



Bridging Divides in Eastern Europe

Policy Perspectives
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The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

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The Bronze Soldier, a statue commemorating Soviet soldiers killed during World War II at its new location, the Defense Forces Cemetery, Tallinn, Estonia. In 2007, it was removed from a downtown square in Estonia's capital provoking riots by ethnic Russians. The sign reads in Estonian and Russian: "To the Unknown Soldier." Some ethnic Estonians consider the memorial a bitter reminder of the Soviet occupation of their Baltic republic, while some ethnic Russians view its removal as a slap at Soviet contributions and an example of discrimination against Russians. (AP Photo/NIPA, Timur Nisametdinov)

The members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States pose in front of a giant tank at the Ozeaneum Sea Museum in Stralsund, Germany, May 31, 2012. From left: Finland's Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen, Russian Federation's First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, Latvia's Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, Chairman of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Valentina Pivnenko, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Denmark's Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Norway's Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, Lithuania's Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, Iceland's Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir, Estonia's Prime Minister Andrus Ansip, and Sweden's Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt. (AP Photo/Jens Meyer)

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Foreword

Cory Welt

George Washington University

This collection of policy memos is based on the proceedings of a May 2012 workshop of the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia), held in collaboration with the Centre for EU-Russia Studies at the University of Tartu in Estonia. PONARS Eurasia is an international network of academics that advances new policy approaches to research and security in Russia and Eurasia.

The workshop, “Continuity and Change: Examining Regime Trajectories and Security in East Europe and Eurasia,” brought together scholars and experts based in the United States, the Russian Federation, and Estonia, as well as Armenia, Canada, Germany, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine. Participants assessed the interplay between domestic and foreign policies in Russia, predicted possibilities for change in Russia’s current political-economic structure, and identified challenges to and potential avenues for cooperation across various Eastern European divides. We are publishing a number of policy memos from the workshop in two collected volumes, of which this is the second.

This volume, *Bridging Divides in Eastern Europe*, assesses political and foreign policy developments in the Baltic states and Ukraine and identifies potential trajectories for cooperation across various Eastern European divides. The four memos of **Part I** address issues relevant to Estonia and the other Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania. *Mark Kramer* assesses the considerable accomplishments the Baltic states have made in terms of democratic consolidation, economic marketization, and security integration over twenty years of post-Soviet state building. He also takes a hard look at their ongoing challenges: demographic decline, ethnic minority integration, economic vulnerability, and incomplete historical memory. *Kornely Kakachia* examines one foreign policy implication of the Baltic transition to the Euro-Atlantic space—their sense of solidarity with, and ability to transfer knowledge to, post-Soviet states still queued up for Western integration, Georgia being a case in point. *Yulia Nikitina* interrogates the “post-colonial” frame that is frequently applied to Russia’s relations with its post-Soviet neighbors, including the Baltics. She asserts that the post-Soviet context is not comparable to post-colonialism, that such an analogy leads to mutual misreading of state intentions, and that a joint and honest reckoning of the past is one constructive step toward the establishment of normal neighborly relations. *Ivan Kurilla* builds on this latter theme, examining textbook treatments of World War II in Russia, Estonia, and other post-Soviet states and demonstrating how divergent historical memories help maintain divides between states and within them. For instance, Estonian textbooks treat those ethnic Estonians who found themselves having to fight on either side of the Soviet-Nazi line as legitimate nation-builders, even as postwar Russian migrants are conspicuously absent from the national narrative. Russian textbooks, on the other hand, leave no room in

the national narrative for those who felt compelled to fight against Soviet power, whether ethnic Russians or national minorities.

Part II turns to contemporary Ukraine, offering two perspectives on President Viktor Yanukovich's slide away from democratic governance and the inability of outside actors to effect a change of course. *Olexiy Haran* demonstrates how the administration has veered between governing through a polarization of society and its unification under more centralized rule. He maintains that Yanukovich still sees relations with the EU as a counterweight to Russian influence and seeks ways to achieve success in the next round of elections using administrative pressure but without overtly falsifying the vote, which could deliver a fatal blow to EU-Ukraine relations. Given Ukraine's interest in retaining a European orientation, *Serhiy Kudelia* argues that the failure of Western actors to get Yanukovich to free former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko from prison is puzzling. He explains that the incentives offered by the West have failed because compromising on the Tymoshenko case could cost Yanukovich his rule, something he seeks to avoid at all costs.

Finally, **Part III** assesses the future of three key relationships straddling various Eastern European divides. *Andrey Makarychev* sees growing strains in the German-Russian relationship, as Germany increasingly defines its relationship with Russia on the basis of European values and development. At the same time, he sees space for non-competitive relations in their common neighborhood, with states between them acquiring greater flexibility to pursue multiple paths of integration. *Ayşe Zarakol* argues that Turkey repeatedly errs in assuming a coincidence of interests with Russia on key foreign policy issues – be it the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Caspian pipeline construction, or, most recently, the Syria crisis. She argues that Turkish policymakers need to increase their expertise on Russia, temper their expectations of Russian foreign policy, and adjust their own strategies accordingly. Finally, *Harris Mylonas* analyzes the challenges of EU-Western Balkan relations. Noting how even NATO integration has proven challenging for the states of the former Yugoslavia and Albania, he maintains that EU integration is more difficult for at least three reasons: a lack of enthusiasm by key EU leaders facing disgruntled constituencies, EU enlargement fatigue, and intractable bilateral problems within the region itself. Ultimately, however, a lack of better alternatives will likely keep the integration project on track.

We are sure you will find these policy perspectives useful and thought-provoking. Many individuals were instrumental in the production of this volume, as well as the organization of the workshop that generated it. I would like to especially thank our colleague and co-organizer, University of Tartu Professor Viatcheslav Morozov; Managing Editor Alexander Schmemmann; Program Coordinator Olga Novikova; Graduate Research Assistants Wilder Bullard and Justin Caton; IERES Executive Associate Caitlin Katsiaficas; and IERES Director Henry Hale.

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The Baltic Countries after Two Decades of Independence

ACHIEVEMENTS, SETBACKS, INTERNAL CHALLENGES

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 200

Mark Kramer
Harvard University

The three Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – endured many hardships in the half century from 1939 to 1991: the initial Soviet occupation, mass deportations to the Gulag in 1941, the German occupation and wartime upheavals, the destruction of the Baltic Jewish communities in the Holocaust, the Soviet re-occupation and forcible annexation at the end of World War II, brutal counterinsurgency campaigns and new waves of mass deportations in the late 1940s, and several decades under harsh Soviet rule.



Since August 1991, however, the three Baltic countries have been independent and are arguably more secure now than at any time in their history. They have close ties to the United States and have been integrated into major Western political, military, and economic structures, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the World Trade Organization, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In addition, Estonia is a member in good standing of the Eurozone, one of the few members that have actually stayed within permissible budgetary limits. All three Baltic countries since 1991 have had democratic polities with free and meaningful elections, frequent changes of executive power, lively political competition and debate, and respect for civil liberties and human rights. The Baltic states are the only former Soviet republics that are rated by Freedom House as “free” countries. They also have market economies that were integrated relatively

smoothly into EU and WTO structures. Economic conditions vary among the three countries, but in each case the private sector has long accounted for the bulk of the economy.

Despite these and other major achievements, the Baltic states must overcome important internal challenges and problems if they are to remain prosperous, independent, and democratic in the years ahead. The two decades since 1991 have led to a spottier record than many in the region had hoped for. This policy memo highlights several key problems: demographic decline (shrinking and aging populations), the difficulty of full ethnic integration, economic vulnerability, and controversial questions of historical memory and national identity. Although the memo focuses on internal challenges, the Baltic countries also face an uncertain future in their relations with Russia.

Demographic Decline

Like many countries in the former Soviet bloc, the three Baltic states since 1991 have been plagued by demographic decline. The populations of all three Baltic republics expanded every year from 1945 to 1990, the years of Soviet rule. In Latvia and Estonia, the population increases were driven almost entirely by a large influx of ethnic Russians (and smaller numbers of other Slavs), who were encouraged to move there by the Soviet regime. By far the largest influx of ethnic Russians occurred during the first five years after World War II, and declassified documents show that Soviet leaders viewed the population transfer as a means of tightening Soviet control. The number of ethnic Estonians in Estonia and of ethnic Latvians in Latvia increased by just a negligible amount after 1945. Only in Lithuania was the situation different. Relatively few ethnic Russians moved to Lithuania after World War II, and the number of ethnic Lithuanians significantly increased, accounting for most of the population growth in Lithuania during the Soviet era.

In the post-Soviet era, the demographic trends in the three Baltic countries have been uniform. As shown in Figures 1 to 3, the populations of all three countries have sharply and steadily declined. The decreases in Estonia and Latvia are partly accounted for by the departure of ethnic Russians, but the exodus of Russians was a significant factor only in the first half of the 1990s. Many ethnic Estonians and Latvians have also emigrated, more than outweighing the number who returned after the collapse of Soviet rule. Indeed, in just the ten years from 2001 through 2011, more than 200,000 Latvians emigrated. Beyond that, most of the population decline in the three countries is attributable to fertility and mortality trends. Total fertility rates in all three countries plummeted after 1990 and shrank all through the 1990s, reaching a low point in 1998. Even though fertility rates have risen somewhat since the end of the 1990s, they are still far below the replacement rates. Hence, the populations of all three countries have declined by at least 15-20 percent during the period of independence. Moreover, the central statistical bureaus in all three countries project further steady declines through at least the year 2050, resulting in a total demographic decline in the region comparable to the precipitous decline that occurred there during World War II.

These demographic trends have resulted in the gradual depopulation of rural areas. Urban populations have declined by a much smaller amount, though the push toward suburbs has changed the pattern of urbanization (a phenomenon common all over Europe). The Baltic governments have been deeply concerned about the demographic trends of the post-Soviet era, including the departure of young and highly educated Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians who take jobs in other EU countries or in North America. Although many of these young people have said they intend to return home someday, relatively few have.

In 1991 the newly independent Baltic states were already among Europe's smallest countries (only Lichtenstein, Iceland, Malta, and Luxembourg were smaller than Estonia). Projections of unremitting demographic decline through 2050 raise questions about their future viability as independent states.

Ethnic Divisions and Problems of Integration

One of the consequences of the post-1991 demographic changes is that all three of the Baltic countries are ethnically more homogeneous than they were at the end of the Soviet era. In Latvia during Soviet times, ethnic Latvians by the 1980s were barely a majority of the population (52 percent as of 1990), but in the post-Soviet era the proportion of ethnic Latvians in the population steadily increased, reaching nearly 60 percent as of 2011. The share of ethnic Russians in Latvia's population during this same period declined from 34 percent to 27.4 percent. Ethnic Estonians now make up 68.7 percent of Estonia's population, up from 60.1 percent in 1990. The proportion of ethnic Russians living in Estonia has dropped from 30.4 percent to 25.6 percent during that same period. As in Soviet times, Lithuania is far more homogeneous than either Estonia or Latvia. Ethnic Lithuanians now make up roughly 85 percent of the Lithuanian population, supplemented by small minority groups of ethnic Poles (6.6 percent) and ethnic Russians (5.4 percent).

Ethnic tensions flared up periodically in Estonia and Latvia in the 1990s over language requirements and citizenship laws, which many ethnic Russians perceived as discriminatory. The Russian government often sought to fuel the discontent, berating the Estonian and Latvian governments for their alleged misdeeds. Officials from the EU and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) expressed concerns about some of the Baltic practices. In response, the Estonian and Latvian governments rescinded certain measures and adjusted legislation to bring it fully into conformity with OSCE and EU norms. The number of "non-citizens" in both Latvia and Estonia has dropped sharply over the past two decades (from 715,000 in 1991 to 290,000 in 2011 in Latvia, and from 340,000 in 1991 to 94,000 in 2011 in Estonia), but the persistence of that category is still a source of friction.*

* It is worth noting, however, that some ethnic Russians have preferred to remain non-citizens because in that status they are entitled to travel visa-free both to Russia and to EU Schengen countries. By contrast, Estonian and Latvian citizens have to obtain visas to travel to Russia.

Even though generational change will eventually eliminate this particular problem, the larger task of integrating ethnic Russians fully into Latvian and Estonian societies is less easily resolved. The ethnic tension is hardly unmanageable – ethnic divisions in Latvia and Estonia are no more acute than in many other European countries such as Belgium, Slovakia, Romania, Spain, and Bulgaria, not to mention Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia. However, it lends itself to exploitation by the Russian government, which has deliberately tried to inflame tensions (as in 2007 during the Bronze Soldier controversy in Estonia) in order to exert pressure on Latvia and Estonia and cause problems in their relations with the OSCE and the EU.

Even in Lithuania, where the minority populations are much smaller, some friction has arisen with the ethnic Polish community, mostly over language and orthographic issues, the status of Polish schools, and delays with restitution of Polish property in what became Lithuanian territory after 1945. Like the majority of European countries, Lithuania has established a single official language, and ethnic Poles living in Lithuania are required to use Lithuanian renderings of their names in official identification documents. Legislative proposals to permit Polish spellings have been rejected numerous times by the Lithuanian parliament, most recently in April 2012. The friction caused by this issue and by differences over restitution and schools has affected diplomatic relations between Lithuania and Poland. The Polish government has lodged official complaints and has occasionally slowed its cooperation with Lithuania on certain NATO activities, notably the Baltic Air Policing mission involving Poland and the three Baltic states.

Economic Vulnerability

From the late 1990s until 2008, the economies of the Baltic states were among the fastest-growing in the world. The Estonian economy, in particular, increased by nearly 10 percent a year, and Latvia and Lithuania were not far behind. So robust was the growth in the region that the three countries became known as the “Baltic tigers.” That status came to an abrupt end in 2008. A combination of bad loans, real estate bubbles, and a large buildup of debt meant that the global economic downturn in 2008-2009 took an onerous toll in the Baltic states, causing the three economies to shrink more rapidly than at any time over the past century, including during the Great Depression. The impact in Latvia was so jarring that it sparked violent protests, precipitated the collapse of Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis’ government, and led to an emergency bailout of €7.5 billion from the International Monetary Fund in 2009. Output declines in Lithuania and Estonia in 2008-2009 were nearly as precipitous as in Latvia. Although the three countries have benefited enormously from their integration into the global economy since 1991, their dependence on foreign partners has left them vulnerable when economic trends in Europe go badly awry.

