transatlantic relations and weaken the EU provides strong evidence of how multilateralism can be successful when nations across different regions agree on the political and philosophical foundations of co-operation. The EU itself is an example of successful multilateralism as policy and practice. The EU also became apparently the most attractive political union of nations in the world's history. The EU's power of attraction induced post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe to radically reform themselves in terms of politics, economy and rule of law during the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. Many countries outside the EU aspire to become its members and struggle to overcome internal and external problems to be accepted into the club.

Another successful example of multilateralism as policy and practice is NATO. Not only has this organisation prevented its members from waging destructive wars against each other for almost 70 years – a significant achievement if one recalls the blood-soaked battlefields of Europe in the previous centuries – it also contributed to the political and economic transformation of its members. Yet again, however, the success of NATO as a multilateral project and guarantor of its members' military and political security is rooted in the member-states' acceptance of this integration project's political and philosophical foundations.

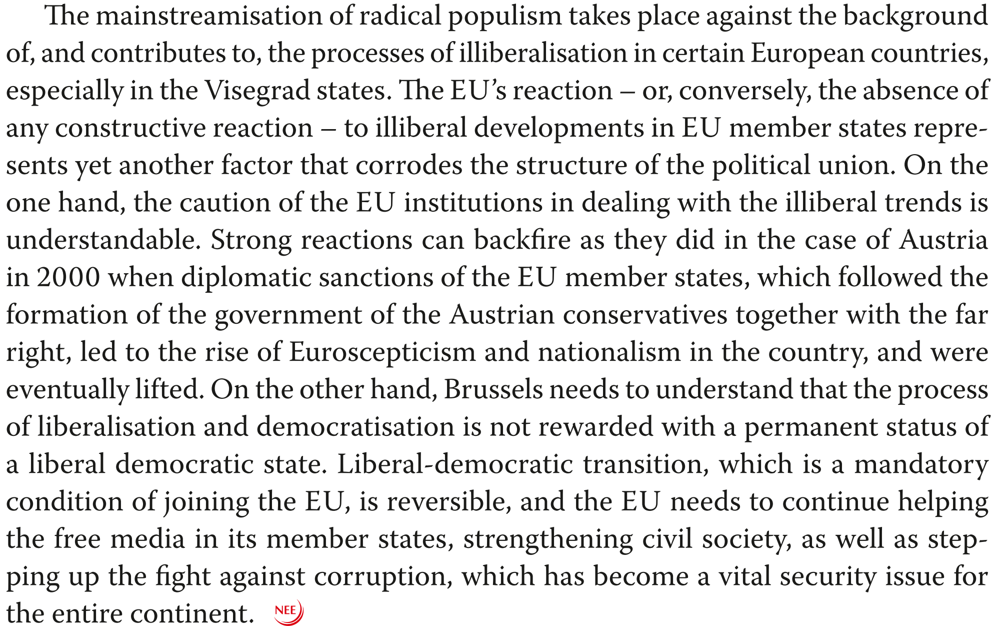
Assertion three: The future of the European Union as a political project is at risk due to the rise of radical political movements in European countries which threatens a return to interest-based politics on the continent.

Yes, the future of the EU as a political project is at risk, but the rise of the far right and far left parties is only one factor that erodes the EU. Indeed, the rise of the radical parties on both the right and the left is a worrying sign. However, this is not a new phenomenon: we have already seen the leader of the French National Front in the second round of a presidential election in France and the Austrian Freedom Party, Slovak National Party and League of Polish Families in coalition governments. More recently, the far left SYRIZA formed a governing coalition with the far right Independent Greeks in Greece and the right-wing populist Finns Party became a part of the government in Finland. None of these countries has left the EU. The far right is unlikely to seize political power in any EU member state, except for maybe France, where Marine Le Pen has a slight chance of being elected president in 2017. Even if the far right come to power, the intrinsic logic of European integration will probably curtail ambitions and moderate them.

In order to understand the major threat of the far right and the far left, we may need to turn to a different perspective. It is the process of their struggle for power and the growing electoral support that creates a pathological effect on European politics which, in turn, is a result of short-sightedness of particular European leaders and politicians. The electoral rise of radical parties largely takes place at the expense of mainstream parties (conservatives, liberals, and even social democrats), so in order to win votes back mainstream parties perform a knee-jerk reaction and start employing radical narratives, thus prompting the mainstreamisation of radicalism. They essentially normalise the radical hysteria around the issues that are indeed soft spots of the EU: the refugee crisis, stability of the Eurozone, austerity measures, social cohesion, Islamist terrorism, etc. Instead of addressing these problematic issues in a systematic and balanced manner, some politicians adopt populist language and contribute to the undermining of trust towards liberal democracy as the political and philosophical basis of the EU.

> The strengthening of uncivil society has a lasting cultural effect and hinders the search for liberal democratic solutions to problematic issues.

This process is damaging to European politics because it can lead to the following outcomes. First, since radical populism is perceived as a "new normal", this can result in a spiral of radicalisation. Second, once one liberal democratic approach ceases to be an alternative to another liberal democratic approach, illiberalism becomes the only alleged viable alternative to all the liberal ones. Third, this process strengthens uncivil society imbued with ultranationalist



ideas, conspiracy theories and populism; the strengthening of uncivil society has a lasting cultural effect and hinders the search for liberal democratic solutions to problematic issues.

The mainstreamisation of radical populism takes place against the background of, and contributes to, the processes of illiberalisation in certain European countries, especially in the Visegrad states. The EU's reaction – or, conversely, the absence of any constructive reaction – to illiberal developments in EU member states represents yet another factor that corrodes the structure of the political union. On the one hand, the caution of the EU institutions in dealing with the illiberal trends is understandable. Strong reactions can backfire as they did in the case of Austria in 2000 when diplomatic sanctions of the EU member states, which followed the formation of the government of the Austrian conservatives together with the far right, led to the rise of Euroscepticism and nationalism in the country, and were eventually lifted. On the other hand, Brussels needs to understand that the process of liberalisation and democratisation is not rewarded with a permanent status of a liberal democratic state. Liberal-democratic transition, which is a mandatory condition of joining the EU, is reversible, and the EU needs to continue helping the free media in its member states, strengthening civil society, as well as stepping up the fight against corruption, which has become a vital security issue for the entire continent. NEE

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Tilting at windmills

The debate on terrorism in Europe

WOJCIECH MICHNIK

The threat of terrorism is clearly on the rise. The year 2015 became a stark reminder to Europeans that they do not live in a security bubble any more. However, terrorism is not the only threat facing Europe and emphasis needs to be placed on the perils connected to an overestimation of the terrorism debate. This significantly prohibits EU and NATO members from addressing other threats which are at least equally, if not more, urgent.

"It's déjà vu all over again", a famous phrase attributed to the late baseball player Yogi Berra, might well be the most suitable summary of yet another counter-terrorism and security debate in Europe. On November 20th 2015, just a week after the terrorist attacks in Paris, the European Union's Justice and Home Affairs ministers wasted no time in announcing their priorities on how to respond to terrorism. They correctly underlined a common focus on reinforcing controls at EU external borders, targeting terrorists' financial resources, combatting firearms trafficking, improving information sharing and judicial co-operation. Media coverage emphasised the all too familiar rhetorical pattern that follows every major terrorist attack in Europe and stressed a need to eradicate terrorism, defend the European way of life and increase co-operation with other EU member states.

However, some things seemed to have made last year's discussions about counter-terrorism responses both unique and worrisome. Rarely, if indeed ever in its post-Cold War history, have Europe and its direct neighbours faced so many security threats simultaneously, including the ongoing refugee crisis; the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; terrorist attacks in Europe, the Middle East and the United States and

the growing arc of instability stretching from Libya through Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Even more strikingly, European attempts to address these concerns have never sounded more disjointed and weak. Whilst an answer to what caused this European identity crisis exceeds typical EU-bashing, the terrorism debate among European states, with their various approaches and often contradictory interests, highlights basic security problems that the EU has been facing for some time.

With the rise of populist right-wing movements and xenophobic sentiments across Europe, the way the terrorist threat is framed in public discourse could determine policy issues (including privacy-protection laws and immigration policies) that affect EU states facing little or no direct threat from terrorism, such as those in Central Europe.

This does not mean that the terrorist threat should be dismissed. Instead, emphasis needs to be placed on the perils connected to an overestimation and oversimplification of the terrorism debate in Europe. Not only does it elevate terrorism to the level of an ominous modern power (when in fact terrorists are weak and frustrated), which is exactly what terrorists all over the world strive to achieve, it also prohibits the EU and NATO members from addressing other threats which are at least equally, if not more, urgent.

Bloody 2015?

The year 2015 was not the best year for counter-terrorism in Europe. It was even worse for French society, as it experienced two devastating attacks on its home soil. The first one occurred in January, when the headquarters of the satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* were assaulted. The attack, manhunt and police sieges that followed paralysed Paris and left 17 victims dead. Then in November co-ordinated attacks were executed in Paris, killing 130 people, causing utter chaos in the city of light, shutting down the Belgian capital city of Brussels and leading to the cancellation of a football match in Germany. We should also not forget about the terrorist attacks in Copenhagen in February 2015, as well as cases of lone wolf assaults in France and an attempted plot to detonate a bomb in London on the tenth anniversary of the 7/7 attacks.

By contrast, only four people died in the whole of the EU in 2014 as a result of terrorism, according to a European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report released in June 2015. As experts in the report noted, even though the EU should expect an increase in terrorist activities, the number of attempted and successful terrorist attacks in the EU "are low relative to Africa, South-East Asia and the Middle East, and they are not evenly distributed across the member states".

To put things into perspective, the Institute for Economics and Peace reported that 32,658 people worldwide were killed as a result of terrorism in 2014, compared to 18,111 in 2013. This represents an 80 per cent increase in terrorism related deaths between 2014 and 2013. According to the report's findings, terrorism in 2014 was also highly concentrated; 78 per cent of all deaths in 2014 took place in just five countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria. Even though full statistics for 2015 are not yet available, it is a safe assumption that 2015 was similarly bloody.

These statistics should serve not only as an obvious assertion that terrorism is on the rise. They ought to be a reminder that societies in Europe lived in a security bubble while the world around them (Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen) was on fire. In short, the idea that Europe can build a physical and/or psychological fortress that can secure the people inside it from international problems appears to be strategically indefensible.

Between zero tolerance and total ignorance

As the governments of countries targeted by terrorists (i.e. France, Belgium and the UK) pledged zero tolerance to extreme forms of political violence and were backed by other allies within the EU and NATO, questions of feasibility, as well as strategic and operational sufficiency remained unanswered. In other words, how feasible is a plan to prevent terrorist attacks in Europe and capture their architects and executors? What are EU members ready to sacrifice and how high do they list terrorism on their respective security agendas? These questions should be accompanied by a premise that doing too much is almost as counterproductive (if not more so) as doing too little. Regardless, finding the right balance between reacting and overreacting to an increasing terrorist threat is still a problem that the EU, its member states and its allies have failed to address.

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The problem with the perception of terrorism in Europe is that it is not as ominous and dangerous as it is believed to be. As this statement goes against the media-hyped terrorism coverage and common knowledge, it is hard to find convincing arguments that the threat of terrorism should be of equally major concern to all societies in every EU country. If the past couple years can function as any

indication, European states such as the UK, France, Germany, Belgium or Greece should be more wary of terrorism than Slovakia, Poland, Romania or Sweden.

At the same time, it is completely understandable that a general public that keeps hearing about terrorist attacks or plots from San Bernardino to French, Belgian or German-based extremists would internalise the idea that terrorism is the most preeminent security issue faced by European societies today. Subsequently, there are very few, if any, serious politicians who would publically risk disregarding the grave and universal threat that terrorists pose. However, both the psychological and political contexts of this discussion, although valid, obscure two modest realities that should serve as a framework for the current terrorism debate within the European Union.

Firstly, there is no such thing as absolute security. Even though the main goal of every state is to ensure the safety of its citizens, there should be little doubt that convincing people that they will enjoy a world free of threats, risks and dangers is either a delusion or just cynical misinformation. Yet since the early 1990s, a strong belief seems to have taken hold among western societies that peace has not only been secured once and for all, but also that the traditional forms of vulnerability are things of the past (or at least that they happen to other people in other parts of the world).

How mistaken have we been? Nothing makes this illusion of absolute security more transparent than the emergence of so-called lone wolf terrorists, single actors who commit acts of political violence, ideologically motivated but not directly connected to any particular terrorist organisation or cell. They constitute a real nightmare for any counter-terrorism efforts and send a false signal to the general public that anyone can be a terrorist. As a consequence, individuals in western democracies that have done no harm but may intend to inflict it in the future are almost impossible to identify and locate. To catch them beforehand would require not only a near-perfect and diligent intelligence operation but also what would in essence be an Orwellian-type state that would have all its citizens under constant surveillance.

Secondly, terrorism in its current form cannot be defeated, but it can be limited. Although this is another statement that politicians would not dare say in public, it is a strategic reality that leaders and societies in Europe need to grasp sooner rather than later. The struggle with terrorism (regardless of whether it is ISIS, al-Qaeda or any others) is not a Third World War, as US president Barack Obama underscored during his last State of the Union Address. It should also be a sombre reminder for EU political and intellectual elite, before the war analogy starts to dominate security discourse in Europe. To claim otherwise would be playing directly into the terrorists' strategy.

Distracting attention

The basic challenge in the European security debate and successive counter-terrorism policies is a diffusion of threat perception among member-states and their divergent geopolitical realities. Nowhere is this point more valid than in the Central and Eastern European states, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Baltic States. Although these countries do not always share policy views and sometimes disagree over national security priorities, the threat of terrorism does not constitute a vital security priority (Estonia treats so-called "cyber-terrorist" threats uniquely, but in general, their security agendas with regard to terrorism do not resemble those of western European states).

The Polish authorities seem to understand that Poland has not been directly threatened by terrorism in the way that the United States and western European states have. The statement on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reads that "Poland is a country not directly threatened by terrorist attacks" and as far as regional security is concerned "the threat of terrorism in Central Europe is currently low". This by no means indicates that Poland will not become a target of terrorist attacks in future. Yet it also shows that the formulation of current Polish national security strategy should not be centred around terrorism.

The terrorist threat in Western Europe has dominated security discourse within the EU, leaving the situation in Ukraine and policy towards Russia on the backburner.

What is problematic for both Poland and its allies from Central and Eastern Europe is that the current preoccupation with the terrorist threat in Western Europe has dominated security discourse within the EU, leaving the situation in Ukraine and policy towards Russia on the backburner. With the news of terrorist attacks appearing almost every week and the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, there is little hope that this attitude will change in 2016. This means that Poland and other states that are concerned about the unstable situation in Eastern Europe will need to constantly fight for the attention and support of their western NATO and EU allies.

Need for debate

Two issues in this context are troublesome. One is a poor state of debate in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia about possible solutions to the refugee crisis in Europe. Often, ambiguous and ideologically driven arguments

attempt to connect the terrorist threat with refugees and suggest that accepting them means seeding future Islamic extremists in Central Europe. This problem stems not only from negative stereotypes being shared among homogenous societies in the region (as in the case of Poland), but also from a sheer humanitarian crisis that hit Syria, causing a huge influx of people to seek asylum in Europe. The Hungarian government, infamous for its anti-refugee and anti-immigrant rhetoric, announced in December 2015 that the Paris terrorist plot had involved migrants who had travelled through the territory of Hungary.

Yet even though jihadist militants might occasionally conceal themselves within a huge flow of refugees, this should not be sufficient to form the base of a valid argument for banning refugees from entering EU countries. A serious debate about refugees is long overdue in Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland. It did not help that soon after the November 13th terrorist attacks in Paris, high ranking Polish officials used it as an opportunity to close the door on refugees fleeing from Syria. Moreover, it did not help that the German government miscalculated both the consequences and the side-effects of accepting so many refugees and immigrants in such a short space of time. With the rise of populists and nationalists across the region, worldwide terrorist attacks increasing and the criminal acts in

Cologne, the nexus of "refugees as would-be terrorists" analogy will remain potent in Central Europe. Shortly after the January 2016 terrorist attacks in Istanbul, security experts speculated that by targeting Germans in this particular case, ISIS intended to create an anti-refugee backlash in Europe, "hoping to fuel already rising anti-Islam sentiments on the continent".

"When in danger or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout". Thus goes a golden maxim, recently quoted by Stephen Walt from Herman Wouk's novel, which perfectly summarises the pitfalls of ignorance in the aforementioned debate. One can only think how much worse this debate would become if terrorists strike somewhere in Central Europe or Poland itself. In that case, unlikely but not impossible, there will be no room for any sound discussion at all. As Canadian author Michael Ignatieff noted in December 2015 in the *New York Times*, "the ISIS strategy also seeks to make Europeans think of refugees as potential security threats rather than the victims that they are". He aptly noted that thus far, the terrorist strategy has been successful. The latest public attitudes surveys in Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany all seem to prove his point. If we want to escape the strategic mistake of overreacting to terrorism, the re-evaluation of public discourse about both terrorism and the European refugee crisis cannot wait any longer.

It can get worse

What clouds an understanding of modern terrorism even more is a simplistic narrative that often treats terrorism as an independent force in and of itself, concentrating only on its effect, while neglecting its causes and context. According to this narrative, there are three distinct categories: perpetrators, victims and saviours. The perpetrators, the terrorists, are depicted as Muslims fighting against the West. There is little or no regard for the real aims of terrorist organisations, no effort to comprehend the differences between ISIS and al-Qaeda and no acknowledgement of the deep conflict within Islam itself. Following this logic is a perception of the victims of terrorist attacks as predominantly white, Christian and western. Even a brief look at the data shows that the majority of victims of terrorism come from places like Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria.

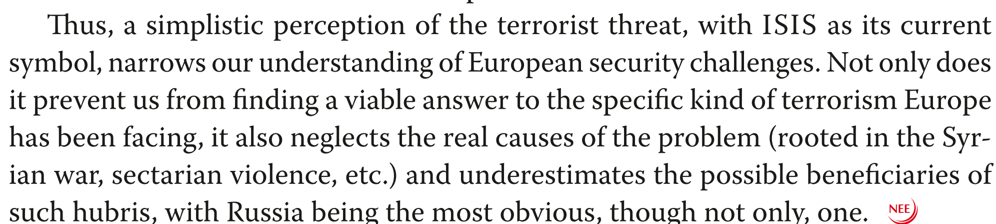
Finally, there is an old-fashioned expectation that a democratic government will be able to protect us from terrorist attacks with its security apparatus. Citizens often expect that military actions undertaken against terrorists (falsely) promise an easy solution to the problem. There is hardly ever a conversation, especially in Central Europe, that emphasises the need for a multi-layered, societal, educational and non-governmental approach to the study of current terrorist threats. Instead,

the present state of basic social awareness and education does not even reach the "see something, say something" level.

The year 2015 was clearly one of the worst years for the security, solidarity and well-being of the European project. However, this does not mean that it cannot get any worse in 2016. Drawing the wrong conclusions from both the terrorist attacks and the refugee crisis could both weaken member states and disrupt the European Union.

Terrorism, though important, should not be treated as the most important security problem in Europe. Co-operating in counter-terrorist measures and carrying on with addressing other risks and dangers is the best strategy for European countries to adopt. For Poland and other Central and Eastern European states, terrorism, though not a key security concern, should not be ignored. As there are no countries that are totally immune from the possibility of an attack, both the authorities and societies should be prepared for such an event. Furthermore, co-operation regarding counter-terrorism activities with other EU and NATO states is essential. Yet, there is a paradox to this debate. Embracing the counter-terrorism agenda takes attention away from other issues such as policy towards Russia, a key security concern for Central and Eastern Europe.

Drawing the wrong conclusions from both the terrorist attacks and the refugee crisis will not only weaken member states, but disrupt the European Union as well.



Thus, a simplistic perception of the terrorist threat, with ISIS as its current symbol, narrows our understanding of European security challenges. Not only does it prevent us from finding a viable answer to the specific kind of terrorism Europe has been facing, it also neglects the real causes of the problem (rooted in the Syrian war, sectarian violence, etc.) and underestimates the possible beneficiaries of such hubris, with Russia being the most obvious, though not only, one. NEE

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Poland and Germany through thick and thin

Photo: PAP/Grzegorz Rogiński

The year 2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation between Poland and Germany. The treaty was a milestone in Polish-German relations but has also significantly contributed to the peace and stability of Europe as a whole. In this special section, we present voices from both Poland and Germany that examine the high points and setbacks in these relations since the signing of the treaty. The analyses all illustrate how the state of the Polish-German neighbourhood look like in times of crises and new challenges facing Europe in the months to come.

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Poland and Germany, yesterday and today Kai-Olaf Lang
From foe to friend. Bringing Poles and Germans together Agnieszka Łada

Funded in part by a grant from the Polish-German Cooperation Foundation

Resolving borders and building bridges

BASIL KERSKI

When we think back to June 1991, we see great value in the treaty between Poland and Germany. It was a new beginning in relations between the two states. Yet, the treaty was more than bilateral, but it was also a building bloc in the construction of a new Europe, without which there would be no united Germany, NATO or the European Union.

Every time I cross the Polish-German border, which nowadays is merely a formal line, seeing as there are no controls or checkpoints, I feel like a free European. I feel the positive aspect of history and the great decisions that led us here. I write this because as a teenager, I experienced a completely different reality, a continent divided by the iron curtain. Even in the 1990s, a time when Poland was already free and Germany had united, cross-border travel was not as pleasant an experience as it is today, because the Oder and Nysa rivers marked the periphery of the European Union. At that time, we still had to wait at the border and go through border control.

I call myself a member of the 1989 generation. That year had a massive impact on my future. It was that year that I turned 20 and it was also the year when I decided on my educational path, as I realised that I wanted to focus on this new Europe and become involved in Polish-German relations. It is also when I decided to stay in Berlin, even though I did not like West Berlin and did not see many opportunities there. Despite those things, the collapse of the Berlin Wall encouraged me to stay and follow Germany's transformation from a close distance.

Bold vision

There is a certain paradox in history. When I think of 1991 and the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation, I realise that we took this event for granted. The overall atmosphere in 1990 and 1991 was that there was no question that we would enter onto and follow the path towards democracy, freedom and peace in Europe. When this treaty was signed, we were looking at it in a rational, not emotional manner. Today, I am under the impression that we appreciate more what happened then, an opinion that is shared by many of my colleagues. Of course, this is a result of the changes that took place in Europe in the years that followed, including the crisis in Ukraine caused by Russia's revisionist policies, which contributed to the fact that ideas such as peace in Europe are no longer taken as read.

When I think of 1991 and the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation, I realise that we took this event for granted.

That is why when we think back to June 1991, we see great value in the treaty between Poland and Germany. It was a new beginning in relations between the two nations. While reading this treaty, although it can come across as broad and vague, it formulated a bold vision and set a direction for these relations to follow. The treaty spoke of the community of values, interests and of Poland joining the western community at a time when the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union and Comecon still formally existed. Nevertheless, these great visions laid out in the treaty came true. Today we value the courage of those people who outlined this vision for us.

Another important point about this treaty, something that is missing from our public discourse in Germany and Poland, is the role it played in Germany's unification. This process was not limited solely to the 2+4 format, meaning the two German states and the four allies. These difficult negotiations included discussions on the conditions to allow for a form of unification where Germany could become a sovereign state, which also meant a withdrawal of Soviet troops from German soil. The 2+4 process finally closed the epoch of post-war of history and included the issue of borders and Germany's final acceptance of its eastern boundary. Poland joined the process in July 1990 in Paris and the outcome of the negotiations Germany's sovereignty was two key documents: the border treaty between Poland and Germany, signed in November 1990, and the 1991 Neighbourship treaty, the 25th anniversary of which we are celebrating this year. Therefore, when we talk about the 1991 treaty and its anniversary, we are in fact talking about the foundation of a new anti-Yalta order in Europe.

Without a doubt, the treaty was bilateral, but it was also a building bloc in the construction of a new Europe, without which there would be no united Germany, sovereign Poland, NATO or the EU in the guise that we know them today. The decade of the Solidarity revolution, which began in 1980, also brought about a revolution that lasted three years from 1989 to 1991. It led to processes such as the fall of communism in 1989, the unification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union, including the emancipation of the nations that had been dominated by Moscow. However, the issue of Europe's post-war borders remained formally incomplete. Of course, they had been confirmed in many documents, such as the 1970 treaty between the German Federal Republic and Communist Poland, or between East Germany and Communist Poland. Regardless, it was important to close this post-war chapter.

The issue of the Polish-German border was as important for internal processes in Germany as it was for Poland. The key to Polish sovereignty was an acceptance of its post-war borders, those that were imposed on it, as well as an understanding that a united Germany is good for Poland, whereas a divided Germany was an obstacle to Poland's independence. The reunification of Germany moved Western Europe to Poland's borders and opened new opportunities for its emancipation. Thus, Poland's independence and democratisation, as well as Germany's reunification, were closely linked, which is why this treaty is so important. Unfortunately today, these things are often forgotten in both Poland and Germany.

Spirit of the treaty

Looking at the last 25 years from a wider perspective, it is remarkable that both countries greatly profited from this co-operation, resulting in a strong position in Europe, both politically and economically. This was all possible thanks to the fact that both states treated their mutual relations as part of their European and even multilateral policies. In the 1990s, I was sceptical towards the Weimar Triangle (France-Germany-Poland). I did not agree with the German rhetoric at the time that a Polish-German reconciliation is a repeat of the French-German pact of forgiveness. For me, these are two completely different processes and I pointed out this fact to many people in Germany. The Polish-German reconciliation was a much more difficult affair and for it to be successful, we had to be aware of this fact. Nonetheless, I was also aware that the Polish-German treaty was just as important for European integration as the 1963 Franco-German one. Clearly, Weimar co-operation has turned out to be a positive instrument in creating a system of consultations in which Poland plays a key role in the EU. This co-operation be-

tween the three ambassadors of the Weimar Triangle in Brussels was decisive in many decisions. The same applies to security and neighbourhood policies. Without these mechanisms there would probably be no EU sanctions levied against Russia.

Another positive development of the last quarter century and one that had a significant impact on Poland and Germany's mutual relations was Poland joining the EU in 2004. It is important to recall that in the years leading up to Poland's accession, a large part of German society was against Poland becoming a member. Opinion polls from that period present a very incoherent picture; German society supported EU enlargement, but took a different approach to each aspiring state. They supported Hungary and the Czech Republic but not Poland. A significant feat of political restraint that goes unappreciated is the fact that the German political parties did not exploit these critical attitudes towards Poland. The German elite acted against public opinion, since it understood that having Poland in the EU was in Germany's best interests. At this time, Poland was providing support for the United States-led intervention in Iraq. Simultaneously, crucial debates were taking place in Europe over a new EU constitution. The voices of Poland's two largest parties, Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS), were critical to a deeper integration. At that time the Polish-German relations were additionally burdened by the policy of the Shröder government towards Moscow and the German debate on commemorating the post-1945 forced migrations. It was a time of crisis in Polish-German relations. Despite this, the German elite acted in the spirit of the 1991 treaty and drove forward and supported Poland's EU membership bid.

The German elite acted against public opinion in 2004, since it understood that having Poland in the EU was in Germany's best interests.

History of people

The history of these new Polish-German relations can also be viewed as a history of people. It is certainly true that charismatic individuals make history and shape politics. Today, the criticism that is levelled by some nationalistic Polish politicians and journalists at Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, respectively the foreign minister and prime minister in 1989 and 1990 and two founding fathers of the new Polish-German-partnership, is somewhat unfair. Nationalists accuse them of being submissive towards the neighbour and lacking criticism. Skubiszewski, who had little experience in foreign affairs, behaved like a

skilled diplomat.Right from the start, both Mazowiecki and Skubiszewski understood the importance of Polish-German relations for Poland's independence. They had impressive backgrounds and even though they had come to Germany from a poor country, that was in deep economic and social crises, they were respected and well-received.

A great majority of Polish presidents, prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs continued Mazowiecki and Skubiszewski's policy aimed at deepening Polish-German community of values and interests. They included especially: Lech Wałęsa, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Bronisław Komorowski, ministers Władysław Bartoszewski, Bronisław Geremek or Radosław Sikorski, and prime ministers: Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, Hanna Suchocka and Donald Tusk. Poland was also lucky when it came to its diplomatic service and had great ambassadors to Germany (like Janusz Reiter, Andrzej Byrt or Marek Prawda) who could discuss difficult issues without offending their opposite number. The meaning of dialogue was understood in the wider context of these relations.

