

# EASTWEEK

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## ANALYSES

## Russia's historical campaign

A series of articles about the policies of the Soviet Union and certain European countries towards Hitler's Germany have appeared in the Russian electronic and paper media since June, and especially in late August in connection with the approaching seventieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. In these articles, Russian historians, political scientists and journalists, as well as high-ranking state officials and representatives of the secret services and the armed forces, presented arguments which largely repeated the clichés of Soviet historiography. They justified and positively assessed the USSR's policy in the late 1930s, and accused Poland, the Baltic States, Great Britain and Ukrainian nationalists of having supported Nazi Germany.

The publications appear to be an organised propaganda campaign steered by the Russian authorities. They are also part of the increasingly intensive efforts to promote the concepts behind Russia's emerging new state ideology, while at the same time serving the short and long-term objectives of Russia's foreign policy, in particular with regard to Poland, the Baltic States and Ukraine. Among other goals, Moscow is apparently seeking to influence the outcome of the campaign ahead of the Ukrainian presidential election, and to discredit the Baltic States and Poland on the European stage in order to undermine their influence on the EU and NATO's eastern policies.

## The campaign

The Russian media have published numerous texts on historical issues in recent weeks. Apart from publications by Russian historians and political scientists (including Prof. Anatoly Torkunov, rector of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MGIMO), and head of the Polish-Russian commission for questionable issues), the texts include statements and articles by high-ranking state officials and politicians. The collection of papers published in the August special edition of *Vestnik MGIMO*, with an editorial by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, is one of the most important publications in this context. The papers' authors include the foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, the head of the Federation Council Sergei Mironov, as well as Sergei Naryshkin, head of the Russian commission appointed this May to combat the falsification of history, and head of the Presidential Administration. In addition to the publications in the press and the Internet, Russian state television aired a series of documentaries which were in fact propaganda material, including a film entitled *The Secrets of the Confidential Protocols*, broadcast on 20 August by the state television channel Rossiya. The film was prepared with the assistance of general Alexandr Zdanovich, the long-time Federal Security Service spokesman. The claims presented in the articles and films are supposedly substantiated by the col-

## APPENDIX

## 1. The major historical concepts promoted in Russia on the eve of the seventieth anniversary of World War II

- **A positive representation of the Soviet state leadership's policy in the 1930s.** It is claimed that the Soviet Union was the only state that consistently tried to prevent the war, unlike the West, which either collaborated with Germany or was unable to strike a lasting alliance with the USSR for ideological reasons, and was guided solely by its mercantile interests.

- **A positive view of the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact.** The pact is presented as being largely a historical myth, and an instrument used by other states to build a negative international image of Russia; in reality, according to this interpretation, the pact was the only move by which the USSR could avoid having to fight on two fronts (with Nazi Germany and Japan), and gain time to prepare for the war with the Nazis with the intention of liberating all Europe.

- **The Soviet army as a liberating force and the rescuer of many small nations.** The Soviet aggression against Poland on 17 September 1939 is claimed to have been a measure to defend Poland against Nazi occupation. Stalin allegedly had no plans to seize Eastern Europe, but simply wanted to stop the Germans as far as possible from the Soviet border. The Soviet forces entered Poland only because the Polish government was no longer present on its territory, and there would be no other way of stopping Hitler from, for instance, creating a puppet state in western Ukraine.

- **The negative role of Poland, the Baltic States and Great Britain.** It is claimed that all these countries were allies and collaborators of the Nazis at different periods. **It is alleged that Poland became one of the first allies of Hitler's Germany** (having signed the non-aggression pact with Germany in 1934, the two countries supposedly started a secret co-operation, the objectives of which included a Polish occupation of Soviet Ukraine and Carpathian Ruthenia, as well as joint actions against the USSR), and ultimately lost the most as a result of this collaboration.

lections of documents on the geopolitical situation around the Baltic States on the eve of the war, declassified by the archives of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) on 17 August. On 31 August, the SVR will present another set of documents concerning “the secrets of Poland’s foreign policy in the years 1935–1945”.

The materials communicate a consistent message which largely refers back to the propagandistic concepts of Soviet-era historiography. Most of them manipulate facts taken out of context and expressing biased views, in order to justify and positively assess the policy of the Soviet Union on the eve of the war, to put the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact in a positive light, and to accuse Poland, the Baltic States, Great Britain and the Ukrainian nationalists of having supported Nazi Germany in the 1930s (see Appendix 1 for more information). They also strongly criticise the historical policies of today’s Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic States and even Georgia, by accusing these countries of falsifying history, and claiming that an ‘information war’ is being waged against Russia.

