

THE GERMAN CLUSTER

– INTERIM REPORT –

By Hannes Adomeit

03/10/2018

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CLUSTER

Launching of the cluster occurred in two meetings in London on 20-21 June, where I familiarized myself with the work of the Institute for Statecraft and the Integrity Initiative.

COMMITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

For a full engagement for the Initiative I first had to meet some prior commitments. These were connected with my affiliation as Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University (ISPK) and concerned primarily a commissioned paper for the newly (in 2017) founded *Sirius: Zeitschrift für strategische Analysen*, the only academic journal in German on the subject of strategic studies. The paper is on Russian-American relations after the Helsinki summit and will be published in October.¹ The journal is published under the auspices of the ISPK. Affiliation to ISPK and access to the journal is important. Hence, I continue to be involved with both the institute and the journal, without, however, taking on significant new commitments.²

SPECIFICALLY GERMAN CONDITIONS

- Russia is one, if not the most, divisive and contentious issue in German foreign policy debates. There are other contentious and emotional issues in Germany's public domain, notably 'migration' – war refugees (Kriegsflüchtlinge), economic migrants (Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge) and those seeking political asylum (Asylbewerber). Migration is primarily a domestic political issue and relevant in the EU context but the issue is exploited by Russian propaganda and disinformation.³

¹ Hannes Adomeit, 'Nach dem Helsinki Gipfel: Trübe Aussichten für eine Verbesserung der russisch-amerikanischen Beziehungen [After the Helsinki Summit: Dim Prospects for an Improvement of Russian-American Relations], *Sirius: Zeitschrift für strategische Analysen* (October 2018, forthcoming).

² For cross reference to ISPK see the part 'Cluster Members'.

³ The most notorious case is the case of 'Our Lisa'; see Stefan Meister, 'The "Lisa case": Germany as a target of Russian disinformation', NATO Review 2016, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2016/also-in-2016/lisa-case-germany-target-russian-disinformation/EN/index.htm>.

- The Russian narrative on the origins of the deep crisis in Russia’s relations with the West is widely accepted by German public opinion. Its main theses are that after the end of the Cold War, the United States in its approach simply replaced ‘the Soviet Union’ by ‘Russia’; it continued policies of containment, isolation and humiliation of Russia; its main instrument had been NATO and NATO’s expansion into areas considered vital to Russian interests; and it had exerted pressure on Europe, including on Germany, to tow the line of its anti-Russian policies.⁴
- Germany, therefore, should not fall in line with the US approach. It should reject the ‘demonization’ of Russia as preached by politicians, the ‘mainstream media’ and research institutes – an approach that is being held to be patently ‘dangerous’.⁵ In fact, it is said to raise yet again the spectre of war in Europe but those who were taking Germany down this path should not count on the German public to legitimise war and to fight it ‘in our name’.⁶
- A central feature of Russian efforts to influence German public opinion, therefore, is to emphasise the dangers of war in Europe. Such dangers, the Russian and *Russlandverstehers* narrative asserts, are heightened by NATO ‘rearmament’ efforts and the reintroduction of US and NATO forces as well as military maneuvers in the Baltic States, and eastern and southeastern Europe.⁷
- The *Querfront* constellation, a common albeit uncoordinated ‘front’ of extreme Left-wing and extreme far-Right anti-government and anti-‘system’ polemics and actions of members of the AfD and Die Linke. This harks back to the Weimar Republic, which was destroyed by the parallel onslaught of the communists (KPD) and the Nazis (NSDAP).

⁴ One of the most insidious advocates of the idea that the United States has exerted pressure on Germany to undercut its Ostpolitik is Peter W. Schulze. At an international conference in Moscow he claimed that ‘since 2009, the United States has pursued an anti-Russian policy and employed a *strategy to prevent Germany from fostering harmonious relations with its eastern neighbours*’ (italics not in the original); see ‘Summary of the International Conference “Rethinking Russia”’, May 2016, http://rethinkingrussia.ru/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Journal_Eng.pdf. – Schulze was head of the SPD’s political foundation in Moscow, 1992-2003.

