

Best of the *Geopolitics* Archive: Ukraine trapped between two geopolitical grammars?
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#Euromaidan one year one

On the night of 21 November 2013 a large group of Ukrainians gathered on Maidan square (literally the independence square)² in Kiev to demand closer European integration after the Ukrainian government decided to suspend the preparations for signing the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. This was the beginning of a long series of protests known as #Euromaidan - after the hashtag used by the opposition on twitter to call citizens to come to demonstrate. These protests developed into severe clashes with the police and into a national and international conflict. Both Russia (i.e. the Russian President Vladimir Putin) and the European Union (represented by Radosław Sikorski, Laurent Fabius and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the foreign minister ministers of Poland, France, and Germany respectively) contributed to negotiations for a compromise. The protests eventually evolved into the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution, the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich and his government and the restoration of the pre-2010 Constitution in February 2014.

Oleksandr Turchynov, the leader of the Fatherland party after Yulia Tymoshenko (former prime minister, then in prison), was elected Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament and acting President and Prime Minister of Ukraine. The Turchynov government was accepted by the United States and the European Union, but not by Russia that stressed that it originated in a coup d'état. Boosted by the almost immediate revocation of linguistic rights for Russian speakers, protests against the new government grew in the South and the East of the country, resulting in its disintegration. After a hasty referendum, the Parliament of Crimea (a peninsula the Soviet leader party leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred in 1954 from the Soviet Socialist Republic Russia to SSR Ukraine, to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the unification of Ukraine to Muscovy) declared its independence and applied to join the Russian Federation (the successor state of the SSR Russia). This has been recognized so far only by Russia, Syria, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Afghanistan while the process has been commonly read elsewhere as a Russian annexation of the Crimea. Moreover, a war has been waged in Eastern Ukraine where pro-Russian secessionists do not accept the authority of the new Kiev regime. The war has made thousands of victims,

including the passengers of a commercial airliner - flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur - that was shot down above Eastern Ukraine and crashed nearby Thorez on July 17. At the dawn of a new winter, the situation seems to become even more precarious: Ukraine and many EU countries are dependent on Russian gas for their energy needs.

One year after the emergence of #Euromaidan it is clear that the clash between internal fractions in Ukraine (sketchily summarized as a clash between Ukrainian speakers in the West and Russian speakers in the East and the South) resonates with the international clash between the geopolitical ambitions of Russia and those of the European Union. The existence of a Russian “Near Abroad” consisting of former Soviet Republics as a buffer between Russia and the West (which Russians perceive as an invasive Other) is seen by many as a reasonable wish, but still a geopolitical argument in the narrow sense. The “European Neighbourhood Policy” of the EU is seen by contrast as a different type of influence over “a ring of friends” in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean: a case of peaceful and rational pacification through regulation and conditionality. The asymmetrical influence of the EU on these areas is of course marked by power and compulsion, and here too security is the main goal. The main difference between the EU and Russia is the nature of their political system and the means their leaders are prepared to use for domestic and external actions. While Russia is an autocratic state, politically centralized and culturally sustained by a strong national identity, the EU is a quasi-federal configuration with a complex structure of multiple layers and plural identities based on consensus and compromise. While Russia glows with military might, the EU foregrounds diplomatic, political and juridical solutions.

The two logics clash in Ukraine as in no place else. It is a borderland once more, as Ukraine has often been in its history, as the very name of the country reminds us. It used to be known as “the Ukraine” – the borderland – before losing the article that is seen as pejorative by many Ukrainians.³ In this borderland, home to over 45 million people (about the same size as the population of Spain, Tanzania or Argentina and sensibly larger than Poland or the American state of California), that is neither a no man’s land, nor a buffer between Russia and the European Union, we witness not only clashing claims over the same area of influence, but two geopolitical views that structure incompatible ways of handling international politics.⁴

Introduction to the virtual special issue

The journal *Geopolitics* has published extensively on this region of the world and more specifically on the uneasy encounter between Post-Soviet Russia and the European Union, especially in the light of its eastward enlargement (eventually effectuated in 2004). Rather tellingly, in an early analysis of the re-ordering of the ‘crush zone’ in postwar Eastern Europe, O’Loughlin contrasts US and Russian geopolitical views and foregrounds NATO enlargement over EU enlargement.⁵ It is with the development of the EU common foreign and security policy, and its geopolitical ambitions, that the EU became a serious actor in the region.

