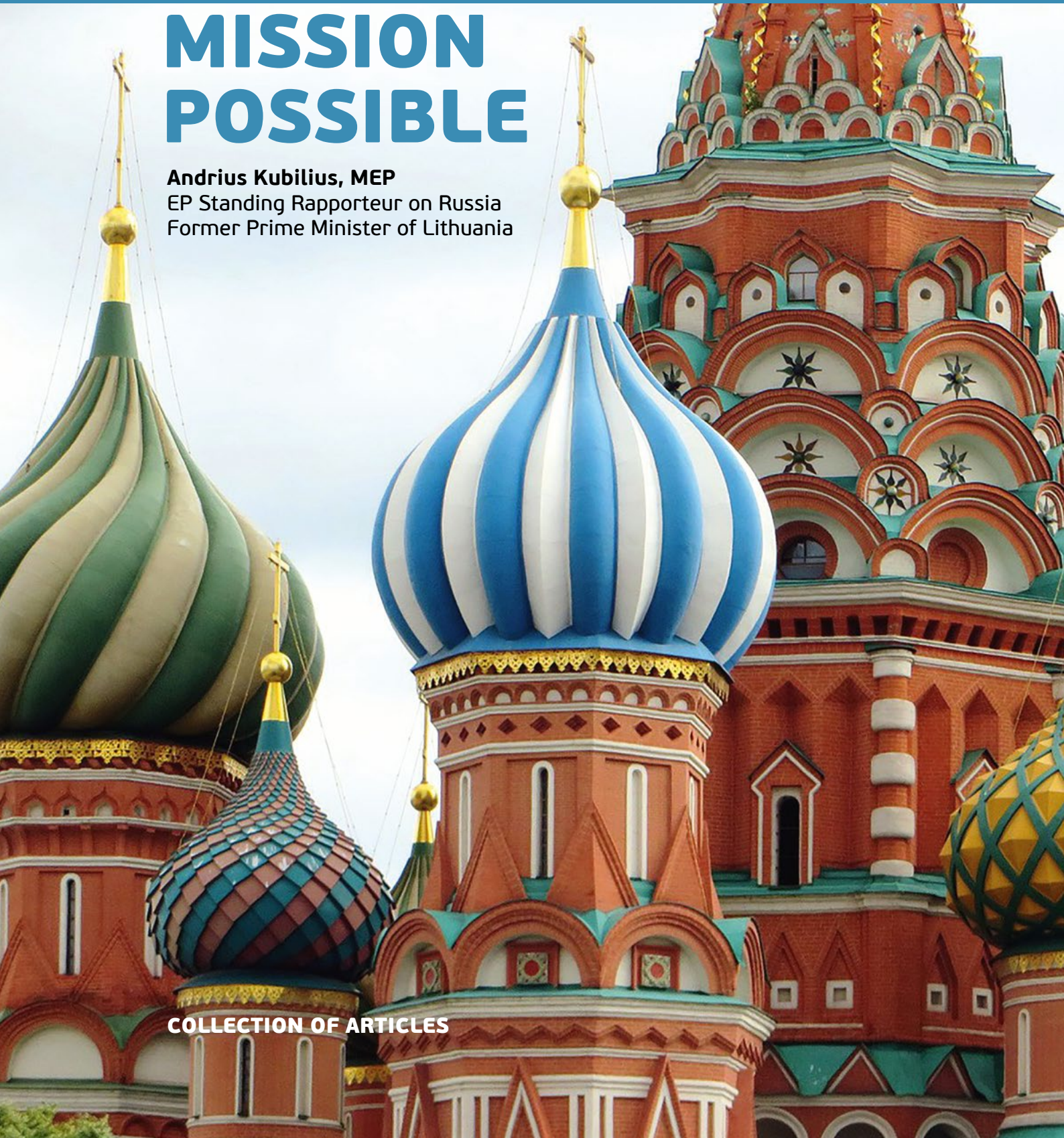


DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA:

MISSION POSSIBLE

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COLLECTION OF ARTICLES



Democracy in Russia: Mission Possible

Foreword

Dreams are moving the World forward!

The American Dream, since the very beginning of the American history, was a moving force for the American society. Ronald Reagan used to say that "America is too great for small dreams." One of his great dreams led to the collapse of "the Evil Empire".

On the European continent (at least those of us who come from "the new Europe"), we live with a very clear and big dream of "Europe: whole, free and at peace". This is a dream to live in the peaceful, stable and prosperous neighbourhood. We were fighting for that dream to become a reality since the very beginning of 1990s, when we were striving for our return to democracy and for our European integration.

Unfortunately, fulfilment of the dream of "Europe: whole, free and at peace" is still an unfinished business. Part of the former Soviet Union is still suffering deprived of freedom, democracy and human rights. Today Russia is the biggest victim of that unfinished business and the Kremlin regime is the biggest obstacle for that dream to come true.

The hybrid strategy of Putin towards the West was always based on attempts to convince the Western leaders that democracy is not suitable for Russia, which supposedly is a "special case", because it was always ruled by czars, general secretaries or authoritarian presidents.

Meanwhile in the West, there were and still are quite many of those who believe in this propaganda about Russia, and who repeat that democracy in Russia is impossible to achieve, and that the West should simply adapt to such a situation in the European continent. Such paradigm would mean that many people should abandon the dream of "Europe: whole, free and at peace".

The recent Revolution in Belarus is one of the very important factors, convincingly demonstrating to us that it is utterly false to believe democracy is not possible in Russia. On the contrary – it is just as possible in Russia as it is in Ukraine or Belarus.

Furthermore, Russia is undergoing some well-established historical processes, that make its democratic transformation unavoidable: a) erosion of people's loyalty towards autocratic and autarkic regime; b) erosion of post-imperial power of the Kremlin; c) the inevitable cyclic recurrence of historical waves of democratization.

Unexpected developments in Russia can start the same unpredictable way as with the recent surprise democratic revolution in Belarus. This conclusion is based not only on the abovementioned historical dynamics but also by recent developments in Russia and around it: the democratic revolution in Belarus, continuous public protests in Khabarovsk, democratic electoral victory of the pro-European presidential candidate Maia Sandu in Moldova, criminal attempts of the Kremlin to poison the opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and many other events.

That is the reason why the European Union must prepare itself to major transformation, which could begin evolving in its closest neighbourhood.

That was the main reason behind the adoption of the European Parliament September 17, 2020 Resolution “On the situation in Russia: the poisoning of Alexei Navalny”. In this Resolution, the European Parliament introduces a clear recommendation and demands EU institutions “with utmost urgency to launch a thorough and strategic reassessment of the EU’s relations with Russia”. European Parliament specifically decided “to call on the VP/HR to review EU policy vis-à-vis Russia and the five guiding principles for the EU’s relations with Russia and to develop a new comprehensive strategy, which will be conditional on further developments in the area of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights by the Russian leadership and authorities;” and also asked “the Council to immediately start preparations and adopt an EU strategy for future relations with a democratic Russia, including a broad offer of incentives and conditions to strengthen domestic tendencies towards freedom and democracy;”

Thus, the European Parliament has spoken out very clearly that future relations with Russia will depend not on ideas of “reset” or friendship with Putin or the Kremlin (which was the basic Western attitude towards Russia until now), but on democratic transformation of Russia itself. The European Parliament also stated that the EU should be ready to assist this transformation with “hard” policy instruments, such as sanctions for autocratic and kleptocratic suppression of democracy domestically or abroad by the Kremlin regime, as well as with “soft power” instruments, in the way of strengthening support for the development of Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (at least towards the “Trio of EaP”: Ukraine, Moldova, Sakartvelo) and preparing the “EU strategy for future relations with a democratic Russia”, thus showing to ordinary Russians what opportunities they are losing for the time being.

At least for the EU, no other long-term goal in the global democracy agenda is more important than the democratic transformation of Russia. That is why while conducting a strategic review of its own strategy towards Russia, the EU also needs to say clearly: “Democracy First!”.

This way our dream of “Europe: whole, free and at peace” can come true.

In Lithuania, we were having this dream for quite a long period of time. We were not only speaking loudly about that dream, but we were also writing about that dream, and we were permanently looking at how to build a coalition of those who want to make that dream come true.

For these reasons I took the initiative to establish an informal Forum of the Friends of European Russia in the European Parliament, where we among ourselves and with our friends from Russia can share and discuss numerous ideas on how to assist the democratic transformation in Russia.

Some of my ideas had appeared in the form of publications during the last years. They are presented in this compilation. I hope that those of you who will read at least some of them, will better understand what the European Union as well as the whole Western community can do in order to assist democratic transformation of Russia and in order to push the dream of “Europe: whole, free and at peace” closer to reality.

Democracy in Russia: mission is possible, - and it is also our responsibility!

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On Western Strategy towards Russia

Andrius Kubilius

Published in „Lithuania Tribune“, December 16, 2019

There are two lines of thinking among the politicians in the EU on relations with Russia. There have always been those who call for – maintaining, restarting, refreshing – a dialogue with the current leadership of Moscow. This line of thinking was predominant until Russia attacked Ukraine in 2014. But recently it was brought to spotlight again by President Macron.

