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### Editor's note

Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, the Baltic States seem to have been plunged into the forefront of European security dilemmas. The Lithuanian ambassador to the US called them the new frontier, their situation reminiscent of West Berlin during the Cold War, geographically a hostage, politically and symbolically an integral part of the West (or so we hope). The newly resurgent revanchist Russia brought security issues back to the table for the Baltic States themselves, forcing them to focus more and more on hard security, but also not to neglect 'softer' issues, such as the information arena or energy.

With these developments in mind, the Baltic Defence College launches a new *Journal on Baltic Security* to replace our long-standing publication *Baltic Security and Defence Review* with a renewed emphasis on the region and its security matters, and with the view of assessing its future in the turbulent contemporary security environment. The first issue of the Journal contains articles and interventions presented at the conference on Russian power projection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, addressing such areas of its potential influence as energy and information security, military developments and power projection, internal issues that may influence its possibility to project power and the wider implications of Russian foreign policy. The last section of the Journal contains book reviews on the Russia-related topics.

Dr. Asta Maskaliūnaitė  
Editor  
Journal on Baltic Security

## PUTIN'S RUSSIA AS A REVISIONIST POWER

**Andrei Piontkovsky**  
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Any foreign policy strategy is based on ambitions, objectives, apprehensions and values of a state's leadership. So before addressing directly the subject of my essay, I am compelled to devote some time to this political motivation of the Russian leadership's behaviour.

We all remember the famous Churchill saying: 'Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.' But fortunately, in our current situation, we possess a key to this riddle/mystery/enigma. All hundred percent of Russian foreign policy is driven by one person, Vladimir Putin. The key to Russian foreign policy, its strategy, its set of motivations and interests, all of it comes from this one particular person. Putin's highest priority is to remain in power forever. He saw what happened to Mubarak and especially what happened to Gaddafi when they had lost power, and he became determined never to leave the Kremlin.

Until this recent Ukrainian crisis, the Putin regime was an authoritarian kleptocracy without much of an ideological pretence. It had no foreign agenda beyond motor reaction to what it perceived as an external threats. And certainly Ukraine's European aspirations and its Europe-bound political vector were perceived by Putin's Russia as an existential threat because Ukraine's success would present an undesirable example for the Russian society. That is why he first tried to bully and bribe Yanukovych into refusing an association agreement with the European Union. And then after Yanukovych's kleptocracy was overthrown, Putin became determined to either bend Ukraine completely to his will or else to dismantle it. And the first act on that agenda was the annexation of Crimea, the act by which Putin's Russia broke a dozen of international agreements signed by the Russian Federation.

I think that Putin's Crimea speech delivered by him for the occasion of Crimea and Sevastopol formally joining the Russian Federation was a political event even more important than annexation of Crimea itself. The task for Putin during this speech was to legitimise, to justify, or even to glorify the act of annexation. But he did much more. He fulfilled an even more important mission. He created a new ideology of the so-called 'Russkiy Mir,' the Russian World.

No dictatorship can sustain on violence and intimidation alone. A protracted dictatorship needs some kind of an ideology or a mythology that would appeal to a considerable part of the population for a considerable span of time: like Hitler's ideology of the superiority of the German people or Stalin's ideology of communism.

Many pundits, myself included, noted that Putin's Crimea speech was a remake of the German Chancellor Hitler's Sudetenland speech delivered for the occasion of annexation of Sudetenland. Putin's Crimea speech borrowed heavily from the main concepts and even from the terminology of Nazi political foreign policy and propaganda.

First came this concept of a 'divided nation.' Putin informed us that we, the Russian people, are a 'divided nation.' This was the first time this term was used in such a high level speech.

Next he justified the Crimean annexation as a part of gathering of historically Russian lands.

Then he coined a new label for his opponents, 'Natsional-predateli,' or 'nation-traitors.' That set a new tone as there previously had been no such term in the Soviet or Russian political vernacular. The Soviets' opponents were castigated as 'enemies of the people', while 'nation-traitors' or 'Natsional-predateli' is a pure Nazi vocabulary.

However the most important concept was the concept of the 'Russian World'. Putin claims it is his right and even a sacred duty to protect not citizens – not Russian citizens – but ethnic Russians or Russian language speakers, all over the world.

And to demonstrate that Crimea was only the first step in promoting the Russkiy Mir agenda, Putin immediately initiated another stage. He also coined another new term, 'Novorossiya' ('new Russia'). By Novorossiya he is referring to the eight Ukrainian regions, which were, in his opinion, unjustly handed over to Ukraine after the Bolshevik revolution.

So now Putin has created a long-term ideological system he can use to justify his role forever, because it is a very long-term program. Any dictator, as I already noted, needs such an excuse. It's much more convenient to claim he is promoting the great Russian idea from the Kremlin, than to admit he was just sitting there to make tens of billions of dollars for himself and his cronies. These were no empty words or slogans.

His hybrid war against Ukraine is going on now. There are ups and downs. As I already mentioned, the main objective is to control Kiev, to control the Ukrainian government and Ukraine as a whole. He doesn't need an annexation of Donetsk and Luhansk. Coincidentally he is now the most ardent supporter of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, except for Crimea, of course. He needs to have the cancerous tumour of Novorossiya inside Ukraine to spread instability and chaos.

But Kremlin propaganda offices present these events not as a war of Russia with Ukraine. Every day on the TV, Kremlin talking heads tell us that it's much more than that. It's a war between Russia and the United States of America. Ukraine is just terrain on which this war is being staged. Even more philosophically, it is a war between Russkiy Mir, the Russian world, and the Anglo-Saxon world. Putin explains that we Russians have a unique genetic code, superior to the genetic code of the Anglo-Saxon world because Anglo-Saxons are mercantile, they are concerned about their own enrichment, and due to our specific Russian genetic code, we possess more spirituality.

For example, one of the Kremlin guys – Vyacheslav Nikonov, grandson of Vyacheslav Molotov — has made a historic claim that Russians are an Aryan tribe which descended from the Carpathian mountains and spread all over the world until they reached Fort Ross, California.

No state or regime goes to war firmly convinced that it will lose it and Vladimir Putin is no exception: if he goes to war with NATO he will be acting based on the belief that he can win it.

That belief is based on Putin's assumption that the logic of the mutually assured destruction (MAD) regime that prevented a major war between Russia and the West is broken due to divisions within the West regarding how to respond to a limited Russian nuclear strike.

If we read Putin correctly, the world is in a far more dangerous situation than most have thought and the risks to Russia's neighbours, the West and Russia itself are far greater.

Even the most modest practical realisation of Putin's idea of 'assembling the Russian lands' requires changes of the national borders of at least of two NATO member countries: Latvia and Estonia. Because of the Western alliance's Article 5 in which an attack on one is an attack on all, that would seem impossible given MAD.

But the MAD doctrine considered only a single most destructive scenario of a military conflict between nuclear powers, total war. The doctrine of mutually assured destruction is still valid, and it prevents a full-scale world war. But there are other scenarios, including the limited use of nuclear weapons by one side under conditions where the other side does not respond lest that lead to 'mutual suicide.'

In his classic books *On Thermonuclear War* and *Thinking About The Unthinkable* Dr. Herman Kahn a pre-eminent nuclear strategist and one of the founders of the Hudson Institute, pondered a potential scenario of a limited nuclear war initiated by a nuclear power in order to achieve certain political objectives. It is feasible that in a more volatile geopolitical situation, a nuclear power determined to change the status quo, armed with the advantage of political will, and indifferent to the value of human lives, be it its own or those of others, while being inspired by certain adventurism, could achieve serious foreign policy gains through the threat of limited application of nuclear weapons or through the actual limited application itself. Russian military doctrine has

been recently changed allowing Russia to use nuclear weapons in regional and even local conflicts.

Clearly Putin does not seek the destruction of the hated United States, a goal that he could achieve only at the price of mutual suicide. Instead, his goals are significantly more modest: the maximum extension of the Russian World, the breakdown of NATO, and the discrediting and humiliation of the US as the guarantor of the security of the West.

To put it in simplest terms, Putin's actions would be a revenge for the defeat of the USSR in the third (cold) world war just as the second world war was for Germany an attempt at revenge for defeat in the first.

Let us follow Herman Kahn and try to think a bit about the unthinkable. Let us contemplate that some day in the Estonian city of Narva, which has a predominately Russian population, Putin's 'polite green men' conduct a referendum and the Kremlin says, well, this part of Estonian territory historically belongs to the Russian world. Well, a year ago, the annexation of Ukraine was unthinkable, so we should think about such kind of scenarios. The Estonian government, referring to Article 5 of the NATO agreement, asks NATO countries to help. And if NATO countries can help, their joint military might would be much stronger than the Russian Army. At this point, Putin publicly states or says in private talks with his 'partners' in Europe; 'OK, we realise that a more powerful conventional military force is ready to confront us in our pursuit of the Russian world agenda, so we are ready to use a nuclear weapon if NATO conventional forces try to eject us from Estonia.'

How will Western politicians react? It is difficult to predict. I think that a vast majority of people both in Europe and in the United States would say that we are not ready to die for Narva, just as many Europeans stated in 1930s that they were not ready to die for Danzig. So this situation will present an unthinkable choice for the West: either a humiliating capitulation by refusing to help Estonia that in turn would also mean the end of NATO, the end of Western alliance, the end of the United States as the guarantor of Western security, or providing help that would lead to war with a thermonuclear power.

Putin seems to be convinced that the West would blink, and that he can outplay Western countries and their leaders in potential military conflicts that would occur along the path to the realisation of his great idea of the Russian World. Regardless of the fact that Russia is much weaker in conventional arms than NATO and does not have an advantage over the US in nuclear ones.

‘By the spirit we will take them,’ Putin calculates. ‘By the spirit and by boldness.’

Putin’s plans are extremely adventurist but he believes they have chances for success. Nuclear bullying and nuclear blackmail are going on with growing intensity as part of psychological warfare against West.

Almost every one of Putin’s statements includes the phrase ‘Don’t forget that we’re a nuclear power.’ There was a scandalous performance during a meeting with a top Russian official in August in Sochi, when Vice Speaker of the Duma Mr. Zhirinovskiy threatened to completely annihilate the Baltic States and Poland. Mr. Putin was present and in summing up the panel discussion, he noted approvingly that Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s speech was very vivid and flamboyant, and only added that maybe not all of his words reflected current government policy.

There are two parallel ways to tackle this dangerous Narva Dilemma . The first is to defeat decisively and to discredit forever this crazy idea of ‘Russkiy Mir’ (the Russian World) here and now in Ukraine by purely economic and political instruments without boots on the grounds and planes in the air but helping Ukraine, including supplying it with modern weaponry. The West has a capability to do that to avoid facing the choice between humiliating capitulation and a nuclear war down the road in case of Putin success in Ukraine.

The second one is to deprive Mr. Putin of any illusions about NATO weakness and the US inability to fulfil its obligations according to Article 5 of NATO Charter.

Ever since Vladimir Putin began his aggression in Ukraine and sent signals that he was prepared to move against the Baltic countries, people in the West, either because they were intimidated by the Kremlin leader's words or for other reasons, have asked whether their countrymen were 'prepared to die for Narva.'

Since April 2014, there have been many discussions about 'the Narva dilemma' and about Putin's success in supplying the West with a Hobson's choice between a 'shameful capitulation' and a 'nuclear war with someone living in another reality.' Until very recently, those discussions suggested that the West had not made a decision one way or the other.

Moreover there was evidence that Putin was making progress in splitting the alliance and making any tough response less likely. There was the pro-Putin 'drift' of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia that according to Jackson Diehl of the Washington Post were clearly 'hedging their bets' in the face of Putin's threats.

It certainly appeared that the Kremlin had achieved its first psychological victory in its hybrid war with its Baltic neighbours. Three NATO countries were suggesting that they would not want to defend another NATO member against Putin's efforts to be 'the ingatherer of immemorial Russian lands.'

But later the situation has changed completely and consequently, the question 'are you prepared to die for Narva?' should be posed not to Western capitals but rather to Moscow and especially to the Kremlin.

Western leaders no longer view Putin as a 'partner' but rather as a strategic problem which requires an immediate and clearly formulated response, and they are making the kinds of statements and taking the kinds of actions that show that they are prepared to live up to the principles fundamental to NATO.

Today there are no politicians like Churchill and Roosevelt in the West, but what many had seen as 'a collective Western Chamberlain' have

nonetheless found an adequate answer to Putin's growing nuclear blackmail.

The 2015 September Wales NATO Summit supported deployment of American troops on the territory of the Baltic countries in order to act as a restraining influence on the Russian president and his threats. Other NATO countries have dispatched troops there as well.

The symbolic presence of American troops in the region of Narva psychologically transforms the situation 180 degrees. The appearance there of the first armed polite little green man would automatically mean the involvement of the Russian Federation in a full-scale war with the United States.

That in turn means that Putin and his entourage need to begin asking themselves the question that they worked so hard earlier to get some in the West to ponder. Is Putin himself ready to die for that northeastern Estonian city at the eastern edge of NATO and the European Union?

## RUSSIA CHALLENGES THE WEST IN UKRAINE

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Events in Ukraine have made many re-evaluate their view of Russia and suggest new approaches. While there are good reasons to do so, there is also every reason to revisit some old lessons and draw the right conclusions from events further back in time than the annexation of Crimea. First, Russian domestic politics will continue to play a prominent role in deciding Russia's room for manoeuvre in its security policy. Second, change can only come from within Russia – the West (mainly the US and Europe) will be able to influence events only on the margins and perhaps not always receiving the intended response. Finally, and perhaps at first a bit paradoxically taking the first two points in view, what the West does will matter. It will matter because it will influence developments inside Russia in a long-term perspective if there is an alternative model. But even more importantly, what the West does will decide what position it finds itself in when Russia does change.

### *Domestic politics and Russian national security*

Domestic politics will set the limits of what range of action is available to the Russian leadership in the foreign policy arena. This is in no way unique to Russia. Domestic politics will always influence foreign policy and at times vice versa. However, domestic politics at times drives Russia to take decisions that go against its foreign policy goals and that even are detrimental to its national security – not just with hindsight but even at the time the decisions are made.

To provide a few examples, in 2013 unrest and pogroms against immigrants erupted in the Moscow suburb of Biriulevo. A Russian had been murdered and rumours spread it that the murderer 'looked as someone from the Caucasus'. This prompted a demonstration against immigrants in this Moscow suburb and ended in riots, where their shops

and property were destroyed and looted. Russian newspapers described the area as a war zone and many of the slogans in the demonstration were decidedly intolerant of immigrants and even racist.

The interesting aspect was the authorities' response. The local authorities did try to identify the main perpetrators of crime during the riots, but on a regional level, the policy response was to hunt down illegal immigrants from the South Caucasus and Central Asia and send them home (see e.g., RBK 2013; ITAR-TASS 2013). On the federal level, Putin commented the event by blaming the local authorities for letting the situation get out of hand. He claimed that 'the discontent of the residents had been mounting for years' and 'the local officials, regrettably, often preferred sitting in their offices' (Forbes 2013).

If one of the goals of Russian foreign policy is to attract countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in this case the Central Asian states, into the Eurasian Union then showing contempt for these states' citizens and to send them home in humiliating circumstances will undermine this goal. Moscow can most certainly put pressure or even force states to join the Eurasian Union, but this will be more costly and also have consequences for how Russia is able to proceed with the project.

Russia has also often pointed to the threat that unrest and conflict in Central Asia after the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan would pose to Russian national security. Again, the decision to send home immigrants from Central Asia will be unwise. The economy of countries like Tajikistan is highly dependent on remittances from their citizens working in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, if national security is a priority, then Russian authorities were taking measures that were clearly counterproductive. However, if the overarching goal is to shore up the popularity and legitimacy of the Russian political leadership domestically, then it is more understandable.

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<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, the Russian government in 2011 decided to send home Tadjik illegal immigrants in a direct response to a Russian pilot having been arrested in Tadjikistan (Lenta 2011).

That the Russian leadership was well aware of the dangers involved became evident when Putin stated that Russia would not consider introducing a visa regime for Central Asia and the South Caucasus (something that Alexei Navalnyi had demanded in the wake of the events in Biriulevo) since this would ‘push [the countries of the CIS] away rather than attract them’ to Russia (NEWSru 2013).

The second obvious example is Ukraine. If the goal was to attract rather than force Ukraine into the Eurasian Union, then outright supporting the corrupt and increasingly unpopular Viktor Yanukovich was unproductive. However, if the main goal was to prevent a colour or velvet revolution in Russia, the policy makes more sense (Horvath 2013). Indeed, ‘the establishment of regimes, including when the result of the legitimate organs of state powers having been overthrown, in states bordering the Russian Federation that conducts a policy contrary to the interests of the Russian Federation’ is qualified as a ‘main military danger’ in the revised Russian Military Doctrine that was made public in December 2014 (Military Doctrine 2014, §12:n; Kofman & McDermott 2015). In 2013–2014, the Russian political leadership was still smarting from the humiliation and shock of having had large anti-regime demonstrations in Moscow in 2011–2012 and the overarching goal became to ensure that no ‘Maidan-style demonstrations’ would ever be occur in Russia (Persson & Vendil Pallin 2014, p. 25). If, on top of that, the Russian political leadership is unable to conceive of a demonstration as being indeed organised from below and representing popular will, then it makes even more sense. In the Kremlin, the West – ultimately the US and more specifically the CIA – was behind the orange revolution and the following colour revolutions, the Arab Spring, Maidan and even the recent protests in Hong Kong.

Domestic politics will not determine foreign and security policy. It will, however, dramatically reduce the room for manoeuvre in security policy. The way foreign policy is framed and interpreted in the Kremlin also seems to determine how foreign policy events are framed and acted upon. If the political leadership is indeed convinced that there is a plan in the West to achieve regime change in Russia and to undermine Russia, then every demonstration at home and hostile statement from

neighbouring states are interpreted as part of this evil plan. The main objective of the Russian leadership is to preserve the current political system, the underpinnings of which are authoritarian rule, Russian patriotism and underlining Russia's status as a great power.

### ***Change will come from inside Russia***

The dilemma should, however, not be reduced just to one about regime security and certainly not only about Putin. It is much more complex and it is vital to understand that change can only come from inside Russia. The EU, individual European countries and the US sometimes overestimate their ability to influence events inside Russia by turning off and on sanctions or being amicable with certain leaders. These tactics have often failed and even produced the opposite of the desired results and risks failing miserably in the future as well. A graphic illustration of how the West has tended to focus on persons rather than on policies. During Dmitri Medvedev's presidency there were calls for support for Medvedev against Putin. This represents a misinterpretation of how politics works in Russia; there were never two distinct teams within the Russian political leadership. Moreover, Medvedev was on the watch when the war in Georgia was initiated and for all his talk of innovation, no significant democratic or economic reforms were carried out during his presidency. Even had there been two teams competing for power in Moscow, Western support could easily have become liability rather than an asset for Medvedev in the struggle for power. Finally, meddling in Russia's internal power politics by expressing support for individual politicians is insulting and sends the wrong signals to Russia. Expressing support for certain policies and condemning those that go against the values and established institutions and practices the West would like to see, is not. Instead it signals commitment to these values and principles and makes the West less vulnerable to accusations of 'double standards'.

Furthermore, interpreting what we are seeing around us as a new Cold War or Russia as a new Soviet Union will lead us to the wrong conclusions. The international arena is different from that of the Cold War – the rise of China is just one of many changes that lead to a radically different setting. But Russia has also changed. The first

generation not to have spent a single day in the Soviet Union is entering into adulthood now; economic growth has given rise to new values and norms at least among an urban middle class; at the same time economic inequality has increased substantially – more or less everyone has enjoyed some income increase but the bulk of the energy incomes have ended up among the wealthy and the urban middle class; ethnic, religious and regional tensions are increasing and an economic downturn risk accentuating all of these divisions inside society (for an overview of the socioeconomic development and values in Russian society, see Vendil Pallin 2015).

Sociological studies have showed that individualistic values such as human rights and freedoms have been on the increase among the younger cohorts and the middle class, but also that a growing demand was present for a return to tradition, moral values that are perceived to have been lost and strengthened nationalistic sentiments. When the Russian political leadership decided to promote Russian patriotism they were tapping into sentiments that were already present among the population (see, for example, IS RAN 2013, p. 15). It is not all created by propaganda; there was a popular demand for recovering Russian national pride, intolerance towards homosexuals and immigrants was on the increase and there was a deep-rooted wish for stability and order. These sentiments co-existed with demand for rule of law and the freedom to travel and express opinions freely and similar values.

One thing that did not exist before the war in Ukraine was the enemy image that now permeates Russian propaganda and is reflected in opinion polls. The enemy evoked is external (mainly the US and NATO) and internal (national traitors and fifth columnists). Russians predominantly negative towards the US were not in a majority before February–March 2014 (with the exception for dips in attitudes towards the US during the bombings of Kosovo in 1999, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the war in Georgia in 2008). Sentiments towards the EU have been overwhelmingly positive ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but even this has changed with the annexation of Crimea (Levada Centre 2014b). Russians have also come to harbour a negative view of Ukraine. Ukrainians are demonised and even dehumanised in Russian

political rhetoric and propaganda (Levada Centre 2014c). Add to this the witch-hunt for internal enemies: ‘national traitors’ and ‘fifth columnists’ as they were dubbed by Putin in his address to parliament when the decision to annex Crimea was made public on 18 March 2014 (President of Russia 2014). This further accentuated a theme that had been present in Russian official rhetoric for almost ten years – that of a conspiracy against Russia in order to justify a negative mobilisation of the population (Levada 2005). The rhetoric and propaganda has delivered concrete results. In 2007, about 42 per cent of the population believed that internal and external enemies are threatening Russia – now that figure is over 61 per cent (Levada Centre 2014d).

It is in this atmosphere that the opinion polls that say that Putin is supported by 87 per cent of the population should be interpreted. This is not primarily a measure of how many would vote for him in a fair and free election but rather a population that rallies around its political leadership because it perceives that Russia is under threat (Gudkov 2014). Add to this that about a third answer that they are reluctant to give answers that are critical of the political leadership in anonymous opinion polls for fear of negative personal consequences and that an increasing share fear a return of political repression. (Levada Centre 2014a).

Russia is not as easy to predict as Putin’s opinion ratings could lead us to think. It is worrying that intolerance and nationalism has been on the rise, but it has been so simultaneously with an increase of preferences for rule of law, civil rights and freedoms. In other words, we see an increasingly chauvinistic and authoritarian Russia, but demand for economic growth and political accountability have also been on the rise. Change can only come from inside Russia – whether a turn for the worse or a more promising one – but there is nothing predetermined about it. Deterministic analyses of how Russia will run out of money and have to change within 18 months are misleading and completely ignore the potential for negative mobilisation of the population against a perceived conspiracy against Russia and in the face of evoked internal and external threats.

### *What the West does matters*

In spite of the fact that change must come from Russia, the policy response of the EU and NATO matters – and it does so irrespectively of how events in Russia develop. The fact that Russian domestic policy could thwart efforts to achieve a certain policy response and that change can only come from inside Russia is not the same as saying that policy choices do not matter. It is high time to ask what it is in the West – in the US and in Europe – that makes the Russian leadership think of it as a danger.

The answer is threefold. First, Russia did not count on Europe and the US being able to unite in delivering a response to Moscow's actions in Ukraine. The G20 summit in Brisbane was an illustration of this. Putin came to the G20 with the intention to separate economic questions from those of the future of Ukraine and the security arrangements in Europe (RIA Novosti 2014). It was a Russian attempt to break out of isolation. The journalist Yevgenii Kisilev (not to be confused with Dmitrii Kisilev on Russian national television), wrote a blog after the G20 summit under the title 'Kto kogo', or 'Who will prevail'. Kisilev's analysis was that the West finally came to the conclusion that Putin only respects strength and that the only law there is, is that of the law of the strong:

Well, it seems the West thought, let's see who is the strongest. We are one billion against your 144 million, we have 60 per cent of world GDP against your 2 per cent, we have all the high-end production, all high-technologies in the world, all the greatest scientific research institutes, all the mightiest world mass media – so let's compare who is the strongest. (Kisilev 2014)

A united EU is indeed the stronger economy in spite of slumping growth figures; NATO's allies together are stronger militarily; and the political systems in the West are infinitely more stable than Russia's.

Second, there is an obvious counter-argument in that the West has not proved ready to use military force, whereas Russia is. Kisilev's blog does end on the pessimistic note that the outcome of a battle of strength

between the West and Russia is obvious but for one fact – Russia is in possession of nuclear arms. However, just as Russia has been skilful in tailoring its use of military force and threat of force (Norberg & Westerlund 2015), this is something that the West can develop as well. Increasing the defence budgets of the European countries to the two-percent goal for NATO allies would be a sign of determination that Moscow will take note of. And two percent of 60 per cent of the world's GDP will be difficult to match by any increases of Russian defence expenditure when Russia's share of the world GDP is about two per cent and diminishing. Another important signal and well-tailored measure to withstand challenges to territorial integrity and national sovereignty is to strengthen border control.