This virtual special issue revisits some of these articles to signpost some of the most noted contributions. A selection of these articles will be available to download for free until May 31, 2015. The selected articles can be clustered into four clusters: geopolitical visions of the main protagonists, Russia on the one hand, the European Union (or one of its member states) on the other,⁶ borders, and energy security.

The first group is by far the largest and features a rich collection of studies of geopolitical visions. Mäkinen discussed the geopolitical views and worldviews taught to future generation in Russia.⁷ Ambrosio & Vandrovec turn to practical geopolitics and examine the addresses of Putin and Medvedev in the Federal Assembly⁸ while Foxall deals with masculine visuality and nationalism in the photographs of Putin circulated by the authorities.⁹ The same author earlier published a book review essay on Russian geopolitical identity.¹⁰ Morozova analyses Euranianism in foreign policy¹¹ and in an older special issue on *Religion and Geopolitics* guest edited by John Agnew, Sidorov presents the post-imperial Third Rome (i.e. Moscow) and the importance of the Russian Orthodox geopolitical metaphor.¹² In older articles addressing practical and popular geopolitics in the early post-soviet period: Perović studies the impact of Soviet legacy and contemporary globalization on federal reform,¹³ Mäkinen explores the geopolitical discourse of Yabloko in the 1990s¹⁴ and Kolosov respectively and O’Loughlin separately study the view of Russian citizens.¹⁵¹⁶ In an older special issue on *The changing geopolitics of Eastern Europe* guest edited by Dawson and Fawn, Russia is present too: Smith and Timmins explore the perceptions emerging from Russia's geopolitics of vulnerability in a paper on Russia and NATO and EU enlargement,¹⁷ and Kolosov and Turovsky review contemporary geopolitical approaches in Russia in a review essay.¹⁸ Finally Ambrosio examines

the efforts of Russian and Belarusian politicians in the 1990s to push for a Slavic Union, which also involves Ukraine.¹⁹

Other, somewhat less numerous, contributions have looked at the geopolitical practices of the EU, especially focusing on the so-called European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Early on (just before or after the eastern enlargement was effectuated), in a special issue on *The critical geopolitics of Northern Europe* edited by Aalto, Dalby and Harle considered the Northern dimension—the joint policy of European Union, Russia, Norway and Iceland.²⁰ This special issue also included examinations of the continuing othering of Russia by Browning²¹ and on Baltoscandia by Moisiu.²² Two years later, Scott questions the EU ‘Wider Europe’ and the emerging neighborhood policy.²³ Galbreath and Lamoreaux investigate the position of the Baltic States in this geopolitical representation—are they a “Bastion, Beacon or bridge?”²⁴ Others scrutinize EU supranational actors: Jones and Clark examine the role of European Commission discourse building and Europeanization,²⁵ Kostadinova analyzes the ENP and the construction of the EU external border.²⁶ Boedeltje and Van Houtum guest edited a series of papers in a special section on *EU neighbourhood geopolitics*. In their own paper they scrutinize how the EU speaks to its neighbours.²⁷ Two papers investigate the role of civil society (one by Scott,²⁸ and the other by O’Dowd and Dimitrovova²⁹) and Kramsch explores a non-Eurocentric view on ENP applying the neologism of a ‘Borgesian frontier’.³⁰ A year later, Boedeltje considers EU’s Others through a Foucauldian perspective³¹ and Joenniemi considers how the lens of the Neighbourhood contributes to the realization of EU actorness.³² More general analyses, including one by Zielonka, scrutinize contemporary empires - Russia and the EU but also China and the US³³- and Foster approaches the European Union as an empire from a cartographic perspective.³⁴

A third cluster consists of articles about border issues. They are more diverse and focused on specific cases: Golunov reviews EU-Russian border crossings from “a dialogical perspective”,³⁵ Prokkola deals with the making of the Finnish border and Schengen,³⁶ and Marcu with the making of the new Eastern border of the EU with a case study of Romania-Moldova-Ukraine.³⁷ Earlier contributions include Laitinen about the Finnish-Russian border,³⁸ Berg on the Estonian-Russian borderland³⁹ and Kolossov and O’Loughlin on the pseudo state of Transnistria.⁴⁰ Last but not least, in 2010 Stefan Berger put together a special section on the *Geopolitics of enclaves*

featuring two articles on Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave in the European Union, one by Archer & Etzold⁴¹ and one by Berger.⁴² This case was previously studied by Browning and Joenniemi from the perspective of the strategic use of its marginality⁴³ and by Aalto in the light of the constitution of an EU geopolitical subjectivity.⁴⁴