Severe though the impact was in all three Baltic countries, it did not prove to be as debilitating there as in some other EU countries, especially Ireland, Greece, and Bulgaria. In 2010, both Estonia and Lithuania returned to economic growth, reaching 3.2 percent in Estonia and 1.3 percent in Lithuania, and Latvia’s economy stopped

contracting. By 2011, Estonia was back to a brisk 8.1 percent growth rate, the highest in the EU. Lithuania achieved 5.9 percent economic growth, and Latvia experienced a heartening return to 5.5 percent. The resumption of fast growth in the three Baltic countries, well ahead of the rest of the EU, was due in part to sharp internal devaluations, which the Baltic governments managed to implement despite strong resistance. In their ability to act, they stood in remarkable contrast to many of the leading EU countries, not to mention Greece, Italy, and Ireland, where the governments have been nearly paralyzed by popular unrest and political infighting. By showing resilience and political courage in the face of adversity and protest, the Baltic governments reaped the reward of a much prompter revival of fast growth.

Even though the crisis is now over in the Baltics and important economic safeguards have been introduced, the experience of 2008-2009 underscored the potential for major problems to reemerge if the EU fails to extricate itself from its current predicament. The Baltic governments hope that banks in their countries will behave more responsibly with lending in the future, but nearly all banks in the region are owned by Scandinavian or German banks, and hence there is no direct guarantee. The great benefits the Baltic countries derive from EU membership cannot be sustained indefinitely if the EU does not regain its vitality. The uncertain future of the Eurozone (which Estonia joined in early 2011, and which both Lithuania and Latvia are on track to join in 2014) ensures that some risk of a new crisis will persist in the future.

Historical Memory and National Identity

After the Baltic countries regained their independence in 1991, they set up research institutes to undertake historical investigations of the five decades in which the region was under foreign occupation, from 1939 through 1991. The official names of these institutes included the words “genocide” and “totalitarianism,” indicating that the events they were studying – the subjugation of their countries to foreign rule – were tantamount to genocide. Researchers at the institutes have produced some exceptionally useful books, articles, and collections of documents, and the Baltic archives for the entire period have long been fully accessible, a degree of openness unmatched anywhere else in the former Communist world, with the partial exception of Germany and the Czech Republic. Research on the four-and-a-half decades of Soviet rule in the Baltics has made a great deal of headway, but explorations of the briefer Nazi occupation have been much more uneven. For example, no detailed study has yet appeared of the role of Lithuanians and Latvians in assisting the Germans’ annihilation of Baltic Jews. The impression one often gets, justifiably or not, is that the term “genocide” in the institutes’ names refers solely to the atrocities and crimes of the Soviet occupation and not to the actual genocide carried out against Lithuanian and Latvian Jews during the war.

The incompleteness of efforts to come to terms with the past has also been reflected in the perennial controversy surrounding Baltic veterans from World War II. During the Soviet era, a simplistic version of history was enforced depicting anyone who had fought against Soviet troops as a fascist and anyone who had joined the Red Army as a hero. Since 1991, this Soviet contrivance has rightly been abandoned, but in its place

has come official sponsorship of annual marches by Baltic veterans of Waffen-SS units. To be sure, many who joined the Baltic Waffen-SS units were motivated solely by a desire to help regain independence for their countries, but some who took part in these units were complicit in atrocities. By giving an official imprimatur to the veterans' marches, local Baltic governments are misconstruing the best way to counter the falsifications of the Soviet era. Undoing the pernicious legacy of the Soviet era will require a thorough reckoning with all the crimes of the past, not just those perpetrated by the Soviet regime.

Because only two decades have passed since the demise of the Soviet Union, the mixed record of the Baltic countries' historical reassessments is not at all surprising. Many of the long-established democracies, including the United States, have found it hard to make a full and candid reckoning with horrible events in their pasts. In most cases, several decades or longer have had to elapse before these countries have truly been able to face up to past abominations. The Baltic states in that sense are hardly unique.

For now, historical memory and national identity in the Baltic countries are being shaped mainly by a sweeping (and entirely justified) rejection of Soviet rule. The passage of additional time will undoubtedly permit a more thorough reassessment of the wartime years as well. Such a result will be salutary for the three countries' democratic development by ensuring that unsavory episodes will not come back to haunt them.

Conclusions

The many successes achieved by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania since 1991 are of immense historical importance, and the future of the Baltic states is brighter now than anyone could have imagined 25 years ago, not to mention 60 or 70 years ago. Nonetheless, the three countries have experienced some major problems over the past two decades, and formidable challenges lie ahead. Like other small states, the Baltic countries do not fully control their own destinies, not least because their "neighborhood" has been an inhospitable one most of the time over the past century. External developments are bound to have a far-reaching impact on the three countries' internal prospects.

Yet, even if daunting setbacks occur in the years ahead, the Baltic states thus far have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to overcome them. There is no reason to believe they will be any less resilient in the future.

Figure 1. Population Trends in Estonia

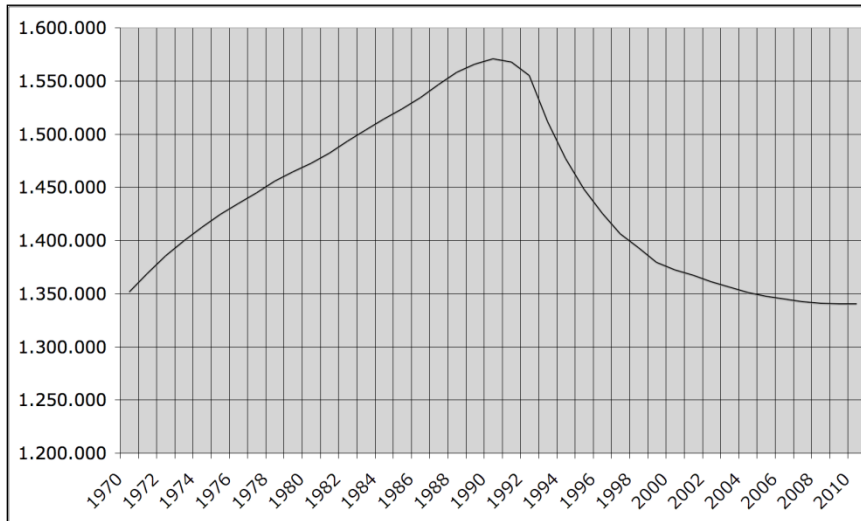


Figure 2. Population Trends in Latvia

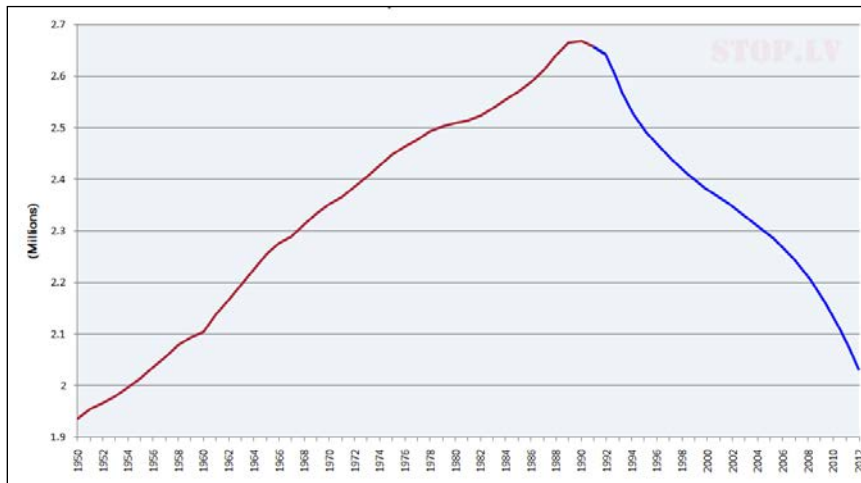


Figure 3. Population Trends in Lithuania

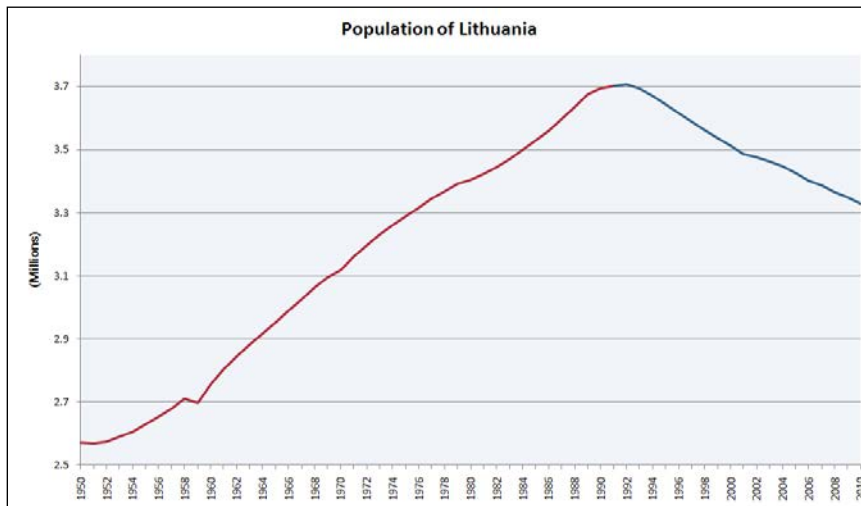


Figure 4. GDP Growth in Estonia

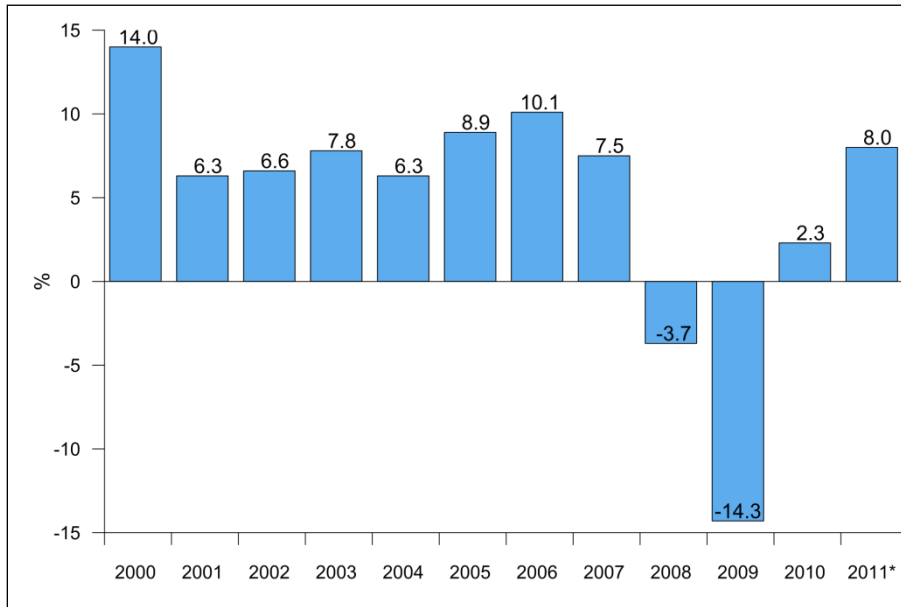


Figure 5. GDP Growth in Latvia

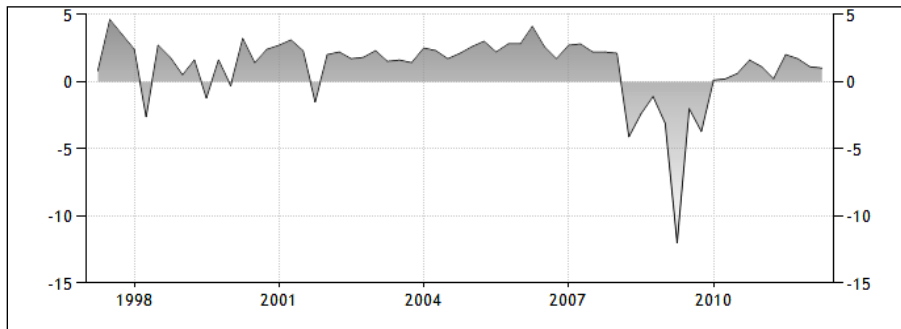
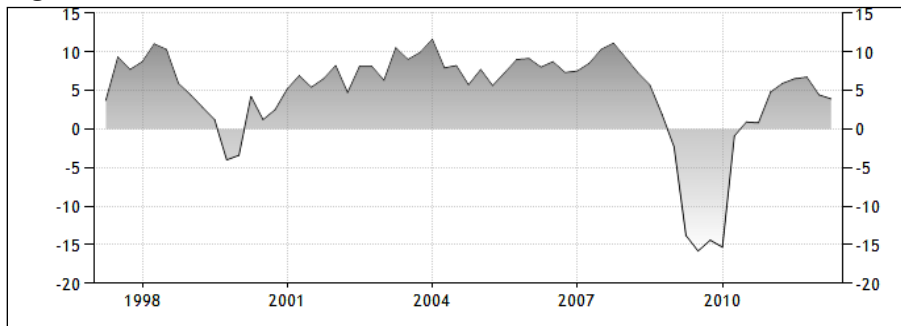


Figure 6. GDP Growth in Lithuania



From Blind Love to Strategic Alliance?