Finally, a much-noticed aspect of Russia's operation against Ukraine has been that of information warfare. It is obvious from official documents and rhetoric that Russia considered itself as under attack in an information war well before its military operation against Ukraine (Franke 2015). Russia wants to develop its own soft power, but also finds it 'a double-edged sword' since it is convinced that foreign intelligence services have used soft power in Russia and that it constitutes a threat to Russian national security (Persson 2014: 28).

It is high time to recognise that when the EU was engaged in what it perceived as the innocent task of support for democratic values and human rights as well as economic freedom and rule of law, this was considered a hostile activity in Moscow. What used to be referred to as the second and third baskets inside the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), constitutes a threat to Russia's current political system. But it is also a threat to Russia's goal to create a sphere of influence, since stronger political, judicial, economic and societal institutions in Russia's neighbouring countries reduces the possibilities to covertly influence these countries. Strong institutions, independent scrutiny, transparency and eradication of corruption are paramount to strengthen countries' sovereignty. This will be an integral part of providing sovereignty support – since the war in Ukraine has brought home the lesson that defending national sovereignty is at least as important as preserving territorial integrity.

Democratic values, human rights, rule of law and economic freedom and the institutions that go with these are effective in displaying the weaknesses of the Russian economic and political system to at least some sections of the elites. When asked what the West can do in Stockholm on 22 January 2015, the political researcher Lilia Shevtsova answered: 'Practice what you preach!' Indeed, sticking with the values and institutions that have helped build a Europe that lives in peace and prosperity will strengthen the West's position regardless of when and how Russia does change.

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## AIMED FOR THE BETTER, ENDED UP WITH THE WORST: RUSSIA AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER<sup>1</sup>

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The annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the subsequent intervention in Ukraine created a shockwave in the European security system. It suddenly became apparent that certain key rules of international conduct in Europe could no longer be taken for granted. Opponents of Vladimir Putin's Russia in the West, and especially in the Baltic states, immediately put the events in and around Ukraine in the context of previous developments, in particular the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. Their conclusion was that the intervention was part of a long-term plan of imperial expansion, which is going to continue in the nearest future.

A year later, it is time for a more sober reflection on the driving forces and potential consequences of the Kremlin's action. This article highlights some of the central features of Moscow's policies, which, taken together, help understand why last year's outburst became possible and evaluate prospects for the future. My point of departure is the assumption that the intervention in Ukraine was not, and could not have been, planned in advance in every detail. Even though the Russian military probably had prepared (and continue to prepare) operation plans for various contingent opportunities, the sequence of events that led to the current crisis could have been foreseen by no-one. One of the reasons why this dynamic was, for all practical purposes, unpredictable

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the author's presentations at the Baltic Defence College conference 'Russian power projection in the twenty-first century' (Tartu, November 2014) and Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute annual Russia conference 'Russia and Global (dis)Order' (Oslo, December 2014). I would like to thank the organisers and participants of both conferences for inspiring intellectual exchanges. Special thanks to Helge Blakkisrud, Minda Holm, Asta Maskaliūnaitė, Aglaya Snetkov, Julie Wilhelmsen and Natalia Zubarevich. The study was supported by institutional research funding (IUT20-39) of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

was its relational character: it consisted in a highly complex interaction between a number of actors, none of whom had full control of the process and was able to fully foresee the outcome. Presenting the whole crisis as pre-designed in the Kremlin assigns too much strategic rationality to one actor and fails to account for the fact, acknowledged by a vast majority of experts, that the Russian leadership underestimated the costs of the intervention for Russia, in terms of Western sanctions, the domestic repercussions of the volatility of the situation in the Donbas and in other crucial respects.

A call not to overrate the Kremlin's strategic thinking must not, however, be taken to mean that the whole move was a reckless gambit. On the contrary, it looks perfectly rational from the point of view of Russian foreign policy thinking. This article therefore suggests to look at Russia's logic in its own terms, neither exoticising it as rooted in 'the enigmatic Russian soul' nor imposing a Western logic on what is essentially a semi-peripheral worldview. In what follows, I argue that the Russian intervention in Ukraine was an attempt at restoring international order, destabilised by the Western support of the orange revolution. To understand this somewhat paradoxical position, one must take into account Russia's semi-peripheral position in the international system and its subaltern imperial identity. Having briefly outlined this background in the first section of the article, I then proceed to analyse the internal logic of Russia's position on the issue as driven primarily by domestic considerations (among which ensuring sovereign autonomy and survival of the regime are paramount) and framed by a bipolar, Eurocentric and conspirological worldview. I demonstrate that Moscow did aim for the better in the sense of trying to offset the negative effects of what it saw as a unilateral attempt by the West to skew the global balance in its favour. However, to paraphrase former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, the outcome for Russia is not as usual: in effect, Russia ended up with the worst by undermining key international institutions on which its own status and agency depend in a crucial way.

## 1. Russia's post-imperial resentment

It is commonplace to argue that Russia is a semi-peripheral country (see e.g. Kagarlitsky 2008, Hopf 2013, Christensen 2013), but the full significance of this fact for its foreign policy is not sufficiently appreciated. In Ayşe Zarakol's work, the specificity of the international conduct of the latecomers to the Eurocentric international society has been examined through the prism of 'stigmatisation' (Zarakol 2011, see also Suzuki 2009, Zarakol 2014) and linked with ontological insecurity (Zarakol 2010, see also Mitzen 2006, Steele 2008). What the current crisis highlights, however, is the degree to which identity-related ontological insecurity is reinforced by the material and technological dependency on the global capitalist core, which in Russia's case makes overcoming stigmatisation a nearly impossible task (Morozov 2015, pp. 47–102). Even though stigma can be converted into anti-Western antagonism at the discursive level, its structural preconditions cannot be eliminated by a sovereign decision.

This structural background of Russian foreign policy has remained relatively unchanged since at least the nineteenth century, while the short-term dynamic in its relations with the West has produced repeated cycles of catching-up modernisation followed by nationalist reaction. The Bolshevik revolution undoubtedly broke the pattern in some important respects, but Soviet modernisation failed to put an end to dependent development and eventually brought into being an economy hooked on hydrocarbon exports (Kagarlitsky 2008). In addition, it made an ideological point out of traditional Russian anti-Westernism and promoted it through mass education and indoctrination on an unprecedented scale.

The post-Soviet Russia thus emerged as, and continues to be, a nation whose identity is deeply imprinted with a Eurocentric outlook and at the same time plagued by post-imperial resentment (Morozov 2015, pp. 103–111). Its ultimate goal is to enter international society as a great power, but it still perceives global norms and institutions as externally imposed on it by the hegemonic West. Stigmatisation, ontological insecurity and economic backwardness thus represent different

manifestations of the same phenomenon – subaltern imperialism, which prevents Russia from fully identifying itself with the West but at the same time leaves it with no other options than to catch up.

There is no space in this article to analyse the specific chain of events that has led to the Ukrainian crisis; this has been done by a number of other authors who greatly differ as to the allocation of responsibility and the policy prescriptions that follow (compare, for instance, Mearchimer 2014, Charap and Shapiro 2014). There is, however, a near consensus with regard to the fact that Russia's intervention in Ukraine was in response to what it perceived as the Western expansion and the failure to take Russia's legitimate interests into account. This suggests the need to interpret Russia's behaviour as a counter-hegemonic exercise driven by the same post-imperial resentment that was behind most of Putin's policies, especially after 2003. The remaining part of the article provides a summary of what we have learnt about Russia's logic since the outbreak of the crisis around Ukraine.

## **2. Regime security and sovereign autonomy**

To begin with, it is evident that Russian policies are driven first and foremost by domestic concerns which necessarily acquire an external dimension, and not vice versa. The Kremlin's primary goal is not expansion as such, but the preservation of sovereign autonomy in the face of the expansionist West. This overarching goal has several dimensions. The most direct one is protecting sovereignty – both of Russia as a sovereign state and as a fundamental principle of international order.

It is worth highlighting that Russia understands sovereignty primarily as non-intervention; this is behind its claims that the West violates international law by trying to impose its own norms and values on other countries and by promoting democratic change in the post-Soviet space. Historically speaking, sovereignty is associated with the right to wage just war: it was only during the second half of the twentieth century that non-intervention came to define the concept (Glanville 2013), and there are indications that the current trend in international law is back to the

original understanding. This trend certainly makes Russia fear that what the West really aims for is regime change in Russia. The current elite sees its entitlement to rule in doing everything to prevent Western subversion, which, if not resisted, would lead to the disappearance of Russia as an autonomous political and cultural entity. In his annual press-conference on 18 December 2014, President Putin visualised this anxiety almost to the point of the grotesque by using one of the national symbols and depicting Russia as ‘a bear protecting his taiga’:

[S]omeone will always try to chain him up. As soon as he’s chained they will tear out his teeth and claws. ... As soon as – God forbid – it happens and they no longer need the bear, the taiga will be taken over. ... And then, when all the teeth and claws are torn out, the bear will be of no use at all. Perhaps they’ll stuff it and that’s all. (Putin 2014)

Hence, a lot of effort is invested in the creation and preservation of the domestic political and cultural consensus, in the strengthening of the ‘spiritual bonds ... which have always, throughout our history, made us stronger and more powerful, which we have been always proud of’ (Putin 2012). The conservative turn, which has been so characteristic of Russia’s development since Putin’s return to the top in 2012, is thus part of the same semi-peripheral entanglement between domestic and international politics. It is important to point out that conservative nationalism is not really imposed from above: it has a lot of popular support and is promoted by influential intellectuals, who criticise Western moral relativism and declare that by rejecting an absolute differentiation between good and evil liberals ‘destroy morality itself’ (Lukin 2014).

The intervention in Ukraine, against this background, paradoxically comes out as a non-intervention, as a legitimate counter-measure whose sole aim was to protect Russia’s sovereign autonomy. As Putin (2014) stated in the same press-conference, ‘it is not about Crimea but about us protecting our independence, our sovereignty and our right to exist’. In this interpretation, it was the West which intervened in Ukraine by

encouraging (or even orchestrating) the Euromaidan revolution, while Russia's action was an act of legitimate resistance.

### **3. The Kremlin's worldview: bipolar, Eurocentric, conspiriological**

Another crucial element of the Russian worldview is that it still imagines the international system as bipolar, with Russia as one of the main poles. All official documents explicitly deny this by declaring that the bipolar world ended with the Cold War, while '[t]he ability of the West to dominate world economy and politics continues to diminish. The global power and development potential is now more dispersed and is shifting to the East' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013).

Yet the official recognition that today's world is multipolar does little to prevent Russia from grossly overestimating its own importance for Washington and the West in general. The idea that the West seeks to destroy Russia, currently widespread in the public mind (not least due to the televised propaganda) is the best reflection of this bipolar myth, in which Russia plays the role of an effective counterbalance to Western hegemony.

A connected, but probably more fundamental feature of the Russian outlook is its Eurocentrism. Russia has been thoroughly Europeanised in the course of its modern development, to the extent that the only language that the Russian society has for self-description and for comprehending the world 'out there' is the language of European modernity. The defence of 'traditional values' which, at first glance, is supposed to establish an independent platform, is in effect deeply rooted in the European intellectual tradition. It is German romantic philosophy that is the key reference point for the Russian conservatives, – appropriated and mediated, of course, by the Russian writers from the Slavophiles through Dostoyevsky and Ilyin to Solzhenitsyn.

The fact that even the nationalist discourse remains Eurocentric is illustrated, *inter alia*, by its negative nature. It is not really able to come up with any positive agenda and remains obsessed with punishing 'immoral' behaviour, while the qualification of a life style or a behavioural as

immoral implies connecting it with the West. Thus, avant-garde artists and LGBT activists are persecuted for the same reason as opposition leaders: they infiltrate the healthy national body and spread the moral decay emanating from the West. In a similar vein, Putin's 'pivoting to Asia' is first and foremost a Eurocentric move, whose primary meaning consists not in engaging with Asia, but in turning away from Europe.

Finally, a very important aspect of the Russian worldview is that it is conspirological. Rooted in a belief that there is always some hidden truth behind politics, this position glorifies cynicism and refuses to acknowledge that human action can pursue political ends, as opposed to being driven by greed or vanity (Morozov 2015: 149–152). In this view, there is always some secret centre from which any political action is directed. Given the Eurocentric nature of Russian political thought and its tendency to see the world as bipolar, it is not surprising that this centre is nearly always located in the West. In other words, if the Euromaidan was not plotted in Moscow, it must have been plotted in Washington – the possibility that it could have been a genuine grassroots movement is simply not considered in any serious way.

#### **4. Restoring the balance, destroying institutions**

The Russian reaction to the Euromaidan revolution was to a large extent predetermined by these key elements of the global outlook, shared by the elites and the general public: the feeling of insecurity and prioritisation of sovereignty as non-intervention, bipolar view of the world, Eurocentrism and propensity to conspirological explanations. This combination explains why the events in Ukraine were seen as a very dangerous escalation on the part of the West, aimed at destroying the existing world order based on a bipolar equilibrium, pushing Russia into the corner, making it even less relevant and finally initiating a regime change.

Against this background, the annexation of Crimea and the following intervention can be seen as an attempt to fight back for the sake of making sure that international order does not collapse. It was based on a correct tactical estimation of Russia's power as being greater than the West tended to believe, in the sense that Russia was prepared to put

troops on the ground and otherwise raise stakes, with neither NATO nor the EU being ready to reciprocate. As a short-term tactic, it proved startlingly successful. Russia now needs to be taken into account in the European security context to a much greater extent than before.

However, in a more long-term perspective, Russia did not just get ‘the usual’; it ended up with the worst by destroying many key pillars of European security architecture. None of them has been formally dismantled (at least not yet), but undermining confidence has nearly the same effect, since trust matters more to institutions than the letter of international agreements. The field of indeterminacy created by the Russian action is much wider than its immediate consequences: thus, it is not really clear how much has been left of the legacy of Helsinki Final Act (centred around the principle of the inviolability of borders), the nuclear non-proliferation regime has been equally put into question by Putin trumping over the Budapest Memorandum, and so on.

One could argue, of course, that by intervening in Ukraine and thus undermining the foundations of the liberal international order (and thus of Western hegemony), Russia actually aims to uphold a more ancient international institution – the balance of power. In essence, the way the Kremlin and especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs always emphasises the importance of international institutions is framed by the idea of balancing against the West. Another element of international order that Russia strives to defend is the institution of sovereignty – once again, understood as non-intervention. It frames its conduct as aimed at breaking loose from the constraints imposed by the liberal international institutions, which in effect protect the interests of the Western countries and ensure their hegemonic position.

There is a clear parallel between the emphasis on sovereign autonomy in foreign policy and the functioning of the domestic ‘vertical of power’. In both cases, priority is given to ‘manual control’. Domestically, it implies direct intervention in the economy, governance based on the redistribution of the rent as well as on personal loyalty and selective punishment of the dissenters rather than on the rule of law. Internationally, there is a clear preference in favour of deals (often kept

away from public scrutiny) with the key players at the expense of the less powerful ones and to the detriment of the institutions guaranteeing stable rules of the game. The tendency to exploit international anarchy by scheming and intrigues was diagnosed by Sergei Prozorov (2011) as a key element of Russia's approach already after the Georgian war, but it took nearly eight years to fully reveal its potential.

## Conclusion

It might be tempting to declare that Putin has won the game by severely undermining international order and thus freeing his hands for further action. However, Russia is already facing a problem, which in time will become ever more severe. Sovereignty, taken alone or even in combination with the balance of power, is no more than a fiction: it cannot work in the absence of a wide array of enabling international and domestic institutions. Nowhere is this more visible than in the economic sphere: in fact, as Karen Dawisha and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova demonstrate in their recent study, Russian economic actors have compensated for the absence of properly developed market institutions by 'outsourcing' this job abroad. Money has been kept in foreign banks, disputes settled in London or Stockholm, and even children of the upper class Russians have been educated in Western universities.

Similarly, for Russia's claim to great power status or the role of the balancer against the West to make sense, there needs to exist a platform where such claim could be voiced and a more or less universally recognised set of norms differentiating the agents who can legitimately use this platform from usurpers or impostors. By placing itself outside of the order that it considers unjust, Russia in effect invalidates its own international agency, and thus undermines its own sovereign autonomy.

For such a radical step to pay back, Russia would have to be able to create an alternative international order under its own control. It is evident that its capabilities fall far short of that mark. The key difficulty does not lie on the level of material capabilities (military or economic), it has to do with the total Europeanisation of the Russian discursive space that was highlighted in the first section. Given the lack of an

independent language that would be indispensable for creating any new global order, the move beyond the hegemonic order means that Russia consigns itself to a voiceless position, that of an outsider who can be spoken about and spoken for, but can never speak independently.

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## THE SEIZURE OF CRIMEA – A GAME CHANGER FOR THE BLACK SEA REGION

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I would like to steer your attention to the Black Sea region, not because I come from Bucharest, and Romania has a stretch of the Black Sea shore, but because Crimea's seizure and annexation by Russia changes dramatically the geopolitical and strategic balance in the Black Sea region, which forces the US and NATO to re-evaluate strategically and tactically the Black Sea and Mediterranean areas.

1. The Black Sea is a traditional direction for Russian expansion. In fact, the first direction of expansion for the founder of the Russian Empire, Peter the Great, was to the South, to the shores of the Azov and Black seas, towards Crimea. Moscow, 'The Third Rome', was organically tempted to get closer geographically to the first two, meaning Constantinople and Rome, the warm seas, the Black and Mediterranean seas, not the frozen North.

In 1688, a Russian military campaign against the Tatars of Crimea failed. Were it not for the peace at Carlowitz and the Northern War, Peter the Great would have probably concentrated his attention and resources on the Black Sea region over the following few years. However, the 1711 defeat at Stanilesti, on river Pruth, when the Czar himself was miraculously saved (Oriental corruption played a determining role in this), froze for half a century Russia's expansionist projects in the Black Sea area.

It was as late as 1771 that Catherine the Great occupied Crimea, which she annexed twelve years later, in 1783. For the following 200 years, the Black Sea region remained the centre of attention for the political, military, and art elite, penetrating deeply the Russian and Soviet public consciousness, whether we talk about the Russian-Turkish wars, the Crimean War, the Black Sea Straits, or the film and music of the soviet generations.

Some, and not a few, of those who are now part of Russia's foreign security and policy apparatus, came up intellectually reading Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki*, a book published for the first time in 1997, and following several editions, in issues of tens and hundreds of thousands of copies:

Ukraine's sovereignty is such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that, in principle, it can easily burst into armed conflict. [...] Ukraine as an independent state manifesting territorial ambitions is a great danger for the whole of Eurasia, and without solving the problems raised by Ukraine, any discussion of continental geopolitics is rendered pointless. [...] It is an absolute imperative in Russian Black Sea geopolitics for Moscow to have total and unmitigated control over the entire territory from Ukraine to Abkhazia [...] The northern coast of the Black Sea has to be exclusively Eurasian and under Moscow's centralised control<sup>1</sup> (Dugin 1997, p. 348).

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<sup>1</sup> 'Суверенитет Украины представляет собой настолько негативное для русской геополитики явление, что, в принципе, легко может спровоцировать вооруженный конфликт [...] Украина как самостоятельное государство с какими-то территориальными амбициями представляет собой огромную опасность для всей Евразии, и без решения украинской проблемы вообще говорить о континентальной геополитике бессмысленно. [...] Абсолютным императивом русской геополитики на черноморском побережье является тотальный и ничем не ограниченный контроль Москвы на всем его протяжении от украинских до

The project that President Putin brought with him to the Kremlin upon his return in 2012 is the founding of the Euro-Asiatic Union. Ukraine is a centrepiece of this project. However, the active part of Ukrainian public opinion sees the future of its country with the European Union, not the Euro-Asiatic Union. Paradoxically, no European capital, maybe with the exception of London, Warsaw and the Baltic capitals, would have supported Ukraine's integration, while Moscow was inviting Kiev into the Euro-Asiatic Union.

If in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the game changer in the Black Sea area was the annexation of Crimea by Catherine the Great, in 2014 Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea was a game changer not only for the larger Black Sea region, but for the entire global security system. Now, in February 2014, the trigger was a fear that a pro-Western government in Kiev would allow NATO to take control of the naval base at Sevastopol, which would have ended the Russian Black Sea Fleet and force projection into the Mediterranean.

What happened in the last year in Crimea will have a formative influence on security arrangements in the wider region, from the Black Sea, Caucasus, and Eastern Balkans to the Mediterranean.

2. The US and NATO can no longer count on ruling the waves of the Black Sea, or on being uncontested in the Mediterranean. The major implication here is that the whole expeditionary model of US power, especially the US ability to project power across transoceanic distances, is in question. At the same time, the credibility of US deterrence umbrella, but also the capability to enforce international law and the global rules of the road (like freedom of the seas) are also in question. As former US Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel emphasised: 'without our superiority, the strength and credibility of our alliances will suffer. Our commitment

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абхазских территорий. [...] Северный берег Черного моря должен быть исключительно евразийским и централизованно подчиняться Москве.'

to enforcing long-established international law, rules of the road, and principles could be doubted by both our friends and our adversaries'. Another important paragraph in Chuck Hagel's speech in Rhode Island on September 3rd 2014: China and Russia

are also developing anti-ship, anti-air, counter-space, cyber, electronic warfare, and special operations capabilities that appear designed to counter traditional U.S. military advantages – in particular, our ability to project power to any region across the globe by surging aircraft, ships, troops, and supplies. All this suggests that we are entering an era where American dominance on the seas, in the skies, and in space – not to mention cyberspace – can no longer be taken for granted (US Department of Defense, 2014, 1).

Moreover, in a keynote speech at the Reagan National Defence Forum, Hagel made this reality the rationale for trying to develop the foundations of a new strategy designed to offset the Russian and Chinese trends:

...while we spent over a decade focused on grinding stability operations, countries like Russia and China have been heavily investing in military modernisation programs to blunt our military's technological edge, fielding advanced aircraft, submarines, and both longer range and more accurate missiles. They're also developing new anti-ship and air-to-air missiles, counter-space, cyber- electronic warfare, undersea, and air attack capabilities. America must continue to ensure its ability to project power rapidly across oceans and continents by surging aircraft, ships, troops and supplies. If this capability is eroded or lost, we will see a world far more dangerous and unstable, far more threatening to America and our citizens here at home than we

have seen since World War II (US Department of Defense, 2014, 2).

However, in a European context, these trends question the reassurance package adopted at NATO's Wales summit. The expeditionary solution that the NATO summit brought forth in order to fix the vulnerability of the Eastern Flank via the spearhead force might prove inadequate in a time of maturing anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) complexes.

Over the past 25 years, denial forces have increasingly won the competition with forces of what used to be called traditional expeditionary power projection. The A2/AD forces are neutralizing many of the assumptions that used to be at the core of US power projection,

These traditional features are becoming outdated because of the keep-out zone that Russia is building by investing in its own A2/AD capabilities. Simply put, Russian denial forces can keep at bay any promised NATO reinforcement.

3. The emerging A2/AD Russian bubble over the Black Sea. Although all eyes are currently focused on the Baltic region and the Northern Flank of NATO, the Black Sea might become a rather probing ground for NATO's credibility in the near future. In recent years, the traditional modes of power projection that gave the US the ability to gain access, operate and be forward present in key strategic regions of the world have been challenged. Over the past decade, states like Russia, Iran and China seemed very interested in gradually developing anti-access (A2) and area-denial (AD) postures (Tangredi 2013). These capabilities are aimed at

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<sup>2</sup> A2 (anti-access) are those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering in an operational area.

<sup>3</sup> AD (area denial) are those actions and capabilities, usually shorter range, designed to limit the enemy's freedom of action within the operational area.

building keep-out zones or regions where traditional freedom of action can be denied. The maturation of these access-denial complexes will make it harder for the US to deploy, project power, gain access, and even operate in certain theatres.

China is the first manifestation of this trend that countries, and even non-state actors, follow by developing anti-access bubbles. At the same time, protected by this A2/AD umbrella, China will be increasingly incentivised to gradually alter the geography of the region, operating below the threshold of a formal *casus belli*. Recent developments in the South China Sea, as well as the establishment of an Air Defence Identification Zone in the East China Sea, seem to validate this assessment.