Finally, energy and the dependence of European countries on Russian gas (and of Russian on exports to European countries) is another key topic. In 2011 Giselle Bosse and Anke Schmidt-Felzmann supervised a special section on *The geopolitics of energy supply in the 'Wider Europe'*⁴⁵ consisting of seven research papers to grasp on different facets of energy supply security. The papers deploy different approaches: some constructivist, others realist and middle ground in between. Two papers (McGowan⁴⁶ and Bosse⁴⁷) look at historical changes comparing the social construction of energy security. Two papers (Kropatcheva⁴⁸ and Butler⁴⁹) address geopolitical power games and the politics of energy. Two contributions (Casier⁵⁰ and Schmidt-Felzmann⁵¹) deal with international cooperation and a last author (Roth) analyses Poland as a policy entrepreneur that tries to upscale its preferences at the level of the EU and NATO through a call for energy solidarity.⁵² In this special issue, Kropatcheva's paper focuses more specifically on the position of Ukraine.⁵³ Nord Stream (the pipelines from Viborg in Russia to Greifswald in Germany eventually inaugurated in 2011 and 2012) was the focus of two papers: Bouzarovski and Konieczny who deal more specifically with Poland⁵⁴ and Johnson & Derrick, who interrogate "the geographical logics of Russia's role as energy provider to Europe," try to provide a more networked base conceptualization of the pipeline and to engage in a critical analysis of pipeline geopolitics.⁵⁵ Two years later, in the midst of the turmoil in Eastern Ukraine and the vulnerability of the land pipelines running through Ukraine to Europe, energy security and geopolitics seem more topical than ever in the relations between Russia and the European Union and might even eclipse the other geopolitical and political issues at stake in the war torn country.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank our editorial assistant Mandy Hoggard for her invaluable help in preparing this selection of articles published in *Geopolitics*.

² Before independence in 1991 Maidan Square was known as the Place of the October Revolution. It was the site of previous massive protests in recent Ukrainian history, such as the 1989 Granite student revolution, the 2001 "Ukraine without Kuchma" protests and the 2004 Orange Revolution.

³ Think of another European borderland with a similar name, the Krajina that was home to the Serbian Republic of Krajina during the 1990s Yugoslavian wars. Nevertheless former military marches need not to be doomed to war, even if they kept the name alive. Denmark does not echo anymore any belligerent destiny.

⁴ Among the broader literature on geopolitics of Russia and the European Union, a few references could be highlighted to include early analyses of the post-cold war situation: O'Loughlin, J & Van der Wusten, H (Eds.) (1993) *The new political geography of Eastern Europe*, London, Belhaven. Tunander, O, Baev, P & Einagel, VI eds 1997 *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity*. Sage, London. See also general accounts such as: Dijkink, G 1996 *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions, Maps of Pride and Pain*. Routledge, London. Heffernan, M. (1998) *The Meaning of Europe, Geography and Geopolitics*. Arnold, London. Kuus, M. 2007 *Geopolitics reframed: Security and identity in Europe's Eastern enlargement* Palgrave Macmillan, New York. Guzzini, S. (Ed.) (2012) *The return of geopolitics in Europe? Social mechanisms and foreign policy identity crises*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. And more specifically on Russian geopolitics: Müller, M. 2008 Situating identities: Enacting and studying Europe at a Russian elite university. *Millennium* 37 3-25. Prozorov (2007) The narratives of exclusion and self-exclusion in the Russian conflict discourse on EU–Russian Relations, *Political Geography*, 26 3, 309-329; and finally on the EU as geopolitical actor: Aalto, P 2001 Structural geopolitics in Europe, Constructing geopolitical subjectivity for the EU and Russia, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), København; Elden, S. & Bialasiewicz, L. 2006 The new geopolitics of division and the problem of a Kantian Europe. *Review of International Studies* 32 623-44; Bachmann, V. & Sidaway, J. D. 2008 Zivilmacht Europa: a critical geopolitics of the European Union as a global power. *Transactions* 34 94-109; Bialasiewicz, L. (Ed.) (2011) *Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Making of European Space*, Farnham, Ashgate; and Kuus, M. 2014 *Geopolitics and Expertise: Knowledge and Authority in European Diplomacy* Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA.