BALTIC-GEORGIAN RELATIONS REVISITED

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 201

Kornely Kakachia
Tbilisi State University

Since the restoration of independence, Georgia and the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – have established dynamic relationships that have evolved into forms of strategic cooperation. Over the last two decades, many have seen Georgia and the Baltics, along with Moldova and (somewhat) Ukraine, as a potential “belt of freedom and democracy” alongside Russia. As Georgia entered the post-Soviet era without natural allies or a history of reliable alliances, the Baltic states have proven to be loyal partners, as well as to all the Caucasian states when they needed support in their various tussles with Russia. Increasingly, geopolitical developments taking place around the Black and Baltic Seas have provided a new impetus for closer Baltic-Georgian relations. Although Russia has reconciled itself with the independence of the Baltic states, Moscow seems to have a difficult time swallowing the idea of independent Georgia. As Georgia tries to balance Moscow’s influence in its internal affairs and strives for Euro-Atlantic integration, cementing a close partnership with Eastern European states becomes essential. Similarly, Moscow’s policies vis-à-vis its smaller neighbors reinvigorated the Baltic states’ traditional security concerns and catalyzed their interest toward further involvement in the Caucasus. A number of factors lie behind this change, including Georgia's rapid transformation, growing energy security concerns, and the mounting strategic importance of the Caucasus in light of the potentially looming Iran crisis.

The Baltics and the Caucasus: Two Regions, Two Pathways

In order to understand Baltic-Georgian relations, one must look at the regional dynamics of both regions. After the collapse of Soviet Union, both the Baltic and Caucasus regions emerged as battlegrounds for competition among larger actors. Although both regions had their chance to become centers for further integration projects, the two regions chose different ways of development. The Baltic states managed to strengthen their regional bonds and become full-fledged members of the European security system. The Caucasus, on the other hand, struggled to define itself, descended into ethnic conflict,

and got preoccupied with state-building exercises. Likewise, while regional unity in the Caucasus remained a large hurdle, the Baltic states succeeded in overcoming regional problems, constructing functioning states and developing a viable regional security architecture. In the field of security, the Baltic states now consider the possibility of joint defense (including joint purchase of military and other special equipment in order to ensure more efficient use of existing resources) and participation in international missions, quite in contrast to the security environment that dominates in the Caucasus. As observers acknowledge, a certain common cultural background, political rationality, and clear economic advantages have played key roles in the establishment of close regional ties among the states of the Baltic Sea region.

The biggest difference between the Baltic region and the Caucasus remains their respective stances toward regional development models. As the Baltic states grew to accept the idea of a Baltic Sea region as an EU sub-region with a strong regional identity, the South Caucasus as a sub-region still remains without a proper “regional identity.” With its ill-defined borders, weak economic links, and lack of a shared identity, the Caucasus is not a coherent region, which undermines regional development and security. The debate over where the Caucasus region broadly belongs, how it more narrowly fits into the EU ballpark (either collectively or individually), and what functionality it has in global politics remains an important feature of the region’s internal and international relations.

Geopolitics Still Matter

As for Georgia in particular, foreign policy has revolved primarily, if not solely, around the imperative of enhancing security vis-à-vis Russia. One can say that after the United States and Poland, Georgians consider the Baltic states to be among the most – if not the most – reliable security partners. Shared visions, values, and aspirations have helped to form close bonds. More than most EU members, the Baltic states have a vision of a wider, stronger, and more open Europe. While Baltic foreign policy and interests might differ significantly in their specifics, they share an attitude of support and camaraderie toward Georgia and other neighbors like Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. Having successfully transformed their own countries into free market democracies, the Baltic states hope to pass on their reform experiences to other post-communist states that desire to implement similar reforms.

While pursuing an active and productive foreign policy within the EU, the Baltic states retain the aim of strengthening Baltic-Black Sea regional solidarity. The transfer of stability and security from the Baltic states to the Caucasus is seen as a desirable endeavor. Georgia, in particular, evinces great interest in such cooperation. From the Georgian perspective, the Baltic model of development is a clear success story in the history of EU integration and represents a positive example for Eastern Partnership countries that are still on their way to the EU. Georgia also wants to emulate the Baltic states in their political discourse and transformation of political institutions. The Baltic example also represents a role model for the kind of security Georgia wishes to achieve.

Links with the Baltic space are also important for Georgia from a geopolitical perspective, as partnership means more options for countering Russian influence. Like Georgia, the Baltic states' post-Soviet geopolitical identity has been based on Russia as their greatest threat. With Russia seeking to pressure Georgia to accommodate its geopolitical interests, neither Georgia nor the Baltic states want to see growing Russian influence in the Caucasus. It was no accident that the Baltics were founding members of the "new group of friends of Georgia" set up in 2005. The group's chief goal was to assist Georgia in its bid for European and Euro-Atlantic integration by putting to good use the experience of the Group's members. This informal gathering of several European states has provided expertise and advice to Tbilisi – they understand what it means to fight for sovereignty and maintain an independent foreign policy under the shadow of a big neighbor.

In view of the parallels between the situations of the Baltic states and Georgia, the emergence of close bilateral relations has been a natural development. The Baltic states' support for Georgia's aspirations to NATO and EU membership has been instrumental for the harmonization of national legislation and institutions, as well as for reforming the defense sector and other spheres of public policy. Although Georgia is not a NATO member, it has made tremendous contributions to the NATO-led international efforts in Afghanistan by deploying nearly 1,000 troops under French and U.S. command. This move has created a new dynamic in Georgian-Baltic relations. In fact, relations with the Baltic states have emerged as a foreign policy priority for Georgia. Its national security concept, adopted by the Georgian parliament in December 2011, separately notes "active cooperation" with the Baltic states, while emphasizing the "huge importance of cooperation" with Eastern and Central European states, as well as with Scandinavian countries.

Common security interests have led to stronger ties between Georgia and the Baltics, including cooperation on energy, cyber security, and national defense issues. During the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war, Estonia sent cyber security experts to Georgia and took over the hosting of the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website after cyber attacks essentially shut down Georgian government communications. The 2012 Defense Cooperation Plan between Georgia and Lithuania anticipates the study of Georgian representatives at the Lithuanian Military Academy and the Baltic Defense College in Tartu (Estonia), military medics, and noncommissioned officer courses. Lithuania foresees sending representatives of its Land Forces to Georgia's Sachkhere Mountain-Training School and conducting meetings for logistics and civil-military cooperation specialists. Exchanges and consultations have also covered the development of the National Security Concept of Georgia, procurement issues, training, and education.

In the economic field, Baltic markets are important for the Georgian economy, in light of the ongoing Russian ban on Georgian products such as wine and mineral water. Great efforts were made to encourage Georgian exports to the Baltic region and, at the same time, sustain investments from the Baltic states to Georgia. It is expected that an

active Baltic policy toward Georgia will strengthen commercial relations and set the stage for Baltic investment in the region.

Finally, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have identified Georgia as a core target country for development assistance cooperation. They have consolidated their capacity and financial resources and coordinated activities. Development cooperation has focused on education, good governance, and democracy building, as well as economic development and environmental sustainability. After Georgia's Rose Revolution in Georgia, former Estonia prime minister Mart Laar advised the Georgian government on the carrying out of liberal reforms. While assistance to date has been limited in financial terms, it has made Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania stakeholders in Georgian affairs.

The Russia-Georgia Conflict and its Implications for Baltic-Georgian Relations

The Russia-Georgia war of 2008 stirred painful memories of Soviet occupation in the Baltic states. They watched with dismay as the West failed to offer Georgia effective support during the conflict. They also understandably rallied behind Georgia against Russia's military incursion. Some Baltic officials and commentators even considered that Russia's invasion presaged a potential threat to their own independence. Although, unlike Georgia, the Baltic states enjoy the security guarantees that come with NATO membership, not even these eliminate their sense of insecurity as their relations with Russia remain complicated.

The war also demonstrated to political elites that the territorial integrity of small states still cannot be taken for granted, even within Europe. With significant ethnic Russian minorities, Estonia and Latvia were particularly alarmed by Russia's public explanation that it had invaded Georgia to protect the rights of Russian citizens. The war also raised a host of uncomfortable questions regarding the future security of the Baltic and Black Sea regions. The overall response of the West, which was perceptibly weak, increased the general uncertainty. On a pragmatic level, the war gave the Baltic states crucial insights into Russian foreign policy toward small neighbors and solidified their view that oversimplifying or ignoring the Russian threat could be quite risky.

The Baltic states continue to press Russia more than other EU members to fulfill its obligations under the six-point August 2008 ceasefire agreement that was concluded with French President Nicolas Sarkozy's mediation. Along with Great Britain and Poland, the Baltic states are in favor of a tougher stance toward Russia's fulfillment of commitments it undertook under the cease-fire agreement. Lithuania was the first to condemn Russia's occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, followed by similar resolutions by the European Parliament and the U.S. Senate. The Georgian public appreciated the moral and political support they received from the Baltic states during the war. By traveling to Tbilisi as the war concluded and demonstrating their firm support for the democratic choices of the Georgian people, Baltic leaders, together with the Polish leadership, managed to win the hearts and minds of many Georgians.

Conclusion

After the war, other Europeans sometimes criticized the Baltic states, especially Lithuania, for caring too much about Georgia at the expense of EU solidarity on foreign policy issues. Their policy was said to be not in tune with that of EU heavyweights like Germany or France, which adopted more conciliatory approaches toward Russia after the war. Nonetheless, the Baltic states continue to concretely assist Georgia in its efforts to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures. While NATO members like Germany and France said that pushing for a MAP for Georgia meant unnecessarily complicating relations with Russia, the Baltic states actively supported Georgia's stance on conflict resolution. Although analysts in both regions assert that the foreign policy of the Baltic states toward Georgia has become more moderate, there is no clear evidence of this. On the contrary, the Baltic states have been instrumental in pushing for EU-Georgia talks on the establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade area. They also spoke out in favor of launching visa facilitation talks between Tbilisi and Brussels. Coupled with the solid commitments Tbilisi made to enable the EU-Georgia visa facilitation agreement, the Baltic states' firm advocacy likely contributed to its entry into force in March 2011. In contrast to Western frowning on Georgia's leadership after the conflict and reluctance to accept Georgia as a NATO member, the Baltic states' political support for Georgia has been consistent. Comparing the Georgian plight regarding Euro-Atlantic and European integration to their integration bids back in the 1990s, the Baltic states have been strongly sympathetic to Georgia. Likewise, as Georgia seeks ways to ensure its security and work toward Euro-Atlantic integration, the Baltic model inspires it as a vivid example of how small states during a relatively short period of time can transform their security systems and integrate into NATO.

Legacy and Responsibility in the Post-Soviet Space

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 202

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Two main discourses are currently used to analyze relations between Russia and the other post-Soviet states. The two approaches, post-colonial and post-ideological, underlie most analyses of Russian policies in Eurasia and help establish the conceptual frameworks for Western policies toward post-Soviet states and other countries of the former socialist bloc. These two discourses are intertwined. They are also intentionally or unintentionally reflected in the national political discourses of Russia's post-Soviet neighbors.

This paper focuses on the more prominent *post-colonial* discourse. This is based on a perception of the Soviet Union as an empire, the successor of the Russian Empire. This discourse holds Russian policies in post-Soviet Eurasia to be a form of neo-colonialism. Such a frame, however, raises a basic methodological question: what should be considered the colonies of the Soviet Union and Russia? All former Soviet republics? Or are Ukraine and Belarus exceptions as culturally and historically similar territories? Should the ex-socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe be considered colonies or semi-colonies? Furthermore, post- and neo-colonial approaches might even be seen as flattering to Russia, as they affirm the latter's role as regional leader and as a real, not only legal, successor to the USSR (even if at the official level Russia denies neo-imperial ambitions).

Such ambiguities help explain why classic post-colonial theories are rarely applied to the post-Soviet space. Parallels for creating an explanatory model are available. These include both the European colonial experience and the national guilt recovery strategies of Axis powers after World War II. Both sets of cases involve national self-blame and sincere repentance, even if they differ in their specifics. Twentieth-century de-colonization was partly a result of the conscious efforts of metropolitan centers, while the states defeated in World War II had to admit their guilt under international pressure. The logic of de-colonization and post-colonial guilt led to the development of aid programs to former colonies bolstered by modernization theory. De-Nazification and similar processes in other defeated states involved shifts of ideology and changes in political elites. Post-Soviet Russia had neither.

Political and Ideological Account of the Past: Who is to be Blamed?

At the level of popular and political perceptions, it is difficult to divorce Soviet-era social stability from ideology. The extent to which relative welfare and stability resulted from the planned economy or were built only at the expense of millions of victims of authoritarianism is still not entirely clear. As there is no definitive answer to the question, in the post-Soviet states there is a temptation to assess the Soviet legacy in an entirely negative light. This is closer to the logic of analyzing German and Japanese regimes after World War II than to the logic of the colonial experience of European powers.

What often results is a politics of guilt. To take one leading example, in their disputes with Russia the Baltic states present themselves as victims of the Soviet regime. They wait for Russia to make the first step at reconciliation by acknowledging its imperial guilt. The unwillingness of Russia to do so is a consequence of Russians' own tendency toward self-victimization. Self-blame was not part of the Russian political discourse in the 1990s because Moscow felt that it was a (self-)liberator and victim of the regime, not a former suppressor. When the Baltic states or Ukraine blame Russia for the Soviet legacy, Russians are offended because they also suffered from the abuses of the Soviet regime.

Russian language minority issues in the post-Soviet states (most salient in the Baltic states and Ukraine) are a case of reverse discrimination resulting from the nation-building strategies of post-Soviet states that opted for an ethnocentric approach as the easiest and fastest way of self-determination. For federal Russia, by comparison, it would have been politically suicidal to adopt an ethnocentric approach, and so it was left to adopt a much more complex civic strategy of nation-building.

Russians are offended by the treatment of Russian-language minorities in other post-Soviet states not because they fundamentally question the ethnocentric approach, but because the basis for post-colonial reverse discrimination is unwarranted. Colonial history is typically accompanied by a discourse of civilization vs. barbarism that is based on ethnic discrimination. In the Soviet Union, however, the goal of creating a Soviet nation based on class identity excluded (at least at the level of ideology) any grounds for ethnic discrimination. Titular nations in the republics were always represented in local political structures, and their national cultures were supported. Linguistic discrimination in post-Soviet states, however, now leads to discrimination in political and educational spheres. This is perceived in Russia as a response that aims at the wrong target.

In the end, the real cause of discrimination against Russian-speaking populations in post-Soviet states is a desire to reestablish historic justice. However, the former metropolitan center no longer exists at the political level, and the Russian Federation presents itself also as a victim. Thus, "vengeance" is taken out on those who personify the defeated regime but who are in fact not responsible for its sins – ethnic Russian or Russian-speaking minorities.