The annexation of Crimea is already shifting the geography of the Black Sea region. It used to be called a Russian lake; now it is becoming an A2/AD Russian bubble. James Sherr, an Associate Fellow at Chatham House, summed up the new strategic reality very well when he said in the House of Commons:

the Russian Black Sea fleet has, in the past, been constrained by various agreements about what it could and could not do as far operation, modernisation and the kinds of weaponry — nuclear and conventional — deployed there. Those constraints no longer exist. A massive modernisation programme has been announced. That includes, in short order, the deployment of Russia's most advanced long range area denial weapons, which affect a large part of Turkish air space and extend right out to the Bosphorus and, perhaps, beyond. It raises new questions about the vulnerability of any surface assets that we send into the Black sea. (Sherr 2014).

4. Crimea is becoming the centre of gravity of the Russian A2/AD Black Sea posture. By the end of the decade, Russia's Black Sea force will tally

206 ships. By 2016, the Black Sea Fleet will receive six brand-new Kilo-class submarines that will be stationed at a new base at Novorossiisk. In addition, Tu-22M3 long-range strategic bombers will be deployed in the region (Delanoë 2014).

Overall, by the end of the decade, Moscow's plans to spend US \$151 billion to modernise its navy and the Black Sea Fleet represent one of Moscow's highest priorities. The modernisation will emphasise the emergence of a counter-intervention capability for the Black Sea along the lines of A2/AD logic, including submarines, anti-shipping, anti-surface and anti-air capabilities. At the same time, the annexation of Crimea will add long range land-based missile systems (like the S-400 SAM system) including the Iskander surface-to-surface missiles, which have an operational range of 400 kilometres (Delanoë 2014).

If information published in the Kiev weekly *Zerkalo Nedeli* finds confirmation from alternative sources, that means that the militarisation of Crimea occurs at an infernal pace, with no analogue in the Black Sea area. This process should worry the countries in the region, and not only them, as the Defence Ministry in Moscow plans to hand combat flags to 40 *new* military units in Crimea by the end of the year. In the Russian army, combat flags are not handed to battalions, but to units of regiment or brigade size and above. That means the creation of at least 40 new regiments or brigades, each made up of 2,000 to 3,000 men. If at the moment of annexation the number of soldiers in the Black Sea fleet was around 20,000, soon the number of Russian soldiers in Crimea will exceed 100,000. Here we are talking about strategic bomber regiments, fighter jet regiments, Bastion coastal missile batteries, and Iskander-M missile complexes.

In addition, units have been deployed to Crimea that have been restructured, actively trained and rearmed in the North Caucasus, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The military base in Crimea is 200 to 300

km away from the EU and NATO border, as well as Romania's and Bulgaria's shore.

As Russia is developing its access denial posture, freedom of movement might be in jeopardy inside the Black Sea with all the evident consequences for the energy security of the region. At the same time, any effort to reinforce a NATO maritime presence might be out of the question as Russia acquires the capability to transform the Black Sea in a no-go area. To sum up, these various anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles together with the long range S-400 land-based missile systems suggest a 'large spectrum of capability to strike ground targets, interdict maritime traffic and impose a no-fly zone' (Delanoë 2014). That, in effect, means a zone free of NATO influence.

In the Chinese case, there seems to be a correlation between the gradual development of the A2/AD capabilities and the coercive salami-slicing tactics employed in the South China Sea. Consequently, as Russia becomes a mature A2/AD power, it may also employ similar tactics inside the Black Sea.

A few weeks back, in a speech he gave at Bucharest University, Wess Mitchell, president of well-known DC think tank, CEPA, talked about the risk of re-militarisation of the Black Sea, emphasising that a Russia that is revisionist on land could also become revisionist at sea:

Imagine an announcement from Moscow that, on the basis of Crimea's new sovereign ownership, it will resurrect the Black Sea maritime dispute of the past decade, using the original Ukrainian EEZ claim as its own. 40 percent of Romania's Black Sea oil lies within this zone. Even if the claim failed, it could put a chilling effect on foreign investment and jeopardise Romania's plans for energy independence by 2020. [...] Russia's continued advance on southern Ukraine places direct pressure on Romania. In the years ahead,

Romania should expect more frequent Russian violations of its airspace, more Russian maritime harassment of ships and rigs in the Romanian Exclusive Economic Zone.

President Putin is in a hurry. He knows the Russian economy cannot take much more of the sanctions, especially with the price of oil dropping on international markets. As the West is in no hurry to negotiate spheres of influence with the Kremlin, or recognise Russia's annexation of Crimea, Putin doesn't have a lot of alternatives: he either gives up Crimea, pulls out of Donbass, and accepts the right of the Ukrainian people to decide their own fate; turns the local Russian-Ukrainian war into a regional war with unclear end; or, the most probable scenario right now, through A2/AD capabilities and the coercive salami-slicing tactics, destabilises the whole Black Sea region, expanding its control over it.

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## RUSSIAN NATIONALISTS FIGHT UKRAINIAN WAR

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In this article, I am going to focus on how the radical nationalist movement in Russia fares in the current situation, given the political consolidation of the current regime, and the war in Ukraine<sup>1</sup> and the government's reaction to it. The article describes the situation as it stood at the end of 2014, which makes it predictably incomprehensive because new updates on the conflict still arrive every day, and there has also been more news about Russian ultra-right forces over the past few months.

### 1. Nationalism as underlying basis for new official political consolidation

The political consolidation of Putin's regime rose to new heights in 2014, and not only due to his 85% popularity rating (LevadaCentre 2013) – the important part is *what* exactly these people support.

This unparalleled political support rallied by the Kremlin is not entirely the result of the propaganda campaign against the 'Kiev Junta' or 'Bandera followers.' Unlike in previous years, the regime has now worked out its own ideology – a nationalist one.

But the question is what kind of nationalism did they opt for? Of course the racial or ethnic chauvinism that prevails 'in the streets' could not be adopted as the government's official policy. It was therefore replaced by a milder version – an odd mixture of political nationalism (although without the civil or democratic component) and the so-called 'civilisational' nationalism, a concept based on the uniqueness of the Russian civilisation as opposed to the West. Yet, ethnic chauvinism cannot be entirely excluded from nationalism as the official policy.

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<sup>1</sup> The article was written in October 2014 when fighting was in full swing and therefore does not cover any further developments of this war.

This much is obvious from what is happening in Ukraine today. They are fighting for ‘the Russian world,’ or for ‘Russians,’ which suggests that the national unity concept, understood as the Russian civilisation-based unity, still involves some ethnic bias.

## **2. Prior attempts at national consolidation. Federal program ‘On Strengthening the Unity of the Russian Nation and Ethnic and Cultural Development of the Peoples of Russia’**

Some of the moves made by the federal government in the previous years demonstrated a similar attitude. In 2011, the Regional Development Ministry worked out the Strategy of State Ethnic Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025, while in August 2013, the federal program ‘On Strengthening the Unity of the Russian Nation and Ethnic and Cultural Development of the Peoples of Russia in 2014-2020,’ was approved (Verkhovsky 2014a), listing actions aimed at ‘a greater unity of the Russian nation’ as opposed to ethnic or culture-based rallying (including Russian ethnic chauvinism).

The program said the key problems were ‘weak Russian civil identity combined with the growing significance of ethnic and religious self-identification,’ ‘the lack of public accord on basic values of Russian society’ and the increase in radical nationalist sentiments and religious trends, massive immigration and the subversive activities of various forces, of course – but that was not a hint meaning the West for this once. The document also pointed out the ‘poor sociocultural state of the Russian people’ and ‘negligible role of traditional values.’

The main goal of the program was to justify the need for a series of steps to consolidate national unity to counterbalance ethnic and religious mobilisations, including Russian ethnic nationalism. The unity was supposed to be based on civil nation principles combined with ‘civilizational nationalism.’

The goals of the government’s ethnic policy made sense; however, no efforts that could achieve the desired result even theoretically, were made. On the other hand, this was hardly one of the Kremlin’s priorities right then, which is why the ruling elites failed to overcome their

disagreements and combine efforts to work out any feasible policy line. Instead, the government made a series of clearly populist moves of the ethnic nationalist nature.

### 3. Anti-immigrant campaign in 2013

The year 2013 brought a really unexpected turn in the development of nationalism in Russia. While in 2012, the Kremlin launched various propaganda campaigns against the opposition that relied on many Russians' xenophobic sentiments, its ethnic policy targets remained unchanged.

Things began changing in early 2013 – or at least from spring 2013. An unexpected anti-immigrant campaign was launched by the governments of several Russian regions, including Moscow and St. Petersburg, and continued for months. In Moscow, this policy change could be explained by the mayoral elections; but no elections were held in St. Petersburg that year. What's more, the campaign was eagerly supported by federal TV channels.

The campaign led to an unprecedented growth of ethnic xenophobia in Russia, according to Yury Levada's public opinion centre (Levada Center). In 2013, 70-80% of Russians shared xenophobic sentiments at least to some extent. The overall support of the '*Russia for Russians*' slogan (at least to some extent) had grown from 56% to 66%. Negative attitudes toward 'southerners' were expressed by a total of 61%, which topped even the figures during the second Chechen war. Moreover, that total did not even include hateful statements motivated by other negative sentiments (such as economic issues) in regard to immigrants. The support of another racist slogan, '*Stop feeding the Caucasus*,' exceeded 70% – this many respondents supported immigration control and deportation of 'illegal' immigrants (who had mostly failed to obtain the right papers on time). Commenting on the survey results, head of the Levada Center and editor-in-chief of *The Russian Public Opinion Herald* journal Lev Gudkov confirmed that 2013 saw the record level of xenophobia in Russia. 'This was the highest level registered yet, and a very uneven wave, too,' he said.

Yet, that could be considered a breakdown because it was short-lived: it began in spring and ended around October or November. Still, radical nationalists immediately responded to the government's call with a series of moves of their own, from political rallies to so-called 'raids.' Incidentally, even the pro-Kremlin Rodina party then staged similar raids (and continues doing so). In fact, raids as a moderately violent but safe form of activity had long been used by ultra-right groups. They intensified in 2012. Soccer fan Alexei Khudyakov who leads Shield of Moscow – the best known immigrant-hunting group in 2012 – had earlier participated in equally violent raids of the Youth Anti-Drug Special Forces (Molodezhny Antinarkotichesky Spetsnaz, MAS), associated with the Young Russia group.

In 2013, 'Russian mop-ups' surged to an unprecedented scale, involving nationalist groups such as the Shield of Moscow, Bright Rus and others. Those raids could include – or not include – the police or the Federal Migration Service, take place with these authorities' informal approval, or without one, and involve various degrees of violence. Although they were careful not to take it too far, the raiders still used non-lethal weapons, clubs, sledgehammers and other objects, also in cases where the police were part of the action. Videos of those raids were posted online deliberately popularising the idea– the target audiences were predictably drawn to participate in the public (albeit safe) violence against 'aliens' (Verkhovsky 2014b).

The anti-immigrant campaign also worked as a supporting background for advertising radical nationalist groups in the media. However, most importantly, it actually compromised the earlier proclaimed goal of supra-ethnic political consolidation and shook the foundations for fighting radical nationalists.

Our observations also showed a disruption of the 2009-2012 downward trend in racist violence. In 2013, 23 people were killed and 203 wounded or beaten, while 10 more were threatened to be killed<sup>2</sup>(Alperovich & Yudina 2014a). These alterations in statistics were mainly brought about by the long-term changes in the law-enforcement practices of the past

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<sup>2</sup> As of February 4, 2015

three years at the least, and therefore cannot be viewed as the result of the anti-immigrant campaign.

All of this has definitely increased the importance of the violence aspect in the discussion of Russian nationalism. Radical nationalist groups gained popularity due to the media attention they were getting as part of the anti-immigrant campaign; the authorities even had to slow down some of the most ardent volunteers helping them ‘fight illegal immigration.’ (Alperovich and Yudina 2014a). The Russian nationalist movement entered a period of optimistic expectations.

Admittedly, few of those ‘helpers’ actually became associated with any official political activity. Although many ultra-right movements tried to register their own political parties, only a few of them actually succeeded: Sergei Baburin’s Russian National Union and Dmitry Rogozin’s Rodina Party. However, even these two oldest parties have not been entrusted with the authority to communicate the government’s ideas to the public; the ‘Russian world’ ideas are being conveyed by pro-government agencies. Other nationalists failed to register their parties.

#### **4. How Ukrainian events affected Russian nationalists**

In the first half of 2014, the attention of all active Russian citizens was riveted on Ukraine. The fight against ‘fascists’ and ‘Bandera followers’ then partly ousted nationalist ideas and even made them taboo. For the first time in months, opinion polls showed lowering levels of xenophobia (LevadaCenter, 2014a), while the general ‘anti-Bandera’ sentiment entered into conflict with the essential content of the ultra-right groups’ main activities. The anti-immigrant sentiment that the nationalists of the 2000s entirely relied on, and which was high in 2013, faded.

##### **4.1 Ideological battles**

One important and unexpected outcome of the Ukrainian events was the reconfiguration of the nationalist movement. (Alperovich, 2014)The Ukrainian crisis, which began with clashes in Grushevskogo Street, revived nationalists’ hopes for the ‘white revolution’ success in Russia:

the Maidan riots were seen as a positive example, especially if one overstated the Right Sector's role. The transition from the 'government vs. opposition' conflict to a different phase that can be described as 'ethnic Ukrainians vs. ethnic Russians' made Russian nationalists face a difficult choice. While the opposition-minded part of nationalists initially supported the Maidan protesters, serious disagreements emerged among them later.

The leaders of publicly active organisations have been the most outspoken. As expected, most nationalist organisations approve of the annexation of Crimea and the so-called 'Russian Spring.' These include the opposition-minded Konstantin Krylov from the National Democratic Party, the highly loyal Alexei Zhuravlyov (the Rodina (*Motherland*) Party), the belligerent Stalinist and nationalist Vladimir Kvachkov (People's Militia in the Name of Minin and Pozharsky (NOMP)) and the long-standing Nazis such as Dmitry Bobrov (National-Socialist Initiative) and others. They all view the conflict in Ukraine as a battle that pits ethnic Russians against ethnic Ukrainians and the West. Thus, even groups that view the Moscow regime as anti-Russian support 'our own people' in the Donbass in eastern Ukraine.

There are significantly fewer opponents of the 'Russian Spring.' They include some of the leaders of the Russkiye (*Russians*) association – Dmitry Dyomushkin, Vladimir Basmanov, possibly also Alexander Below; Natsionalnye Demokraty (*National Democrats*) leader Semyon Pikhtelev (this group is also part of Russkiye); leader of the Russian Right-Wing Party Vladimir Istarkhov; leaders of the National Democratic Alliance Alexei Shiropayev and Ilya Lazarenko; Maxim Kalinichenko, one of the organisers of the 'Russkaya probezhka' (*Russian jogging*) public event in St. Petersburg, former member the 'Restruct' movement political council Roman Zheleznov; the leader of the Slavic Force in St. Petersburg Dmitry Yevtushenko, and others.

Ironically, their statements closely resemble those made by their sworn enemies in the liberal opposition. These nationalists contend that both the Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine would do better to live under the hated authorities in Kiev, or better still, independently, than under what they see as President Vladimir Putin's 'anti-Russian regime.'

Unlike the supporters of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics, their opponents showed no haste in forming any alliances, as they sensed they were more than just in opposition to the official political rhetoric (which is something totally to be expected with radical nationalists) – they also found themselves in clear minority even among other nationalist groups. There are a lot of ultra-right nationalist communities on social networks for those who do not share the general enthusiasm about ‘Novorossiya’ or even openly support the Right Sector, but there haven’t been any open attempts so far to use these communities as bases to build any movements or organisations, at least not that we know of.

The majority of Russian nationalists are autonomous militants that do not belong to any formal political organisations, and who are also in disagreement over Ukraine. Apart from the two viewpoints described above, there is a third group which sees the conflict in Ukraine as the result of a Zionist conspiracy against the Slavs. They see Novorossiya as resistance to Kiev-imposed oligarchy. Still others see eastern Ukrainians as ‘*Vatniks*’ (a modern term describing Russian patriotic rednecks – Ed.) or ‘*Sovoks*’ (the term carries the same connotations, only for Soviet patriots – Ed.) and would rather take Kiev’s side in this conflict. The possibility of eastern Ukraine’s accession to Russia is perceived highly negatively, because the newcomers are expected to automatically join the Putin regime admirers and ‘*vegetables*.’

Some of these autonomous nationalists believe that the units fighting for the *Vatniks* are mainly manned with Chechens sent in from Russia, with Russia more than willing to have them killed.

Incidentally, most nationalists are not satisfied with just political debates. Some radical nationalist groups send ‘humanitarian aid’ which, in addition to the traditional load of food, cigarettes and clothes, includes military equipment and obviously weapons. These ‘humanitarian’ packages come from a lot of different sources these days, and some nationalist activists even have official agencies join the effort (like Shield of Moscow leader Alexei Khudyakov).

## 4.2 Russian nationalists involved in fighting

With the conflict growing into a full-fledged war, it is important to note that there are supporters of different viewpoints on both sides of the frontline in eastern Ukraine (Yudina, 2014).

However, it is important to note that ultra-right activists do not even account for the biggest share among Russians fighting in Ukraine. For the most part they are not even (or not so much of) nationalists, but all kinds of different people, even antifascists. Many of those fighting there now have never been spotted involved in any political activity before.

Unfortunately, our information is fragmentary, which prevents us from giving even a rough estimate of their numbers. There are probably several hundreds of nationalists fighting for Novorossiia, not including non-Registry Cossacks.<sup>3</sup>

The Russian nationalists fighting in Ukraine have a certain ideology but do not associate themselves with any political party. Some of them are veterans of recent wars (the Chechen war and even the Afghan war), or just retired servicemen, which means that they have had some experience of military action. Some of them are affiliated with Cossack organisations, especially those active in Ukraine or adjacent regions, the most well-known of them the Great Host of Don Cossacks led by ataman Nikolai Kozitsyn that now controls the area between the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics and the VolchyaSotnya (*Wolves' Hundred*) Cossack battalion from Belorechenskaya in the Krasnodar Territory (closed down in late 2014).

Less known organisations are more active in sending fighters to the conflict area, such as Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity, RNE (or rather a fragment thereof which somehow remained loyal to the leader), which had thousands of young people as its members in the 1990s. The group is currently engaged in an intensive recruiting campaign

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<sup>3</sup> Marlene Laruelle estimates the number of fighters sent to Donbas by nationalist groups at 100-200 (Laruelle 2014). Alexander Tarasov, director of the Phoenix Center for New Sociology and Research in Applied Politics, said only around 90 nationalists fought for DPR/LPR at the end of 2014.

online. Images can be found on the internet showing groups of 15-20 armed people amid the conflict area, wearing RNE insignia. One of them even pictures Barkashov's son, Pyotr, and another, Alexander Kildishov, the leader of the group's Volgograd Branch.

The National Liberation Movement (NOD) led by United Russia deputy Yevgeny Fyodorov<sup>4</sup> is busy forming volunteer units and transporting them to Ukraine. Last summer, the group's Samara Branch sent volunteers from Samara to join the defenders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, bearing the *'Motherland! Freedom! Putin!'* slogans and portraits of Tsar Nicholas II.

Other Russian volunteers spotted in Ukraine included activists of the Eurasian Youth Union (the youth branch of Alexander Dugin's party), the Russian Imperial Movement led by Stanislav Vorobyov, and the National Democratic Party. 'Other Russia' members have been seen at the frontline, too.

The well-known ultranationalist website Sputnik & Pogrom (its team also split up over the Ukraine issue) as well as several soccer fan websites had been calling on the audience to join a group of St. Petersburg nationalists (Alexei "Fritz" Milchakov, Dmitry Deineko and others) heading for Ukraine, which was later transformed into the Batman Special Task Unit and joined the Luhansk People's Republic forces.

Still fewer facts are known about those fighting on the other side – even quantitative estimates vary from 20 to 200 people.<sup>5</sup> Most of them, if not all, are neo-Nazis, but there are different types among them, even supporters of General Kvachkov.

On December 5, 2014, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko met with the fighters who defended Donetsk Airport, presenting one of them with a Ukrainian passport and citizenship: Sergei "Malyuta" Korotkikh, one

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<sup>4</sup>NOD is as yet little studied, but this movement is undoubtedly nationalist. Judging by its current activities NOD may be seen as part of the radical wing, although it may not in any way part of the opposition (Strukova 2014).

<sup>5</sup> 60 people as of the end of 2014, according to Tarasov – mainly in the Azov, Aidar, Donbass1 and Donbass2 battalions, and two Right Sector battalions.

of the former leaders of the National-Socialist Society and a former RNE member, has been fighting with the Azov Battalion<sup>6</sup> from the start and heads the intelligence service.

Roman “Zukhel” Zheleznov, a well-known associate of neo-Nazi activist Maxim “Tesak” Martsinkevich, also arrived in Kiev in July. Mikhail Oreshnikov, a representative of the Misanthropic Division transnational neo-Nazi group, also fled to Ukraine. About 10 other group members are now fighting with Azov, while prior to that, Misanthropic Division fighters actively participated in clashes in Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities.

Several Russian ultra-nationalists have lost their lives in this war. Some of those who died fighting on the separatists’ side include Sergei Yefremov (RIM), Sergei Markov (People's Militia in the Name of Minin and Pozharsky (NOMP), Petrozavodsk), Alexander Proselkov (Eurasian Youth Union, Rostov Branch leader), Sergei Vorobyov (Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI), Korolyov branch), Cossack Nikolai Leonov, and Ilya Guryev (Other Russia, Togliatti branch). On the other side, for example, there is Sergei “Balagan” Grek, who fought with Azov.

## 5. Conclusion.

New splits between nationalists alone could not have weakened the movement that is used to disagreement. But this new schism is of a different nature. The ‘Russian Spring’ supporters are actually parroting the federal channels’ statements because they have no policy of their own. The opponents feel vulnerable, not only due to the concentrated pressure from the police, but also because, while being used to considering themselves at ‘the forefront of the majority of the nation,’ they have now found themselves in the minority.

Furthermore, the war in Ukraine has overshadowed many other problems. While the opposing leaders are still capable of reaching some agreement, common nationalists – especially militant nationalists – are

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<sup>6</sup> Many ultra-right-wing supporters chose the Azov Battalion for a reason – its core is made up of Ukrainian neo-Nazis.

reluctant to compromise on this sensitive issue and prefer avoiding any contact with political leaders. This much has become obvious from the record low number of participants in the Russian March event in November 2014.<sup>7</sup>The march obviously was the biggest failure of the past few years, not only in Moscow but across Russia, just like most of the traditional nationalist rallies lately. (Sova centre 2014)

It is important to note that, although existing Russian nationalist organisations are growing weaker, new and stronger ones have not been established or inspired from the top.

The Kremlin has not established any special organisations to air its new policy, apart from the aforementioned National Liberation Movement, which is rather insignificant. The policy is being implemented by the Kremlin itself, its United Russia party and affiliated groups. Even the 'official nationalist' Rodina party is playing quite a small role. This means that supporting the presidential policy requires no subtleties.

On the other hand, we can see that the number of racist attacks is not going down. According to our preliminary estimates, at least 114 people have suffered from violence motivated by xenophobia or neo-Nazism this year; 19 of them died. These figures are bound to increase even more.

Many of those now fighting in Donbas will soon return to Russia, with their dream of a 'Russian riot' or 'white revolution' that no longer seems so fantastic. Moreover, the 'enhance fighting capacity' rhetoric used by the Russian government during the Ukrainian crisis clearly legitimises violence. Therefore, radical right wing forces may sharply intensify their activity here in Russia in yet another aftermath of this war.

Although we cannot predict the nature or mechanisms of that activity at this stage, it remains a very realistic possibility.

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<sup>7</sup> The November 4 National Unity Day as marked by two competing rallies conducted in Moscow, both traditional 'Russian Marches,' one in Lyublino and the other from the Oktyabrskoye Pole to Shchukinskaya metro stations. The Lyublino event gathered around 1,800 people, and the other one, around 1,200, according to the SOVA Center estimates.

In conclusion I would like to note that the political consolidation of Russian society around the Kremlin, on a scale that is surprising event for Putin's regime, is a fact now. This consolidation is fraught with social quakes that are impossible to avoid or even predict.

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## RUSSIAN MILITARY THINKING – A NEW GENERATION OF WARFARE<sup>1</sup>

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This article deals with how Russian warfighting is described and discussed in contemporary Russian military theory. The approach has been studies, analyses and interpretations of primarily Russian sources as prominent Russian journals, but also Western analyses and interpretations of contemporary Russian warfighting discussions. Theoretical considerations are limited to the period from the 1980s to the present day – 2014. Mainly Russian experts on military theory (Bogdanov, Chekinov, Gareev, Kiselyov, Kuralenko, Morozov, Slipchenko, Vinogradov, Vladimirov, Vorobyov) have been studied, but also sources from some prominent Western experts on Russian warfare (FitzGerald, Gileotti, Kipp, McDermott).