Then there are those, who warn against such “dialogue” as counterproductive and outright dangerous, those who hear voices of the democratic opposition and younger generation of Russians who want a real choice in elections, who are tired of corruption and nepotism.

The main difference between these two approaches boils down to one thing – belief whether Russia can become more democratic, more European country, or is it doomed to authoritarianism forever.

Putin, with his aggressive and unpredictable behaviour, aims to convince the West that Russia even in a long term future, cannot become democratic, and the West needs to adapt to “Putin’s Russia”. President Macron recently showed that he does not believe in such transformation and he is ready to lead the West into adaptation towards “Putin Russia”.

In CEE we still keep the hope, and I believe that a transformation of Russia is possible in a long-run and even more, inevitable. And that the West can assist Russia in such transformation.

That is why we are saying clearly and loudly – it is time for the West to develop a policy towards Russia that is long-term and pro-active, to help Russia to return to the path of democratic European-type development. We should not have any illusions that such transformation may happen under Putin’s rule. Therefore, the EU’s strategy must, first and foremost, be geared towards assisting a post-Putin Russia to transform into a non-aggressive democratic country that follows European standards.

” The EU’s strategy must, first and foremost, be geared towards assisting a post-Putin Russia to transform into a non-aggressive democratic country that follows European standards. There should be three main elements of this new strategy – deterrence, containment and transformation.

There should be three main elements of this new strategy – deterrence, containment and transformation. The two first elements are more or less well known and implemented now.

A deterrence strategy has a clear objective of deterring Russia's military threat. Securing NATO military presence in the Baltic region is a vital instrument of the deterrence strategy. The US National Security Strategy identified Russia and China as major threats to US national security. It would be good if the EU were likewise capable of detecting the primary source of threat in its security strategy.

Sanction regime, which was introduced by the West as a reaction to Russia's aggression to Ukraine, must continue or even be strengthened until Russia fully implements the Minsk agreements and returns illegally annexed Crimea back to Ukraine.

A containment strategy is necessary for effectively countering Russia's hybrid threats by preventing it from influencing the sentiments of our citizens, occupying the hearts and minds of our people, and affecting the outcome of elections and activities of political parties in foreign countries. That is why the EU needs to have a consolidated and centralised holistic anti-hybrid containment strategy, including an energy independence strategy.

There is, however, a third element of the West long-term strategy towards Russia, which up until now was none existant. A strategy of transformation refers to our thinking about not only the ways to defend ourselves from Russian threats but also the means to assist Russia's transformation into a European country. The transformation will not happen overnight or even in a year or two. It is, however, necessary and doable. While the future of Russia is for Russians to determine, the West can help with that. This will nevertheless require an appropriate long-term Western strategy towards Russia.

The transformation of this kind is the only way to no longer be situated next to a threat we face today.

Two things can assist Russians in seeking a transformation of their country, namely:

1. a "success belt" along the Russian border to set an excellent example for Russians.
2. a clear message of the West to the people of Russia on how the future relations between the West and Russia could look like had Russia finally returned to the path of democratic pro-European development.

The underlying idea behind the transformation strategy is simple. Two things can assist Russians in seeking a transformation of their country, namely:

1. a "success belt" along the Russian border (including Ukraine, in particular) to set an excellent example for Russians. One should not underestimate the impact of Russia having successful, democratic, and market-oriented neighbours along its borders. If they can succeed, Russia can too. This is why "success belt" is the Western "weapon" posing the greatest danger to the Kremlin's regime and feared most by Putin. His strategic goal in Ukraine is to prevent the development of a prosperous state.

That is why the West should do their utmost to thwart Putin's strategy towards Ukraine. The success of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova is what the West can make happen, and it is currently the only instrument available for the West to help Russia transform into a pro-European country. Therefore, one of our current primary goals should be having a clear Western strategy on ways to build a 'success belt' along the Russian border (starting from Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova).

2. a clear message of the West to the people of Russia on how the future relations between the West and Russia could look like had Russia finally returned to the path of democratic

pro-European development. The West needs to change the interlocutor and the content in their dialogue with Russia. The dialogue with Putin is counterproductive and will be further regarded as a manifestation of Western weakness. Such signs provoke Putin into behaving even more aggressively. As considers strategic issues and Russia's future, instead of directly talking with Putin, the West must indirectly engage with a pro-European Russia of the future, which does not exist yet but may emerge after the end of Putin's era.

The West needs a strategy that would demonstrate the potential of relations with a post-imperial and non-aggressive Russia (which is going to happen one day!) by already presenting possible models of integration of a democratic Russia into the Western structures. This could include a broad spectrum of promising future relations, including, among others, a visa waiver, a customs union, and a free trade agreement with the EU. Finally, this would help ordinary Russians and the Russian elite unconnected with Putin's kleptocratic regime to understand what they are losing today because of the aggressive behaviour of the regime and what they would win with a pro-European Russia (after Putin) evolving in the long term.

All in all, this is how a Western strategy towards Russia could look like. To make it happen, the West should have more faith in Russia's capability to transform one day and embark on the path of democratic European development. Likewise, they should trust in their potential to assist Russia on this uneasy path of transformation through a long-term strategy of support and its consistent implementation.

This is where the EU's joint efforts should be currently focused on.

Lithuanian initiative: Western strategy towards Russia

Andrius Kubilius, Gediminas Kirkilas [*]

Towards a Pro-European Russia and a Marshall Plan for Russia (after Putin)

Lithuania is situated next to a complicated neighbourhood. Russia has been and will remain, for many years to come, the biggest threat to the geopolitical security of Lithuania.

Lithuania needs to have a long-term strategy for relations with Russia without having any illusion that in the near future Russia, under Putin's rule, may become a non-aggressive democratic state which abides by the European standards. This must be a very clear strategy, because efforts to pursue contacts or better relations between Putin's Russia and Lithuania are hopeless and even harmful. Lithuanian strategy for relations with Russia must, first and foremost, be geared towards efforts to influence a Western strategy on relations with Russia that would assist a post-Putin Russia in transforming into a non-aggressive democratic country that follows European standards.

Russia's becoming a European country is an inevitable historical process; however, it is one that will take a very long time. This also represents Lithuania's principal interest in geopolitical security. Furthermore, the process has to be a general objective of the Russian people and the whole Western world, including Lithuania, as this is the only way to guarantee peace and good relations between neighbours across the European continent.

These days, when we talk about Putin and Russia, the only positive message is that the West has started to gradually open their eyes. Following the nuclear threats made by Putin; the use of the chemical weapon *Novichok* in Britain; the chemical attack in Syria authorised by Bashar al-Assad, a friend of Putin; the ongoing flow of toxic lies and hybrid attacks against the largest Western countries; and the recent mockery made of the so-called democratic elections in Russia itself, the West have finally come to see what Lithuania observed well over a decade ago when looking at Putin's Russia.

” If neither we nor the West have no longer any illusion about Putin and the development path of Putin's Russia for the next decade, what strategy towards Russia needs to be followed by Lithuania and everybody else?

And here is the crucial question: if neither we nor the West have no longer any illusion about Putin and the development path of Putin's Russia for the next decade, what strategy towards Russia needs to be followed by Lithuania and everybody else?

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Our country on its own is unable to exert influence over Russia, but what we can do is influence Western policies towards Russia, provided that we know what kind of Western policy we want and seek. Until now, our vision of such a policy has been limited to continued Western sanctions and voicing of Lithuania's understandable defence need for NATO's enhanced capabilities in our region in order to deter Russia. After all, that was all that we asked the West when our discussions were focused on the aggressive Russia under Putin's rule.

Now we are beginning to understand that the two instruments alone are no longer sufficient. The deterrence strategy has to be complimented by a long-term Western strategy towards Russia, which would lead to a prospect of a pro-European Russia. We now have an opportunity and a responsibility to assist the West with designing and implementing a strategy of the kind.

Until now, the EU has unsuccessfully tried to work inside Russia with the Russian government or opposition or other participants in the Russian political system to support Russia's transformation. It is quite obvious that these European efforts will not help Russia in the future, too. So far, the Western policies with regard to Russia have not followed a clear and long-term strategy. Partnership for modernisation, various reset policies, support for the opposition and calls for democratic elections, efforts to maintain a dialogue in exchange for alleged common interests in Syria, North Korea or Iran – everything has been tested in the relations with Russia, but none of this has led to Russia becoming more democratic or pro-European. On the contrary, the position 'let's not provoke Russia', which has dominated the West for many years now, and a lenient approach towards Russia's aggressive behaviour with regard to its neighbours, such as events in Georgia in 2008, as well as its actions on a domestic scene, such as smashing the internal opposition in 2012, was what only encouraged Putin's regime to become more aggressive both internally and externally.

” The West needs a policy on Russia that is long-term, pro-active and based on a clear and overarching philosophy. The West had a similar approach during the Cold War when they pursued a long-term strategy of containing Russia.

