

## **A b s t r a c t s**

**Andrei Kolesnikov**

**Remembrance as weapon**

**The politics of memory of the Putin regime**

The politics of memory have become a weapon of the Putin regime, and are increasingly being used offensively and aggressively by the regime's representatives, both domestically and internationally. They serve to mobilise the population, stabilise the regime's grip on power and to consolidate the image of Russia as a beleaguered fortress. The subjects are well known: the Second World War, Stalin and the 1990s. However, the ways in which these policies are being implemented have changed. Places of remembrance are being eradicated, competition is being created between victim groups, and negative events are being reinterpreted as positive ones. All this is engendering historical myths and propaganda, and it makes it harder for Russia to tackle its difficult past.

**Otto Luchterhandt**

**Non-compliance with the constitution**

**An interim assessment of the "Putin" era**

In June 1990 Russia declared its sovereignty and initiated legal reforms that were generally successful. One particularly important step was the passing of the constitution in December 1993, the first in the history of Russia that was not just a constitution in name, but also in nature. In the interim, this constitution has lost its regulatory power. It has been systematically undermined by the Putin regime through an increasingly blatant failure to comply with the basic constitutional principles. The low point has now been reached. The constitutional changes made suddenly in March 2020 by the presidential administration have robbed the constitutional order of its power and have derailed the fundamental principles of a constitutional state, democracy and federalism.

**Margareta Mommsen**  
**Russia's constitution in poor health**  
**The end of an illusion. A retrospective**

The "Putin constitution" of 2020 is a watershed. It marks the end of a period that began with perestroika, included the upheaval of the communist system and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and which in 1993 led to the approval of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. According to this constitution Russia was a democracy and a state governed by the rule of law that guaranteed human and basic rights. The reality was different. The Soviet legacy, and errors made during the Yeltsin era, made it harder to establish a functioning democracy. After Putin became President, the discrepancy between constitutional norms and the constitutional reality widened. Yet for two decades, the political leadership upheld the illusion of liberal constitutionalism. This has now been brought to an end. The new constitution reinforces institutional authoritarianism and presidential absolutism. The legacy of 1993 has been destroyed.

**Roland Götz**  
**From oil boom to stagnation**  
**Russia's domestic economy under Putin**

From 2000 to 2008, Russia enjoyed a period of economic upturn. The price of oil rose sharply, and Russia had large numbers of skilled workers and untapped production capacities available. However, since 2009, the situation has taken a turn for the worse, and growth has decreased. This is due to the fact that no new sources of growth have arisen to replace these exceptional circumstances. Over the past 20 years, monetary stability has improved. However, the investment climate, which is a prerequisite for broader-based economic development, remains unfavourable. Companies are exposed to unjustified persecution by state structures, which act partly on their own initiative, and partly at the behest of competitors of the companies being penalised. Putin's "strong state", which is only strong in name, is riddled with networks with only their own interests at heart. Many people living in Russia face an uncertain economic future.

**Jan Matti Dollbaum**  
**Action and reaction**  
**Russia: protest movements within the authoritarian system**

In Russia, the authoritarian regime has imposed increasingly stringent restrictions on civic life since 2000. Even so, protest movements still continue to exist to this day. When they have specific social or local goals, they are occasionally successful. However, if they direct their efforts against the regime as a whole, they are suppressed using the means of a police state. The regime sets the limits regarding what is deemed acceptable. Since the large protests against electoral fraud in the winter of 2012/2013, these boundaries of acceptability have been drawn ever

tighter. In order to split society, the Kremlin styles itself as the upholder of “traditional values” and agitates against many different social groupings. Differences between Russia’s regions have been levelled out by the rigorous imposition of the power vertical. In Perm, once an important centre of organised civil society, the situation today is hardly different to that in Rostov on Don, where the suppressive measures had already been applied again during the 1990s.

**Hans-Henning Schröder**  
**Resubmission: expertise on eastern Europe**  
**A decline, a new beginning, unfulfilled expectations**

After the East-West conflict, research into eastern Europe was severely curtailed in Germany. As a result, knowledge about Russia and the post-Soviet space was lost. This lack of expertise was noticed particularly during the Russia-Ukraine crisis. In order to rebuild the know-how that was lost, the Bundestag decided to found an institute for East European studies. The institute was opened in 2017; however, thus far, expectations that it would consolidate expertise on Russia have not been met.

**Evgeny Kazakov**  
**Democratic, pro-western, racist?**  
**The National Democrats in Russia**

The National Democrats are enjoying increasing popularity among opponents of the regime in Russia. They have deep roots in Russian 19th century intellectual history. They combine positive ideas about democracy and market economy with ethnonational views. After overcoming antisemitism, the ideas nurtured by the supporters of this movement have become compatible with those of right-wing liberals. Elements of their worldview include an idealised image of the classical West, criticism of Russia’s model of ethnic federalism, majoritarian democracy, criticism of Islam and migration. Their goal is democracy, but the demos to which they refer are only the ethnic Russians.

**Namig Abbasov, Emil A. Souleimanov**  
**Putin as Pyhrrus**  
**Russia in Syria and Libya**

Russia is perceived as being the winner in the Syrian civil war. With its covert involvement in Libya, Moscow is also seen as being in control of important positions in the western Mediterranean. This view is too short-sighted, however. Russia’s military successes are built on feet of clay. In order to attain long-term strategic benefits from the open military intervention in Syria and the covert support of militias in Libya, Moscow would have to invest far more in both countries. If Russia brings these costly military campaigns to an end, however, it will quickly lose the military advantages that it has gained with so much effort.

Liza Rozovsky  
Countering the sin of defencelessness  
Friedrich Gorenstein and (post-)Soviet Jewry

The émigrés from the former Soviet Union who came to Israel in their hundreds of thousands in the early 1990s still remain a separate group from the cultural and political mainstream there today. In order to understand what characterised and motivated them, it is worthwhile taking the work of the Russian Jewish writer Friedrich Gorenstein into consideration, which can be read as a type of encyclopaedia of Soviet Jewry. His texts draw on both biblical sources and his own biography. The lesson that Gorenstein draws – that for the Jewish people, defencelessness is the greatest sin – is shared by many (post-)Soviet Jews, and not only in Israel.

D. Beyrau, W. Eichwede, M. Kunštát  
Conflict and cooperation  
On the death of the Czech historian Jan Křen (1930-2020)

Jan Křen was among the eastern-central European thinkers who overcame the division of Europe with the power of the powerless. His main interest was historical truth. He studied civilian resistance against National Socialism, which according to the ruling doctrine of the Communist Party did not even exist. One topic of his research was the expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, which he refused to justify as being a matter of necessity. And he refused to conform to deterministic portrayals of history that presented the destruction of the centuries-old community of Czechs and Germans in central Europe as being a matter of inevitability. Jan Křen died in April 2020 in Prague, aged 89.