The driving force in the Russian development of her warfighting capability is based on how the national threat perception directly or indirectly influences the conditions for political affairs and conducting of military operations and activities. Soviet and Russian military theorists have a common tradition of belief in depth operations where science and technology have an influence on the success of a war (Ogarkov 1995, Savkin 2002). Technology and science generate products and systems that directly affect and change threats, military capabilities and abilities. Technological and scientific developments are important factors for military concepts, long-term defence planning, and the development of military doctrine and capabilities. New Russian weapons and weapon systems are based on the application of ‘new physical principles’ (Zakharov 1995). The coordination of Russian national/regional /international resources provides synergistic effects. Furthermore, the coordination of Russian civil resources with Russian military capabilities

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Mattsson, P, A. 2014. *Russian Military Thinking – A New Generation of Warfare*. Stockholm: Swedish Defence University.

is an example of how surprising changes influence Russian military goals, means, methods and risks. This Russian dialectical development occurs sequentially and in parallel at the political, strategic, operational and tactical levels (Blank 2014).

The Russian military theorist Sliptjenko's theory of sixth generation warfare (Slipchenko 1999) deals with long-range, high-precision weapons that can be launched from various weapon platforms on land, sea, in the air and in space. New technology is crucial to this type of warfare, particularly electronics, and information and communications technology. Sometimes this type of warfare is called 'contactless war' and has its conceptual basis in modern missile wars: the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Falklands War in 1982 and the First Gulf War in 1991. Sixth generation warfare has three main objectives: 1) Defeating an opponent's armed forces (in his own territory), 2) Destroying an opponent's economic activity and potential – and 3) Subverting or changing an opponent's political system. Russian criticism of this theory initially took the form of emphasis on and expressions of technical and scientific determinism (read also the prioritisation of space, air and naval forces over ground forces). War can be waged against all enemy territory and even beyond the boundaries of the operational area. The goal is to attack the political and military leadership in order to quickly achieve the stated political and military strategic objectives (Slipchenko 2004).

The use of various capabilities is optimised to create effects at as high a level as possible. Indirect and asymmetric means and methods are used in advance of the operation, in order to identify and effectively influence the opponent's weaknesses during the preparation for and conduct of operations. In this new form of warfare, war does not stop; it occurs continuously as preparation for war with varying intensity and centres of gravity (Vinogradov 2013). Appropriate military strategic means are used to create a favourable strategic position and operational environment. Society will be weakened, destabilised and isolated (Vorobyov & Kiselyov).

Firstly, it is attacked from within with psychological warfare, information warfare and agents of influence. When the situation is favourable there

are coordinated strikes using Special Forces, remote and specialist weapons, volunteers and armed civilians deep into enemy territory. Remote weapons come from all dimensions. The fight against an opponent is launched from space, air, land, sea and from under the sea, preferably coordinated in time and space. Key political leadership, vital societal infrastructure, regional leadership functions and military infrastructure are neutralised, or destroyed if possible, across the operational area. In the recent debate about new generation warfare, cultural and existential war has emerged as an important complement to the kinetic, contactless and remote war. In sixth generation warfare the various phases are conducted both sequentially and in parallel. This 'spear point' warfare is but a part of the total warfare capability and is one of several military and civilian instruments available to Russia during conflicts and war (Chekinov & Bogdanov 2013).

In conclusion, the new generation of warfare is said to have had an evolutionary development and to be based on Soviet military theoretical thinking between the 1920s and the late 1980s. Discussions about revolutions in military affairs (RMAs) in the 1980s and 1990s in the Soviet Union/Russia should also not be forgotten (FitzGerald 1997). Hybrid concepts have emerged during the last ten years and were initially limited to a tactical perspective on irregular warfare. However, concepts have gradually broadened and taken on a more strategic nature, which has led to some including economic and political factors, and the media. Hybrid warfare has also been ascribed existential and ideological characteristics, increasing its complexity (McCulloh & Johnson 2013). Sixth generation warfare has evolved in the period 1995-2005 and consideration has been given to the experience of globalisation, the New World Order,<sup>2</sup> new scientific achievements and applications, not least in the fields of science and technology. The increased importance of 'soft power' and psychological operations also shows that behavioural sciences and other 'soft' sciences will have increased significance (Belsky & Klimenko 2014). The strength of sixth generation warfare is its

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Kissinger, H. *World Order. Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 2014 & Huntington, S, P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, NY, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1996/2011.

synthesis of thinking about how goals, means, methods and risks should be managed in an era of radicalised world order and major scientific advances. The goals are political, the means are national syntheses, the methods are combinations of tradition and innovation, and the risks lie in how surprise and initial force can be balanced (Morozov 2014).

In Sweden, hybrid warfare has primarily been linked to a method of warfare that combines various strategies, tactics and combat techniques in the same area of conflict. Actors have access to both regular and irregular military capabilities. Particular emphasis is put on how actors make use of communications, the mass media, command and control, support and access to sophisticated weapons systems, which means that those actors pose a hybrid threat – and are difficult opponents.<sup>3</sup> The traditional British view has been to associate hybrid warfare with asymmetric warfare and indirect methods. In US descriptions many have tried to use the terms hybrid threat and hybrid warfare to cover almost every complexity of war and its grey areas from civil conflict to full-scale war. A combination of ‘regulated’ regular warfare with forms of terrorism and criminality creates an opponent that allows the ends to justify the means. Criticisms of the concept are its universal use, its limitation to specific operational areas, its primarily tactical leaning (combat techniques at the tactical level) with defensive methods, although sometimes with the use of offensive weapons, and its lack of linkage to overall objectives and strategic means, such as mass media, politics and economics – despite the fact that the media and political elements have often been a strength for hybrid actors (Liegis, Bērziņ, Šešelgytė & Hurt 2014).

The direction of Russian strategic thinking is based on the country's socio-economic development, national security strategy, foreign policy concepts and strategies for the development of the Russian Arctic zone, and security policy up to 2020. Russia advocates a multipolar world with several regional centres of power, instead of the unipolar world of today with strong American military, economic and political dominance. The major external threats to Russia are NATO and the USA. NATO's

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<sup>3</sup> Militärstrategisk doktrin 2011 (Military-Strategic Doctrine 2011), Stockholm, Försvarsmakten (Swedish Armed Forces), p. 29.

military expansion in areas neighbouring Russia, the US conventional 'Prompt Global Strike' programme and strategic missile defence are seen as the most dangerous threats. The destabilisation of countries neighbouring Russia and internal unrest and fragile stabilisation in Russia [by other countries] are perceived as serious threats. Information and communication technology is said to constitute a threat to world peace. The doctrine describes the characteristics of current military conflicts (The Military Doctrine of the Federation of Russia 2014). They are conclusions drawn from previous Russian studies of contemporary wars and there may be links to the 2013 Defence Plan. These characteristics describe the 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and they have a solid basis in sixth generation warfare, and a clear adaptation to the current era (Gerasimov, 2013).

In his book 'General Theory of War', Major General Alexander Vladimirov describes Russian military thinking through the ages, where war is seen as a social phenomenon and military power as an important part of a nation's power. Vladimirov's interpretation of Sliptjenko's theory of the 'generations of war' is rooted in a dialectical development of objectives, means and methods. In his book there are ideas about war and warfare, beyond sixth generation warfare, which involve means such as missiles in all dimensions, non-lethal weapons, and new weapons derived from scientific advances, based on nanotechnology and genetic engineering. He states that the length of the armed phase decreases because it represents the completion of attack operations, which are preceded by diversionary operations against a nation's civil society, political leadership and the population, and reinforced by information warfare and psychological warfare. Precision weapons, with greater precision, countermeasures and increased kinetic effect, along with a greater ability, in near real time, to identify and analyse political and military strategic goals are swiftly, and not unexpectedly, of decisive significance at the beginning of the military phase of a war. This also requires Special Forces and agents deep in an opponent's territory. Various military functions are digitised and can thus allow a greater ability to wage war in real time and – with powerful intelligence, platforms, strike systems and logistics systems – the continuous monitoring of both friendly and enemy forces' operations. This means

that warfare may be conducted at various degrees of depth and can quickly be redirected in terms of geographical direction and distance. A greater capability for diversionary operations is also needed. Vladimirov predicts a sharp increase in precision weapons, an increase in non-lethal means and unmanned military craft that can be autonomous and armed. Operational and strategic mobility is increased through improvements in the performance of weapon systems and platforms (Vladimirov 2013).

The character of the new war is developed by Major General Alexander Vladimirov from a clear distinction between peace and war between nations, to a permanent war as a natural part of a nation's existence. The previously clear boundary between war and peace blurs into a transitional state of insecurity and fear of war. These new wars are no longer 'surgical' wars involving 'pure' military units against each other, but have become total wars between nations and civilisations, where the nation's entire capacity is exposed to the impact of war, which generates national synergy and strategic force. Vladimirov sees three aspects of this 'eternal' total war. The first change is a shift from war about territory to war of an existential nature. The second change is a transition from war to destroy and annihilate to the exertion of political, economic and cultural influence. The third change is the transition from a war of direct military engagements to a contactless war. The 'existential war' means that the objectives of war no longer involve physically conquering a territory or specific place. As the strategy is no longer destruction, intimidation and annihilation, so the direct use of military means is not the most important method used against other military means. Instead the strategy becomes the use of means for indirect action where the goal is to create organised chaos. Methods can include several variants of the generations of warfare. 'Cultural war' involves creating political, economic and cultural influence. These objectives require means that provide direct influence over an opponent (politicians, the military and the population), internal collapse (to influence the opponent's national elite), a proactive cultural war through various mass media and agents of influence, a war in depth using special forces and commercial irregular forces, and the pursuit of a war about the understanding of war and psychological warfare. The 'contactless war' is seen as a war using remote means of warfare that reduce direct engagement, although Special Forces and

subversive units operate in depth in enemy territory. War against an opponent must, therefore, be understood as a total war continuing with varying degrees of intensity and on several concurrent lines of operation. War is waged within an opponent's territory using subversive and diversionary operations, which are then complemented with remote attacks – from land, the air, the seas and from space – when the strategic and operational conditions are favourable (Vladimirov 2013).

This article has described how the Russian military thinking and development of warfare has evolved from Soviet and Russian war experiences from the 1910s to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century combined with some brilliant ideas of military theorists. The Russians present a different – and for westerners – a challenging way of military thinking and perception of war. War is based on Russian national interests; its historical, cultural and geopolitical position. Warfare involves both civilian and military resources, and the first phases of the modern war are directed at vulnerable civilian soft and hard targets of the adversary's societies. In the revised Russian military doctrine (December 25, 2014) information and psychological warfare are described as both military threat and danger. Especially, patriotic upbringing of youth in Russia is one of the mechanisms to protect the population against western information war. Another mechanism is to work with historical education and present Russian history in positive view. A specific focus should be upon the positive portrayal of Soviet history. The Modern Russian warfare is a synthesis of all national assets and it is led from the new National Command Centre in Moscow, where all important civilian authorities and institutions are subordinated to the General of the Army Valerij Gerasimov, chief of General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, in crises and war.

The Russian build-up of military capabilities and aggressive military interventions in Ukraine has shown a new threat for the western countries. Many have misunderstood and underestimated the Russian military thought, capabilities, and intentions. The threat is a combination of an indirect and direct approach, a combination of asymmetric and symmetric means, as well as a combination of soft and hard methods. Vulnerabilities of the adversaries is analysed and exploited by necessary

available (civilian and military) means as deep operations inside the adversaries territories, as well as a remote contactless warfare by kinetically, informational, psychological and cyber warfare. Western countries must meet these Russian threats by a national coordination by civilian and military defence, as well as a broad international political and military cooperation.

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## VISION IMPOSSIBLE? SOME ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT RUSSIAN DEBATES ABOUT THE MILITARY SCIENCES

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In 21<sup>st</sup> century military theory and doctrine, it is common to subdivide military capability into conceptual, physical and moral components. At least in theory, it follows that conceptual capability should be regarded as the crucial link between the physical and moral capabilities of a given military actor, as it concerns the ability of the actor to operationalise ideas about how to conduct modern warfare. Conceptual military capability can thus be defined as the sum of an actor's military know-how, scientific capacity and doctrine, which defines the expected ability of an actor to uphold an efficient language of military action, distribution and command.

The aim of this article is to highlight the specific current military debate on interaction between military knowledge and scientific capacity in the case of Russia. For all the recently reawakened interest in Russia's overall military capability, not least in the wake of the 2014 operations in Ukraine, there seems to be a curious emphasis on doctrine among Western observers and analysts. Consider for example one reaction to the most recent Russian military doctrine, which also emerged in 2014:

Ultimately the doctrine is a restatement of global realities, **as Russia sees them**, but more focused on regional threats to Moscow's interests. It is characterised by defensiveness and insecurity, rather than a desire to chalk up the West as an enemy. At its core, the document leaves any would be Cold War warrior or alarmist disappointed. If anything, it combines Russia's long standing protests to Western behaviour, with **changes to Russian military thinking**, and potentially positive revisions in the country's nuclear posture. As such, if carefully scrutinised by Western policymakers, the 2014 Military Doctrine may serve to deflate existing fears of a return to the Cold War, and tamper

prevailing worst-case thinking regarding Russia's intentions.  
(Kofman & McDermott 2015, author's bold)

The emphasis on doctrine begs political questions, particularly related to the current leadership of state in Russia, and there is no lack of commentary on the vagaries of Russian political steering (cf. Barany 2009, McDermott 2011, Hedenskog & Vendil Pallin 2013). But how relevant is the politics-of-scale question about a return to global cold-war structures, and to which countries? Admittedly, in Soviet military parlance doctrine was everything, and rightly analysed as such by Western observers (Glantz 1991). But does military innovation flow only from state policy and political leadership in Russia today? What can we learn from the other two-thirds of its conceptual capability, i.e. by studying how it organises military knowledge and provides it with scientific underpinnings? Focusing on doctrine and summarily disrespecting their innovative capacity in military terms, are we reading the Russians right?

This article taps into an ongoing research project at the Swedish Defence College in Stockholm, *Evolving Russian Military Capability*, to which the author is an affiliated researcher. Methodologically it can be read as research notes from a reading of the public debates between high-ranking Russian military officers and researchers, with examples presented and topical choices made at the discretion of the author of this article (McAuley 2005, Berg & Lune 2014). The period under consideration is 2008-2015, as the first year represents a fresh editorial start for the main public journal of the Russian Ministry of Defence, *Voyennaya Mysl* (henceforth: VM), also translated from Russian and published in the US as *Military Thought*. The journal has been analysed in the original language, and the responsibility for any errors concerning interpretation, translation or conjecture thus lies with the author. Currently, the research project is delving deeper into the relationship between changes in military thought and the general development of science in Russia, using a wide number of sources beyond VM. The one-source approach here is chosen for the parallel purposes of research communication and illustration, but the references should be readily

available for checking by the interested reader, only with a slight time lag for non-Russian speakers.

### *The state-science nexus in contemporary Russia*

There is a formal division of labour between the civil and military sciences in Russia. Civil research is guided by the influential Russian Academy of Sciences, under the auspices of which universities can still by and large be seen as mass teaching units. Military research is steered by the Military Scientific Committee, which is directly subordinate to the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. Hence, there are also similarities between the civil and military producers of knowledge and research in Russia since both spheres are elitist and detach research from teaching and education (Graham 1993, Russian Academy of Sciences 2014, Ministry of Defence 2014).

A significant difference between the civil and military sectors is that the state holds direct sway over scientific work on the military side through the Ministry of Defence and the Chief of Staff. This state of affairs is rarely or never debated in public or in the Russian media. Regarding civil research, however, state control is indirect and mostly exercised via budgetary measures. The Russian Academy of Sciences is relatively autonomous vis-à-vis state power. Another difference is that the corruption and conservatism of the academy and the consequences for the Russian system of higher education and research belong to a recurrent theme in the Russian public debate. So much so that international observers are struck by the force and intensity of arguments (cf. Kurilla 2014).

Loren Graham is the western scholar who has perhaps most persistently tried to follow the development of science in Russia. His studies range from the politically monolithic period before the fall of the Soviet Union (Graham 1993) via the confused and identity-seeking 1990s (Graham & Dezhina 2008) to the gradual consolidation of presidentialism and oligarchy in the 2000s (Graham 2013). Leaving the social sciences and humanities to the side, Graham finds that the prerequisites for

innovation and fresh thinking more often than not are lacking through the history of Russian science:

Russian and Soviet science and technology stretches like an arch through four stages: a tsarist system that, while somewhat different from Western models, was clearly becoming more similar to the organisations of other industrialised nations; an early Soviet system in which administrators proudly sought to create a distinct system superior to those of other nations while selectively drawing on the latest foreign models; a late Stalinist and Brezhnevite period in which the disadvantages of the unique Soviet research system, despite its accomplishments in a few high-priority tasks, became increasingly evident; and a new reform era after 1986 in which administrators concentrated on trying to create a system similar to those in the capitalist nations their predecessors scorned. (Graham 1993, p. 196)

His extensive history of science research shows that political change has been the more or less constant driver of both positive and negative developments. Whereas the accumulation of knowledge in the fields of for example literature, history and art have been constantly subjected to authoritarian interference, particularly under the aegis of tsars and communists, the technical and natural sciences have been able to foster a certain relative autonomy by the power of mathematics and objectifying principles of study. This has also allowed researchers in the fields of science and technology a constant element of interaction with their western counterparts. For Graham, however, innovation is defined by the ability among scientists to operationalise research results into ideas and products that can be put on the market and, thus, contribute to the economic growth and welfare of a nation. Graham fails to find this type of innovativeness in Russia generally, but he also points to some areas that are difficult to interpret. In nuclear technology, space technology and computerization political control and steering have yielded positive results (Graham 1993, p. 201ff). Whereas the Soviet Union laid the foundation for Russian prominence in the fields of nuclear and space, however, it completely missed the beat regarding the early stages of computerisation.

In his latest book (2013), adding the contemporary Russian system of science to his observations, Graham takes recourse to the expression 'fits-and-starts' in his effort to describe the development of Russian science over time. He maintains that Russian universities, institutes and other scientific establishments continue to produce human talent. He also describes how the propensity for large-scale national projects aimed at organising and financing top notch research and science spills over into present-day Russia (p. 145-160). As a whole, he concludes, the Russian system of higher education and research continues to produce geniuses in a vacuum because of the blatant lack of political, social, legal and economic support for marketable innovation (p. 99-142). Again, he seems mystified by those scientific areas in which Russian science is able to compensate for what by western standards looks like its constant structural shortcomings. Still, Graham concludes, the Russian system is at the forefront of nuclear and space technology and by extension how knowledge in these fields contributes to the development of modern weapons. Also, with regard to the cumbersome experience from early computerisation, Russia seems to have been able to skip a phase in the evolution of computer hardware, compensating heavily by foreign import and rapid and expansive evolution in the development, design and application of software (p. 91-97). Thus, Russian science is competitive in at least three areas of significant military interest.

### *Five aspects of the current military-scientific debate*

Looking at the military-theoretical debate in VM after 2008, more than 20 articles discuss the role and function of military science in Russia. In an effort to collate the different arguments and perspectives in 2013, colonel N.M. Vasilyev presents his opinion that the debate on military science has been too much focused on the delimitation of military research (VM 2013:3, p. 39-46). The reason, according to Vasilyev, is that too many influential individuals in the field have emphasised armed struggle and combat as the core of military knowledge. Instead, he says, broader social, technical, and scientific perspectives should be applied to military issues since no meaningful boundaries can be drawn between combat and other forms of struggle in modern warfare. The Russian organisation for war, he continues, is so much more encompassing than

just the Armed Forces, strategy is intermingled with general government policies and, above all, it is far from clear when acts of war begin or end (p. 44). The gist of Vasilyev's argument seems to be that Russian military science could do better not so much by emulating other scientific fields of research as by broadening the view of what actually constitutes modern war (p. 42).

Whether or not Russian military science has a core of knowledge, consisting of the prerequisites for and successful implementation of armed struggle, is major bone of contention from 2008 onwards. High-ranking military officers and academics argue over the issue in a debate which seems to be fuelled by the concurrent intensification of Russian military reform. The relative strengths and shortcomings of the military academic system are also debated in relative openness, some arguing that military science is in a crisis situation, particularly targeting the issue of whether or not a renewal of theories, approaches or methods is necessary to achieve the goals of the military reform policy aimed at 2020 (VM 2008:7,10,11; VM 2009: 5,10,12; VM 2010: 10, VM 2011: 9). Opinions about whether or not Russian military science is in a crisis, or not, however pale by the side of arguments concerning the character, role and function of modern warfare. In the following, the arguments are reduced to five different perspectives illustrative of how the debate has evolved over time.

First off, there is the idea that Russian military science is well organised and competitive in terms of knowledge, but that it suffers from an over-emphasis on the role of history and past experience for modern warfare. Major General I.N. Vorobyev and Colonel V.A. Kiselyev, both with doctorates in military science, are frequent participants in the debate. Their argument is that Russian military science is unique in having an extensive knowledge base in its historical experiences from war, but that it is currently over-emphasising the study of history, collective national experiences and relative successes and failures in wars of the past (VM 2013 p. 39-42). Vorobyev and Kiselyev express their firm belief that military history forms an integral part of overall military knowledge, but also that the intellectual primacy of historical perspectives in Russian military theory and higher education has evolved into an organisational

principle (p. 8). In their view, this has made the Russian system for military analysis vulnerable to oversight and partially blocked its capability to embrace the realities of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> generation warfare.

A second position in this debate focuses on the demerits of Soviet military terminology and how it casts a long shadow over current military analysis in Russia. The moral importance and ponderousness of the Soviet military heritage is nowhere in question but, as illustrated by N.M. Ilichev, its conceptual and theoretical aspects are (VM 2013:9). In this light, the Soviet assumption that social and economic developments are linear and stable is particularly problematic, since present-day structures are inherently unstable. In an encompassing article, Vorobyev and Kiselyev also follow this line of thought, saying that the role of military doctrine therefore has changed and that the real challenge for current Russian military science is to observe some critical distance between how political and economic knowledge is transformed into military doctrine on the one hand, and on the other hand military science can make judgements about developments in the world (VM 2013: 8, p. 35-38). The authors go on to enumerate examples of how they see Russian military science as lagging behind the US and NATO because of its reluctance to incorporate technical, scientific and social-scientific innovation with the conceptualisation of modern warfare. Vorobyev and Kiseljev also think that Russian military science could have a greater influence over military doctrine if the current spearheading action of the Russian government and the Armed Forces, i.e. the actual military reform was to be taken more at face value (p. 41-42). New technologies, net-centric and information warfare, electronic operations and joint leadership structures lie at the core of modern warfare, and the argument is that Russian military science lags behind other state institutions in this realisation at its own peril.

A third position in the debate on Russian military science is represented by equally frequent participants V.K. Kopytko and A.V. Kopylov. The thrust of their argument is that no clear boundaries, analytical or otherwise, can be drawn between military and social change (VM 2013:9). To them, however, the issue is methodological. In their eyes, Russian military science should sharpen its analytical tools, particularly its

conceptual tool box, in order to better observe and draw conclusions about different types of conflict including both the armed and non-armed varieties. Furthermore, they argue that the ability to contribute to different kinds of prognosis about social, political and economic change is a success factor. According to Kopytko and Kopylov, this can be achieved only as the result of a sharper methodological discussion and revamping of how military science in Russia is delineated, inspired and focused on particular areas of research (p. 14-15).