On the German side, the most notable personalities of the German-Polish partnership after 1990 are Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkel. Let me start with Kohl who, from the perspective of Polish-German relations, was full of contradictions. On the one hand, in 1990 he made Mazowiecki's life very difficult by not making it explicit that the Polish-German border was not an issue for debate. For Kohl, it was not, but he could not make this clear because he was afraid of the reaction it might provoke from the extreme right wing of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Kohl's achievement was that he used the historical opportunity that came with Central European revolutions of 1989 and despite many critical opinions led to a quick unification of Germany and withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country, thus moving the border of the western alliance to the Polish border. Also importantly, of great help at that time was the administration of George Bush senior who understood the opportunities that the European transformations of that time were bringing about. After Kohl, Schröder came to power. He was a chancellor full of contraditions when it comes to Polish-German relations and we often forget about his positive role. On the one hand, his friendship with Vladimir Putin and Gazprom was cause for concern. Yet on the other hand, before becoming chancellor, he was very much involved in the issue of the fate of forced labour during the Third Reich, which included the fate of some Poles. As the head of Lower Saxony, he was the main shareholder in Volkswagen and a member of its supervisory board. In the 1990s, Volkswagen was involved in a very intense debate about the company's historical heritage. When Schröder came to power, groups of victims had sought an opportunity to blackmail European firms, especially German ones, with the help of American law. Schröder was well prepared and joint Polish-

German-American co-operation led to the creation of a German public-private fund which paid reparation to Polish workers forced to work against their will in the Third Reich. Of course, such compensation is always symbolic but let us not forget about Schröder's positive approach. As a result of the Iraq war, he later got into a dispute with both the Americans and Poland and because of that, he came into conflict with the post-communist Polish government.

After Schröder we have the long rule of Angela Merkel, a politician who is often underappreciated. Her uniqueness comes from two sources. Firstly, she is very intelligent when it comes to the implementation of German interests. She understands that Germany is at its best when it is a team player. Secondly, Merkel's personal background is important, since there are not many politicians who have such an emotional attitude towards Poland especially the heritage of Solidarność. She belongs to a generation of East German intellectuals (Christians would be a better description) for whom Poland's democratic culture has always been important. That is why when it comes to Polish issues, Merkel's door is always open.

Crises ahead

Despite the success of the last 25 years there is still plenty of work that needs to be done. In this sense, Germany and Poland, as well as Europe more broadly, face serious risks. On the one hand, there are external problems with no obvious solution, such as the crisis in the Eurozone, the collapse of states in North Africa and the Near East and Vladimir Putin's imperial politics.

On the other hand, there are crises or threats that we generate ourselves. One example is Europe's attitude towards refugees. Merkel was unjustly criticised for welcoming them to Germany (especially by Polish public opinion). In Poland there is almost no talk that upon consulting with Hungary and Austria, Merkel invited the refugees who were already on EU territory to come to Germany. This created a significant problem, as it is difficult, even for Germans, to integrate such a large group of people. The German state was unprepared for such an influx and what we are now seeing is an attempt to get the situation under control. Nevertheless, this problem was not a result of some moment of folly but rather an inevitable consequence of the terrible situation facing the refugees in Hungary Austria and in the Balkans. Hundreds of thousands of people were already in the EU and Merkel made a gesture of humanitarian solidarity towards them. Unfortunately, Poland did not show Germany the same level of solidarity towards the refugees, nor enough interest in the development of the Middle East, although it participated in the US-led democratisation of Iraq. The main result of this failed transformation

was the destabilisation of the Near and the Middle East that accelerated Islamic radicalisation processes. German politicians are aware of the ethnic situation in Poland, the lack of experiences with the integration of foreigners, especially from the South, but did not understand why Poland could not provide more assistance to European refugee-politics.

In my view, the deep Polish-German differences in the perception of migration can contribute not only to a new bilateral crisis but by getting linked to other European challenges (such as Brexit or policy toward Russia) to the destabilisation of the EU and its cohesion.

After 200 years Polish-German relations have finally reached a certain level of peaceful coexistence and bilateral cooperation of sovereign states, but we are celebrating this anniversary in very difficult times, a period of huge challenges which exceed politics, since they are a result of long-term dynamics and thus require long-term solutions. I fear that in the face of these crises, we risk forgetting the positive heritage of the last 25 years of Polish-German relations concentrating on differences between our political cultures. People like me (and there are many of us), meaning those who constantly travel between these two countries, frequently have to explain things. In Germany, I explain to people that comparing current development of Polish democracy to "Putinsation" is absurd and that some of the phenomena they see, including including lack of European solidarity, nationalism, anti-liberal attitudes, xenophobia or islamophobia, are not strictly Polish problems; they also exist in France, Germany and other European states.

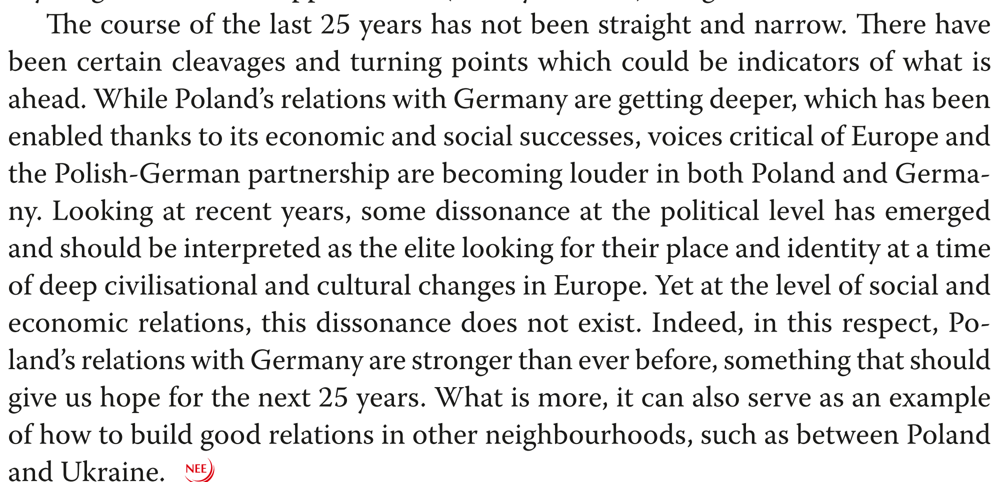
Comparing Poland's current development to Putinisation is absurd.

At the same time, the Polish media and politicians who reduce the refugee challenge to the tragic events that took place in Cologne or problems caused by refugees are creating new anti-German stereotypes, oversimplifying the cultural and social development of the Federal Republic. The truth is that migrants have changed German society and these changes are mostly positive. It is this positive change that has made these states completely different societies with different values. In culture, the voices of people who were not born in Germany are becoming increasingly visible and influential.

The influx of migrants during the 1980s and 90s has changed German culture, which prior to their arrival, was ethnically German and religiously predominantly Protestant or Catholic. Now, it is more universal. This is a shock and not everyone has accepted it. Yet at the same time, these changes are happening in France, the United Kingdom and Scandinavia. It is easy to get caught up in the negative tendencies of these shifts, but they are marginal and do not represent real cultural conflict, since conflict arises where there is success.

Regardless, Poles fear these developments, knowing that their homogeneity is an artificial creation. However, in this age of globalisation, Poles will change too and it may not even be Muslims who change the political culture in Poland, but rather Ukrainians or Russians. This is a very interesting experience that shows how irrational inter-state relations can be and how important people are. Today in Poland, there is a visible lack of people who could be guides in these interactions. Polish-German relations also fall victim to the language of politics in Poland, which is far from Christian. That is why it is difficult to accept that Merkel, who is the daughter of a pastor, was driven by biblical commandments, most notably, "love thy neighbour", in her appeal to the (mostly Muslim) refugees.

The course of the last 25 years has not been straight and narrow. There have been certain cleavages and turning points which could be indicators of what is ahead. While Poland's relations with Germany are getting deeper, which has been enabled thanks to its economic and social successes, voices critical of Europe and the Polish-German partnership are becoming louder in both Poland and Germany. Looking at recent years, some dissonance at the political level has emerged and should be interpreted as the elite looking for their place and identity at a time of deep civilisational and cultural changes in Europe. Yet at the level of social and economic relations, this dissonance does not exist. Indeed, in this respect, Poland's relations with Germany are stronger than ever before, something that should give us hope for the next 25 years. What is more, it can also serve as an example of how to build good relations in other neighbourhoods, such as between Poland and Ukraine.



Translated by Iwona Reichardt

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This essay is based on a discussion held in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Co-operation.

Artikel 38

(1) Dieser Vertrag bedarf der Ratifikation; die Ratifikationsurkunden werden so bald wie möglich in Warschau ausgetauscht.

(2) Dieser Vertrag tritt am Tage des Austauschs der Ratifikationsurkunden in Kraft.

(3) Dieser Vertrag gilt für die Dauer von zehn Jahren. Danach verlängert er sich stillschweigend um jeweils weitere fünf Jahre, sofern nicht eine der Vertragsparteien den Vertrag unter Einhaltung einer Frist von einem Jahr vor Ablauf der jeweiligen Geltungsdauer schriftlich kündigt.

Zu Urkund dessen haben die Vertreter der Vertragsparteien diesen Vertrag unterzeichnet und mit Siegeln versehen.

Geschehen zu Bonn am 17. Juni 1991

in zwei Urschriften, jede in deutscher und polnischer Sprache, wobei jeder Wortlaut gleichermaßen verbindlich ist.

Für die
Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Für die
Republik Polen

The Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation between Poland and Germany signed by Polish Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Photo: www.25de.pl

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts
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Poland and Germany: 25 years of good neighbourhood.

Photo: Wojciech Milewski, Archiwum ECS

Wolfgang Templin: *"The fall of the Berlin Wall had great significance, but only in the context of Solidarność."*

Screenshot: Bye, Bye GDR! To Liberty via Warsaw

East German refugees escaping to the German Federal Republic via Warsaw, summer 1989.

Photo: PAP/Grzegorz Rogiński

Polish Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl signing the Polish–German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation, June 1991.

Photo: Deutscher Bundestag/Archiwum W. Bartoszewskiego/ZNiO

Władysław Bartoszewski, minister of foreign affairs of Poland and former Auschwitz prisoner speaking at the Bundestag, April 1995.

Photo: European Council President

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, February 2015.

Photo: MHP/Tomasz Woźny

Polish Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz, Władysław Bartoszewski and German Chancellor Angela Merkel attending an opening of the exhibition on Polish-German reconciliation in Krzyżowa, Poland, November 2014.

Photo: PNWM/DPJW/Tomasz Tołoczko

Poland's First Lady, Agata Kornhauser-Duda, attending the Polish-German youth award ceremony "Changes/chances@work" in January 2016.

Photo: K.Siemion-Bileska/MSZ, S.Indra/MSZ

A meeting of German and Polish foreign ministers: Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Witold Waszczykowski, January 2016.

The role of the German-Polish Youth Office is to encourage the development of friendly relations between Poland and Germany through youth exchanges.

Photo: PNWM/DPJW/Paweł Duma

Polish and German firefighters take part in joint training in Gryfino, Poland.

Photo: www.kppspgryfino.pl

A partnership on trial

WOLFGANG TEMPLIN

The last 25 years of the German-Polish partnership have been marked by both positive and negative developments. It seems that once again, this partnership is being put to the test. Nevertheless, the anniversary of the German Polish Treaty of Good Neighbourship provides a perfect opportunity to confront all the forces of isolation, mistrust and refusal and to bring open questions to the table, debate controversies and deal with them.

On June 17th 1991, two years after the overwhelming victory of the Polish Solidarność (Solidarity) movement in the first and mostly free elections to be held in Poland following the fall of communism in that country, Germany and Poland signed the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation. The treaty was designed to provide a new foundation for relations between the two countries and was intentionally put in the context of the peaceful revolutions of 1989. The victory of Solidarność and the withdrawal of the communists inspired upheavals in other Eastern Bloc countries and created the conditions for the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. The treaty contains 38 articles, which lay out the terms for social, political, cultural and economic co-operation, as well as common tasks and challenges. In addition, it frames relations between the two countries as part of the process of European integration. A reunited Germany assured Poland that it supported their path towards membership of the European Union.

Closer integration

After fifteen years of painful reforms, Poland became a member of the European Union in 2004. In the years that followed, the country impressed other EU member states with the speed and success of its reforms. Germany proved to be a good and reliable neighbour in this process. Furthermore, it demonstrated that it took responsibility for the dark periods of its past seriously and countered fears that it aspired to re-emerge as a great power by rapidly developing its economy and by achieving reunification.

A dense web of civil society initiatives and activities which were carried out by both countries bound Germany and Poland closer together. These included school and youth exchanges, cross-border and regional co-operation and cultural and academic programmes. Moreover, the successful and tight-knit economic integration supported Polish reforms and profited both countries. Historians, eyewitnesses and many civil society initiatives took up the reappraisal of difficult past chapters. This included common history book commissions and redesigning certain museums and memorials. In 2005 the European Solidarity Centre was founded in Gdańsk, the cradle of Solidarność, to combine the outcomes of the Polish freedom movement and the future questions for the eastern part of the continent. Poland's foreign policy followed the impetus established in *Kultura*, a leading Polish-émigré literary-political magazine which was published in the second half of the 20th century in Paris. Poland saw itself as a bridge for the European path to reach Ukraine. Solidarność activists, Polish diplomats and politicians all played an important role in achieving the peaceful outcome of the Orange Revolution in the autumn of 2004.

> A dense web of civil society initiatives, including youth exchanges, regional co-operation and cultural and academic programmes, bind Germany and Poland together.

In his historic speech to the German parliament on September 10th 2014, 75 years after the start of the Second World War, the then-Polish president, Bronisław Komorowski, outlined both the accomplishments and future challenges of German-Polish rapprochement. Komorowski spoke of a "Copernican turn" in the history of German-Polish relations, a real miracle given the brutal history of the 20th century. He also outlined the preconditions for this miracle, which led to the breakthrough in 1989. "It was not the victory of diplomacy or alliances that changed Europe. It was the will of the people who were starving for freedom".

The Polish president referred to Roland Jahn, an oppositionist in East Germany, who pointed out that during the mass demonstration on the Leipziger Ring in

October 1989, Solidarność activists took part in the protest. Komorowski emphasised that the phenomena of Solidarność was ethical. "The power of the powerless resulted out of a belief in basic values and human dignity." It is thanks to this belief that the bloodiest imperium in the history of the world came to an end. Due to the universal dimension of the Polish experience, Komorowski stressed that personalism was the seed of a European culture that originated from Christian values, as well as from the traditions of the Enlightenment. According to him, the challenge is to create an anthropological coalition with a global reach which puts the primacy of the person and human dignity at its centre.

A lesson for today

At the time of Komorowski's speech in September 2014, following the Russian annexation of Crimea, Russia had started an undeclared war against Ukraine and violated the fundamental principles of the European order for lasting peace. This put German-Polish relations to the test with one decisive lesson from their difficult shared past. To show an understanding or even indulgence towards violence would paralyse Europe and erase any chance of a new German-Polish togetherness. Komorowski emphasised the need to support Ukraine and adhere to the Eastern Partnership, another success story resulting from close co-operation between Poland and Germany.

In 2011, the previous Polish minister of foreign affairs, Radosław Sikorski, argued in his famous Berlin speech that he feared German power less than German passivity. He postulated that Germany should take the lead in the implementation of further reforms and the strengthening of European institutions. For a Polish foreign minister to say something like this demonstrates how much trust was placed in Germany to responsibly use its economic and political power.

Both Komorowski's and Sikorski's appeals view Germany and Poland as possible engines of reform for the restructuring of a common European foreign, security and defence policy. However, many European actors denied this and did not share their optimism. The same is true of several social and political forces inside Germany and Poland themselves. At the start of the journey towards rapprochement, it was not just political outsiders and civil society actors that were organising protests and expressing strong reservations regarding this new approach. Supporters of the social-democratically dominated *Neue Ostpolitik* (New Eastern Policy) of the 1970s and 80s, much like their conservative counterparts, had completely different reasons to be sceptical. Many German Social Democrats saw the mass movement of Solidarność as a threat to stability and peace. They opted for

official diplomacy and Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s. For them, the situation after 1989 was a result of the success of their policies and the magnanimity of Gorbachev. The rapprochement with Poland remained in the shadow of their fixation with Russia. The self-declared "friend of the Poles", Gerhard Schröder, put himself into question due to his close friendship with Vladimir Putin. When Schröder started working for Gazprom following the end of his chancellorship, he seriously harmed Germany's reputation. Many German conservatives did not see the social potential of a new German-Polish togetherness due to their fixation with Russia and statist ideas. By contrast, the German left adhered for far too long to the idea that the Soviet Union was victimised and refused to address the experiences of Poland, Ukraine or the Baltic States.

Many German conservatives did not see the social potential of a new German-Polish togetherness due to their fixation on Russia and statist ideas.

Turning point

On the Polish side, two extremely different attitudes towards the realities and chances of a new neighbourhood can be observed. The vision of rapprochement and German-Polish reconciliation, as well as a European community of responsibility, was opposed by an attitude that sees these ambitions and hopes as a violation of national interests. National-conservative intellectuals, alongside like-minded sectors of society, agreed that a loss of sovereignty accompanies every step in the process of European integration. According to them, a normal German-Polish neighbourhood should be based on specific national interests. In other words, the changing situational alliances with different EU members would determine Poland's place in Europe. Furthermore, they postulate that Europe consists of extremely diverse nations. From this perspective, Brussels represents a negative influence and is mainly accepted as a place where financial resources are redistributed.

The consequences of such a nation-focused and essentially Eurosceptic attitude being applied to Polish realpolitik could be observed between 2005 and 2007. During this period German-Polish relations were put under severe strain. This changed with the start of liberal-conservative dominance under Donald Tusk and the Civic Platform. Furthermore, Poland continued its successful path of reform, even during the height of the financial crisis. Thus, Germany increasingly began to understand who their most important and reliable partner in the East was.

The year 2015 marks another important turning point. The European Union is shattered by internal crises. Conflicts with global-political dimensions are turn-

ing into open trouble spots and the drama of the refugee crisis overexerts all the European countries that are affected by it. At the same time, the attention on Russia's hybrid war activities marking a decisive challenge to peace and the European legal order is waning. What is more, the change of government in Warsaw and the ongoing rapid developments over the last few months have created a new phase in German-Polish relations. Every voice that questions the accomplishments and foundations of the last 25 years is profoundly foolish. Similarly, it would be wrong for Germany to simply resign and refrain from any prudent judgment so as to not engage in the internal affairs of a neighbouring country.

The real value of partnerships and friendships is revealed in times of crisis. In light of the recent extension of power by the new Polish government, remarks made by a Polish commentator called Tomasz Lis appear justified. "Neither the tough attitude of the opposition, democracy defenders' protests on the streets or even pressure from Brussels or Washington will bring any effect, at least anytime soon. Despite this, without these factors, Jarosław Kaczyński (the leader of the Law and Justice party) will destroy what's left of liberal democracy in Poland." Jadwiga Staniszkis, one of the most important Solidarity intellectuals, who is known for her criticism of the previous government (Civic Platform) and who was considered to be a strong supporter of the current government (Law and Justice), has criticised Jaroslaw Kaczyński's lack of interest in seeking compromise and has claimed that he ignores the principles of the separation of powers. In this regard, it is important both not to succumb to hysteria, but also not to trust false reassurances. Always stick to the facts.

The real value of partnerships and friendships is revealed in times of crisis.

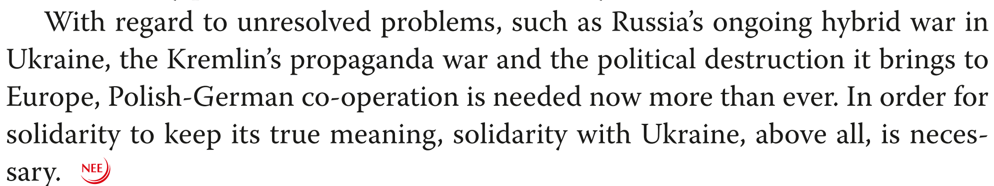
Confronting differences

Vladimir Putin's propaganda machine is up and running at full speed in Germany and Poland. In Germany, it is aimed at both right and left wing populist forces like AfD (Alternative for Germany), Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident), supporters of the Die Linke party and millions of Russian Germans. In Poland, Russian propaganda is targeted at deeply rooted nationalist, anti-Ukrainian and anti-German sentiments, stereotypes and perceptions. The messages are worrying; consider: "perhaps it would be possible to come to an agreement with the Russians behind the Ukrainians back, as they seem to be incapable of developing a functioning, stable state" or "the Germans are dangerous based on their history". These are the image that Putin's propaganda machine tries

to convey. The Polish government is different, but there are still voices that could be receptive to Russian offers. In Germany as well, Horst Seehofer, chair of the Christian Social Union, is attempting to become a part-time international player and is making his own visits to the Kremlin.

Nevertheless, the 25th anniversary of the German Polish Treaty of Good Neighbourship provides the perfect opportunity to participate in events and initiatives, as well as confront all the forces of isolation, mistrust and a refusal and bring open questions to the table, debate controversies and deal with them. These questions may include: What does national and common European responsibility mean in light of the current refugee crisis? What can the German and Polish governments do to help? What is the foundation of social co-operation in our societies and what jeopardises it? How does the media portray each other's country? What should the role of the state, public and private media be? How are contemporary German and Polish security positions similar and how are they different?

With regard to unresolved problems, such as Russia's ongoing hybrid war in Ukraine, the Kremlin's propaganda war and the political destruction it brings to Europe, Polish-German co-operation is needed now more than ever. In order for solidarity to keep its true meaning, solidarity with Ukraine, above all, is necessary.



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Poland and Germany, yesterday and tomorrow

KAI-OLAF LANG

Looking back at the last 25 years of German-Polish relations, one cannot deny that both countries' membership in the European Union has not been only a coronation of their mutual efforts, but also the overarching context for relations. However, looking ahead to the next 25 years, there are new questions and growing doubts emerging about European integration.

When the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation between Germany and Poland was signed on June 17th 1991, it was clear that both countries were about to enter a new stage in their mutual relations. This stage was meant to be one of multi-layered and multi-dimensional co-operation that would to be couched in a European context; both sides had expressed their common interest in Poland becoming a member of the European Community. In a way, the treaty became a reset point in the German-Polish relationship post-1989. Before the agreement was signed, there were still fundamental issues that had to be addressed in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. First and foremost was the fact that Germany's unification had to be coupled with a confirmation of Poland's western borders. Therefore, the results of the 2+4 negotiations,* which led to unification, as well as the German-Polish Border Treaty of November 14th 1990, were preconditions for entering a new phase of bilateral relations based on co-operation and interdependence.

* Parties at the 2+4 negotiations were both German republics and the four post-war occupying powers of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union (later Russia).

Without a robust and unequivocal resolution to the border question, both countries would not have been able to embark on successful neighbourhood co-operation because undefined territorial questions would have remained a thorny problem in the post-Potsdam period. In this regard, the border treaty and the 2+4 agreement closed a chapter, whereas the Neighbourship Treaty tried to open a new one. Nevertheless, all three documents were a package of treaties, which together formed the legal backbone for the subsequent political dynamics between both countries.

Three periods in a new reality

After the completion of the groundwork to achieve the treaty, German-Polish relations went through three major phases. In the first one, as Krzysztof Skubiszewski, the first Polish foreign minister after 1989, famously remarked, Germany and Poland worked together, united by the mentality of a "community of interests". Whereas the effort to open-up the possibility of membership to the EU (and NATO) was the core of that community, both countries, as well as their political leaderships and the relevant parts of their respective societies, were aware that the tragic past of the 20th century continued to be an important challenge. Germany had to send convincing signals that Polish suffering had a prominent place in the process of coming to terms with its own past and that a unified Germany would devote due respect to German guilt and historic issues in bilateral relations. Even though not all the controversial issues were clarified (e.g. the question of German citizens who had to leave parts of Germany which later became Poland and their legal property claims), a cautious, but visible policy of overcoming the past ensured that difficult issues were at least put aside. Hence, de-historisation in the sense of overcoming the past as an obstacle for the future and Europeanisation as a process of inserting bilateral relations in a multilateral context were the main traits of the first period, which lasted from the early 1990s to the beginning of the following decade.

> After 1989 Germany had to send convincing signals that in the process of coming to terms with its own past, Polish suffering had a prominent place in bilateral relations.

The second period was marked by difference and competition. It began with Poland's approaching EU membership. Accession negotiations had illustrated that important issues regarding Poland's future membership had a bilateral dimension. Germany's push to postpone the opening of the labour market and Poland's wish for transitional periods regarding the purchase of land by foreigners were issues that were fed by the fears of

Germans and Poles respectively. Even more controversial was Poland's firm stance in key transatlantic and European quarrels. For example, during the 2003 Iraq war, Poland sided with the United States, as a part of a pro-Atlanticist group in Europe. When it came to the debates about EU reforms, Warsaw adamantly opposed the introduction of new voting weights, the so-called "double majority", which would have been detrimental to Poland's power in EU decision-making.

In both conflicts, Germany and Poland stood on different sides of the issue. After years of harmony and German advocacy for Polish EU membership, Berlin was surprised by Poland's bold behaviour (especially as it was not yet a formal EU member). Many in Berlin were disappointed and began talking about ingratitude and selfishness, conveniently forgetting that Germany's policies at that time (e.g. the change of voting rules) were also not motivated by altruism. The culmination of phase two was between 2005 and 2007. Patterns of conflict and distrust were prominent and historical leftovers (such as compensation issues brought by German refugees against Poland or war reparation claims by Poland) reappeared. The German-Polish relationship turned from a "community of interest" into a difficult neighbourhood, defined by a deepening crisis of mutual expectations.

Indispensable partners?

However, German-Polish relations were robust enough to swiftly overcome this period of doubts and estrangement. The climax of the crisis in the middle of the decade marked its end, and after heavy confusion, a Polish government which defined itself as pro-European and pragmatic averted the risk of full blown crisis. The Civic Platform lead coalitions aimed to make Poland a proactive and indispensable European player. Co-operation with Germany was seen as a precondition for gaining access to the "inner circle" of European affairs. With the Eurozone crisis emerging, Warsaw saw new opportunities, as well as risks for Poland. As a like-minded country of the fiscally conservative "European North", Poland signalled its closeness to Germany, which was also looking for partners. On the other hand, Poland was afraid of getting side-lined due to the dynamics of economic reforms inside the Eurozone. Warsaw's response was a proposal to Germany: Poland was ready to support and justify German leadership in exchange for Germany's commitment to guard the unity of the EU.

This message, which was powerfully communicated to the German public in a famous speech given in Berlin by Poland's former foreign minister Radosław Sikorski, was received, but it did not turn into the basis of a new German-Polish compact. Due to the dynamics of the crisis, Germany became more occupied with

Greece, the European South and the rescue of the common European currency. As a result, Germany's relations with France moved to the fore. Poland was a close and extraordinary friend, but not an indispensable partner in the quest to save the Eurozone. What was even more sobering for Poland was the development of the next European crisis, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Here, the involvement of Poland's foreign minister in the management of the crisis during the tense situation occurring on Kyiv's Maidan Square on February 21st 2014 (in the framework of the Weimar Triangle), seemed to be a promising sign. Germany (and France) appeared to see an important role for Poland in settling disputes with Russia. However, Germany's shift to the Normandy format (which included Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia) caused unease and disillusionment. Those in Poland who had been critical of an alignment with Germany blamed the government for miscalculation and naïve expectations. Irrespective of how the low profile of German-Polish collaboration in the Ukraine-Russia conflict is assessed, one development became clear during this period. On the one hand, the atmosphere between Germany and Poland became increasingly positive and the level of ambition advanced. For example, speaking in the German Bundestag in 2014, Poland's president, Bronisław Komorowski, even proposed a "German-Polish community of responsibility for the future of Europe". On the other hand, there was only limited momentum in conceptual co-operation at the European level and in foreign policy.

> For years it seems that Germany had taken Poland for granted. Bilateral relations now need a new approach, combining flexibility and an improved tolerance for frustration.

It is this situation of political closeness, splendid dispositions and unspectacular normality which is now being questioned by the winners of Poland's 2015 elections. It seems that there is a desire to redefine and rebalance German-Polish relations through the paradigm of distrust and rivalry. Germany, which for years took Poland almost for granted, now needs a new approach, combining flexibility and an improved tolerance for frustration. Above all, both countries have to redefine what role the other is to play in their foreign and European policies.

The next 25 years

Looking back at the last 25 years of German-Polish relations, one cannot deny that both countries' membership in the EU has not just been a coronation of their mutual efforts, but also the overarching context for mutual interaction. EU

membership has also revealed an inbuilt ambiguity that has constituted many areas of rapport but also some sources of friction. Standing on the cusp of 25 years of German-Polish realities, the relevance and ambivalence of the EU for bilateral relations looks set to continue.

