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Pandemiebekämpfung im Osten Europas

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A b s t r a c t s

Roland Götz Sechin's oil war OPEC+ and Russia

At the end of 2016, Russia, the OPEC states and other countries agreed on maximum limits for oil production, with the aim of increasing the price of oil. At the request of Saudi Arabia, this group of countries, known as OPEC+, planned to agree to an additional limitation on their oil production at the start of March 2020. Igor Sechin, the chairman of the largest Russian oil production company, Rosneft, had other ideas in mind, however. He backed a rapid release of oil production in order to lower the price of oil and in so doing, force US shale oil production out of the market. Since no agreement was reached, Russia and Saudi Arabia declared that they would entirely abandon their restriction on oil production from April 2020 onwards. This led to a collapse in the price of oil, which continued to fall as a result of the corona crisis. In consequence, Russia and Saudi Arabia reverted to their shared policy of restricting production.

Nikolay Mitrokhin Expansion after the discord The global politics of the Russian Orthodox Church

2019 marked a significant change of tack for the Russian Orthodox Church with regard to its global policy. After the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople granted autocephalous status to the newly founded Orthodox Church of Ukraine, against the will of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow adopted a confrontational stance. By far the largest of the 14 independent orthodox churches now regards itself as a global church in competition with the Greek-dominated Constantinople Patriarchate. In this competition, the Russian Orthodox Church is not only abandoning its "Russian world" ideology, but is also in effect breaking away from its Greek roots.

Laboratory Test Fighting the pandemic in Eastern Europe

Daniel Hegedüs Hungary's authoritarian emergency state Using the fight against the pandemic to seize power

The Orbán regime in Hungary has exploited the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic to further tighten the hold on power by the authoritarian regime. With an unconstitutional enabling act, it has suspended all parliamentary control and judicial oversight for the duration of the state of emergency. The state of emergency can only be lifted by a majority that is at the beck and call of the regime. However, even if the enabling act is suspended, Hungary will have taken a further step along the path to authoritarianism. The government is exploiting the fight against the pandemic to suppress the

opposition. The regional districts in particular, where in the autumn of 2019, mayors from opposition parties were elected for the first time for many years – particularly in Budapest – the regime is curtailing state funding.

Marta Buchholc, Maciej Komornik

The PiS, the virus and power
Elections during the pandemic

In the fight against the corona virus, the Polish government has imposed significant restrictions on public life and the economy, as well as on the rights and freedoms of Polish citizens. The pandemic situation was announced by decree. Nevertheless, the PiS is determined to continue with plans to hold the presidential elections on 10 May 2020. In order to do so, it has introduced changes to the electoral law, making postal voting obligatory. The restrictions on the right to hold public gatherings are preventing an equal and fair public election campaign. This approach is a cause for concern when it comes to constitutional rights. There is a danger that while attention is focussed on fighting the corona virus, too little notice will be taken among the European general public of challenges to the rule of law.

Zuzana Lizcová

Isolation, new solidarity, unclear future
The handling of the Sars-CoV-2 epidemic in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, very severe measures restricting public life were put in place very quickly in the fight against the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic. The country closed its borders and broke its social and business relations with Austria and Germany in the border regions, despite their close mutual ties. Despite this huge clampdown on civic rights, there was almost no criticism of the government's behaviour. Instead, wearing and sewing nose-and-mouth masks became a symbol of social cohesion, and the masks themselves became an item of national pride. Some high-ranking politicians demanded an extension of executive competencies beyond the current emergency legislation. However, in contrast to Hungary, such attempts have no chance of success. If, as is hoped, the pandemic is overcome quickly, no damage will be caused to democracy in the Czech Republic. However, the impact on the economy will be devastating.

Andrea Kluknavská, Tomáš Gábriš

By consensus
Fighting the pandemic in Slovakia

In Slovakia, the change of government following the parliamentary elections took place during the height of the battle against the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic. The change of political direction anticipated before the pandemic broke out failed to materialise. The new government continued with the restrictions on public life and business activity and expanded them further. The only disagreement arose over the law that was quickly passed on the storage and use of mobile phone data. Although the law gives the health authorities fewer rights than in one original draft, the opposition wants to take the case to the constitutional court. The more severe the economic impact of the battle against the pandemic become, the more likely it is that the consensus will start to crumble.

Maria Lipman

Coronavirus versus coronation

Putin's constitution and the pandemic

In mid-March, Putin appeared to be on the winning side. Once again, he had outwitted everyone, secured himself the "eternal presidency" and consolidated stability in the country. Yet already by the end of the month, he came face to face with an opponent that forced him to back down when the corona pandemic reached Russia. The political consequences could be extremely serious.

Astrid Sahm

The risk of taking a different path

Belarus and the Covid-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 virus has hit the Belarusian leadership at an inopportune moment. At the start of 2020, the first signs of an economic recession were already visible as a result of the longstanding oil conflict with Russia. President Alexander Lukashenko wanted to avoid a lockdown of public life at all costs in order to avoid obstacles to his re-election this year. Like other populist state leaders, he at first underestimated the danger posed by the virus. This has led to an increasing degree of alienation from large parts of Belarusian society, which is organising itself and demonstrating solidarity in the face of the pandemic. However, while even a failure of state crisis management is unlikely to have any direct impact on the political system, the economic impact of the pandemic on the country is likely to be severe.