It is interesting to note that Kopytko and Kopylov take their methodological argument very far. They only glance over the doctrinal aspect of military science, while fully focusing their attention on the world of science. Indeed, far from just talking about methodological choices within the field of military science, they actually conceptualise how the ultimate break with Soviet terminology (in which military doctrine steers military science, cf. Glantz 1991) can be achieved by a conceptual shift in which philosophy of science guides military science. Considering the significant influence on the modernisation of military theory in Russia, particularly of V.K. Kopytko, the argument merits special mention here:

Hence, military science cannot wholeheartedly study various forms of preparation for and implementation of armed struggle without deeper knowledge about the socio-economic and military-political aspects of war, nor without knowledge about those laws prescribed by materialist dialectics. (VM 2013:9, p.17)

A fourth, perhaps more polemical position in the ongoing debate is represented by Lt.Col. S.V. Fomov. To his eyes, it is easy to accept the notion that Russian military science can be more inspired by science in general and by certain innovations in particular. However, he argues, this does not lead to any significant changes in the objects of study or, indeed, terminology of Russian military science. The reason, he finds, is that the identity of Russian military science is defined precisely by its staunch protection of certain methodological and philosophical core assumptions, to which he explicitly counts 20<sup>th</sup> century rationalism, such as universalism, collectivism, utilitarianism and organised scepticism (VM

2014:2, p. 76). Doctrinal steering, Fomov argues, is rather uninteresting since Russian military science already shares its place in Russian society and development with the civilian sciences. Times may change, says Fomov, and perhaps some objects of study within the field of military science, but at the end of the day the forte of Russian military science is its constant refusal to succumb to postmodernist theories and perspectives. Fomov's views are supported when, toward the end of 2014, A.V. Kopylov returns with an article on how the American usage of the term *national security* has changed over time. Regardless of his polemical, perhaps politically motivated, keenness to show similarities between the US and Russian governments, his point is that militarily successful Western governments have moved from doctrinal thinking based on ideas about military security to doctrinal thinking based on national security (VM 2014:11, p. 47-56). Kopylov, a Ph.D. in Political science, argues that American and other western thinking is both motivated by and firmly rooted in theoretical and scientific concepts. Directly addressing the Russian national strategy (cf. Vladimirov 2013, pp. 356-359), Kopylov closes his argument by saying that the study of how military theories and practices integrate with other scientific fields in such doctrinal thinking should be a prime object of study for Russian military science (p.56).

The fifth position also emerges towards the end of 2014 and carries over into 2015: 'The discussions about the role of military science, its place in the theoretical system of the state are always topical. But they take on a particular sharpness in the light of the global movement towards post-industrial, information society.' (VM 2014:12, p. 42) Authors Y. N. Golubyev, V.R. Grin and V.N. Kargin argue that the debate on military science in Russia has less to do with methodology, the postmodern varieties of which are well known and utilized by a plethora of analysts in the Russian military-scientific system, and more with the lack of a systematic quality assessment. 'Top managers of the military reform', they say, 'have ignored the birth of these new organizational principles for the intellectual sphere, which are directly related to the steering of quality in military-scientific knowledge.' (p.58) Following the same line of thought, albeit not putting any blame for scientific problems on political middle managers, S. G. Chekinov and S.A. Bogdanov try to

summarise the key elements of Russian military science under ‘the new look’ of the Russian Armed Forces. Their schema emphasises interaction between different areas of knowledge and research, also introducing a new terminology for the building blocks of Russian military art (*voyennoye iskusstvo*) (VM 2015:1, p. 35). The new terminology merits some attention from Western scholars in and of itself, but two aspects of the schema are of particular interest here. The first is the overall emphasis on coordination and cooperation between different areas of science and research, civilian and military, where Chekinov and Bogdanov reduce the role of strategic, operational and tactical military theory (historically *the* theories of Russian military art) to just one of several interfacing elements, including civil research in the social, natural and technical sciences. Perhaps even more interesting is their reduction of the role of military doctrine to just another factor contributing to better military science. Their schema would, according to Chekinov and Bogdanov, simply codify a system of knowledge production which is already in place, given their view of what changes have taken place in Russian state and society:

Thus, in the evolutionary development of military art at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the core role will be played by all of its component and interacting theories and disciplines, of other methods of struggle, above all non-military measures and indirect effects and their elements—military cleverness and instantaneity. A special place in this process is reserved for military science, which decides the basic trajectories, causalities in the development of military art. It specifies causal dependencies in military affairs, gives practical recommendations with regard to military practice in our VS (armed forces) and the other military structures of the country. (p. 43)

### ***Concluding remarks***

As this rendering of perspectives on military science in Russia is based on a single source, e.g. the journal *Voyennaya Mysl*, it does not allow any definite conclusions or hypotheses about the country’s conceptual capability. It does, however, describe the perimeter of public intellectual

efforts among top military thinkers in Russia today. Some of the names referred to here can sometimes be seen also in other public media, but more often than not the discussion on military doctrine, knowledge and science is limited to fewer sources. Leaving doctrine aside and focusing instead on the know-how and scientific aspects of Russia's current conceptual capability, certain points stand out in the discussion.

From a bird's-eye view, it appears that Russian military thinkers firmly believe in rational scientific modelling and analysis. Postmodernity is firmly relegated to elements of behaviour in society, which is in line with what the civil Russian literature on philosophy of science has to say (cf. Lebedeva 2007, Lebedev 2013). This leads the discussion onto two different paths, where one addresses the problem of how military knowledge and science should be organised, and the other whether or not social phenomena that might be construed as postmodern should lead to a change in, or redefinition of, the military-scientific objects of study. Indeed, as evident particularly from one of the articles quoted here (VM 2014:12) all aspects of human mind and matter can be neatly modelled into analytical 'spaces' (*prostranstvo*) in which scientists can determine and analyse relevant phenomena and causalities. Importantly, the information sphere is considered one such analytical space.

On closer scrutiny, the debate mirrors a particular view of what constitutes scientific innovation. The adherence of the debaters to the uniqueness of Russian national interests is, albeit not outspokenly so, staggeringly close. The Russian national strategy, as formulated by for example A.I. Vladimirov (2013, p.356-359) talks among other things about Russian uniqueness and autarchy in terms of scientific and technological capability, which in turn forms the basis of military independence. The civil-military intellectual link can also be illustrated with how a current Russian university textbook talks about how 'Russia is capable and bound to play an important role in the emergence and formation of a global, pluralist theory of international relations.' (Tsygankov 2013, p. 10). But what does innovation mean in military terms?

On reflection, perhaps it could be argued that Russia retains at least an option to innovate militarily? Returning briefly to the full concept of modern military capability, is the current Western discussion perhaps too focused upon the physical (mostly technological) and moral aspects of modern warfare? (cf. Fabre 2012, Jantunen & Kotilainen 2014) Has the decoupling of knowledge and experience (Ferraris 2012) gone too far? At this juncture, it seems as if the Russian discussion on military science gives us at least the incentive to further research the potential privatization of Russian security forces and the development of private security companies. Drawing on the debate about military knowledge and science in Russia, it could be seen as a game changer for at least two fields of global military interest. Among Russian military experts, the discussion about how Russian military interests might be forwarded by the use of private military companies is already under way (VM 2015:1, pp. 60ff). What is not being discussed, in Russia or elsewhere, is how military privatization might be a game changer also in scientific innovation.

At the base, at least where it stands in 2015, the Russian debate on military science throws out an interesting analytical challenge. Although it is difficult to know whether or not military thinkers like Chekinov and Bogdanov are simply trying to mask incompetence with conceptual eloquence, there is food for thought in their effort. If their relative denouncement of military doctrine in Russia as the ultimate guide to our understanding of current and future military action has any substance, then particularly neighbouring countries will ignore the innovative potential of Russian conceptual capability at their peril.

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## IS RUSSIAN MILITARY BACK ON IT'S FEET

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When on 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2008 Russia officially announced a decision to reform its armed forces some observers were very fast to claim this as a new adventurist's move of Russian political and military leadership. Almost nobody took it seriously. Today the situation is different with more and more specialists and officials pointing at the Russian army and recognising it as an emerging threat. How did this happen that we became caught in surprise again? Why did nobody pay any attention to what was going on in the Russian Army, or if somebody did, why nobody took them seriously. Those and other questions still remain to be answered.

Already in the beginning of 2010 it became obvious that this reform was different. At the same time a number of indicators also showed that the reform had reached a point where it was not possible to return back. I already presented my thoughts regarding this in my studies of 2010 (Petraitis 2011) and 2012 (Petraitis 2012). In this article (and presentation) I will repeat only some which according my point of view are the most evident and important. Other things I am going to discuss here are related to new evidence and recent changes in the Russian military.

I am still convinced that the recent reform is different compared to previous ones. Firstly, it was theoretically based and field tested. Secondly from the beginning it has been seriously run with no indications showing that the political leadership is going to give up. I still argue that the true reform started far before its official announcement in October 2008. It started as soon as the military doctrine of 2000 was announced. Following it, in the fall of 2003, the Russian MOD headed by S. Ivanov and the General Staff presented a recent document known as the 'Doctrine of Ivanov'. This doctrine transferred political requirements for a new military into political-military ones, declared the

level of the country's ambitions and announced new requirements for the military. To get this implemented the General Staff developed an entire plan, which was presented to the MOD board in September 2005. The plan was made after deep analysis of a transformation which had been done in the US military five–six years before and which allowed the US to perform outstandingly in Iraq and other following wars and missions. It proposed a drastic change. In the process of the reform it was foreseen to dismantle an entire old Soviet type Army and to build new military forces. They had to be very similar to the USA forces. They had to be a new generation forces, fully reshaped and able to conduct military operations and other missions differently. The proposal was so revolutionary that a great number of former Soviet generals refused to support it at that time. S. Ivanov stepped back by offering to name all this as an experiment and to do more theory testing in the fields and HQs. But at the same time he stated that the reform would take place at any cost and as a result of the change hundreds of generals would be retired. We do not know if it was his confidence or the generals' fear of being fired that played the decisive role, but at the end the agreement was achieved.

What was new in the 'Doctrine of Ivanov' and the General Staff plan? The doctrine stated that the new forces have to be:

capable in a peacetime and in times of emergencies to maintain a potential of strategic deterrence and continue to fulfil tasks of combat readiness. It will be able to fight successfully **simultaneously two military conflicts on any type and to participate in one peacekeeping type operation** alone or together with international force by using only forces of constant combat readiness without any mobilization and preparation actions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Original text 'Вооруженные силы РФ должны быть способны в мирное время и в чрезвычайных ситуациях, сохраняя потенциал стратегического сдерживания и выполняя задачи поддержания боеготовности, войсками (силами) постоянной готовности без проведения дополнительных мобилизационных мероприятий успешно решать задачи одновременно в двух вооруженных конфликтах

Besides other recommendations, the plan suggested a solution to achieve this by creating operational and institutional forces. The first ones will be the forces ready to fight any time and the second ones will be the framework allowing the first one to exit and operate.

Proposals had been tested for more than two years. To get the right people to test the reform, and later to implement it, all personnel appointments were concentrated in hands of Army General N. Pankov. He became a State Secretary in the MOD in 2005 and since then remains in that place. Under his supervision a strange appointing policy was adopted and kept until the official beginning of the reform. This policy was expressed by a practice to appoint some commanders by the President's decree and others by the Defence Minister's order. Trusted commanders, appointed by the President, like General-colonels V. Bulgakov, A. Postnikov, N. Tkachov, A. Zelin, Vice-admirals V. Mardusin, N. Maksimov, K. Sedenko were conducting reform tests in a newly created experimental HQ headed by N. Tkachov and during exercises in Siberia and other places. Those, appointed by the minister, like Admiral V. Visockij or General-colonels V. Gerasimov or N. Makarov still had to prove their loyalty and only later were reappointed by the President. As soon as the reform was launched officially this practice ended.

As has already been mentioned the new military had to be split into operational and institutional forces. The first ones were supposed to have a three level C2: a joint strategic command (JSC) in strategic level, an operational command (OC) in operational level and a brigade in tactical level. The new brigade with its four artillery battalions and antiaircraft artillery element was designed to have its fire support capabilities almost the same as previous division had.

The reform has been run in stages. The first one, which is to last until the end of 2015, has a task to finish all structural changes in operational

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любого типа, а также осуществлять миротворческие операции как самостоятельно, так и в составе многонациональных контингентов, Виктор Мясников, (note 2), underlining by the author.

and institutional forces, to get planned units formed and to rearm with new modernised weaponry. A majority of operational forces consisting of new type brigades, OCs and JSCs was created within the first years of the reform. In 2010 almost all structures presented in the schema (Petraitis 2012) below already existed. Some adjustments like creation of Artic forces, which are announced to be a separate operational forces block with its own JSC, OC and tactical structures, have been announced recently but they fit nicely into this scheme as well.



The institutional forces are supposed to perform other than combat activities and are related as an example to strategic command at state level (MOD, General Staff, NSDCC), education, logistics and maintenance, mobilisation and other issues. The creation of forces started almost at the same time as of the operational ones. Military education and logistics became the first to be transformed. Military education system was restructured with dozens of military schools and academies disbanded and thousands of teachers retired. From the side it might have looked like a chaotic distraction, as some kept saying, but quite soon a new logical system has appeared.

NEW RUSSIAN MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM									
	GENERAL STAFF	LAND FORCES	AIR FORCES	NAVY	STRATEGIC MISSILES	NBC	SPACE FORCES	REAR	OTHER
<b>TRAINING UNITS</b>									
Science and research centers		1	1	1					
Academies	1	1				1	1	1	1
Military universities									1
Military schools		9	7	10	2	2	2	?	?

### Russian military education system after reform<sup>2</sup>

Reform in the education system was launched alongside the operational forces with the purpose. At first it allowed to stop 'producing' big numbers of old type officers the new forces did not need. For some years entire admission into military schools was stopped and only when new forces started to appear in 2011 it was restored. Today, when forces are almost created and new officers requested, reshaped institutions are producing officers in numbers almost matching and even exceeding those of soviets times. As the MOD State Secretary Army General N. Pankov pointed out recently in his interview there were more than 15 000 cadets admitted into military schools and other training institutions in 2013.

A creation of an entirely new system of combat training of units is also under way. (Tikhonov 2013) Combat training centres are supposed to be located in each of the military districts (JSCs). The first such centre is planned to start in the JSC 'West' in December 2014. (Novoe Telegrafnoe Agentstvo Privolzh'e. 2014) Each centre will be capable to train an entire brigade at once. Annually it has to train up to ten brigades and around 30 thousand soldiers.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this topic see, Petraitis 2011.

Another important area where an intensive reformation took place was military administration and command and control. Since all operational forces became subordinated to adequate JSCs, supreme HQs of old military branches and troops became obsolete. Closing began. We could name as examples Naval C2 movements from city to city or General Staff command post reformation. The reform will touch former supreme commands of military branches and troops. They are destined to shrink and loose command over forces. They will be turned in to sort of departments in the MOD and be responsible for a wide range of issues related to the branch or troops support, specific research, preparation of normative documents, military education, manuals, technical requirements for armament and equipment and so on.

Still the most important in my point of view is the change of the General Staff. According to new General Staff regulations signed by the president of Russia back in 2013, the staff got new responsibilities. The old general staff was doing only strategic C2 for the forces belonging to the MOD. Now it will perform strategic C2 for all state institutions. To implement this, a command post of old general staff was transformed into a new structure – a national centre for coordination of state defence (NCCSD)<sup>3</sup>. The process began in July 2013. In March 2014 the centre began to work and is planned to reach its final operational capabilities at the end of 2014. (Nikitina 2013) The most important is a fact that the NSDCC is authorised to coordinate all defence related activities in peace and war time. This means that Russia already has a war time structure in place and no further transformation is required.

Besides standing operational forces, Russia still keeps a mobilisation idea alive. It will be different compared to the former Soviet one. The first wave of mobilised forces will be made from reservists. Creation of a new reserve system, by the way very similar to the US reserve system, is gaining speed. The Russian parliament (Duma) made necessary changes in laws (INTERFAKS-AVN, 2013a) introducing principles of formation and numbers of reserve. Government decisions (Gavrilov 2011) and MOD documents (Kulikov 2013) describe a way to organise activities of the reserve. (Gavrilov 2013) The new system was established in 1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In russian 'Национального центра управления обороной государства (НЦУОГ)

January 2013. The MOD system of reserve will guarantee a first wave of 250,000-300,000 reservists (50-60 brigades). The remaining in total 800,000 reservists (180 brigades), planned by the general staff, will come from other institutions. As an example a system of students training as reservists (Mukhin 2014) just started. It is supposed to provide 100,000-160,000 reservists annually. Reformed 'Voluntary support to army, aviation and navy' organisation (Russian name DOSAAF) (NG-NVO 2011) will train around 100,000 reservists annually plus has more than a couple of million more involved in other different military related activities. A newly established reserve OC, one per JSC, will supervise reserve brigades in the military district. (Ishchenko, 2013)

A logistic system of units in the peace time locations is almost finished. Here so called 'outsourcing' with a majority of functions transferred to civilian and commercial institution is created. In regard to issues related to servicing weaponry and equipment, a system oriented to provide entire life cycle maintenance and service by using military industrial complex capabilities, is being created now. (A. Tikhonov 2014) Besides that another system, tasked to provide maintenance and service for military equipment and armament by using MOD capabilities, is also being established. As deputy defence minister J. Borisov told journalists, the MOD would keep only 26 from 133 factories to repair military equipment and arms. The rest would be transferred to the military industrial complex with adequate contracts for repair and maintenance signed. (Voronin 2014) At the same time repair and maintenance elements were re-established in the units to be responsible for current maintenance and repair units weaponry in place. (Tikhonov 2014) A new military arsenal system foresees standardised arsenals spread among JSCs with approximately 400 soldiers in each. At the end of 2014 it should be first nine such arsenals and at the end of 2015 and the total number would grow up to 15. (INTERFAKS-AVN. 2013)

A new system of medical support foresees 33 medical brigades/groups (Gavrilov 2014) under the JSCs and MOD command being ready to act in emergencies and other cases. Education of military medical personnel is renewed. After four years of waiting, military medical institutes accepted around 600 students in 2013. Plans for the year 2014 are 400

students plus 200 more after a new medical faculty is opened in Penza. To match the required numbers, around 150 military doctors have been recalled to service. (Tikhonov, 2014) A system of daily military medical care and prophylaxis medicine is being renewed as well.

As it has already been mentioned rearming reformed forces with modernised weaponry is foreseen in the first stage of the reform. To achieve this a mass modernisation program was started. From each category of weapons certain models were selected, modernised and sent into units. As an example the T-72 tank was modernised to T-72 B3 level, which is almost equal to new T-90 A and C models. (Tikhonov, 2014) Similar things are done with armoured personnel carriers BTR, infantry fighting vehicles BMP3, artillery systems, aircrafts MIG, SU and so on. And modernised products go straight to the units. For example, the number of modernised T-72B3 provided to troops since 2012 range from 150 to 300 annually. A factory located in Arzamas producing BTR-82A infantry fighting vehicles is stated as being able to produce up to a thousand BTRs per year. (BTR-82A. 2013)

The second stage of the reform will put the emphasis on a new generation weapons. It is planned to start it from 2016. Recently deputy defence minister J. Borisov confirmed that by stating that a production of around 20 percent of recent weaponry types will be terminated and those weapons substituted by new type ones. (Voronin 2014) One of the most important criteria for any new type of a weapon will be standardisation. The military will try to use the same platforms to create different types of weapons. Of course a lot depends on Russia's success and ability to create new weaponry. There are plenty of ideas and wishes but not everything went as smoothly as was expected. For example the fifth generation T-50 jets keep experiencing problems during flight testing, (Denisov 2014) a new 'Armata' tank prototype was planned to be presented already in 2013 and taken into an armament in 2015 (Vladykin 2012) but even today it remains shrouded in mystery.

New weaponry requires adjusting of brigade structure. Already back in 2010-2011 the first messages about potential changes in new brigades appeared. (RIA Novosti 2011) Experimentation kept going and the first

drafts of reorganised new brigades already exist. Some time ago a General-Colonel A. Postnikov, at that time a commander of land forces, said that it would be only light, medium and heavy brigades in the land forces. (Topwar.ru 2011) Most probably light brigades will be armed by light wheeled transport vehicles as crossovers 'Tigr', 'Skorpion', 'Volk' or vehicles built on a new 'Taifoon' platform. Those brigades would have light antitank, antiaircraft defence weapons as well. (Military Russia.ru 2011) Medium and heavy brigades would rely on bigger wheeled and tracked platforms. Experimental wheeled platform was named as 'Bumerang', a tracked platform for medium brigades named as 'Kurganec', and for heavy brigades as 'Armata'. (Vladykin 2013)

There is a similar situation in other categories of arms (air, naval, air defence, missiles and so on) as well. The only difference from land weaponry is that it takes longer to get a new generation of a weapon and at the same time all those weapons possess further modernisation potential. But the tendencies remain the same. The emphasis is put on enhanced modernisation and increasing supplies into forces. At the same time creation of new types of arms is progressing.

To guarantee rearmament process ongoing and orders to be fulfilled on time the NSDCC is involved as well. A special event so called 'a day of acceptance of new armaments into forces' was held in the centre recently. During it the defence minister received reports from different factories about fulfilling orders and himself distributed new jets or tanks into units. (Tikhonov 2014) Most probably such events will continue because in the second stage of rearmament supply new weaponry must become massive (INTERFAKS-AVN. 2014) and reach 70 percent of new arms in the forces level marked by the MOD for 2020.

In conclusion it is worthy of mention that reformed troops are exercised continuously with different forms of training and testing being used. This includes not only increased number of ordinary military exercises but also so called sudden checks of combat readiness, military competitions like 'tank biathlon' or 'aviadarts', multinational exercises and so on. This makes the reformed Russian army much more capable. It was noted even by the US Defense Secretary C.Hagel in his speech to the

Association of the United States Army (AUSA) in 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014 when he said that ‘we also must deal with a revisionist Russia – with its modern and capable army – on NATO’s doorstep’.

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## **'CONSOLIDATION' AND 'SECURITISATION' OF THE RUSSIAN STATE. IMPLICATIONS FOR POWER PROJECTION.**

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### **1. Introduction**

In the study of Russia modernisation, the role of agency in the structuration of social processes has intrigued researchers in the past 20 plus years. The construction of a credible picture of the multiple processes and levels of change in Russian society are needed for an informed analysis of how Russia is really changing, what might be the main obstacles in front of this change, what have been unintended consequences and what are definite choices. In order to give an informed opinion on power projection of the Russia state inside and outside of its borders, comprehensive attention must be given to change in Russia.

The Finnish Centre of Excellence in Russia studies launched a multidisciplinary six year project in 2012 to examine the multiple processes at various levels of the Russian society to understand how modernisation is understood and implemented. Some of the most recent results of this project by Vladimir Gel'man (2014) and Meri Kulmala, Markus Kainu, Jouko Nikula and Markku Kivinen (2014) in the Special Issue of *Demokratizatsiya* will be presented here. The goals of the Centre are based on the idea that previous research has not sufficiently considered all relevant dimensions of Russian modernisation, their mutual interrelationships and more generic theoretical possibilities. Despite some interesting theorisations concerning the various paths and forms of modernity, and a near-consensual understanding that modern development can no longer be encapsulated in the traditional 'West and the rest' formula, Russian modernity has remained an enigma that social scientists have approached from various perspectives with somewhat atomistic results. The most widespread approach in Russia sees Russia as a unique civilisation. For example, Eurasian theory is problematic

because it tends to be abstract and totalising in an essentialist vein. In the context of major Western theories, totalising approaches are also widespread. One such influential interpretation is the concept of the 'patrimonial model'. This perspective sees Russia as being determined to stay on its path of state-dependent authoritarianism. Empirical studies, however, have shown that development is more hybrid in nature, connecting global and local influences in both formal and informal rules of the game. The contradictory and complicated relationship between the reality and the rhetoric prevalent in Russian discourses has been a major obstacle for researchers in their attempt to understand current Russian society and state. In the Soviet period, the lack of reliable information was used to explain this difficulty. Information is much more freely available in post-Soviet Russia, and analysis which draws from Russian history and culture, must be placed alongside social science models in order to fully grasp the significance of official discourses and their reception in Russian society. (The Finnish Centre of Excellence in Russia studies 2012)

The Centre of Excellence in Russia studies approach emphasises choice and agency, intended and unintended results and the social constitution of culture. In this regard, Russia faces five major challenges which are diversification of its economy, managing an authoritarian market society, developing its welfare regime, creating a credible foreign policy, and cultural and philosophical interpretations of modernisation. The Centre of Excellence maintains that Russia should not be seen only as an empirical case; we view it as a challenge for our understanding of basic social processes of modernisation in general. (The Finnish Centre of Excellence in Russia studies 2012) At the same time, the question of whether Russia is indeed modernised is left open. Russian developments include notions of competition between ideas, hybrid forms of implementation, and also processes which could be called de-modernisation. It is in this framework that 'consolidation' and 'securitisation' of the Russia state and implications for its power projection are approached here.

## 2. The logic of consolidation since 1991

In the past 20 years, the Russian state has been the object of massive structural reforms, which have led to the establishing and re-organising of institutions, re-divided authority of the state, and produced new legislation. The global paradigmatic turn of *New Public Management* (NPM) has been visible in political, legal and organisational changes in Russia. States – including Russia - have de-centralised, de-regulated and delegated resource using powers. At the same time, Russian reforms have continued to be targets of critical analyses across different disciplines, which see the current institutional development falling short of the original goals of political democratisation, genuine economic liberalisation and even many of the more technical goals of reforms. The Russian state administration is criticised for recycling institutional characteristics of informal Soviet administrative culture which compromises real modernisation of practices. The legacy of strict top-down political forces is seen as prevalent in Russian society. (e.g. Barabashev and Straussman 2005; Brovkin 2002; Oleinik 2009; Goncharov and Shirikov 2013; Obolonsky 2009) At the same time, many researchers have argued that historically based path dependency and legacy explanations (Hindrik-Mayer 2009) can offer only partial explanations for Russia's administrative developments. Analyses of specific policy sectors and institutions suggest a complex picture of public sector changes in Russia. (e.g. Hendley 2012; Gelman 2012; Romanov 2008; Gelman and Starodubtsev 2014.)