⁵ The most recent notorious example of this thesis can be found in the paperback by Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, *Eiszeit: Wie Russland dämonisiert wird und warum das so gefährlich ist* [Ice Age: How Russia is Being Demonised and Why This is so Dangerous] (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018).

⁶ The most explicit example of this is epitomized in the December 2014 ‘Appeal of the 60’, that is, 60 representatives from the realms of politics, economics, the media and culture, under the heading of ‘*Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!*’ [War again in Europe? Not in Our Name!] For documentation of the appeal see Die Zeit, 5 December 2014, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/aufruf-russland-dialog>. The authors, in essence, repeated their appeal in April 2018; see ‘Konflikt mit Russland: Dialog statt Eskalation’ [Conflict with Russia [?]: Dialogue instead of Escalation [!]], Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 12 April 2018, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/konflikt-mit-russland-dialog-statt-eskalation-15537381.html>.

⁷ That theme was effectively reiterated by Putin in his February 2007 address to the Munich International Security Conference. German receptivity to this approach is well reflected in the view expressed by then foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in reference to the Polish-led Anakonda 2016 maneuvers of NATO and partner countries that ‘What we shouldn’t do now is to further fuel the situation by loud saber-rattling and war mongering.’

- Yet another special feature of the conditions in Germany are the more than 3 million migrants from post-Soviet countries. As witnessed by the case of ‘Our Lisa’ in 2016 and the 2017 parliamentary elections, the Russian influence campaign and efforts by the right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) coincide to turn the ex-Soviet diaspora against the Merkel government.
- To be elaborated: War weariness and conflict aversion. – The *Schuldgefühl* syndrome: Germans killed 20 million ‘Russians’ in the Second World War. – The *Ostpolitik* traditions and constraints. – *Ad nauseam* mantra: ‘There can be no military solution.’ – Geopolitics as a non-entity. Germany as a civil and civilian power as expressed, for instance, by Hanns Maull, Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1990-12-01/germany-and-japan-new-civilian-powers>.

CLUSTER MEMBERS

According to the Guidelines for Coordinators, the cluster will consist ‘of well-informed people from the political, military, academic, journalistic and think-tank spheres, who will track and analyse examples of disinformation in their country and inform decision-makers and other interested parties about what is happening [...] and will pass on information by way of research papers, articles, presentations, individual conversations and personal contacts’. I’m somewhat unsure as to how ‘membership’ is to be understood. Thus far, I have proceeded on the basis of informality, that is, without a written contract but with the commitment to act in accordance with the principles stated above. The degree of commitment varies significantly and, of course, depends on my effort to engage the individuals concerned. In this light, the following current and prospective members can be identified as follows:

Harold Elletson: All activities have been and will be coordinated with him.

Joachim Krause: Close friend, ex-colleague at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, former Director of Research at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP), at present head of the Institute on Security Policy at the University of Kiel (ISPK) and chief editor of the only journal on strategies studies in Germany; *Sirius: Zeitschrift für strategische Analysen*.⁸ The importance of this connection lies in the fact that I am not only involved in the search for serious contributions on the subject but writing articles myself, including for the benefit of the Initiative.⁹ No meeting is necessary with him since I am in close, almost daily, contact with him.

Marie-Luise Beck: Outline provided of what the Integrity Initiative is all about and what her role in it might conceivably be. Meeting was held on 20/09/2018. She is, together with her husband Ralph Fücks, founding member of LibMod.

⁸ On Prof. Krause and ISPK see also the part ‘Commitment and Engagement’.

⁹ See the part on ‘Specific Projects’.

Claudia von Salzen: Outline provided of what the Integrity Initiative is all about and what her role in it might conceivably be. Meeting was held on 21/09/2018. Von Salzen is an investigative journalist at *Der Tagesspiegel*, the most serious and biggest daily newspaper in the German capital with a circulation of 110.749 copies. Her research and publications have focused on the interconnections between German national and *Land* institutions, economic interests, the German-Russian Forum and Gazprom, see fn.¹⁰

Susanne Spahn: Outline provided of what the Integrity Initiative is all about and what her role in it might conceivably be. Meeting was held on 28/09/2018. She is an academic specialist on Russian media targeting Germany; author of the only systematic and detailed study of the Russian campaigns to influence German public opinion generally and specifically on Ukraine.¹¹

Boris Reitschuster: Meeting scheduled for 04/10/2018 to outline of what the Integrity Initiative is all about and what his role in it might be.