To a degree, the unwillingness of the Baltic states to take some responsibility for collaboration with the Nazi regime during World War II enables this approach.

Accusations aimed at the Soviet regime permit some to avoid acknowledging unpleasant or shameful facts in their own history, facts presented as an induced reaction to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and subsequent Soviet occupation.

In the end, both Russia and the Baltic states try to escape feelings of guilt, leading to mutual accusations and a kind of “inculcation race.” As a reaction to the negative attitudes to Soviet policies, Russia embellishes its past, going so far at times as to deny obvious abuses of the Soviet regime. The main challenge for Russia here is to find the right balance between the positive and negative record of the Soviet regime. Twenty years after the collapse of the USSR, Moscow is still not morally ready to do so. If each side (Russia and the Baltic states) were to accept its share of responsibility for the common past, face the facts, acknowledge them, and move on (as the Baltic states appear to have done with Germany), it would help make bilateral relations between Russia and each of the Baltic states less tense.

Of Two Minds: Neo- or Post-Post-Colonial Strategies?

Moscow remains conflicted concerning its “imperial” legacy and the “white man’s burden” it inherited from the Soviet Union. The most frequent Russian counterargument to the claim that the Soviet Union was an empire and all 14 republics Russian colonies is that Soviet Russia was not a dominant metropolitan territory that exploited its “colonies” but, on the contrary, that the central government economically developed the Soviet republics. This would be a rather post-colonial and post-imperial behavior (in line with the communist ideological fight against “imperialism”). Russian strategies after 1991 can thus be named *post-post-colonial*. However, some analysts argue that the economic strategies of the central Soviet government were aimed not at developing the republics but at creating a strong single economy with divisions of labor among all of them, leading to disproportionate development and overspecialization of republican economies.

Regarding economic relations with other post-Soviet states, Russia has been ever more ready in recent years to become a “normal” regional power with no post-colonial guilt or neo-imperial aspirations. In practice, this has translated into a desire to de-politicize economic relations with post-Soviet neighbors, in particular limiting preferential policies. The idea of the Eurasian Union follows from this new line of thought: only those states that want to cooperate on an equal basis with equal contributions are welcome in this new structure. The concept of the Eurasian Union received considerable attention in the West, while in Russia the initiative was met with equanimity. The exaggerated interest of outside observers in the project is easily understood; they inscribe it with the logic of German revanchism rather than post-colonialism, thus perceiving it as a manifestation of Moscow’s efforts to re-build its economic clout. The same Western view existed toward the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, seen as Eastern NATOs or “blocs of dictators” created to counter Western structures – this despite the fact that both structures were willing to establish relations with European and Euro-Atlantic structures. This wary approach toward any Russia-led regional structures in Eurasia is

based on an instinctive and deeply entrenched fear of revanchism – a parallel with German policies after World War I. But if so, inclusion, not exclusion, is the remedy for revanchism. Perhaps the West would be better off taking Russia's European security treaty initiative more seriously, or at least accept it as an expression of Russia's desire not to be isolated in the security sphere.

One aspect worth scrutinizing in relations between a metropole and its colonies are the modernization policies aimed at developing colonies' economies. In Russia's case, this trend is partially reversed. In the framework of the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernization, Russia itself has become a subject to modernize, while the democratic Baltic states, as members of the EU and NATO, have ended up as source of political and economic modernization for the former metropole. Hierarchical relations are reversed. Similar examples by which a former colony is better placed in an ensuing global hierarchy are the United States and Great Britain, or Brazil and Portugal.

Another reversion can be found in the cultural sphere. Post-colonial theories are heavily influenced by the concept of Orientalism, popularized by Edward Said. This concept posits that the West socially constructed the Orient by negatively inverting Western culture, creating a discourse of hierarchy and civilization vs. barbarism to subordinate indigenous peoples. It is difficult, however, to apply this concept to Soviet or independent Russia. For centuries Russians have been searching for their own cultural and geographic identity and cannot decide whether they are a European, Asian, or Eurasian nation. In contrast, the Baltics, even under Soviet rule, have always been perceived by their Soviet/post-Soviet neighbors, including Russia, as more culturally advanced, European, and genuinely Western. At least at the level of popular perception, it was the metropole that was culturally alienated, not the colonies.

Can the Soviet Legacy be Transformed into Russian "Soft Power" in Eurasia?

Recently, the idea of developing the potential for "soft power" has become increasingly popular among Russian political elites. However, this is mainly based on strategies of maintaining what is left from the Soviet past. The Russian language, still a lingua franca throughout much of the post-Soviet space, is losing its position. Young generations born after the collapse of the USSR usually speak only national languages and prefer to learn English, Turkish, or Chinese. The common past has turned out not to be reason enough for a common future. The Soviet legacy should not be taken for granted and needs reassessment from all former republics, Russia first and foremost.

The main challenge to developing a potential for "soft power" is that Russia does not have any clear political or economic model that appeals to its neighbors. Such a model or ideology could help unite members of regional organizations in Eurasia. Until recently, Russia was not ready to take all responsibility for the development of regional structures, and it did not want to be the provider of regional hegemonic stability. At present, however, the situation appears to be changing, at least in the sphere of economic cooperation and, to a lesser extent, security.

Strategies of avoiding responsibility follow from an unwillingness to make a positive and negative balance of the Soviet regime's record. But such a task is necessary,

even if it is difficult to reconcile with great power aspirations dictated by resources and geography perceived more like curses than blessings. Russians are still of two minds about whether their country should behave like a regional leader or be tired of paying for its virtual regional hegemony. But twenty years after the “civilized divorce,” it is high time to make a decision to be free from the past and the “post.”

In Search of National Unity or International Separation

WWII ERA TEXTBOOK NARRATIVES IN POST-SOVIET STATES

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 203

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Some of the most emotionally-charged discussions in the post-Soviet space have not been about economics or foreign policy but controversial historical problems. History debates juxtapose countries like Poland and Ukraine as much as they do countries like Estonia and Russia. But in general, Russia has more problems with its neighbors than other post-Soviet states. This is in part because it inherited a long history of imperial and Soviet policies toward its neighbors, and in part because newly independent states found it overly tempting to build identities in opposition to their former patron. The Russian version of the national historical narrative has changed far less since the Soviet era than the versions taught in other post-Soviet republics.

For many states in Eastern Europe, the most controversial period is World War II. Nations found themselves divided between hostile camps, and many experienced war crimes both as victims and perpetrators. This era invokes painful memories and coming to terms with it is a considerable challenge. This is an endeavor clearly seen in middle and high school education. What narratives do different textbooks have? Specifically, how do educators address various historical social choices and the cleavages that occurred when inhabitants took different roles and sides during World War II? How textbooks portray divisions within nations during the war can indicate the broader tasks historiography is playing in societies, as well as the limits to historical reassessment. This memo explores these issues by taking brief looks at prevalent textbooks used in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Estonia, and Russia.

Armenia

Considered to be one of the closest allies of Russia, Armenia has not dabbled in the “two equal totalitarianisms” narrative since embraced by many German-occupied countries. A textbook by A. E. Khachikyan (2009) devotes a chapter to the Armenian participation in the war (often called the Great Patriotic War in the post-Soviet space). Not deviating

from Soviet narratives, the chapter tells the story of the republic's efforts to help the Soviet Army, details its economic and human input into the "common victory," and lists Armenians awarded "Hero of the Soviet Union." Another chapter provides information about Armenian diaspora activities during the war. It describes how some Armenians fought against the Nazis with the French Resistance, while others formed an Armenian legion under German command. It mentions how Dro and Nzhdeh – Armenian heroes of the 1918-1920 period who received high praise on previous pages of the textbook – allied themselves with Hitler. The book interprets their actions as an effort to secure German patronage against the Turkish threat in the probable case of Soviet defeat.

Georgia

A Georgian textbook written by Valery Silogava and Kakha Shengelia (2007) is reminiscent of the Armenian narrative about World War II. The authors describe the economic and human input of Soviet Georgia into the military effort and lists Georgian heroes. In the very same chapter, unlike the Armenian textbook, Georgian military units are mentioned as having served with the German army (the Tamar I, Tamar II, Bergman, and Georgian battalions are mentioned). The authors explain that these fighters were motivated by "a great desire to liberate their motherland from the Soviets."

Ukraine

A Ukrainian textbook by Viktor Misan (1997) tells the story of the Great Patriotic War with deeper emotions. Misan describes the extermination of whole villages in Ukraine by Nazi invaders, as well as Babi Yar and other Holocaust sites. After mentioning the widespread partisan movement in Ukraine during the war, the textbook describes the creation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and that it fought against both Nazi Germany and the Communists, though it does not mention that the group also fought against Poles and Czechoslovaks.

Another Ukrainian textbook by V. Vlasov and O. Danilevska (2005) was published during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko. The first paragraph of the chapter about World War II states that the reason for the war stemmed from decisions made by the "leaders of Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Soviet Union – Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin, each of them aspiring to rule the world." Still, the authors use both names for the war – World War II and the Great Patriotic War – on the pages of the textbook. In the description of the guerilla movement, the book mentions pro-Soviet partisan leaders Sydir Kovpak and Alexei Fyodorov, but then the authors proceed to indicate that it was the Ukrainian Insurgent Army that fought against both the Nazis and the Soviets, and that it received the support of the population. Then, on the same page where the Insurgent Army's members are praised, the textbook tells the story of Soviet General Nikolay Vatutin who led the liberation of Kyiv in 1943. What is missing is the fact that Vatutin was assassinated by an Insurgent Army ambush attack in 1944.

Estonia

The Estonian textbook by A. Adamson and S. Valdmaa (2000) devotes much attention to World War II. The major idea of the chapters devoted to this tragic period revolves around the impossibility for Estonia to make a correct choice in 1939 between two coercive powers. The authors criticize the pre-war government of Estonia and then proceed to tell the story of Estonians fighting on both sides of the war. There were Estonian military units in the Soviet, German, and even Finnish armies. Because of these divisions, World War II forced Estonians to fight against each other. Such a description changes the perception of the war in the textbook to an almost *imposed* Estonian civil war, positioning Estonia as a victim of the two powers. The Estonian Waffen-SS Legion is described the same way as the Soviet Estonian Infantry Corps. The authors tried to keep the narrative balanced, describing the two great powers as equally hostile to Estonian independence. They also occasionally use the ethnic term “Russians” instead of “Soviets” when describing the enemies of Estonia’s “Finnish guys” (Estonians serving in the Finnish army).

One of the authors of the Estonian textbook, A. Adamson, recently (2009) stressed the idea that Estonian history should be less ethnic and move toward a more multicultural “European” view. He also lamented that the Russian minority in Estonia belongs to the Russian “information field,” thus preventing its integration with the new Estonian identity.

In fact, his own textbook provides an example of the problem he highlights – the unity it establishes for the Estonian nation does not include the Russian and German populations of the country, and the historical narrative provided by the book shows Russians only as an alien force and not part of the common nation.

Russia

Unlike the textbooks of the countries discussed above, Russian textbooks are not eager to adopt an exculpatory attitude toward Soviet citizens who fought within German ranks in World War II (if sometimes the attitude may be considered benign). In them, the unity of the Russian nation excludes those who stood against the Soviets in the war.

A textbook by N. Zagladin, S. Kozlenko, S. Minakov, and Y. Petrov (2004) does not use the word “traitors” to describe controversial figures such as Andrey Vlasov (a Red Army general who collaborated with Nazi Germany in an attempt to overthrow Stalin’s regime), Pyotr Krasnov (an anti-communist White army general), or Andrei Shkuro (an anti-Bolshevik Cossack leader). It even refers to Stalin’s Order No. 270 that implied that all Soviet prisoners of war were traitors, which essentially forced enlisted Russian men to fight to the death, as a partial reason for the *Vlasovites’* collaboration with Germany. However, the work does not give any assessment of that part of the Soviet population that fought and worked with the Germans.

A textbook by V. Izmozik and S. Rudnik (2009) devotes more space to a discussion on collaborationism. The authors give estimates of the number of Soviet citizens who fought on the German side – several hundred to a million, and provides

possible reasons for their decisions – hatred of Soviet power; hope to revive a Russian nation-state; fear for one’s life; attempt to deceive the enemy and flee. The book also discusses the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, referring to its “formal” efforts to maintain an equal distance from both the USSR and Germany. But the authors stress that the Ukrainian nationalists participated in the extermination of Jewish and Polish populations, and the book insists that the “majority of the population rejected collaboration with the invaders, deeming such behavior a grave crime.”

A textbook written by A. Danilov, K. Kosulina, and M. Brandt (2010) mentions the Germans’ attempts to control and use the national movements in Ukraine, Crimea, Western Belarus, the Baltic states, and the mountainous areas of Chechen-Ingushetia in their war against the USSR. Regarding the *Vlasovites*, the authors write that Vlasov “tried to explain his betrayal by an ideological aim – his fight against Stalin’s regime,” concluding that the Germans failed “to shake the friendship among the peoples of the USSR.” Unlike most other countries’ textbooks on this theme, this Russian one continues to emphasize the “friendship of the peoples” and shows no mercy for “traitors.”

The textbook by Igor Dolutskii (2002) permits no hesitation, directly calling Vlasov and his associates traitors: “they betrayed not Stalin but the Motherland.” This book was later excluded from the list of recommended textbooks by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science after it received severe criticism from the Russian authorities. It is noteworthy that the last chapter of the book discusses the Vladimir Putin “era” and it contains quotes by Yuri Burtin (“an authoritarian dictatorship”) and Grigorii Yavlinskii (“a police state”).*

The only book that tries to promote an alternative narrative, including a sympathetic mention of Russian collaborationists, was never recommended for schools and was not in fact a textbook. This is the two-volume Russian History in the 20th Century edited by Andrei Zubov and published in 2009.