A now widely shared understanding is that examination of current Russian politics and the rise to the power of Vladimir Putin, requires taking into account the development of the 1990s. Russia has undergone at least three major reform periods since the start of the *perestroika* period which have included various kinds of sub-programs and legislative changes. The most significant, politically, have included the first post-socialist reforms of shock therapy and subsequent privatisation of state assets in 1995-1996. Shock therapy and the delegation of power to the regions were basically attempts to get rid of the influence of former bureaucratic elites (Heusala 2005) and to curb the possibility of a second coup at the time of intense competition between the Duma and the

government. In 1995-1996, the government faced an acute budget crisis which it tried to curtail through the issuing of government bonds and with IMF loans. The intension was to keep the rouble stable and to get reserves for the so called stabilisation fund. In addition to the birth of the oligarchs in the state assets privatisation, the events led to the collapse of the Russian economy and rouble devaluation in 1998 (Brovkin 2003; Kivinen and Chunling 2012).

Since then, the efforts of the Russian leadership have been directed at getting Russia back on its feet in macro-economic terms. The primacy of economic interests and the huge societal challenges after the collapse of the Soviet Union have a significant effect on the way that state building has progressed. Contrary to common wisdom, Russia has adopted many World Bank recommended measures in its state reforms more effectively during Putin's regime (Collier 2011) than during the highly turbulent and politically chaotic post-Soviet years in the beginning of the 1990s. In Russian economic policy, the choice of modernisation seems to be connected to both the global technical-rational managerial views on the creation of innovation economies and on the Soviet legacy of technological change. These are evident, for instance, in such projects as *Skolkovo*. At same time Russian public administration change has included elements of *New Public Management*, which uses outsourcing, public-private partnerships, competition and generally putting a price tag on services (Hood 1991; Romanov 2008). Many of Russian developments in the past 20 years and its long term goals deserve to be examined against this background.

The main objectives in state consolidation in the previous framework have been the following: first, balancing of budgets in order to avoid debt and to collect reserve funds for societally important sectors; second, changing the negative demographic situation to increase the proportion of working age persons in the country. Russian macro-economy was indeed a success story for years with regard to many key indicators. Living standards in Russia rose in a steady manner. The average salary rose from 475€/month to 695€/month between 2008 and 2013. Inflation diminished from 13.3% to 6.5%, and unemployment from 7.6% to 5.4% during the same time period. Population was finally on the

rise from 142.8 million in 2008 to 143.3 million in 2013. On the other hand, there were structural problems which were manifested in the slower GDP growth from 5.2 yearly percentage-growth to 1.3% in 2013. Industrial production fell from the 8.2 % high in 2010 to -1.3% in 2013. (Bank of Finland 2014)

During the 2000s Russia became a ‘money-based market economy with a reasonable degree of economic stability’ as Sutela (2012) has pointed out. This can be seen as a great achievement or a disappointing ‘half-way’ result from the point of view of complete market liberalisation. Russia has remained a resource-dependent economy with state dominance, but the prices of its main commodities – oil and gas – have multiplied. (Sutela 2012) Because of the positive GDP and stabilisation fund growth from the post-financial crises low of 113.9 billion USD in 2010 to 175 billion USD in 2013 (Bank of Finland 2014) the Russian government has finally been able to concentrate on reforming the state administration. A key sector has been the social services.

Kulmala et al (2014) show how the 2005 National Priority Programs for improving the quality of life were introduced with high political and practical expectations. In 2000, President Putin identified the demographic situation as a serious threat to ‘Russia’s survival as a nation, as a people...’ In the same year, the government issued the Concept of Demographic Development for the Russian Federation through 2015, and the most prominent measures were introduced in Putin’s annual address to the nation in May 2006. In this speech, the president named demographic development as ‘the most acute problem facing our country today.’ ‘Love for one’s country starts from love for one’s family,’ the president continued, setting family policy as the major priority through which the demographic crisis was to be solved. Ever since, pronatalist policies have been a top priority of the Russian government. Promotion of traditional values, and support for Russian families in order to reconcile work and family obligations have been addressed (Kulmala et al 2014). The internationally highly controversial law on the prohibition of ‘gay-propaganda’ in 2013 can be seen as a continuation of the emphasis on traditional family values.

The macro level effect of the National Priority Programs has been positive. Kulmala et al (2014) show that poverty rates have declined considerably and inequality has stabilised. Yet, an important societal problem has remained as high male mortality has not diminished. Russian life expectancy has remained only slightly higher than what it was in 1990, although GDP per capita has improved substantially. Compared to Brazil and Poland, which have similar levels of per capita GDP and starting conditions in the 1990s, life expectancy for Russian men is five to seven years lower. According to the authors the overall picture is paradoxical: 'Still, most Russians want the state to be the main agent in terms of organising these services. People believe that state-organised services better guarantee social equality, even if the quality of public services is mediocre.' Consolidation, according to Kulmala et al (2014) has meant rising living standards – experienced by people in real terms – and creating order out of the chaos of the 1990s have helped to legitimise the contemporary political elite even if the major welfare policies have only benefitted selected groups of people. Positive welfare developments and agency at the level of the Russian regions can be seen. Local activists can create alternative forms of services with the political support from the regional centre which now has the legal power to restructure social service systems. Thus, in the Kulmala et al (2014) study, federalism and regional variation are indeed significant factors and involve a role for NGOs and local initiatives as the implementation of state policies is defined at that level.

### **3. 'Securitisation' in globalized conditions**

In the past 20 plus years, globalisation itself has made modernisation in Russia a complex undertaking. In the governmental decision making, reactions to risks caused by the changes in the 1990s have been dealt with a re-assessment of Russia's national interests. The answer has been found in centralisation of structures and securitisation of decision making at various levels and sectors of the government. The underlying logic of the Russian leadership is that Russia's interests are secured through comprehensive development of the Russian society in politically controlled environment. The emulation of both globalised public sector managerialism and ideas which to some extent resemble the Chinese-like

incremental and politically controlled development seems to be the aim here. To what extent this is a planned situation or an unintended consequence, needs more specific research attention.

‘Securitisation’ of state administration has historically taken place in situations where the Russian authorities have estimated the risks of societal and political changes to overwhelm the original goals. Risks have been understood as security concerns, often related to the concept of national security. This has led to ‘corrective’ administrative measures which have relied on centralisation and strict legalistic decision making, and hierarchical command systems. The intention has been to reduce ambiguity and strengthen control of decision making. (Heusala 2013).

Vladimir Gel'man (2014) has concluded that the electoral nature of authoritarianism, the low level of repressiveness, the efficient use of institutional foundations (superpresidentialism, centralised subnational authoritarianism, and the dominant party), the winning combination of major political pillars (economic well-being, fear of political disequilibrium, and the ‘lies of virtual politics’) and a changing supply-demand balance on the political market became major features of Russia’s current political regime. These features contributed to the rise of electoral authoritarianism. To the regime’s advantage, popular demand for political changes long remained only latent.

According to Gel'man Russia’s political leaders invested heavily in building their political monopoly, by placing both the state apparatus and United Russia under hierarchical subordination to central authority, and by insulating domestic politics from direct Western influence. Two interconnected reforms in the 2000s helped to consolidate this process: (1) co-optation of the local politics controlled by regional governors and city mayors into a nation-wide Kremlin-driven echelon; and (2) reformatting the party system into a highly controlled hierarchy under the dominance of United Russia. Key institutional changes, such as the elimination of popular gubernatorial elections and the reframing of electoral and party legislation also served the same purpose. As a result, United Russia became the only available choice for all significant national and subnational political actors.

Gel'man has contended that in the Russian developments, the attractiveness and availability of alternatives to the existing political order has remained low. The economic growth allowed the leaders to 'rely upon carrots rather than sticks as the major tools of their dominance; systematic repressions of their opposition rivals were not necessary. Rather than cracking down, Russia's regime guaranteed its subjects (at least, on paper) a wide array of individual and, to some extent, civil freedoms, although they severely constrained their political rights.' (Gel'man 2014). Gel'man points out that political repressions of the regime's opponents were limited. The list of political prisoners in Russia compiled by human rights activists in November 2013 included just seventy names, which the author considers as a low number on the world map of authoritarian regimes. These facts lead Gel'man to state that 'the fear that the regime would repress an individual due to political disloyalty, quite probably, was overestimated. But in a broader sense, the fear felt among various social groups that implementing political change would be costly (especially after the traumatic experience of turbulent reforms during the 1990s) contributed to the preservation of the status quo.' The status quo has been consolidated via media control which has given independent media a small corner in Russia. (Gel'man 2014).

The underlying 'modernisation logic' of the previous developments has so far been manifested in the policy documents and subsequent laws which have defined the future goals of the Russian state. The most significant ones include the 2009 Security Strategy and 2010 federal law on Security which stress the coordination of reforms from the centre. Although the Security Strategy reads almost like a comprehensive welfare state declaration, the accent will most likely to continue to be on the technocratic changes of the state. Political risks, even before the current Ukraine related international crisis, have resulted in a development which has made national security once again the focal point of attention. One could argue that all other laws of the state, including the Constitution of RF are viewed in the national security context at the moment.

The internal consolidation is based on the idea that Russia's national interests are best served by a comprehensive development of the society, which requires most of all diversification of the economy and

further capacity building of the state. At the same time, these interests and the security of the Russian state and society are challenged by the dominant, USA led Western power system. In the 'securitisation' framework then, one can see that Russia seeks to consolidate its great power position – in real terms, the most important of which are connected to its economic interests in the Eurasian region. In the building of the Eurasian security complex and with relations to EU and USA, Russian thinking underlines three elements: first, sovereign democracy as it is defined in the current national security framework; second, equal position in international systems and treaties (Sakwa 2011); third, realism which sees politics as tactical game where the primary goal is to advance economic interest and hegemony. It is thus within this complex framework binding the internal and external goals of Russian state, that Russia seeks to find balance in the global context.

#### 4. Conclusions

Modernisation in Russia during the past 20 plus years has produced a hybrid system both politically and economically. Russia has emulated best practices and ideas of other societies in its own development plans and implementation. For the past 20 years, structural changes of the state have dominated the development. This has consolidated Russian economic independence and its ability to carry out societal changes, many of which have been greatly needed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Research of the Finnish Centre of Excellence which was presented here shows that internally Russian society has its own 'multiple modernities'. Agency at the local and regional levels matters, even as the political scene is controlled by the dominant role of one party and authoritarian type of economic decision making. The answer to challenges, some of which are by-products of globalisation, while other are born internally, has produced a 'securitisation' process which underlines the importance of national security consideration above other factors, such as electoral freedom or even the Constitution of the Russia Federation. It remains to be seen whether this choice is a political adjustment in an economic and political crisis, and as such a recurring phenomenon in Russian history, or a more long term reassessment of Russian way.

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## THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION, RUSSIA'S INTEGRATION POLICY AND THE EU CHALLENGE

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### *A new phase of Eurasian integration*

In the wake of globalisation, governments have started to see relative advantage in associating with other countries, and also possible negative consequences in staying outside preferential trade arrangements. Many times a decision to join an economic organisation is made because staying outside will be with time more costly. It can be assumed that countries that rely to a very high extent on special export sectors or export partners are hit relatively harder when they are forced to stay outside a free trade area or a customs union. For the exporter, this is because it might be difficult to find alternative markets to sell to or to restructure the country's export composition. Such countries are also very vulnerable to economic blackmailing because sanctions can be addressed to small but crucial sectors.<sup>1</sup>

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has sought to establish economic and political alliances with the newly-independent countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) (1949-1991) and the Warsaw Pact (1955-1991) have been followed by various attempts at cooperation in the post-Soviet space, all of which have reflected both Russia's ability as well as its wish to regain its position as a regional hegemon. The Commonwealth of

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<sup>1</sup> Georgian wines and mineral waters are a prime example of this. They were banned from the Russian market in 2006 until Russia lifted the embargo in 2013. As Russia was the main export market for Georgian wines and mineral waters, Georgian wine producers were forced to improve quality and find new markets in Europe and Asia. Yigal Schleifer, Georgia: Lifting of Russian Wine Embargo to Have Limited Economic Impact?, eurasianet.org, 14.8.2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67391>.

Independent States was established immediately after the collapse of the Soviet empire. In the 2000s, the economic integration process between the few most interested countries, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, has been rapid.

The Eurasian Economic Union, EEU, which is the latest phase in the continuum of Russian-led cooperation projects, has been one of the major foreign policy goals of Vladimir Putin. It was built on the already existing Eurasian Customs Union (ECU), as the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia signed the treaty founding the EEU. The signing ceremony was on 29 May 2014, and the organisation started operating in January 2015 with three founding member states. Armenia joined a few months behind and the prospects are that Kirgizstan will follow next.<sup>2</sup>

The founding document established the international legal status, organisational framework, goals and operating mechanisms of the Union. The EEU will base its executive body in Moscow, the high court in Minsk and the top financial regulator in Astana. It seeks to provide closer economic integration between the member states who, signing the treaty, undertook obligations to guarantee the free movement of goods, services, capitals, and labour. The member states will pursue a coordinated policy in key sectors of the economy: energy, industrial production, agriculture, and transport.

However, the treaty stops short of introducing a single currency. It also delays the creation of a common energy market. In fact, based on the first press commentaries in the summer of 2014, Russian experts were cautioning against haste in establishing a single energy market. As a protective measure pursued particularly by Russia, there will be an 11-year-long transition period, during which the member states aim to set up a common oil and gas market. On the other hand, according to Kazakh officials, they see the EEU's immediate benefit as granting landlocked Kazakhstan better access to, and moreover a say in the use of the transport and logistics and other pipeline systems of the Union's member states.

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<sup>2</sup> The Tumultuous Birth of the Eurasian Economic Union, 31.12.2014, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/tumultuous-birth-eurasian-economic-union>.

Effective economic integration in the form of a customs union necessitates giving up some sovereignty in favour of a supranational organ that administers common policies. What is received with this decision is a share in the decision-making process of the organisation. Most often the references made about Russia's partners losing their sovereignty in Eurasian integration projects refer to Russia's geopolitical and great power aspirations, which have in fact never been well-hidden (Starr & Cornell, 2014). The discrepancy between what is decided and aspired to on paper and what is happening in the real political sphere, is a factor that needs to be taken into account when assessing the performance of the Eurasian Union. However, it is important to bear in mind that the Eurasian Union is not all about geopolitics or Russian integration goals. It is an actor in the international arena with a set of rules and established structures and it cannot be analysed without taking into consideration also its working mechanism (Popescu, 2014).

### ***Russian geopolitics, the Eurasian Union and the EU***

The EEU project should be analysed in its geopolitical context. Firstly, it must be noted that Russia's integration policy is connected to its status as a great power. Russia wants to offer the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU) an alternative integration model.

There has been one small victory and one major blow in the work towards the EEU: in the summer of 2013, Armenia discontinued its negotiations with the EU and announced that it would join the Eurasian Economic Union. In October 2014, it signed the founding treaty, and it became a member at the start of 2015. The government of Ukraine, on the other hand, decided to integrate with the EU instead. On 21 March 2014, it initialled the political sections of its Association Agreement. The DCFTA was signed on 27 June 2014. By taking these steps, Ukraine *de jure* discarded Putin's EEU option.

Russia seeks to attract new members away from the EU orbit with the integration projects. Its integration policy is based on counter-effecting the EU's attraction and that is why it has regarded the Eastern Partnership as a challenge to its interests in the FSU area. The EU's

stated objective in the European Neighbourhood Policy was to share the EU's stability, security and prosperity with neighbouring countries. The policy was designed to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe by offering neighbouring countries closer political, security, economic and cultural cooperation. However, Russia has regarded the policy as a threat to its security: according to the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the EU was trying to establish its own sphere of influence through the European Neighbourhood Policy and then later the Eastern Partnership.

The fact that both Russia and the EU wanted the Eastern European countries to join their own integration projects – which are incompatible – has polarised the situation for all countries between Moscow and Brussels. The problems for these countries are caused by the difficult relationship between the two power centres and their unwillingness, or at least incapability, to deal with one another.

The EU's policy towards the Eastern Partnership countries was compatible with their prior commitments. The Association Agreements (AA) were not an attempt to attract the EaP countries from their obligations for instance within the CIS free trade area. On the other hand, the provisions of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) the EU offered to the partnership countries are not compatible with membership in the Russian-led Customs Union. And this is where the two integration projects have clashed. (Popescu, 2014)

The EU has neglected to see that Russia analysed the EaP in a very different context than what its purported goal had been. Russia's own EEU project was never just about economics. In fact, it was perhaps not about economics at all. For Russia, and especially President Putin, who has been the primus motor of the project, it was about Eurasia as a geopolitical project (Starr & Cornell, 2014). It needs to be understood that Russia sees the EU's aim to provide these countries possibilities to modernise as a geo-political threat.

### *EEU rules and performance*

However, the EEU is not merely about geopolitics or Russia's great power aspirations. As Dragneva and Wolczuk have pointed out, the latest phase in the form Eurasian customs union has in fact, unlike previous initiatives, had an effect on the member states and their economic actors. They have begun to harmonise legislation and standardise practices and policies (Dragneva & Wolczuk (2012), 5). However, with the crisis in Ukraine and subsequent Russian economic slowdown, the Eurasian Economic Union is facing severe problems. These recent developments notwithstanding, it is nevertheless important to see what kind of an economic and political actor is taking shape in the EU's neighbourhood.

Regional economic organisations ought to bring economic benefit to their members, who will benefit from protectionist policies and be given power to influence the decision-making process and lobby for their national interests. In the EEU's Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, the voting power is based on the size of population. Therefore Russia does possess even an absolute majority of votes, whereas for instance Armenia's has very little voting power. However, at least on paper, the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, which determines the strategy, direction and prospects of cooperation and makes the final decisions on key goals and targets, works to counterbalance the power asymmetry. It is composed of the heads of state of the member states and its decision making is based on the principle of unanimous voting. Thus, on the highest level of policy-making in the EEU, at least in principle, all members have the same voting power.

More importantly, the unanimity rule gives all members the veto power. This right has been many times referred to by Kazakhstan's president Nursultan Nazarbaev as a sacred component of the EEU decision-making rules. He has threatened that Kazakhstan could even leave the union if its independence is in any way restricted by the organisational rules. Also on other instances, Belarus and Kazakhstan both have already showed their power in the EEU negotiations.

Kazakhstan for instance brought up its scepticism about Armenia joining the organisation, referring to the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict that would be a hazard on the customs union border. Nazarbaev has also given several statements which show that the many differences observed during the years of negotiations, have remained unsettled. Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko for his part said before the signing of the EEU treaty in May 2014 that he was not fully happy with the deal, but saw it as a compromise. Nazarbayev's statements pointed out exactly the same: the new treaty was based on consensus. Moreover, Nazarbaev and other Kazakh officials have been eager to state that as a result of their demands, all aspects of political integration were removed from the EEU treaty.

Russia's efforts to use the organisation towards (geo)political goals will no doubt be steadfastly objected by Kazakhstan.<sup>3</sup> This could well relieve some pressure that Russia could be thinking of putting on its allies, particularly the smallest one, Armenia, within or through the EEU.

The economic performance of the EEU has so far also left the members looking of more results. The Customs Union, which in effect has meant the imposition of the higher Russian external tariff regime on the other members, is judged to be contrary to the economic interests of both Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Customs unions eliminate barriers to trade between members, which is why they are assumed to provide a considerable increase in intra-bloc trade. And on the other hand, they reduce trade between members and non-members in two ways. This is because the members of a trading bloc substitute their imports from third parties with imports from their own partners. This causes loss of export markets and accompanying revenues to third parties. Furthermore, in order to protect the members' economies, a trading bloc establishes barriers to trade such as customs

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<sup>3</sup> Alex Vatanka, Kazakhstan's Crafty Eurasian Union Strategy, National interest, 20.6.2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/kazakhstans-crafty-urasian-union-strategy-10705?page=2>.

and duties, which might limit or hinder access to their markets, or make the access more costly (Haftel, 2004, 123-125).

However, in the case of the Eurasian Customs Union, its establishment has in fact brought mixed results. This is because Russia has higher levels of protectionism over its domestic market. Customs unions often initially raise the average levels of the members' trade protection vis-à-vis the outside world. In the case of the ECU, the external tariffs were set by Russia's standards which were much higher than the other members'. Kazakhstan, in terms of economic policy the most liberal among the member states, has had to nearly double its external tariffs from 6.5% to 12.1%. This has led to trade diversion, but to Russia's benefit. For instance Kazakhstan and Belarus have not gained significant improvement in their access to Russian markets, and there has been no marked Customs Union-related trade growth as such. For Kazakhstan to start reaping benefits of its membership, the organisation would need to keep to its commitments to foster deeper integration (Carneiro, 2013, 2-3). Recent developments nonetheless indicate that Russia is having trouble playing by the rules of the game.

### ***EEU – which way forward?***

Russia's integration policy involves aligning with someone to defend their interests against the challenge posed by the EU. The principles of Moscow's objections to the EEC/EU have in fact remained constant from the Cold War decades to the present. First of all, Russia is reluctant to deal with a supranational institution. It will counter the EU with a policy of differentiation, opting for bilateral relations instead of negotiating with the organisation as a whole. Secondly, it aspires to limit cooperation to economic affairs only, avoiding sensitive issues such as human rights or other European core values. Thirdly, it wants the EU to accept the *status quo* in the relationship, also an acknowledgement of interests Russia considers privileged. It will also accept a *modus vivendi*, even if this means the continuation of mutual neglect and antagonism. And lastly, it is willing to resort to revisionist methods to achieve its goals (Zagorski, 2013).

This feature will have an effect on all Eurasian integration projects. Russia's decision to use hard economic power in the midst of the escalating Ukrainian crisis is already threatening its commitment to furthering the integration of the EEU. Sanctions against the three states that signed Association Agreements with the EU, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, and the ban on food imports from the EU and the US were not sanctioned by the other Customs Union members. Belarus and Kazakhstan chose not to follow these policies. Russia therefore acted unilaterally, and what is more important, it acted in violation of its commitment in the Customs Union.

Russia's independent decisions were against the rules of the organisation and were a serious blow to its credibility in the eyes of outside viewers, and perhaps even more importantly, by Russia's allies and hoped to be allies. The sanctions have created frictions within the organisation leading up to a renewed trade war between Russia and Belarus. The latter has been suspected of exporting western embargoed products to Russia; while both countries have reinstated border controls.

These internal disputes might turn out to bear a devastating impact on the recently established organisation. The poor performance of the Russian economy has been felt in all of the Eurasian union countries, since Russia continues to be their main foreign trade partner. The idea of Eurasian integration and the projects to have come out of it have to large extent been funded by the Russian Federation. The crucial question is how long it will be able to pay the bill of keeping its empire together.

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## **‘TOOLS OF DESTABILIZATION’: KREMLIN’S MEDIA OFFENSIVE IN LITHUANIA<sup>1</sup>**

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Just a few years ago Lithuania marked 20 years since the withdrawal of the Soviet army from its territory. On this occasion President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated that ‘speaking with one voice, Lithuania secured a historic victory without using arms. [...] This event is a history lesson on how much countries achieve when during a critical moment their citizens are united by principles one cannot violate, sell and betray’ (the Lithuanian Tribune 2013). This statement symbolises the fascination of the President with the political unity of that time and the non-military path towards Lithuanian independence, but on the other hand it illustrates the anxiety towards the lack of similar political mobilization in contemporary Lithuanian politics, and this true of Ukrainian, Moldavian or Georgian politics as well. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin has lost direct political and military control of the region, but it started mastering the tools of non-military influence by exploiting the lingering weakness of post-Soviet societies: growing internal political splits, social and economic discontent, ethnic minorities, and prevailing energy and media dependencies. This new kind of Kremlin strategy paved the path for the Russian campaign in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Even before that, the new Russian strategy of ‘soft pressure’ became especially evident in the second half of 2013 when Lithuania took up the Presidency of the EU Council.