Manfred Sapper: Meeting scheduled for 05/10/2018 to outline of what the Integrity Initiative is all about and what his role in it might be. Chief editor of the only scientific journal on Russia and Eastern Europe, *Osteuropa*.

Gemma Pörzgen: Meeting to be scheduled for 09 or 10/10/2018 before London and Vilnius to outline of what the Integrity Initiative is all about and what her role in it might be. She is an independent journalist living in Berlin, founding member of the German section of Reporters without Borders and a member of the board of that organization.

Meetings to be scheduled for after London and Vilnius

Margarete Klein: Since 2008, she is my successor at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) in Berlin. The only scholar outside the official defence and secret service establishment dealing with and writing about Russian military affairs; see, for instance, her September 2018 paper on ‘Russlands Militärpolitik im postsowjetischen Raum’, SWP-Studie No. 19, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/russlands-militaerpolitik-im-postsowjetischen-raum/>

Manfred Quiring: During the Cold War, worked for the East Berlin *Berliner Zeitung* as Moscow correspondent. After the collapse of the GDR, stayed at the paper under new management and orientation and, thereafter, worked for the Springer owned *Die Welt*. Author of the 2018 book entitled *Die russische Welt: Wie der Kreml Europa spaltet* [The Russian World: How the Kremlin is Dividing Europe].

¹⁰ ‘Russlandtag in Rostock: Mit freundlicher Unterstützung aus Moskau’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 20 September 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/agenda/russlandtag-in-rostock-mit-freundlicher-unterstuetzung-aus-moskau/23077798.html>, and ‘Pipeline Nord Stream 2: Wie Gerhard Schröder als Türöffner für Gazprom agiert’, *ibid.*, 20 December 2017, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/agenda/pipeline-nord-stream-2-wie-gerhard-schroeder-als-tueroeffner-fuer-gazprom-agierte/20739366.html>.

¹¹ Foremost among her publications: *Das Ukraine-Bild in Deutschland: Wie Russland die deutsche Öffentlichkeit beeinflusst* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2016), and *Russische Medien in Deutschland: Unabhängiger Journalismus oder politisches Instrument?* (Potsdam: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, March 2018), in Russian: *Российские медиа в Германии. Независимая журналистика или политический инструмент?* (Potsdam: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, March 2018).

Gwendolin Sasse: Head of the recently (in 2017) founded Zentrum für ostwissenschaftliche und international Studien (ZoiS). The Center focuses on Russia and Eastern Europe and is designed to deepen the study of that area. Financed by the German government. I have no contact with her but will establish it.

Barbara Mohnheim: Associated with LibMod. Recommended by Harold Elletson.

Armin Huttenlocher: Associated with both LibMod (Marie-Luise Beck) and the Integrity Initiative.

Walter Gruhn: Previous IT head at SWP. Lives in Berlin, retired. He should help with technical issues.

Barbara Freytag-Loringhofen and her husband Arndt Freytag-Loringhofen: Barbara worked previously for Andreas Schockenhoff, the German government's coordinator for Russia policy. Her husband is NATO's first Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security. He took up his post on 1 December 2016. He is responsible for providing intelligence support to the North Atlantic Council and the Military Committee as well as for advising the Secretary General on intelligence and security matters. The idea is to travel to Brussels at some time, and brief and interview both, preferably simultaneously and privately.

Stefan Meister: Head of the Robert Bosch-Zentrum für Mittel- und Osteuropa, Russland und Zentralasien at the DGAP. He has written on the Russian influence campaign as, for instance, when I was with him in Washington, D.C. as a fellow for the Transatlantic Academy in 2016. Useful as contact but he will have not time actively to involve himself with the Integrity Initiative.