It is time for the West to realise that a momentary, single-day or responsive policy towards the Kremlin's actions is no longer sufficient. The West needs a policy on Russia that is long-term, pro-active and based on a clear and overarching philosophy. The West had a similar approach during the Cold War when they pursued a long-term strategy of containing Russia. George Kennan, the famous US diplomat and analyst, gave a start to the strategy with his philosophical doctrine on Russia's containment explained in the Long Telegram in 1946. The doctrine was based on a deep analysis of Russia's domestic processes and the prevailing mentality of its society. This doctrine gave birth to the famous Truman Doctrine that shaped Western behaviour during the Cold War. The latter doctrine had consistently led to the 1947 Marshall Plan for Western Europe, which influenced the establishment of the European Union and NATO. That was how the West not only withstood the Stalinist and later Soviet plans to extend their influence over the whole of Western Europe and the rest of the world, but also managed to overcome one of its lasting tectonic conflicts on the European continent, which was the main cause of World War I and World War

II. The conflict relates to the disagreement of the early 20th century between Germany and France over dominance across the European continent and the inability to share power-wielding industrial resources of steel and coal in the Ruhr Region. This long-lasting tectonic conflict ended only when the Americans proposed the Marshall Plan for both parties and the whole of Western Europe, thus calling for a merger of the coal and steel industries thereby kick-starting the process of uniting all Western economies. This long-term strategic step guaranteed not only an end to the conflicts over the riches of the Ruhr Region, but also brought about a sustainable peace in Western Europe.

However, Europe and the West continue to struggle with the second tectonic conflict on the European continent. In the 20th century, this conflict contributed to bloodshed across vast European regions. As a result, a large share of the European continent has not yet been able to benefit from democracy, freedom and prosperity. This has been the tectonic conflict involving Russia and mainland Europe. In the period from the end of the war in 1945 until the beginning of 1990, the cause of the conflict was the Stalinist and expansionist policy of the Russian empire. After 1990, the causes of the conflict were the post-imperialistic sentiments that Russia found itself engulfed in. This gave rise to Putin's kleptocratic, autocratic and increasingly more aggressive regime.

Even though Russia is the cause of this tectonic conflict, it is up to the West to propose a long-term strategy to resolve it. The strategy must be of the same scale and of the same systematic nature as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan or the containment strategy towards the Soviet Russia were, given that the problem of Russia has been and will continue to be as big in the early 21st century as it was in the late 20th century. The changing nature of the problem requires new instruments to address it. However, the price of failure may be as high as it was during the Cold War.

Unfortunately, the West has not yet developed a long-term strategy of the kind to settle the conflict. Lithuania is the one who is interested the most in making sure that the West has such a strategy and implements it systematically, for Lithuania's geopolitical security depends on whether or not Russia becomes, in the long run, a pro-European, democratic and peaceful country.

We cannot just sit back and wait until someday the West comes up with a strategy (if any) vis-à-vis Russia. We should be more active ourselves in seeking it. We should go beyond mere requests to enhance NATO's battalions deployed here and should not limit ourselves to only defending the continuity of sanctions or traditionally speaking up for the Eastern Partnership and against the Nord Stream project. We need an ambitious and comprehensive Western strategy towards Russia and it is up to us to propose it instead of wasting our time for discussions on ways to improve our relations or contacts with Russia.

We are the ones who are the most interested in having good relations with Russia. However, we need changes in Russia rather than new contacts with it to enjoy those relations. The West could assist in bringing about the change. This, however, requires a long-term Western strategy towards Russia and we must become instrumental in helping the strategy see the daylight.

In order to have a strategy to offer to the West, we must, first and foremost, agree among ourselves on what kind of Western strategy we want.

Following four elements must be included in the Western strategy towards Russia:

- I. Putin's Russia as a strategic threat to, rather than a partner of, the European Union and NATO
- II. Strengthening of NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltic region and Western sanctions against Putin's Russia
- III. Joint efforts to counter the Kremlin's hybrid threats
- IV. Long-term Western efforts to help Russia transform into a European state: the Marshall Plan for Russia (after Putin)

We hereby propose the following four elements to be included in the Western strategy towards Russia, which are also crucial for Lithuania:

I. Putin's Russia as a strategic threat to, rather than a partner of, the European Union and NATO

The US Administration's National Security Strategy [1], published in 2018, identified Russia (and China) as a major threat to the US geopolitical security. This, however, does not prevent US President Donald Trump from declaring, from time to time, that he wants a dialogue with Putin while, at the same time, the US Administration is implementing a clear policy of containment vis-à-vis Russia. If the current Russia under Putin is considered to be a threat to the geopolitical security of the US, then it should be treated as an even bigger threat to the European Union. However, the European Union has not thus far determined Russia as a key threat to the EU's geopolitical security in any of its official documents on foreign and security policy [2]. Until this has been done, the EU institutions are treating Russia as a potential partner rather than a threat.

Lithuania has to make sure that the European Union follows the example set by the US and clearly identifies Russia as a threat to the geopolitical security of the European Union. Similarly, such references have to be included in NATO's documents as well.

II. Strengthening of NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltic region and Western sanctions against Putin's Russia

As long as Russia is ruled by Putin's post-imperial and kleptocratic regime, its aggression has to be offset by continued Western sanctions against Putin's regime and its supporters as well as by efficient military deterrence measures. Putin's regime may continue to exist for a long time. Putin himself may seek to remain in power until his physical health allows him to do so. Soviet times have shown that this situation can remain for yet another couple of decades. It is vain to hope that any current constitutional limitations may stop Putin from possible attempts at asserting his authority for life. In his most recent book *The Road to Unfreedom* [3], the famous Timothy Snyder provides a convincing analysis of and perspective on the fascist nature and structure of Putin's regime. Such regimes do not end per se. Likewise, it is hardly expected that the successors of this type of a regime will be capable of easily saying goodbye to their autocratic and fascist nature [4]. According to Snyder [3], Putin builds the philosophy of his regime on the works of the Russian philosopher, Ivan Ilyin, who migrated to the West after 1917 and promoted fascist ideas glorifying Mussolini and Hitler. Ilyin also described the ideal fascist regime intended for Russia that had just shaken off the legacy of Bolshevism. Now, Ilyin is glorified and cited by Putin as well as by the architect of his ideology, Vladislav Surkov.

Ilyin's concept of politics was pretty simple: the essence of politics is to choose the enemy and fight against it. The fascist regime needs regular elections only for the people to have a regular opportunity to express their loyalty to the Leader. These are exactly the features that characterise Putin's regime today.

Western politicians should conclusively reject an illusion, that aggressiveness of the Putin's regime can be tamed by proposing some attractive offer, for example, containing a deep and comprehensive trade agreement. Aggressive policies of the Kremlin can be contained only when Putin believes that the Western world is ready and capable to defend its interests and starts to "respect adversary" – therefore, a strong response of the West to hybrid threats posed by Russia, as well as effective sanctions targeting regime's corrupt connections and financial resources are necessary.

There is a strong likelihood that Putin's regime will be getting even more aggressive over the next decade. It cannot be ruled out that, in the long term, the Kremlin may be tempted to go for any military provocation in the Baltic region to check the will of NATO and, concurrently, the US to defend themselves.

In this context, Lithuania must continue its efforts to ensure that Putin's aggressiveness is offset by a tough policy of deterrence:

- Sanctions must not only be continued, but also tightened because of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and occupation of Crimea;
- Western democracies must adopt Magnitsky sanctions (against impunity for gross human rights violations, large-scale corruption and money laundering) and introduce restrictive measures against oligarchs, who are closely connected to Kremlin, and their businesses;
- NATO capabilities must be further strengthened in our region;
- Lithuania also needs to keep the momentum in strengthening and modernising its military capabilities.

III. Joint efforts to counter the Kremlin's hybrid threats

Lithuania needs to ensure that the EU and NATO develop new defence capabilities and implement new actions for strengthening self-defence in order to counter not only hard military threats but also less exposed and softer hybrid threats posed by Russia.

- Lithuania must spare no effort to make the EU and NATO build and strengthen joint anti-hybrid defence capabilities [5] in order to help national states to defend themselves against a wide range of the Kremlin's hybrid threats, including cyber and propaganda attacks; spread of fake-news; infusion of the Kremlin's dirty offshore money into our political systems; and influence through the national businesses having major economic interests in Russia and, all of a sudden, turning active and very successful in our national politics. Our experience shows [6] that our country or any other Western country on its own may find it difficult to deal with such threats. Therefore, a high premium should be placed on the development of NATO's joint anti-hybrid capabilities by utilising the existing intelligence capabilities held by the US and the UK as well as their institutional capacity to detect offshore money and attempts to inject it in national political systems. Lithuania must also have an effective anti-hybrid strategy and institutional capacity for its practical implementation.