### What is Russia’s objective?

The Russian media publications about the seventieth anniversary of the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact and the outbreak of World War II are not incidental, nor are they an expression of the interests of the media concerned. They make up a whole series of diverse publications, which add up to an organised propaganda campaign involving (directly or indirectly) the state structures of Russia and high-ranking state officials. The campaign is therefore an expression of the political will of the current state leadership of Russia. It serves different objectives concerning both the Russian public and the outside world.

Firstly, the publications are a continuation, in more aggressive form (see Appendix 2), of measures to promote the concepts that form part of the emerging new state ideology of Russia. This ideology involves, among other elements, the rehabilitation and glorification of the Soviet Union’s great power policy. At its core is the emphasis on the USSR’s great victory over Nazi Germany (and its decisive importance for the fate of World War II), intended to integrate both the Russian public around its own government, and the post-Soviet societies around Russia. The facts and historical assessments which contradict this vision, and are often raised in the Central and Eastern European States, therefore come in for increasingly violent criticism in Russia. Moscow is also concerned that the historical views of those states in Europe which fell victim to Soviet expansionism are being increasingly taken into account in the European political and historical discourse. For example, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution of 1 July 2009, which put the crimes of Stalinism alongside the crimes of Nazi Germany, has been fiercely criticised by the Russian authorities.

Secondly, the current historical campaign is meant to serve the immediate and long-term objectives of Russia’s foreign policy with regard to certain states and regions, in particular the Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine. One of the issues is that Moscow fears potential compensation claims from the victim-states of Stalinist policy, and seeks to avert them in advance. Russia’s attack against the concepts of Ukraine’s historical policy, endorsed mainly

### 2. Main manifestations of Russia’s historical policy

Since 2005, the year when the Russians celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II with great pomp, historical policy has been gaining importance in Russia. This has mainly manifested itself in the following ways:

- statements made by politicians on the occasions celebrations commemorating various historical events (especially Victory Day on 9 May),
- the activities of pro-Kremlin youth movements (such as the protests against the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument in Tallinn in May 2007),
- the active position taken by Russia in international historical debates (for example, the Russian parliament’s statement of 7 July 2009, condemning the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution which put the crimes of Stalinism alongside the crimes of Nazi Germany),
- the provisions of key state documents including the National Security Strategy endorsed on 12 May 2009 by President Medvedev, in which the attempts at revising the role and place of Russia in history are regarded as a threat to national security,
- the creation of bodies tasked directly with producing historical propaganda, such as the commission for the combating of falsification of history to the detriment of Russia, appointed in May 2009. Most of the commission’s members are representatives of the government (Presidential Administration and government) and the institutions of force (the Federal Security Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the General Staff, the Security Council) as well as political scientists engaged in political activity, who promote the vision of Russia as a world power (such as Natalia Narochitskaya and Sergei Markov).

by Ukraine's president Viktor Yushchenko, is clearly part of Russia's growing involvement in the campaign before the Ukrainian presidential election in January 2010, and its objective is to weaken and discredit the Ukrainian president and state, both internally and also on the European stage. Moscow's attacks on the governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, including its allegations that the Baltic States have been rehabilitating Nazism and exaggerating the impact of Stalinism, are in line with Russia's long-standing policy of discrediting the Baltic States on the European stage in order to undermine their influence on the eastern policies of the EU and NATO. The objective of Russia's propaganda attack against Poland is similar, but in this case it appears that there is also another, immediate goal of creating a scandal in connection with prime minister Vladimir Putin's participation in the celebrations of the seventieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, to be held on 1 September in Gdansk. The Russian authorities are apparently aiming to provoke a reaction from the Polish public opinion and leadership that will be unfavourable to Russia, or to humiliate the Polish authorities. In the extreme case, Russia's intention might even be to cancel the Russian prime minister's visit to Poland and blame this on the Polish side. All this demonstrates that Russia is increasingly tending to use historical manipulation as an instrument of its internal and foreign policy.

