

A b s t r a c t s

Phenomena of Fear II Tyranny and Its Consequences

“Everyone Has Grown Accustomed to the Fear”

Svetlana Aleksievich on Dictatorship and Violence in Belarus

Nobel Prize Laureate Svetlana Alexievich looks back at the non-violent revolution in Belarus in the summer of 2020 and the brutal repression on the part of the Lukashenko dictatorship. Today, fear reigns in Belarus. Aleksievich offers a glimpse into her creative process as she works on her new book, *Waiting for the New Barbarians*. In it, she gives a voice to those who paid a high price for their participation in the protests and became victims of physical and psychological violence.

Steffen Kailitz

Lev Gudkov’s Grammar of Fear

Repression, Atomisation, and Rule under Putinism

In his reflections on collective fear in Russia, Russian sociologist Lev Gudkov explores the question of how people respond to external coercion. His “grammar of fear” links three steps: People anticipate state sanctions. They react by deeming fewer and fewer things sayable. Consequently, they fail to recognise potential allies for dissent, criticism, and collective action and thus face a coordination problem. Gudkov’s analysis contributes to the theory of social atomisation: repression stabilises rule not merely through the threat of sanctions, but also through uncertainty regarding the willingness of others to act.

“Fear is the Principle of Tyranny”

Helmut König on Lev Gudkov’s “Theory of Fear”

Political scientist Helmut König examines the Putin regime through the lens of Montesquieu. According to Montesquieu’s classification of forms of government, Russia’s political order constitutes a tyranny. Its fundamental operating principle is fear. However, König expresses reservations regarding Lev Gudkov’s “theory of collective fear,” arguing that fear in present-day Russia does not stem from a revival of traumatic experiences from the Stalin era. He maintains that the inter-generational transmission of fear cannot be empirically demonstrated. The

protests in Russia during the winter of 2011-2012 and protests against the Lukashenko dictatorship in Belarus in the summer of 2020 ultimately failed. Yet, for König, they demonstrated that any individual can overcome their fear when something new emerges in the relations between people.

Judith Eckert, Kai-Olaf Maiwald

Measuring Anxiety

A Hermeneutic Analysis of Structures of Meaning in Survey Instruments

Anxiety has emerged as a central concept in diagnoses of society. This raises the question of the empirical basis for such diagnoses. Standardised surveys regarding the sense of insecurity are considered particularly significant in this context. A hermeneutic analysis of three survey items addressing anxiety or insecurity suggests that the relevant surveys generate elevated anxiety scores, thereby playing a role in producing the very evidence they aim to measure.

Anne Hartmann

Fear as a Driving Force and Blockade

German “Cultural Cadres” in the Grip of Stalinism

In the Stalinist Soviet Union, fear was the defining emotional state – even among the German “cultural cadres,” KPD members from the cultural sphere who had sought refuge from the National Socialists in the “Fatherland of the Working People.” They had expected the fulfillment of communist promises there, yet reality proved otherwise. Fear, employed as a technique of rule, shaped their behavior, oscillating between submission and idealisation, aggression and fascination. Absolute party discipline was intended to safeguard against any challenges to or doubts about the communist ideal.

Irina Rastorgueva

Dictatorship and Fear

Metastases of Violence in Putin’s Russia

The war in Ukraine is also acting as a catalyst for violence within Russia. Private and state institutions are raising children and adolescents to be fearful and obedient; the dictatorship requires patriots willing to make sacrifices. The war is also altering the moral and social economy of violence. Traumatized veterans are effectively granted the right to commit domestic violence. Violence is becoming a social norm, accompanied by a normalisation of fear. People grow accustomed to fear, internalise it, and keep it within the family. The diffuse origins of this fear breed fatalism and passivity, paralysing the capacity for social action.

Monica Rüthers
Global City and Authoritarian Urbanism
Moscow in the Focus of Urban Studies

Moscow's urban development since 1991 initially reflected the transition from the center of world communism to an internationally competitive metropolis within globalised capitalism. In terms of functional differentiation and socio-spatial structure, Moscow resembled global cities such as New York and London. Yet under the aegis of Mayor Sergei Sobianin, who enjoys close ties with the Kremlin, these apparent similarities have taken on a different quality: urban development and city life in Moscow have become a resource for power, serving to legitimise authoritarian rule.

Nikolay Mitrokhin
Russia's War against Ukraine
July 2026 to September 2026

Ukraine has its back to the wall. In a massively expanded air war, it is inflicting heavy damage on Russia. However, its own losses are disproportionately higher. By means of drones, rockets, and cruise missiles, Russia is destroying the country's economic foundations. On the front, occupation forces continue to advance along a few sectors, very slowly and at a high price in casualties. In the Kupians'k area, the Ukrainian Army has recaptured a significant amount of territory.

Nino Doborjginidze, Giga Zedania
Administrative Strangulation
Academic Freedom in Georgia and European Responsibility

A restructuring of the higher education system is underway in Georgia. The government cites reasons of efficiency and talks of better preparing students for the labor market and fostering regional development. A closer look reveals that it is all about something else: the number of college admissions is being reduced, degree programs redistributed, revenue sources dried up, organisational structures fragmented, and international cooperation hindered. It amounts to administrative strangulation. The very existence of Georgia's most important university is under threat, and all of the other universities are to be stripped of their autonomy. Countering this is a European task. The EU, member state governments, research funding organisations, and university networks – all bear this responsibility.

Vakhtang Partsvania**War Profits****Georgia's Economic Relations with Russia**

Georgia's economy has developed dynamically since 2022. GDP has grown strongly, and wages have risen significantly. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on the aggressor have turned Georgia into a hub for economic relations with Russia. Tbilisi does not participate in the sanctions, while some companies deliberately circumvent them. This business model is driving Georgia into dependence on Russia and hindering the development of an economy based on genuine value creation. If the EU adopts more rigorous sanctions against Russia, this model will collapse.