- Lithuania must encourage the Western states to review the standards of the freedom of speech and the freedom of information to prevent the Kremlin from abusing them in order to spread disinformation, fake news, and propaganda. The propaganda instruments, like Russia Today and Sputnik, cannot be considered as the media, and they must be subject to clear and unambiguous restrictive regulations.
- Lithuania must urge the EU and NATO to take joint actions to prevent the investment of offshore money owned by the Kremlin or by the Russian oligarchs close to the Kremlin in the Western economies and political systems, including Lithuania's economy and political system. This requires new EU-wide transparency and anti-corruption standards and effective common instruments for the implementation of the former, as shown in a recent study conducted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of the United Kingdom [7].
- Lithuania has to categorically insist that the West, in particular the EU, should have a clear strategy for reducing the dependence on Russian energy resources. As long as Russia poses a threat to the European geopolitical security, increasing the dependence on Russian energy resources means an increasing threat to the European security. Lithuania needs to actively work towards the coalition of the EU Member States and the US which would strongly oppose Nord Stream 2 by highlighting the geopolitical nature of the project, since Nord Stream 2 would not only increase Europe's dependence on Russian energy, but also, by eliminating Russia's need for the gas transit through Ukraine, would open the door for Russia's massive military aggression against Ukraine.

IV. Long-term Western efforts to help Russia transform into a European state: the Marshall Plan for Russia (after Putin)

The most important strategic objective of Lithuania is to aim for a long-term Western strategy towards Russia. The strategy would not only help Lithuania today, tomorrow and over the next decade to defend itself against Putin's aggressiveness, but would also already today provide for the financial and political investment by the West into Russia's positive transformation into a pro-European country in the long term. Such a perspective of Russia is conceivable only after it abandons its penchant for aggression. Incidentally, the West can be effective in helping it happen.

- Lithuania must encourage the investment of Western political and financial resources into the 'success belt' along the Russian border, starting with support for the economic success of and European perspective for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. The Marshall Plan for Ukraine [8] is intended to pursue this strategy. Ukraine's success is needed not only for preventing the return of the imperial Russia to the Ukrainian land, but also for the successful pro-European Ukraine to pass its success story on to ordinary citizens of Russia. This is the Western weapon posing the greatest danger to the Kremlin's regime and feared most by Putin. Putin's strategic goal in Ukraine is to prevent the development of a successful state. Therefore, the West should do their utmost to thwart Putin's strategy towards Ukraine. Ukraine's success is what the West can make happen, and it is currently the only instrument for the West to help Russia change into a pro-European country. Therefore, the Marshall Plan for Ukraine (call it as you like) is the most important Western geopolitical instrument, which the West has to put into effect with its all political and financial might and which can help the West deal with the last tectonic challenge in the continental Europe.

Five to ten years later, when the Western Balkans become EU members, the prospect of EU membership for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova will have to become a geopolitical instrument that bears the same effect.

- Lithuania must ensure that the West changes the interlocutor and the content in their dialogue with Russia. The dialogue with Putin is counterproductive, as Putin is not going to change and any overzealous Western attempts to seek dialogue with him will be further regarded as manifestation of Western weakness. Any signs of Western weakness provoke Putin into behaving even more aggressively. As regards strategic issues and Russia's future, instead of directly talking with Putin, the West must engage with the Russia of the future, which does not exist yet but may emerge after the end of Putin's era. The West needs the strategy that would outline its potential relations with a post-imperial and non-aggressive Russia (which is going to happen one day!), the prospect of a pro-European Russia, and even possible models of integration of a pro-European Russia into the Western structures, as proposed by the renowned expert Andreas Umland [9]. This could include a wide spectrum of promising relations, including visa waiver, a customs union, and a free trade and association agreement with the EU. This would be a kind of a Marshall Plan for Russia, which could be even now publicised in the Western strategy on relations with Russia. This would help ordinary Russians and the Russian elite unconnected with Putin's kleptocratic regime to understand what they are losing today because of the aggressive behaviour of the regime and what they would win with a pro-European Russia (after Putin) evolving in the long term.

Western geopolitical conditions enabling the appearance of the strategy, implementation of the strategy, and conclusions

Lithuania is most interested in helping a pro-European Russia to be born because our geopolitical security is conditional on it. This is the interest that neither the French, nor Italians have. Even Germans do not term it as their geopolitical security interest.

Therefore, Lithuania's policy towards Russia must not focus on the question of how and why we need to strengthen contacts with the Russian government, because these are absolutely harmful initiatives in case of Putin's Russia. Rather, Lithuania's policy must centre exclusively on the question of how to help the West design and implement an appropriate Western strategy towards Russia with a long-term objective to assist Russia in becoming a pro-European country. The strategy needs to be very clear, i.e. it should outline sanctions and military and anti-hybrid deterrence against Putin's current aggressive and kleptocratic Russia, and in particular, the Kremlin's ruling regime, while offering the Marshall Plan for a pro-European Russia (after Putin).

This must be at the centre of our foreign policy.

The development of such a Western strategy towards Russia depends on several very important geopolitical conditions in the West.

First of all, such a strategy is unthinkable without the US leadership. Recently, increasing divisions between the US and Western Europe on the policy towards Iran, moving of embassies to Jerusalem, Nord Stream 2, and steel production and trade have become dangerous, because in the long term this may lead to irreversible tectonic changes in the relations between the US and Western Europe. Forced more often to assume responsibility for the security of the European

continent on its own, the EU may be tempted to overlook Russia's actions to allegedly avoid provoking its even greater aggressiveness. This would incite Russia to ever more unpredictable behaviour, which would be particularly dangerous for both the EU and the US.

Lithuania must make every effort to prevent the divide between the US and the EU from getting bigger in various areas. The continuing leadership of the US is of particular importance in ensuring the security of the European continent. Meanwhile, the Europeans, as NATO partners, must, in good faith, fulfil their commitment to spend 2 % of their GDP on defence.

On the other hand, it is no less important for the EU to continue its integration, increase its strength, develop its capacity to react more effectively, and play an important and responsible role in ensuring the geopolitical security primarily in the European continent. For that reason, the EU needs a strong partnership with the US as well as joint contribution of all EU Member States to the defence and border security. Similarly, the EU needs an efficient common energy strategy for reducing the dependence of its Member States on supplies from the countries posing a geopolitical threat to the EU. The EU must also frame an effective neighbourhood and enlargement policy geared, in particular, towards the Eastern neighbours, as this is the only way to progressively expand the area of stability, democracy and peace in the European continent. This Eastern neighbourhood policy necessitates immediate instruments, like the post-war Marshall Plan, for promoting economic development and reforms. This should be a common concern for both the EU and the G7. Later on, such a policy should naturally transform into a plan of the EU's enlargement towards the Eastern neighbourhood.

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Lithuania should take the lead in forming the coalition of supporters of the Western strategy towards Russia. The first natural partners could be our immediate neighbours -- the Scandinavian and Baltic countries. The United Kingdom, which has recently had something to say about Putin's Russia, and the neighbouring Poland could become the major pillars of the coalition in the near future. Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, which have been mostly affected by Russia's aggressive expansionist behaviour, could also actively join in.

However, for Lithuania to achieve the ambition of helping the appropriate Western strategy towards Russia to see the daylight, Lithuania itself, first of all, has to develop this ambition. This requires an overwhelming consensus among parliamentary parties, the Government and the President. Then, an intense implementation plan and concrete actions must follow, so that each delegation of Lithuanian politicians speaks about the strategy at meetings in the West and each arriving Western delegation is offered to join the coalition. We did the same with the Marshall Plan for Ukraine to make it start turning into a reality.

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When will a “Belarusian” democratic revolution take place in Russia?

Andrius Kubilius

Published in “Lithuania Tribune”, September 16, 2020 [*]

Regional elections were held in parts of Russia on Sunday (September 13). All of Russia has found itself between Khabarovsk in the Far East, with relentless protests throughout the summer, and Belarus, with a real people’s democratic Belarusian revolution.

The Kremlin was clearly on edge going into these elections – the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, who was focused on the “smart voting” project in these elections, as well as the fact that voting was extended to three days, allowing for various falsifications, are plain evidence of this.

We can only speculate on how this vote will end, but it is clear that the regional elections are only a prelude to next year’s Duma elections.

” Revolutionary changes in the post-Soviet authoritarian space can be born very suddenly, instantly spreading across the country, without any of the traditional features of 19th- or 20th-century revolutions – no parties, ideologies or clear-cut leaders are necessary.

After the Belarusian revolution, it also became clear that revolutionary changes in the post-Soviet authoritarian space can be born very suddenly, instantly spreading across the country, without any of the traditional features of 19th- or 20th-century revolutions – no parties, ideologies or clear-cut leaders are necessary. On-line revolutions are real people’s revolutions and they cannot be stopped by conventional methods of government force.

And what’s more, the beginnings of these revolutions are hard to spot for outside observers. Back in April, I personally didn’t believe that a revolution could happen in Belarus, but then I began feeling the winds of change and strayed into Belarusian independent websites, telegram channels and blogs, which, to my surprise, revealed the enormous scale of the intense independent thought and independent initiatives that had spread to all regions of Belarus. This fundamentally changed my understanding of the Belarusian public arena and very quickly helped me realise that the Lukashenko regime was standing on very fragile ground.