Conclusion

As we can see, the historical narratives that appeared during the post-Soviet period caused a great split between former “brother republics.” The main goal of those narratives was the creation of myths to unify each of the new nations. The nations’ internal divisions during World War II prevented them from writing histories based on a one-sided perspective. The Baltic and Central European views that they were “victim nations of two totalitarianisms” play a vitally important role in unifying them domestically and helping them find peace with their pasts. The problem that appears in Estonia is that the new *unifying* narrative does unify pro-German and pro-Soviet Estonians but does not integrate Estonian Russians.

Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia provide another approach to the war: their textbooks are written with the clear message that there *was* a right side in World War II but that collaboration with the Nazis by some national figures can be justified.

* Of note here, attempts by the Don Cossacks to rehabilitate *ataman* Pyotr Krasnov, who fought for the Germans, were obstructed by Putin.

Russia, on the contrary, is less ready than other nations to see World War II as a civil conflict and its narratives provide no option for the integration of Russian collaborationists into the country's history. Such attempts have taken place, but not at the school textbook level.

It is clear that differences in historical "optics" make it very unlikely that incongruent versions of World War II will merge in the near future. This also means that well-meaning projects to establish "jointly written history textbooks" cannot be successful for now. It is nearly impossible to marry two national narratives, each aiming to unify one nation.

It is thus advisable not to politicize differences in historical understanding. The abolition in February 2012 of the infamous Russian presidential commission to "Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests" provides the possibility of a needed end to an era when internal identity problems exercised a huge influence on the international relations of the region. Historians in Central and East Europe should continue working to find common ground when dealing with identity questions, political pressures, and professional responsibilities.

For the references and citations of, and page numbers from, the textbooks involved in this analysis please contact the author.

Polarizing the Country?

YANUKOVYCH'S AUTHORITARIAN GAME BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE EU ON THE EVE OF UKRAINE'S 2012 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 204

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Ukraine is too regionally and politically diverse to allow a single entity to monopolize power – this “pluralism by default” makes the Ukrainian political system more balanced than the Russian one. The electoral divide between, on the one hand, Ukraine’s south and east and, on the other, its west and center has persisted in every election since 1990. However, in the 2004 presidential election, Ukrainian politics were deliberately and dangerously polarized by former president Leonid Kuchma, who relied on Kremlin support to secure the succession of his prime minister Viktor Yanukovich.

By contrast, opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko managed to move beyond traditional voting patterns, whereby national-democrats existed mainly in the geographic west and center. Yushchenko concentrated on slogans common to the whole country – European values, social justice, rule of law, and the struggle with corruption. This proved to be an important factor in his electoral victory and in the Orange Revolution struggle against electoral fraud.

Nonetheless, due to polarizing strategies that his opponents employed, including pro-Russian slogans and an anti-Western, anti-American propaganda campaign, the country emerged from the 2004 elections extremely polarized.

Polarization Under Yanukovich: A Useful Strategy?

To a great extent, President Yushchenko’s policies appeared counterproductive and reinforced polarization. The anti-corruption struggle remained only on paper and reforms stalled. As a result, Yushchenko’s ratings dropped to only 3-5 percent by 2008. This meant that Yushchenko’s efforts to secure a Membership Action Plan from NATO played into Yanukovich’s hands (public support for Ukrainian membership in NATO was paradoxically higher under Kuchma than under Yushchenko). In 2008, an agreement on Ukraine’s membership to the World Trade Organization was finalized

and ratified. But as there were no economic successes within the country, the opposition blamed the Orange forces “for selling Ukraine to the West.”*

Yanukovych’s victory in the 2010 campaign was partially based on a polarizing strategy, which included a promise to declare Russian as the second state official language. Yanukovych also toyed with the idea of recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

After his victory, Yanukovych continued to pursue polarizing policies. Most notably, he decided to make an important and symbolic concession to Russia: in exchange for cheaper gas, the lease of the Russian naval base in the Crimea was extended for an additional 25 years after its present term expires in 2017. Tellingly, this concession did not even redound to the benefit of local Crimean elites. Under Yanukovych, the new leaders of the Crimean peninsula hail from Makeevka, in Yanukovych’s home region of Donetsk. Yanukovych also enacted a new law on the fundamentals of Ukraine’s foreign and domestic policy, which excluded prospects of NATO membership and declared “non-bloc” status for Ukraine. He also rejected Yushchenko’s official position that Ukraine’s 1933 Great Famine was a genocide (recognized by the parliaments of more than 20 countries, including the U.S. Congress). Yanukovych also extended a clear preference to the branch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.†

While playing on contradictions between different regions, however, Yanukovych’s administration sought to preserve its control over the whole of Ukraine. Yanukovych therefore attempted to avoid the threat of separatism or talks about federalization, a card the Party of Regions tried to play during the Orange Revolution and after 2004 when it was in opposition. Despite his electoral promise, he also affirmed that Ukrainian would remain the sole state language.

Yanukovych also played on the ambivalent geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians. According to an April 2010 poll by the National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Sociology, 62 percent favored Ukraine joining a “union with Russia and Belarus.” The leading reasons were cooperation and visa-free travel (rather than the formation of a union-state or military bloc). At the same time, 46 percent favored joining the EU while 19 percent were against. This meant that some of respondents were in favor of both union with Russia and Belarus and EU membership simultaneously. In an October 2011 Razumkov Center poll 44 percent of respondents were in favor of joining the European Union while 31 percent were in favor of joining the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Of interest, the younger the respondents, the more they were inclined to favor the EU.

* Another paradox is that the negotiations for an Association Agreement with the EU and a visa-free regime, which began under Yushchenko, were boosted by Brussels after the Orange bloc lost the 2010 presidential election and Ukraine’s subsequent backslide from democracy. If negotiations with the EU end successfully, it will be the new anti-Orange regime that capitalizes on this success.

† See Olexiy Haran and Petro Burkovsky, “[Russian Expansion: A Challenge and Opportunity for the Emerging Authoritarian Regime in Ukraine](#),” PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 146, May 2011.

At the same time, the failure of Yanukovich to deliver on his socioeconomic promises have united the electorate, whatever their geopolitical orientation, around a growing criticism of the leadership. As **Table 1** shows, the highest number of individuals who say they are intending to abstain from voting in the upcoming October 2012 parliamentary elections is in the east, Yanukovich's core region.

By quickly returning and even overstepping the bounds of authority that Kuchma received only during his second term, Yanukovich faces the same danger: concentrating criticism on himself and creating a backlash from below. Ukraine lacks the material resources needed to increase the social base of an authoritarian regime. It also has no ideological base, such as the messianic idea of "greatness" or the "third Rome," which the Russian regime can utilize. Ukraine is also more pluralistic and has a far stronger national-democratic opposition, civil society, and traditions of nation-building than, say, Belarus.

Intra-elite splits (as happened under Kuchma) seem to be inevitable, although it is not clear when they will appear. The business group closest to Yanukovich, RosUkrEnergo, appears to have sought a deterioration of Ukraine's relations with the West, deliberately pushing Yanukovich toward Russia. At the same time, other business groups somewhat counterbalance RosUkrEnergo. Some of these seek to facilitate a deepening of relations with the EU via the Association Agreement, which includes a deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA) and a roadmap toward a visa-free regime (negotiations on both issues continue under Yanukovich).

In order to mobilize his electorate on the eve of fall 2012 parliamentary elections, Yanukovich may again have to start using divisive slogans. His Party of Regions has already submitted a draft law on languages to upgrade Russian to the status of a regional language throughout most Ukrainian territory. Only a simple parliamentary majority is needed to pass this law. Despite loud protests from opposition deputies and the expert community, this law was passed in the first reading at the start of June 2012.

Many analysts have come to the conclusion that the Party of Regions is tacitly supporting the right-wing *Svoboda* (Freedom) party, known for its nationalist radical rhetoric. In the 2010 local elections, *Svoboda* won in Halychyna (Galicia), in the west of the country. This success coincided with the plans of the Party of Regions to destroy Yulia Tymoshenko and other moderate opposition forces and mobilize its own electorate using the "*Svoboda* threat." Given *Svoboda*'s limited base, its leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, would seem to be Yanukovich's best choice as a final-round opponent in the 2015 presidential election.

However, playing a game with *Svoboda* also contains risks. On Victory Day (May 9) last year, there were clashes in Lviv between *Svoboda* and activists of the marginal pro-Russian *Rodina* party, who arrived from Odessa especially for this purpose. Law enforcement bodies knew about the provocation but did nothing to prevent it. Many analysts considered that Yanukovich, perhaps unwillingly, was helping to play out a scenario developed in Russia, aiming to discredit both Yanukovich and Ukraine on the eve of finalizing the DCFTA agreement with the EU.

Yanukovych's Bipolar Foreign Policy

Despite Yanukovych's concessions to Russia, the pressure from Moscow has not decreased. Russian authorities have sought control (via a consortium) over Ukrainian gas pipelines and pressured Kyiv not to join the DCFTA with the EU but to join the Russia-led Customs Union and support the development of a broader Eurasian Union.

Yanukovych has sought to use relations with the EU as a counterweight against this Russian pressure. But the arrest of Tymoshenko in 2011 threatened the future of the the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. It seems that Yanukovych's phobias and desire for revenge played an important role in his persecution of Tymoshenko. However, Tymoshenko's seven-year sentence for allegedly "betraying national interests" in a 2009 gas deal with Russia weakened Yanukovych, both within Ukraine and in the EU. Brussels considers the Tymoshenko case and that of her similarly imprisoned former minister of internal affairs, Yuri Lutsenko, as politically motivated and as an application of selective justice.

The EU demands that the political prisoners be released and be able to participate in the electoral campaign, which was why it postponed initialing the Association Agreement (originally planned for December 2011). After a pause, the EU decided to initial the agreement in March 2012. Ukrainian civil society organizations supported this move, warning the EU not to repeat the situation that occurred with Kuchma during the "Kuchmagate scandal" in the early 2000s, when isolation from the West pushed him toward Russia. From their prison cells, Tymoshenko and Lutsenko also called on the EU to initial the agreement. At the same time, the deal was downplayed by Brussels and explained as a technical step, which meant that the text of the treaty had been agreed upon but that the "pause" would continue. A formal signing of the agreement and its ratification by EU members and the EU parliament is stalled.

The upcoming elections in October 2012 will be a litmus test for EU-Ukraine relations. Accordingly, the Party of Regions may try to win elections without an open falsification of the vote. The first sign of this was how the government changed the Ukrainian electoral law. Instead of moving from a closed to open party list, as Yanukovych promised during his presidential campaign, he pushed through an electoral law upholding a mixed proportional-majoritarian system. In the current narrowing political space, the ruling party is expected to tightly control the majoritarian seats. No blocs are allowed, and the threshold for parties has been increased from 3 percent to 5 percent. Despite initial loud protests, most deputies from Tymoshenko's party (and those of another opposition party, Arseniy Yatseniuk's Front for Change) supported this system in the end, thus securing themselves against competition from new players. The justification for this step was that otherwise the ruling party would pass an even worse law, which would pave the way to greater vote fraud.

The Party of Regions will also try to play on splits within the opposition in majoritarian districts, as happened in the March 2012 mayoral elections in Obukhiv (near Kyiv) when several opposition candidates split the votes and, as a result, lost to the Party of Regions.

Yanukovych's dream is to preserve the present situation, whereby parliament serves as a rubber stamp for his administration. As always in Ukraine, however, elections matter and the electoral struggle will be a tough one. A lot will depend on the ability of the opposition to counteract Yanukovych's "divide and rule" policy.

Table 1.

"Who would you vote for if parliamentary elections were held today (February 2012)?"

Parties	Ukraine, %	Macroregions*			
		West	Center	South	East
Batkivshchyna (Yulia Tymoshenko)	14.0	25.7	20.0	5.8	3.6
Svoboda (Oleh Tyahnybok)	3.4	10.3	2.6	0.8	0.5
Communists (Petro Symonenko)	5.7	1.3	2.5	8.3	11.3
Party of Regions (Viktor Yanukovych)	16.5	5.7	9.1	25.8	26.4
Strong Ukraine (Serhiy Tihipko)	3.6	2.8	2.8	4.7	4.3
Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reforms (UDAR) (Vitaliy Klychko)	4.6	7.2	5.8	3.0	2.2
Front of Change (Arseniy Yatseniuk)	7.9	13.6	9.1	5.7	2.9
Other Parties	7.0	7.8	8.6	6.8	3.8
Abstain from Voting	16.1	8.5	16.0	17.9	21.9
Difficult to Say	21.2	17.1	23.5	21.2	23.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, Poll, February 2012.

* These are defined as follows: South – Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Mykolaiv (26% of the electorate); Center – Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Cherkasy, and Chernihiv (30%); West – Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytsky, and Chernivtsi (22%); East – Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv (22%).

The West and the Imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko

WHEN IS POSITIVE LEVERAGE NOT ENOUGH?

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 205

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When is Western leverage ineffective in shaping a neighboring country's internal policy making and enforcing democratic norms? I address this question by analyzing the failed attempts of Western governments to prevent the jailing of Ukraine's opposition leader, Yulia Tymoshenko. I argue that prevailing theories that account for the effectiveness of Western leverage by focusing either on the attractiveness of conditional benefits offered to a target country or the latter's structural characteristics are inadequate to explain Tymoshenko's case. Instead, I draw on bargaining models of international relations to show that the characteristics of a contested issue may limit the ability of outside actors to exert positive leverage to prevent democratic regression in hybrid regimes.

Leveraging Benefits and Vulnerabilities

One account of the Western capacity to promote favorable policies in a target country, offered by political scientist Milada Vachudova, points to the importance of tangible rewards offered for compliance. In particular, a credible promise of European Union membership has often been mentioned as the strongest incentive for the democratizing states of Central Europe to fulfill strict policy requirements imposed from outside. In Ukraine's case, although the EU never confirmed Kyiv's eligibility for membership, it offered to conclude an ambitious Association Agreement (AA) containing provisions for establishing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). This clause promised to enhance the competitiveness of Ukrainian producers, improve their access to the EU market, create a more favorable business climate, and add 2-3 percent growth to the country's annual GDP. Still, the Ukrainian leadership refused to stop the prosecution of opposition leaders, even after the EU explicitly conditioned the signing of the AA on their release.