However, there are new questions and growing doubts appearing about European integration. Whereas the EU has thus far, despite its many internal frictions, been regarded as a permanent and undeniable framework, this is now being challenged. However, if the crisis-stricken EU begins to get shaky, Germany and Poland will both look for additional stabilisers by fostering old relations or creating new bilateral or multilateral partnerships. In one scenario, a Europe of "negative integration" and growing divisions might lead to more German-Polish co-operation, as both countries use their contacts as a reassurance against disintegration. However, in an alternative scenario, both countries are driven apart by varying assessments regarding the root causes of European problems and by their differing responses to the EU's deepening crises.

This is all still political fiction of course, as we do not yet know what shape the European project will assume in the future. Nevertheless, we can assume that a couple of recurring features and transversal questions will continue to shape German-Polish relations, or will at least have to be addressed in order to avoid friction, some of them in a much more dynamic way than in recent years.

The first big question will be how to reconcile Germany's new centrality in Europe with Poland's quest for more leeway in foreign and domestic affairs and better defence of its national interests. Germany is expected and ready to assume "responsibility", and it is increasingly accepting its new European leadership duties. Whereas some partners perceive this as a long-awaited and necessary impulse for the EU, others point to German unilateralism as a search for dominance. From Berlin's point of view, effective leadership requires reliable partners. Yet what is often included in the modern concept of co-leadership, which implies the equal inclusion of partners, is the wish to obtain support or even followership.

What might complicate the situation is that at a time when Germany expects loyalty from Poland, Poland is striving for something else, an objective that the current Polish government calls *podmiotowość*, i.e. an assertive policy-making role in the EU, not just being a coadjutor. Irrespective of party politics, uncertainty in Poland regarding Germany's behaviour in European politics has grown during the past couple of years. It is true that the position taken by the Merkel government concerning the crisis in Ukraine, and especially its sanctions policies, has been lauded by Warsaw. The Eurozone crisis has demonstrated Germany's determination discipline deviators. Given the *podmiotowość*-fervour in Poland and considering the domestic pressure in Germany on questions like migration, energy policy and

economic interests, rather than a renewed "community of interest", we may see the return of realpolitik, including a mixture of co-operation and competition, that could be the new paradigm for German-Polish relations.

The second issue for these relations is the uncertainty regarding the future of solidarity, both in the EU and between the two countries. Traditionally, Poland has been the standard-bearer of a Europe built on mutual assistance and help. Therefore, Polish governments have tried to show their support for others and have aimed to anchor key EU policies around the principle of solidarity. Of course, effective solidarity requires strong common bonds, moral proximity and a spirit of togetherness. With an increasingly fragmented and re-nationalised EU, these fundamentals have been somewhat eroded. Instead of a Polish-German couple propagating the virtues of solidarity as a pillar of European integration, both countries have recently accused each other of using solidarity in an egoistic way. Germany has complained about Poland treating solidarity as a one-way street while Poland has lamented Germany's instrumental approach to solidarity on issues such as the Nord Stream 2 pipeline or the original design of Europe's asylum policies. Apart from this trend towards selective solidarity, the development of the EU might put additional strain on European reciprocity. If the EU becomes multi-speed, e.g. with a mini-Schengen or upgraded Eurozones, varying zones of solidarity within the EU might emerge, with Germany and Poland finding themselves in different zones at different times.

Politics and security

The prospects of solidarity are deeply intertwined with a third enduring topic in German-Polish relations: the development of the EU and the preferred European vision in both countries. In Poland, two basic ideas seem to compete on this issue. Some envision a decentralised concept of a community of sovereign nations united by solidarity, whilst others imagine an integrationist view of a tightly-knit union with an extensive pooling of conjoined statehood. Even though both concepts share some objectives, they have different ideas about how to achieve them. The first group believe that their goals can be achieved by strengthening national states, containing Brussels's institutions and guarding against the German (or Franco-German) "hegemony"; whereas the integrationist view believes in consolidating EU-competencies, solidifying rules-based integration and collaborating with Germany (and France) to hook up with the political core of the Union.

Domestic factors like the emergence of party based Euro-scepticism, a critical public opinion and the emergence of new veto-players for European policies could

invigorate tendencies that have already been observed in recent years. These include a predilection for rebalancing relations between the European Commission and member states in favour of the latter and an increasing readiness to find solutions in a smaller group, if "rejecters" threaten to derail important decisions. This tendency could get an additional push towards the end of this decade, when the British question will have been negotiated and when the Germans and the French will have had their elections in 2017. A deeper reform of the EU architecture might appear on the agenda. Germany could then overcome its traditional hesitance about intra-EU cracks and agree to "differentiated integration" with Poland being left outside the new European nucleus, at least for some time.

In the sphere of security, we will probably also see some changes. Here, Poland may achieve real progress. Uncertainty beyond Poland's eastern borders, Moscow's obstinacy in international relations and Russia's massive armaments programme have all helped NATO to become more aware of the risks and threats on its eastern flank. In spite of reluctance on the part of some allies, the Alliance has begun to steadily reinforce its presence along its eastern periphery. Notwithstanding the outcome of the 2016 Warsaw Summit and further NATO meetings in the upcoming years, it seems evident that NATO has decided to reduce its frailty in North, Central and South-eastern Europe. Were there to be any new military escalations in the post-Soviet space, NATO would probably (not swiftly in order not to "provoke" Russia, but at least in the mid-term) increase its deterrence and reassurance efforts.

Whereas the reduction in military weakness is a long and cumbersome process, there are other areas of risk that can be reduced substantially with greater ease. Energy is the most promising field in this respect. Having lagged behind for more than a decade, Poland initiated a bold diversification policy at the beginning of the 21st century. With the help of EU energy policy, national measures like the construction of interconnectors with other EU countries and the construction of the first LNG terminal have substantially reduced Polish dependence on Russian gas. Even though Poland will face new challenges, (due to problems in the coal-based parts of its energy sector), there is a real chance that energy security will be less and less a question of relations with Russia and increasingly a matter of modernisation and an appropriate investment strategy for its energy sector.

There is a real chance that energy security in Poland will be less and less a question of relations with Russia and increasingly a matter of modernisation and investment.

Whereas Poland's real and perceived security may improve, Germany could be about to enter a period of multiple new risks and vulnerabilities. Interestingly enough, Germany's foreign and European policies could

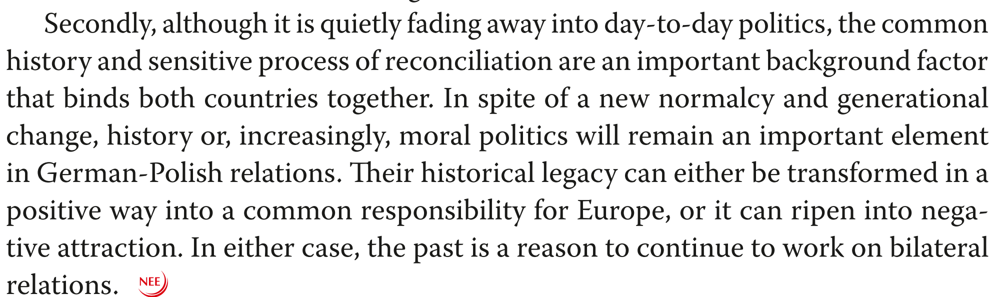
adopt one of the traditional hallmarks of Poland's view about the international environment: it could become much more securitised.

Resilience of relations

Of course, all of this is highly speculative. External shocks or domestic ruptures can give all of these determinants new directions. Nevertheless, irrespective of these uncertainties, looking to the next 25 years of German-Polish relations, we should at least take into account one preeminent development, which has been both a feature and an achievement of the first 25 years of those nations' good neighbourly relations: the resilient nature of bilateral relations. In politics, it is not totally natural that times of plenty alternate with times of famine. Prosperity can be superseded by desertification. However, this has not happened to German-Polish relations during the last two and a half decades and is unlikely to happen in the near future, a fact that stands as a testament to these relations' enduring nature.

Two developments have contributed to this. Firstly, mutual relations have been deepened and widened. Notwithstanding the unprecedented dynamics of economic trade and person-to-person contact, the political agenda of both countries has been considerably extended. When Poland was on the brink of joining the EU, the country appeared to have expertise only on matters of security and Eastern affairs. In the meantime Poland has substantially diversified its fields of action in Europe. After more than ten years of membership, this broad plethora includes energy and climate issues, the single market, EU finance, the institutional future of the EU and, most recently, questions of migration and borders. Even though some of these areas have had rather divisive effects on bilateral relations, they have constituted a need for collaboration. This wide range of policies will not be narrowed easily and will continue to act as a stabilising set of interactions.

Secondly, although it is quietly fading away into day-to-day politics, the common history and sensitive process of reconciliation are an important background factor that binds both countries together. In spite of a new normalcy and generational change, history or, increasingly, moral politics will remain an important element in German-Polish relations. Their historical legacy can either be transformed in a positive way into a common responsibility for Europe, or it can ripen into negative attraction. In either case, the past is a reason to continue to work on bilateral relations.



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From foe to friend
Bringing Poles and Germans together

AGNIESZKA ŁADA

Relations between Poland and Germany have undergone significant changes in the last 25 years. Research and public opinion show that the greatest change has occurred on the level of friendly feeling and mutual trust between the two countries. Above all, Poles have overcome their fears and negative stereotypes about Germans in order to open up to their neighbours. Therefore, the success of Polish and German reconciliation proves it was worthwhile endeavour.

In 2016 Poland and Germany are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Co-operation. Its numerous points about political and economic co-operation have been successfully implemented and as a result, Polish-German relations have changed dramatically over the last quarter century. One of the ground-breaking moments in these relations was the hope put forth in one of the closing paragraphs: "The signing parties shall support comprehensive personal relations between their citizens, while expressing the belief that the development of interpersonal relations is an indispensable condition of mutual understanding and reconciliation of both nations." Clear evidence of this accomplishment can be seen in the enormous change that has taken place in the last 25 years regarding the mutual perception of both societies.

Both Poles and Germans began building "new" mutual relations, starting from a base of mutual distrust and reluctance. In 1990, 69 per cent of Poles stated that they felt personally threatened by Germans. Moreover, 78 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement: "As long as the world exists, Germans will never be brethren to Poles."

Five factors

The aforementioned changes in attitude and perception were influenced by five key factors. First and foremost, the main issue to keep in mind is the common historical past and the stories that have emerged from it, including wars, border changes, the Prussian partition of Poland, the policy of Germanisation and the Second World War, along with the accompanying Nazi atrocities that were committed in Poland. All of these events have impacted the perception of both Germany in Poland and Poland in Germany. Let us start with Germany and its 17th century Prussian policy, which was continued for many years and allowed the German authorities to claim that Poland was a weak state, one that was immersed in chaos with an underdeveloped economy and whose citizens belonged to a lower class. Prussians believed that Poland was a state that should be under German management and control.

After the Second World War the division of Germany into two political blocs contributed to a deepening of distrust, ignorance and stereotypes. Germans from the West looked down on Poland as their poor neighbour and believed that after 1989 Poland deserved a helping hand with reforms and integration, as well as with NATO and EU integration. This was as much related to economic and political concerns as it was to historical issues and a sense of responsibility. The image of Poland as Germany's "baby brother", that is looked down upon and patronised, was not particularly conducive to building good relations. Today, when both countries are members of the European Union, their mutual relations are based far more on partnership, even though some differences will always exist.

The second issue worth considering is intergovernmental relations, especially those that have been covered by the media on both sides. Until 2004, the year when Poland, along with nine other states, joined the EU, Germany had been Poland's strongest advocate for accession. Since 2004 both countries have often stood side by side when making decisions on the EU level. However, they also have their differences, especially in areas such as energy and climate policy.

The third issue that has developed over the last 25 years has been the economy. Germany has been Poland's key economic partner for many years now, which has had an impact on both the level of knowledge and level of understanding shared by both societies about each other's economic situation. A stable economy in Poland, especially when compared to the situation of some EU member states, is encouraging to Germany. In 2014 Poland was eighth on the list of places where German exports are directed and came sixth in terms of imports. The term *polnische Wirtschaft*, which in the 1990s was a synonym for chaos, mismanagement and a lack of planning, became the synonym for economic growth and reforms carried

out in a swift manner. German media regularly quote economic data that confirms that Poland is moving in a positive direction, while German entrepreneurs indicate that Poland is a highly attractive investment market.

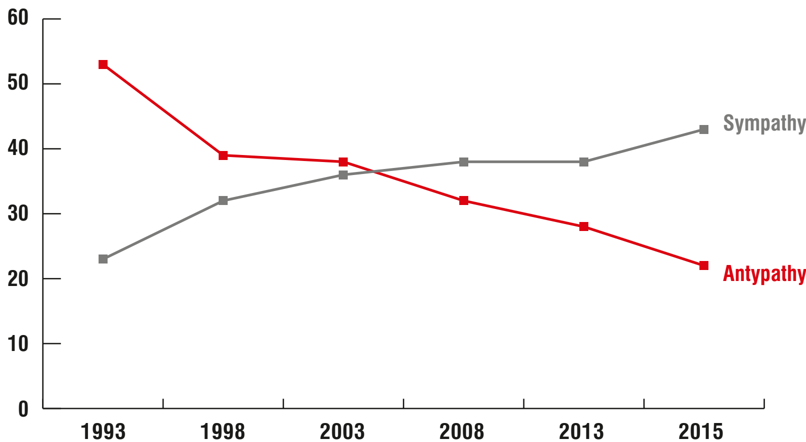
The fourth issue is interpersonal relations. Since 1989 the network of Polish and German connections has been growing at a steady pace and many German citizens now have different opportunities to dispel the many historical stereotypes about Poland that have been floating around Germany for centuries. Poles also have opportunities to get to know Germans who are different from those depicted in jokes that were popular in Poland until the 1980s, which presented Germans as Nazis and brutal occupiers. Youth exchange programmes have been extremely valuable in this respect. The Erasmus programme, as well as city partnerships and co-operation between NGOs, have also helped to foster interpersonal relations. The fact that Poland joined the EU and later the Schengen zone helped tremendously in facilitating cross border contacts in all manner of ways, including employment, trade, shopping and even sending children to schools in the neighbouring country.

The fifth factor is the presence of Polish workers in Germany. Even before 1989 and during Germany's re-unification, there were already Poles who were active in the German labour market, mainly as seasonal workers. This remained the case until the complete opening of the labour market in 2011. The concerns voiced by some Germans regarding the influx of Polish workers into Germany have not come true, as Poles are currently a desirable labour force, not just in agriculture or the lower levels of the economy, but also in medical care and the IT sector. Thanks to the Polish presence on the German labour market, many Germans who have never visited Poland have a chance to get in touch with "Polishness". Direct contact between representatives of both nations is very important because it promotes knowledge and understanding of the other country and its inhabitants, whilst also contributing to the greatest Polish/German success of the last quarter of a century: bringing both peoples closer to each other.

Mutual friendly feelings and acceptance

The changes in perception on the part of both nations and their newfound mutual closeness can be seen most vividly in the increased levels of friendliness and acceptance towards national representatives. Poles feel increasingly friendly towards and accepting of Germans. At present, nearly half of Polish society admits to having positive feelings about Germans (43 per cent), whilst around a third feels indifferent (30 per cent). Just over a fifth admits to feeling hesitant (22 per cent). At the same time, a greater percentage of Poles feel positive about Italians (51 per

cent), Czechs (50 per cent) and the Spanish (49 per cent) than they do about Germans. Since 1993 the level of positive feelings towards Germans has increased by as much as 20 per cent. At the same time, the level of dislike towards them fell from 53 per cent in 1993 to 22 per cent in 2015.



Changes in the level of friendliness felt by Poles towards Germans from 1993 to 2015
Source: CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) 2015

The level of friendliness that Germans feel towards Poles is rather stable, although due to a lack of directly comparable data, it is difficult to draw solid conclusions. For instance, in 2000 and 2011, research showed that 31–32 per cent of German respondents had positive feelings towards Poles. At the same time, 21–24 per cent of Germans were hesitant about Poles. The level of friendliness and mutual acceptance is also related to how much members of the other society are accepted in various societal roles (e.g. neighbour, daughter-in law etc.). It is this that gives us the best indication of to what extent Poles and Germans, who were once enemies, have become closer and begun to trust each other in recent years. As far back as 2000, every second Pole did not mind having a German person as a friend, a son-in-law or a neighbour. At present, these indicators exceed 80 per cent. In 2000 a German boss would only have been accepted by 38 per cent of the respondents, whereas today, that figure stands at around 75 per cent.

In terms of the societal roles for which there is data, Germans are more likely to accept Poles than reject them. German acceptance of Poles has changed over the years depending on their societal role. For example, whilst acceptance of Poles as inhabitants and citizens of Germany has increased greatly, acceptance of them as

neighbours has only gone up slightly. Similarly, the acceptance of Poles as friends, co-workers, bosses, sons or daughters-in-law has decreased. This could be connected with an increased German reluctance towards foreigners in their country, a trend that is spreading throughout Western Europe.

Recent evidence suggests that the level of Polish acceptance of Germans currently exceeds that of German acceptance of Poles. In some cases it is significantly different. This is a relatively new phenomenon. In the 1990s Germans would more willingly accept Poles than the other way round, particularly in roles such as co-workers, neighbours, inhabitants, bosses, children-in-law etc. A similar level of acceptance could have been assumed for the roles of citizen and friend. After Poland's accession to the EU, the level of German acceptance increased dramatically.

Recent evidence suggests that the level of Polish acceptance of Germans currently exceeds that of German acceptance of Poles.

Only in recent years have Poles opened up to their neighbours so much that the level of Polish acceptance of Germans in most societal roles is currently higher than German acceptance of Poles. Therefore, this change is primarily related to a major improvement in the attitude of Polish citizens towards German society. Poles who are more familiar with Germany today have stopped feeling hesitant about it and can therefore easily envision mutual co-existence. In Germany, changes in acceptance are also relatively less significant since the emotional burden that was causing distrust and a fear of Poles was beyond comparison. The Germans were the ones who were perceived as aggressors and, as a result, Poles had to overcome much greater fears in order to open up to their neighbours.

Mutual image

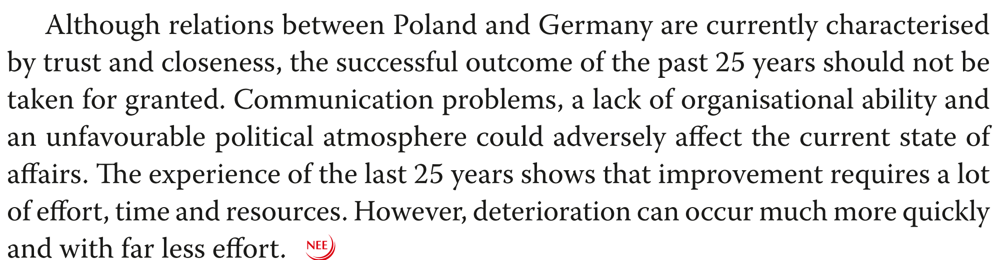
Germans have a much more positive image of Poles these days, particularly in regards to their personality traits. Today, Germans are more likely to associate Poles with traits such as kindness, entrepreneurship, higher education, modernity and religiousness. Poles' assessment of German personality traits has also been subject to many changes over the years, although their view of Germans as effective, well-organised and responsible has not changed drastically. Polish opinion regarding German discipline, entrepreneurship and modernity has deteriorated. However, their assessment of Germans' honesty, tolerance, modesty and kindness has improved.

Therefore, it is difficult to define an image of a typical German in Poland. Some would argue that because Poles have gotten to know Germans better, they have

"demythologised" their spotless image as a nation characterised by extreme levels of hard work, modernity and entrepreneurship. Instead they began to perceive them as a nation of kindness and honesty. Poles are also less likely to associate Germans with arrogance and a lack of kindness, which indicates a softening of the image of a "typical" German in the eyes of a Pole. This is yet further proof of the fundamental changes that have taken place, especially when we take into account the fact that over the years, negative historical experience and Polish propaganda under communism created an entirely different picture of Germany.

An example of a strong Polish-German social connection is the support given to youth exchange programmes, especially the German-Polish Youth Office, an organisation created by the 1991 treaty. The aim of this organisation is to facilitate social contacts and organise trips for thousands of young Poles and Germans. It is a great opportunity to meet neighbours, most often for the first time in their lives. Other exchanges which also need continued support are mutual meetings at the local governmental level, mutual choir performances and fire brigade practice, as well as academic and research programmes.

The study of foreign languages should also be promoted more in order to get better acquainted with one's neighbouring countries and understand their culture, traditions and citizens' way of thinking. Formal barriers should thus be removed, especially in the cross border area. This should be achieved by facilitating and supporting the existing co-operation between the police forces, medical rescue staff, cultural centres and schools.



Although relations between Poland and Germany are currently characterised by trust and closeness, the successful outcome of the past 25 years should not be taken for granted. Communication problems, a lack of organisational ability and an unfavourable political atmosphere could adversely affect the current state of affairs. The experience of the last 25 years shows that improvement requires a lot of effort, time and resources. However, deterioration can occur much more quickly and with far less effort.

Translated by Justyna Chada

The data quoted in this article are from studies carried out by the Institute of Public Affairs, conducted with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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The future of Ukraine is the future of Europe

YAROSLAV HRYTSAK

I often say that what happened in Polish-Ukrainian relations after the fall of the Berlin Wall was a geopolitical revolution. I compare it to the French and German reconciliation in the 1950s. While that laid the foundation for a new post-war Europe, a Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation creates the possibility of this construction extending further East. Moreover, the stakes in Polish-Ukrainian relations always were, and indeed continue to be, about more than just Poland and Ukraine.

This text does not claim to represent the most outstanding depth of analysis or breadth of perspective. It is more akin to a set of travel notes. In 2015 I spent time travelling by car, bus, train and plane from Shanghai in China to Edmonton in Canada, via Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, the United States and France. I also travelled throughout Ukraine, passing several times through Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, a city that shares a border with the separatist region of Donbas.

My travels were a result of circumstances rather than choice. If the situation allowed, I would have preferred to stay home and do research. My frequent trips were caused by the crisis in Ukraine. I needed to travel in order to advise, persuade, appeal and reassure a multitude of different people, ranging from Kissinger in Yale to Russian-speaking, middle-aged women in Odesa who say that they pray every single day that Galicia will separate from Ukraine and leave them alone. Not that they want Vladimir Putin; on the contrary, they do not. In fact they hate him. What they want is to be left alone, by both the East and the West.

Strategically friendly

Poland is the country with the least amount of representation in my recent travels. The reason is simple: when it comes to Poland, Ukrainians have an impression that it is a reliable and loyal partner. This attitude is reflected in public opinion: among all the countries considered to be friendly towards Ukraine, Ukrainians name Poland as the most amiable. A few months prior to the Polish presidential election in May 2015, my Polish friends assured me that when it comes to Poland, we Ukrainians have nothing to worry about. Bronisław Komorowski stood firm in his support for Ukraine and his chances of re-election were very high.

Among all the countries considered to be friendly towards Ukraine, Ukrainians name Poland as the most amiable.

Even now, after Andrzej Duda won the election, my Polish colleagues still assure me that Ukraine need not worry. Duda and Jarosław Kaczyński (head of the ruling Law and Justice party) are both "students" of Jerzy Giedroyc, an influential émigré intellectual who was largely responsible for Poland's views on Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is unlikely that Poland's Eastern policy will be revised. What is more likely is an intensification of historic discussions in relation to Volhynia (a massacre of ethnic Poles during the Second World War carried out by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army – editor's note). However, this intensification is unlikely to have an impact on the strategic partnership between Warsaw and Kyiv.

To that end, one can compare Polish-Ukrainian relations to those that exist between Poland and Lithuania. However, there is nothing comparable to Volhynia in Poland and Lithuania's shared past. Yet even without that issue, relations between Poland and Lithuania remain problematic. By contrast, even with the memory of Volhynia looming large, Polish-Ukrainian relations will remain strategically friendly whoever comes to power in Kyiv or Warsaw, particularly in the face of Russian aggression, with the Law and Justice party proving to be more far-sighted in estimating its danger than the Civic Platform was.

These assurances are comforting to me, although only to a certain extent. I agree with the conclusion that in all probability, Ukraine will not lose Poland and Poland will not lose Ukraine. However, I see another threat emanating from a change of government: that the Polish-Ukrainian strategic partnership which currently remains "on paper", ceases to be strategic "in deeds". The stakes in Polish-Ukrainian relations always were and indeed continue to be more than just about those two countries. Now, they are about more than even Central and Eastern Europe; the very future of Europe is at stake.

If we accept that Europe remains a global player for the next few years at least, then we are talking about the future of the whole world. This is how Henry Kissinger represents the situation in his latest book on the new world order. In his opinion, this order will be founded on the European ("Westphalian") system. Whatever we may think about him, Kissinger can hardly be called utopian; his views have always been firmly grounded in realism.

Thinking about reconciliation

I often say that what happened in Polish-Ukrainian relations after the fall of the Berlin Wall was a geopolitical revolution. I compare it to the French and German reconciliation that occurred in the 1950s. While that laid the foundation for a new post-war Europe, a Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation creates the possibility of this construction extending further East. Of course, for this new Europe to be stable, the Polish-Ukrainian axis will have to be transformed into a "Poland-Ukraine-Russia" triangle. Without Russia's participation, the construct will not last long. However, reconciliation with Russia was not achieved over the course of the last 25 years and there is certainly no chance of it happening now that Russia has resorted to open aggression.

This does not mean that we should not think about how such a reconciliation should look like. After all, the architect of the new Europe, Robert Schuman, started talking about French and German reconciliation in the early 1940s, during the Second World War, long before it actually took place. The prerequisite for such reconciliation was to be Hitler's collapse. Similarly, the prerequisite for Polish-Russian and Ukrainian-Russian reconciliation should be the fall of the Vladimir Putin regime. The Russian president only understands the language of force. In his view, reconciliation is for weaklings.

Some experts, including George Soros, estimate that Putin's regime will last for only two more years. Even if we accept this optimistic estimation, two years is too long for Ukraine. Devastated by war, corruption and a post-revolutionary crisis, it could fall during this time, perhaps even more than once. We should deliver justice for Ukraine. After all, it stood in the face of the "Russian spring" of 2014.

Putin's actions in relation to Ukraine were not spontaneous. Russia's strategy of attack was developed in Moscow back in 2009, after the war in Georgia. It was prepared to be activated if Ukraine began taking real steps to leave the Russian sphere of influence and move closer to the West. According to this strategy, Putin's intention was to get half of Ukrainian territory under Russian control, to the east and south of the Kharkiv-Odesa line. There lies the industrial heart of Ukraine and

its access to the Black Sea. The remainder of Ukraine, its agricultural centre and west, was irrelevant as far as Putin was concerned.

Despite this, the most that Putin was able to achieve during the "Russian spring" in Ukraine was to annex Crimea and cut off Donbas, and even then it was only one-third of that territory. As a matter of fact, Putin sustained a military defeat in Ukraine. It appears to be his greatest defeat thus far. However, the war is not over yet. As we know from history, you can win every battle and still lose the war.

Putin sustained a military defeat in Ukraine. It seems to be his greatest defeat thus far. However, the war is not over yet.

I often compare the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war with the First World War. In that conflict, victory was achieved not through large-scale military operations but through attrition; the side with the strongest defence in the rear won. If Ukraine stands alone in its resistance to Russia, its chances of success are extremely low. However, Russia stands no chance of achieving its aims if Ukraine is granted access to western resources. That is why Polish-Ukrainian understanding was of key strategic European importance until 2014, when Russian aggression was initially launched against Ukraine. Now, in the face of the Russian threat, Polish-Ukrainian understanding remains important, although its significance is fading. This is because Poland does not possess the resources that Ukraine needs in order to hold out. Poland is, and hopefully will remain, part of the West, but it cannot replace the whole of the West by itself when it comes to aiding its neighbour.

Of course, the "West" is a relative notion. It disappears and re-appears, in keeping with the consensus, which also disappears and re-appears, between Washington and Brussels on the one hand, and within the EU, between Brussels and other European states on the other. Putin expected that he would be able to disrupt these blocs and then negotiate with each part separately. Fortunately, this strategy failed. The existence of collective sanctions against Russia is empirical evidence that the West exists. It is very important within the framework of our subject matter that the West's solidarity developed as a reaction to Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Lasting change?

To a certain extent, the situation in 2014–2015 is a repeat of the situation that came about after the first Ukrainian Maidan (the Orange Revolution). Then, the West also manifested the necessary minimum solidarity to support Ukrainian democracy. The primary difference between 2014 and 2004 is that Berlin's position has changed. Previously, Germany had hoped that political and economic mod-

Photo: KPRP/Andrzej Hrechorowicz

Polish-Ukrainian relations will remain strategically friendly whoever comes to power in Kyiv or Warsaw, particularly in the face of Russian aggression.

ernisation was possible in Russia and that this would move the country closer to the West, both politically and economically. Dmitry Medvedev's presidency was seen as a guarantee of this; the term "modernisation" was central to many of his public statements. Germany viewed Ukraine primarily through the perspective of Russia; Kyiv's interests were of marginal significance when compared to what was taking place in Moscow.