Michael Thumann and Alice Bota: *Die Zeit*. Specialists on Russia.

Katja Tichomirowa: Investigative journalist at *Berliner Zeitung*. Lost contact with her but could and should be reestablished.

Note on the meetings: Originally, I thought that I should try to assemble all possible 'candidates' in one brainstorming session. However, (1) it is highly doubtful that any date could be arranged where more than half of the suspects would be available. The more active and influential the person, the less time he/she has for additional tasks. (2) In a session with several or many participants, the cluster coordinator has only minutes rather than hours to establish the possible contributions a prospective cluster member might make to the common task. Several hours of exchange, as experience has shown, is much more productive. A common brainstorming session or workshop would make sense only once the crew has been assembled.

Note on remuneration: I will not claim 250 GBP for each and every 'consultancy', only for 'serious' meetings lasting several hours and leading to 'results' in the sense of getting a commitment from the interlocuteur for engagement and participation.

EXAMPLES OF NETWORKING IN PROGRESS

Two examples of successful networking can be provided.

One concerns a project by **Susanne Spahn** (see above and below) on the social-economic status and political orientation of the more than three million Germans with a post-Soviet *Migrationshintergrund* (migration background), including 2.3 million Russlanddeutsche and their family members, i.e. persons with German ethnic roots deported in 1944 to Siberia and Kazakhstan. She has funding for the project from the German government but has been unable to find a required 'akademische' or 'wissenschaftliche' institution that would figure ostensibly monitor the soundness of the research and affix its stamp of approval. She mentioned that to me in the briefing noted above. I discussed this with **Joachim Krause** of the ISPK who agreed that his institute would be ready to provide the necessary institutional affiliation.

When talking to **Boris Reitschuster** and agreeing on the date for a briefing and his possible participation we also discussed the murky case of Andrey Kovalchuk,

*He is someone who, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) claims was behind an alleged attempt to smuggle nearly 400 kilograms of cocaine from Argentina to Moscow has been detained in Germany, his lawyer and police said. Andrei Kovalchuk's lawyer, Vladimir Zherebenkov, said on 2 March 2018 that his client was detained on the outskirts of Berlin on 1 March 2018, and German police confirmed that he was detained. 'Berlin forces have arrested Mr. Kovalchuk. He is now [in] police custody', the news agency AFP quoted a police spokesman as saying. **Russia has requested Kovalchuk's extradition** and the process could take several weeks, the Interfax news agency quoted the spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Berlin, Denis Mikerin, as saying. [Source: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-argentina-cocaine-plot-mastermind-detained/29072790.html>.]*

I surmise that it would have been possible to find out a lot about Russian corruption, notably between government institutions (MID) and organized crime if German law enforcement agencies had made an effort. However, contrary to standard operating procedures, Kovalchuk was extradited:

German lawyers are shocked: 6 [July] they received a notification that Kovalchuk can be extradited to Russia without trial. But the appeal period is a month. His German lawyer Alexander Hamburg had the right to appeal this decision until August 6, this week they were going to file a complaint. We cannot understand why they extradited him before the expiration of this period," clarified Zherebenkov. [Source: <https://en.crimerussia.com/drugmafia/germany-extradited-cocaine-case-defendant-kovalchuk-to-russia/>]

See also https://www.huffingtonpost.de/entry/merkel-putin-schroder_de_5b7a688de4b018b93e955207

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2247479631933879&set=a.194618133886716&type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2011909075487506&set=a.707451949266565.1073741826.100000052989894&type=3&theater>

Claudia von Salzen will look into this and try to find out what happened and why.

SPECIFIC PROJECTS

AGREED

Paper on the domestic determinants of Russian foreign policy. The rationale of this project is as follows: As noted in the part above dealing on specific features of German conditions the Russian narrative on the origins of the deep crisis in Russia's relations with the West is, among other claims, that after the end of the Cold War, 'the West', first and foremost the United States', continued policies of containment, isolation and humiliation of Russia; its main instrument had been NATO and NATO's expansion into areas considered vital to Russian interests; and it has exerted pressure on Europe to tow the line of its anti-Russian policies. Russia, therefore, the narrative continues, had no other option than reacting to the military and security challenges and threats. The deplorable state of affairs in the relations between Russia and the West essentially is the result of the persistence of the anti-Russian policies.

