

## A b s t r a c t s

Lilia Shevtsova  
Guaranteed without Guarantees  
Russia under Putin

Russia's political development is following a logic that is as paradoxical as it is frightening. That the ruling class is interested in the stabilisation of the existing order is self-evident. This order, however, can only be consolidated so long as it remains motion. Its essence lies in uncertainty. The ruling clique is working vigorously on creating state that not only poses an enormous danger to Russian society but one that could go out of control. And there is no political force able to prevent Russia from sliding into social disintegration or dictatorship.

Boris Dubin  
Simulated Power, Ceremonial Politics  
Elements of Political Culture in Russia

Since the start of the Putin era, the state media in Russia has been staging political ceremonies, simulating the existence of powerful leaders and outlining threatening scenarios. These kinds of symbolic political productions are supposed to mobilise solidarity and forge the nation. But it cannot hide the fact that the men at the pinnacle of the Russian state are weak and irresponsible, that the elite is either officious or paralysed and that the population is petrified by fear.

Azär Babayev  
A Failed Test of Democracy  
Azerbaijan's 2005 Parliamentary Election

After the democratic departures in Georgia and Ukraine, Azerbaijan's opposition linked the November 2005 parliamentary election in its republic to the hope that something similar to what happened in Tbilisi and Kiev could take place in Baku. The election was seen by observers as the greatest chance for democracy in Azerbaijan as well as the last chance for years to come. But all those involved failed the democracy test: the voters, the political elite and even the West, which gave priority to stability over democracy.

Norbert Baas  
Building Trust, Creating Stability  
The UN and the Resolution of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict

The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict left deep wounds in Georgia and in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. The international community never recognised Abkhazia's efforts to secede and remains committed to Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty in its recognised borders. A resolution to the conflict is being worked on under the auspices of the United Nations. In the forefront of negotiations stand confidence building and the return of Georgian refugees and expellees to Abkhazia, above all to the Gali District. Only when efforts here have met with success will the question of a political solution, including Abkhazia's status, be raised.

**Karin Bachmann**  
**“Reform Tiger” Slovakia**  
**A Model for Other States?**

Slovakia's image abroad has undergone rapid transformation in recent years. This young east-central European state, considered “socially unacceptable” by the international community until Slovak voters turned out the Mečiar government in 1998, is today seen as an exemplary model of reform enthusiasm. Above all, the introduction of a uniform tax rate of 19 percent produces admiration. This reform, however, stems from very specific structural preconditions and is threatened by political instability.

**Ulrich Hofmeister**  
**The Soviet Union as Colonial Power**  
**Looking Back on the Case of Uzibekistan**

Was the Soviet Union a colonial power? The example of Uzbekistan shows that all of the characteristics of colonialism apply to Soviet rule in Central Asia. Substantial differences in the Soviet Union's practice of colonialism from that of West European colonial powers are explained by Moscow's unrelenting determination to integrate Uzbekistan into the greater Soviet state. In the long term, those efforts failed, and the Central Asian republics also chose to go down the road of decolonisation.

**José M. Faraldo**  
**Ad marginem: Historical East European Studies in Spain**

In Spain, East European Studies has always had a touch of the exotic. Having anything to do with Eastern Europe was always left to the margins. Under Franco, it was obstructed for political reasons. As a result, Spain lacks the kind of interdisciplinary academic tradition in the field as exists in Germany. In the meantime, however, Spanish research into nationalism, dictatorships and transformation is making substantial contributions, and interest in Europe's east is growing through comparative studies.

**Petra Huber**  
**Traitor or Mediator?**  
**Yosif Brodskii / Joseph Brodsky as Cultural Double Agent**

The poet and translator Yosif Brodskii left the Soviet Union in 1972 and was “born again” as poet, essayist and university lecturer in the United States. There, he continued to compose his poems mostly in Russian, but for his essays, Brodsky made the switch to his adopted English tongue. Two texts of different genres – between each of which lies almost all of Brodsky's time in exile – reveal Brodsky as a distinct kind of traveller of borderlands, one who moved between cultures, languages and genres. Common to both texts is the theme of the writer as spy and potential traitor to his own culture.

**Karlheinz Kasper**  
**“Wagging with Models of the Universe...”**  
**Russian Literature in German Translation in 2005**

In 2005, German translators again performed extraordinary achievements in translating classic and contemporary works by Russian writers. Ganna-Maria Braungardt, Annelore Nitschke, Alexander Nitzberg, Andreas Tretner, Dorothea Trottenberg and Birgit Veit deserve mentioned alongside Peter Urban. Particularly valuable works were also again on offer from small publishing houses such as Dörlemann, Engeler, Kein & Aber, Pano, Persona and the journal Schreibheft. And the number of translated thrillers also remained conspicuously high.