Now Germany, represented by Chancellor Angela Merkel, is addressing the Ukrainian matter separately from the Russian one and treats Ukraine as important in its own right. One can only imagine what would have happened to Ukraine if Gerhard Schröder had remained in office and the EU's position towards Ukraine was determined by him, together with Silvio Berlusconi in Rome and Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris!

Future historians will have to determine the moment when Berlin changed its approach towards Ukraine. I would assume that it started when Putin returned to power in 2012, since this was the moment when it became clear that all hopes for Russia's modernisation were in vain. An acquaintance of mine, a journalist at *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung*, tried to persuade me in the early 2010s that Ukrainians needed to take into account a sharp change in Germany's Eastern policy. Without this change Berlin would not green light the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine. However, it is difficult to say how lasting this change is. This issue

was discussed at a conference on German-Ukrainian relations which took place at the University of Toronto in October 2015. One of the lead German experts argued that this change would last as long as Putin, or someone like him, remained in power. It is not a matter of Merkel and Ukraine, she argued, but the fact that Putin is seen as the enemy by a younger German political elite. This is because they were taught to value public work and contributions to public life. Therefore, they will never forgive Putin for his reprisals against civil society in Russia. Based on my personal experience of frequent trips to Germany and my participation in various events organised in Ukraine by a variety of German foundations, I have also noted a change in the German opinion-forming elite: in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the majority identify with Ukraine.

The bad news is that Ukraine is currently on the verge of becoming a failed state. The good news is that it can count on the West for support. As most historians would agree, external factors are often crucial for the success of revolutions. In the case of Ukraine, the Revolution of Dignity should not merely aim to hold out, but also to modernise Ukraine along western lines. In other words, it has to do what Russia has failed to achieve. Only then, can its victory be considered genuine and complete. The success of Ukrainian modernisation will put an end to Putin's ideology of *Russkiy Mir* ("Russian world"), which is based upon an assertion that Orthodox states like Russia and Ukraine have to follow their own *Sonderweg*, separately to the West.

No choice but reform

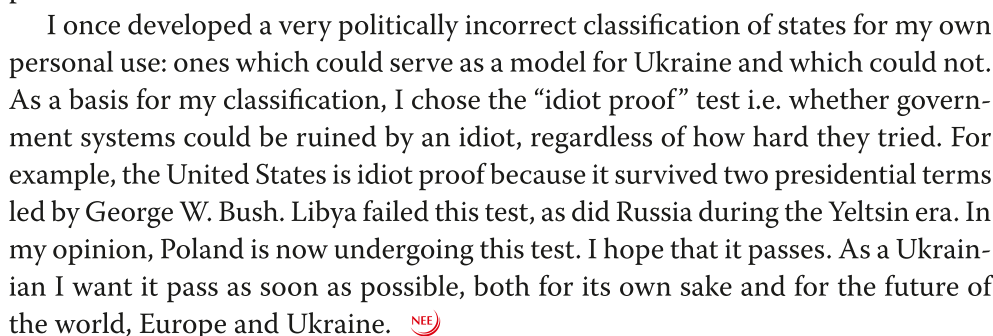
Ukraine's victory could potentially have a wide-ranging impact on Eastern Europe. Should this be the case, the first country to feel it would be Georgia. That is why Georgian reformers have relocated to Ukraine en masse; they think that is where the second phase of the Russo-Georgian War is taking place and that Ukraine's success will also be Georgia's victory. This knock-on effect is also noticeable in some of the post-Soviet Central Asia states. Local democratic forces in states like Kyrgyzstan are now looking to Ukraine in the same way that the Ukrainians looked to Poland for inspiration back in 1989–1991.

Despite this, Ukraine's biggest problem is that it cannot handle modernisation on its own. In addition to the present crisis, it is still in the grip of its past, a mixture of Orthodoxy, colonial heritage and communism, which weighs it down like an anchor. This is evidenced by the lack of any radical reform occurring in the last two years. Yet Ukraine has no choice but to reform, for a lack of change threatens its very existence.

Ukraine is far more likely to successfully manage these issues when it joins the EU, or if not, then at least the common European legal and economic sphere. Receiving an equivalent of the Marshall Plan is also gravely important in this regard. Without this plan, post-war Europe would never have become what it is now. Post-war Ukraine also needs a similar plan to enable it to achieve its modernisation ambitions. Each reform has a price. This is not a metaphor, but a real price calculated in real numbers. The Ukrainian budget does not have these kinds of sums. It can barely make ends meet and the money it receives from the International Monetary Fund is not spent on radical reforms, but rather used to fill the gaps in the Ukrainian budget and prevent a default.

This brings us back to Polish-Ukrainian relations. Ukraine desperately needs a strong and united Europe, while the new Polish government seems to be pursuing an agenda aimed at limiting the EU's strength and solidarity. Whilst Kyiv urgently needs to move towards Berlin, Warsaw is currently demonstrating a determination to move away from it. Personally, I think that Poland currently resembles a suicidal state. Instead of playing big-league politics, it is going back to the idea of small regional blocs like *Międzymorze* (Intermarium) or the Visegrad Alliance. I prefer not to discuss the fact that the Polish prime minister made a gross exaggeration in a recent speech where she said that Poland had accepted "a million refugees from Ukraine" and that is why it cannot accept Syrian refugees now. Discussing this would mean accepting the scale of thought that the current Polish government is operating on. I prefer to focus on the wider context.

Ukraine desperately needs a strong and united Europe.



I once developed a very politically incorrect classification of states for my own personal use: ones which could serve as a model for Ukraine and which could not. As a basis for my classification, I chose the "idiot proof" test i.e. whether government systems could be ruined by an idiot, regardless of how hard they tried. For example, the United States is idiot proof because it survived two presidential terms led by George W. Bush. Libya failed this test, as did Russia during the Yeltsin era. In my opinion, Poland is now undergoing this test. I hope that it passes. As a Ukrainian I want it pass as soon as possible, both for its own sake and for the future of the world, Europe and Ukraine.

Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

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Trying to move a rock

Lustration in Ukraine

IGOR LYUBASHENKO

A strong demand to "reset the authorities" became evident during the EuroMaidan protests in Ukraine. The bloody finale of the Revolution of Dignity in February 2014 only served to crystallise public conviction that further democratic developments would be impossible without a purge of the political elite. However, the current low levels of trust in the Ukrainian authorities, and the courts in particular, begs the question as to whether lustration in Ukraine is actually an effective form of justice to allow the country to move on.

Political transitions usually evoke associations with something new. This is undoubtedly natural. Nevertheless, one should remember that the process of transition is always a mixture of change and continuity. Societies are complex entities and they never change their political attitudes and priorities fully in a matter of days or even months. In other words, any change of political regime has to deal with a part of society that represents the *ancien regime* or at least remains a supporter of the values upon which it was based. While authoritarian regimes tend to deal with this problem by using repression, it constitutes a significant dilemma for the regimes that claim to respect the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

This dilemma is as old as democracy itself. However, only the events of recent decades, namely the post-communist transitions that have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe, have made both researchers and practitioners systematise their thinking about the problem of justice during periods of democratic transition.

Resetting the authorities

Vetting policies, usually called lustration, have become the most widespread transitional justice practice in post-communist countries. The acceptability of lustration has been confirmed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which, in 1996, adopted a resolution containing guidelines for countries willing to implement lustration in order to ensure that they comply with the principles of the rule of law. Bearing in mind that any transitional justice action, including lustration, contains a political element, one of the basic standards of lustration as understood by the CoE is that such policies should be aimed at providing justice without seeking revenge. Thus, the ultimate goal of lustration according to existing jurisprudence is not to punish the representatives of the *ancien regime*, but rather to shield a young democracy, in particular its state apparatus, from those who are considered to be standard bearers for the values of the illiberal past.

In most Central European states, post-communist lustrations are usually seen as a "closed chapter". These policies differed in their scope and the effects they had are debatable, although there seems to be a general consensus that lustrations had a positive impact on the consolidation of democracies, or at the very least, have not harmed their development. After gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine has not implemented any transitional justice policies. There was no significant demand for it due to economic hardships, which were the priority for the majority of the population. There was also no will for it on the part of the political elite, which consisted to a large extent of the former communist *nomenclature* and was focused on building networks with business and rent-seeking, rather than creating genuine political competition. The Orange Revolution of 2004, which has become an important milestone in Ukraine's political development, did not change this situation.

> There seems to be a general consensus that lustrations in Central Europe had a positive impact on the consolidation of democracy.

A strong demand to "reset the authorities" became evident in 2013 during the EuroMaidan protests. A series of surveys conducted during the protests revealed that it was motivated primarily by the desire to change those who were in power. The poor quality of political representation was considered to be the main cause of the generally disappointing quality of life in Ukraine. What should be emphasised is that the demand to "reset" the public authorities reflected society's dissatisfaction with the unaccountable political elite, rather than with the institutional design of the political system as such. Consequently, the demand addressed the period of time after 1991 and those responsible for the political and economic sit-

uation in the country under the "oligarchic democracy" that culminated in the notorious protests. The bloody finale of EuroMaidan in February 2014 has only served to crystallise public conviction that further democratic developments would be impossible without some kind of purge of the political elite. The political winners of the victorious Revolution of Dignity had no choice but to address this demand.

Lustration in stages

The post-EuroMaidan interim authorities in Ukraine introduced a vetting policy for the first time in the state's history. Popularly called "lustration", this policy has similar mechanics to the lustration policies introduced in Central European states in the 1990s and 2000s. However, it differs from them in terms of the goals it is designed to achieve and who it addresses. The first stage of Ukraine's lustration is the law titled "Restoration of trust to the judiciary of Ukraine", adopted on April 8th 2014. The main goal of this document was to implement a screening process for judges, based on their possible involvement in supporting unlawful actions against the EuroMaidan protesters. The screening was implemented by a special commission. Should the commission conclude that a judge had broken his or her oath, the case would be transferred to the High Council of Justice, a constitutional body that plays a significant role in the process of the approval and dismissal of judges.

The second and most important stage of lustration in Ukraine was ushered in on September 16th 2014 with the introduction of "the law on government cleansing". This regulation was aimed at eliminating people from public office whose acts or inactivity supported the usurpation of power by Viktor Yanukovych, endangered national security or enabled lawless violations of human rights and freedoms.

The basic mechanics of Ukrainian lustration are quite simple. The law defines several types of what can be called "lustrable offences", which eliminate the possibility of holding public office for a period of five or ten years, depending on the type of the offence. Notably, an exception is made for elected positions. Basic lustrable offences include holding public office for the period of at least one year during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych and not resigning as a result of the developments caused by the EuroMaidan Revolution; or being a high-ranking official in the communist party or the All-Union Lenin Communist Union of Youth, the only element of Ukrainian lustration that is targeted at the pre-1991 period. Additionally, the law introduced a ban on co-operating with foreign intelligence services, acting against national security and the territorial integrity of Ukraine,

calling for the violation of territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Ukraine or fomenting ethnic strife, a measure that is obviously designed to address the problem of separatism in the east.

The law on government cleansing defines one more significant lustrable offence, which distinguishes Ukrainian lustration significantly from that of Central European states and thus deserves special mention. The Ukrainian law introduced a ten-year ban from public office for public servants who were unable to explain the origin of their assets. Although it is not expressed directly in the regulation, this norm clearly goes beyond the period of the Yanukovych presidency and is targeted at the biggest problem in post-Soviet Ukraine: corruption. This de facto merging of anti-corruption measures with lustration constitutes an interesting novelty in the practice of vetting policies. The logic of the Ukrainian lustration law clearly views corruption as a structural problem, preventing the state from developing towards a desirable model of European liberal democracy, which means that it is an indirect human rights violation.

The process is confession-based. Those affected by the law have to declare whether they fulfill the defined lustration criteria. This declaration is later verified by the state institution where the confessors are employed. Refusal to lodge a declaration is treated as a confession and the respective person then loses his or her job.

Constrains and effects

Almost two years after the process of implementing vetting policies in Ukraine began, one can draw some preliminary conclusions about what has been achieved. The special commission created by the law on the restoration of trust to the judiciary of Ukraine has come to the conclusion that 46 judges should lose their positions. However, as of January 2016, only four of them have been dismissed. It is too early to say whether there will be any other dismissals. Regardless, it is clear that the law will not result in a massive purge of the judiciary. As for the "law on cleansing the government", according to information published by the Ukrainian ministry of justice, which is responsible for the implementation of lustration, 880 people have been lustrated as of mid-January 2016 (this number is consistently increasing). Comparing these numbers with some of the initial predictions made by certain Ukrainian politicians is astonishing. For example, in September 2014, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk spoke about one million officials potentially losing their jobs as a result of lustration. Despite the huge disparity in what was predicted and what has happened, the numbers are only part of the story and only reveal so much about achieving the ultimate goal of any vetting policy.

Ukraine's lustration policy has faced several important challenges. Firstly, there are instances of individuals breaking the law on government cleansing. According to some civil society organisations, there are several cases of misinterpretation by certain people or institutions. For example, some officials who should have fallen under lustration have been labelled "participants in the anti-terrorist operation" in the east, which guarantees them immunity from lustration. Secondly, several complaints intended to remove the core provisions of the law on cleansing the government were lodged with the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. In October 2015 the court postponed its decision indefinitely, thus leaving the ultimate destiny of the lustration process under question. Although these complaints are often considered to be political acts aimed at disarming the process by supporters of lustration, they raise significant questions that cannot be ignored by a democratic society.

There are two contentious issues that are particularly noteworthy. The first is the retrospective nature of lustration, which refers mainly to judges who, the argument goes, based their decisions on law that was in force at the time of the protest. The second argument refers to the de facto introduction of presumption of guilt and collective responsibility. This generally refers to officials being removed under lustration, including ones who were involved in corruption, which is a crime and should therefore be proven in court. One needs to wait for the verdict of the constitutional court to know whether this argumentation is accepted, thus making the law completely ineffective. So far, there have been several cases of effective appeals by lustrated officials going through the courts.

As a result, at the beginning of 2016, surveys showed that levels of trust in the Ukrainian authorities, and the courts in particular, were extremely low. This is a much better indicator that the policy intended to restore this trust is far from achieving this aim. On the other hand, studies on corruption show that the removal of corrupted elite and the installation of a new set of politicians, whilst a necessary step, does not automatically lead to a renewed surge in societal trust, an important element in reducing corruption. Bearing this in mind, it seems that the lustration law's stated aims would have been impossible to achieve, even if the number of officials who were removed was significantly higher.

What next?

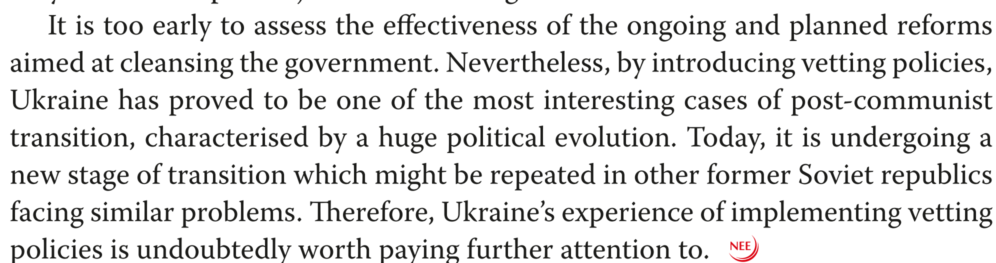
This is not to say that Ukrainian lustration is a shot in the dark. The more time that elapses since the end of EuroMaidan, the lower the public demand will be for a "total reset" of the public authorities. The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine plays an important role in refocusing society's attention away from lustration. There

are two important issues that remain closely related to lustration: the fight against corruption and improvement of the judiciary. One way or another, the solution to both problems requires a "reset", the renewal of a significant part of the staff in the state apparatus. Any experience with vetting policies, even if it is bad, is valuable for Ukraine. It has proven that in a situation where transition between political regimes contains a significant degree of continuity, extraordinary forms of justice are ineffective because there is no clear division between the illiberal past and the liberal present. The nature of "extraordinary" justice inevitably means that a political layer is added to "normal" justice, something that is generally incompatible with the rule of law but which is dictated by the motivation to strengthen democracy. In Ukraine's case, this is exemplified by the conscious introduction of solutions that might be interpreted as collective responsibility and the presumption of guilt amongst certain groups of citizens.

> There are two important issues that remain closely related to lustration: the fight against corruption and improvement of the judiciary.

In order to solve this problem, the Ukrainian authorities seem to have attempted to turn vetting from a retrospective to prospective logic, which is a novelty in the history of post-communist transitions. This can be seen in the ongoing reform of the police and in the planned reform of the judiciary. The logic here is quite simple: replace existing institutions with new ones and make staff go through the assessment procedure if they want to keep their job in the new organisation.

It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the ongoing and planned reforms aimed at cleansing the government. Nevertheless, by introducing vetting policies, Ukraine has proved to be one of the most interesting cases of post-communist transition, characterised by a huge political evolution. Today, it is undergoing a new stage of transition which might be repeated in other former Soviet republics facing similar problems. Therefore, Ukraine's experience of implementing vetting policies is undoubtedly worth paying further attention to.



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In search of Odesa's identity

ANDRZEJ SZEPTYCKI

One of the most striking aspects of Odesa is that it is a city with a strong local identity. Its local history and multi-ethnic nature have contributed to the fact the city's residents have regarded themselves first and foremost as Odesans. Traditionally, the residents of Odesa were uninterested in politics. However, the EuroMaidan Revolution and the outbreak of war with Russia have now put Odesans in a difficult situation, forcing them to take a different look at their past and take care about their future.

When one thinks about Odesa, the usual images that come to mind are of the Black Sea, Catherine the Great or the Potemkin Stairs, which became famous thanks to Sergei Eisentstein's 1925 silent film *The Battleship Potemkin*. One is also reminded of Vladimir Vysotsky's "Moskva-Odessa", as well as a Jewish sense of humour, often associated with Odesa.

Odesa is a city which since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has been seen as part of the Russian-speaking south-eastern Ukraine, a region that remains sceptical of the West and is friendly towards Russia. In 2014 Odesa became, after Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv, one of the most important centres of the protests inspired by Russia and directed against the new government in Kyiv. The tragic peak of this disruption was on May 2nd 2014, when more than 40 people were killed during clashes outside the Trade Unions House. The victims were predominantly supporters of rapprochement with Russia. However, the so-called *Novorossiya* project (a Russian-backed movement calling for the separation of parts of southern and

eastern Ukraine) failed, at least in the Odesa oblast. As a result, Odesa became more Ukrainian and less Russian. Its identity however, as it was in the past, remains far more complex.

Porto franco

First and foremost, Odesa is a harbour town. Its construction was started by tsarist Russia at the end of the 18th century, shortly after Russia's conquest of the northern Black Sea shore. For years, the harbour was the driver of the city's development. It was the harbour to which Odesa and its residents owed their wealth throughout the 19th century. The tsarist authorities established special privileges for the city, assigning it the status of *porto franco*, a free economic zone which operated between 1819 and 1859.

The desire to make a quick fortune attracted many people to the city. Among them were peasants who had fled Podolia, Christians who had been oppressed by the Ottoman Empire and all kinds of globetrotters and criminals. In Odesa, nobody questioned a person's background, which provided an equal opportunity for all newcomers. After 1917 the city was labelled the "southern gateway of the USSR". During this time, the city's infrastructure was developed and a conglomeration of three harbours was created: Odesa – Pivdenyi – Illichivsk. The harbour that gave the city its wealth and multiculturalism, even during periods of Soviet self-isolation, was an open window to the world. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union brought an end to the harbour's prosperity. The ships which were once owned by the mighty Black Sea Company were divided between smaller firms and sold off to private owners. The harbour began falling behind the standards of modern naval transport and became too shallow to take in large modern ships. The number of passengers serviced at Odesa was also reduced and even the strategic connection between Istanbul and Odesa was eventually eliminated.

The harbour that gave the city its wealth and multiculturalism, even during times of Soviet self-isolation, was an open window to the world.

Today, Odesa's residents still live off the sea, mainly thanks to the sailors who are based there. The city has always attracted people with an entrepreneurial spirit and this continues to be one of its distinctive features. *Porto franco* offered opportunities for making money by engaging in both legal trade and by smuggling. Traditionally, Odesans were uninterested in politics; what mattered most for them was making money, if possible quickly and easily. This lack of interest in politics

was a characteristic of the lifestyle of the city's residents; since the beginning of the EuroMaidan Revolution and the outbreak of war with Russia it is also a question of carefulness.

Odesans have now found themselves in a difficult economic situation, something they are rather unfamiliar with. There remains a strong nostalgia about *porto franco*. Vyacheslav Azarov, the leader of the Ukrainian Anarchists' Union, who is associated with the Odesan "anti-Maidan" movement, says "This has stayed in the Odesan subconscious, in the Odesan outlook of the world. Regardless of which state we belong to, it is important that we have as much autonomy as possible."

Multi-ethnic heritage

Since its beginning the city has attracted representatives of different nationalities and cultures. According to some sources, Odesa was initially inhabited by people of five different ethnic backgrounds: Greek, Moldovan, Albanian, Ukrainian and Russian. They were soon joined by Bulgarians, Georgians, Poles and Jews. Each ethnic group settled in a different part of the city, which today is reflected in the names of various districts. The most illustrative example of this is the Greek Square or Moldavanka, a poor industrial district of the city that became widely known thanks to Isaac Babel's *The Odessa Tales*. In the 19th century, the multi-ethnic composition of the city underwent an evolution. First, the ethnic groups that inhabited it began to intermingle. Second, as a result of the 1917 revolution and the Second World War, the balance of the various ethnic groups changed; the number of Jews decreased, while the number of Russians and Ukrainians went up.

Without a single group dominating the city, Odesa's multi-ethnic make up engendered relatively good relations between the individual groups. As Odesa's residents might say, everyone can regard this city as their own. It is open to strangers as long as they want to become Odesans. A good example of this was the relatively positive welcome that Mikhail Saakashvili, the former president of Georgia, received upon being appointed governor of the Odesa region, despite the fact that a large number of residents doubt whether he will be able to implement any real reform.

The multi-ethnic history of the city also has an economic value. The city offers its hospitality to tourists from Israel, Germany and Poland who come in search of a "Jewish", "German" or "Polish" Odesa. The presence of multiple ethnicities also encourages state and private actors from different countries to engage with the city. An interesting example of this is the "Atena" shopping centre, which was opened in 2004 on the Greek Square and which is a shared undertaking by investors from two states. Foreign states also support "their" ethnic minorities in Odesa. They

do so through various cultural policies and by offering them special privileges in administrative matters.

The recent Ukrainian revolution and the war with Russia have not significantly altered inter-ethnic relations within the city, despite the increased radicalisation of attitudes and the tragic clashes that took place in May 2014. Even attempts at instigating antisemitic attitudes have turned out to be useless. However, a more complex situation characterises the rural areas outside the city, especially Bessarabia, which are faced with the strong pro-autonomy aspirations of Bulgarians and Gagauzians.

Palmyra of the south

In the 19th century Odesa was one of the main centres of *Novorossiya*, an unpopulated area of present day southern Ukraine that was used by tsarist authorities for a large social experiment. In 1785 serfdom was abolished and the authorities tried to attract colonisers from abroad. Rapid economic development enabled Odesa to become the third largest (after Moscow and St Petersburg) city in the Russian Empire. For this reason, it became known as the Palmyra of the south. The "northern Palmyra" was of course St Petersburg, the capital of the empire. In Soviet times, Odesa lost some of this prestige, as the tsarist concept of *Novorossiya* fell out of fashion.

Despite Ukraine's proclamation of independence in 1991, no major changes took place in Odesa. On the symbolic level, the de-communisation process took place relatively quickly. The majority of Soviet monuments were demolished and the old pre-revolution names were brought back. However, the old elite remained in power and residents were more attached to Russian and Soviet traditions (such as the Great Patriotic War) than Ukrainian ones. Unsurprisingly, the Communist Party, and later the Party of Regions, found a base of support in Odesa. Russia's position in the region was further entrenched by the politics of the local authorities and by pro-Russian propaganda, which dominated the local media.

It is worth asking why Odesans are so amiable towards Russia, especially at present. The older generation and the ethnic Russian population are still nostalgic for the Soviet Union as a great superpower. Support for Russia is also expressed by parts of the local elite who are connected with pro-Russian political groups that have benefited from the political and economic system that has developed in Ukraine for the last 25 years. The less wealthy are, in turn, attracted by the stereotype of Russia's prosperity. Many Odesans would like to see their city follow Crimea's path become part of the Russian Federation, in the hope of seeing a rise in their salaries and pensions.

After the Ukrainian "Revolution of Dignity", supporters of rapprochement with Russia, most probably backed by that country, decided to take things into their own hands. They turned the Trade Unions House into their headquarters. However, their plans to join Russia ultimately failed largely thanks to the differences that exist between Odesa and other parts of the hypothetical "south-eastern" region of Ukraine, or *Novorossiya*: Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. The residents of these regions share the same language, some history and an ethnic awareness. Yet there are also key differences between them, such as in the nature of the local economy (Odesa – trade and tourism, Kharkiv – science and industry, Donetsk – heavy industry) and the lifestyle that goes with it. These differences partially explain why the 2014 "Russian Spring" led to completely different results in Odesa and Donbas.

A Ukrainian city

Odesan-Ukrainians (currently the largest resident group in the city) do not agree with the traditional interpretation of the city's history i.e. that the town was established just over 200 years ago. They argue that the first mention of Odesa dates back to 1415. The territory of the city was then settled in the mid-18th century by Cossacks, who were fighting with Turks on behalf of the Russian Empire, and settlers who relocated from central Ukraine. At the turn of the 20th century Odesa became one of the centres of the Ukrainian national movement, and in 1917 became part of the ephemeral Ukrainian People's Republic. As a result of urbanisation, rural dwellers moved to the city and Odesa became ethnically more Ukrainian, although this did not mean that Ukrainian became the dominant language. A strong command of Russian was necessary in order to climb the social ladder.

As a result of urbanisation, Odesa became ethnically more Ukrainian, although this did not mean that Ukrainian became the dominant language.

In the early 1990s the majority of the city's residents supported Ukraine's newfound independence, although they remained somewhat sceptical about the new state. Odesans were not very familiar with their own national history and the authorities at the time were discriminating against Ukrainian-language media. A weak Ukrainian statehood with a poor democratic system, leaning towards a mild form of authoritarianism, after 25 years of independence turned out to be surprisingly attractive for some. Today the inhabitants of the city consider themselves to be first and foremost Ukrainians and only later Odesans. This identification with Ukraine is more civic than ethnic in nature. Its key elements are a passport and

citizenship, not a shared history or language (Russian is the common tongue spoken by most, even though Odesans understand Ukrainian very well). An increase in patriotic mood is positively correlated with an increase in civic awareness, which is understood as a responsibility for the city and the state, both their own and that of the civil servants.

A large majority of Odesans do not want to see the separation of their city from Ukraine. They know that the implementation of the Crimean scenario (i.e. peaceful integration with Russia) is impossible and that the Donbas scenario would mean the destruction of the city and the loss of its tourist value. Last but not least, Odesans do not want to live in authoritarian Russia, as they are aware that business conditions, pressure from the authorities and corruption are much worse in Russian than in slowly-reforming Ukraine.

In the face of increasing differences dividing the residents of Odesa, the conflict between supporters of *Novorossiya* and supporters of Ukraine became unavoidable, especially in the context of Ukraine's destabilisation after the Revolution of Dignity and Russia's increasing penetration into the country. The peak of this discord was the tragedy in May 2014 when Odesans, despite their traditional resentment of politics, became engaged in national affairs. It was during these clashes that Odesans, contrary to the myth of Odesan tolerance, spilled their own blood.

"This was a turning point," says Yevheniya Zavaliy, a volunteer from Illichivsk, one of the coordinators of Odesa's EuroMaidan. "We realised that it will be better for us to have Ukraine here … That we do not need any war." That is why Petro Poroshenko, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian revolution, received the largest number of votes in Odesa during the 2014 presidential elections. Serhiy Tihipko, who was connected with the old regime, came only in second.

