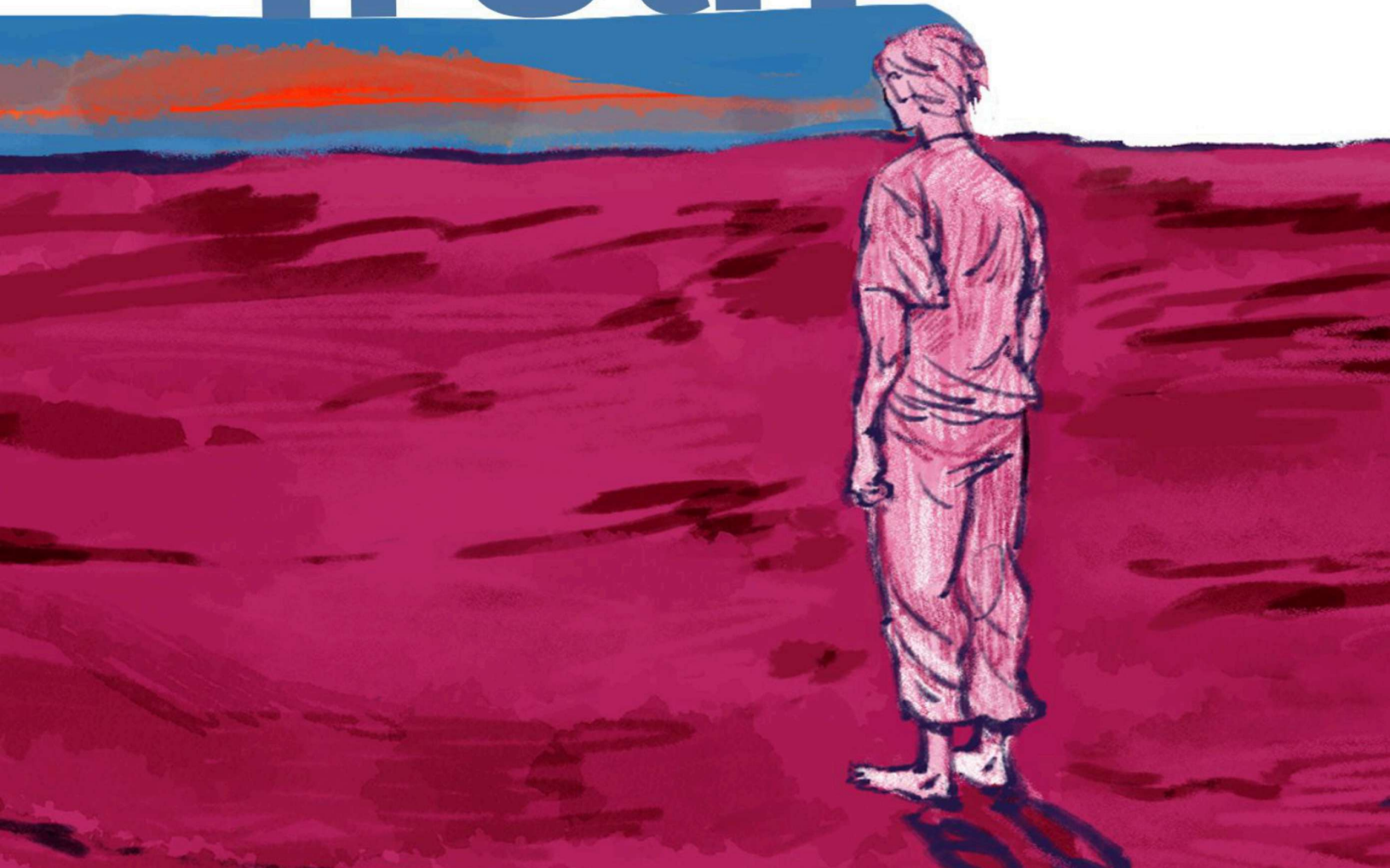


Gazeta Sashka

3/25

Truth



Gazeta Sasha 3/2025
Truth / Totuus

Gazeta 3/2025 Editorial & Writing Team

Editors-in-Chief: Anna Kananen & Sierra Salazar

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Porkkala, Kacper Regulski, Isaac Steinmeyer, Erik Toikka, Tommaso
Valastro

Cover Logo: Jalmari Sarla

Cover Illustration: Johanna Porkkala

SASHA RY'S ELECTION MEETING

What?