The same goes for Russia. To understand what is happening in Russia, you can’t just watch Kremlin television or read a few central opposition websites (Meduza or Ekho Moskvyy). Khabarovsk clearly proves that the regions in Russia have their own intense civic life, which we hardly see. And this, in our view, makes Russia similar to Belarus as we saw it in April, when most of us didn’t think and didn’t believe that a revolution like the one that took place on 9 August could take place in Belarus.

[*] <https://lithuaniatribune.com/when-will-a-belarusian-democratic-revolution-take-place-in-russia/>

All this allows us to ask a simple question today: when will a democratic revolution like the “Belarusian model” take place in Russia as well?

This question may seem too radical for many, and many might say that democracy is not possible at all in Russia because “Russia cannot be understood with the mind alone” and Russia has never been a democracy.

It is my conviction that all of these sceptical arguments are wiped away by the revolution in Belarus, because until this summer, the prospects for democracy in Belarus seemed much worse than in Russia. And what is happening in Belarus at the moment is clear evidence that the same thing could begin in Russia at any moment.

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I am convinced that this conclusion is based not on some real or perceived similarity between the Russian and Belarusian peoples, but on objective historical patterns, which are the root cause of the revolution in Belarus and which no atrocities of power can stop. The “circle of history” is merciless to all dictators, no matter how many thousands of army bayonets support them to the end.

I would like to single out three such historical patterns which determine the success of the revolution in Belarus today: a) the end of the “shelf life” of dictators in the post-Soviet space; b) the further slow collapse of the Soviet/Russian Empire as new territories keep escaping from the Kremlin’s sphere of influence; and c) the inevitability of the “fourth wave of democratisation”.

The same patterns also apply to Russia, which is why it is worth asking an objective and rational historical question: when will a “Belarusian” revolution be repeated in Russia, caused not by the West or other alleged enemies named by the Kremlin, but by the Russian people themselves and the three historical patterns that I mentioned?

It is therefore worth discussing these historical patterns in more detail, because only by getting to know them in greater depth will we be able to avoid getting lost in the daily life of the historical changes taking place in our neighbourhood.

I. THE END OF THE “SHELF LIFE” OF DICTATORS IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

I have written before that 20th century world history provides a wealth of clear evidence that authoritarian regimes, even surrounded by democracies, can survive and guarantee the loyalty of the people if they are able to guarantee the people continuous growth in terms of economic and social well-being. This has been the case with South East Asian authoritarian regimes in South Korea, Taiwan and even Singapore, which managed to function successfully enough and maintain the loyalty of the people for decades by implementing prudent policies of economic modernisation. This led to very rapid growth in the level of economic and social development of these countries. After Mao, the famous Deng Xiaoping brought about revolutionary changes in China, resulting in a rapid growth in prosperity in China to this day. This also guarantees the existing loyalty of the Chinese people to the authoritarian Chinese regime.

Both Lukashenko and Putin, in the early stages of their rule, could also expect the loyalty of the people, because after the revolutionary changes that took place in the 1990s, the authoritarian stability that they guaranteed to the people was associated with an increase in well-being. However, all that growth in the 2000s ended with the 2008-2012 global financial crisis, which neither the Belarusian nor the Russian economy has been able to recover from. Especially the Belarusian economy. Meanwhile, the authoritarian regimes themselves are unable to change, even though society itself has changed radically in both Belarus and Russia over the 20-26 years of their rule. Under these circumstances, the previously observed loyalty of the people to the authoritarian regimes is evaporating very quickly and radically. Changes in people’s well-being and self-consciousness come imperceptibly and very quickly. The need for change spills into the streets and is unstoppable, especially when people get a chance to see that they are the majority.

” When an authoritarian regime begins to see resistance not from a small opposition party exhausted from constant imprisonment, but from the streets of cities and towns, it means that the period of people’s loyalty to authoritarian rule is coming to an end.

When an authoritarian regime begins to see resistance not from a small opposition party exhausted from constant imprisonment, but from the streets of cities and towns, it means that the period of people’s loyalty to authoritarian rule is coming to an end. The “shelf life” of the regime expires along with it. This is what is happening in Belarus today. In Russia, it could begin tomorrow.

II. THE FURTHER SLOW COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET/RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Russia’s history over the centuries is characterised by one feature: despite all the interpretations of today’s Russian ideologues, Russia is a European state, undergoing the same changes as in the western part of the European continent, just much later. Feudalism and capitalism were late in coming to Russia for centuries, but ultimately came. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia was late in building an overseas colonial empire, but expanded the borders of its continental empire to the Baltic States, Poland, Ukraine and Central Asia. Throughout the 19th century, the Russian intelligentsia and elites tried to repeat the French Revolution in Russia as well, but it all just ended with the curse of Russia – the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917.

In Western Europe, colonial empires began to collapse immediately after World War II. It didn’t happen in one day and it wasn’t an easy process. Nostalgia for the imperial past clouded minds in both Britain and France. For France, the “farewell” to Colonial Algeria was so painful that in the mid-1950s, it began to threaten the fate of democracy in France. The turmoil and chaos in France itself was only stopped by the decisive action of General de Gaulle, who had returned to power, and his farewell to the imperial colonies.

Russia/the Soviet Union only began saying goodbye to its imperial past in the early 1990s. The collapse of the empire has always been painful for Moscow, and it definitely did not end with

the agreements signed in the Belovezha Forest at the end of 1991 on the legal dissolution of the Soviet Union. Despite this legal act, most of the former Soviet Union remained in Moscow's area of influence in one way or another. Only the Baltic States, thanks to their historical distinctiveness, were able to escape the empire at that time, both legally and in terms of political influence, even though the influence of the Soviet-era energy pipeline and power line empire has largely remained to this day.

After the Baltic States, the first to follow our example to liberate themselves from Moscow's influence once and for all were the people of Sakartvelo (Georgia) who, under the leadership of Mikheil Saakashvili, set down the path of liberation from the empire in 2003, only to pay the price of war with Russia in 2008, with Russia occupying the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the end.

In 2014, Maidan Ukraine took a similar path: after the people's revolution, Putin occupied Crimea and Donbass, but Ukraine made a decisive move from the status of a country under the influence of Moscow to a state that has irreversibly chosen a pro-Western orientation.

Even Armenia, still dependent on Russian security guarantees in the Karabakh conflict, went through a real people's revolution in 2018. Armenia is not changing its geopolitical orientations, but democracy in the post-Soviet space means one thing – the speed varies, but in such a country, Kremlin influence inevitably begins to diminish over time. And this is the kind of change where two consecutive processes only reinforce one another: the nostalgic imperial power of the Kremlin that is diminishing naturally and consistently over time is opening up more space for democratic processes in the former colonies of the empire, and the strengthening democracy is further decreasing the Kremlin's sphere of influence.

” The democratic revolution in Belarus is part of the same historical process – the old Russian/Soviet empire, based on imperial and autocratic methods of government, is slowly but inevitably losing its influence. Even in Belarus.

The democratic revolution in Belarus is part of the same historical process – the old Russian/Soviet empire, based on imperial and autocratic methods of government, is slowly but inevitably losing its influence. Even in Belarus. And the longer Putin supports Lukashenko, the faster this process of shrinking and alienating the Kremlin's influence will be.

Some people, remembering Ukraine's Maidan, are regretting the absence of European Union flags at the Belarusian demonstrations. The Belarusians themselves are loudly declaring that the Belarusian revolution is one of democracy, and not a geopolitical revolution. And this is a smart position for the Belarusians, since if they were to declare aspirations of a geopolitical revolution today, tomorrow Putin's tanks would be standing not only in Minsk, but in Grodno and Ashmyany as well.

However, the democratic Belarusian revolution in itself has enormous geopolitical significance – not only that the new democratic Belarus will be able to decide its geopolitical strategy itself in a democratic way rather than by the decisions of a single dictator, but more importantly, that democracy in Belarus and Ukraine will eventually inspire Russia's transformation into a

democratic state as well. And this will be the most important geopolitical transformation of this century in the entire European continent.

III. THE INEVITABLE “FOURTH WAVE OF DEMOCRATISATION”

In *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, the famous book that he published back in 1991, the renowned American academic analyst Samuel P. Huntington substantiated one clear historical pattern with clear arguments: in a global world, democracy spreads like ocean tides – in due course, a wave of democracy begins to surge throughout the world and floods more and more new countries with democratisation. However, democracy is not able to take root in all of the new countries flooded by the high tide of democratisation, so when low tide comes, some of the new democracies – especially those flooded for the first time – turn back to authoritarian rule and wait for a new wave of democratisation.

According to Huntington, the world experienced three waves of democratisation in the 20th century: the first began after World War I and lasted until the end of the 1920s; the second began after World War II and lasted until the 1960s; and the third began in the second half of the 1980s and lasted until the 2000s.

