

# A b s t r a c t s

## **Fragments of Power Elections in Poland and Romania**

### **“No Deals with a Cannibal”**

#### **Natal'ia Dulina on Political Prisoners in Belarus**

Natal'ia Dulina was a lecturer of Italian at Minsk's University of Linguistics. When hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets following the fraud in the August 2020 presidential elections, she also participated in the protests and a strike by university professors. As a result, she was initially dismissed from the university and later sentenced to several 14-day periods of arrest. In October 2022, she was arrested and six months later sentenced to three and a half years of imprisonment in a camp for supporting an extremist organization. Her offense: She had given an interview to the radio station Euroradio, which was declared an extremist organization two weeks after the interview. On June 21, 2025, she was taken to Lithuania by the Belarusian authorities along with twelve other political prisoners. In the interview, she talks about the reasons for her protest, the unlawful conditions of detention, the circumstances of her release, which for her was tantamount to deportation – and about her encounter with Maria Kolesnikova.

### **Human Rights in Belarus**

#### **A Report by the Civil Rights Organization Viasna, June 2025**

The human rights situation in Belarus remains catastrophic. Even five years after the 2020 protests, participants in the demonstrations are still being persecuted, as are participants in new protest initiatives, dissidents, journalists, civil rights activists, and lawyers. The authorities are concealing the extent of the repression. However, the Human Rights Centre Viasna regularly receives information about arrests and other forms of politically motivated state persecution.

## **Matters of Power in Poland and Romania**

**Reinhold Vetter**

**Continuation of Polarisation**

**Poland after the Presidential Election**

Karol Nawrocki's narrow victory over Rafał Trzaskowski in the presidential election shows how polarized Poland is. Nawrocki has no knowledge of domestic or foreign policy. But he is a master of populist simplification of complex issues. After the election, Prime Minister Donald Tusk managed to stabilize his heterogeneous coalition government, which consists of the Civic Platform, the alliance Third Way, and the Left, by means of a vote of confidence. But Nawrocki will try to use his strong constitutional position as president to bring down the government and pave the way for the PiS to return to power.

**Paweł Marczewski**

**Rollback or a New Beginning**

**Poland's 2025 Presidential Election**

Before the 2025 presidential election in Poland, Rafał Trzaskowski, the candidate of the liberal Civic Coalition, had long been ahead in the polls. In the run-off election, he then lost to PiS candidate Karol Nawrocki. The mood in society was marked by weariness with the ongoing conflict between the political camps and a longing for a new beginning. Everyday issues such as health care reform, which was considered urgent, did not play a major role in the election campaign. Instead, security issues such as attitudes toward the war in Ukraine and migration dominated.

**Piotr Buras**

**Poland's Foreign Policy under Tusk**

**Reorientation and Domestic Political Constraints**

For a long time, Poland's foreign policy was based on two premises: the transatlantic partnership is unshakeable. And the EU, the United States, and NATO guarantee prosperity, democracy, and security. The about-face in US policy under President Trump with regard to Europe, Ukraine, and the global order has shaken these premises. They are coming under pressure at a time when Poland's security is acutely threatened by Russia. Foreign policy is in a state of flux. Poland must redefine its relationship with America, Europe's role in se-

curity policy, and its stance on Ukraine. The broad consensus on Ukraine policy is eroding. And the victory of PiS candidate Karol Nawrocki in the presidential elections heralds a difficult cohabitation with the Tusk government. Foreign policy is likely to become a contested area.

**Marta Bucholc & Maciej Komornik**

**Banana Peels in a Minefield**

**On the Reconstruction of the Rule of Law in Poland**

During its term in power from 2015 to 2023, the PiS broke with the principles of liberal democracy and the separation of powers and distorted the rule of law in Poland. Restoring the rule of law was the most important goal of the current government under Donald Tusk. Its record is sobering. The PiS has left behind a minefield that is almost impossible to defuse. The illiberal order is proving more resilient than expected. After the 2025 presidential elections, in which PiS candidate Karol Nawrocki emerged as the winner, the situation will not become any easier. Poland offers a lesson for Europe that shows how difficult it is to overcome the legal, institutional, and normative devastation of illiberal rule.