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<sup>1</sup> This conference paper is based on authors research in ‘Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States, ed. Mike Winnerstig, www.foi.se, 2014

The realisation of the importance of a non-military strategy in the Baltics for Russia was building-up gradually. Already in 1992 the *Diplomaticeskii Vestnik* (magazine of the Russian MFA) presented the so called 'Karaganov doctrine': Sergey Karaganov – an expert and long-time chairman of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (SVOP) – in one of the articles of that magazine encouraged the use of Russian compatriots for foreign policy purposes in the so called 'near abroad' region (Karaganov 1992). This doctrine was based on pure interest of keeping Russian influence in the Baltics. It had to be done by hindering the integration of ethnic minorities in the Baltics and by facilitating the stay of Russian-speakers in the 'near abroad' with the hope of using them as a tool for implementing Russia's interests. The concepts of the 'compatriot policy' and the 'near abroad' became the driving force behind Russian foreign policy in the Baltics.

When Vladimir Putin came to power, he started concentrating on the so called 'humanitarian dimension' of Russian foreign policy in the region. The idea was based on the principle of controlling the post-Soviet region by non-military, but quite aggressive tools: shady investments, energy blackmail and media manipulation (Pelnens 2009). In 2008 the outline of such a policy was included in *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* (*The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2008*) and in 2013 the new FP Concept elaborated that Russia sees its goals in:

protecting rights and legitimate interests of compatriots living abroad; [...] supporting consolidation of organisations of compatriots to enable them to effectively uphold their rights in the countries of residence while preserving the cultural and ethnic identity of the Russian diaspora and its ties with the historical homeland; [...] facilitating the learning and wider use of the Russian language; [...] strongly counteracting manifestations of extremism, neo-Nazism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, as well as attempts to rewrite history using it to build confrontation and provoke revanchism in global politics and to revise the outcomes of World War II [...] (*The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2008*).

The important aspect of the new FP concept is that it additionally emphasises the use of soft power.

Such Russian foreign policy developments affected the political and security thinking of targeted countries as well. The National Security Strategy of Lithuania in 2012 specified external risks, dangers and threats which must be given particular attention and amongst them – in priority order: economic and energy dependence – dominance of the economic entities of other states in the economic sectors of strategic importance for national security (energy, transport, finances, and crediting); development of nuclear energy in the region disregarding international nuclear energy safety standards; efforts to exert an impact on the political system, military capabilities, social and economic life, cultural identity of the Republic of Lithuania; information attacks – actions of state and non-state entities in the international and national information space aimed at spreading biased and misleading information, shaping a negative public opinion in respect of interests of national security of the Republic of Lithuania; cyber attacks and other more conventional risks (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2008).

Recently the Lithuanian intelligence institutions (State Security Department and Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of Defence) started releasing yearly public reviews. In the 2012 review, the Lithuanian State Security Department specifically stated that some countries – having Russia in mind – are using not just traditional power means to promote their national interests. Lithuanian security risks include ‘the control of economic and energy resources, the creation and support of influence groups in Lithuania, [...] active informational, ideological policy and “history rewriting”, [...] fostering ethnic and political discord, weakening the integration of ethnic minorities in Lithuanian society, promoting distrust in the democratic political system of Lithuania, supporting specific political forces in the country’ (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania 2013). The review specifically warned that all those aggressive means of non-military pressure would intensify during the Lithuanian Presidency in the EU Council. It is by no surprise that faced by such a complex Russian non-military pressure, the Baltic States are gradually establishing NATO

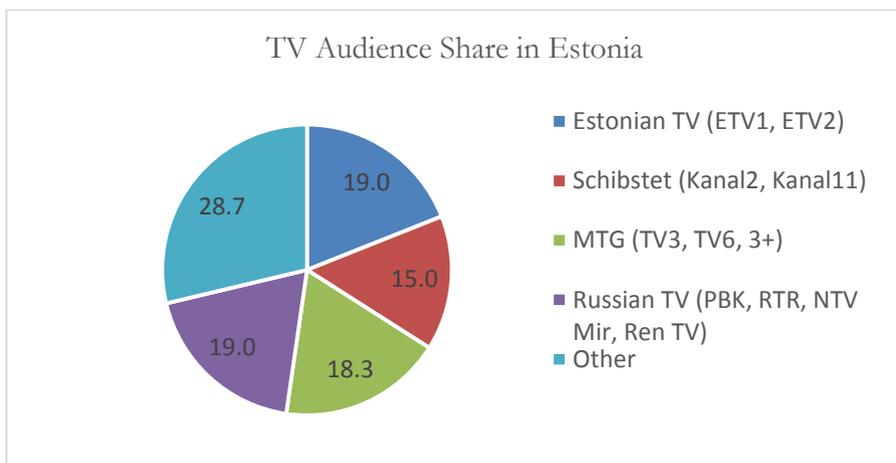
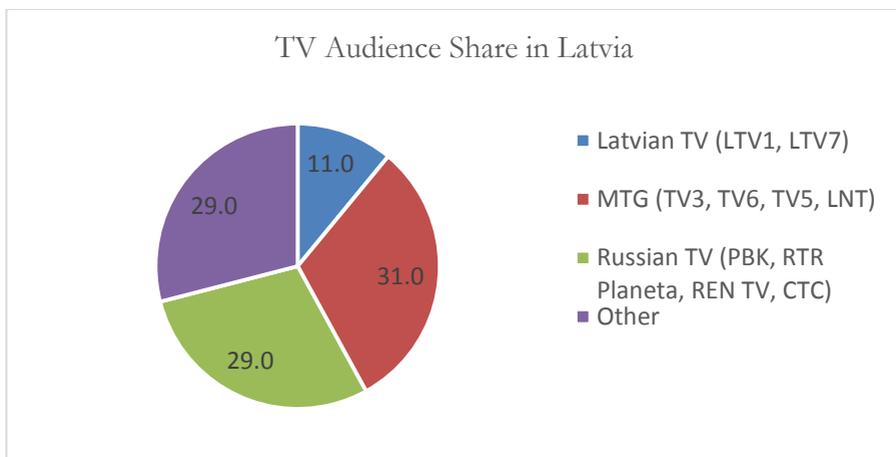
centres of excellence in areas where the respective governments perceive security risks to be the most serious: in 2008 a NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was set up in Tallinn, Estonia, in 2013 a NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence was established in Vilnius, Lithuania, and NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia, in 2014.

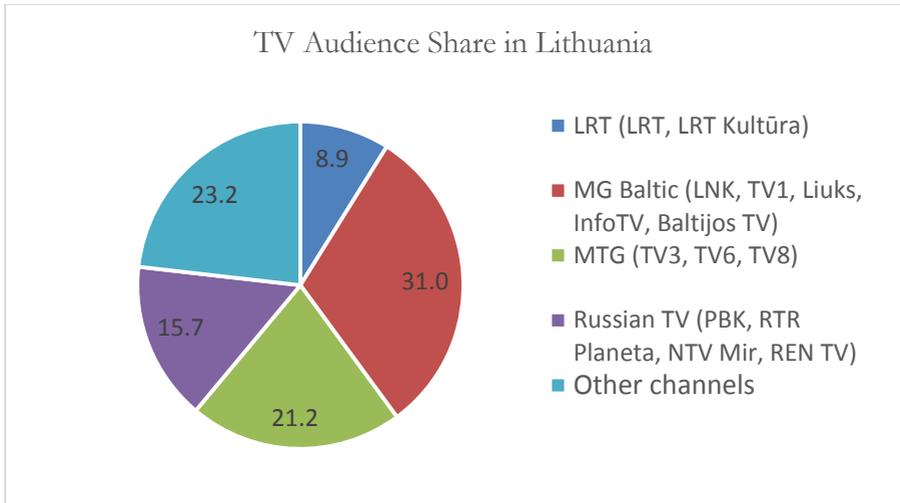
However, it was only after Kremlin's campaign in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine - and the aggressive anti-Western propaganda offensive that followed it - that the West realised what big security gaps it left out for Putin to exploit. In this respect Lithuania's experience with Russian media presence and activities in its information space should be a valuable 'lesson learned' for Western political leaders and experts.

The popularity of the Russian language, positive attitude towards Russian culture and symbols, widespread nostalgia for the Soviet past creates a very favourable environment for the Russian media and its propaganda narratives in Lithuania.<sup>2</sup> The State Security Department numerous times warned about potential aggressive information attacks which might be orchestrated from specific internet news portals (Rubaltic.ru or Regnum.ru). However, it is not individual Russian internet portals that are the biggest concern for Lithuania, it is the traditional media environment – specifically the TV environment – that is overflowing with Russian media production (Russian TV channels in Lithuanian cable networks and Russian made TV production in Lithuanian TV channels). Media expert Kęstutis Petrauskis conducted research into the TV audiences of the Baltic States in 2013 which shows the audience shares of alternative TV channels (more than 23%) and Russian TV channels (almost 16 %):

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<sup>2</sup> see Ramonaitė, A., Maliukevičius N., Degutis, M. 2007. *Tarp Rytų ir Vakarų: Lietuvos visuomenės geokultūrinės nuostatos*. Vilnius: Versus aureus.





**Source:** Petrauskis 2013

This can be compared to the situation in Latvia and Estonia where the audience share of Russian TV channels is even higher: 29% and 19% respectively. The Lithuanian media environment is different from the other Baltic States in yet another respect: e.g. one of the major TV owners in Lithuania is a local and not western business group – MG Baltic, which owns one of the most popular channels LNK.

It is not just a matter of Russian TV channels taking a share of the audience in the Lithuanian information environment. Russian media production comprises a considerable portion of TV production in major Lithuanian TV channels: e.g. LNK and TV3. When their revenue dropped significantly after the 2008 crisis, they started increasing the share of Russian production in their programming because of lower prices for Russian TV entertainment programs. In the end, the Russian media has become a major player in the Lithuanian media market. A large proportion of the population receive not just entertainment, but also news about the world and the post-Soviet region through the Russian media.

The current Russian policy in Lithuania – as well as in the other Baltic States – has a clear competitive advantage in the media environment. The important question is – what messages are transmitted and reinforced through these communication channels? The Kremlin’s media strategy focuses mainly on the topics of history: distant as well as more recent. Lithuania is portrayed as a state that is based on aggressive nationalistic values, fascist past and present. The Soviet period, on the contrary, is shown as something glorious and nostalgic. Those information campaigns are usually orchestrated before or during memorable national anniversaries or electoral cycles in Lithuania. History dominates even in the soft Russian entertainment production: fiction films and TV series of suspense and drama during WWII or Soviet Union times get prime time on some Lithuanian TV channels. The messages about historical interpretations beneficial for Putin’s regime are later echoed during compatriots’ events, seminars and conferences; they are repeated in the compatriots’ media. In 2012 Lithuania witnessed one more organisational format for discussions about history and politics – Format-A<sup>3</sup> – that was implemented in Lithuania by Russian journalist working in Estonia Galina Sapozhnikova (Vedler 2012). This so-called ‘discussion club’ nowadays specialises in inviting scandalous Russian experts that speak about the collapse and crisis of the EU, NATO and the West in general to Lithuanian audiences.

When in the autumn of 2013 the Russian TV channel ‘Pervij Kanal’ ran yet another pseudo-documentary ‘Chelovek I zakon’ about most recent Lithuanian history – the bloody events of January 1991 in Vilnius – and muddled the facts, a significant event happened, which could be interpreted as a serious shift in the Lithuanian media business community when dealing with the Russian media attacks in the Lithuanian information environment. This specific pseudo-documentary concentrated on the conspiracy theory, which is propagated by the marginal Lithuanian politician Algirdas Paleckis, that during the January events in Vilnius it was the activists of the Lithuanian independence movement Sąjūdis and not the OMON soldiers who started shooting at the crowd and the Soviet military. The film created a wave of fury in

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<sup>3</sup> see <<http://www.format-a3.ru>>

Lithuanian society, but it was local media companies and not the regulatory institutions that reacted the first: the TV cable network company 'Cgates' suspended PBK transmission via its network and some advertisers stated that they are suspending marketing campaigns in this channel. We can conclude that the aggressive tactics of the Russian media backfired, and the Lithuanian media companies started to view Russian media production as a serious risk to their business reputation.

### **In conclusion**

In recent years Soft Power has become a trendy term in Russian political and academic discourse: President Putin writes about it in his pre-election article in the Moscow News (Putin 2012), the new head of Rossotrudnichestvo Konstantin Kosachev, declares it to be his priority for action in the new post (Kosachev 2012). However, the concept of soft power in the hands of Kremlin officials and politechnologists was transformed to suit chauvinistic Russian political realities. The competitive advantage that Russia has in the media environment of the post-Soviet region is used not so much for making Russian image better as to fight historical and political battles, or even to pave way for aggressive intervention into the neighbours' territory, as Ukraine's example shows. This new power strategy is based on the traditional idea of 'divide and conquer' – in Lithuania it centres on deepening splits between the majority and Polish minority, in other societies it centres on the idea of protecting 'the Russian speakers' from mythical Neo-Nazis or 'Western puppeteers'. In the end the contemporary Russian regime is still a master in hard power tactics, just that it employs creative media tools to exert it, and Lithuania had a very early experience with such kind of power methods.

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## IN THE POST-SOVIET PROPAGANDA SPHERE

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Any discussion of propaganda in the geopolitical context must dwell on the spheres of influence, a term that has unfortunately crept back due to the Russian determination and despite the Western attempts to turn a blind eye to the reality that the division of Europe is not a thing of the past.

My take on these spheres is based on the societal perspective rather than on media-centred explanations.

There are two spheres where the Russian propaganda thrives, and different ones at that. In the post-Soviet sphere, mostly older tactics of the information warfare are employed whereas further west, societies deal with newer, more sophisticated methods of the Russian media influence.

Media in this case are merely the reflections and instruments through which the societal differences are displayed. There are two main issues on this level. Firstly, Baltic societies are different from the Western societies and still belong to the post-Soviet sphere of Russian propaganda when it comes to its messages and methods. Secondly, Baltic societies — and their media — react to propaganda in a different way to the West.

Both of these issues are alarming. They are not so much related to what Russia does as much as to what the Baltic societies are. Their weaknesses are more fundamental than simply media shortcomings and thus are more difficult to change.

A quick look at the background of the Russian messages aimed at the post-Soviet sphere would reveal a noticeable shift in recent years, showcased by the fact that suddenly an EU Association Agreement with Ukraine has ostensibly become a major issue for Russian foreign policy.

Not so long ago, it was NATO and the hard power that Russia imagined it was opposing. America has always been its enemy. Europe, though, was, to a large extent, a reference point rather than a counter-point. The Russians, ever cognisant of their 'special civilisation', have nevertheless strived to do things the European way, as terms such as 'Evroremont', or 'European-style renovation', suggest.

Then something changed, not least in Vladimir Putin's mind. America in this mind-set has subjugated Europe, and Europe has now become part of the enemy. Weaker, more disoriented and faster declining than America, yet clearly 'them', not 'us'.

It changed the way the world is presented in the Russian media. Now Russia can legitimately — to its own population — claim that it is a counterbalance to the West at large and its inclination to impose its values.

This only works in Russia itself — and in the rest of the post-Soviet world, which is very alarming in the case of the Baltic States.

This sort of Russian propaganda would be doomed were it applied in the West. When President Putin invites Western analysts to the Valdai club discussions only to scold the West and proclaim how Russia is superior, it merely has an effect, as someone has noted, of a Chechen leader inviting Westerners for a lecture on the advantages of blood revenge.

Therefore what the Russian propaganda does elsewhere, is not only more nuanced but outright different. Presenting Russia as a counterpoint is a long shot; but to present the West itself as hypocritical strikes a chord in the self-aware societies that have long traditions of questioning their own power structures.

The Russian media that works for Western audiences thus seeks to sow doubts, multiply possible versions of the truth and encourage questioning reality and the entire system of values. (These methods are employed also for the Russian audiences, to be sure.)

Yet it does tell a lot about the Baltic societies that large parts of their population find these messages emanating from Russia still rather powerful and subscribe to these ideas.

Were one to think about two ‘propaganda departments’ in Moscow, one preoccupied with the Russian target audience and the other with the Western audiences, the most important problem is that the Baltic societies would fall under the sphere of the domestic propaganda department.

By no means should the progress that the Baltic societies have made in the past decades be belittled. Yet research constantly shows that the large parts of their electorate and the societies in general are still cynical about the institutions, democracy, not used to debates and criticism and are anti-modern in their economic activities (i.e. inclined to rely on doing things themselves rather than relying on the market or institutions).

Just as the Russian society, large parts of the Baltic societies still believe in irrational things and big-power conspiracies. The fact that Russian is just about the only foreign language that parts of the native population still speak also adds to the problem.

Given that propaganda is most powerful at amplifying views that are already held rather than at countering established wisdom, this shows why the Russian messages reverberate so powerfully in significant segments of the Baltic societies. They exploit the cynicism, feelings of inefficacy, crudeness and harsher ways of operating in public.

The Baltic societies have moved on; they have actually moved very far — yet there are far too many aspects that still hark back to their Soviet past.

The rest of the Western societies are different but they, too, have their own weaknesses. They are too politically correct and too preoccupied with applying rules rather than seeing the bigger picture. The Western-oriented deluge of Russian messages is successful in exploiting these weaknesses.

In most of the Western societies, the Russian propaganda is aimed at their fringes, more radical and dissatisfied than the mainstream. In the Baltic societies, it is aimed at the core. Just recently, research data in Lithuania once again showed that more than half of those polled viewed the Soviet era positively. There is much to tap into.

To turn to the second major problem, that of the difference in reactions between the Baltic and the rest of the Western societies, one has to admit that the ways of dealing with the Russian propaganda display much haste and little long-term thinking. This is an unfortunate paradox: deep, societal problems are being fixed with temporary, questionable solutions.

Most Baltic actions in countering propaganda still aim at the short term. Yet they increase the dangers for the long term. Methods employed — bans and counter-actions rather than spreading the enlightened ideas of Western-style criticism and fundamental civil liberties — can themselves inhibit the Westernised development.

Faced with the imposition of top-down decisions on what to read and how to react, the societies might take a longer time to — inevitably — cure themselves than they would do otherwise. (Admittedly, there are differences among the Baltic societies, say, between the Estonian and Lithuanian approaches to banning Russian TV.)

The media elites and activist circles in the societies often display group-think and siege mentality. Over the past year, many have come to think that propaganda must be responded to swiftly and, all too often, that there is one side to be supported.

Large audiences now only want to hear what they approve of. To many otherwise critical people, supporting Ukraine and its version of the truth has become a must despite indications that it might not be telling the truth either.

Questioning the patriotic, almost black-and-white worldview of the mainstream of the political class has become less welcome. Those who do, sometimes face personal attacks. Many people feel they are already at war so there is little justification for them to be self-critical.

The Baltic societies have always lacked the critical discourse of the Western scope and depth. In the current very dangerous situation, the knee-jerk responses have increased the danger that its emergence might be slowed. Once again, a great deal has changed in the past quarter-century but one must ponder the situation where the societies might be thrown some way back.

The added problem is that there is very little overlap of what is discussed in the Baltic media universes with the mainstream discourses in the Western European societies.

This increases the dangerous sentiment, fuelled by conspiracy-style thinking, that the West is not standing up to the challenge. To assume that Western leaders in responding to the Russian actions do not understand the concerns of the frontline Baltic societies, do not ‘feel their pain’ and cannot hear their worries, only adds to self-marginalisation and victimisation.

Aside from these concerns, but connected to the broader lack of critical discourse and lacklustre demand for quality journalism, pure unprofessionalism must be noted. Almost daily, the media outlets directed by Russia hawks who publicly profess harsh criticism of its propaganda still pump out stories lifted from the Moscow playbook — not intentionally, but due to the sheer unprofessionalism and ignorance of line editors.

In the media markets where there is little incentive to stay in journalism beyond a few years after graduation, media outlets routinely translate and distribute, without giving much thought to checking the facts, stories such as the elegant invention by the Russian political technologists of a fake election-monitoring organization 'ABSE' that was intended to confuse the public once the real 'OBSE' (OSCE) declined to monitor the Donetsk and Lugansk 'elections' in November.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, of course, the weak spot for many other Western societies is the dogged application of the media standards that is exploited by the Russian propaganda. Through the inclination to hear all sides of the story, media institutions are often giving similar treatment to both truth and lies as equally valid points of view.

The Western media too often fails to deal with the propaganda appropriately. It is a serious weakness but a short-term one. It takes a critical mass of evidence for the slow-turning Western societies to start critically appraising the so-far distant events on the European periphery but then their instinctive, value-imbued judgements start informing their reading of the situation.

In the long term, there is no doubt that the all-encompassing nature of the media and their standards are one of the most important pillars of the Western societies.

To conclude, one cannot exclude that the Russian propaganda would win in the short term. One has to accept that there is simply not enough ruthlessness on the part of the West or specifically the Baltic societies to stand up to the torrents of misinformation and outright lies coming from the East. But the most immediate short-term challenge is to start focusing on the long term, leaving the current issues to the militaries and security services that should take the necessary protective measures.

Short-term defeat is acceptable. But one has to lament the very fact that the long-term societal weaknesses still need to be discussed a quarter-century after the breaking away from the Soviet regime and after much effort in building Western institutions.

It shows that the Baltic societies were not exactly successful in building solid defences and the sense of truly belonging to the Western community. It is imperative at least not to shoot oneself in the foot by taking hasty steps now.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### WRITING UNDER EURASIA?

Review of Alexander Dugin. 2014. *Putin Vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right*. London: Arktos.

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Ostensibly, this book is about Putin. The title and blurb juxtapose two Putins: one a liberal Atlanticist and the other a patriotic Eurasianist. In reality, a larger proportion of the book compares two other Putins: the real Putin and the potential Putin. This latter Putin is still the patriotic Eurasianist, but the real Putin is taken to be an ideology-free political realist – a stance the author argues is untenable.

*Putin Vs Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right* is one of four works by Russian Eurasianist thinker Alexander Dugin now available in English (the others being *The Fourth Political Theory*, *Martin Heidegger: The Philosophy of Another Beginning*, and *Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism*). The Ukraine crisis has served to increase the attention paid to Dugin in the West, particularly focussing on the influence his textbook *Foundations of Geopolitics* (which has yet to be translated into English) has upon much of Russia's military and foreign policy elite through its use at Moscow's General Staff Academy.

Prior to recent attempts to read in Dugin's works a sign of Putin's next move, interest in Dugin in the West had tended to be connected to interest in 'radical traditionalism'. This strand of conservative romanticism is perhaps best represented by the European New Right,

whose key thinkers include Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye.<sup>1</sup> Both publishers of Dugin's works in English have tended to focus on the European New Right and wider radical traditionalist topics. There are however numerous differences between Dugin and the European New Right, which unfortunately cannot be discussed here due to limitations of space.<sup>2</sup> Given the surge of interest in Dugin, a review of this book must answer two questions: whether it is useful for gaining a greater understanding of Dugin and the neo-Eurasianist worldview, and whether it is useful to gain a greater understanding of Putin. On the former count, the book is a success. After spending just over three-hundred pages with Dugin, the reader will have a clear view of both his ideology and his personality. This is no dry academic text. Instead the book flows with character and idiosyncrasies, more akin to a conversation than a systematic exposition – a style that is no doubt deliberate in order to create a distance from Western rationalism. As far as the second criterion is concerned, the answer must be a more cautious 'perhaps'.

*Putin Vs Putin* was published in English in late 2014. The Russian version emerged in 2012, and the articles which have been collated to form the chapters were written during Putin's first period as President, during the Medvedev era and shortly after Putin's return to the presidency. The two appendices are from the first half of 2014. Because of this, readers looking for direct analysis of the Ukraine crisis will be disappointed (Appendix I discusses the earliest stages of the crisis). Unfortunately the texts that make up the book are undated and are arranged thematically and then sequentially within the topic, rather than sequentially within the book. This occasionally leads to confusion about precisely when in Putin's career Dugin is writing. Before moving onto the book's key

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<sup>1</sup> Both de Benoist and Faye were members of the French think-tank GRECE (Research and Study Group for European Civilisation). Faye left the group in the mid-1980s to retire from politics before returning to the subject in the late-1990s. For an overview of the ideas and personalities of the European New Right, see Michael O'Meara, 2013a and Sunic 2011 – both authors are sympathetic to the New Right but this does not affect the utility of the overviews.

<sup>2</sup>Michael O'Meara's criticisms of Dugin's reading of fascism and National Socialism highlight some of these differences, see O'Meara 2013b.

arguments, it is worth mentioning here the usefulness of the book's ample footnotes. These footnotes, added by the English edition's editor, John B. Morgan IV, will be invaluable for readers unfamiliar with the vast array of political, philosophical and business figures, amongst others, cited in Dugin's text.