*Marek Menkiszak, Agata Dubas*

## Tension escalates in the Northern Caucasus

Violence has escalated in recent weeks in the eastern part of the Northern Caucasus, i.e. the region comprising Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan. On 17 August in Nazran, Ingushetia, an attack against the local Interior Ministry headquarters took place, in which 25 people were killed and nearly 300 injured. In the second half of August, eight police officers were killed in three suicide attacks in the Chechen capital Grozny. In Dagestan, attacks against representatives of the institutions of force occur almost daily. Radical underground Islamic organisations are responsible for the current escalation of violence; however, the activities of the Russian institutions of force may also be responsible, as they have been seeking to destabilise the situation in the region in order to obtain additional powers in the fight against terrorism.

### Escalation of violence

In June and July, several local politicians and members of the security bodies were assassinated in Ingushetia and Dagestan. For example, the Dagestani interior minister was assassinated, and on 22 June, a failed assassination attempt on the Ingush president Yunus-bek Yevkurov took place. The constantly deteriorating situation in Ingushetia is the most unstable; acts of violence have been taking place there on a regular basis since autumn 2008.

Under the authoritarian rule of President Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya had remained the most stable among the three republics until last week. However, the recent attacks in Grozny demonstrate that Chechnya too has been affected by the escalation of violence.

Although violence is a permanent phenomenon in the Northern Caucasus, the current wave of terror attacks and armed actions is comparable only to the events of 2002–2004, when large-scale terror acts were a habitual occurrence (not only in the Caucasus but also in Moscow).

## Underground Islamic organisations step up activity

Responsibility for most of the terror attacks has been claimed by underground Islamic armed organisations, and especially the Chechen commander Dokka Umarov. The declared objective of the Islamic militants, who are likely associated with international terror organisations, is to overthrow the local authorities, separate the Caucasian republics from Russia and establish a Caucasus Emirate in their territories, with Sharia law as its legal system. The Islamic militants, who are a major military force, mainly target the institutions of force (at the republican level), as well as members of the authorities and any Muslim clergy co-operating with the government.

The main reasons for the increased activity and radicalisation of the underground Islamic armed organisations include the central and local authorities' persistent inability to solve the region's social and economic problems, as well as the activities of the institutions of force, which have been persecuting those Muslim communities which have not been associated with official Islamic organisations, as well as violating human rights on a massive scale, under the pretext of fighting 'international terrorism'. As a result, the Islamic militants are gaining popularity, as they claim they will dismantle the current political system built on clan and mafia relations. The militants also attack people who do not abide by Sharia law; in one example, they shot seven prostitutes in Buynaksk, Dagestan, this August.

## Is the destabilisation designed to serve the interests of the federal institutions of force?

While the Islamic militants are capable of organising a series of attacks, it cannot be ruled out that the current wave of violence has been made possible by the federal institutions of force (some of the attacks may have taken place as a result of provocations staged by the *siloviks*, or their failure to take adequate preventative action, as was the case with, for instance, Shamil Basayev's raid into Dagestan in summer 1999). It is notable that the escalation of violence occurred immediately after President Dmitry Medvedev lifted the anti-terror regime in Chechnya this April (the regime had been in place since 1999). The decision displeased the federal institutions of force, because it entailed a limitation of their powers in Chechnya; it provided for a reduction of the number of troops stationed in the republic. It is also notable that many acts of violence have recently occurred in Chechnya, where the militants had been relatively weak in comparison to the situation in Ingushetia and Dagestan, and where President Kadyrov has been in control of the internal situation. It should also be noted that it is almost exclusively members of the local,

and not the federal, institutions of force who die in the attacks. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that the destabilisation has been provoked or made possible by the Russian *siloviks* in order to prove to the Kremlin that the local leaders are unable to ensure stability in the region, and that the powers of the institutions of force in the Caucasus should be extended.

### Moscow's helplessness

The central authorities have as yet undertaken no firm response to the destabilisation in the North Caucasus (so far, only a government meeting devoted to the situation in the region has been scheduled). It might appear that the policy towards the North Caucasus region is not being co-ordinated by a single decision-making centre, and that decisions are being taken by several bodies including the Kremlin, the Interior Ministry, the Federal Security Service and the Defence Ministry. The Kremlin is presumably still engaged in its long-standing dispute about what choice of policy options to take with regard to the Caucasus; either employing strictly forceful methods, or expanding the competences of the authorities at republic level. In recent years, the Kremlin has been implementing both these policies inconsistently, failing to achieve the expected results.