Even though Odesa has become more Ukrainian, its relations with the government in Kyiv are far from harmonious. The central government has no vision for Odesa, which explains the nomination of Saakashvili to the position of city governor. Odesans are critical of the historical policies of the new authorities, especially the idealisation of the heroes of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

Odesa is Europe

The central promenade of the city is called the Deribasivska Street (named after José de Ribas). Further on, above the Potemkin Stairs, is a monument of the Duke de Richelieu. José de Ribas was a Spanish officer who forged a successful career in the Russian imperial army. In 1789 de Ribas was in charge of the takeover of Khadjibey (a fortress which later became Odesa – editor's note). Years later,

he became one of the main initiators and, on the orders of Catherine the Great, the overseer of the construction of the city of Odesa and its harbour. Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis, Duke de Richelieu, was a French aristocrat who at the turn of the 19th century governed Odesa for ten years and in the process contributed greatly to its development.

The presence of foreigners, including those who were highly qualified, was a consequence of the policies of Catherine the Great, and fitted perfectly into the *Novorossyia* project. With the time, close ties with Europe became more limited and Russia ceased to be a multi-ethnic empire, instead undertaking activities with the purpose of Russification. The European past of the city however remained visible, not just in the monuments and street names but also in the city's architecture. The old Odesa does not resemble Russian or Soviet cities and its architecture is closer to that of Western Europe. The most recognisable buildings in Odesa, the Opera and the Ballet Theatre, which was built in the baroque-rococo style, as well as the hotel "Londonskaya", which was designed in the neo-Renaissance style, are just a few examples of this.

The city's residents often say that "Odesa is Europe". This statement calls for an ambiguous assessment. Unlike in Russia, after 1991 Ukraine has not developed a consolidated autocratic system. Democracy was flawed, but Ukrainians, particularly at the local level, learned how to take care of their business. "Oligarchic pluralism" guaranteed a relative freedom of speech. Before the "Revolution of Dignity", a small yet dynamic group of activists had been operating in the city. However, they were focused more on local issues, such as spatial management, coastal protection and public transport, than on politics.

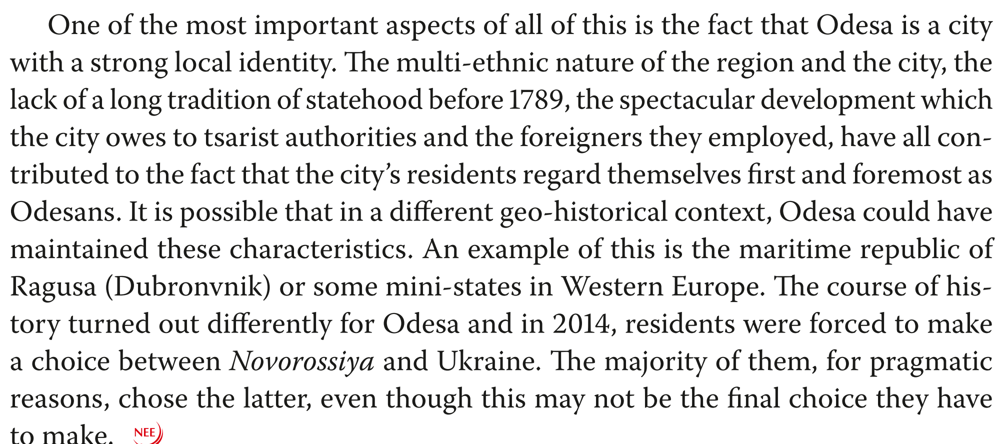
In 2013–2015 Odesan society experienced a political awakening. The Odesan "EuroMaidan" was not the largest in terms of numbers. At its peak, the protests gathered over ten thousand people. Despite this, those who turned up were honest supporters of European integration and conscious efforts were made to avoid party symbols; the protesters used only Odesan, Ukrainian and EU flags. Customary to Odesan traditions, the majority of residents preferred to stand aside and observe the results of this confrontation. When the clashes in Kyiv became more intense, Odesans organised assistance for their compatriots, collecting warm clothes, medicine, bulletproof vests and helmets. Later, these local ad hoc structures became involved in assisting the Ukrainian forces fighting in Donbas.

Even though it has already been two years since the Revolution of Dignity many areas of life in Odesa are still a long way off meeting European standards. Without a doubt, the greatest remaining challenge is corruption and a lack of transparency in business. Another major challenge is a limited knowledge about the EU, especially at the institutional level, and the strong penetration of Russian propaganda.

Clearly, greater co-operation with the EU will greatly contribute to eliminating many of the problems that the city and the region are currently tackling. The Odesa oblast is a neighbouring region to the European Union. Odesa can also play an important role in Ukraine's trade relations abroad. Furthermore, the region could also be attractive for European tourists. However, this would require modernisation of the transportation infrastructure, development of the harbour and improved business conditions. These changes could be brought about by, first and foremost, implementing the association agreement with the EU and creating a free trade area, as well as granting Ukraine visa-free travel to the EU. Some Odesans are also hoping that effective measures aimed at the modernisation and "Europeanisation" of the region will be undertaken by Governor Saakashvili. Such a scenario is possible but not guaranteed. It depends on the success of reforms on the national scale, as well as the government's ability to work out appropriate solutions for the harbour, the city and the region.

> Odesa can play an important role in Ukraine's trade relations abroad and the region could also be attractive for European tourists.

Monaco – Ragusa – Odesa



One of the most important aspects of all of this is the fact that Odesa is a city with a strong local identity. The multi-ethnic nature of the region and the city, the lack of a long tradition of statehood before 1789, the spectacular development which the city owes to tsarist authorities and the foreigners they employed, have all contributed to the fact that the city's residents regard themselves first and foremost as Odesans. It is possible that in a different geo-historical context, Odesa could have maintained these characteristics. An example of this is the maritime republic of Ragusa (Dubronvnik) or some mini-states in Western Europe. The course of history turned out differently for Odesa and in 2014, residents were forced to make a choice between *Novorossiya* and Ukraine. The majority of them, for pragmatic reasons, chose the latter, even though this may not be the final choice they have to make. NEE

Translated by Iwona Reichardt

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Kalininingrad: A beleaguered fortress or Russia's western gateway?

were also present. These were the first of a series of similar protests which took place during the decade of Putin's rule. The international media reporting on the events tried to explain them in geographic terms, referring to the European history of Kaliningrad, which they argued helped explained that city's ability to mobilise civil society and its reluctance towards authoritarianism.

Unchanging attitudes

Five years later, in April 2015, a public opinion survey in Kaliningrad asked residents about their support for certain elements of power. Putin was assessed positively by 89 per cent of respondents. However, this still represented a decline compared with the previous year. In November 2014, 91 per cent of residents in the Kaliningrad oblast expressed a positive view of the Russian president. In April 2014, after Russia annexed Crimea, the same survey indicated a record-breaking low level of "separatist attitudes" in Kaliningrad. Nearly 90 per cent of the oblast's inhabitants declared that they wanted Kaliningrad to remain a part of the Russian Federation, even though some of them would like to see the territory gain special status. Only around one to two per cent of people claimed that they would like Kaliningrad to become a Russo-European or European protectorate. One should always be careful with official Russian statistics yet, the decline in anti-government feelings was visible. It was especially obvious during the rally organised by the Vesna youth democratic movement on March 1st 2015 in Kaliningrad. Neither western sanctions, which hit many local enterprises, nor Boris Nemtsov's death a few days earlier, sparked significant social mobilisation. In the end, there were only a couple dozen people who participated in the demonstration.

The residents of Kaliningrad demonstrated a similar attitude towards the Ukrainian crisis and growing tensions in relations between the West and Russia. Some successful projects undertaken together with the EU, like cross-border co-operation or small border traffic with Poland, have not helped change attitudes. Since 2012 the residents of the Kaliningrad oblast can enter Poland without a visa. The same rule applies to Poles living near border with Kaliningrad. Cheaper goods and services attracted numerous Russians from Kaliningrad to shop in Poland.

The success of the small border traffic initiative was one of main arguments used to support the popular conviction that Kaliningrad was becoming increasingly European. Polish politicians tried to create an image of Russians who, by coming to Poland, were learning about democracy. The prosperity that occurred in Poland after its transformation following the end of communism was meant to make Kaliningraders want the same changes in their country. Yet no major shift

Photo: Paulina Siegień

In the sphere of values and the rules of social and political life, the Europeanisation of Kaliningrad was just a superficial process.

in attitudes took place. The main reasons for this is not the war in Ukraine, which strongly influenced relations along the border, but rather because of high oil prices. The region benefitted from this situation, which meant that the residents of Kaliningrad could not see, with the exception of cheaper goods, any real attraction in Poland's political and economic system. High budget revenues and the constant flow of petrodollars between 2010 and 2014 stimulated the Russian economy, so much so that even Kaliningrad felt the effects. For most in the oblast, and indeed throughout Russia, Putin equalled not just stability, but also wealth, factors which combined to significantly calm anti-government sentiments.

Superficial identity

Support for the Kremlin's policy choices during this period did not mean a resignation from Kaliningrad's European identity. Promoting the oblast as the western gateway to Russia and an experimental field for rapprochement with Europe was an important element of the official Russian discourse at that time. Loyalty towards Moscow and support for Putin's policy was not a denial of the oblast's ongoing Europeanisation. However, the essence of this Europeanisation was rather

superficial. In fact, the Europeanisation of Kaliningrad was linked largely with the lifestyle and material needs of the people who live there, including the local elite. In the sphere of values and the rules of social and political life, the Europeanisation of Kaliningrad was just a superficial process.

Local reaction to the events that transpired in Ukraine provides clear evidence of this. A wave of national consolidation, which spread across Russia after the annexation of Crimea and is sometimes referred to in that country as the "Russian spring", did not bypass Kaliningrad. In fact, Kaliningraders identified with Russians living in Crimea, unsurprising given that both are residents of regions that are cut off from mainland Russia and are places where the Russian navy has a base. One should not forget that the Kaliningrad oblast is largely inhabited by servicemen and their families. Therefore, Kaliningrad provided fertile ground for an official Russian historical narrative that started to expound the victory over Nazi Germany. However, it should come as no surprise that the oblast would not exist if not for the Second World War and the Red Army's victory. Thus, triumph in "The Great Patriotic War" represents more than just a historical narrative for Kaliningrad; it is the region's founding myth. Every year, during Victory Day, which is celebrated on May 9th, patriotic signs saying "thank you, grandfathers, for the victory and our beloved city" can be seen all around Kaliningrad.

Kaliningraders identified with Russians living in Crimea, unsurprising given that both are residents of regions that are cut off from mainland Russia.

In official statements issued by the Russian government, there has been a change of rhetoric regarding Kaliningrad. In March 2015 the city hosted an event called the "World Russian People's Council", a public initiative organised by the Russian Orthodox Church. In his speech at the event, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow said that "it is necessary to resist a desire to build an identity on the foundation of German stones." He also stressed Kaliningrad's missionary role as an outpost of Orthodoxy in the West.

In the summer of 2015 the Kaliningrad branch of the "National Front", a public organisation established to maintain high levels of support for Putin, invited Sergey Markov, an influential political scientist with links to the Kremlin, to a public meeting. During this meeting, Markov stated that the West is waging a hybrid war against Russia aimed at dividing the country.

"If the West wins, Germany will take Kaliningrad," Markov said. He also advised attendees to forget about the pre-war history of the region and described the people who promote the idea of "Königsberg" (the German name of Kaliningrad) as provocateurs. According to him, the territory has always been Russian and the

Red Army simply liberated it in 1945 from German occupation. Despite Markov's vision of history being somewhat radical, many Kaliningrad residents accept at least some of it. For example, in Russian history books about Kaliningrad, the city's historical ties with Russia, especially during the Napoleonic Wars when East Prussia was under Russian control for several years, are largely emphasised.

Caution and special treatment

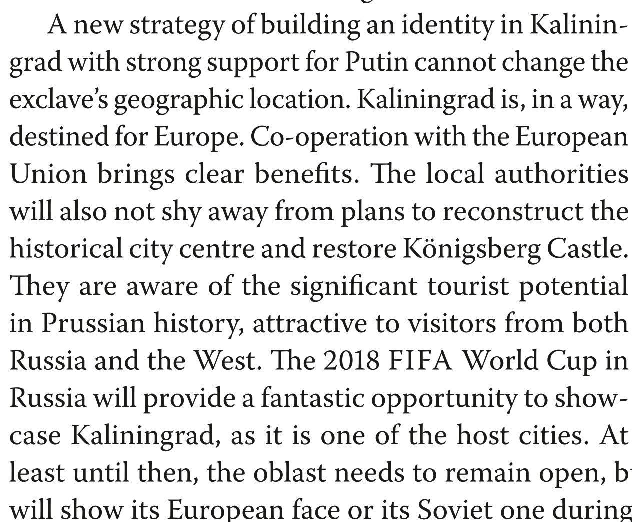
Fuel is constantly being added to the fire as the regime consistently repeats and reiterates the threats supposedly coming from the outside world. The Russian website *LifeNews*, well-known for its poor quality journalism, "reported" in the summer of 2015 on a Ukrainian conspiracy which provoked a social disturbance in a number of Russian cities. The report cited a plan to blow up Immanuel Kant's statue in Kaliningrad, which would cause a protest amongst the Europe-oriented middle class. In effect, it would give Poland a reason for military intervention and would enable NATO troops to enter Kaliningrad. Although this seems totally absurd, the "information" was widely cited by the media in Kaliningrad, spreading the conviction that the EU and NATO are a threat and underlining the need for a large Russian military presence in the Kaliningrad oblast.

According to sources at NATO's headquarters, cited by Radio Free Europe, the militarisation of Kaliningrad advanced very quickly in 2015. Frank Gorenc, a US Army general, expressed his concern at the beginning of 2016 about the build-up of a complex Russian missile defence system. Russian surface-to-air missiles based in Kaliningrad would limit NATO's access to air space in the Baltic Sea region. This illustrates why ideological control over Kaliningrad has become so important for the Kremlin as it prepares for confrontation with the West. The Kaliningrad oblast, thanks to its military and strategic importance, may become a destabilising factor in the region, aimed against the Baltic states.

However, even though Kaliningrad demonstrated loyalty during the war in Ukraine, Moscow still treats it with caution. In the summer of 2015 the ministry of Crimean affairs was transformed into a department of the ministry of economy, which was labelled the "three Ks" department. This is because it is meant to deal with the development of Crimea, Karelia and Kaliningrad, three regions that need special treatment owing to their geographic locations (in Russian Crimea starts with a "K").

In spite of the Kremlin's attempts to maintain ideological control over the Kaliningrad oblast, it is difficult to resist the impression that the local elite are placed somewhere between a Russian and a European vision of development. The role of

Kaliningrad has not yet been unequivocally defined in the case that Russia, the West and Ukraine reach an agreement and sanctions are suspended.



A new strategy of building an identity in Kaliningrad with strong support for Putin cannot change the exclave's geographic location. Kaliningrad is, in a way, destined for Europe. Co-operation with the European Union brings clear benefits. The local authorities will also not shy away from plans to reconstruct the historical city centre and restore Königsberg Castle. They are aware of the significant tourist potential in Prussian history, attractive to visitors from both Russia and the West. The 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia will provide a fantastic opportunity to showcase Kaliningrad, as it is one of the host cities. At least until then, the oblast needs to remain open, but it is not yet sure whether it will show its European face or its Soviet one during the competition. NEE

A new strategy of building an identity in Kaliningrad with strong support for Putin cannot change the exclave's geographic location. Kaliningrad is destined for Europe.

Translated by Bartosz Marcinkowski

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Let's not isolate Russia

An interview with Yuri Dzhibladze, president of the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights in Moscow. Interviewer: Agnieszka Lichnerowicz

AGNIESZKA LICHNEROWICZ: Are Russians happy with Vladimir Putin?

YURI DZHIBLADZE: Research shows an increasing gap between what people feel about issues they are confronting on a daily basis and a steadily high trust towards Putin. For almost ten years the Kremlin's legitimacy was built entirely on the external factor of unprecedentedly high oil and gas prices. Quickly increasing living standards were the basis of the social contract. But now the Russian economy is collapsing. Thus, if you look at how the Russians think about their life, and I am not talking about those mythological successes of the country's leader but the bread-and-butter issues, you will see that people in my country are extremely frustrated and increasingly very unhappy.

However, because the focus of government propaganda is on external affairs, mostly on Russia's fight in a global battle against its enemies, people tend to put aside their own problems and associate themselves with the great power. This is possible because of the government's unprecedented control of information sources and the creation of a virtual picture of the world through massive propaganda. If you look at news programmes, for almost two years there has been almost no coverage of life in Russia. It has been all about Ukraine. Of course, we were shown an distorted picture of Ukraine, as Ukrainians were called "fascists" and puppets of the United States who were doing their best to undermine Russia. In the last few months, Russian TV has expanded its apocalyptic repertoire by adding pictures of Europe totally collapsing as a result of the refugee crisis and news from Syria, showing that Russia is emerging as a victor by crushing terrorists and the opposition to its ally Assad. The underlying is that Russia is back and successfully protects its friends against revolutions organised by the West. And of course, there is no coverage of economic crisis at home which is a grim reality people are confronted with every day.

What does this gap between the officially declared and the real attitude towards politics in Russia tell us?

It tells us that support for Putin is unsustainable and based on propaganda. If the Kremlin does not maintain a high level of propaganda, the support will disappear and people will start thinking about their everyday problems. From a psychological perspective we can also say that people quite often prefer not to think about economic and social hardships because there are no easy answers for them. They would have to confront reality. For now the social contract is based on the notion of Russia returning to the world arena as a superpower.

And what would a breach of this contract mean?

First, we have to understand that this contract is based not only on continuous propaganda, but also that success must be delivered. If you analyse the moment when this enormous jump of public support for Putin took place you will see that it was entirely linked to the annexation of Crimea. Prior to that, the level of his support had been decreasing for several years. It was still decreasing in 2012 and 2013 when Putin had already established a repressive apparatus and turned the propaganda on, presenting Europe and the US as morally decaying. This rhetoric did not work because of corruption and the worsening economic situation. Thus, Kremlin strategists had to come up with something else, something extreme. It was the annexation of Crimea. But this is a unique case in terms of delivering success. In eastern Ukraine Putin failed to prove to the Russian public that he is victorious. That is why they have to constantly invent new successes.

What do you expect from European governments and the public abroad? What can the West do in this regard?

In order to develop a coherent and effective strategy to contain the growing, aggressive and resurgent authoritarianism of Putin, we have to look at the instruments he uses and respond to them. There are several and they all should be used in parallel. Any change in Russia will come from a combination of internal demand for change, a split within the elite and external actions aimed at targeting different actors in Russia.

First, the price that the Russian elite has to pay for the aggression and undermining international law has to be increased. The current sanctions have only limited effect. What we need is to make the members of the ruling elite understand the negative consequences of this course of action for them and in this way cause a split. Broader and better targeted economic sanctions should be imposed on the oligarchs, Putin's friends and companies that not only benefit from the regime but also serve as support for the regime and its repressive apparatus by extracting cash from trade in natural resources and channelling it to the top through corruption schemes.

The second tool to use is to increase investigations in individual countries

outside Russia. Investigations should target dirty money as well the corrupt Russian elite's assets invested throughout Europe, which are enormous.

Thirdly, there is the so-called universal jurisdiction that allows prosecuting culprits of gross human rights violations such as torture, political assassinations or forced disappearances. It could be similar to Magnitsky's list (a sanctions list of individuals who were involved in the death of anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky – editor's note) but much broader. It should not include only symbolic travel bans but a real pursuit of an investigation and bringing these cases to court. There are many people in Russia, at different levels, who qualify for such prosecution.

In the same field, I would also like to emphasise how important it is that the West does not buy Putin's goals of intervention in Syria, where he is trying to position himself as an indispensable ally in the fight against ISIS and global terror. Essentially, Putin is trying to persuade the West that the Kremlin is an equal partner, similar to the role assigned to the Soviet Union during Stalin's victory over Nazi Germany. His dream would be a "new Yalta", where leaders of the great powers would sit together as equals and strike a new deal on spheres of influence, allowing him to maintain all the territorial gains through aggressive behaviour, such as in Crimea or the Caucasus, and to establish Russian control in the post-Soviet space and possibly beyond. If the West does not agree, the Kremlin essentially says, the prospect of a third world war will be imminent. When Russia continued to play by the rules of international law and international institutions it had been hopelessly losing in economic competition and global influence. The only way for a comeback as seen by the Kremlin is to blow up the status quo, break the rules, and re-emerge by military might. By constantly provoking new pockets of military instability, the Kremlin imposes a purely security discourse on the West, shifting the focus from restoring international law broken by Russia, stopping its gross human rights violations, investigating dirty money of Russian oligarchs and combating the impact of Russian propaganda in Europe. Negotiate with us or face a new war, this is the message. One could call it "coercion to negotiations on a new deal".

Naturally, the West would not agree to that. What other tools that you would recommend?

As I said earlier, all these tools have to be used simultaneously. One more tool is to expose the vast network of lobbyists, corrupt western politicians and experts that Russia is using for propaganda purposes but also to undermine the unity of the EU.

Where do you see them?

They are everywhere. Some are obvious suspects. We know how much the Kremlin is investing, financially and politically, in supporting the extreme

right and extreme left throughout Europe. This is not surprising because these are the forces attacking the EU as an idea. But there are also numerous experts and think-tanks in Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and France, as well as reputable experts, academics and journalists. Look at who works for RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik News broadcasting abroad; more than half of them are foreign journalists and "experts".

It would probably be useful to remind people today how Azerbaijan's regime corrupted the Council of Europe.

It is a particular phenomenon how Azerbaijan, Russia and some others are systematically undermining and weakening intergovernmental organisations and international legal frameworks. On the one hand, on the ideological level, they are preaching that human rights are a joke and a tool of political influence. Russia leads many countries in challenging universal human rights concept by putting an emphasis on traditional values. Also, they are using this anti-human rights framework for security concerns. By doing so they are trying to convince people that in the joint struggle against extremisms and terrorism, we should put human rights aside. Liberal democracy and human rights are substituted with authoritarian, extremely conservative and often xenophobic discourse. That is on the ideological level. But they also weaken international institutions that have been created since the Second World War, including the Council

Photo courtesy of Yuri Dzhibladze

of Europe, the United Nations and the OSCE. This is very dangerous.

Azerbaijan is a striking example. They themselves call it "caviar diplomacy" and are simply corrupting and co-opting politicians from various European countries who are members of national parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. As a result, resolutions on political prisoners in Azerbaijan are defeated by a majority of President Aliyev's supporters. Similar processes are pursued by Russia in Strasbourg, Geneva, Vienna and so on.

How would you then answer some Europeans who are expressing their concern and suggesting that Russian society may not be ready to adopt liberal European values?

When I was speaking earlier about anti-democratic tendencies in Russia I did not mean to suggest that there are specific national genetics that predispose Russians to authoritarian rule or anything like that. I was rather referring to Russian experience throughout history. That is why for me it extremely frustrating to hear statements that "Russians are not ready for democracy." In my view the worst thing that could happen would be if the democratic community of nations gave up on Russia. I hear these voices saying: "86 per cent of support for an autocrat speaks for itself. Let's not isolate Russia. Confronting it would be too dangerous, it may lead to unpredictable consequences, after all they have nuclear weapons. Why provoke it, let's continue doing business as usual."

I hear this increasingly. And that makes me very nervous. First of all, Russians are no different than any other nation in their desire to live with human dignity, receive respect for their opinion and in their ability to hold their rulers accountable. In the early 1990s an overwhelming majority of Russians wanted democracy. They might have not understood fully what it meant, but average citizens really wanted change. Democratisation was not only organised from the top, it was based on a massive demand from below. However, 15 years ago, let's call things as they are, a group of KGB officers was able to take over power. The format of our conversation does not allow me to go through all the mistakes that were made in the 1990s that in effect allowed the KGB agents to prepare this takeover. These KGB agents are in control of the country now and, especially since 2012, have been imposing step-by-step, a very strict and harsh control over the Russian society. Thus, the answer to your question would be to differentiate between autocratic leaders and the Russian people.

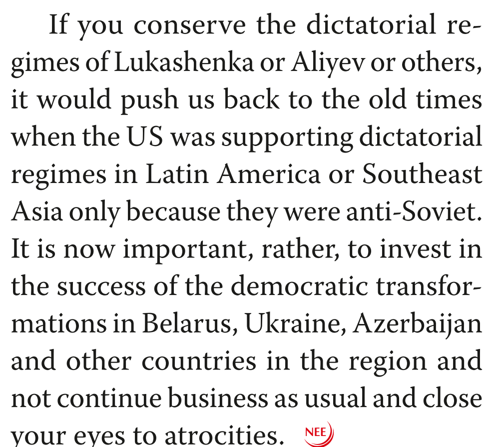
Secondly, you have to reach out to those Russians who continue to oppose their authoritarian rulers. This group is not only limited to opposition activists. These days there are too few people who dare protest publicly because of repressions and intimidation. But many studies and assessments show that at least 15 to 20 million people think differently and strive for democratic change. These people need not only an expression of solidarity but also practical support and co-operation. The idea is to help Russians maintain those remaining pockets of freedom, where we can still have independent opinions, free dialogue or academic freedom at universities. Much of it is gone now, but a lot still remains. Freedom online, remaining civil society groups, pockets of independent media – we need these to stay in the European circle of ideas and be supported.

But going beyond that, millions of other Russians who currently feel that they must "rally around the flag" because Russia is at war, in reality most of them are normal people only zombified by the toxic propaganda. They are bombarded daily with propagandistic messages describing Russia as a fortress under siege

with all sorts of villain enemies around it and their agents inside the country aiming to destroy Russia. People are brainwashed by the TV and repeatedly told that western sanctions are aimed not against the government but against the Russian people. Thus, it is important to reach out to them and send consistent and broad messages contesting the propaganda-generated clichés and stereotypes, offering alternative news and information. Russians should hear loud and clear from the West that the democratic community of nations differentiates between the Russian rulers and the Russian people and that Russia belongs to the European civilisation. They should hear that the European alternative is the only way for Russia to live in dignity and prosperity, without fear of repressions, government abuse and corruption. In a nutshell, it is the Russian rulers, not the Russian people who should be isolated.

Finally, we should not forget about the importance of the neighbouring countries around Russia. For Putin to successfully consolidate and develop of his autocratic rule is to prevent any democratic transition in Ukraine, Georgia or anywhere else in the post-Soviet space. These could serve as a role model for the Russian people. That is why it is also very important that the West does not engage in an attempt to support autocrats such as Ilham Aliyev, Alyaksandr Lukashenka in Belarus, or Central Asian dictators in the hope to pull them away from Russia. It will not work. And even if it does work, in reality it would mean the success of Putin's idea in exporting authoritarianism.

If you conserve the dictatorial regimes of Lukashenka or Aliyev or others, it would push us back to the old times when the US was supporting dictatorial regimes in Latin America or Southeast Asia only because they were anti-Soviet. It is now important, rather, to invest in the success of the democratic transformations in Belarus, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and other countries in the region and not continue business as usual and close your eyes to atrocities.



Yuri Dzhibladze is president of the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights based in Moscow. He was a speaker at Freedom Games 2015 in Łódź, Poland.

Agnieszka Lichnerowicz is a Polish journalist and the foreign desk chief at the radio station *Tok FM*.

Civil society cornered in Hungary

A conversation with Veronika Móra, director of the Ökotars Foundation in Budapest. Interviewer: Maciej Makulski

MACIEJ MAKULSKI: What is the general situation of civil society and NGOs in Hungary, taking into account respect for civic organisations' rights and their relations with the state authorities?

VERONIKA MÓRA: It is important to start with a brief historical overview. In Hungary, like in other Central European states, civil society began to organise after the political changes of 1989–1990. In the early 1990s, a strong and diverse civil society had emerged and many organisations became involved in a wide range of activities. However, since the turn of the century and after Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, the development of civil society has, to some extent, come to a halt. A large number of well-established and fully-functioning NGOs has developed and provided services using EU grants and Hungarian state funds. Yet it has also turned out that a lot of organisations became dependent on state funding and just repeat the same activities over and over again. There has been a lack of innovation and an unwillingness to search for new alternatives.

Since 2010, when the new government came to power, the whole mechanism of financing the NGO sector, as well as NGOs' whole legal framework, has changed. The effects these changes had first emerged in 2012. The new legal environment has created new administrative requirements that have significantly affected NGOs' ability to operate. At the same time, there was a dramatic shift in the funding environment. State funding was significantly reduced, and the distribution of EU-funds came to a standstill during 2010–11. In addition, the decision-making process regarding the distribution of state funds also changed. In this situation, civic organisations were quite shocked and began to feel helpless.

Moreover, since 2014 the government has undertaken a campaign against NGOs. It was originally focused on a se-

lect group of NGOs, but now includes those that focus on human rights, anti-corruption efforts, LGBT organisations and others whose priorities and politics are not in line with the government. These NGOs have suffered a series of attacks in the form of mass media campaigns, harassment, administrative investigations and even criminal accusations. These actions began about a year and a half ago, so it is still too early to see what the long-term consequences for Hungary's civil society will be. However, they do highlight some of the NGOs' long-standing weaknesses, such as a lack of constituency and public support in Hungary, as well as weak networking and coalition building within the NGO sector.

