

A b s t r a c t s

Phenomena of Fear State, Society, Art

Lev Gudkov

A Theory of Collective Fear

Causes and Dimensions Using Russia as an Example

Every culture has specific techniques and rituals for learning and controlling fear. Fear is suppressed from consciousness and at the same time forms a horizon of everyday life. The boundary between permissible fear and taboo shapes the fundamental order of society. If fear takes on a form that blocks rational analysis of its causes, this indicates that it is being deliberately generated and spread. Behind such fear lies a repressive state that exercises unlimited power over the population. This is the case in Russia. The fear produced by Stalinist mass terror subsided in the late 1980s, but remained anchored in the political culture. The Putin regime has revived it and exploited it to mobilise and control society.

Wolfgang Stephan Kissel

The Modern City as a Place of Fear

Agoraphobia in Andrei Belyi's Petersburg

Andrei Belyi's novel Petersburg, published on the eve of the First World War, is marked by an apocalyptic-eschatological expectation of impending doom. The novel was written during a period of external and internal instability marked by economic and social upheaval, war, and revolutionary unrest. At the same time, it is the product of an "epoch of nervousness". Almost all of the characters suffer from "neurasthenia" syndrome, which was typical of the period. In the novel, fear, which is one symptom of the syndrome, affects not only individuals. It becomes a characteristic of the Russian capital itself. The agoraphobia of protagonist Apollon Ableuchov, who as a powerful senator is himself a source of fear, intensifies the dread of dissolving boundaries and decay. Belyi's symbolist "mind games" were considered decadent in the Soviet Union. Today, the significance of the novel as his magnum opus is undisputed. It speaks in a special way to readers of the 21st century, which is experiencing a "return of a nervous age".

Bernd Feuchtnner**Songs of the Night, Nights of Fear****Fear in the Music of Dmitri Shostakovich**

During the Stalin era, music had the privilege of saying things that could not be said aloud. Dmitri Shostakovich developed a veritable system of hidden meanings that imbued his music a double meaning that could be discerned only by those who felt similarly and understood this language. He gave expression to the fears that plagued an entire era and that were particularly prevalent at night.

Jay Winter**History and Memory****The Second World War in Europe**

Memory and history differ in nature, yet they overlap in many ways. Memory is history reflected in emotions. The truth of historical interpretation depends on sources. The truths of memory depend on emotions and the passage of physiological time. Many national narratives about the Second World War involve heroic tales. However, the suffering of the civilian population in Europe during the war stubbornly resists any heroization.

Mark Belorusez**Translation as a Means of Survival****Languages and Poetry in Soviet Kyiv**

In the 1970s, the capital of Soviet Ukraine was largely Russified. The Ukrainian language led a shadowy existence. Most writers produced lifeless novels and poems. But there were exceptions: among them was Moisei Fishbein, who was passionate about the Ukrainian language. His poems defied the usual expectations of Soviet literature. Translators, who often enjoyed greater freedom than authors, played a special role in the resistance to Russification. The extraordinary flourishing of Ukrainian literary translation in the 1970s led to a renaissance of the national language and culture. Translations further developed the Ukrainian language. The work of translators thus also had political significance. Many of them paid a high price for their commitment.

Nikolay Mitrokhin
Russia's War against Ukraine
Weekly Reports October-December 2025

Russian occupation forces continued to creep forward in the final months of 2025. The advance is slow, but the situation for the Ukrainian army is precarious along many sectors of the front. The situation for the civilian population in areas near the front is dire due to constant attacks from glide bombs and combat drones. Russia's heavy airstrikes have so severely damaged Ukraine's infrastructure that people in major cities farther west are experiencing a very harsh winter of war, too. International politics are not developing in Ukraine's favour. The US president's attempt to enforce a ceasefire has failed. Despite increasing economic problems, Russia believes it has the upper hand and therefore sees no reason to compromise on its territorial demands.

Anna Gevorgyan
Security Bridge
Armenia and Iran

Armenia is in a precarious geopolitical situation. Azerbaijan, in alliance with Turkey, continues to make territorial claims even after its victory in the Second Karabakh War and the expulsion of the Armenians living there. Russia, its former ally, has been weakened. The government in Yerevan has made a "turn to the West", and relations with the European Union are growing closer. But Brussels has little to offer in terms of security policy. Only Iran has a serious interest in forming a counterweight to the Baku-Ankara axis. Infrastructure projects with its southern neighbour have been of great importance to Armenia since its independence in 1991. Now, the US has stepped in as a mediator between Baku and Yerevan. If the external powers can find a compromise, Armenia could become the "crossroads of peace" that the prime minister speaks of. Otherwise, the country will once again face ruin.

Ina Rumiantseva
Out of an Impasse
For a New European Policy on Belarus

Germany and the European Union sharply criticise the devastating human rights situation in Belarus. Sanctions are supposed to force the regime to end its repression. This policy has been unsuccessful for five years, and the situation has deteriorated further. Belarus is increasingly being equated with Russia, and there is hardly any independent policy on Belarus left. In this way, Belarus is

being left to the mercy of Moscow. A different approach is needed and possible. Sanctions are no substitute for diplomacy. They must be used as a means of diplomacy. First and foremost is the goal of gaining the release of political prisoners. Then, it is necessary to increase Minsk's room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis Moscow. This is in the eminent interest of Germany and the EU.

Vakhtang Partsavania

Cover-up as a Business Model

Georgia as a Transshipment Hub for Russian Oil

Western countries are trying to reduce Russia's oil revenues with import bans. But these are being circumvented in a variety of ways. Companies from Georgia are involved in circumventing sanctions. They are enabling Russian oil exports to Europe by providing infrastructure, logistics, and mechanisms to provide a fig leaf of legality. Georgia's exports of oil products have risen sharply, although the country had no refineries before October 2025. There is a high risk that the petrochemical facility now operating in Kulevi on Georgia's Black Sea coast will be used to facilitate cover-ups of illicit oil sales.

"This is the end of autonomy in institutions of higher learning"

M. Chitashvili on the planned education reform in Georgia

Since 2024, the Georgian regime has been taking action against civil society. Now, it wants to rein in institutions of higher learning as well. Verbal attacks on academics who support protests against the government's authoritarian course are being accompanied by plans for education reform. If the reform is implemented, the result will lead to the diminishment and provincialisation of the Georgian university landscape.