⁵ J. O'Loughlin, 'Ordering the 'crush zone': Geopolitical games in post-cold war eastern Europe', *Geopolitics* 4/1 (1999) pp. 34-56.

⁶ This selection does not include articles on Russia or on the European Union that are concerned with other regions, such as the Arctic, the Caucasus or Central Asia for the first, and the Mediterranean for the second.

⁷ S. Mäkinen, 'Geopolitics Teaching and Worldviews: Making the Future Generation in Russia', *Geopolitics* 19/1 (2014) pp. 86-108.

⁸ T. Ambrosio and G. Vandrovec, 'Mapping the Geopolitics of the Russian Federation: The Federal Assembly Addresses of Putin and Medvedev', *Geopolitics* 18/2 (2013) pp. 435-466.

⁹ A. Foxall, 'Photographing Vladimir Putin: Masculinity, Nationalism and Visuality in Russian Political Culture', *Geopolitics* 18/1 (2013) pp. 132-156.

¹⁰ A. Foxall, 'Constructing, Practising, and Narrating Russian (Geo)Political Identity', *Geopolitics* 17/1 (2002) pp. 235-241.

¹¹ N. Morozova, 'Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin', *Geopolitics* 14/24 (2009) pp. 667-686.

¹² D. Sidorov, 'Post-Imperial Third Romes: Resurrections of a Russian Orthodox Geopolitical Metaphor', *Geopolitics* 11/2 (2006) pp. 317-347.

¹³ J. Perović, 'Regionalisation trends in Russia: Between the Soviet Legacy and the Forces of Globalisation', *Geopolitics* 9/2 (2004) pp. 342-377.

¹⁴ S. Mäkinen, 'On the Geopolitical Discourses of the Russian Yabloko Association, 1993-2001', *Geopolitics* 8/1 (2003) pp. 149-180.

¹⁵ V. Kolossov, 'High' and 'Low' Geopolitics: Images of Foreign Countries in the Eyes of Russian Citizens', *Geopolitics* 8/1 (2003) pp. 121-148.