Another account, elaborated by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, stresses the role of structural characteristics of a target country, particularly its economic weakness, the

strength of its ties to the West, and its reliance on other powers for support. Although Ukraine's economy has been growing since 2010, it has not recovered from the 2008 crisis. Its current account deficit has deteriorated, substantially increasing the need for outside financing. Moreover, Ukraine remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, with an estimated GDP per capita (2011) of \$7,200. Hence, it should have been particularly interested in using the new opportunities for economic development offered through the DCFTA. Moreover, over the last two decades, Ukraine developed extensive economic and human ties to the West. EU members account for a third of Ukraine's international trade, and the EU receives the second largest number of Ukrainian labor migrants in the world. Western foundations, meanwhile, have long maintained close ties with Ukrainian civil society. Still, these close and longstanding links with Ukrainian society did not strengthen Western leverage on the issue of Tymoshenko's jailing. Finally, although Russia often backed some undemocratic actions of the Ukrainian authorities, it publicly criticized Tymoshenko's prosecution suspecting that it could undo the Russian-Ukrainian gas treaty. Hence, the Ukrainian authorities could not rely on Moscow's political support in this case.

Issue Characteristics and Leverage Constraints

Bargaining models of international conflict have shown that the characteristics of the issues at stake may have a decisive impact on the outcome of negotiations. They specifically demonstrate that two sides are less likely to reach an agreement when contested issues are:

- 1) intangible, linked to objectives such as prestige, influence, or values;
- 2) indivisible, lacking a range of compromise solutions equally acceptable to both sides; and
- 3) equally salient to both parties.

The third characteristic makes it harder to resolve a dispute by linking it to progress on another unrelated issue. For linkage to succeed, as political scientist James D. Morrow argues, the bargaining sides would have to exhibit an asymmetry of interests on the main issue that then would allow them to engage in a mutually beneficial exchange on another.

The issue of Tymoshenko's jailing had all three characteristics that tend to lead to bargaining failures. It was intangible to President Viktor Yanukovich because it was directly related to the vital goal of his political survival. Its intangibility from the Western perspective was related to its symbolism as an abrogation of such values as the rule of law and political freedoms critical to the European integration project.

The issue of Tymoshenko's jailing was also indivisible for both sides. Any compromise on her imprisonment would have lowered the risks for further opposition activity and could have encouraged defection even among Yanukovich's allies. Therefore, Yanukovich could not accept any bargain short of a lengthy jail term for his

principal political foe. By contrast, the West refused to recognize Tymoshenko's trial as fair and transparent and demanded her unequivocal release.

Finally, when the West realized that its public criticisms were insufficient to deter Yanukovich, it tried to exercise its leverage by linking the resolution of the issue to an offer of future rewards (conditionality) in the form of signing and ratifying the AA. However, since they both equally prioritized Tymoshenko's case over a linked issue, they could not reach a compromise. Yanukovich's political strategy and risk assessment on the domestic level, therefore, decisively influenced his response in dealing with his Western counterparts.

Domestic Level: Sending a Signal to Repress

Post-Soviet ruling elites, as political scientist Henry E. Hale has demonstrated, perpetuate themselves in power by relying on a hierarchical system based on the distribution of rewards and punishments from a patronal president to subordinate client groups. After the Orange Revolution, Ukraine shifted from a concentrated to divided executive system with several power centers fiercely competing with each other. The lack of a unified authority structure also diversified control over law enforcement agencies between different political groupings. Yanukovich began his presidency with an attempt to reconstitute a single vertical of power that would guarantee his long-term survival. This required him not only to demonstrate his ability to distribute rents and patronage among his closest allies, but also to signal his resolve to sanction his main opponents.

Tymoshenko became a central target of Yanukovich's crackdown on the opposition for several reasons. First, despite her electoral defeat she consistently remained the second most popular politician in the country and the unequivocal leader of the opposition. Second, Yanukovich's own public support took a nosedive with unprecedented speed during the first year of his presidency, declining from 40 percent in May 2010 to less than 10 percent in May 2011. His political insecurity may also have been reinforced by the narrow margin of his victory over Tymoshenko and his own failure to win the majority of votes. Third, Tymoshenko refused to recognize the election results and remained in irreconcilable opposition to Yanukovich. Fourth, once she returned to the opposition, Tymoshenko promised to oust Yanukovich through popular mobilization and was said to be behind a major protest wave against the government's tax code in November 2010. Given her organizational skills, financial resources, and mobilizing role during the Orange Revolution, she would most likely lead any attempted popular challenge against the authorities. Finally, her international stature meant that any coercive actions against her would credibly communicate to the domestic audience the authorities' strong resolve to repress any potential challengers.

Yanukovich publicly signaled his intention to use coercion against Tymoshenko shortly after his inauguration. Over the next year, the Security Service (SBU), the General Prosecutor's Office (GPO), and the Control and Revision Office (KRU) conducted in-depth investigations of Tymoshenko's activities. The investigations alleged

misappropriations of up to \$7 billion, while the GPO opened criminal cases against Tymoshenko and about a dozen other high-level officials from her government.

Initially, the charges against Tymoshenko centered on two episodes of alleged malfeasance as prime minister. In April 2011, these episodes were sidelined in favor of a new criminal case that eventually led to her conviction. The charges against Tymoshenko in the so-called “gas case” centered on directives she issued as prime minister in January 2009 to the state-owned oil and gas company Naftogaz to sign a ten-year agreement on gas supplies with Russia’s Gazprom. According to the prosecution, Tymoshenko exceeded her formal authority in issuing these directives, while the unfavorable terms of the gas contract led to state budget losses of about \$440 million.

The prosecution moved the gas case forward quickly and decisively. The court proceedings, chaired by 32-year old judge Rodion Kireev, were held with what the Danish Human Rights Committee characterized as “remarkable urgency.” The turning point in the trial was his decision in August to detain Tymoshenko for contempt of court, which the Danish monitors called “disproportionate and unjustified.” Her conviction to seven years in jail was announced shortly thereafter. Most striking, however, was the further relentless prosecution of Tymoshenko. The day after the sentencing, the GPO announced the re-opening of a previously closed case that charged Tymoshenko with tax evasion and property embezzlement when she was chairman of the gas trading company United Energy Systems in the 1990s. The GPO also announced it was investigating her alleged financing of a 1996 contract murder of Donetsk governor Yevhen Shcherban.

Yanukovych’s audacious use of coercion to silence his longtime political opponents went far beyond what any of his predecessors ever dared. Although former president Leonid Kuchma was implicated in the murder of a journalist and was alleged to have ordered the killing of several prominent political figures, he rarely attempted to prosecute his political opponents publicly. Throughout his second term, he allowed opposition leaders to stage mass protests, obstruct his political initiatives in parliament, and run for high public office. While there were attempts to use law-enforcement agencies to pressure those businesses that funded the opposition, none of the figures associated with the opposition ended up in jail. Most importantly, judges could still demonstrate relative independence, as was evidenced by Kuchma’s failure to prosecute Tymoshenko. The sentencing of the former prime minister and, several months later, the conviction of another opposition figure and former minister of internal affairs, Yuri Lutsenko, signaled that Yanukovych was willing to use his coercive powers in a very public manner irrespective of any potential costs at home or abroad. The decision to pursue new investigations against Tymoshenko, who by then was already barred from holding any public office until 2021, indicated Yanukovych’s potential interest to safeguard his political future well beyond his possible second term.

For Yanukovych, the prosecution of key opposition leaders was intangible, indivisible, and highly salient. It was related to the intangible goal of consolidating power. It was indivisible since anything short of a prison sentence would have had the opposite effect of that which the president intended, indicating his insufficient control

over the judiciary or his weak resolve to inflict decisive punishment. As a result of these interests, it was also highly salient, especially in comparison to other policies with less relevance to his immediate power interests, like the signing of the AA.

International Level: Misrepresenting Preferences

Although Yanukovich initiated the investigation of the former prime minister right after his inauguration, the West largely ignored it for most of his first year in office. EU officials even praised him for achieving “political stability,” while the United States applauded his decision to give up all of Ukraine’s highly-enriched uranium. The first official mention by the Western government of “an appearance of selective prosecution” in Tymoshenko’s case came in a December 2010 U.S. statement – seven months after the opening of the first criminal case. The EU was even slower to react to Yanukovich’s suppression of the opposition. In late May 2011, following the first attempt to detain Tymoshenko, the office of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy pointed to “the danger of provoking any *perception* that judicial measures are used selectively” (italics mine). Moreover, while expressing their concerns with the case, the EU representatives claimed that it would have no effect on the outcome of negotiations over the AA. This position sent a contradictory signal to Ukrainian authorities, indicating that the EU would be interested in signing the agreement despite any disagreements it had with the conduct of Tymoshenko’s trial or its verdict. After Tymoshenko’s arrest, EU officials toughened their rhetoric but remained vague about the consequences of conviction. Following a series of meetings with Yanukovich in the run-up to the sentencing, several European leaders expressed concerns that a conviction would prevent the agreement’s ratification, but they never linked it to the agreement’s signing. Similarly, EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addressed a letter to Yanukovich calling on him to address Western concerns about the case, but they did not specify the costs of non-compliance.

Ukrainian authorities continuously responded to Western demands by insisting that they could not interfere with the functioning of the judiciary. However, as the trial neared its end, Yanukovich gave the impression to European officials that he preferred a compromise solution. The essence of the compromise from the Western perspective would be the Ukrainian parliament’s decision to decriminalize the articles in the criminal code that Tymoshenko allegedly violated. In his speech at the Yalta European Strategy meeting in mid-September, Yanukovich indicated that he was ready to “modernize” the outdated articles of the criminal code that were the basis for the charges against Tymoshenko. Once the conviction was announced, however, Yanukovich rejected the notion that he made any promises to the West regarding Tymoshenko, asserting that “these discussions should not by any means be cast as a commitment.” The pro-presidential majority in the parliament, meanwhile, refused to make the changes to the Criminal Code needed to release Tymoshenko.

Up until the EU-Ukraine annual summit in December 2011, the Ukrainian side misperceived the saliency of the case for the EU and seemed convinced that European officials would not sacrifice the agreement that took several years to make. However,

even after the EU refused to initial the AA in December and clearly conditioned its signing on Tymoshenko's release, Yanukovich remained unmoved. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko stressed in March 2012 that the Ukrainian authorities would reject any attempts by the EU to issue any conditions prior to the signing. Further attempts by major European leaders to influence Ukrainian authorities by boycotting the Central European Summit in Yalta (scheduled for May 2012) faced a similarly unemotional response from Kyiv. Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the summit's postponement to a "later date" while Yanukovich surmised that a "pause in EU-Ukraine relations would be useful for both Ukraine and the EU." The final attempt to resolve the problem by changing the legislation to give prisoners a chance to receive medical treatment abroad was voted down in parliament. This reaffirmed the saliency that the Ukrainian side attached to Tymoshenko's case, the lack of intermediate solutions to the issue from Kyiv's standpoint, and the futility of positive leverage by the West.

The EU came to view the prosecution as a critical indicator of the Ukrainian authorities' real commitment to democratic norms, particularly their respect for an independent judiciary and political freedoms. Hence, Western leaders treated Tymoshenko's case through the prism of the intangible political values on which the EU is based. Moreover, if the EU agreed to sign the AA with Ukraine despite the jailing of its leading opposition figures it would undermine its credibility in negotiating similar AAs with other non-member states. Therefore, the issue became increasingly salient for the EU. Finally, long jail sentences for Tymoshenko and Lutsenko meant that the EU could not agree on any compromise solution to the problem short of their immediate release. As a result, by the end of 2010 the issue of Tymoshenko's prosecution gained the same characteristics for the EU as it had for Yanukovich. Its position, however, evolved from being a distant observer of the case to becoming an engaged participant.

The Limits of Positive Leverage

Western leverage in Tymoshenko's case failed for two main reasons directly related to the characteristics of the issue for the two sides. First, from the start, Yanukovich linked it to the intangible goal of his political survival and could not accept any intermediate face-saving bargaining solutions, particularly once the trial started. Hence, for Yanukovich the saliency of keeping Tymoshenko behind bars is much higher than the establishment of closer ties to the EU. Secondly, the saliency of the case for the EU evolved gradually and became particularly strong only with Tymoshenko's seven-year sentencing and the conclusion of the talks over the AA. As a result, the West failed to specify the consequences of Tymoshenko's jailing for Yanukovich early in the case or to raise the internal costs of action by threatening to exercise negative leverage (withdrawal of current benefits). With the EU insisting now on her unconditional release, the issue also became indivisible for both sides.

The EU's current policy based on positive leverage alone is insufficient to change Yanukovich's preferences and release Tymoshenko since it would require him to accept immediate domestic costs (reputation losses) and risks (elite division or opposition

mobilization) that outweigh any long-term benefits he could expect to receive from the signing of the AA. The costs of failure in talks over the AA, by contrast, are negligible. Only 3 percent of Ukrainians, according to a February 2012 poll, expressed concerns about problems related to Ukraine's relations with the EU. In addition, there are more Ukrainians who favor joining the union with Russia and Belarus (55 percent) than those who support joining the EU (40 percent).

The bargaining around Tymoshenko's case thus shows how positive leverage may be limited not only due to the structural characteristics of a target country or the insufficient benefits offered, but because of the characteristics of an issue at stake. In those cases where authorities view the issue as critical for the intangible goal of political survival and see no possible compromise solutions to it, they are likely to assess any prospects of future long-term rewards as less salient than the immediate promise of maintaining power. The exercise of external leverage may influence a target's policy only if it can impose substantial immediate costs by withdrawing any current benefits or putting at risk the short-term political survival of the country's leadership.

Russia and Germany in Wider Europe

DYNAMICS OF RAPPROCHEMENT AND ALIENATION

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 206

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The resumption of Vladimir Putin's presidency and the strengthening of nationalist rhetoric during his presidential campaign significantly complicated Russia's relations with the European Union and its major member states. Most pro-Kremlin observers assert that Russia – even if it wanted to – cannot integrate with the West: the latter's major institutions – the EU and NATO – are in crisis and their future uncertain. Consequently, this leaves Moscow with two basic directions: fostering bilateral relations with individual Western states and pursuing a more robust policy in the post-Soviet region. Against this backdrop, the Kremlin is likely to keep treating the EU as a weak international actor, while expecting Germany to remain the most loyal to Russia among the EU's member states.

