

A b s t r a c t s

Profiling Maps, War, Consequences

Olena Pal'ko
Desire and Reality
Ukraine as a Cartographic Construct

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been trying for some time to delegitimize Ukraine by portraying it as a Bolshevik “invention”. In fact, the idea of an independent Ukraine was born in the 19th century. This can be easily traced using historical maps: The first ethnographic map showing a cohesive area of settlement of the “Little Russians” extending beyond state borders dates to 1861. This and an ethnolinguistic map of the southern Russian dialects created ten years later provided the basis for the later definition of a national Ukrainian territory. At the time of the First World War, efforts to create an independent Ukrainian reached an apex. Again maps were used to promote this undertaking. However, unlike some other nations that emerged from the old empires, Ukraine had to wait decades for its own state.

M. Homaniuk, O. Hnatiuk, V. Zharonkin
Selling the Skin of a Bear That Hasn't Been Caught
Maps of Russia's Collapse

Maps create mental images of spaces and their organisation. They can be wielded as instruments of power. But where there's no power, the performative act becomes magical thinking. This is the case with the maps showing Russia's collapse that have been circulating in Ukraine. They are created mechanistically, with existing administrative borders usually being upgraded so that republics or other administrative units become states. This also merely transfers the Soviet Union's pattern of collapse onto Russia. Another method is to transfer historical borders onto a desirable future. This has little to do with the real political and social conditions. What is ignored is that this copies Putin's methods and, in addition, provides Moscow material for propaganda.

Andreas Umland
Russia's Child Abduction
Ukrainian Victims, International Reactions

Since the beginning of the war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia's occupation authorities have abducted tens of thousands of children and sent them to locations elsewhere within the occupied territories or to Russia and given them over to adoption. The abduction of minors and their Russification through assimilation presumably constitute genocide. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Commissioner for Children's Rights Mariia L'vova-Belova on suspicion of committing a war crime. Only a fraction of the abducted children have been able to return to their Ukrainian guardians.

Nikolay Mitrokhin
Taking a Sledgehammer to a Nut
Ukraine's New Law on Churches

A law has come into force in Ukraine that aims to ban the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Although the church broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in spring 2022, it is accused of not having formally separated. Bishops, priests, and believers are defamed as "agents of Moscow". Patriotic forces had even called for an immediate ban and expropriation. The number of church representatives who have verifiably committed real crimes that could be considered treason is very small. The Ukrainian state is putting its international reputation at stake without gaining anything in the struggle against Moscow's aggression. The idea of creating a national church is doomed to failure in multi-confessional Ukraine anyway.

Otto Luchterhandt
A Pillar of the Putin Dictatorship
The Prosecutor's Office in Russia

The prosecutor's office in Russia looks back on a history spanning over 300 years. During the Yeltsin era in the 1990s, it fought a battle for its independence from the head of state. This battle reached its climax under Attorney General Yurii Skuratov, who investigated corruption in the highest Kremlin circles. By means of an intelligence operation to discredit Skuratov, then FSB chief Vladimir Putin contributed significantly to the prosecutor's office losing this battle for the rule of law and independence. After that, the institution became a "pocket prosecutor's office", and the prosecutor general became a recipient of orders from the president. By fabricating criminal proceedings against Boris Berezovsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, he helped to eliminate opponents of Putin's rule. Today, the prosecutor's office is a pillar of the dictatorship.

Caroline von Gall
From Counterweight to Pillar of Power
The Constitutional Court in Russia's Authoritarianism

In the early 1990s, Russia's Constitutional Court was a counterweight to the office of the president. Today, it is a pillar of President Putin's power. From the late 1990s until the amendment of the constitution in 2020, the court covered up the Kremlin's increasingly authoritarian policies by disguising the ever-increasing discrepancy between the 1993 constitution and political practice. When this was no longer possible, the court submitted to politics. One of those who benefited from this was current Constitutional Court President Valerii Zor'kin. The Kremlin's loyal henchman now has a position of power within the court that is just as unrestricted as Putin's throughout the entire state.

