

A b s t r a c t s

Pressure points Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine

Georgia after the Election Defenceless against Russia

Zaal Andronikashvili on the Georgian Nightmare, Act 3

Billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream party has secured an absolute majority in Georgia's parliament by means of election fraud. With the polls predicting defeat, Georgian Dream opted for an inventive combination of manipulation. The pro-European opposition indulged in illusions and made mistakes. It was unable to take advantage of the fact that 80 percent of Georgians want to join the EU. Geopolitically, Georgia and Ukraine are different theatres of the same battle that Russia is waging. Georgia's only protection from Moscow is integration into the EU and NATO. Ivanishvili's election victory has interrupted this course. The election is a great success for Moscow. And Brussels merely watching from the sidelines.

Hans Gutbrod

Revealing Numbers

How Georgia's Election was Systematically Manipulated

The parliamentary elections in Georgia were rigged and influenced by the government in an extremely efficient way. This was achieved through buying votes, intimidation, multiple voting, and identity fraud. A special feature was the systematic misuse of private data so that the authorities knew exactly which voters to target. There is also a large gap between urban and rural areas in the manipulation of the election. At the district level in particular, statistical analysis can be used to quantify with astonishing accuracy how many more votes Georgian Dream received and how many fewer votes the opposition received due to certain violations.

Anna Guminska

**Sandü Elected, Division Cemented
Presidential Elections in Moldova**

In Moldova, incumbent President Maia Sandu won the presidential elections. A referendum held at the same time on making accession to the European Union a constitutional goal also ended in victory for the supporters of EU membership. Both decisions were close. This is an expression of the country's social, economic, and political divisions.

Namig Abbasov, Emil A. Souleimanov
Rise of a Criminal
Ramzan Kadyrov's Tyranny in Chechnya

The president of the Russian republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, bases his rule on fear and terror. He employs violence in a targeted manner to eliminate opponents, nip dissent in the bud, and consolidate his rule. After the Second Chechen War, he emerged victorious from the power struggle between various military combat forces. Since then, he has systematically persecuted human rights activists, journalists, civic organizations, and the LGBTQ+ community. He is accused of numerous human rights violations such as torture, abductions, and extrajudicial killings. He does not stop at the borders of the autonomous republic, but takes action against critics and opponents throughout Russia and even abroad. The Kremlin tolerates Kadyrov's tyranny and thus allows the limits of authoritarian rule in Russia to be expanded further.

Martin Schulze Wessel
Conflicting Worldviews
Debates about Rearmament and Russia's War

What does the "turn of an era" mean for contemporary history? Immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the first studies meticulously reconstructing Germany's political entanglements with Russia began to appear. They showed that German politics for years had ignored Russian domestic political developments and their consequences for foreign policy. This denial of reality had already existed in the late 1970s. The peace movement was formed in response to NATO's 1979 dual-track decision. In the debate over peace and defence, two worldviews and political strategies competed: containment or appeasement. These worldviews influenced the behaviour of the actors in the 1980s and continue to do so to this day. One side demands vigilance and defence, the other restraint. In an era characterised by Russia's war policy and hegemonic ambitions, the pacifists' worldview from the 1980s and the virtue of prudence make for poor advisors.

Benno Ennker
The Sweet Poison of Appeasement
Russia's War and German Manoeuvring

British foreign policy in the 1930s, which went down in history as "appeasement", pursued the goal of stopping Hitler's revisionist course. It led to disaster. Today, Russia is pursuing an aggressive and revisionist policy. Although no one explicitly professes a policy of appeasement, the manoeuvring of relevant circles in German politics on the question of whether Ukraine should be given full military support for its defensive struggle amounts to de facto appeasement. What is needed is a change of course: Germany should be prepared to counter the Russian aggressor through deterrence and defence.

Peter Sawicki
New Start Postponed
Poles, Germans, and the Shadow of War

In recent years, German-Polish relations have been marked by conflict and alienation. The election victory of Donald Tusk's alliance in October 2023 raised hopes for a restart in relations. But this remains a long way off. The main reason for this is Germany's inability to meet Polish expectations of an appropriate form of reparation for German crimes during World War II. This was evident at the celebrations commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. The German government's position that it no longer has to pay reparations is correct from a formal legal standpoint. But reparations are necessary for historical, moral, and political reasons. And it would be a prerequisite for the German-Polish engine in the EU to gain traction, which in times of the war in Ukraine and Trump's election victory in the United States is needed more urgently than ever.

Hella Engerer
Decoupling from Russia
How independent the EU has become in terms of gas and oil

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 revealed the European Union's dependence on Russian energy. The EU Commission reacted with the "REPower-EU" program. Its aim is to end Europe's dependence on fossil fuels from Russia, diversify Europe's energy supply, increase energy efficiency, and accelerate the energy transition by expanding renewable energies. An interim assessment by the EU Commission in 2024 shows that a natural gas crisis has been successfully averted in the short term. However, after the crisis mode, the expansion of renewable energies and the infrastructure they require is making only slow progress. Competing national interests and a lack of joint coordination, as well as complex financing structures and bureaucratic hurdles, are making it difficult to implement long-term goals. A coherent EU energy policy is still lacking.