The fact that the Kremlin has not been following any clear policy line in its dealings with the Caucasus is apparent in the contradictory decisions taken recently by the Russian authorities. On the one hand, Moscow has strengthened its military presence in the region (three regiments of the Interior Ministry forces were deployed in Dagestan in August alone) and stepped up direct supervision over the local institutions of force. On the other hand, the anti-terror operation regime in the Nazran region (imposed after the attack on Yevkurov) was lifted on 24 August, and the president of Ingushetia, who is strongly backed by the Kremlin, said he was opposed to extending the regime to the entire republic (which the *siloviks* have been advocating), and pledged both to increase the size of the Ingush police force from 4,000 to 7,000 officers and to meet the human rights activists to discuss the situation in the republic.

Whichever option Moscow chooses to follow, its measures are unlikely to solve the Northern Caucasus' problems, which have been accumulating for years, or stabilise the situation in the region. If Moscow opts for the forceful variant, the popularity and activity of the Islamic militants will continue to rise. Any attempt to limit the powers of the federal institutions of force, on the other hand, may prompt them to take actions that will cause even more instability in the region. In the immediate future, one should therefore expect further acts of violence; nor can an outbreak of armed conflict on a larger scale be ruled out either.

*Maciej Falkowski, Wojciech Konończuk*

## EVENTS

## Georgia stops vessels sailing between Turkey and Abkhazia

On 20 August, the Georgian coast guard detained a vessel flying the Cambodian flag on its course from the separatist region of Abkhazia to Turkey. This was the latest in a series of similar incidents in recent weeks. The Abkhazian authorities have accused the Georgian government of 'piracy', and called on the UN and other organisations for assistance. Even though the measures Tbilisi has undertaken are justified from the legal point of view, the question of sea passage to and from Abkhazia may trigger a new escalation of tension between Georgia and Russia.

The Cambodian ship Afro Star was seized in Georgian territorial waters on charges of contraband. A similar incident occurred on 17 August, when a Panamanian tanker carrying fuel from Turkey to Abkhazia was seized; on that occasion the ship with its cargo were confiscated, and the Turkish-Azeri crew was detained. The Abkhazian authorities asked the UN Security Council, the EU and the French president for assistance, and threatened to respond with similar measures, by seizing vessels headed to Georgian ports. Under international law, the coastal waters of Abkhazia are an integral part of Georgia (as is the land territory of Abkhazia), and therefore the Georgian coast guard has the right to operate in the way it did. However, there is a serious risk that Moscow may decide to take measures to ensure free sea passage to and from Abkhazia, whose independence Russia has recognised and with which it has been intensively developing co-operation, including in the military sphere. In this situation, incidents of this kind may likely lead to a serious escalation of tension between Russia and Georgia, or even a limited use of force by the Russian side. <bart>

## Uzbekistan develops closer co-operation with the USA

General David Petraeus, commander of the US Central Command, visited Uzbekistan on 18 August. As a result of his talks in Tashkent, the United States and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on military and technical co-operation. The USA's recently increased efforts to expand its military presence in Central Asia have been accompanied by Russia's pressure on the Central Asian republics to preserve Russian influence in the region. As a consequence, US/Russian rivalry in Central Asia may heighten in the near future.

The agreement lays down a programme of contacts in the defence sphere between the two states, and provides for the training of Uzbek military forces by the Americans. The signature of the agreement has triggered press speculations about alleged talks concerning the return of US troops to the Karshi-Khanabad base where American soldiers were stationed in the years 2001–2005. These reports, however, have been denied by the US. For Washington, the main objective in developing closer relations with Uzbekistan is to strengthen its

military presence in the region and extend the Central Asian transport corridor to Afghanistan (the Americans have managed to keep the base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, and gain access to the airfield in Navoi, Uzbekistan). Uzbekistan, for its part, seeks to step up its co-operation with the United States because its relations with Russia have been deteriorating systematically, and Tashkent is concerned about Russia's mounting pressure on the Central Asian states. The Uzbek authorities are particularly concerned about the plans to establish a Russian military base in Southern Kyrgyzstan, close to the Uzbek border. The objective behind the measures Russia has undertaken is primarily to strengthen its military presence in the region (Russia has little to offer to the Central Asian states in terms of economic co-operation). The intention is to intimidate the countries of the region and counterbalance the influence of the USA and China in Central Asia. The actions of the two states may lead to an escalation in tension between Russia and the United States in Central Asia. <mf>

## CES

**The Centre for Eastern Studies**

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