What condition was civil society in just prior to Victor Orbán's rule? Did people trust and support NGOs?

The events of the last two years have shown that a large section of Hungarian society still does not understand what NGOs are really about. Between 2001 and 2011 NGOs in Hungary maintained a "business as usual mentality". They received public funds and fulfilled the demands these grants required, without developing their own constituencies or reaching out to new people.

In other words, they did not try to build deeper roots in the society by developing new initiatives?

Not necessarily new initiatives, but the NGOs were not innovating and did not seek to undertake projects differently, or seek new partners or sources of funding. To put it another way, they continued to do the same things without any real feedback from society in terms of what people needed and wanted. In order to function properly, you have to continuously develop and rethink what you do and how to do it; that is what was missing.

Despite this, I imagine there were probably protests against these anti-NGO policies. What was the government's answer and how did they communicate their strict policies to the rest of society?

Actually, the lack of popular protests highlighted the fact that society does not consider NGOs to be that important. During the governmental campaign against NGOs, there were some demonstrations in defence of civil society, but they gathered around 1,000 people. The government easily neglected this small protest and pretended nothing was happening. Basically, the government undermined the NGOs' credibility, emphasising that they do not represent national interests and that they work for hidden agents abroad.

Another part of this story is that the government has developed its own "non-governmental sector". Have you heard the term GONGO?

Referring to Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations, like in Russia or the People's Republic of China?

Yes. As a counterpart to the traditional NGO sector, the government

Photo courtesy of Yuri Dzhibladze

has created new organisations which have an NGO mandate but of course, are geared towards or organised by the government.

Is it safe to assume that the government favours these organisations over traditional NGOs and that all state funding goes to these particular GONGOs?

Yes, absolutely. Maybe not all of them are GONGOs, but the priorities in state funding are very clear and the money goes to organisations that have personal relations with government figures or are affiliated with the church. NGOs that are perceived to be conservative are also favoured.

You have mentioned the important issue of coalition building among NGOs in Hungary. Were there any attempts by the NGO sector to discuss their situation with the government?

Yes and no. There were some attempts, but there was no real answer from the government. In the past, there were a number of different consultative mechanisms between NGOs and the government. However, they have now been dismantled or have become

completely insignificant. Actually, after the government attacks, there were two negotiation sessions between the government and NGOs, but they did not produce any results.

I would also like to ask about the refugee issue and the migration crisis. A huge influx of people came to Hungary during the last year. How did the NGO sector react? Were they willing and able to assist them?

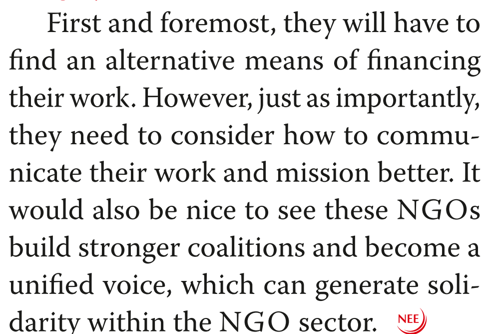
The migration crisis has brought about a new phenomenon in Hungary. Starting in the summer and autumn of 2015, when the largest influx of migrants occurred, informal groups of people organised via social media. They built a complete set of services for the migrants from scratch, including the provision of food, clothing, information and medical assistance. This did not come from traditional NGOs, but were newly organised, informal groups which use names like "Migration Aid". There were a few NGOs which worked alongside them to provide legal assistance, but they mostly became involved later in the process.

The government initially ignored these informal groups, but later accused them of working against the national interest.

In your opinion, has the government done anything that could be perceived as trying to solve the migration crisis?

This is my private opinion, but I think that the government wanted to get rid of the problem, not manage it. This should be stated very clearly, because the only thing the authorities did was put people onto trains or buses and send them across the border.

Looking ahead, what will the next set of challenges be for the NGO sector in Hungary?



First and foremost, they will have to find an alternative means of financing their work. However, just as importantly, they need to consider how to communicate their work and mission better. It would also be nice to see these NGOs build stronger coalitions and become a unified voice, which can generate solidarity within the NGO sector.

Veronika Móra is the director of the Ökotárs – a Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation in Budapest. Ökotárs is the lead partner of the consortium managing the European Economic Area/Norwegian NGO Programme in Hungary.

Maciej Makulski is a project director with the Jan Nowak-Jeziorański College of Eastern Europe.

Russian truckers take it to the streets

ARSENIY VESNIN

After the imposition of a new road tax aimed at truck drivers, protests broke out around Russia, culminating in the establishment of a protest camp outside Moscow. What seemingly began as a protest by workers against an injustice is slowly becoming ever more politicised. However, it remains unclear if any real change will take place as a result of the truck drivers' protest.

Russian truck drivers are people who generally worship President Vladimir Putin, celebrate the annexation of Crimea and call US President Barack Obama "a schmuck", at least until six months ago. Today, these same men have suddenly become the main voice of opposition in the country. They took to the streets, squares and roads and set up camps not because they merely disapprove of the current government, but because this government put them on the verge of total ruin and poverty.

The most recent political protests carried out in Russia were usually done by people who wanted to express their dissatisfaction with the authorities owing to their moral principles and beliefs. They challenged the Putin regime, calling it authoritarian and even totalitarian. They also compared today's Russian state with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Regardless, these people remain a minority. However, the truck driver protest has turned out to be the first real show of defiance based on economic, rather than political, demands.

Trucks destroy the roads

The spark that set off the truck divers' protest was a new road tax introduced in late 2015. Anyone driving a truck weighing over 12 tonnes will now have to pay 3.75 roubles for each kilometre they drive on federal roads. It is estimated that truckers who annually drive thousands of kilometres throughout the country would have to pay 400,000 roubles per year. This is roughly half the annual earnings of a Russian trucker. Of course, they could try to incorporate this charge into the cost of their work. However, not all customers are willing to pay more for the transport of goods. In addition, the road tax will inevitably affect the prices of goods on the shelves. Most items in Russia are transported by trucks. They also deliver building materials, so it is likely that the prices for construction, accommodation and basically any other consumer good in Russia will skyrocket.

It is estimated that truckers who annually drive thousands of kilometres throughout the country will now have to pay 400,000 roubles per year.

The official logic for imposing this new tax (popularly called Platon, which is the name of the system used to collect road tolls) is quite simple: trucks destroy the roads. However, it seems that no-one in government considered that all drivers already pay for road maintenance, as a portion of the existing vehicle and petrol taxes are specifically allocated for that purpose. Russian truckers became even more infuriated when it became clear that the "Platon" money is not going towards road maintenance at all. Allegedly, it is lining the pockets of Igor Rotenberg, the son of Arkady Rotenberg, one of the most influential Russian oligarchs and a close friend of Putin. Igor Rotenberg owns the company that is being used to collect the Platon tax and many argue that very little of the money that has already been collected has found its way into the state budget.

The truck drivers vociferously protested against the Platon tax. The first rallies, called *ulitka* ("snail"), were staged in different Russian cities and regions. Trucks would occupy one lane and crawl at five kilometres per hour. As a result, whole roads were blocked by lengthy traffic jams. The most notorious rally took place in St Petersburg. Around 300 trucks blocked the traffic at the southern entrance to the city and later broke through to the city administration building. Officials even invited protest representatives for negotiations. However, this offer was refused. The men said that the authorities would have to come to them to start a dialogue.

This rally was made public owing to the fact that there are still independent media and journalists in St Petersburg. The federal TV stations and news agencies ignored the truckers' protest as a matter of principle. Moreover, the protests that

simultaneously took place in the regions were also largely ignored. This all changed following events in Dagestan, when southern truck drivers declared that unless their demands to abolish Platon were met, thousands of trucks would gather near Moscow and block the whole capital.

Loners on the road

The rally to Moscow was scheduled for November 30th 2015. A column consisting of hundreds of trucks headed towards the Russian capital. However, only a few scores of trucks actually made it to Moscow. The police and state traffic patrols did all they could in order to stop the truck drivers from reaching their declared destination. Roads were shut, drivers were informed that bombs had been planted in their trucks and engines were disabled, so many were unable to start. The most active protesters in Dagestan were detained by the authorities. At the same time, police officers told the truck drivers that they were supporting their demands, but that they could not help due to orders they had received from above.

Other parties interested in undermining the protest used different tactics. All of a sudden, the leaders of certain truck driver unions, which had been virtually unknown until that point, announced in the media that nobody was going to Moscow. Accordingly, many drivers turned back after hearing the announcement.

To understand the protests, one must get to grips with the truck drivers' way of thinking. Truck drivers are loners. They rely only on themselves. They spend days and nights on the road and deal with many challenges on their own, including changing heavy wheels, struggling with Mafiosi, sorting issues out with police, etc. Generally speaking, truck drivers do not normally coordinate activities with anyone. A protest movement, on the other hand, involves compromises, discussions and joint actions.

That is why, when several dozen trucks arrived near Moscow early on November 30th, they were protesting on different roads. There was little communication between them. Eventually, two large protest camps were formed: one located around a hundred kilometres to the south of Moscow, and the other, northern one was based on the city's border, in the car park of a large shopping centre.

Although the federal TV channels did not cover the protest, the smaller media did and the authorities did not disperse the camps. However, politicians intervened. The leaders of the growing protest were invited to the parliament and ministries for negotiations with officials and deputies on an almost daily basis. The communists turned out to be the most active supporters and promised support and some financial assistance, as reported by the journalists. At first, the truck drivers

were encouraged by the attention from the authorities and they were confident that they would not have to stay near Moscow for long. They even participated in several rallies under the red flags.

The main purpose of the protests, to blockade Moscow, fell by the wayside. The truck drivers who were not let in by the traffic police were not willing to make a second attempt. Driving a truck from St Petersburg down to Moscow costs at least 20,000 roubles (around 260 US dollars). In addition, the protesting drivers' camps were blocked by the police. Signs prohibiting the parking of heavy vehicles were erected. Approaching trucks were sent back. Nevertheless, the protest camps continued to exist. In some sense, they resembled a miniature Maidan, only without burning tires and demands to topple the government. Otherwise, there were many similarities, with field kitchens, songs, non-stop debates about politics and journalism all taking place. The protesters were visited by famous musicians, such as Yuri Shevchuk, the legendary singer of the band DDT. The interesting thing is that the protesting truck drivers soon realised that the current regime had no intention of meeting their demands, so a change was necessary. Despite this, they decided not to put forward any political slogans, as they feared a violent police crackdown.

> In some sense, the truck divers' protest camps resembled a miniature Maidan, only without burning tires or demands to topple the government.

During the protests, one of the activists said: "I had painted my truck in the Russian colours, I was for *krymnash* ('Crimea Is Ours') and 'Obama chmo' ('Obama is a schmuck') and even wanted to have an image of Putin tattooed on my chest. Now, I see how wrong I was." However, a rejection of Putin's regime does not imply support for the opposition. For example, the truck drivers refused a visit to the camp from Alexei Navalny, a well-known opponent of Putin. They also rejected the popular musician Andrey Makarevich, known for his support of Ukraine and his opposition to the war in Donbas. Yet there were some protesters who supported the current opposition. As a result, the camps were far from united.

Who is really behind the protests?

Interestingly, the blockade of Moscow eventually took place. After another fake announcement that an "*ulitka*" was planned, a single traffic policeman shut down traffic on the Moscow Ring Road, stopping all trucks. This led to a huge traffic jam. Most media decided that this must be the planned operation, although in reality,

this traffic jam was caused by the police. This suggests some interesting developments. In recent years, any protest in Russia has been brutally shut down. The current regime in its present form is particularly intolerant of protest camps near Moscow. This is evidenced by the crackdowns at the Bolotnaya Square rally and the Occupy Abay movement, a protest camp in the centre of the capital. Despite this, not only were drivers allowed to stay near Moscow, but the rally blocking Moscow was carried out for them. It is difficult to imagine that the traffic policeman would have done this voluntarily. It may suggest that someone in power wanted the truckers to protest.

There are different theories about who could benefit from it. Some political scientists believe that a group of liberal-minded officials is behind the protest as they want to avoid Russia slipping into the abyss of poverty, while other experts suggest that it is a form of settlement amongst the oligarchs, in particular, a campaign against the Rotenbergs. Yet another theory is that the law imposing the toll for driving on the highways specifically targets those truck drivers who are working as individual entrepreneurs. They will be ruined by this tax and that will enable large companies to take over the transport industry.

In any event, the protest camp remains. The truck drivers celebrated the New Year holidays in their trucks. On New Year's Eve, many Moscow residents visited them, bringing presents and treats. The camp in Khimki became a Russian-wide symbol of protest. However, some opposition members were negative in their assessment of the protesting drivers' actions. They hoped for a revolution and clashes with the special police forces. It has not yet happened, so they accused the truck drivers of being cowards, disregarding the fact that the drivers organised their protest camp near Moscow and in the bitter cold.

No money, no system

Many truck drivers who were unable to come to the capital began to strike in their hometowns. They stopped delivering cargo and refused to register with the Platon system. Those who chose to work discovered some interesting details about the system. Firstly, it turns out that it operates erratically. At times, it charges money, at others it does not and sometimes it runs slowly and displays an incorrect route. Secondly, it does not allow drivers to take alternative routes to avoid traffic jams. If a driver decides to change his route, he will be fined. Initially the penalty for non-payment of the Platon fee amounted to 400,000 roubles (over $5,000). After the protests began, this amount was significantly reduced. Putin also promised to cancel the vehicle tax for those who pay Platon. However, when the head of state

Photo: Arseniy Vesnin

According to opinion polls, more than half of Russians support the protest of the truck drivers. No opposition member has ever polled that much support.

finally turned his attention to the truck drivers, they were laughing at him; the times when they waited in reverent anticipation of Putin's words had long since passed.

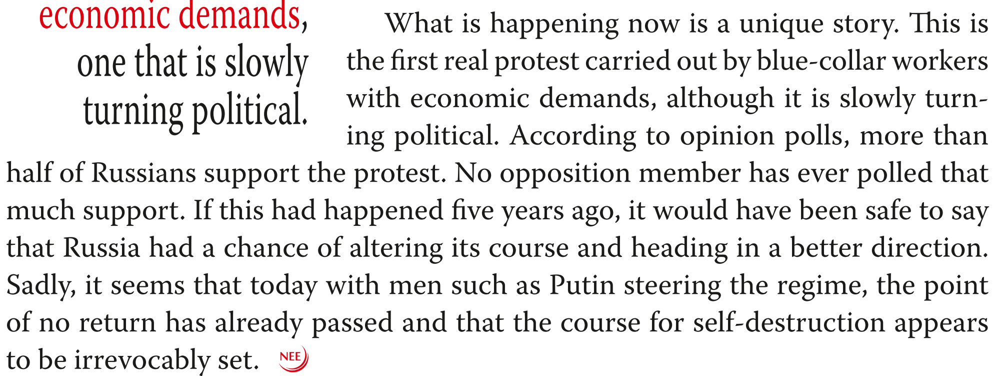
Meanwhile, the truckers developed a strategy. They came to understand that their main problem was a lack of communication, so they decided to organise an independent trade union. However, there are formal obstacles to doing so. For one, they cannot form a trade union as many of them are individual entrepreneurs, not workers. Therefore, the decision to establish an association was adopted. To this end, the leaders of the protest went on tour to the regions to recruit members. In each city, they assembled people, explained their position and answered questions. Afterwards, they signed a protocol on the establishment of their organisation's local chapter. The main purpose of all this was not just to form an association, but to

convince all drivers not to pay the new tax or register with the Platon system. This in itself is a complicated task, as there is no special equipment at collection points.

"If there is no money, there will be no system", the protesters say. If this does not work, they plan to stage another rally in Moscow. "This time it will be serious, no cops will stop us. Everyone will know what to do, we will have structure and organisation." Of course, the truck drivers are not prepared to fight with the police. These people are mostly past the age of forty and many have wives and several kids. Yet these guys do not back down. They realised how much power they had, leading the government to make concessions.

> This is the first real protest carried out by blue-collar workers with economic demands, one that is slowly turning political.

What is happening now is a unique story. This is the first real protest carried out by blue-collar workers with economic demands, although it is slowly turning political. According to opinion polls, more than half of Russians support the protest. No opposition member has ever polled that much support. If this had happened five years ago, it would have been safe to say that Russia had a chance of altering its course and heading in a better direction. Sadly, it seems that today with men such as Putin steering the regime, the point of no return has already passed and that the course for self-destruction appears to be irrevocably set.



Translated by Olena Shynkarenko

Arseniy Vesnin is a journalist based in St Petersburg.

ECS WITH MUSEUM PRIZE FOR 2016

The Council of Europe Museum Prize for 2016 – which is a recognition of excellence – has been awarded to the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk. It is worth reminding that in the first year of activity in the new seat at 1 Solidarity Square in Gdańsk ECS was visited by 390 thousand guests.

The Council of Europe Museum Prize forms part of the European Museum of the Year Awards (EMYA). It has been awarded annually since 1977 to a museum judged to have made a significant contribution to the understanding of European cultural heritage as a factor uniting the Council of Europe's 47 member states. This prestigious prize is awarded based on the recommendations of the EMYA Judging Panel, by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

ECS Permanent Exhibition: Room F.
The Triumph of Freedom.
Photo by Grzegorz Mehring / ECS

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EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL FOR THE HISTORIC GDAŃSK SHIPYARD AND THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CENTRE

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The plaque unveiling ceremony in Gdańsk on 29 August 2015.
Photo by Grzegorz Mehring / ECS

The Historic Gdańsk Shipyard, including the OHS Hall (Sala BHP), Gate No. 2, Solidarity Square (Plac Solidarności) and Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers of 1970, as well as the European Solidarity Centre, has been awarded the European Heritage Label. The purpose of the Label is to mark those sites which have played an important role in European history and culture and relate to the idea of uniting, as well as democratic and humanistic values of timeless significance.

The Label was created in 2013, although the idea for such an award to mark those places important for European heritage arose much earlier, back in 2006. In 2014, apart from the premises of Gdańsk Shipyard, another 16 places were also awarded, including two Polish points on the historical map of Europe: The 3rd May 1791 Constitution and the Union of Lublin. A total of 36 sites from 18 countries competed for the Label.

Basil Kerski, chairman of the ECS, with the memorial plaque

date | **19-20 May 2016 Thursday-Friday**
venue | ECS, 1 Solidarity Square, Gdańsk
entrance | free on reservation
contact | europe@ecs.gda.pl

Panel debate during the Europe with a view to the future 2015. Panelists: Georges Mink, Elena Nemirovskaya, Cornelius Ochmann, Janusz Reiter, Ivan Krastev. Photo by Grzegorz Mehring / ECS

You are cordially invited you to this year's fourth annual European Reflection Forum **EUROPE WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE**. This project aims to bring together experts, journalists, academics and politicians dealing with issues relating to European integration. The concept of the Forum therefore contributes to the need for European reflection in a wider circle of experts. It is not without significance that the Forum is held in Gdansk.

The **EUROPE WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE** forum is an international socio-political project where participants discuss the contemporary condition of Europe and Europeans. This is a meeting of the heroes and creators of change, representing different generations, disciplines and perspectives. All of them share a common concern about the future of the European Union and the ambition to act effectively in the areas bordering with the community.

ECS's Auditorium during Europe with a view to the future 2015. Photo by Grzegorz Mehring / ECS

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Discussion during Europe with a view to the future 2015.Speakers: Donald Tusk, Basil Kerski. Photo by Grzegorz Mehring / ECS

MAIN TOPICS OF THE FORUM:

- Europe and the culture of hospitality. Migration as a test of the credibility of European values
- Twenty-five years in Central and Eastern Europe after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The after-effect of the democratization project?
- NATO in the 21st century. How safe are European democracies?
- How the dynamic of the EU Neighbourhood Policy changed due to the wars on East and South?
- Poland-Germany - a partnership for Europe. 25 years of Polish-German treaty on good neighborhood and friendly cooperation

AMONG THE SPEAKERS ARE:

Krzysztof Czyżewski
Borderland of Arts, Cultures, Nations Centre
Seth G Jones
Director of the International Centre for Security and Defense Policy RAND, Chicago, Washington
Manfred Sapper
political scientist, editor-in-chief of the monthly Osteuropa
Patrycja Sasnal
expert on the Middle East, the Polish Institute of International Affairs
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Seeking refuge in distant Portugal

CÁTIA BRUNO

As the war in eastern Ukraine reached its peak in 2014, 157 of the 442 people seeking refuge in Portugal were Ukrainian. In 2015 at least 368 Ukrainians followed suit, making up around 42.4 per cent of all asylum requests in Portugal that year. Only a few of them are granted refugee status, but almost all receive at least some humanitarian protection. Emine Shykhametova was one of them. This is her story.

It was around 11pm when Emine Shykhametova left her home in Yalta, southern Crimea, never to return. The 29-year old Ukrainian got inside her car with her husband Oleksii and 10-month old baby Masha and drove to Kyiv. They were leaving behind months of persecution, calls in the middle of the night telling them that they were "traitors" and a pervasive fear that one of them might someday "disappear", just as Emine's cousin had.

Emine tells her story with her almond shaped eyes focused on the same table where the tea she has just prepared is getting cold. Black eyeliner accentuates her Asian-like features, which used to catch the eye of passers-by back in Crimea. Her Tatar origins did not go unnoticed, and in the final few months she spent in her country, many made a point of insulting her on the street.

This was what Emine was leaving behind when she got inside that car, back in July 2014. After a 12-hour ride to Kyiv, some friends in the capital opened their

doors so that the runaway family could take a bath and get some rest. "After that, we went to McDonald's, because we missed it", she says with a small laugh. Their next stop was the Maidan square, to buy souvenirs like bracelets and traditional *vyshyvanka* shirts, anything they could get their hands on that could help Emine remember home and the reason she was leaving her whole life behind.

More than enough reasons

"Then we went to the airport, but I could not get through the boarding area. I did not have a return ticket, but because I had a tourist visa, I had to buy one, even though I knew perfectly well that I had no intention of returning." Her plan was simple: get on a plane to Lisbon, Portugal, along with Masha, and make an asylum request upon arrival. After purchasing two return tickets, she was left with only 100 US dollars in her pocket.

Saying goodbye to Oleksii would have been easy if it was not for all the luggage she was carrying, not to mention a crying baby. Only after passing through the first security check did she find a second to lean in and kiss her husband goodbye. Without knowing a single word of Portuguese, Emine hopped on a plane to Lisbon with her daughter sitting on her lap. She cried throughout the whole flight.

As soon as she stepped off the plane at Portela Airport in Lisbon, Emine went straight to the first police officer she saw. Speaking a mix of Russian and a few English words she knew, she told him she wanted to make an asylum request. It was late in the evening and the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF, in Portuguese) office was already closed. With no plans beyond waiting it out, Emine had to look for an airport bench where she and Masha could sleep for the night.

Early in the morning, she met with the SEF officers. No one spoke Ukrainian or Russian, or was able to find Crimea on a map, so they took her to the Portuguese Council of Refugees (CPR, Portugal's only UNHCR-affiliated NGO), where she received help with her paperwork. On that night, more than 72 hours after leaving Yalta, Emine and Masha slept in a new, foreign bed at the CPR building.

A year and a half later, the situation at Lisbon airport is very different. Now, almost everyone in SEF and CPR knows where Crimea is and Russian and Ukrainian speaking interpreters are a phone call away. Emine was a pioneer, the first from the peninsula to seek asylum in Portugal, but after her, many more came, including a former schoolmate of hers.

Refugees arriving from Crimea and Donbas are the largest group of asylum seekers in Portugal. In 2014, as the war in eastern Ukraine reached its peak, 157 of the 442 people seeking refuge in Portugal were Ukrainian. In 2015 at least 368

Ukrainians followed suit, making up around 42.4 per cent of all requests, according to Teresa Tito de Morais, the president of CPR. Only a few of them are granted refugee status, but almost all receive at least some humanitarian protection.

"Those who live in eastern Ukraine or Crimea faced either a very intense war or significant human rights violations. There are more than enough reasons for them to ask for international protection", says Tito de Morais.

Emine was one of them. "Those who were not pro-Russia were being discriminated against, so you can imagine how it was for those of us who have different facial features," she says, referring to her Tatar origins. In Crimea, more than ten per cent of the population is Tatar. However, this has not prevented them from being harassed. In October 2014 Human Rights Watch reported on a "disturbing trend of abductions and threats to Crimean Tatars."

In Emine's case, friends were turning their backs on her and Oleksii. Some called to verbally abuse them and other people threw things at her on the street. Oleksii faced laughter and disgust from his friends, who called him a "traitor" for being married to a Tatar. Emine did not have a job and Oleksii was close to losing his as a taxi driver. Eventually, the local authorities tried to convince them to become Russian citizens. They refused. That is when they were told that if they became unemployed, their daughter could be taken from them, a gesture made much easier by the fact that they had the "wrong" nationality. In the meantime, Emine's cousin disappeared after leaving for work one day, never to be seen again.

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Portugal by chance

"People became like zombies. Suddenly, the Russian flag appeared in every window," Emine says. A 29-year old student of law, she says that she never gave much thought to politics or the news, but admits that the EuroMaidan Revolution politicised her. "We started following the events closely when the first protester was killed," she recalls. "After that point, we kept watching the news on independent TV channels." Her mobile phone illustrates her patriotism towards Ukraine, as our conversation is interrupted by the Ukrainian national anthem, which she has set as her ringtone.

"There were never any issues with becoming part of Russia before," she continues. "People with an education understood it was all propaganda, but everybody

else believed it. They thought a plumber would make as much money as a doctor and that they would start to receive pensions as large as those in Soviet times."

None of this would have been much of a problem to Emine and her family were it not for the persecution they started feeling in their daily lives. On March 16th 2014, when the referendum result was announced, she and Oleksii understood that things were going to change for the worse. That is when they began thinking about leaving, something that eventually happened four months later.

Emine's family chose to come to Portugal almost by chance. They wanted to go someplace far away, but still in Europe. Ideally, the climate would be similar to Crimea's, the country would be open and tolerant towards refugees, and it would also be a NATO member, where the family would feel safe. They took all of this into consideration and ended up choosing Portugal, a small Mediterranean country with 10.5 million inhabitants on the other side of Europe, crammed between Spain and the Atlantic Ocean.

"Many asylum seekers from Ukraine chose Portugal because it is a European country, but smaller and with more integration potential", says Teresa Tito de Morais. Although this was not Emine's case, the CPR president notes another factor: the struggle to get refugee status in countries closer to Ukraine. "Poland, for instance, has a completely different policy from Portugal."

The numbers support this theory. According to data from the Polish Office for Foreigners, since 2013, only two Ukrainians have received refugee status in the country and only 24 received subsidiary protection, out of approximately 3,000 requests per year. Poland already deals with a large influx of Ukrainians who receive short-term work visas (it is estimated that more than 500,000 are currently in the country), but this makes life much harder for those who are trying to get humanitarian protection. Polish authorities invoke the "internal flight alternative", saying that most Ukrainians could relocate to other areas of their country that are not affected by the war. As a result, many decide to request asylum in more distant countries, such as Portugal.

Co-habitation

Another factor comes into play when analysing refugees' motivations. Teresa Tito de Morais estimates that around 30 to 40 per cent of these asylum seekers are familiar with Portugal. They either have friends of family living there or may even have worked there in the past. At the beginning of the 2000s, many Ukrainians came to Portugal to work, mainly looking for jobs in the then booming construction business. Between 2001 and 2003, nearly 65,000 residential permits were

granted to Ukrainians in Portugal, a large number that does not include those who may have entered the country illegally.

José Carlos Marques, a researcher from the Social Studies Centre of Coimbra University, was one of the few who studied the Ukrainian immigration phenomenon in Portugal. Noting that many of these immigrants have since returned to Ukraine, Marques thinks a set of different circumstances helps explain how this immigrant community was created. "It is related to the frail economic conditions in Ukraine, as well as the employment opportunities in Portugal," he concludes. However, there are also other factors to consider, such as the ease of getting a short-term visa, the Schengen area and the actions of criminal networks disguised as travel agencies that scammed many Ukrainians with the promise of guaranteed work.

Co-habitation with refugees that have a more pro-Russian stance is difficult.

Most of these immigrants came from the western part of Ukraine, although there was also a large flow of people who came from the Donetsk region. Marques does not remember political issues being discussed by these migrants back in 2003, but small details haunt him today when he looks at the current situation. "I remember that when we carried out this study back then, some of the people that were born in Ukrainian territory were already claiming to be Russian."