We, Lithuania and the whole of Central Europe, are also the products of this third wave. We were fortunate that the global wave of democracy that flooded us did not leave us with the low tide that followed. The process of European integration that began in the early 1990s also helped. In Russia, meanwhile, the low tide of democracy returned the country itself to Putin’s authoritarian rule in the 2000s. In Belarus, this low tide came even earlier. According to Huntington, this is the fate of states that have no previous experience with democracy – the first attempt at democracy in these countries is quite short.

However, Huntington’s popularisation of the three waves of democratisation theory, which is based on a number of concrete facts, including the history of change and transformation in our region over the past 30 years, also leads to a conclusion that supports another historical pattern and allows us to look optimistically at the future of democracy in our region: if the world experienced as many as three waves of democratisation in the 20th century that recurred approximately every 20 years, then it is now time to start preparing for the fourth wave of democratisation, since the third wave ended around 2000.

And this fourth wave, which is currently flooding Belarus, will inevitably flood the expanses of Russia as well. Such is the historical pattern.

It is completely wrong to think that democracy is not possible in Russia. It is just as possible in Russia as it is in Ukraine or Belarus. And we are not anything special – we were just fortunate that the third wave took root in our country, and we are not immune to the erosion of democracy either. The three historical patterns discussed in this text allow us to boldly and optimistically ask the question of when the processes we are seeing in Belarus today will begin in Russia.

This year we remembered the slogan *Zhyve Belarus!* (“Viva Belarus!”) and learned to chant it with the Belarusians united by the democratic revolution.

Now it is time to look into what slogan we will be chanting with the Russians when a “Belarusian” people’s democratic revolution begins in Russia in the coming years.

The end of post-Soviet autocracy?

Andrius Kubilius

Published in 15min.It, July 31, 2020

Belarus is roiling. The foundations of Lukashenko's regime are shaking – the people demand change.

In Russia's the Far East, Khabarovsk has seen protests gathering for a third weekend now, with ever more courageous calls for Putin's resignation.

The events in both Belarus and Khabarovsk can be interpreted in various ways. Some perceive the Kremlin's hand in Belarus, where the Kremlin supposedly looks to weaken the Lukashenko regime so that he would no longer resist the dismantling of Belarussian sovereignty. Others see in Khabarovsk a cunning plot by Putin to suppress a region, which votes against him.

However, in attempts to perceive the cunning ploys of the Kremlin and supposedly massively successful manoeuvres by Putin everywhere, we lose sight of something essential to them, which places Belarus and Khabarovsk into the same shelf of political development. It is a phenomenon that has surfaced after long decades of authoritarian rule and is truly dangerous to the Kremlin regime itself – a clear shift in the moods of the broader public. People are clearly stating that they are wary of authoritarianism and they want to change, both in Belarus and in Khabarovsk. They want to decide for themselves who to choose for their government and what path to walk down.

” People are clearly stating that they are wary of authoritarianism and they want to change, both in Belarus and in Khabarovsk. They want to decide for themselves who to choose for their government and what path to walk down.

Both Belarus and Khabarovsk are united in the same long time post-Soviet phenomenon – both Belarus and Russia are ruled by autocratic post-Soviet regimes. In Belarus – for 26 years now, while in Russia – for 20. Up to this year, these regimes managed to retain their legitimacy, suppressing the opposition with repressions, but at the same time retaining the resignation of most of society with such rule under the regime.

Today though, we see ever more indicators that the situation is beginning to change cardinally – we are seeing ever more people publicly and courageously expressing discontent with autocratic regimes and this is neither extinguished by repressions (in Belarus), nor a demonstrative avoidance by the government to apply any repressions (in Khabarovsk).

The question arises – why? What happened that we are able to watch such changes?

My answer is that it lies in the nature of the autocratic regimes themselves. Autocratic regimes can retain the people’s loyalty only if their rule continues to bring clear evidence of progress and the improvement of people’s lives. This was the case in South Korea and Taiwan up to 1990, it is the case in Singapore, it has been the case in China since the time of Deng Xiaoping, for a time this was the case in Putin’s Russia and Lukashenko’s Belarus.

Now, however, this is no longer the case in either Belarus or Russia. There is no more economic growth in the two countries and the young generations of Belarussians or Russians, who have seen nothing else than Putin or Lukashenko, are no longer convinced by Putin or Lukashenko’s arguments that life, before they entered power, was very difficult and that it was only they who improved it. Young Belarussians or Russians simply never saw it. They see that now life is not improving. And this has been ongoing for the past 5-10 years.

According to Valery Tsepkalo, over the past decade, Belarus’ GDP shrank from 60 to 58 billion US dollars and the average wage – from 500 to 450 dollars. There is no longer any improvement in people’s lives and there’s no more loyalty for the government among the people. Thus, all that remains is repressions and “bayonets”, but the government can’t sit “on bayonets” for long. North Korea, Cuba or Venezuela are probably none too inspiring as examples.

Lukashenko already “stole” from the Belarussians the elections that were supposed to be held on August 9: his main rivals (V.Babaryka and S.Tsikhanouski) are imprisoned, the key figures in their campaign teams have also been jailed, V.Tsepkalo has been forced to flee Belarus alongside his children, the electoral commissions and observers are filled with solely Lukashenko’s henchmen and on August 9, the regime will strive to also “steal” the people’s votes.

What is about to happen on August 9 can no longer be described as “elections.”

” Even Lukashenko cannot “steal” from common Belarussians the drive for change.

However, August 9 will be of particular importance to Belarus. And not only. Because even Lukashenko cannot “steal” from common Belarussians the drive for change. The more repressions, the more of this drive. On August 9, Belarus can regain what Lukashenko “stole” from it – the right to choose. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the hope for change in Belarus, has clearly formulated her main goal – upon winning the August 9 vote, she would release all political prisoners within half a year and would organise new free and democratic elections. This would return unto the Belarussian people what was “stolen” from them by the Lukashenko regime.

It is clear that Lukashenko, having “stolen” the opportunity for real elections from Belarussians, will conjure up for himself any number of votes he wants, appointing himself as president for yet another term. He will have protests chased down, he will imprison the discontent, but this will not regain the people’s loyalty for him.

Belarus is already different. With every day, the Belarussians’ own belief in this only grows stronger. Public disbelief that anything can be changed is rapidly being replaced by a broad

belief that everything can be changed. And the flow of such a river cannot be stopped. It is only a matter of time for when a change will actually happen – on August 9 or a little later.

This is the very worst possible signal for the Kremlin. Inherent public loyalty to post-Soviet autocrats is ending. Putin can write up any precepts he wants in the Constitution he had rewritten for himself to entrench his regime for good, but Khabarovsk's streets are filled with massive demonstrations calling for Putin's resignation. In September, most Russia's regions will be holding regional elections and after the "revolt" in Khabarovsk, Putin is in a hurry to have three-day voting approved in them so as to facilitate vote manipulation. Lukashenko can "steal" the elections from Belarussians, but three brave women are shaking Belarus' political skies and Lukashenko can only resort to intimidating the Belarussians that he will bring in the army.

” In 1985, no one believed that in five years, the Soviet Union will begin collapsing. In June 1988, most Lithuanians did not believe that the Sąjūdis can change anything. Disbelief very quickly, over the summer of 88, turned into universal belief. And changes happened in Lithuania. The Soviet Union collapsed.

In 1985, no one believed that in five years, the Soviet Union will begin collapsing. In June 1988, most Lithuanians did not believe that the Sąjūdis can change anything. Disbelief very quickly, over the summer of 88, turned into universal belief. And changes happened in Lithuania. The Soviet Union collapsed.

Now, many do not believe that any change can occur in Belarus. Three months ago, I too was among the unbelieving. Because I mistakenly thought that civic society in Belarus is weak and the regime is able to retain the loyalty of the broader society. Today, I am firmly convinced that the expiration date is nigh for the Belarussian regime. And this is the decision of Belarussian society. Efforts to prop up the regime are futile. And harmful. Harmful for Belarus, harmful for Lukashenko himself, harmful even for the Kremlin because the demands of Belarussian protesters, if they are not met on August 9, could quickly infect Russian society as well.

Truth be told, even if they are met, it could also infect Russian society...

This is a dilemma for post-Soviet autocratic regimes – when public loyalty is lost, any further actions by the regime only serve to harm it...

This is the beginning of the end for post-Soviet autocratic regimes. Both in Belarus and in Russia.

Belarus: A trap for the Kremlin?

Andrius Kubilius

Published by Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, August 12, 2020 [*]

Revolution is unfolding in Belarus. We just witnessed its first phase – Alyaksandr Lukashenka has been struck by a landslide defeat, with 60-80 percent of voters choosing Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Lukashenka is trying to steal this victory from Belarusians, so the revolution continues in the streets and with strikes. People are going to the streets to defend their victory.

Some views can be heard in Lithuania and elsewhere in the West, that this revolution is useful for the Kremlin, that it may even have been orchestrated by the Kremlin's secret service itself. Some believe that Lukashenka is the sole guarantor of the sovereignty of Belarus and that the alternative candidates are the Kremlin's project. This way, the Kremlin wanted to weaken Lukashenka and drive him to beg for the Kremlin's assistance, they say.

