

## Freedom and Militarism in Post-Soviet Europe

### Introductory Notes

The wave of populism that swept Donald Trump into the highest office in the United States and an earthquake of euroscepticism that threatens to separate the British Isles from the European continent is starting to be felt across Eastern Europe: the contemporaneous rise of revanchist policies in Russia and nativist movements in Europe and America present unique security and governance challenges for countries from the Baltic to the Black Seas. The spread of the feeling of insecurity changes value of freedom and meaning of war in post-Soviet societies.

This volume of *Ideology and Politics Journal* takes a look at how these changes are becoming manifest and considers what states and peoples might do to address them going forward. IPJ's authors are in the hinterlands and on the front lines of Russia's conflict with the West, in the streets of Kyiv and Minsk and in the halls of power in Moscow. They take stock of civil society in Ukraine and Belarus, the threat that Russia's nuclear rhetoric and strategy pose to the Baltic States, and the militarization of Russian history.

IPJ considered dozens of submissions for this, our 6<sup>th</sup> volume, ultimately selecting four articles for publication. This volume begins with

an essay from Svitlana Batsyukova, who examines the relationship between a country's "freedom status,"—based on Freedom House's annual "Freedom in the World Report—and its residents' propensity for activism. Batsyukova surveyed 105 Ukrainian and Belorussian activists in 2014-2015, using their responses as the basis of her analysis of citizens' motivations for joining in activist movements in Belarus and Ukraine. She concludes that there is "evidence of a relationship between advocacy drivers and country freedom statuses" but that a country's "non-free" status is not "an obstacle to advocacy implementation."

Marcel H. Van Herpen then considers the Kremlin's recent nuclear posturing and which threats the West should take seriously. Noting that the prominence of nuclear weapons in Russian military strategy since the turn of the millennium has greatly increased the threat of their use during a conflict, the Baltic States, he argues, are in particular danger, and should not be forgotten as NATO articulates a post-Trump, post-Brexit defense strategy.

Egor Isayev then documents how Russian visual culture—particularly film—increasingly represents Russian history through the lens of war. Relying on official statements and publications, Isayev looks at the role that history and historical films play in Russia's contemporary politics of memory. The recent militarization of Russian history, he suggests, is largely uncritical; filmmakers are less and less willing to produce works that criticize Russia's military engagements.

Shota Kakabadze reviews how the feeling of insecurity and East-West divide are employed by the various political actors in the identity production processes in Georgia. Author analyzes Georgian identitarian politics in terms of “liminal identity” which is used for legitimisation and justification of certain foreign policy agenda.

Finally, Daria Goriacheva challenges a widespread belief that the Euromaidan uprisings has brought about a leap forward in Ukraine’s long-held aspirations of European integration. As Author highlighted in her article, the failure of numerous Ukrainian attempts to integrate with united Europe is largely the result of a lack of shared long-term goals between Ukrainian and Western political elites. By the use of metaphor-oriented critical discourse analysis, Goriacheva examines Ukrainian and European leaders’ official discourses in the post-Euromaidan period. The result of her analysis shows that it is far too early to speak about a breakthrough in Ukraine’s European integration: .the both groups of leaders possess substantially different visions on prospective of the EU-Ukraine integration.

This volume of IPJ sheds light on the most important sociocultural, political, and military issues facing Eastern Europe. We hope you enjoy reading IPJ as much as we enjoyed producing it.

Mikhail Minakov and Isaac Webb