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- ¹⁶ J. O'Loughlin, 'Geopolitical fantasies, national strategies and ordinary Russians in the post-communist Era', *Geopolitics* 6/3 (2001) pp. 17-48.
- ¹⁷ M. A. Smith and G. Timmins, 'Russia, NATO and the EU in an era of enlargement: Vulnerability or opportunity?', *Geopolitics* 6/1 (2001) pp. 69-90.
- ¹⁸ V. Kolossov and R. Turovsky, 'Russian geopolitics at the Fin-de-siècle', *Geopolitics* 6/1 (2001) pp. 141-164.
- ¹⁹ T. Ambrosio, 'The geopolitics of Slavic Union: Russia, Belarus, and multipolarity', *Geopolitics* 4/3 (1999) pp. 73-90.
- ²⁰ P. Aalto, S. Dalby and V. Harle, 'The Critical Geopolitics of Northern Europe: Identity Politics Unlimited', *Geopolitics* 8/1 (2003) pp. 1-19.
- ²¹ C.S. Browning, 'The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North', *Geopolitics* 8/1 (2003) pp. 45-71.
- ²² S. Moisis, 'Back to Baltoscandia? European Union and Geo-Conceptual Remaking of the European North', *Geopolitics* 8/1 (2003) pp. 72-100.
- ²³ J. W. Scott, 'The EU and 'Wider Europe': Toward an Alternative Geopolitics of Regional Cooperation?', *Geopolitics* 10/3 (2005) pp. 429-454.
- ²⁴ D. J. Galbreath and J. W. Lamoreaux, 'Bastion, Beacon or Bridge? Conceptualising the Baltic Logic of the EU's Neighbourhood', *Geopolitics* 12/1 (2007) pp. 109-132.
- ²⁵ A. Jones and J. Clark, 'Europeanisation and Discourse Building: The European Commission, European Narratives and European Neighbourhood Policy', *Geopolitics* 13/2 (2008) pp. 545-571.
- ²⁶ V. Kostadinova, 'The Commission, ENP and Construction of Borders', *Geopolitics* 14/2 (2009) pp. 235-255.
- ²⁷ F. Boedeltje and H. Van Houtum, 'Brussels is Speaking: The Adverse Speech Geo-Politics of the European Union Towards its Neighbours', *Geopolitics* 16/1 (2011) pp. 130-145.
- ²⁸ J. W. Scott, 'Reflections on EU Geopolitics: Consolidation, neighbourhood and civil society in the reordering of European Space', *Geopolitics* 16/1 (2011) pp. 146-175.
- ²⁹ L. O'Dowd and B. Dimitrovova, 'Promoting Civil Society Across the Borders of the EU Neighbourhood: Debates, Constraints and Opportunities', *Geopolitics* 16/1 (2011) pp. 176-192.
- ³⁰ O. T. Kramsch, 'Along the Borgesian Frontier: Excavating the Neighbourhood of "Wider Europe"', *Geopolitics* 16/1 (2011) pp. 193-210.
- ³¹ F. Boedeltje, 'The Other Spaces of Europe: Seeing European Geopolitics Through the Disturbing Eye of Foucault's *Heterotopias*', *Geopolitics* 17/1 (2012) pp. 1-24.
- ³² P. Joenniemi, 'Turning into a Sovereign Actor? Probing the EU Through the Lens of Neighbourhood', *Geopolitics* 17/1 (2012) pp. 25-46.
- ³³ J. Zielonka, 'Empires and the Modern International System', *Geopolitics* 17/3 (2012) pp. 502-525.
- ³⁴ R. Foster, '*Tabula Imperii Europae*: A Cartographic Approach to the Current Debate on the European', *Geopolitics* 18/2 (2013) pp. 371-402.
- ³⁵ S. Golunov, 'EU-Russian Border Crossing: The Dialogical Perspective', *Geopolitics* 18/4 (2013) pp. 933-953.
- ³⁶ E. Prokkola, 'Technologies of Border Management: Performances and Calculation of Finnish/Schengen Border', *Geopolitics* 18/1 (2013) pp. 77-94.
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- ³⁹ E. Berg, 'Deconstructing border practices in the Estonian-Russian borderland', *Geopolitics* 5/3 (2000) pp. 78-98.
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- ⁴¹ C. Archer and T. Etzold, 'The European Union and Kaliningrad: Taking the Low Road', *Geopolitics* 15/2 (2010) pp. 429-344.
- ⁴² S. Berger, 'How to be Russian with a Difference? Kaliningrad and its German Past', *Geopolitics* 15/2 (2010) pp. 345-366.
- ⁴³ C. S. Browning and P. Joenniemi, 'Contending Discourses of Marginality: The Case of Kaliningrad', *Geopolitics* 9/3 (2004) pp. 699-730.
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- ⁴⁶ F. McGowan, 'Putting Energy Insecurity into Historical Context: European Responses to the Energy Crises of the 1970s and 2000s', *Geopolitics* 16/3 (2011) pp. 486-511.
- ⁴⁷ G. Bosse, 'The EU's Geopolitical Vision of a European Energy Space: When 'Gulliver' meets 'White Elephants' and Verdi's Babylonian King', *Geopolitics* 16/3 (2011) pp. 512-535.
- ⁴⁸ E. Kropatcheva, 'Playing Both Ends Against the Middle: Russia's Geopolitical Energy Games with the EU and Ukraine', *Geopolitics* 16/3 (2011) pp. 553-573.
- ⁴⁹ E. Butler, 'The Geopolitics of Merger and Acquisition in the Central European Energy Market', *Geopolitics* 16/3 (2011) pp. 626-654.
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- ⁵² M. Roth, 'Poland as a Policy Entrepreneur in European External Energy Policy: Towards Greater Energy Solidarity vis-à-vis Russia?', *Geopolitics* 16/3 (2011) pp. 600-625.
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- ⁵⁴ S. Bouzarovski and M. Konieczny, 'Landscapes of Paradox: Public Discourses and Policies in Poland's Relationship With the Nord Stream Pipeline', *Geopolitics* 15/1 (2010) pp. 1-21.
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