These are quite absurd conspiracy insinuations. The driving force of the Belarusian revolution is not one or another candidate, but the radical change within Belarusian society itself. A new civic nation has been born in Belarus. This civic nation is the true leader of the revolution, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is its symbol.

” A new civic nation has been born in Belarus. This civic nation is the true leader of the revolution, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is its symbol.

The unconscious, and totally wrong willingness to accept the continuation of Lukashenka's rule in Belarus reminds me of the Sajūdis era, more than 30 years ago. Back then some in the West would call on Lithuanians to “slow down” our pro-independence revolution, as it was harmful to Gorbachev. They would say to us ‘we have to preserve Gorbachev because he is the guarantor of perestroika, your revolution is damaging him’. It is only normal that we did not listen to such insinuations. It is good that today, Belarusians are not so keen either to listen to similar “advice”.

And now on to the main question – why, in my firm belief, is the Belarusian revolution nothing but a big headache and a nightmare for the Kremlin?

First, because the birth of the civic nation in Belarus is “contagious” for Russia. We see persistent protests in Khabarovsk, which are very similar to the ones in Belarus – without clear leadership or organisation, but still continuing. Important elections are approaching in Russia – regional elections this September and Duma elections next year. Vladimir Putin understands very well these processes in Belarus, and how they constitute a signal that the authoritarian regimes in the whole post-Soviet hemisphere are approaching their “expiry date”.

[*] <https://martenscentre.eu/blog/belarus-trap-kremlin>

Second, Putin must be aware that he is entrapped: he cannot support the revolution in Belarus (because a similar revolution may start in Russia), which is why he congratulates Lukashenka. However, Lukashenka is as toxic for Belarusians as Yanukovich was for Ukrainians in 2013. Back then, Putin supported Yanukovich, occupied Crimea and part of the Donbas, and became the No. 1 enemy of the Ukrainian nation ("Putin – chuilo"). He actually "helped" Ukrainians to unite and choose the Western path of development.

The same may happen to Putin with regard to Belarus – he cannot support the revolution, but by supporting Lukashenka he would alienate all those who voted against Lukashenka, making them eager to look for friendship elsewhere, not in Moscow.

Putin "helped" to consolidate the pro-Western Ukraine. Ukraine has finally left the post-imperial realm of the Kremlin with Putin's "help" in 2014. Now it's Belarus' turn.

It's a zugzwang for the Kremlin – whatever it does, it's bad: if it supports Lukashenka, it will alienate the Belarusian nation; if it supports the revolution in Belarus, a similar fate awaits in Russia.

Bad times for autocrats: in Minsk and in Moscow!

Zhyve Belarus!

A changed reality: the role of the EU and the US in the transformation of Ukraine and Russia

Andrius Kubilius

Published in: *European View* 14, 275–283 (2015) [*]

Abstract

The historical causes of Russia's conflict with Europe have not been settled and continue to threaten the stability of the Old Continent. As the last empire of Europe, Russia is undergoing a painful transformation and disintegration, leading to aggressive foreign policy measures. Previous Western attempts to democratise Russia have proven fruitless. Bearing this unsuccessful experience in mind, it seems that the most plausible option to ensure Russia's further development as a European democracy is to make Ukraine an economic, political and social success story—a role model for Russian society that will work as a catalyst for bottom-up democratic changes in the country. In order to help Russia transform in the long run, the West must first concentrate on helping Ukraine by providing the country with real military guarantees, sufficient economic support for the implementation of structural reforms and an adequate level of geopolitical engagement, including the prospect of EU membership.

Introduction

Europe has gone through paramount difficulties and tragedies throughout the twentieth century, dealing with two world wars, the Holocaust, the existence of gulags and tens of millions of deaths. After the end of the Cold War, Europe stepped into the twenty-first century with faith in its guarantees of peaceful prospects. Unfortunately, recent years have demonstrated that these guarantees are not as reliable as previously thought.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has engaged in another aggressive foreign policy adventure, this time in Ukraine. This has brought back the nightmares of the twentieth century, prompting experts to discuss the possibility of a Third World War (*Lucas 2015*) and to portray the prospect of a nuclear conflict as entirely likely (*Fisher 2015*). Intimidating as it may sound, this is the reality of the situation. The Western community cannot escape it by burying its head in the sand and shying away from openly responding to the pressing geopolitical questions at hand.

In this article I will briefly discuss the origins of the 'Russian problem' and its effects on the state's foreign policy, describe the phase of development that Russia is currently undergoing, and provide the readers with guidelines on the actions that the Western community should take in order to help both Ukraine and Russia move forward successfully on the European path.

A fundamental challenge for the US and the EU: the unresolved 'Russian problem'

The nightmares of the twentieth century were determined by two major factors. The first was comprised of two 'tectonic' conflicts: between Germany on one side and the rest of Europe on the

[*] <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-015-0364-4>

other, and between an imperial Russia (the Soviet Union) and Europe. The second factor was the enduring isolationist politics of the US, leading to its unwillingness to assume leadership, both in consolidating European efforts and in stabilising Europe while securing freedom and democracy.

After the Second World War, the US significantly altered its foreign policy course from isolationism to 'forced engagement' in world affairs in the face of the rising Communist threat. Together with other European leaders, the US managed to eliminate the principal causes of the 'German conflict' by establishing what later came to be known as the European Union and by implementing the Marshall Plan, thereby laying the foundations for a stable, peaceful, democratic and thriving Europe.

However, the reasons for Russia's conflict with Europe have not been removed to this day and it is these that are determining Russia's current behaviour and the ensuing threat it poses to the whole of Europe and the rest of the world. The main reason for this situation is the fact that Russia still cannot be regarded as a democratic European country. On the contrary, Russia may fairly be called the last empire of the Old Continent, and it is undergoing a painful process of disintegration and internal transformation.

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Russian history demonstrates that it has always been a typical feature of Russia to repeat, with considerable delay, what has previously—several decades or even centuries before—happened elsewhere in Europe. The only difference is that in Russia's case, it usually happens on a far more radical level. In this case, the British and French Empires were the last in Western Europe to collapse after the Second World War, while the Russian Empire did not start crumbling until as late as 1990—in a process that has still not finished.

What is currently happening?

Painting in broad strokes, I will try to provide a picture of what is currently happening on the eastern fringes of Europe. Then I will concentrate on what actions need to be taken on both sides of the Atlantic to mitigate this alarming situation.

First of all, what we are witnessing today is a continuation of the collapse of the Russian Empire, which began in 1990. The disintegration process took a new turn on the Maidan, and now Putin is doing what he can to stop the accelerated dismantlement of the remaining empire. He may be able to delay this inevitable historical process, spilling a lot of blood in the process, but it will continue to evolve regardless of his actions.

Second, my personal prediction is that Putin will stay in power as long as his physical condition allows him to. In the current circumstances, this could be the next 20 years. This means that Russian policies will continue on the same path and that the economic and social conditions in

the country will deteriorate further. And this, in turn, means that Putin will inevitably look for new opportunities to demonstrate aggressive behaviour in order to maintain his domestic popularity.

Third, so far, all Western attempts to stimulate democratic development in Russia from the outside have been unsuccessful and are bound to remain so during Putin's reign. The clearest example of this is probably the politically motivated murder of the well-known opposition figure Boris Nemtsov in February 2015, which symbolises the regime's increasing hold over the remaining democratic opposition.

Neither Germany's Eastern Policy, nor Washington's 'reset', engagement or appeasement policies; strategic partnership; or partnership for modernisation have brought about visible, positive changes in Russia. Continuing the same policies while Putin is still in power would be naïvely irresponsible. What is more, it would be criminally negligent to agree to Russia's demands to allow it to have zones of strategic interest with special rights to handle everything within them in the way it sees fit (*Buckley and Hille 2015*).

Fourth, bearing in mind all the previously unsuccessful attempts to effect change in Russia, the action most likely to positively influence developments there is the positive and successful development of Ukraine, along with opening up the possibility of the country integrating into the EU. In other words, the Western community's assistance in bringing about positive economic, political and social changes in Ukraine will also encourage similar developments in Russia in the longer term.

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Fifth, this is exactly why Putin is pursuing a long-term strategy of preventing Ukraine from reform, because a successful Ukraine poses the biggest threat to Putin's kleptocratic regime (*Dawisha 2014*). This strategy implies that the aggression in Eastern Ukraine is more about creating chaos and an economic and political crisis, and stimulating public dissatisfaction than about physically occupying new territories—Putin's primary goal is to create another 'frozen conflict' that would severely hinder Ukraine's ambitions, such as joining the EU.

Finally, the Western community must have its own long-term strategy to prevent Putin from successfully implementing his plans in Ukraine. That is why assisting Ukraine is of crucial importance for the whole Western world rather than just for Ukraine, as this is the best way in which, in the longer perspective, to stabilise Russia. And Russia will only become stable when it is transformed into a European country—in terms of its actions and principles, not just in terms of geography. Thus, the war in Ukraine is to be fought not only for the freedom of that country, but also for the sake of this kind of future in Russia and for the sake of ending the last 'tectonic' conflict between Russia and Europe.