Yuri Durkot

In crisis mode

Fighting the pandemic in Ukraine

The Ukrainian government insisted at an early stage that the country was well equipped to deal with the corona virus. In reality, the health system is almost entirely incapable of dealing with a pandemic. The medical infrastructure is inadequate, doctors and nursing staff are underpaid and there is not enough personal protective equipment in the hospitals. At the end of March 2020, the cabinet declared a state of emergency. President Zelensky is exploiting the crisis in order to concentrate political power in his hands. This is a risky step, since in doing so, he is assuming sole responsibility for the handling of the pandemic. Due to his dwindling political support and the precarious economic situation, he has only limited room for manoeuvre.

Stefan Meister

Fixed reactions, authoritarian reflexes

Fighting the virus in the southern Caucasus

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have handled the corona crisis well. The governments there have acted quickly to restrict public and economic life in order to prevent the pandemic from spreading. Infection rates are relatively low. However, the crisis is exacerbating structural problems. It threatens to undermine the economic successes achieved in recent years. The state is playing an increasingly important role in the fight against the pandemic. And signs are emerging that the authoritarian tendencies among the governments in all three countries will continue to grow.

Edda Schlager

The fear of losing control

The corona pandemic in Central Asia

The Sars-Cov-2 pandemic appears to have reached Central Asia later than many other parts of the world. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan did not report their first cases of infection until mid-March 2020, followed by Tadzhikistan four weeks later. To date, Turkmenistan has reported no cases at all. This information is implausible. The official case figures are in fact a reflection of the nature of the regimes. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the ruling powers are using measures to combat the pandemic to suppress members of the opposition. However, they have also demonstrated that they can impose similar restrictions to those introduced by the European states and provide emergency financial support. In Tadzhikistan, and in particular in Turkmenistan, information about the pandemic has been suppressed by the authorities. All five regimes fear that they might lose control.

Conservative intellectuals in Poland

Magdalena Marszałek

Bard of the conservative revolution

Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz

The conservative revolution in Poland has its thinktanks, intellectuals and literature. In right-wing circles, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz enjoys the status of a national poet. Rymkiewicz already joined the radical critics of Polish transformation during the early 1990s. He is one of the most well-known supporters of the PiS. His gripping late literary work, which is highly controversial politically, exerts a high degree of influence over radical conservatives in Poland.

Jens Herlth

Literary criticism from the right

Breaks and continuity in the work of Tomasz Burek

Since the end of the 1960s, the literary scholar and critic Tomasz Burek has been one of the leading figures in the literary and cultural debates of Poland. These debates often go beyond the field of aesthetics to cover the big questions of society, Polish identity and the country's painful and heroic historical legacy. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Burek gained notoriety as one of the most important conservative, right-wing nationalist voices on the Polish literary scene.

Ulrich Schmid

Romanticism and politics

Stanisław Srokowski and the patriotic narrative of the PiS

In the People's Republic of Poland, Stanisław Srokowski belonged to the group of writers who were ostracized. He was born in Kresy and as a child witnessed the massacre of Volhynia. With his prose writing filled with strong images that present the massacre in dramatic scenes, he has brought the issue to the table of Poland's literary discourse. He uses Romantic narrative patterns and is updating a narrative that can be integrated into the historical policy of the national-conservative ruling party, the PiS.

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Guido Hausmann, Tanja Penter

Instrumentalised, suppressed, ignored

The Holodomor in the German consciousness

Germany was well informed about the famine in Ukraine in 1932/33. Diplomats sent reports of what was happening, and church organisations began collecting aid for the victims. German engineers and labourers working on installations in the country were eye witnesses to what occurred. The first academic study of the catastrophe was conducted in 1941 under German occupation, and the results were extensively exploited for propaganda purposes. The Germans had quite a large amount of information. Yet the instrumentalisation of the Holodomor by the National Socialists and unease within Germany about the country's own crimes during the war of annihilation and the Holocaust made it difficult to engage with the issue during the post-war years. The Holodomor in Ukraine was also suppressed, forgotten and ignored as a result of the Russia-centric nature of German historical Eastern European research. Today, those who demand that the Holodomor be recognised as genocide also hope to integrate it into the European and global culture of remembrance.

Irina Shcherbakova

Memorial under pressure

The techniques used by the repressive state in Russia

The situation for NGOs in Russia has become more and more difficult. The state is becoming increasingly repressive and is exerting ever stricter control over them. One of the organisations that is suffering is Memorial. Several regional groups have been declared "foreign agents". They are randomly inspected, prosecuted and ordered to pay financial penalties. The head of the Memorial Human Rights Centre in Chechnya was found guilty following farcical judicial proceedings, while for a second time, the head of Memorial in Karelia faces prosecution on the basis of manipulated witness statements. The aim of the repressive state is to discredit, defame and destroy Memorial. However, it has failed to do so, and solidarity remains unbroken.