Indeed, in light of the current crisis in the Eurozone, it is to be expected that Germany's role in the EU's Common and Security Policy will further increase. Russia has every reason to rely on this key European country, whose special role among EU member states is based upon traditions of *Ostpolitik* and encompasses both geopolitical and normative components. In an attempt to iron out negative assessments of the "Putin 3.0" project in Europe, Fyodor Lukyanov, editor-in-chief of *Russia in Global Affairs*, commented at a conference hosted in the German Bundestag that Putin is more interested in Europe, and Germany in particular, than Medvedev. Yet how does the seemingly pro-European discourse of the Kremlin resonate in Germany? In this memo, I address the issue of compatibility of Russian and German policies in a wider Europe, and try to identify both conceptual gaps between the two countries and possible areas of common concern.

The Russian–German Disconnect

Today's German foreign policy debate is shaped by three key issues. First, the Germans deem that in the 21st century power has to do far less with military force than with a combination of economic strength, technological innovation, and "soft power" resources. Second, the Germans tend to reiterate that the EU is a democracy project, a

sort of “republic of Europe,” open for trans-national civil society engagement and sensitive to issues of democracy and human rights throughout the world. Third, Germany looks for more supranational integration, which ought to weaken the monopoly of states on solving financial and budgetary issues to their liking. The ideas of a supranational federation and “post-classical” nation-state are intrinsic parts of German public debate.

On all three accounts, Russian political premises radically differ. Moscow still believes that its strength derives from huge extractive resources and military potential. It continues to favor state-centric imagery of international relations. And it pays little attention to a variety of normative matters, intentionally marginalizing issues of democracy domestically and internationally.

Even when Russian and German international positions appear to formally coincide, the logics that drive the two countries, as well as the lessons that they learn from international crises, are markedly different. Both Russia and Germany are very supportive of the EU-Russia “partnership for modernization,” yet the very meaning of this concept is understood differently. A mix of post-political and authoritarian versions of modernization prevails in Russia and creates a discursive disconnect with Germans, who accentuate much more strongly the socio-political connotations of the concept. All debates on Russia’s modernization in Germany raise acute and troublesome issues for Moscow: rampant corruption as an inalienable mechanism of power relations, chronic ineffectiveness of state institutions, and a substantive deficit of state-civil society communication.

Another striking example of the political disconnect is Libya. Many political leaders and opinion makers in Moscow and Berlin appear to deplore their countries’ abstention votes on the United Nations resolution that gave start to the military campaign against the Qaddafi government, yet the reasons for criticism are wholly dissimilar. In Russia, the key point for debate concerns the material losses inflicted by its permissive stand (i.e., business contracts allegedly lost because of the regime change in Tripoli), which provoked a much more anti-Western position taken by Russian diplomacy in blocking outside humanitarian intervention in Syria. In Germany, the debate is focused on the prospects for a much closer integration of the country with Western institutions of security, and on finding a better combination of soft and hard power tools (in particular, as one German author claimed, Germany is by now “a civil power without civil courage”). Both countries deem that they were unprepared for tackling the Libyan conflict. But Russia is mostly concerned about carving out its individual strategy beyond the West, while Germany clearly sees the problem in its unfortunate detachment from the Western coalition. Both countries are eager to be “normal European powers,” but, again, in completely different ways: for Germany normalization means deeper embeddedness in the European normative order, while for Russia normalization presupposes the role of a great power with a distinct voice.

What has clear repercussions for German-Russian relations is Germany’s willingness to implement its leadership functions within coalitions of EU-member states, such as the “Weimar triangle” (Berlin-Paris-Warsaw) or the reinvigorated German-

Polish nexus. This is what Berlin means by the idea of “more Europe for Germany,” which dominates the German foreign policy debate. With a softer approach towards Russia on the part of the current Polish government, cooperation with Poland plays an increasingly important role in Germany’s “Eastern policy.” Yet Russia’s role in this policy is far from certain: it can either be incorporated by means of such relatively new formats as the German–Polish–Russian “trialogue,” or it can be left aside.

Against this backdrop, Putin’s third presidential term represents a particular challenge to Germany. Until September 2011, German political elites informally yet markedly counted on the continuation of Dmitry Medvedev as Russian president. Moscow will undoubtedly continue to be Berlin’s key economic partner – Germany remains dependent on Russian energy supplies – but Putin may be wrong to rely upon Germany’s political support. German political discourse is becoming increasingly critical of the Kremlin and skeptical about a strategic partnership with Russia. While serving as prime minister, Putin already received a warning signal in summer 2011, when the German Quadriga Foundation withdrew a prize it awarded him under the pressure of angry public opinion. It was quite indicative that the German foreign minister issued an unusually harsh statement after the March 4 election: “I hope that Russia now, after the elections and with a clear view, will see that it stands on the wrong side of history.”

Guido Westerwelle obviously had in mind Russia’s intransigent position on Syria, but his words might as well be projected onto other fields of Russian foreign policy of interest to Germany, including the EU – Russia common neighborhood. The recent appointment of Russia’s deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin, whose reputation in Europe is highly controversial, as presidential representative on Transdniestria symbolized Moscow’s adherence to old approaches in the regional conflict. Just a few years ago, Moscow and Berlin agreed to tackle this conflict as the cornerstone of a wider dialogue on security in Europe within the framework of what was referred to as the Meseberg process. Yet the anticipated Russian–German cooperation on Transdniestria stalled because of insufficient Russian political influence and its inability to influence political changes in the breakaway territory.

The German expert community – especially the German Society for Foreign Politics, DGAP – increasingly raises the issue of reactivating German engagement with Eastern Partnership states, even if this threatens to ignite new tensions with Russia. Arguably, Germany will not accept the legitimacy of Russian ambitions in the so-called “near abroad” and will look for new openings for regional multilateral diplomacy. In practical terms, this means that Russian foreign policy will have to avoid focusing on a de facto division of spheres of influence, which in any case is today an unworkable political scheme, and search for more flexible forms of interaction with major European actors.

Any Hope for the Best?

The steady and inevitable differentiation among the states of the “common neighborhood” makes it impractical to try to carve out institutional solutions that embrace and integrate all or most post-Soviet states. This concerns both Russian and EU

policy. Russia-led CIS institutions gradually seem to be ceding the way to the geographically and functionally more narrow Customs Union. The EU's Eastern Partnership program is de facto split into its "New Eastern Europe" and "South Caucasus" components (where, in both cases, diversity trumps uniformity). Neither Russia nor Germany has answers to the growing regionalization within the common neighborhood area.

However, Germany's role as mediator in the complex set of Russia-EU relations in their common neighborhood has led to some practical results. First, there is a good record of Russian-German management of specific projects like the Nord Stream gas pipeline. Second, Germany mediated one of the most important positive changes in Russia's relations with its neighbors, the political rapprochement with Poland, as well as the establishment of a visa-free border crossing regime for residents of Russia's neighboring Kaliningrad exclave. This laid the foundations for a political "triangle" (Germany-Poland-Russia). Some Russian diplomats even expressed interest in participating in some of the Eastern Partnership projects, instead of criticizing this EU initiative.

Taking into account Germany's sensitivity to security issues stemming from the forthcoming withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan, it is very likely that Russia's decision to make its infrastructure – an airport in Ulyanovsk – available for NATO cargo transit will have a positive effect on Russia's security profile in Europe. Perhaps this move will help realize the cooperative approaches developed by the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative, chaired by Igor Ivanov, Wolfgang Ischinger, and Sam Nunn.

There are some opportunities in the Russia-EU shared neighborhood for overlapping institutional tools and commitments to emerge. These contain elements of competition, but also of mutual readjustment and accommodation. Possibilities for the intensification of exchanges and communication in the common neighborhood are still open, as an effect of potential visa liberalization, Russia's WTO accession, and the proliferation of networking trans-/cross-border practices. This scenario generally corresponds to an idea of open regionalism. Instead of key actors searching for unilateral domination (for instance, in the form of "exclusive" energy projects like South Stream or Nabucco), they will look for wider regional frames of interaction that downplay borders and security concerns.

A positive effect of such a model would be the opportunity for common neighborhood states to adopt a strategy of selective integration, becoming closer to the EU in some domains and to Russia in others. This possibility is facilitated by the growing appeal of the concept of a "Europe of different speeds," which has also opened up possibilities for selective integration of non-members. This scenario will require more flexibility from Russian diplomacy, which will have to embrace a highly controversial and complicated milieu that incorporates both EU approaches and the practices of its individual members. Both symbolic-discursive and institutional changes in Russian conduct will be mandatory, but this process of learning and readjusting is the only antidote for the gradual shrinking of the area of the "common neighborhood."

Conclusions

The German political elite seem to want to take a pause in their relations with Russia. Recent enthusiasm for Russian modernization is gradually fading away, to be substituted by a new wave of skepticism about the legitimacy and effectiveness of Putin's new presidential tenure. At the same time, mass protest movements in Russia and the spread of information technologies of social networking have clearly indicated that within Russia there is huge demand for the rule of law, transparency, and human rights protection – all those principles of governance for which Europe traditionally stands. This does not mean that a new Russian government will be more responsive to cooperation with Europe, but the window of opportunity is still open. Within the Partnership for Modernization framework, Russia implicitly recognized – even if in mild form – its acceptance of the principle of conditionality. In opening Russian territory to NATO military transit, Russia displayed its willingness to take into account financial arguments in tackling security issues of common concern. In implementing the visa-free agreement for Kaliningrad, Russia played down its old fears about carving out special solutions for particular regions of the federation.

Despite sharp intra-European problems, Germany will retain its interest and presence in most post-Soviet states, in particular Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan. Along with inevitable competition with Russia and attempts to balance Moscow's influence in these states, Germany's *Ostpolitik* can also open up new possibilities for closer interaction with Russia. Even if these possibilities are unintended results of their individual policies, Russia and Germany should still anticipate, identify, and properly use them.

Turkey, Russia, and the Arab Spring

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 207

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More than a year after the inception of the so-called Arab Spring, Turkey's much-ballyhooed regional rise is teetering on the brink. Especially in its ability to influence outcomes in Syria, but also in its reading of regional dynamics in general, Turkey finds itself consistently outmaneuvered by other regional powers like Russia and Iran with longer standing interests in the Middle East. Furthermore, the convergence between the positions of Turkey and the West on Syria, when so explicitly pitted against the Russian position (whether or not by design), recalls to mind Cold War dynamics where Turkey was hardly more than an extension of the United States in terms of its role in the region. In other words, Turkey may finally be in the big leagues, but it is also dangerously close to a strikeout.

This means that soon the AKP government of Turkey may face the very real possibility of having to reduce its regional ambitions to little more than Turkey's traditional (and mostly irrelevant) twentieth century role in the Middle East. That this would be so despite the economic, political, and social strides Turkey has made over the last decades would make such an outcome an even worse failure than it was in the past. This is also bad news for the United States and the EU, because a Turkey perceived not to be autonomous will have no credibility at all in the Middle East and hence will be entirely useless as a middleman between the West and the region.

Not all is lost for Turkey, and for its friends in the West who believe that active Turkish involvement makes the Middle East a better place. There is still a window for Turkey to regain its foothold in the region, but first it needs to stop making rookie mistakes. This requires getting a better read on regional competitors like Russia and playing to Turkey's strengths in foreign policy, which involve neither religion nor the military.

As in the Caspian, So in the Middle East

One of the main roadblocks to Turkey's ambitions for influence in the Middle East is Russia, now that the latter has thrown its weight squarely behind the Assad regime in Syria (and also Iran). Turkey has repeatedly criticized the Assad regime, given aid to

Syrian refugees fleeing across the border, hosted the second “Friends of Syria” meeting in Istanbul in April, and called for international intervention with increasing urgency. Yet Assad has kept hanging on, in no small part due to Russian support, and Turkey is burning through its hard-earned (but shallow) cache of soft power in the Middle East with each passing day of bloodshed. This puts Turkey once again in an uncomfortable position vis-à-vis Russia.

This, however, should not have come as a surprise. It is a repeat of the scenario Turkey has been facing in the Caucasus, another region of common concern. Turkey should have learned from its experiences in the Caspian basin, where Russia did not at all meet its expectations on at least two major policy issues (as Turkey had presumed it would):

1) Normalization of relations with Armenia

In 2008, the AKP government initiated an attempt to normalize relations with Armenia. The border between the two countries has been closed since 1993 in solidarity with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As part of this initiative, President Abdullah Gül visited Yerevan in 2008, and the governments signed joint protocols in 2009 establishing diplomatic ties and an opening of the border. This warming of relations was vigorously protested by Azerbaijan, whose concerns could only be assuaged by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s promises not to make any more progress on the bilateral relations until the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute was settled. Armenia rejected the effort to link the two issues, and the reconciliation efforts quickly unraveled.

Russia heavily figures into this debacle. As Stephen Larrabee remarks, “Turkish leaders appear to have believed that Turkey’s good relations with Russia somehow would induce the Kremlin to put pressure on Armenia to make concessions on Nagorno-Karabakh.”* This optimism was quite misplaced. The continuation of the conflict between Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan ensures Armenian dependence on Russia. At the same time, Azerbaijan’s frustration with Turkey’s attempt at normalization (and U.S. support for this move) brought Azerbaijan closer to the Russian camp. In other words, contrary to Turkish expectations, Russia had nothing to gain from assisting Turkey on this matter, and it did not.

2) Turkey’s Caucasian energy ambitions

Turkey also was completely blindsided by the August 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, which drastically threatened Turkey’s plans to become the center of the planned East-West energy corridor, as manifested in the existing Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (South Caucasus) natural gas pipeline and the planned Nabucco project.