Misinterpretations of Russia

The Western community has apparently forgotten the key lesson of the tragedies of the twentieth century: that aggressive rogue states are most provoked by a weak response to actions that breach international norms and agreements, rather than the opposite.

As the West watches Russia's aggression unfold in Ukraine, it is still having doubts about whether its response should be strong and unambiguous. Some of the larger EU capitals are afraid that a strong response might provoke even harsher Russian aggression. This is a misguided approach. A weak Western response, that allows Russia to draw red lines around its areas of interest as it pleases, is exactly what most encourages and continues to provoke Russia's aggressive behaviour.

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Politicians in some Western capitals also do not seem to understand the geopolitical importance of what is being dealt with in Ukraine. Both the US administration and the majority of European leaders still believe that it is only Ukraine's fate that is being decided. What many do not realise is that it is also Russia's future and path of further development that are being decided in Ukraine. The Western response is still reactive, responding to Russia's actions, rather than proactive, dictating the region's agenda.

What should we do?

At the moment, we need to show Putin that his military strategy to create chaos in Ukraine is no longer going to succeed. We immediately need to start using a much more precise political language when we are referring to the aggression in Ukraine. We should stop calling it 'the crisis in Ukraine' or 'the Ukrainian crisis'. Rather, we should call it precisely what it is: 'Putin's war'. We now are into the second decade of Putin's wars: first there was the war in Chechnya, then in Georgia and now in Ukraine.

If we start using such precise language, we will immediately face up to the reality, which is that Ukraine is defending itself against the entire military might of Russia. When Putin is facing a much weaker opponent, as Ukraine is today, he moves forward without hesitation. That is why we need to realise that the responsibility to stop Putin's aggression lies on the shoulders of the Western community.

'Gangster wars'

On this note, I would like to share some of my personal experience. In 2010, when I was serving as the prime minister of Lithuania, I had the chance to have an unofficial meeting with Putin, then prime minister of Russia. After the meeting I was left with the impression that Putin was the type of person I was used to encountering in my younger days. In Vilnius, where I grew up, we had a district around Red Army Avenue where young Russian-speaking gangsters loved to demonstrate that they were stronger than anybody else. Putin reminded me completely of those local young gangsters.

As youngsters, what we learned from our experience in Vilnius was quite clear: you could not negotiate with the guys from the local gangs. If you tried to negotiate with them, they would immediately perceive this as a sign of weakness, and they would make a move. The only effective tactics were to beat them back, call the local police or run away.

What Putin is doing in Ukraine is not special or new. When we give it a complicated name—‘hybrid warfare’—we are moving away from reality. And the reality is that Putin is fighting a ‘gangster war’ in which one will either need to fight back or call the police, or one will be beaten up, robbed or even murdered. What one cannot do is show weakness—by employing statements such as ‘there is no military solution’, or by trying to negotiate while being much weaker than the enemy. If Putin believes that Ukraine will not be assisted by the US administration providing the needed weapons or threatening stronger sanctions, then it will only be a matter of time before Putin moves on Mariupol, Kharkiv or Odesa.

That is why it is so important to demonstrate to Putin that he is no longer the stronger party in Ukraine. This is the responsibility of the whole Western community, not just President Poroshenko. Let us not run away from our responsibility to stop this ‘gangster war’. We have to make a simple choice, without removing the possibility of implementing a SWIFT banking ban on Russia or providing Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukrainian military forces, and make it clear to Putin without waiting for his next move.

Saving Ukraine

As noted above, Putin has a long-term strategy to prevent Ukraine from reforming, developing a prosperous economy and integrating into the EU, because Ukraine’s success in these areas would set a positive example for the Russian nation and would be very dangerous for the survival of the Kremlin’s regime. That is why it is so important to assist Ukraine, not only in defence matters but also in the implementation of the necessary reforms and the stabilisation of the economic situation.

Over the last several months, I have frequently visited Ukraine to advise the government on their reform agenda, based on my experience in Lithuania. From a political perspective, Ukraine is at the same point as the Baltic states were at the beginning of the 1990s. One could even joke that the real European-style reforms in our region only begin when the monuments of Lenin have been removed throughout the country, as happened in the Baltics in the early 1990s and as has started to happen in Ukraine since the events on the Maidan.

Ukraine is looking like a real post-revolutionary country, with a lot of young and well-educated professionals in the government and plenty of romantic idealism, but with a large deficit in political experience that is hindering political coordination between the different institutions and stakeholders.

Reforming Ukraine

Judging from my experience of reforms in Lithuania, I believe that suitable conditions exist in Ukraine for the effective implementation of an ambitious reform agenda. In order to push forward major structural change, two important factors need to be brought into play: there needs to be a good team of reformers (already present in the current government), and there needs to be a good level of crisis (of which there is too much).

The Ukrainians have already started pushing through major reforms. The government is currently abolishing the huge energy subsidies, which stood at a total of around 10 % of GDP when reforms in the sector started (*Aslund 2014*), and is also starting to implement crucial reforms in the management of state-owned enterprises. Both of these reforms will diminish the room for oligarchic corruption. In addition, police reforms are also taking place (in July 2015, at least in

Kyiv, modern police forces started operating on the streets), and an anti-corruption bureau and an office of the business ombudsman have been created in order to fight corruption in a more efficient way and increase the level of public trust in the state authorities and institutions.

Thus, the government in Ukraine is not only fighting Putin's war but is also implementing major structural reforms, which will form the foundations needed to transform Ukraine into a European-style democracy with an open economy.

However, there are a lot of problems concerning the implementation of these essential reforms. There is an evident lack of political experience, a shortage of skills in strategic political communication, a deficit of traditions of effective cooperation between the government and the parliament, and a scarcity of clear party structures inside the coalition. These factors are creating a lot of political chaos, which could very easily cause real political instability for the ruling coalition.

EU membership prospects

The Western community must assist Ukraine in implementing the ambitious reforms that it has decided to undertake. In the middle of the 1990s, when the Baltic states were undergoing similar reforms, our countries received effective assistance from the West, not only in the form of expert advice but, most importantly, in the form of a clear political promise of future membership of the EU and NATO if we implemented all the necessary reforms to transform ourselves into a European democracy with an operating market economy. This promise kept us on track, despite all the political mistakes we made.

What is now needed is a very clear political statement from the EU's leadership, declaring that Ukraine also has such membership prospects. We are all aware that this is not an easy task to achieve. We unfortunately missed a good opportunity during the 2015 Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga, mainly because of a lack of Western unity and leadership, combined with the enduring futile efforts to appease Russia.

Alongside the prospects of EU membership, Ukraine needs its own 'Marshall Plan', a true financial assistance plan. In the EU we are spending hundreds of billions of euros on rescuing Greece, while, in comparison, Ukraine looks like it has been abandoned, despite the fact that it is the ultimate front line against Russia's revived revanchism, which is threatening the future and stability of the whole European project, not just Ukraine.

In order to avoid requesting more taxpayers' money for this financial assistance, the EU could reallocate funds from its 2014–20 financial framework. During this period, the EU has agreed to use a total of around 1 trillion euros for various purposes; Lithuania alone will receive around 10 billion euros of that amount (*European Commission 2014*). If the member states of the EU could agree to reallocate just 3 % of the total funds for a new Marshall Plan for Ukraine, we could create a financial instrument worth 30 billion euros. In this scenario, Lithuania would still receive around 9.7 billion euros (instead of 10 billion euros). This would probably not be a tragic development for the countries of the EU and at the same time would constitute a reasonable and timely investment in the geopolitical security of the whole of the EU.

Therefore, in my view, based on our experience in Lithuania, Ukraine can still become a successful country with a European democracy and an effective market economy. Ukrainians need to believe that they can achieve this goal. Likewise, we need to do our part and the Ukrainians want to see proof that we will deliver. So, let us do what we need to do.

Action plan

All in all, this is what the West needs to do in order to enhance the security of Ukraine and Europe as a whole:

- we need to show Putin that from a military point of view, he is no longer the stronger party in Ukraine;
- we need to use our expertise to assist Ukraine with the implementation of structural reforms;
- we need to offer a clear promise concerning Ukraine's future prospects for EU membership; and
- we need to create a special 'Marshall Plan' for Ukraine to ensure sufficient funding.

Evidently, this agenda is not a very large one: it contains only four general actions that the Western community must execute if it is to stay united in the face of the new threats of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

We have the opportunity not only to transform Ukraine into a European country, but also to create the conditions for the development of a European-style Russia and to offer a positive example for the other countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. The Europeanisation of Russia begins with success in Ukraine. Together we can deliver such a success. But this will require organic leadership from the US and the EU to assist Ukraine and, at the same time, to help Russia in the longer term, which should be regarded as the fundamental geopolitical challenge of the early twenty-first century. There is no better way to ensure that Russia becomes a European-style democracy in the long term than by assisting Ukraine today.

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