In fact, many of the Ukrainians that arrive in Portugal do not have as strong of an anti-Russian feeling as Emine. Those who do usually get in contact with the Association of Ukrainians in Portugal, an organisation responsible for organising events in support of the Ukrainian soldiers, as well as sending them clothes and food. However, co-habitation with refugees that have a more pro-Russian stance is difficult, as Emine readily admits.

This is visible at the Church of All Saints, one of the largest Orthodox communities in Lisbon. It would be a natural gathering point for many in the Ukrainian community, but its ties to the Moscow Patriarchate leave some feeling excluded.

"Our church is absolutely open for everyone, no matter the nationality," says Jorge Divisa. This Russian man, who makes a point of adapting his name to a more Portuguese sounding version ("Jorge" is the equivalent of "Yuri" in Portuguese), has been living in Portugal for the past 15 years and is currently one of the leaders in the All Saints community. When he realised after a Sunday mass that a journalist was there to ask whether Ukrainian refugees were a part of this religious community, he was a little startled and insisted that he should be the one doing the talking on such a subject.

After initially stating that no Ukrainian refugees had contacted them, Jorge later corrects this statement. Until that day, only two people from Donbas had

come asking for help in the past two years. He even briefly introduced me to one of them, a shy and skinny young man in his early 20s, who stuttered as he said "hello". Yet once again, Jorge is conducting the conversation, pushing the boy away and closing the door, while saying that if people with different political views arrive on the church's doorstep, they will be welcomed with open arms. "We leave all of that outside the church, the church is for peace. We just pray that things get better," he assures me.

Sensitive issues

Teresa Tito de Morais sometimes sees these political differences reflected back in Portugal. "People who were friends yesterday can be enemies today. This is very delicate and even while the country is convulsing, a post-conflict reconciliation has to be prepared." Despite this, overall, from what she sees at CPR's reception centre, Teresa feels that the Ukrainian refugees will adapt quickly to life in Portugal. "They are Europeans and they come with the purpose of integrating and making themselves useful. I think this is a community with more integration potential than many others."

> Ukrainian refugees are adapting quickly to life in Portugal. "They are Europeans and they come to integrate," says Teresa Tito de Morais, of the Portuguese Council of Refugees.

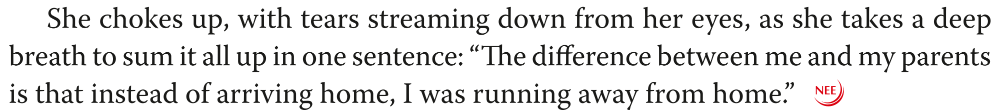
Emine thinks the same way. Apart from the Portuguese habit of arriving late, the Ukrainian feels content with most things in her new country. In the meantime, her husband joined the family and found a job in construction, while she stays at home taking care of their second-child Yulia, who was born in Portugal in September 2015. They are living in an apartment on the outskirts of Lisbon and both Oleksii and their oldest daughter Masha already speak fluent Portuguese. Masha insists on being called Maria (the Portuguese equivalent) and speaks Portuguese around the house with her father.

Although she is a fierce Ukrainian nationalist, speaking Russian (her mother tongue) is one of the few things that connects Emine to her homeland, Crimea, where she moved with her parents and two siblings from Uzbekistan when she was two-years old, back in 1988. Back then, they were welcomed with the same insult of "traitors" that she heard on the phone and in the streets in 2014. Eventually, things got easier with time and her parents felt that they were coming back to their promised land, which made everything more bearable.

Today, Emine's parents refuse to leave the Crimean peninsula. Their decision conflicts Emine; on the one hand, she is trying to move on with her life in a new

country, but on the other, she is still tied to her past when her thoughts helplessly drift back to Crimea. She cannot help but compare her parents' story with that night in July 2014 when she had to leave her home. "I felt like I was going through the same ordeal as my parents, leaving with my daughter in my arms and selling everything to get enough money for the trip."

She chokes up, with tears streaming down from her eyes, as she takes a deep breath to sum it all up in one sentence: "The difference between me and my parents is that instead of arriving home, I was running away from home."



Cátia Bruno is a journalist based in Lisbon. She writes mainly for *Expresso*.

Interpreting memory

MONIKA M. ERIKSEN

Historically significant places of memory possess vague characteristics. They can be both positive and negative in their symbolism. They share a common denominator based upon the subjective interpretation of the past. At the core of how we interpret memory is the question of whether each place, memorial or statue is received with positive enthusiasm or negative societal repudiation. After all, as the saying goes, "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist".

The concept of European historical memory is far from linear, as are the various expressions of such memory. In fact, they are quite multidimensional. Memory, as a human process of retaining events and categorising them according to their significance and emotive power, has been captured by civilisations into tangible *lieux de memoire* (memory space) since the beginning of time. Mankind has an inherent need to hold on to the past for a variety of reasons. Collective representation of a shared past is expressed in what Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi calls "vehicles of memory"; they are transcribed into books, manuscripts and poetry, while others are forever immortalised in statues and memorials. Furthermore, others are passed on in spoken narratives from one generation to the next.

Regardless of form, there are two coalescing elements we can observe regarding memory, or more specifically, the way a memory is presented by a group or society. Firstly, memory is safeguarded as a means to "remember". However, the second aspect does not necessarily deal with content or what we are trying to collectively remember (although that of course is significant in itself), but rather how such a memory (event, war, victory, anniversary, etc.) is subsequently interpreted by its recipient. This aspect of interpretation, or the accepted (or rejected) meaning of a given place of memory, is often one that stirs much controversy.

Degree of subjectivity

What do we mean by this conflicting nature of interpretation? Part of the answer lies in the partiality of both the presenter or conveyor, and the recipient or the individuals, groups and societies who observe, analyse and interpret the way something is presented to the outside world. Places of memory, whether deliberately or not, incorporate a distinct degree of subjectivity. How we "choose" to remember the past indisputably involves value judgements.

To clarify this point, let us examine some tangible examples. The equestrian statue of King Leopold II in Belgium is an appropriate illustration of such duality. For many Belgians, this immortalisation of the "Builder King" in all his glory is associated with the myriad of public works, urban projects and buildings commissioned by him. Hence, the statue as a physical place of memory is meant to highlight this cultural and historical heritage as a source of national pride. However, in the framework of the aforementioned "interpretational partiality", the very same place of memory represents to others a sense of anger, injustice or cruelty. It can be seen as a memorial to a man who exploited the Congo's resources, made a personal fortune from the harvest of its wild rubber and in doing so, contributed to the death of up to 10 million people. What is celebrated by one nation may be viewed as a colonial conquest by another.

How we "choose" to remember the past inevitably involves value judgements.

As a principle this interpretational partiality is not exclusive to places of memory, but finds appropriate and timely applicability within intangible, ideology-based belief systems. An example of this is a person's right to self-determination and independence, which can be viewed as anarchist or secessionist by the ruling classes. Places of memory possess vague characteristics. They can have both positive and negative symbolism. Moreover, they share a common denominator that is based upon a subjective interpretation of the past, or to put it another way, the way people understand and thus construct their individual sense of the past. At the core of this is the question regarding whether each place, memorial or statue, which potentially portrays a "collectively" significant historical event, is received with positive enthusiasm or negative societal repudiation. After all, as a familiar colloquial saying goes, "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist".

Similarly, we can infer that for every existing place of memory, there is a myriad of distinctive interpretations possessing either positive or negative emotive power. Moreover, there is another uncomfortable fact we must acknowledge regarding the dualistic nature of places of memory, namely, the challenge of conceptualising them as both positive and negative. With regards to the latter, the decision to

abolish an effigy, memorial or building is, in essence, a conscious and calculated attempt to erase history, or a part of it. After all, a nation without history is a nation without a soul. Therefore, both negative and positive places of memory contain essential intrinsic value.

More than a history lesson

We often assume that a memory, especially one that immortalises a traumatic event, once embedded into to our social psyche, remains unchanged. The truth is that memory can be, and often is, transformed with time. What was once a source of anger, pain or even pride can evolve to acquire a completely new meaning. What was once interpreted in a certain way over the course of history has evolved to take on an altered social understanding of its significance and value. Let us consider the Berlin Wall as an example. For decades, it stood as a physical barrier of oppression, dividing East and West Berlin, and as an enduring symbol of communism. Decades later, the remaining fragments stand as an icon of a reunified Berlin and of the German nation. The previous example regarding King Leopold's many projects provides further evidence to the notion that the interpretation of a place of memory can dramatically change over the span of generations. Positive places of memory can subsequently lose their ideological and historical lustre and be reduced to represent a shameful, defeated nation's past.

> Places of memory are often exposed not just to politics, but also to the danger of becoming instruments for the deliberate misinterpretation or falsification of history.

The extrinsic *telos* (ultimate goal) of places of memory encompasses far more than just sights and memorials created to make us remember an important lesson from history. Thus, from a teleological perspective, they retain their validity, their "purpose" in the present. Places of memory are often exposed not just to the politics of memory, but also to the danger of becoming an instrument for the deliberate misinterpretation or falsification of history.

Russia has recently unveiled a controversial monument of the three most iconic national leaders of the Second World War: Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. This bronze sculpture, weighing an estimated 10 tonnes, was officially inaugurated in Yalta, in the annexed region of Crimea. The decision to do so relates to the 70th anniversary of the Yalta conference when, in 1946, the three leaders discussed the future of post-war Europe. What makes this particular place of memory so significant in the framework of our discussion? Simply put,

its symbolic ambiguity. This *lieu de memoire* evokes both a positive and negative response. Its interpretation and meaning varies depending on the audience. In these particular circumstances, the location as well as the "content" complicates the matter. The Yalta conference is a key historical event which represents a top-down approach to reorganising Europe, without consulting those who were most affected by it (Poland in particular comes to mind). Here, plans to erect the sculpture were met with protest, mostly from Crimean Tatars, because of its symbolic meaning. A monument which features Stalin was deemed inappropriate in an already tense Crimea. For some, such as a considerable portion of the Russian population, the image of Stalin, especially in the post-war period, represents a sense of victory and pride. This attributes a positive response to this place of memory. On the other hand, the negative meaning is associated with Crimea's Muslim Tatar minority, who not only remember the mass deportations to Central Asia, ordered by Stalin during the war, but also validate their continued suffering and discrimination since Moscow's seizure of the region in 2014. Lastly, for the Tatars, Stalin represents Russian domination. This sentiment still plays a crucial role today, as most of them oppose Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

Controversial memory

Content, of course, is the main factor affecting whether a place of memory is considered in a positive or negative light, but its strategic position is equally significant. Looking further east to the Russian Federal Republic of Mari-El, in a village called Shelanger, as was the case in the aforementioned monument in Crimea, another statue was unveiled in tribute to Stalin as a national hero. Almost three metres high, the monument was meant to remind Russia's subjects of their debt to "a great man", whose "name has been unjustly forgotten for 60 years". At first glance, it might seem obvious why this place of memory is controversial; Stalin's role in history is viewed by some as representative of Russian Soviet-era greatness, whereas others remember him for his brutality and repression. What is also interesting about the duality of this particular monument is how it is directly related to its final resting place, at the entrance to a meat factory. Although it is an unusual place to establish a memorial to anything, it unintentionally contributes to the debate of how a place of memory develops positive or negative connotations. To some, placing a statue of Stalin in front of a meat factory symbolically reinforces the image of him as a "butcher" of sorts. This symbolic attribution carries significant validity and realism, as hundreds of thousands have suffered inexplicable cruelty or death at the hands of his political machinery.

Of course, monuments commemorating Stalin are visible in many locations across Russia and the post-Soviet states. In a town called Tver, located in central Russia, a museum has been opened in honour of Stalin's political and military achievements. This once again highlights the wide scope of interpretation for considering such places as being either negative or positive. Some view him as a leader who helped Russia achieve glory, while others denounce him as a mass murderer who sent millions of people to their deaths in the gulags.

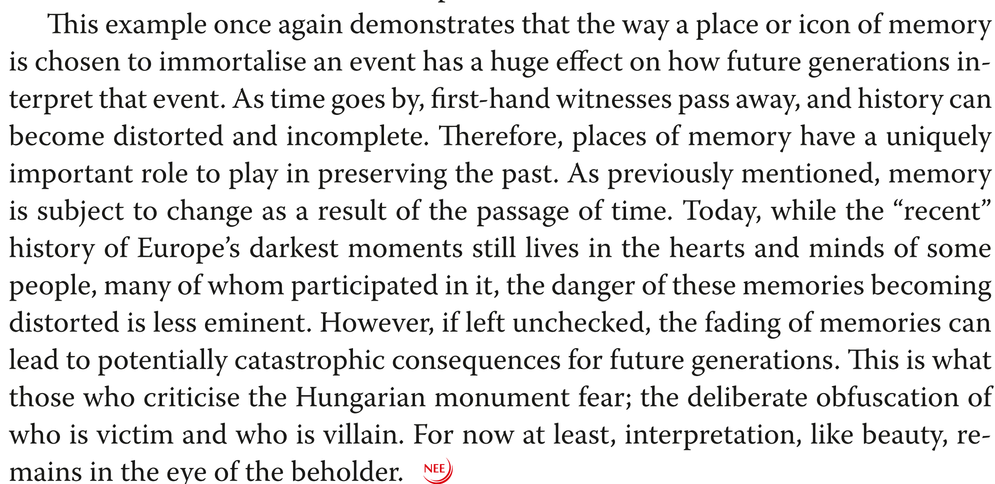
The controversy regarding places of memory is not limited to Russia and its Soviet legacy. In Budapest, during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Second World War, a monument was erected in honour of all the victims of Hungary's German occupation. At a glance, it would be logical to assume that a place of memory which addresses any and all of the atrocities committed during Europe's dark history is positive. However, this monument managed to generate a lot of controversy and considerable opposition. As mentioned earlier, places of memory can be subject to the politics of memory and may fulfil a functional role, one which can unfortunately try, whether intentionally or not, to distort history. In this particular case, those who oppose the monument have contended that its symbolism, which depicts Hungary as the Archangel Gabriel being attacked by a German imperial eagle, absolves the country of its participation in the extermination of almost half a million Jews during the German occupation.

Icons

Places of memory do not necessarily have to correspond to actual tangible places but may embody our "remembrance" of the past in a symbol, icon or token. Remembrance may be immortalised in an idea, in a speech or within literature. The "remembrance poppy", a red flower used since 1921 to commemorate fallen soldiers, is one example. The original idea of using this particular flower as a symbol of remembrance comes from a First World War-era poem by Moina Michael titled "In Flanders' Fields". This symbol has been widely adopted in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia and is particularly popular in the United Kingdom. An artificial imitation of the poppy flower is traditionally worn on Armistice Day (November 11th). This flower can be often found woven into official wreaths and is customarily laid at various war memorials on commemorative days.

> The way a place or icon of memory is chosen to immortalise an event has a huge effect on how future generations interpret that event.

Despite that, this seemingly innocent and supposedly positive icon of memory is not void of controversy, much like our other aforementioned examples. Its interpretation and subsequent characterisation as being both positive and negative stems from the poppy's symbolic ambiguity. Prominent opposition to the poppy's symbolism comes mostly from Irish nationalists who refuse to wear it because of their opposition to the actions undertaken by the British during the turbulent period known as the Troubles, an ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland between the Unionists and Irish Republicans.



This example once again demonstrates that the way a place or icon of memory is chosen to immortalise an event has a huge effect on how future generations interpret that event. As time goes by, first-hand witnesses pass away, and history can become distorted and incomplete. Therefore, places of memory have a uniquely important role to play in preserving the past. As previously mentioned, memory is subject to change as a result of the passage of time. Today, while the "recent" history of Europe's darkest moments still lives in the hearts and minds of some people, many of whom participated in it, the danger of these memories becoming distorted is less eminent. However, if left unchecked, the fading of memories can lead to potentially catastrophic consequences for future generations. This is what those who criticise the Hungarian monument fear; the deliberate obfuscation of who is victim and who is villain. For now at least, interpretation, like beauty, remains in the eye of the beholder. NEE

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EASTERN CAFÉ

In the previous issue, we introduced a new section called "Eastern Café". It replaced the already known format of "Books & Reviews". Just as the previous section, the Eastern Café will also discuss books, films, exhibits and cultural events that are read, watched and debated across the region of Central and Eastern Europe. It will do so, however, in a slightly different manner. This debate will built around a wider discussion, like the ones in the widely admired Bohemian cafés, to relfect the ferment that is taking place within the societies and especially their elite.

Thus, our authors while writing about books, films and art will also talk about issues such as war and peace, democracy, authoritriatrism, freedom and oppression. Just like the old Vienna, Kraków or Lviv cafés, this section will give you a foretaste on what is on people's minds and what possible changes may come from disussions. Encouraging you to join this debate on the pages of *New Eastern Europe* we invite you to take these ideas to your own cafés and, by doing so, contribute to the wider discussions on issues that matter today.

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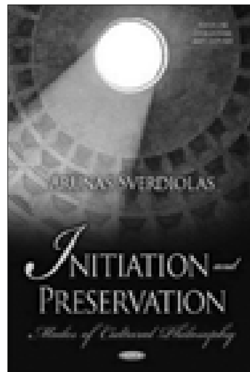
A theory of self and human existence

LEONIDAS DONSKIS

Initiation and preservation: Modes of cultural philosophy.
By: Arūnas Sverdiolas. Publisher: Nova Science:
Hauppauge, New York, USA, 2015.



A close examination of the emergence of modern Lithuanian philosophy is most useful when studying the intellectual and moral sensibilities of Eastern Europe. At the same time, a study of modern Lithuanian theoretical thought may reveal a number of the hitherto concealed nuances of the multi-cultural and multi-faceted character of modern Lithuania. Contrary to a widely accepted, albeit loosely argued, opinion of many western scholars regarding the Baltic countries, namely that Lithuania came into modern political existence as a homogenous entity that had nothing to do with its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural past, an examination of 20th century Lithuanian philosophy disproves this.

Although the multi-cultural character of Renaissance and Baroque Lithuania underwent considerable change throughout the previous centuries, it could be argued that modern Lithuanian philosophy originated as a universalistic attempt to bridge distant cultures and create a synthesis of the civilisations of East and West. This reflected not only its initial orientation towards Russian philosophy (the similarity between the concept of "a synthesis of civilisations of East and West", put forward by the Lithuanian philosopher Stasys Šalkauskis, a follower of Vladimir Solovyov, and that of "Eurasianism" is striking), but also the

dynamics of Lithuanian nationalism. Like any other form of Central or East European nationalism, it had its liberal and conservative phases.

Will-to-culture

In fact, modern Lithuanian philosophy originated as a response to the questions formulated in Russian philosophy, religious, moral and social. Later, it turned to Continental European philosophy, preoccupying itself with German and French existentialism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. During the interwar period in Lithuania, the philosophy of culture arguably became the principal philosophical discipline. At that time, the philosophy of culture as a discipline *sensu stricto* was fading away in Western Europe, giving way to the intrusion of the social sciences in the fields of theory of culture and *Kulturkritik*. Yet it was flourishing in Lithuania, where a Department of the Philosophy of Culture was established at the University of Lithuania in Kaunas (which was renamed Vytautas Magnus University in 1930).

Regrettably, the loss of independent political and intellectual existence that Lithuania experienced for five decades isolated and marginalised the then lively and promising intellectual culture. Despite this, in the early 1980s, Lithuanian philosophy started recovering and reorienting itself towards western currents of modern theoretical thought. Though Lithuanian philosophy survived into the 21st century, owing to the work of Lithuanian émigré thinkers, the second birth of modern Lithuanian philosophy would have been unthinkable without the gradual emancipation of thought that occurred in Lithuania itself. Interestingly enough, the birth of modern philosophy in interwar Lithuania was instrumental in the search for modes of public discourse, collective identity and cultural policy, as well as for elaborating the national project as a whole. Even more striking is the fact that the revival of philosophy was instrumental in achieving Lithuania's independence and freedom in 1990.

The second birth of modern Lithuanian philosophy would have been unthinkable without the gradual emancipation of thought that occurred in Lithuania itself.

Vincas Trumpa, an émigré Lithuanian historian who spent much of his life in the United States, once noted that during the interwar period, Lithuania transformed its will-to-power into a will-to-culture, and thus transformed itself from a *Naturvolk* into a *Kulturvolk*. Trumpa stresses

that this might help explain why and how the philosophy of culture, developed by such Lithuanian philosophers as Stasys Šalkauskis and Antanas Maceina, flourished in interwar Lithuania. In fact, the philosophy of culture in the first half of the 20th century can be considered to be a specifically East/Central European (in particular, a Russian, Romanian, Polish and Lithuanian) phenomenon, for it sprang from "German subculture," which was related to European culture in the way that a national variant relates to a general cultural model.

However, Trumpa could have added that the principle of culture, and numerous projects for promoting the rise of national culture, was as empirically disconnected from mundane reality in Lithuania as was the 19th century Russian intelligentsia from the common people, or the 18th century German middle class intelligentsia from the court aristocracy, especially in terms of the sharp dividing line drawn by German philosophers and writers between *Kultur*, or *Bildung*, and *Zivilisation*.

At this point, it goes without saying that the Lithuanian intelligentsia present at the dawn of the emergence of modern Lithuania described the Polish language and culture in the same way that the German intelligentsia described the French culture. The similarity of these cases is striking, for the Lithuanian intelligentsia came to regard the Polish-speaking Lithuanian gentry in exactly the same manner as the German intelligentsia had regarded the pro-French German aristocracy.

Interpretation of self

It seems that Vincas Trumpa must have been right. Culture (or in his terms, the "will-to-culture") was the principal driving force behind the politics of interwar Lithuania. However, while Trumpa must be credited for producing many interesting insights, he failed to emphasise that because it was based on religious thinking, the concept of culture wielded by interwar Lithuanian philosophers could not be effectively applied either to modern, secularised society or to multi-dimensional reality in general. Moreover, according to this concept, culture was understood as pure spirituality, or as the conscious renunciation of social reality, and thus offered no way to process the complex, diverse and multi-faceted nature of human reality.

Notwithstanding some obvious structural isomorphisms and the almost identical structure of their sentiments, interwar Lithuania's nationalist movement differed in various ways from its counterparts in Romania, Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries. Although, as a meta-discourse, the Lithuanian nation emerged from the system of dominant ideas and values, intellectual strategies, moral stances, keywords and

even frameworks for self-interpretation, the development of the humanities and social sciences in Lithuania at that time hardly compares with what was happening in, for example, Romania.

In short, for a long time, the philosophy of culture was the only theoretical framework for the interpretation of the self, the historical essence of the nation, that nation's past, present and future and the nation's cultural achievements. It should come as no surprise that, in addition to the philosophers who developed the Lithuanian version of the philosophy of culture such as Stasys Šalkauskis, Antanas Maceina, Juozas Girnius, Vosylius Sezemanas and Bronius Stočkus, a number of Lithuanian writers,

The return of Lithuanian philosophy occurred in the 1980s, a decade that should be regarded as one of the high points in the history of modern Lithuanian thought.

journalists, critics and lay intellectuals also contributed to the philosophy of culture by raising problems and questions related to the vision and project of Lithuanian national culture. Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, which was enormously popular amongst Lithuanian intellectuals at that time, served as a great theoretical challenge and as a reminder of what kind of issues should be raised to keep Lithuania aware of the most symptomatic tendencies of western civilisation.

It is important to mention the impact that Polish philosophy and intellectual culture had on Lithuania in the 1970s and 1980s, which was especially critical during the five decades of Lithuania's isolation from Europe and the rest of the world due to the occupation and annexation of Lithuania by the former Soviet Union. Two post-war generations of Lithuanian philosophers and humanists studied the history of philosophy in Władysław Tatarkiewicz's volumes on the history of philosophy. An erudite scholar and a uniquely qualified historian of ancient, medieval and modern philosophy, Tatarkiewicz was regarded among Lithuanian doctoral students as highly as Frederick C. Copleston, an Oxford Jesuit of immense erudition who established a reputation as one of the most preeminent historians of philosophy.

Poland provided Lithuania with a well-researched and documented philosophical literature, not to mention numerous translations of key texts in classical and modern philosophy. Polish philosophers such as Roman Ingarden or Leszek Kołakowski captivated the minds of a number of young Lithuanian intellectuals. The return of Lithuanian philosophy occurred in the 1980s, a decade that should be regarded as one of the high points in the history of modern Lithuanian thought.

Bridging philosophy

One of the founders and leaders of the new Lithuanian philosophy was, and continues to be, Arūnas Sverdiolas. An interdisciplinary master who is equally at home in phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics and various schools of literary theory, Sverdiolas seems to be the only thinker capable of bridging the interwar and present currents of Lithuanian philosophy. Uniquely attentive to, and respectful of, interwar Lithuania's intellectual culture, Sverdiolas took the then heroes of Lithuanian philosophy very seriously, incorporating the issues they addressed into his own inclusive design of thought.

A scholar and a historian of philosophy who was competent in all the major schools of modern thought, Sverdiolas developed his own version of the philosophy of culture, shaping it as a multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary theory of the humanities that engaged in a dialogue with Lithuanian and Western European intellectual traditions. An elusive, albeit intense, dialogue of tradition and modernity remains a notable trait of Sverdiolas's thought.

His recent major work is the book *Initiation and preservation: Modes of cultural philosophy* (initially written in Lithuanian in 1996 and then translated into English and published in 2015). This volume is an attempt to construct an explanatory framework for the humanities and an innovative reinterpretation of the classical legacy of western thought. Taking the entire western philosophical tradition as an interpretive framework for key cultural categories, such as initiation and preservation, this book raises pivotal issues in the philosophy of culture.

A master of metaphor and idiom, Sverdiolas makes elegant and deeply meaningful allusions to present politics and culture, thus bridging classical antiquity and modernity, modernism and postmodernism and also western and non-western trajectories of thought and action. The latter is not accidental, as the translation of thought into action is one of the crucial issues addressed in the book.

Culture as a reservoir of meanings and paradigms, as well as a symbolic design for self-interpretation and an in-depth exploration of the world, is treated here in the most inclusive sense. Endurance, initiation, preservation, vanitas, the horizons of this side, polycentric field, the time of myth and history and communities in polycentric field; they all come as hermeneutical and phenomenological keywords in the multi-perspective, complex and sophisticated philosophical fabric of Sverdiolas' book.

Initiation and preservation was translated from Lithuanian into English by the renowned Lithuanian émigré philosopher Algis Mickunas, a professor emeritus of philosophy at Ohio University, and was published by Nova Publishers of New York. With sound reason, Mickunas writes of Sverdiolas' book:

"The text, by Arūnas Sverdiolas, is an articulation of a philosophy of culture that is truly ground-breaking in its depth and breadth. The author focuses on the most fundamental prejudgments of western and mid-eastern civilisations, their differences and domains of intersection, ranging from classical Greeks, Biblical tradition and their unfolding up to the present. What should be of interest to a reader and also a scholar is the inclusion of texts from Eastern Europe that reveal the manner in which they confronted the clashing cultural challenges, the collapsing of the "high" culture dominated by Plato and his heirs (even if they did not recognise such an inheritance), and the appearance of issues which could not be resolved by returning to some safe haven of the past. The author does not lend comfort by suggesting some palliative for our disquietude, specifically when one of his basic arguments contends that philosophy, as an effort to discover an independent world apart from culture, is no more viable. Philosophy, as a way of being human, is culture and any philosophy regarding itself as being apart from culture and its history is still another aspect of culture. Yet, according to the author, it is culture that reveals our freedom, despite claims by some philosophers that we are subject to causes. The very difference between culture and the natural world is an indication of such freedom. Even when we speak theologically about predestination, we do so by choice provided by the narratives of our culture."

Symbolic design

Vytautas Kavolis (1930–1996), another noted Lithuanian émigré sociologist in the US, who was always attentive to his native Lithuania with its politics and culture, once defined civilisation as a symbolic design within which we search for the frames of meaning to be able to explain and interpret ourselves and the world around us. Sverdiolas's concept of culture stands quite close to that of Kavolis's in terms of his attempt to derive the ideas and concepts we live by from the Bible, ancient and modern philosophy and literature.

Small wonder then, that he tries to explain such phenomena as madness, fanaticism and idealism as a tragic fixation on dead paradigms. As we can clearly see, if we move from Don Quixote to dictators and tyrants in politics, we have an in-depth explanation of what it means to live not in one's time but elsewhere in the epoch. Sverdiolas seems to do here academically what Hermann Hesse did fictionally in *Bildungsroman*, especially in the novel *Steppenwolf*, whose protagonist Harry Haller lives outside of his time. Yet as Algis Mickunas would have it, to deny one's culture is an aspect of that same culture. Needless to say, this insight throws new light not only onto romantic loners and historically dislo-

cated conservative intellectuals, but also onto single-minded fanatics and jingoists.

