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imports and its agricultural sector had been totally neglected since Soviet times. Foodstuffs constituted 15.8 percent of its total imports, and EU states covered 90 percent of its meat consumption.<sup>15</sup> On top of this, Poland suspended the local traffic agreement with Kaliningrad in mid-2016. Foreign trade and tourism diminished and turned away from European neighbors to partners overseas. Kaliningrad is further being cut off from the Soviet-era electricity network as the Baltic states are switching to the EU network and have linked up to Sweden and Finland. Further, since Russia has joined the WTO, it had to scrap the SEZ in mid-2016 insofar as customs were involved.

The effect of all this on Kaliningrad has been increasing self-reliance (that is, import substitution) in agriculture, as in all of Russia, and more dependence on federal support. Food consumption decreased in 2014–2017.<sup>16</sup> The share of federal transfers in the regional income budget rose from 30 to 70 percent in 2015–2016. In 2017 President Putin signed a new law on the SEZ, granting residents new tax privileges instead of customs exemptions. Both the industrial and agricultural sectors started to grow, and trade and tourism with Poland picked up thanks to still rather generous visa rules.<sup>17</sup> Instead of expanding the gas pipeline across Lithuania, which would be cheaper, Russia has decided to build four new power plants in the region, two of which were inaugurated by Putin in March 2018, to be fed by a floating liquid natural gas (LNG) plant and bigger storage capacities.<sup>18</sup> As a response to NATO's intensified presence in the region, Iskander cruise missiles with a range of about 500 km and capable of carrying nuclear weapons were placed permanently in the region and an Anti-Access/Area denial capacity was established, intended to keep NATO out of the Baltic Sea area. Russian officials also started to talk about Kaliningrad as a military stronghold against the West.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusions

One might conclude from all this that Kaliningrad at present is very far from the liberal 'post-modern' hopes of being integrated into the surrounding EU region

or becoming a bridge between Russia and the EU, thus diluting the significance of the borders and blurring the region's exclave status. In line with growing Russian nationalism and hostility against liberal Western democracies in recent years, Kaliningrad has instead become totally dependent on the federal center and – if not isolated – then at least more separated and estranged from its neighbors due to the suspension of agreements and trade favors. The military buildup in Kaliningrad makes the region look more like a threat to its neighbors than the other way round. The borders have become more significant and well-guarded, thus underlining the exclave/enclave status of the region. The transit across Lithuania still functions but is fragile and open to provocations. Russian fears and hostility to the West combined with a perceived position of strength in the region creates fertile ground for expansionist and imperialist schemes, which could entail efforts to the eliminate Kaliningrad's exclave/enclave situation by military means. However, the Russian leadership is also aware that overall and in the long run, the West is the stronger side in any future conflict and that drastic solutions to the complicated Kaliningrad problem would run fateful risks. The experience of 1939 is a strong reminder. ❌

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## Understanding the geography of Belarus. 95 maps with comments

### Belarus in Maps

Edited by Dávid Karácsonyi, Károly Kocsis, and Zsolt Bottlik. Budapest: Geographical Institute, 2017. 194 pages.

**B**elarus in Maps is an important contribution to the study of the geography, history, and contemporary development of Belarus and is a result of an international research project based at the Geographical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The project was initiated in 2005 by Prof Károly Kocsis and has been developed in cooperation with the Faculty of Geography at the Belarusian State University in Minsk and the Institute for Nature Management at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

The book is a part of the "In Maps" atlas series published by the Geographical Institute in order to introduce countries of Eastern Europe to the wider English-speaking world. Among the previously printed volumes are *South Eastern Europe in Maps* (2005, 2007), *Ukraine in Maps* (2008), and *Hungary in Maps* (2009, 2011). The aim of the series is to offer complex geographic, socio-economic, cultural, demographic, and historical perspectives on the Eastern European countries and their region.<sup>1</sup>

The book is composed of nine chapters, an introduction, and appendixes, and it is richly illustrated with 95 maps, 10 tables, and many pictures.