The first section of the book, 'The Making of Putin', centres on Dugin's first impressions of Putin. These impressions are generally positive. Dugin cites attacks on Putin by 'democratic schizos' (9) for being a red-brown, or national-Bolshevik, as being a sign that Putin was 'our man... a patriot and a decent man to boot' (9). Yet Putin is no national-Bolshevik. Throughout the book Dugin attempts to pin down Putin's political ideology, but this is a task akin to that of Sisyphus. Early in the book Dugin identifies what he describes as Putin's between-electoral-cycle liberalism. Come election time, Putin's actions reflect '71% patriotism and 13% liberalism (strictly in accordance with the Russian Public Opinion Research Centre's results' (35). However, come Putin's second term as President, Dugin 'observed a reverse situation, where 71% of the state policy was oriented towards the West and 13% leaned towards patriotism' (35). It should be noted at this point that 'liberalism' and 'the West' are considered to be largely synonymous throughout Dugin's work. It is this discussion of the ratio of liberalism and patriotism (synonymous with Eurasianism for Dugin) which is the source of the book's title.

Towards the end of the book, Dugin argues that by the time of Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, the liberal/patriotic mixture no longer works and wonders if Putin realises that this is the case (224). It is around this point in the book that Dugin addresses Putin's ideology, or lack thereof, in greater detail. The lack of a central Idea for Russian society is seen as Putin's greatest weakness – 'this is why politics in Russia was given away to spin doctors and PR specialists' (231). Putin also lacks a vision for how Russia is to be in the future as well as having 'only a limited understanding of the contemporary world' (231). The Putin Dugin is painting here is a pragmatist who devises technocratic solutions to problems as they arise. This is confirmed when, several pages later, Dugin announces that 'today I can say who Putin is. This is

no longer a mystery to me' (235).<sup>3</sup> Putin is, according to Dugin, 'a classical realist politician' (235). A more cynical reader might highlight that this is hardly a revelation to even the most casual observer of Putin's foreign policy. Yet Dugin argues that realism has been overlooked in Russian social institutions (242). This is even more troubling as classical realism also accounts for Putin's domestic policies (246). This failure to study and hone understanding of the driving ideological force in Russia for the last fifteen years may well be the reason why the Russian political elite beyond Putin himself are, in Dugin's view, so underwhelming. Dugin likens Putin's realism to the work of a snowplough. This managerial approach to politics remains indifferent to opposition from both left and right so long as 'the snowplough' is able to keep clearing the snow unimpeded. If the work *is* impeded, 'then the President loses his patience and removes the people along with the snow' (246). Depending on how this is read (is 'removing' sacking, jailing, exiling, executing, or something else), it may be rather chilling. No doubt Dugin is aware of this dramatic effect. Whether Putin's political worldview is liberal/patriotic or classical realist, Dugin insists it 'no longer meets the needs of our time, and fails in addressing the critical and meaningful moments of our history and our existence' (248). The political worldview which *does* meet today's needs and addresses these critical and meaningful, historic existential moments is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Dugin's brand of Eurasianism.

Dugin's Eurasianism entails a complete rethinking of the current global system, with the current unipolar American-centric system being replaced with a multipolar world. This would result in 'building a fair world order which favours the interests and wishes of all countries and civilisations' (131). At face value this sounds both inoffensive and sensible, as it is neither uncommon nor controversial to believe that international politics could be made healthier with an injection of plurality. Later in the book, Dugin explains more precisely what he

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<sup>3</sup> This is one of numerous points with the aforementioned issue with the dating of passages. Dugin explicitly states here that he is writing during Putin's third presidency, but it would be interesting to know more precisely when it was he came to this conclusion.

means by countries and civilisations whilst outlining the key aspects of his multipolar world theory:

The multipolar world does not seriously consider the sovereignty of existing national states. Such sovereignty is confined to legal terminology and is not confirmed by sufficient enforcement, strategic, economic and political potential. In order to be a sovereign subject in the twenty-first century, a nation state is no longer enough. Real sovereignty can only be possessed by an aggregate, a coalition of states (175).

For the Eurasian Union, Dugin believes Russia 'needs Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and possibly Azerbaijan. It needs access to the depths of central Asia represented by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and possibly Uzbekistan, and even Turkmenistan' (169). This union would allow for uniting 'energy, economic, military and strategic potentials, as well as the territorial zones where natural resources are extracted and their delivery routes' (169). Through this unification, the Eurasian Union would be undeniable as a major world power. It is through this lens that the remarks on the unimportance of existing national state sovereignty should be read. Dugin suggests that the Eurasian Union would not be self-sufficient, and would require partnership with Europe, China and other potential 'poles' in the new multipolar world. He insists that 'together, on the basis of a dialogue of civilisations, we can build a balanced and fair world order' (179-180). Dugin is not utopian, and does not see the multipolar world as being without conflict, but suggests that conflicts should be avoided where possible and replaced by peaceful dialogue as 'the clash of civilisations is not fatal in itself' (180). It is notable that the individual citizens of the nation states amalgamated into the civilizational poles of the multipolar world have little role but to acquiesce to the greater civilisation into which their nation falls.

Dugin's talk of dividing the world into various great civilisations is connected to the theme of Russian destiny which runs throughout the book. This is similar in many ways to the idea of American

exceptionalism<sup>4</sup> which Dugin argues is often mistaken for an expression of US materialism when it is instead related to the ongoing existence of a concept of Manifest Destiny (255-256). Where the original concept was applied to the divinely sanctioned territorial expansion of the United States within the American continent, Dugin is suggesting that this is the impulse behind the spread of US interests and interference throughout the globe. Dugin's Russian equivalent of American exceptionalism/Manifest Destiny is based upon the idea of Russian civilisation as an expression of Orthodox Christianity. Early in the book Dugin declares that his 'political philosophy is based on the assumption that the Russian people are the most important historical, spiritual and religious category... These people are deeply suffused with the light of the Orthodox culture and have been chosen by Divine Providence for a special mission' (61). Dugin does not distinguish between strictly observant Orthodox Christians (like himself) and those merely associated with Orthodox Christianity, believing both to be Orthodox Christians by having been immersed in Orthodox culture (61).<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to argue against such a position because it is not supported by a step-by-step argument, but rather consists of solely making assertions. In this way his work, perhaps ironically, resembles that of a fellow Russian, but one whose main influence has been on numerous modern day proponents of American exceptionalism – Ayn Rand.<sup>6</sup> Dugin shares with Rand the tendency to equate difference in political opinion to moral failure. *Putin Vs Putin* is littered with insults aimed at anyone who

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<sup>4</sup> American exceptionalism is the theory that the US has a unique place and role in history on account of its founding as a relatively new state focussed on the promotion of freedom both at home and abroad. American exceptionalism does not necessarily imply that the US is 'better' than other nations, but US political rhetoric, particularly internal rhetoric, has tended to lean towards this conclusion.

<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps interesting that Søren Kierkegaard who is a great influence on the works on one of Dugin's major philosophical influences, Martin Heidegger, saw such a view of Christendom – where one is a Christian purely by the accident of being born in a Christian country/culture – as being the greatest barrier to true Christian faith.

<sup>6</sup> The United States was for Rand the only nation to have come close to the hyper-capitalist, individualistic form of freedom she felt was morally supportable. In the US entrepreneurial spirit she saw a connection to her view of mankind which is best illustrated in her novel *Atlas Shrugged*.

disagrees with what Dugin stridently believes is the inevitability of Eurasianism (24). Examples include equating the sale of oil companies to foreign owners to politicians selling children's organs (246), calling insufficiently patriotic politicians 'ultra-marginal scum' (160), declaring the early Wittgenstein to be 'totally inept and mentally deficient' (162),<sup>7</sup> and comparing the 'dead-pan, puffed-up, wicked and emotionless' (210) faces of Yeltsin and Yushchenko (he also refers to the latter as a 'sinister shadow' (208)). Few people draw Dugin's ire as regularly in *Putin Vs Putin* as Dmitry Medvedev, who is taken as representative of the liberal-Atlanticist trend in the Russian political elite. A subheading refers to Medvedev's presidency 'an unsuccessful theatrical interlude' (208). Dugin suggests that efforts by liberals to split Russia became unnecessary under Medvedev's presidency because his actions ensured that the country would 'disintegrate on its own' (211). One particularly blunt section is worth quoting in full:

Medvedev generally showed himself to be a man inexperienced in foreign policy, and he is not a quick learner either. His video addresses and the innocent joy he displays at the cheap technological gadgets presented to him by the Americans, who quickly identified his weaknesses, deserve a special mention here. Sometimes his steps in international politics were implemented so clumsily that they were met with laughter and contempt. When Bush did similar things it was not disgraceful for America because Bush was backed by a massive intellectual apparatus. Medvedev, however, was not 'backed' by anyone except the enemies of Russia (215).

Medvedev's failings are not a difference of opinion or of approach for Dugin, but rather are seen as signs of a deficient character. This sort of approach certainly makes *Putin Vs Putin* a more interesting read than a calm analysis of policy line-by-line would be, but it is this characteristic which leaves the book in the realm of polemic rather than analytic.

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<sup>7</sup> Dugin is here rallying against the positivist belief in atomic facts.

The common view of Dugin as a fascist or neo-fascist<sup>8</sup> is challenged by the evident glee he expresses about the marginality of ‘ultra-patriots, skinheads and everyday racists’ (40). In Dugin’s view, ‘this sector is colourful and brutal, but totally disjointed politically, its leaders being petty maniacs with atrophied muscles’ (40). Whilst Dugin sees the utility in deploying such groups for PR purposes against the pro-Western liberals who contest Russia’s position as a superpower, who they vote for is ultimately unimportant because they make up a small percentage of the population and ‘most likely, on the night prior to the election they will drink one too many and not make it to the ballot-boxes’ (40). Dugin’s anti-racism has tended to be a barrier to a sympathetic reading by the white nationalist and Identarian wings of the New Right.<sup>9</sup> Although Dugin’s relative multiculturalism is undoubtedly informed by the political reality of the various ethnic groups residing within Russian territory, it is backed with a clear and open disdain for ‘any kind of nationalism, chauvinism, Eurocentrism, universalism, racism or xenophobic attitude’ (310). He argues that the radical traditionalists in Europe too should adopt a similar attitude, as ‘Europe should stand for geopolitical unity, coupled with preservation of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the various European ethnoses’ (311). It is however important to note that this conception of ethnic and cultural equality can also be interpreted as ‘equal but separate’, which is not the same as the brand of multiculturalism supported by European liberalism.

*Putin Vs Putin* is unlikely to radically change the reader’s opinion about Putin, particularly as he is not a figure many feel indifferent about. What *Putin Vs Putin* will do is to provide a different lens through which to view Putin’s actions and pronouncements. A brief appendix from April 2014 on the situation in Ukraine applies some of the previously discussed conceptions, but is unlikely to add a great deal to understanding of the crisis, if only because events have continued to progress rapidly in the time that has since passed. Dugin’s idea of a fourth political theory

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<sup>8</sup> For example: Shekhovtsov 2014.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Malvicini, 2014.

(4PT)<sup>10</sup> is discussed briefly in relation to criticism of Putin's lack of a guiding Idea and also, in the second appendix, in relation to European politics. Whilst the discussion of 4PT here will provide a general overview of the theory which owes an acknowledged debt to Heidegger, the reader wishing to gain a greater understanding of 4PT would be better turning to Dugin's *The Fourth Political Theory. Putin Vs Putin* is an often fascinating and equally infuriating read which serves as an excellent overview of Dugin's political and philosophical positions. English language readers interested in gaining a greater understanding of the Eurasianist strand and its connection to modern Russian politics are likely to gain much from this. Probably more so than from Dugin's other books, at least until *Foundations of Geopolitics* finally receives an English edition.

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<sup>10</sup> Dugin argues that as communism and fascism were defeated, and liberalism is flawed, a fourth political theory combining the strengths (and avoiding the weaknesses) of these is necessary.

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**REQUIEM FOR A DREAM.**

**Review of Peter Pomerantsev. 2015. *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible. Adventures in Modern Russia*. London: Faber and Faber.**

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Peter Pomerantsev's book is a documentary written in a very easy flowing style that can be read as a selection of short stories or even a novel. It seems to be infused with the atmosphere of *Great Gatsby* set in a much darker, sinister setting. It starts in a swirl of a party where everything is possible, where money falls from the sky, where becoming rich is so easy 'it does not seem real' and where long Northern winter nights are one endless entertainment. It finishes with the same disillusionment of the main protagonist (the author himself) with the 'Eastern' life and return to the West to be haunted by memories of the past and images of the world left behind. For most readers who have not experienced the 'Soviet' or 'post-Soviet condition' this book may well read the same way as that of Fitzgerald – a seducing peek into an era and a place which they will never visit and which is as distant for them in its deeds and mores as that of 1920s America. For those who have lived in 'the system' it will remind how deeply entangled it was and how difficult it is to get rid of its tentacles.

Pomerantsev's book is narrated, as befits a TV producer, through a camera lens. It is a set of stories, quite different from one another, quite fitting to be separate documentaries, but which, told together create a powerful portrait of Russian society, its visitors and its 'offshore'. The razzle-dazzle in the book quickly starts seeping the juice of bitterness. The country where everything is possible too soon appears to be not only the country where someone just out of the university can get to produce his own programs and fulfil his dreams, but also the country where people's possessions and even lives depend on the charity of the state, where everything revolves around the elusive figure of 'The

President' (never with the actual name), the ultimate shape-shifter, the contemporary Wizard of Oz.

Moscow as a city becomes the metaphor for the contemporary Russian society. A city that cannot grow outwards shaped by a 'still feudal social structure defined by needing to be within the touching distance of the tsar' and which is destroyed and built over again and again as without expansion, 'every generation stamps on the heads of the previous ones'. It is a city whose memory is destroyed and written over, whose memory, like that of the country itself and its people, is kept only in the minds of single individuals, such as Alexander Mozhaev. Between the TNT television channel where the author works, with its bubble gum pinks, producing 'happy things' and the disappearing Moscow with its histories of purges, terrors and endless bloodletting, that Mozhaev wants to save, one is left with an impression of a double world familiar in life for those who went through the Soviet system, also aptly described in numerous pieces of literature.

'Nothing is real' as a part of the title is also part of experiences of the people Pomerantsev describes. One of the darkest story is that of Yana Yakovleva through whom it is shown so clearly that one can 'drive with a frothy white dress in the morning only to be treated as a parcel in the afternoon' in a country where 'there are no property rights just gradations of proximity to the Kremlin.' Everything is coated in an illusion of legality with all the participants accepting that legality is a farce, and the words cannot 'do things' but, quite to the contrary, are utterly meaningless. This unreality permeates the other stories as well, with many a protagonist stuck in the limbo of truth, looking for an escape from it in the various flourishing cults and new religions. At the same time, the majority simply accepts the game and smiling benevolently at those expressing belief in, e.g., human rights, 'raise conformism to the level of aesthetic act'.

One does not encounter too many well-known names in this book, it is, after all, the story of a society and people who make it what it is. Two persons, however, do stand out, two demiurges of contemporary Russia, the people who contributed the most to making it one big reality show

where news ‘should feel like a movie’ and where gangster movies are forbidden because politicians act like gangsters: Vladislav Surkov and Boris Berezovsky. Surkov is given the entire chapter with a rather detailed description of his life and works, mainly literary but also some of his most masterful illusions in politics. Berezovsky we encounter fleetingly, in the ‘offshore’, at a trial in London, a pathetic figure eliciting laughter from the audience but probably the only one who deserves a place in a Shakespearean tragedy with his confession and apology to the Russian people. It is this contrast between two men: one regretting, too late, his own role in the (re)creation of the ‘system’ and the alternative (TV) reality for Russia (and is his regret genuine?); and another, announcing with his Cheshire cat smile that he is proud to be considered so important as to evoke Western sanctions, as by sanctioning him the West seems to admit that he perfected the art of the surreal – that I found truly fascinating.

I finished the book with a heavy feeling that, I believe, permeates many a person in the Baltics: that we are caught in someone else’s fantasy. Even if we are not part of the society Pomerantsev describes, even if our tragedies, when told, would sound different; even if our countries have done a lot to dismantle the ‘sistema’ which had us all in its claws; if we do not believe that ‘nothing is true’, now, with Russia increasingly more belligerent, with its regime increasingly attempting to penetrate and corrupt the West from within, to make them believe that nothing is true and that the Hobbesian pre-Leviathan world of all against all is back, but it is all ‘only business’, we still have to take into account the fantasy. We have to follow every move and try to predict which turn the delirium will take and so the chimera becomes a reality, because it is real in its consequences.

At the same time, we live another dream. We ourselves dreamed of Russia as a ‘normal’ country, ‘normal’ in a Western sense, focused on giving the individual a space for self-advancement, cooperating with other countries in trying to make the world a better place and maybe pointing out to others their mistakes so that all can grow. This book can be read as a requiem for that dream.

## FROM ONE AUTHORITARIANISM TO ANOTHER AND BACK AGAIN

Review of William Zimmerman. 2014. *Ruling Russia. Authoritarianism from the Revolution to Putin*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

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William Zimmerman, professor emeritus at the University of Michigan, a long standing observer and analyst of the Russian politics in his newest book traces the development of the Russian political system through different types of authoritarianisms and (limited) experimentations with democracy. Zimmerman starts with distinguishing between different types of political systems: democratic and three types of authoritarianisms (competitive, full and mobilization) which are distinguished by the status of opposition, level of electoral uncertainty, size of selectorate (who can participate in the selection of the leaders) or ejectorate (is there a possibility to remove the leaders through extralegal means, such as rallies or coups) and the goals of the regime. Competitive authoritarianism in this typology is quite close to democratic rule, only the electoral rules are often violated in favour of those in power and the opposition is limited in its expressions. Mobilized authoritarianism here roughly corresponds to the description of totalitarianism and in Russian case is epitomised by the height of Stalin's rule in 1937-1938.

After describing these different forms of rule in the introduction, Zimmerman goes through the history of Russia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century to assess how the system looked right after the revolution, during Stalin's rule, Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's rule, Gorbachev's reforms and finally, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the period of Yeltsin's toying with democracy and going back to authoritarianism

under Vladimir Putin. It is an interesting journey through a hundred years of Russian history, permeated with pieces of information from the previous research of the author (such as the possibility to predict the increase of Soviet Union military budget from the speeches of its leaders and their mention or lack thereof of the United States), tracing of the increases and decreases of the selectorate throughout this period of time, as well as assessment of the country's future.

The book was written before the Ukraine events, but even so the author predicted the very limited chance for the country to turn back to the truly democratic system, whilst at the same time emphasizing that, as the rallies against the falsifications of the results of elections of 2011-2012 have shown, there was still a possibility for it to go back to a kind of 'competitive authoritarianism'. The author did, however, also suggest that there is a possibility for it to move back to a kind of mobilized authoritarianism and, unfortunately, the signs of such an unfavourable outcome are more numerous than those of the system becoming (somewhat more) democratic. He shows that many leaders toyed with the semi-democratic procedures of elite selection (even in the early days after the revolution, according to him, the selectorate was quite large and disagreements with the top leadership possible), each leader has been moving away from such procedures in order to reduce uncertainty in the electoral process.

Even though it was written before the murder of Boris Nemtsov, it would be interesting to assess this murder in light of insights of this book. The author emphasizes that since Stalin's death there has been an unwritten rule that members of the elite who lose in a power struggle would not suffer extremely dire consequences. In Brezhnev's time they would be even given rather comfortable ambassadorial positions in places of little strategic interest (such as Canada or Denmark). The murder of Nemtsov seems to go against this unwritten rule, raising the stakes of power struggle around Kremlin.

This book is not, however, as it was suggested elsewhere, a reading for beginners. It is rather for adepts in Russian history and politics who want to share in the views of one of the most solid Western political scientists in the area of Sovietology and Russia studies. It talks to other books, debating some rather obscure points with other authors which the reader, if s/he is not familiar with the field, can hardly take in and is even invited to ‘explore other areas of scholarship to obtain a full picture of what transpired.’ (p.64)

It has these obscure moments, the best example of which is the statement: ‘Given what Kirov is reported to have said when he was approached and asked if he would accept appointment as general secretary, certainly he, and very likely the Old Bolsheviks who approached him, did not consider the main policies associated with Stalin to have been abnormal.’ (p.79) This is the first time the reader encounters someone named Kirov and, needless to say, without having read previously about the period, one can hardly know what ‘Kirov is reported to have said’. Maybe such obscurity would work better for the newer events, such as ‘Beslan tragedy’ or ‘Beslan hostage crisis’ which is never really spelled out except for p.222 ‘hostage crisis in Beslan (a small town in North Caucasus)’ – it could be assumed that if you know what happened in Beslan, you probably also know that it is a small town in North Caucasus and if you do not, such information would hardly help.

There are periods missing from this account, the most conspicuous is that of the Second World War, the complete absence of which is never explained. At the same time, it moves from one subject to another sometimes with head spinning speed, such as when in a chapter on NEP you suddenly are left with collectivization and have to check other sources to make sure that, yes, the old schoolbook knowledge does not deceive you and it did indeed happen after, not during NEP. It has some strange twists, such as discussing everyday life for half of the chapter that is supposed to be dealing with the Great Purge (what are we to fathom

from this? That life was not so bad during Stalin's terror because workers learned to dance foxtrot in the factories?). Or some interesting logic, such as the explanation why Putin could not have been blackmailing Yeltsin with a 'kompromat' against his daughter: 'Yeltsin's daughter (in her third interview with Colton) said that "her father did not ask her opinion on the selection of Putin" – which reduces by a lot the possibility that Yeltsin's decision to appoint Putin as prime minister was driven by consideration of his daughter's well-being.' (p.226-227)

Overall, the book has its moments, its introduction and conclusions are well worth reading, its theoretical framework is robust, but this definitely should not be the first book one reads about Russian history in the 20-21<sup>st</sup> century or even the first book one reads about Russian authoritarianism unless one wants to spend a lot of additional time figuring out what it was that Kirov is supposed to have said when he was asked to become the general secretary in 1933 and especially so, if one does not even know who Kirov was.

**THE REAL 'RUSSIA HOUSE'**

**Review of Jeremy Duns. 2013. *Dead Drop: The True Story of Oleg Penkovsky and the Cold War's Most Dangerous Operation*, London: Simon & Schuster.**

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Oleg Penkovsky was arguably the most valuable intelligence source the West had in the Soviet Union. He was certainly its most famous or infamous and one of the most controversial. Jeremy Duns has attempted to resolve the controversies swirling around Penkovsky by making use of many recently declassified documents. Duns reveals little new about Penkovsky the man, but he does reveal a great deal about the operation and he clears up the lingering questions about the value and authenticity of the secrets Penkovsky gave to the West.

Oleg Penkovsky was a Soviet Colonel, a frustrated Colonel passed over for promotion and fearing his career was over because his superiors had discovered that his father had fought for the Whites in the Russian Civil War. Penkovsky thus decided to change sides and became an intelligent asset for the Anglo-Americans. Duns' evidence supporting Penkovsky's reasons for turning traitor are conclusive and he puts to rest older theories that Penkovsky turned traitor for ideological reasons or out of fear that the Soviets were risking a nuclear war. Although, most of the secrets Penkovsky turned over did relate to nuclear war that reflected the era, the early 1960s, not any fear he had of a nuclear exchange.

Penkovsky's story is inherently tied to the risk of nuclear war as his service coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis when the risk of nuclear war was at its height. Indeed one of the great services done by Duns is to divorce the Penkovsky story from the Cuban Missile Crisis historiography and treat Penkovsky as a story in its own right. Penkovsky is no longer the great man in history who single handedly saved the world from nuclear holocaust. His intelligence was a source of information

considered by American policy makers during the crisis, but it was one of many.

One of the reasons why Penkovsky's story is so controversial is ironically because his intelligence was so valuable and coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis. Suspicion is an essential element of any intelligence agency and once Penkovsky was captured the CIA, which was being ripped apart by Jesus James Angleton as he searched for Soviet Moles that we know did not exist, began to question the accuracy of Penkovsky's intelligence. Angleton assumed that such valuable information could only have been released if Penkovsky was a KGB plant. Thus for decades debate raged over whether Penkovsky was a great Western or Soviet success.

Duns conclusively demonstrates that Penkovsky was a Western success, albeit one aided and abetted by Soviet mistakes. Those intimate with the Penkovsky story would still find the last chapter 'Beneath the Smoke' valuable. Duns goes through the various arguments about Penkovsky's legitimacy as an intelligence asset and uses recently declassified documents and interviews of key Soviet figures to conclusively demonstrate that Angleton was on another wild goose chase.

While Duns has written an engaging work that reveals how valuable Penkovsky was to the West, his book is not without its flaws or oversights. Duns never puts his research into the wider historiography of Cold War intelligence operations. Furthermore, at times Duns seems to forget that he is writing a historical monograph rather than a thriller which leads to repetitions and at times unnecessary information. *Dead Drop* is nevertheless an excellent addition to the historiography.