The invasion put Turkey in a really difficult spot between two seeming allies. Georgia is a strategic partner of Turkey in the aforementioned energy projects and also one of the rare neighbors with which Turkey has an almost open-door trade and travel

* Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey’s Eurasian Agenda,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 2011, 109.

policy. Russia, on the other hand, is Turkey's largest trading partner, supplying more than half of Turkey's natural gas and a considerable portion of its oil imports. Russia also plays a leading role in Turkey's pursuit of nuclear energy. Finally, Russia is an important market for Turkish goods and construction contracts. Given such ties, Turkey could not take a strong stand against Russia's invasion.

Subsequent efforts by Turkey to maneuver out of this tight spot between Georgia and Russia created only more problems. One such effort involved the hastily pieced-together Caucasus Platform for Cooperation and Stability, an initiative that was supposed to enhance cooperation between Russia, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. However, this initiative ended up dead on arrival and, at the same time, alienated the United States and the EU as they had not been consulted by Turkey in the effort. Yet another problematic effort involved Turkey signing up for Russia's South Stream pipeline project. Despite Turkey's public claims to the contrary, all experts agree that the South Stream pipeline is a competitor to the EU-planned Nabucco or other southern corridor pipeline, designed to cut Russia out of Caucasian energy routes. For years, Nabucco has been central to Turkey's energy ambitions and has served as important leverage in Turkey's EU negotiations. Given this, Turkey's involvement in the South Stream project is best described by paraphrasing a Turkish proverb, "in order to please Russia, Turkey is cutting the branch it is sitting on."

Turkey as a Great Game Novice

Given these developments in the Caucasus, it should have come as no surprise that Russia is similarly undermining Turkey's involvement in the Middle East. Yet wild-eyed optimism about Russia's support for Turkey's regional ambitions again led to Turkey getting blindsided here as well. What accounts for this miscalculation?

For one, despite a centuries-old rivalry between these countries, the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been uncharacteristically warm, or at least perceived as such from the Turkish side. In addition to the aforementioned trade and energy ties, the increased presence of Russian tourists in Turkey, as well as many intermarriages, have left in most Turks' minds the image of a fuzzy, friendly, and jovial Russia, as opposed to, for instance, an interventionist United States or hypocritically snobbish Europe. There is also a sense of common victimization, a belief that Russia suffers from similar double standards as Turkey on the part of the West.

Furthermore, until the recent ambitious turn of Turkish foreign policy, Turkey was completely aloof to developments in neighboring regions. Newspapers hardly covered what was happening in the Caucasus*, Iran, or the Arab Middle East; politicians rarely talked about these regions; Turkish academics hardly ever studied them.† This is a

* Even during the height of the Ngorno-Karabakh conflict, this region received much less attention than the Balkans.

† I would generously estimate that for every twenty academics that study an area to the west of Turkey, there is only one academic who studies an area to the east or south. This situation started to change only recently.

real problem in crafting Turkish foreign policy – Turkey’s newfound ambition is sitting on a serious vacuum of expertise, which is further constrained by the very hierarchical ideas many Turks have about political development and modernization as a result of their own internalization of official Turkish history (this is true even among the Islamists). Many Turks believe that they are naturally due a leadership role in the Middle East and have condescending notions about development in the region.

A lack of regional expertise did not pose as much of a challenge when the Middle East was politically stable. Back then all that was needed for influence were Turkish merchants making business contacts and Turkish soap operas gathering television audiences. Turkish businessmen could sell even non-*halal* snails in a Muslim neighborhood (to borrow another Turkish saying) and Turkish soap operas are quite addictive, so influence came easily. However, since the inception of the Arab Spring, Turkey finds itself quite hampered by its inability to effectively understand regional dynamics, including the motivations of Russian involvement there.

Sunnification of Turkish Foreign Policy is a Mistake

Partly in order to fill this knowledge gap, the governing AKP party is increasingly digging into its own expert networks, which I think partly explains the increasingly Sunni emphasis of AKP’s foreign policy. Devout Sunni communities in Turkey are one community that (at least theoretically) maintained ties with the Middle East during Turkey’s Republican years. Yet it goes without saying that these communities have their own biases when it comes to the various sectarian communities throughout the Middle East. More importantly, a feeling of “brotherhood,” however genuine, cannot replace true policy expertise.

Such are some of the reasons behind Turkey’s recent missteps in the Middle East. If Turkey is to become a serious player in the Great Game of the twenty-first century, it has a lot of catching up to do. The first step is coming to terms with Russia’s power and strategic regional interests. This does not mean Russia is Turkey’s enemy, but neither is it the friendly uncle Turkey has made it out to be. Any long-term planning by Turkey that does not accurately anticipate Russia’s strategic behavior is bound to unravel. Second, Turkey needs to understand that it is always going to be bested by Russia and the West in the military realm in terms of resource capabilities; by Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia in the energy realm; by Iran and Saudi Arabia in the religious identity politics realm; and all Arab countries in the ethnic affiliation game. It is a fool’s errand to chase dreams of power in these spheres.

Instead, what Turkey can really offer is its hybrid of East and West: democracy with a blend of mild authoritarianism, apparent community with a blend of capitalism, and moderate conservative values with a blend of tolerance for alternative choices. This is a compromise model that is both attractive to all parties involved and more sustainable than the other options in the long run, especially for states that are not resource rich, which is the majority in the Middle East. If the United States wants stability in the Middle East, this is the Turkish strategy it should be pushing for.

The Future of Euro-Atlantic Integration in the Western Balkans

PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 208

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Given the absence of enlargement progress in the May 2012 NATO summit and enlargement fatigue in the European Union, it is high time to reconsider the future of Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans – an area that includes all the former Yugoslav republics plus Albania. The Euro-Atlantic integration of postcommunist Europe began hesitantly in the 1990s and reached its apogee during the 2000s. In the Balkans, the membership of Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria in NATO and the EU, and Albania’s membership in NATO, have been the most notable developments of the past decade.

The financial crisis and the recent rounds of enlargement, however, have raised doubts, if not hostility, toward existing, candidate, and potential candidate states among the elites and constituencies in many Western European member states. At the same time, popular support for the EU project is at a low point in many parts of the Western Balkans as well as many parts of “Old Europe.” Finally, NATO’s role in the Balkans – some of the countries considered for membership have been bombed by NATO – and the challenges that the alliance is facing in Afghanistan and beyond complicate the picture further.

Although NATO enlargement in the Western Balkans is primarily stalled by bilateral disputes, EU enlargement suffers from a more fundamental set of problems. Scholars Lenard Cohen and John Lampe suggest that “the EU pre-accession process has been one of the most ambitious democracy-promotion efforts ever attempted.”* But today the EU needs to rethink, first, the content of the European vision; second, the nature of the public goods it provides over time; and, third, whether the Union can expand and still keep the quality of those public goods the same as before. Implementing the Lisbon treaty more effectively is an important baseline but may not prove enough. Existing policies and recommendations, which focus primarily at

* Lenard J. Cohen and John R. Lampe, *Embracing Democracy in the Western Balkans: From Postconflict Struggles toward European Integration* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press/The John Hopkins University Press), 2011, 450.

building domestic support by promoting pro-Western elites, have reached their limits. In short, I argue that overcoming the troubles at the center of the EU is as important for sustaining popular support in the Western Balkans as the orientation of the local leadership, if not more. Euro-Atlantic integration may be the only viable alternative for the Western Balkans at the moment. But for it to remain the only alternative, the EU itself has to shape up. Without problematizing these questions, we may be talking past each other and more importantly over the heads of the citizens of the Western Balkans.

But let us take a step back and think about what exactly is Euro-Atlantic integration? At its simplest, Euro-Atlantic integration refers to the inclusion of countries from the Western Balkans to NATO and the EU. From the vantage point of Washington D.C., this is a process of stabilization, democratization, and alliance formation.* The process in Southeastern Europe is seen as the continuation of the earlier integration of Eastern and Central Europe in the 1990s.

NATO and the EU are different organizations, however, that make very different demands on their member-states. NATO is primarily a military alliance, albeit one that requires certain military and human rights standards to be met, while the EU is a political and economic project that does not shy away from transforming societies. As Nida Gelazis put it recently,

“The distinction between the transformative impact of EU and NATO is made clear by the difference between the two countries that became NATO members in 2009, Croatia and Albania. Both countries met the criteria for NATO accession, and today they have active troops participating in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. But where the Croatian government continues to adopt political and economic reforms that were necessary for EU accession, Albania’s progress has been stalled by a political impasse, allegations of government corruption and election irregularities. The transformation in the former meant that Croatia was invited to join the EU last year, while the council postponed offering Albania candidate status.”†

Thus, although popular support toward the two organizations has traditionally been highly correlated, the EU makes more demands by far on governments and people of the Balkans than does NATO. This is not to suggest that NATO is unimportant. Clearly, security is a precondition for any other type of activity. But it is exactly for this reason that NATO has not faced the same level of fatigue that the EU has.

NATO Enlargement

Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro are the only countries in the Balkans that have not entered the NATO alliance. Former U.S. diplomat Daniel Serwer reminded us recently that NATO entered

* Hearing on “The Western Balkans and the 2012 NATO Summit,” Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission), Washington, D.C. (January 18, 2012).

† Ibid.

the Balkans with a no-fly zone over Bosnia.* The legacy of this “introduction” is very much behind the problem with NATO enlargement today. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo are unlikely to become members in the near future – each for different but not unrelated reasons. Problems remain, and the West is often directly linked in these debates. Out of these countries, Montenegro is most likely to join the alliance once it completes its Membership Action Plan. Meanwhile, despite strong endorsement by the United States, Skopje will not achieve NATO membership until it reaches some type of settlement on its name dispute with Athens.

EU Enlargement

Turning to EU enlargement in the Western Balkans, we have Croatia, scheduled to become the 28th member of the EU in July 2013, as the only acceding country following six years of negotiations. The Western Balkans also include three candidate countries, Serbia (since March 2012), Montenegro (since December 2010), and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (since December 2005), and three potential candidate countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo.

The 2005 Constitutional Treaty debacle and the rather negative post-accession developments in Bulgaria and Romania significantly damaged the pro-enlargement camp’s internal cohesion as well as its appeal. Moreover, the financial crisis and the problems in the Eurozone exacerbated the situation by undermining, at least temporarily, the whole European integration project. Still, despite the financial crisis and the problems at the heart of the EU integration project, the enlargement policy of the EU seems to be moving ahead in the Western Balkans. However, this may just be the product of diminishing ambitions and the limited vision that “Old Europe” has with regard to EU integration. In other words, this “success” may come together with an EU that moves closer to an inter-governmental organization model rather than some kind of United States of Europe.

For some analysts, a longer period of EU accession for the Western Balkans is the best way to get the necessary reforms in place, but the momentum is waning. Old practices – financial assistance, supporting Western-oriented elites, backing pro-Western civil society organizations – might no longer work or be available in the new conditions. Spain, Portugal, and Greece in the 1980s, often proposed as examples, were countries transitioning from authoritarian rule to consolidated democracy under EU accession at a time when Western Europe still enjoyed the awe of most of the world. Today, things are different. The financial/political crisis in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Ireland, coupled with the perception of double standards in the EU accession process in the eyes of the people in the Western Balkans, complicate matters. Moreover, the sluggish show of solidarity in the recent financial crisis and uncertainty about the future of Europe in the future global distribution of wealth and power further undermine the “carrot” of EU membership. EU funding, visa liberalization, and trade preferences and agreements may not prove enough to change this current, especially as they are taken for granted in

* Ibid.

many Western Balkan capitals.

Moreover, what stalls the EU enlargement process in the Western Balkans is not just a hesitant European Commission or even a failure to achieve the Copenhagen criteria – the criteria a country must meet to be eligible to join the European Union. In many cases, the problems are native to the region itself. Two of the countries that remain potential candidates have internal security and governance problems, have international institutions helping them govern their countries, and have bilateral disputes.

There are many actors involved in the EU enlargement process in the Western Balkans, and we need to understand their perspectives and aspirations. To complicate things further, these aspirations and orientations change over time and at different speeds, creating varying constellations at each step of the way. At times, a given Western Balkan public becomes pro-EU while the publics in EU capitals are indifferent or hostile – for example, Serbian elites became pro-European around 2008 at a time when the rest of Europe was becoming more skeptical and the crisis had just begun. Other times the local elites are in doubt when the EU wants to move forward with enlargement and so forth.

There is no shortage of irony in this process. For instance, in some cases where the public developed negative opinions on the matter, the very democratization for which the EU accession process was pushing undermined the commitment – and ability – of Balkan elites to an EU future (like in Serbia). Similarly, in other cases the very success of the EU accession process and the positive effect of conditionality may turn the public opinion of a country against EU integration – especially when things do not look that bright for the EU (as in Croatia).

Where Do We Go From Here?

The discussion in the Western media is from a vantage point that is particularly EU- and NATO-centric. This would not be problematic if indeed there were no alternative models for the Western Balkans. But is this true? Some disagree, proposing that Russia or maybe Turkey – inspired by a neo-Ottoman ideology – may have alternative plans for the region. Supporters of this view cite names of ministers and other elites in the Western Balkans that have studied in Turkey or Russia, or figures on foreign direct investments by various non-Western countries in the region, as well as evidence of other transnational forms of political community building. To a great extent, however, experts suggest this is nothing but hot air.

Beyond this debate, however, an alternative to Euro-Atlantic integration may actually end up emerging from within the Western Balkans. Such alternatives appeared in the past and include ideas of a Balkan federation or various types of ententes.* Unfortunately, one dreadful alternative is the so-called “black hole,” by which Western Balkan countries, which remain outside the EU, simply continue to “export” instability and uncertainty to the rest of Europe. It is this latter possibility, which for many describes the current state of affairs, that most legitimizes the Euro-Atlantic orientation.

* For more recent regional cooperation attempts, see Ivan Vejvoda’s testimony at the Hearing on “The Western Balkans and the 2012 NATO Summit.”

In the end, the only way for Euro-Atlantic integration to take root is if the people of the Western Balkans perceive it as the best alternative. This means focusing on preserving the appeal of EU institutions and keeping alive the values that have been at the core of the Euro-Atlantic integration project.

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