In chapter one – *Belarus in Europe* – the authors turn their attention to the role of Belarus in European history. The authors define Belarus as "a gateway between the Europe and Russia" (p. 19). The history of Belarusian statehood is presented on pp. 20–28. Regarding the use of different names of the country in English (Belarus, Byelorussia, and White Russia), the authors explain that the correct name of the country is Belarus, which is not related historically to Russia, but to Kievan Rus – an early medieval state with its center in Kiev (today's Ukraine). This is a strong historical argument for using the name Belarus in other European languages, for example, in Swedish that still officially uses the name *Vitryssland* (literally



Map of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1940 after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

*White Russia*), while its largest morning daily, *Dagens Nyheter*, rather recently decided to use *Belarus*.

**THE AUTHORS PROVIDE** insight into the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the full name of the state is the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Ruthenia, and Samogitia) and stress the role of the Grand Duchy in the formation of the Belarusian people. Indeed, the borders of the Grand Duchy with Poland and Russia almost perfectly coincide with the ethnic borders between Belarusians and Russians in the east, Belarusians and Poles in the west, and Belarusians and Ukrainians (who during medieval times were subjects of the Polish Crown) in the south. A special part of the first chapter is devoted to the history of Jews in Belarus. The authors provide a detailed map titled *The Pale of Settlement* (fig. 14) and mark the unique role of Belarus in the development of Jewish culture. The authors point out that prior to World War II Soviet Belarus had four official languages – Belarusian, Yiddish, Polish, and Russian. Actually, Belarus was the first republic in the modern world that gave the Jewish language an official status. The Nazi genocide of the Jews in Belarus is presented on pp. 26–27, but no map on the Holocaust in Belarus is provided.

Unfortunately, the authors have ignored many important publications in English on the history of Belarusian statehood,<sup>2</sup> and this has led to some errors. For example, on p. 20 the authors point out that during the Nazi occupation (1941–44) the western (prior to 1939, Polish) area of Belarus formed a part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, while the southern areas of Belarus were included in the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine*. In fact, the adminis-

## Continued. Understanding the geography

trative composition of Belarus during the German occupation was much more complicated, and the territory of Belarus was divided into four occupied zones. The largest part, which included the former Polish territories and the central area of the Belarusian SSR with its capital Minsk formed the general district of Belarus (*Generalbezirk Weissruthenien*, then a part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*). The southern part of Belarus was administrated in 1941–44 by the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine*, but in March 1944 it was transferred to the *Generalbezirk Weissruthenien*. The Hrodna and Białystok regions of the Belarusian SSR were incorporated into the Third Reich. The eastern part of Belarus was under the military administration of the *Wehrmacht*. The administrative rules and the dynamics of the mass killings were different in the different occupation zones.<sup>3</sup>

The authors conclude correctly in chapter one that the present-day borders of Belarus were established in 1919–45. Indeed, in August 1945 the Białystok region and three districts of the Brest region (a part of Soviet Belarus in 1939–41 and in 1944–45) were transferred back to Poland. Therefore, Belarus was one of the few countries in Europe that fought against the Nazis but lost part of their territory after 1945. Moreover, some small territorial exchanges between the Belarusian SSR and Poland and between the Belarusian SSR and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic took place in 1950 and in 1964. These boundaries were inherited by the Republic of Belarus after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. (As a pure curiosity, the insignificant and today uninhabited exclave Medvezhye-Sankovo [Russian: *Medvezh'ye-San'kovo*] of the Russian Federation, situated east of Homiel [Gomel], is not mentioned.)

In the second chapter, the authors examine more precisely the historical, cultural, and ethnic roots of Belarus. They pay special attention to the religious and cultural diversity of Belarus and the role of the Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, and Roman-Catholic churches as well as the Reformation in the development of Belarusian identity (pp. 43–50). Unlike ethnic Russians, the ethnic Belarusians since early modern times have been adherents of various religious denominations. The religious diversity of the population resulted in the coexistence in Belarus of different cultures and different written languages (including Belarusian, Russian, Polish, Latin, and Church-Slavonic). After the fall of the Soviet Union, most of the historical churches were re-established in Belarus that today is one of the most multi-confessional countries in Eastern Europe. Like in Norway, the cultural diversity of Belarus has resulted in two grammars of Belarusian literary language (the so called *taraskievica* and *narkomauka*) and in a mixed spoken dialect – *trasianka* (a mixed language of Belarusian and Russian) – that is used in rural areas of Belarus.