Martina Winkler
Populism in Slovakia
The Government's Worldview and Politics under Robert Fico

Since October 2023, a coalition of three parties has governed Slovakia. Of these, Smer-SD is the strongest and provides the prime minister with Robert Fico. The government pursues populist politics par excellence. Ideological and substantive coherence play a subordinate role. The moral elevation of its own position in dichotomous categories such as "us-them", "friend-enemy", and "people" vs. "elite" is crucial. It serves to legitimize the government's massive attacks on the independence of the judiciary, the public media, and the freedom of culture. Corruption was decriminalised with an amendment to the criminal

law. In Smer's thinking, ideas declared to be "left-wing" merge with radical nationalist tendencies. Fico is pursuing a rapprochement with autocratic Hungary and calling into question Europe's support for Ukraine. In his political rhetoric, Russia serves as the antithesis of an open society.

Alexander Duleba
The Two Faces of Robert Fico
Slovakia and Russia's War against Ukraine

At the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Slovakia was one of Ukraine's biggest supporters. Eduard Heger's government delivered the first missile defence system and the first fighter jets. The country forged close political ties with Kyiv, provided humanitarian aid, and took in refugees. In October 2023, Robert Fico took office as prime minister for the fourth time. He changed the country's Ukraine policy. A closer look shows that his anti-Western rhetoric and his pro-Russian stance are usually much harsher than his actual political actions.

V. Handl, K. Řežábková, Z. Zavadilová
Prague's Turning Point
The Czech Republic, Russia, and the War in Ukraine

The Czech Republic long maintained good relations with Russia. The turning point came in April 2021, when Czech intelligence proved that Russia's military intelligence service, GRU, had carried out attacks on a Czech ammunition depot. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the estrangement between Prague and Moscow deepened. With broad parliamentary backing, the Czech Republic has been supporting Ukraine financially, politically, and militarily since 24 February 2022. However, the strongest opposition party ANO under former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš is mobilizing against this support. The communists and right-wing radicals under Tomio Okamura are also trying to make political capital out of people's war-weariness with the slogan "This is not our war."

Krisztián Ungváry
The Russian Whisperers
Orbán, Hungary, and the War in Ukraine

Hungary's attitude towards Russia and its war of aggression against Ukraine continues to irritate. Viktor Orbán and his voters were once staunch anti-communists and critics of Russia, and not just because of Hungary's experience in 1956. Today, they show understanding for Russia. Almost half of voters for Orbán's party Fidesz are convinced that Russia is acting "in self-defence". Leading Fidesz politicians and ideologues believe that military support for Ukraine is wrong. Speculation is rife in this milieu that Ukraine's defeat could lead to its dissolution and the annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine by Hungary. There is no evidence for this.

Sergei Kuchеров

Oil for Corpses

How Putin and Kim Jong-un Benefit from Russia's Deal with North Korea

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un have concluded an inhuman pact. North Korea is no longer just sending ammunition, but also soldiers to support Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. In return, Pyongyang receives oil, hard currency, food, and - if things go badly - support in its desire to become a strong nuclear power and in building missiles. Putin's calculations may not work out, however, as South Korea is now also supplying Ukraine with weapons, even if indirectly.

Nikolay Mitrokhin

Russia's War against Ukraine

Weekly Reports Autumn 2024

The situation on the front has changed dramatically since the end of August. The most important events have been the fall of Vuhledar and Selydove, Biden's basic approval of longer-range missiles that can also hit targets in Russia's interior, the transfer to Russia of North Korean soldiers, who have so far remained barely visible, and Putin's deployment of a mysterious intercontinental ballistic missile. The fighting is mainly taking place around Pokrovs'k, Kurachove, Kupians'k and in the Kursk region. Russia has succeeded in expanding its weapons production, but Kyiv is also producing new weapons of its own. Ukraine can organise counterattacks, prevent breakthroughs, or hit Russian ammunition depots and arms factories. Overall, however, Kyiv lost more territory in the autumn than it has in a long time. One important reason is the problem of mobilisation. New encirclements of important Ukrainian towns and breakthroughs are imminent.

Felix Riefer

The Russian Germans

From a Community of Fate to a Community of Memory

In Germany, Russian Germans are viewed mostly through the lens of commonplace notions of the Soviet Union and Russia. Knowledge of the fate of the Russian Germans remains limited. It has been forgotten that, as members of a national minority, they were politically persecuted as a result of the Second World War and discriminated against for decades. The same applies to their struggle for emancipation, rehabilitation, and emigration from the Soviet Union. In Germany, they are often wrongly portrayed as a Russian diaspora.