**Kai-Olaf Lang**

**Political Quake**

**Presidential Elections in Romania**

In Romania, the candidate of the liberal camp prevailed in the presidential elections. A strong voter mobilization in the second round prevented a victory for the right-wing nationalist George Simion. But after the annulment of the first round of voting in November 2024, all of the country's political institutions have been damaged. The mood is heated, expectations are high, the economic situation is poor, and the political options for the upcoming formation of a new government are all precarious. In addition, the geopolitical environment is having an impact on domestic politics. Disruptive fire is coming from the United States, which is so important for Romania.

**Oliver Jens Schmitt**

**Fatal Traditions**

**Radical Right-Wing Thinking in Romania**

In the Romanian presidential election in May 2025, right-wing extremist George Simion received almost half of the votes. This is not surprising. For anti-Western, xenophobic, anti-liberal, and authoritarian traits are firmly anchored in Romania's history and political culture. One peculiarity of Romania is

its intertwining of fascist legionarism and national communism. These form the ideological basis of today's ultra-nationalism, for which Simion stands. Ultra-nationalism does not operate on the fringe, but at the heart of society and is supported by the judiciary, the army, the secret services, and the Academy of Sciences. Parts of the Romanian Orthodox Church fuel anti-Western, anti-liberal ultra-nationalism.

**Daniela-Maria Mariş**  
**From the Periphery to the Centre**  
**Romanian Foreign Policy in Transition**

The election of Nicușor Dan as president of Romania in May 2025 is also significant in terms of foreign policy. For in Romania, the president has significant powers in the areas of security and foreign policy. The country's anchoring in the EU and NATO seemed to be in jeopardy due to the possible election victory of the far-right candidates Călin Georgescu and George Simion, both of whom were known for their anti-EU and pro-Russia positions. Now, continuity seems to prevail in foreign policy. This is all the more important as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has significantly strengthened Romania's weight in European security policy. Alongside Poland, Romania is an important location for supporting Ukraine, a platform for Ukrainian foreign trade in times of war, an energy hub, and a catalyst for European integration in Southeast Europe.

**Laurențiu Pleșca**  
**Romania and Moldova**  
**Analysis of a Relationship**

Romania and Moldova share a special relationship. They are linguistically and culturally closely linked and once belonged to the same predecessor state. Since the 1990s, there have been political forces on both sides advocating unification. But they are weak. Bucharest and Chișinău agree that the integration of a sovereign Moldova into the EU would be the best option for overcoming the border's dividing character. But the road to Brussels is long. Moldovan society is divided in its foreign policy orientation between Moscow and Brussels. The longer Russia wages war against Ukraine and the more the people of Moldova feel threatened by Russia, the more momentum the idea of unification could gain.

## **Matters of Power in Russia**

**Irina Rastorgueva**

**Cannon Fodder for the Homeland**

**Russian Pedagogy in the Service of War**

Since the beginning of the war of aggression against Ukraine, a massive militarization of childhood and youth has taken place in Russia. Spending on a propaganda promoting national pride has exploded. Kindergartens and schools impart knowledge about combat and war. Heroes die for the Fatherland. In the tradition of the Pioneers, the Movement of the First now indoctrinates children outside of school as well. The combination of military education and lessons in “patriotism”, extracurricular events, and militarised summer camps serves the purpose of moulding children and young people into ideologically trained soldiers who, upon graduation, are ready for war. A generation of cannon fodder is in the making.

**Zaur Gasimov**

**Soft Power, Hard Power, and Nuclear Power**

**Russia in Egypt**

Russia is paying increasing attention to Egypt, building on Soviet-Egyptian relations. Since the end of 2024, when Moscow lost its long-time ally Syria, Egypt has been gaining in importance as a in the Middle East. Relations are flourishing in culture, education, and science. Cairo has become a base for Russia’s foreign media to spread Moscow’s perspective on the world. But regardless of the fact that Rosatom is building its largest nuclear power plant outside Russia in Egypt, the economic and political substance of the relationship remains limited.

**Nikolay Mitrokhin**

**Russia’s War against Ukraine**

**Weekly Reports for June–July 2025**

Russia continues its war against Ukraine unabated. Renewed negotiations remain fruitless. Russia’s demands are unacceptable to Ukraine. Occupation forces are slowly advancing on several fronts in eastern Ukraine. The air war waged by both sides to weaken the opponent’s economic and military potential also continues.