Johannes Rohr
"Extremist"
Moscow Invents "Enemies of the People"

At the request of the Ministry of Justice, Russia's Constitutional Court on 7 June 2024 classified an "anti-Russian separatist movement" as "extremist". At the end of July, the ministry published a list of 55 organizations that allegedly belong to this "movement" and are therefore now listed as "extremist". One of these is the German Association for the Study of Eastern Europe. The classification is to be seen in connection with an issue of the association's journal *OSTEUROPA* entitled "The Peoples of Russia". This category constitutes the basis for criminal prosecution and is a further attack on academic freedom on the part of the increasingly repressive regime in Moscow. The actual target of this repressive act, however, are organizations of the non-Russian peoples of Russia.

Andreas Heinemann-Grüder
Putin's Vassals
Kremlin-Friendly Milieu in Germany

In Germany, some Russian-speaking circles support Russia's war against Ukraine and repeat the Moscow's propaganda. Russian front organizations in Germany and social networks are hubs for disseminating Russian narratives and mobilizing people to participate in public manifestations. Biker clubs and paramilitary groups offer Russia to recruit combatants for the war against Ukraine.

Nikolay Mitrokhin
Russia's War against Ukraine
Weekly Reports from the Summer of 2024

The situation of Ukrainian troops in the Donbass continued to deteriorate in the summer of 2024. In the southwest Donetsk region, the entire defence system is at risk of collapsing. The offensive potential of Moscow's army of occupation is nonetheless limited. A successful diversionary attack by Ukrainian troops on the Russian Kursk region has not changed the situation in the Donbass. Both sides are continuing the air war in order to wear down their opponents' morale and matériel.

Oleg Loginov
Geopolitics with Grain
Commodity and Instrument of Moscow's Foreign Policy

Russia increasingly views the agricultural sector through a geopolitical lens. In particular, the export of grain is intended to generate income for the state budget. At the same time it serves as an instrument of foreign policy towards countries in the Global South. Russia's growing share of the world wheat market favours this plan. Foreign agricultural trading companies are being forced out of Russia, while domestic ones are being pressured into state-affiliated corporations. This also helps to circumvent sanctions.

Thomas Vogel
In Difficult Waters
The OSCE in times of war

The core idea of the OSCE, to achieve security in Europe through confidence-building and cooperation between all states, has been shaken. Russia is waging war against Ukraine and sees itself in conflict with the "collective West". The OSCE and its contractual foundations are weakened, trust has been lost, and work processes have been disrupted. So far, however, no participating state has questioned the organisation's existence. The OSCE has unique forums and instruments with which it can continue to work. It must prepare for the day when it can once again play a role in European security policy and conflict mediation.

Cornelius Friesendorf
The Dismantling of the OSCE
Russia, the War, and the Consequences

Russia's war against Ukraine has caused political collateral damage. One victim is the OSCE. It has lost its ability to act. Moscow uses the OSCE as a platform for propaganda and uses the principle of unanimity to paralyse it. Moscow is blocking the budget, personnel decisions, and events, such as the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The states that are interested in a functioning OSCE and support Ukraine are forced to balance between confrontation and cooperation. They must criticise Russia for the war and the violation of OSCE principles, circumvent Russia's blockade through improvisation, but also be prepared to make common decisions with Russia.

Paul Schröck
The "Specialist for Russian Questions"
Klaus Mehnert's Rise as an Expert on Eastern Europe

Klaus Mehnert was the best-known expert on the Soviet Union in early West Germany. He had worked hard to achieve this status. He was a gifted networker with excellent connections in politics and a conservative with a pronounced ego. He was a highly productive journalist. With his commentaries in newspapers, radio, and television, as well as books such as the bestseller *Der Sowjetmensch* (Soviet Man), he reached an audience of millions and significantly shaped the West German image of Russia and the Soviet Union. His biography illustrates the role played by Soviet Union experts in the Federal Republic during the East-West conflict and how capable conservative intellectuals were of acting. And it provides insight into German research on Eastern Europe after 1945.