The central argument that will be made in the paper is that the Kremlin's narrative about the reasons for the dramatic deterioration of the relationship between Russia and the West as being external and military in nature is fundamentally flawed. *Internal* factors – the power elite's calculations about its tenure in office – will be considered to be the main explanatory variables. To the extent that external challenges and threats can be said to determine the Kremlin's foreign policy, these are essentially *socio-economic* in nature. They are rooted primarily in the concern of the Russian power elite that the regulatory model and socio-economic attractiveness of the West pose a threat to the legitimacy of its rule in Russia and the country's influence in its self-declared sphere of interest.

The paper, to be written in English, will be based primarily on two of my recent articles in German: 'Innenpolitische Determinanten der Putinschen Außenpolitik' [Domestic Determinants of Putin's Foreign Policy'], *Sirius: Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2017), pp. 33-52, <https://www.pw-portal.de/putins-russland/40328-innenpolitische-determinanten-der-putinschen-aussenpolitik-ein-siruis-beitrag> (for the journal *Sirius*, see above, the part on Cluster Members, Joachim Krause, ISPK) and 'Altes Denken, Statt Neues Russland: Innenpolitische Bestimmungsfaktoren der russischen Außenpolitik' [Old Thinking instead of New Russia: Domestic Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy], *Portal Politikwissenschaft*, 26 September 2017, <https://www.pw-portal.de/putins-russland/40508-altes-denken-statt-neues-russland>.

Paper with Harold Elletson on Russian-German relations with emphasis on Moscow's campaign to influence German public opinion and to undermine the government of Angela Merkel. The purpose of the project is to analyse the reasons for the great receptivity of the Russian narrative (see above) especially in Germany; the major tools the Russian government is using in order to influence German public opinion; the main addresses of the

campaign – political parties, economic interests and non-governmental organizations; and the likely impact of the campaign on political conditions and the strategic orientation of the country.

The paper should be in English and in German. It is to be based on Harold Elletson's draft entitled 'Russlands Informationskrieg in Deutschland: Wie Moskau die Meinung der Deutschen verändert' [Russia's Information War in Germany: How Moscow is Changing German Public Opinion].

TENTATIVE

Commissioning, updating and translation of a paper by Susanne Spahn on 'Russian Media in Germany: Independent Journalism or Political Instrument?'. The basis for this paper would be her research report for the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, the political foundation associated with the Liberal Party (FDP), entitled *Russische Medien in Deutschland: Unabhängiger Journalismus oder politisches Instrument?* (Potsdam: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, March 2018), which is available in Russian: Российские медиа в Германии. Независимая журналистика или политический инструмент? (Potsdam: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, March 2018). – See 'Susanne Spahn' under Cluster Members.

Technically, she would be prepared to make the paper available to us – the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung has agreed to this in writing – and update the information provided in German. She would expect a fee of 1,000 GBP. I would do the translation (also for a fee).

[Chris: A decision is needed on this.]

Brainstorming or workshop by cluster members (and other experts) on the Russian influence campaign in Germany. As stated above in the section on Cluster Members, such a project makes sense only once the individuals concerned have been briefed in detail and their likely contributions established. That process is on-going.

SPECIFIC PROJECTS

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Paper on the domestic determinants of Russian foreign policy. The rationale of this project is as follows: As noted in the part above dealing on specific features of German conditions the Russian narrative on the origins of the deep crisis in Russia's relations with the West is, among other claims, that after the end of the Cold War, 'the West', first and foremost the United States', continued policies of containment, isolation and humiliation of Russia; its main instrument had been NATO and NATO's expansion into areas considered vital to Russian interests; and it has exerted pressure on Europe to tow the line of its anti-Russian policies. Russia, therefore, the narrative continues, had no other option than reacting to the military and security challenges and threats. The deplorable state of affairs in the relations between Russia and the West essentially is the result of the persistence of the anti-Russian policies.

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