At this point, Mickunas' interpretation of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is striking. Cervantes, who deserves honourable mention for his timeless chivalric novel, especially in 2016, which marks 400 years since his passing, is granted exceptional reading and interpretation in Sverdiolas's passage, which reads as follows:

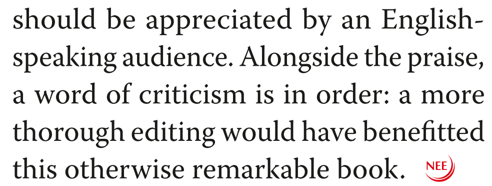
"We encounter the tragic-comic transformation of this theme in Cervantes' great novel. The knighthood is in unique writing, the novels of knighthood, a described relic of a past social reality. Yet Don Quixote regards this popular writing seriously and undertakes to revitalize the vanished knighthood.... This is a clear paradoxical relationship between what is known and what one wants to bring to life by action. In this case, culture is a reservoir of paradigms. However, Don Quixote is comical because it is impossible to reanimate dead paradigms. Nonetheless, they are never completely dead and can at times be revived. Outlived paradigms lurk to find their madmen. In what ways the heroic following of exemplary action becomes comical and insane is a separate and broad theme whose analysis could disclose a basic cultural transformation. Meanwhile, the figure of Don Quixote elicits not only laughter. The humour of Cervantes belongs to the Renaissance and reaches philosophical depths; the madman and the comic are funny, but funny precisely because they tell to all anonymous a known and everyone's recognised but unspoken truth, provoking conscious reprimands."

In his Lithuanian contributions, Sverdiolas addressed some pressing issues related to the public domain, politics of memory, educational and academic politics and the intellectual life of Lithuania. I believe that this is great news. We can see philosophy at work, in the sense of being political, engaged, ethically committed, challenging, endowed with a moral compass and able to bridge what modernity keeps separating, namely, truth and value, rationality and faith, expertise and intimacy, rational choice and moral commitment, the individual and community, powers of self-fulfilment and powers of association, and politics and culture. Most probably, this is exactly what the philosophy of culture, if properly understood, is all about. In addition, Sverdiolas's book introduces the reader to an Eastern and Central European sensitivity in terms of Lithuanian, Polish and Russian authors, themes and

Sverdiolas addresses some pressing issues related to the public domain, politics of memory, educational and academic politics and the intellectual life of Lithuania.

dilemmas that are deeply embedded in the region's politics and ideas.

Arūnas Sverdiolas's *Initiation and preservation* is an important and profound work in continental thought which should be appreciated by an English-speaking audience. Alongside the praise, a word of criticism is in order: a more thorough editing would have benefitted this otherwise remarkable book.



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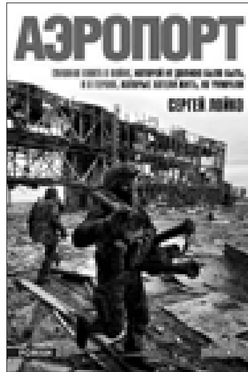
Ukraine's own Stalingrad

EUGENE SOBOL

Аеропорт (*Airport*). By: Sergei Loiko.
Publisher: Брайт Стар (Bright Star), Kyiv, 2015.



Ukrainian literature has been blindly trying to find a proper way to express the realites of the war in Ukraine. One of the most notable books in this regard is the recently published *Airport* by Sergei Loiko. Loiko attempts to interconnect several threads, some of which were key themes during the most intense times of the clashes between Ukraine and the Russian-supported separatists in the east. One is the reconstruction of the last five days of the battle for the Donetsk airport which was bravely defended by a small group of Ukrainian soldiers dubbed "cyborgs" between May 2014 and January 2015. Another is the life and love affairs of Alexey Molchanov, the main character of the book. Loiko also sneaks some autobiographical motifs in *Airport*. The main character, like the author, is a former Russian citizen living in the United States and a respected war photographer working for a big Los Angeles newspaper. Loiko indeed spent several days with the cyborgs defending the Donetsk airport. His pictures taken during the EuroMaidan Revolution as well as in war-torn Donbas are exceptionally artistic.

Having these facts in mind, one may pose a question: "Why didn't Loiko stick to the reportage genre in his writing?" For those who are familiar with Loiko, he is well-known for his previously published compilation of reports titled *Shock and Awe. War in Iraq*, which appeared on the Russian market in 2004.

Contradictory feelings

While writing this review, I learnt that Hollywood is planning to make a film based on Loiko's novel. Perhaps Loiko had this in mind when he decided to provide the main character of his book with a rich, erotic life. Loiko additionally stated in a recent interview that it was very difficult for him to write an objective story about the war in Ukraine, citing the fact that both Russians and Ukrainians were dying in the fighting. The only way to express his contradictory feelings and present the brotherhood, passion and cruelty of this war was to write a novel. He goes even further as he criticises some journalists who were working in Ukraine's east for exploiting co-workers from the post-Soviet countries as slaves.

Loiko's main character is named Alexie. He is a dynamic individual who finds himself in critical moments of Ukraine's recent history: the Maidan, Crimea and Donbas. He is not a one-dimensional person and his complex personality has both bright and dark sides. On the one hand, Alexei is a happy husband with a beautiful wife named Katya, with whom he emigrated to the US from Russia. On the other hand, the reader learns about the skeletons in Alexei's closet, such as his history as a Soviet soldier who took part in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. As a reporter he went to the Caucasus to report from the conflict zone where he was captured by a Chechen warlord. Alexei managed to escape after taking the lives of his captive warlord's family. The reader has a sense that Alexei is a strong man both physically and emotionally, at least until the death of Katya. After losing his wife, Alexei seeks an extreme experience in order to put it all behind him. The Donetsk airport became a tempting place for him where he all of a sudden felt at home among the Ukrainian "cyborgs". While reading *Airport*, I could not restrain myself from comparing it with another recent book on the war in Donbas – *Ilovaisk* by Yevhen Polozhii. Like airport, the authors limit themselves to describing only selected pieces of reality, such as the battle for Ilovaisk or the defence of the Donetsk airport. Perhaps, the time for a holistic approach has not yet come.

Yet, by focusing on the battle for the airport, Loiko's novel allows the reader to understand the fight through the metaphor as "Ukraine's Stalingrad". Loiko even refers to the airport as the "sword of Damocles" hanging over the city of Donetsk. He also used this comparison earlier, in an interview he gave to the *Echo of Moscow* in October 2014. However, that conversation was deleted from the internet as a result of a decision by the Russian agency Roskomnadzor (Roskomnadzor is a federal executive body responsible for control and supervision in the field of media – editor's note). Loiko's point was that the dedication of the Ukrainian soldiers and their bravery dealt a serious blow to the foundations of Russian impe-

rialism. He drew a parallel between the situation of the Red Army in 1941–43 fighting against Nazi Germany and the Ukrainian soldiers fighting against the Russian-backed separatists.

Yet the question whether Ukrainians need to use Soviet cultural codes or clichés taken straight from Russian literature in order to characterise the conflict remains a legitimate one. Wouldn't it be better for the Ukrainians to create their own narrative? Another existential question in this context is whether *Airport* should be perceived as a Russian or Ukrainian book? It was written by a Russian whose roots are, however, Ukrainian. And the main character, much like the author, sympathises with those on the Maidan and identifies himself with the Ukrainian defenders against the invasion. In one of the last parts of the book, Alexei puts his camera aside, picks up a machine gun and joins the cyborgs. In his view, it is a conflict between good and evil. The character's stormy affair with a Ukrainian woman Niki, rescued by him from snipers bullets at the Maidan is yet one more thing which links him to Ukraine.

In fact, Loiko's book is a wrathful accusation against the Russian regime as well as the entire Russian nation for unleashing war against their neighbours. He compares the responsibility of Russians, following obediently Putin's orders, with the responsibility of Germans during the Second World War for Nazi crimes.

Life and fate

A small unit of 60 Ukrainians fights bitterly against the enemy in the last hall of the Donetsk airport terminal. Next to it, there is a bunker where soldiers rest and keep their ammo. They lack sleep, water and supplies. The Ukrainian army desperately tries to gain access to the "cyborgs" but cannot. It is only possible to evacuate the wounded out. The separatists and Russian soldiers attack persistently, having taken control over the basement and first floor of the airport terminal. As they cannot win with the cyborgs in a fair struggle, the Russian-backed separatists decide to blow the pillars under the hall where the Ukrainians are holding their position. Most of them perish under the debris.

A vast majority of the cyborgs were men who joined voluntarily. To take part in defence of the airport was a conscious decision. Their enemy, who suffered significant losses in the fight, realised that it was dealing with a totally different Ukrainian army. Not a cowardly one which was always retreating or letting itself become surrounded, like what happened in Ilovaisk. The separatist advance was halted largely thanks to the bravery of the cyborgs and the battle of the Donetsk airport became a groundbreaking moment for many Ukrainians,

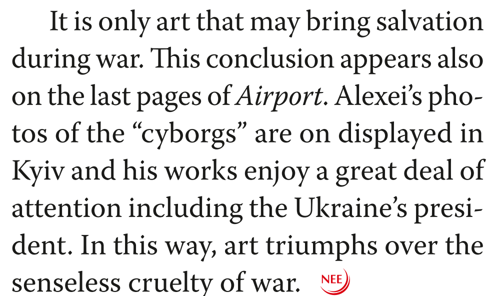
reviving morale and the Ukrainian fighting spirit.

Another interesting motif of Loiko’s *Airport* is the subtle references it makes to Vasily Grossman’s *Life and Fate*, a 1959 novel about the battle of Stalingrad. In both these books heroism is not a result of the commanders’ orders – treated by soldiers with open contempt – but a personal belief in the fighters which are saving human dignity. Grossman’s book is even mentioned in *Airport* – Nataliya Sergeevna, a Russian citizen shattered to learn that her son died in Donbas, is trying to read the book on a train.

> Even though Leo Tolstoy’s name is not mentioned in *Airport*, the influence of the great Russian writer can be easily spotted.

In the chapter titled “The Island of Crimea”, Loiko refers yet to another piece of the Russian literature, Ivan Bunin’s *Cursed Days*. Meeting armed Cossacks at the train station or a separatist commander named Dyrkin dressed in the White Guard uniform, the reader may have an impression that s/he is in an alternative reality, with individuals sent to Ukraine straight from Russian films or books dedicated to the Russian Civil War of 1917–1922.Loiko also mocks Russian propaganda which has nothing in common with reality. He pictured Putin as well as his advisors and separatists in a cartoonish way. Another trace of Bunin’s inspirations can be found in the idyllic description of the holidays that the main character spent with his wife in a village near Moscow. Even though Leo Tolstoy’s name is not mentioned in *Airport*, the influence of the great Russian writer may be spotted as well. The creation of one of the “cyborgs”, Anton, seems to be based on Tolstoy’s writing. While staying with Alexei at the post, Anton talks about philosophy. Later, he plays a flute and the way Loiko describes the music is certainly one of the strongest points of the book.

It is only art that may bring salvation during war. This conclusion appears also on the last pages of *Airport*. Alexei’s photos of the “cyborgs” are on displayed in Kyiv and his works enjoy a great deal of attention including the Ukraine’s president. In this way, art triumphs over the senseless cruelty of war.

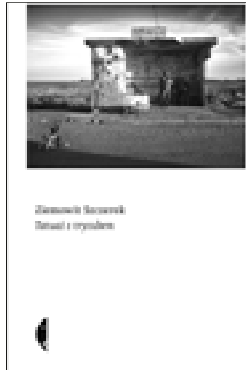


Eugene Sobol is a Ukrainian writer and literary critic based in Poland.

On the aesthetics of a post-apocalyptic world

MATTEUSZ MAZZINI

Tatuaż z Tryzubem (*Tattoo with a Tryzub*). By: Ziemowit Szczerek. Publisher: Czarne, Warsaw Poland, 2015.



This is not another book on the Maidan and its bastard children, and thank God it is not. It is a passage regarding a Ukraine that has resisted political change over the past few years as much as it has resisted any transformation for the past centuries or even millennia.

There are few concepts in arts and humanities or even in the entirety of human civilisation that are more widely discussed and see a more diverse plethora of definition than the concept of beauty. The awareness of its existence and the vulnerability and responsiveness to its features is what some would say distinguishes humans from other creatures. Be that as it may, beauty, in its classical framework, pinned down by such observers as Thomas Aquinas or Umberto Eco, is not a phenomenon that instantly sparks a wave of obvious connotations when juxtaposed with post-transitional Ukraine these days. Especially the greyish, darkish, concrete, brutal post-Soviet landscape, lost between the great historical narratives of the West and East, the emblazed Europe and the eternally enshadowed East. It is a land that has turned itself into an area where a push-and-shove coolness of capitalism, manifesting itself in the details of everyday life, clashes with the overwhelming, close to immortal brutality of the overarching, great structures of the former Soyuz – concepts of societal engineering as much as those of architecture and urban planning.

Borderlands of modernity and brutality

These are the lands that Ziemowit Szczerek, a Polish journalist and writer, travels through in his latest book *Tattoo with a Tryzub*. Szczerek moves from the current Polish-Ukrainian border to the infinite stretches of Zaporizhia; from the valleys and hills of Kamianets-Podilskyi, to what used to be the last safe house of the Polish Second Republic. This is pretty much Europe's no man's land. Following the plot of theorising beauty, most of the towns, cities and villages the author visits would be better suited to appear in Eco's *History of Ugliness* than in his other anthology, *The History of Beauty*. Centuries of different ideologies and momentary geopolitical superpowers, most often only marching through Ukraine on their way to conquer Rome, Paris, Berlin, Moscow or Constantinople, have all left their sediments. And that is exactly what these lands are made of, layers of different cultural sediments, one forced upon another, here and there losing ground to the steppe.

Szczerek manages to avoid clichés and oversimplified assumptions that are drawn from decomposing the complex structure of Ukrainian identity.

In fact, it is the steppe – the great, endless grassland highway stretching from the Carpathian mountains up to the Pacific coast somewhere in the most eastern Russian provinces or even in China – that is the main protagonist of Szczerek's book. Or at least it is the only character that stays with him as he travels deep into the heart of Ukraine, the only one that does not abandon him as he moves from Lviv's nostalgia for Austro-Hungarian chic and style to the simplicity of "us and them" shootings on the frontlines of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic. It is, of course, by no means a novelty that the great steppe dominates a narrative in a book dedicated to one of Europe's eastern countries, the borderlands of modernity and brutality. It is enough to refer to another Polish travel writer, Andrzej Stasiuk, and his famous quote that by lying an ear to the ground in Medyka, one senses the scent of the traders' caravan in Samarkand and the hoof beat of the horses in Mongolia.

Szczerek, however, manages to avoid clichés and oversimplified assumptions that are often drawn from decomposing the complex structure of the Ukrainian identity. To be more specific, the many identities of the contemporary Ukrainian nation, in which many people still want and make attempts to belong somewhere but have not really made up their minds as to which side is more promising. Contrarily, and for the better of the book, the

author derides them and ridicules their incompatibility with the post-Maidan landscape. An example is the case of the popular self-perception of Lviv and its inhabitants, some of whom take pride in portraying themselves as guardians of western civilisation and the heirs of the Austro-Hungarian order, forced to assimilate to the wilderness and savage nature of the country's eastern regions. The author is aware of these narratives' existence, takes a dive into their origins and attempts to understand them, but does not place any of them in a dominant position. As simply as that, *Tattoo with a Tryzub* advances and successfully defends the thesis that the Ukraine of today is everything but a homogeneous and monolithic country – a fact often overlooked in many geopolitical analyses and strategic roadmaps set out to settle the crisis caused by the Russian invasion.

Layers of sediments

Szczerek's book is, nevertheless, a journey in space as well as a travel in time. The author dedicates a considerable amount of pages to the history of the places he visits. Again, however, he does so in a very unorthodox way, merging Fernand Braudel's optics of seeing historical transformations through the lenses of great socio-political processes and events with an ultimately micro-perspective of average people living in average neighbourhoods with absolutely non-average histories. He plays with the concepts of national pride and the longing for a great Ruthenian empire – an idea which never materialised politically or militarily, but is deeply rooted in the minds of many people he meets along the way. And he does so with the great divide stretching across the nation since the illegal annexation of Crimea, the divide between us and them, the speakers of Ukrainian and Russian, those who converted and those who remain loyal to their first choices of identity. For Szczerek, it hardly makes any sense, as both those labels are secondary to the native, more pristine identity, which stems from the great steppe.

The steppe, he adds, has its own aesthetics. And perhaps this is the most innovative, even literally brave move in the entire book: to portray everything that has taken place in Ukraine over the past two years – protest, death, destruction, transformation, war and fire – as yet another sediment, yet another layer of the multi-levelled aesthetics of today's Ukraine. By doing so, he compares the places he visits to a post-apocalyptic landscape, a *Mad Max*-style borderless (and lawless) place where the desert is replaced by grasslands, but the rules are the same. Taking advantage of the reference, it is worthwhile, however, focusing a little more on the main conclusion that prevails from the book. The Mordor-like, post-apocalyptic eclecticism of every-

thing merging with everything is what lies ahead for all of us inhabiting the Central and Eastern European spaces.

> The ill-omened, Cassandrian visions of the future sketched by Szczerek are in his view unavoidable and somehow coded into the DNA of all Slavic nations.

The ill-omened, Cassandrian visions of the future sketched by Szczerek are in his own view unavoidable, somehow coded into the DNA of all Slavic nations, all the post-socialist societies and all the new-born capitalist communities of this part of the world. That winter, Szczerek believes, will eventually come and will be here to stay.

Such a vision, although dangerous, is tempting to be placed on the shopping window for everyone to become more familiar with. In light of the European system of liberal democratic values collapsing and the awakening of extremist movements, sentiments and tendencies, the promise of peace, welfare and freedom not only fades away in the distance, but becomes a less desirable option. Using the same aesthetics that Szczerek offered, the great European dream many have dreamed will, at best, be soon available only as a cheap pluck manufactured somewhere in Turkey and smuggled to us illegally in a container placed in Odesa's docks.

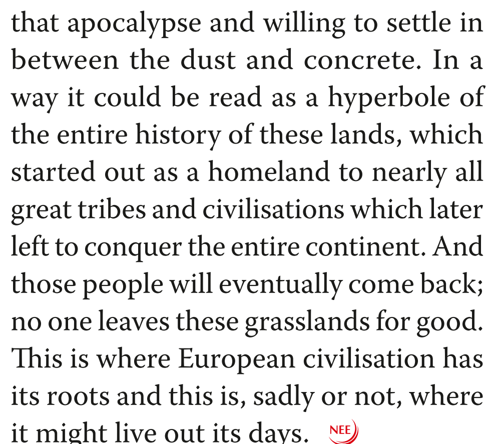
A heavy passage

Perhaps the lesson that the great steppe offers is that the whole apocalypse of concrete and cheap souvenirs, forced identities and forced migrations is somehow chosen by people for others. There is nothing natural in dividing people into born Ukrainians, born Russians or born Soviets, as there is nothing natural in setting limits to the wind blowing through the grasslands and to reverse the currents of the great Eurasian rivers. Maybe that is precisely the reason why Ukraine – the breadbasket of Europe – has also oftentimes played the role of a kicking horse in the cavalry of the great empires, so difficult to harness yet so troublesome when finally given a chance to live fully on its own.

Szczerek's book is not a light and smooth read. Yet that is not due to the flaws of his literary workshop or fallacies he pursues. It is a heavy passage through Ukraine and is meant to be so. His wording and choice of metaphors faithfully reflects the subject of his writings; the post-apocalyptic, brutal landscape, which even when painted into blue and yellow manifestations of post-Maidan patriotism, still transpires with its underlying greyness and fatal visions

of the future. Nonetheless, despite the repulsive scenery of war-torn villages and deserted industrial complexes, Szczerek sees (and captures!) their beauty, a beauty of their own kind. He is very accurate in his diagnosis of post-Soviet fashion and lifestyle doomed to cease, an ever-smiling image of the West and freedom, because, as he writes himself, "the Soyuz was just not sexy enough".

Nevertheless, he is aware that there will always be people falling in love with that apocalypse and willing to settle in between the dust and concrete. In a way it could be read as a hyperbole of the entire history of these lands, which started out as a homeland to nearly all great tribes and civilisations which later left to conquer the entire continent. And those people will eventually come back; no one leaves these grasslands for good. This is where European civilisation has its roots and this is, sadly or not, where it might live out its days.



Mateusz Mazzini is a graduate of St Antony's College, University of Oxford, and a PhD candidate at the Polish Academy of Sciences, where he researches on post-transitional societies in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

The story of migration, centuries in the making

KACPER DZIEKAN

The Emigration Museum in Gdynia (Poland)

Photo: Bogna Kociumbas, muzeumemigracji.pl

Following the end of the First World War, Poland regained its independence after 123 years. The country began to rebuild its structures, but the land and infrastructure had been devastated by the war. In the early 1920s, Poland built a new port city in the north called Gdynia. Gdynia became a destination for those Poles who wanted to leave the country. Today, after 90 years, Gdynia is home to the Emigration Museum, which tells the story of both Polish and international migrations throughout the centuries.

One hundred years later, migration remains one of the world's greatest challenges. Many countries now face the

problem of huge numbers of immigrants amassing at their borders. But migration has been an issue in the world's history for centuries. In Europe, people were travelling around the continent and very often decided to live in a country far away from their homeland. Their perspective was changing and so was their new home. The reasons for emigration varied: some of them, like the barbaric tribes of the fourth and fifth centuries were looking for a better place to live. Some, like the German settlers in 12th and 13th centuries were invited to move to Poland or Hungary by the rulers of those lands. Medieval knights were hired by foreign nobility, and eventually stayed in their new homes.

The great emigrations

Many countries and nations also experienced the so-called "Great Emigration", which was caused by natural problems as famine, flood, overpopulation and external factors like war. Others were the result of new opportunities believed to be found in the "promised land". In many cases, a great migration was the combination of those reasons.

Such was the case for Poland during the interwar period (1918–1939). Poland had already experienced several great emigrations (one in 1831, after the November Uprising, is considered the most important). As Poland rebuilt itself as a nation and state after the First World War, the living conditions of many people were very tough. There were also tales about new opportunities in North and South America. Hence, many chose emigration. The new port city of Gdynia, which was built due to the fact that Poland had lost Gdańsk, which was given the status of a "free city" after the Treaty of Versailles, became a destination for those Poles wanting to leave the country. Today, after more than 90 years, Gdynia is the home of the Emigration Museum, a new museum which tells the story of both Polish and international migrations throughout the centuries.

Diving into history

The museum's permanent exhibition has a narrative that runs in chronological order. This allows the viewer to learn the story of emigration in a logical and coherent way. The vast majority of the exhibition is dedicated to the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet, the journey into the history of emigration begins with Medieval and Modern Age Poland. The permanent exhibition presents features of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a large country in Central-East-

ern Europe. What is interesting is that the exhibition focuses on the diversity of this country. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was home to different ethnic groups, religions and languages, which was a result of various migrations. It is a shame the exhibition does not go far enough depicting the story of the city of Gdańsk itself. Gdańsk was one of the most important cities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (as the only port and at one point the largest and richest city). Gdańsk was very multi-cultural and full of migrants, and its role in Polish migrations would be worth mentioning.

> "The goal of the permanent exhibition's creators was to tell the story of emigration not only as one of the most important phenomena that influenced Polish history, culture and society, but also as a very personal and individual experience," says Karolina Grabowicz-Matyjas, director of the museum.

Continuing through the exhibition, the viewer is met with the 19th century, the age of many great emigrations. Among many interesting stories, one can find those that were crucial to the era, but for some reason are less common in history classes. "The goal of the permanent exhibition's creators was to tell the story of emigration not only as one of the most important phenomena that influenced Polish history, culture and society, but also as a very personal and individual experience," says Karolina Grabowicz-Matyjas, the director of the museum. "On the one hand the exhibition shows a strong connection between the history of emigration and the history of the Poles and Polish lands in the last centuries. On the other, it shows the realities of the departure and the emigration life of millions of ordinary people."

From the visitor's perspective, this goal is achieved. One can find many stories regarding overpopulation in the 19th century, such as the situation in Warsaw or the Eastern European region of Galicia and the role the potato had in this extremely overpopulated region that faced a great famine which eventually led to large emigration. Worth mentioning is also the part of the exhibition dedicated to the city of Łódź, its social and economic phenomenon (the city's population grew throughout the 19th century from 500 to around 500,000) and its significance to the Russian Empire. During the whole journey through this period one can also follow, piece by piece, the tale of a family that left a Polish village and decided to move to the America. Their memories allow us to touch this story deeper, a story which is not limited to Polish emigration.

The authors of the exhibit did not forget about forced migration either. Since deracination was an important part of the social and punitive policy of the Russian tsars, many inhabitants of the empire (of which Poland was a part of in the 19th century) also experienced it.

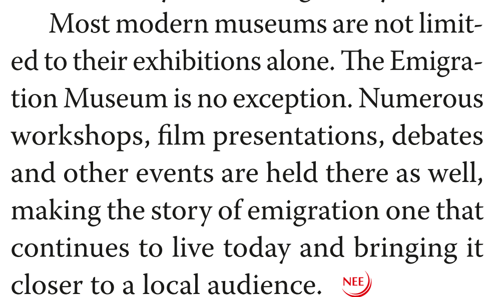
A new hope

The story of the 20th century emigrations focuses on the role of Gdynia in a constantly globalising world. Many archival documents, photos, posters and maps present the port city's role. The city rapidly grew throughout the 1920s and became a symbol of Poland's rebirth as an independent, and now democratic, state. A completely new, modern city with a new port and shipyard was meant to serve as a role model for other cities. It was home to industry, trade and sailing. The pride of the city was its ocean liners – the "Piłsudski" (named after the Polish political leader of the interwar period – Józef Piłsudski) and the "Batory" (after Stefan Batory, a Polish king from the 16th century). Although the liners were built in an Italian shipyard, their home port was Gdynia. These ships operated between Gdynia, New York, Halifax and Copenhagen. After the outbreak of the Second World War, they became part of the Polish navy.

At the end of the journey through the museum, one is shown a modern view of Polish emigration which is both socio-economic and political. During the communist era those who disagreed with the system left the country. Since passports were not easy to get, emigration was not easy. The exhibition tells the stories of bold escapes and emigrants' lives after their escape.

The Emigration Museum in Gdynia was opened in May 2015. Since then, it has already been visited by around 70,000 people. The exhibition is bilingual with texts presented both in Polish and English. Most of the items are gifts from private donors, while others were purchased from all over the world. The museum also has a collection of the passenger lists from the ships that came and left Gdynia. The archivists are still processing the data and when the work is completed the data will be available online for anyone seeking family stories.

Most modern museums are not limited to their exhibitions alone. The Emigration Museum is no exception. Numerous workshops, film presentations, debates and other events are held there as well, making the story of emigration one that continues to live today and bringing it closer to a local audience.



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The rise of paramilitary groups in Central and Eastern Europe

By Arthur de Liedekerke, Kings College London

Photo: www.slovenski-branci.sk

One of the less publicised consequences of the geopolitical turmoil that has come to characterise 2015 has been the surge in popularity of paramilitary units across Central and Eastern Europe.

Nobody wanted to listen to the victims

An interview with Małgorzata Gosiewska

The report "Russian war crimes in eastern Ukraine" is a source of evidence of war crimes and I cannot imagine the ICC may not treat this document seriously.

Kaliningrad: Russia's island in Europe

Sergey Sukhankin

While tackling the issue of Kaliningrad one needs to remain realistic, pursue a pragmatic approach and reflect upon forthcoming events through the prism of the historical legacy of the region.

Transnistria needs more engagement, not isolation

Thomas Frear

Transnistria's increasing economic isolation is likely to bring about a more hard-line attitude.

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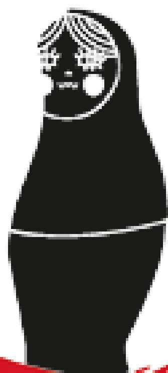

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www.25de.pl: Polish-German events calendar in 2016

The 17th of June 2016 will mark 25 years since the **Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation** was signed by Poland and Germany. A broad variety of Polish-German events will be hosted to celebrate this special jubilee year in both states.

As part of the jubilee, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, in cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland, has launched a special website. The core of this website is an interactive **events calendar** open to to all institutions and initiatives. Its goal is to inform about the numerous Polish-German events throughout 2016, reach new target groups for bilateral cooperation, as well as create optimum conditions for cooperation among the network of Polish and German partners.

We would like to invite all institutions involved in Polish-German relations to use the interactive events calendar. **The use of the calendar will help you promote your events and gather information about a host of projects and other events.** Moreover, on the www.25de.pl website you will gain access to information on central official events and the opportunity to present publications related to the jubilee year.

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The website is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

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