Hungary has a long tradition in cartography, and the quality of the maps is exemplary. As usual, the spatial representation of societal, economic, and demographic characteristics tends to overemphasize rural distributions in relation to greater, but more concentrated, ones, but the cartographers use proportional

circles as well as vectors and diagrams that are all easy to understand and in perfect coloring. In a very useful appendix, important place names are given in five different versions, including Belarusian and Russian and in Cyrillic and Latin letters.

Very few academic works have been published on the historical and cultural geography of Belarus in English.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, despite a few minor critical points, the atlas-book *Belarus in Maps* has considerable importance for understanding the geography, history, and contemporary development of Belarus. ✖

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## Media reporting of the Ukrainian war. A comparison of ideals and outcome

### Ukraina och informationskriget – journalistik mellan ideal och självcensur

[Ukraine and the information war – journalism between ideal and self-censorship]  
Gunnar Nygren and Jöran Hök (ed.), Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap. (2016), 279 pages.

Russia’s annexation of Crimea took many politicians and experts by surprise. The annexation, and the conflict in eastern Ukraine that escalated during the summer of 2014, reached media headlines all over the world. Initially, media reporting was hesitant, and the Russian leadership did what it could to establish confusion about who was behind the military operation on the Crimean Peninsula. Later this Russian operation, and the competing narratives of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, would be heatedly discussed.

The book *Ukraina och informationskriget – journalistik mellan ideal och självcensur* (in Swedish) offers an impressive empirical contribution to the broader debate on the role of journalism and media in conflicts. The study is the result of a project by media scholars in Sweden, Ukraine, Russia, and Poland. It provides a systematic analysis of the media coverage in these four countries during the earlier parts of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The book asks several questions: first, which angles of the conflict are presented in the media; second, which sources are used, and in which ways does disinformation matter for media logic; and third, what is the role of the journalist, and what challenges for journalistic ideals can be identified when covering an armed conflict. Although the book only covers the conflict during the summer of 2014, it includes several insights. In order to put the study into a broader context the book also includes individual chapters about media control and journalism, media and war in authoritarian and democratic states, the Russian news channel RT, and disinformation.

To analytically describe the role played by journalists in different countries during this period, Gunnar Nygren works with two criteria: first, the level of political-military control over media, and second, the journalistic culture in a state. As an example of high level political-military control, he cites the embedded journalists used by the United States government during the Gulf War, while a low level of control was seen during the Vietnam War. Journalistic culture is divided into either a neutral ideal or a subjective, more activist journalistic ideal. Taken together these two variables give us four possible types of state-media relations. The book’s strengths clearly are on the empirical side, and the main goal of the book is not theory development. Although one could certainly criticize the framework for being overly simplistic, it works quite well, not the least given the complex cross-country comparison the authors are undertaking.

Two important factors have limited media freedom in many post-Soviet states: oligarch control and state control. Oligarch control has been predominant in the Ukrainian media landscape, while the state has dominated Russian media, especially under President Vladimir Putin. Besides patriotism, the authors argue that these factors have also been important for Ukrainian and Russian media coverage of the conflict in 2014.

The authors rely on two main methods. The first is quantitative content analysis in which certain representative newspapers and TV-channels from the four countries are selected for a de-



tailed cross-country comparative analysis. This is the book’s strongest section and it definitely contributes to increased knowledge about media coverage of the conflict. The second approach consists of interviews with journalists and gives the reader more detailed information about the differences in journalistic thinking in the four countries.

SEVERAL UKRAINIAN JOURNALISTS describe neutral journalism as their ideal. Values like neutral reporting and objectivity have, however, been difficult to uphold in a situation when the home country is under attack. Not surprisingly, patriotism is also an important factor in a country at war on its own soil. These feelings are obviously different from the perspective of Swedish journalists, for example, who covered the same conflict for a Swedish audience. Moreover, many Ukrainian journalists who tried to work in the conflict zone have been threatened, attacked, and in some cases even killed. This has certainly limited the journalists’ ability to cover the conflict from different angles and perspectives.

The Russian state – according to the authors – rarely needs to force Russian journalists to support a particular government line. Given the difficult conditions for journalists, and the media logic in Russia, a tacit understanding of