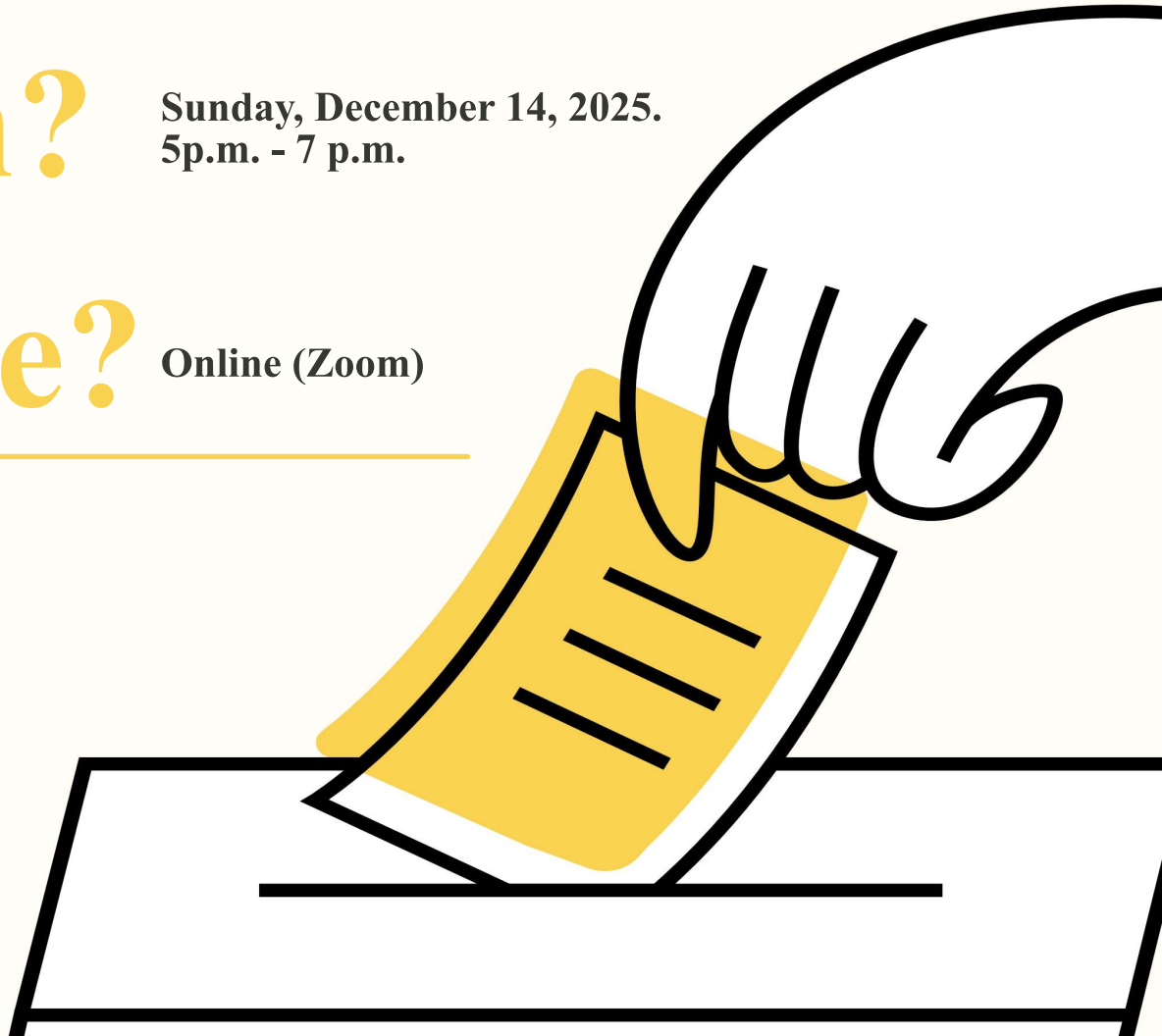
Sasha ry's board meeting! The board for 2026 will be elected, including the chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, & other board member positions

When?

Sunday, December 14, 2025.
5p.m. - 7 p.m.

Where?

Online (Zoom)





Editorial

Text – Anna Kananen and Sierra Salazar

Photo – Jalmari Sarla

Finding truth in what increasingly feels like a post-truth moment is extraordinarily difficult. Without the skills to navigate an overwhelming stream of information, sift through emotionally charged content designed to keep us hooked, spot AI-generated material, and resist collapsing on ChatGPT for answers without acknowledging that it is an LLM (or understanding how such models even work), we become vulnerable. In that state, we are often at the mercy of social media “slot machines” that deliver dopamine hits while feeding us information that is unverified and engineered to persuade, polarize, and shape our perceptions. We remain hooked, misinformed, and tightly bound to our algorithms, as our time and attention are converted into profit for companies like Meta and Google. And where is professional media in all this? Too often, not far behind – producing its own share of misleading or politically-charged content, sometimes packaged in the clean appearance of traditional journalism.

We were just reminded of this recently when Googling the

resignation of BBC directors **Tim Davie** and **Deborah Turness**. The first result on the search engine wasn’t from a major news outlet, but from a newsletter by **Anter Yaşa** – a writer whom **Sami Eerola** in *Laitaoikeiston viikkokatsaus* describes as a conspiracy theorist aligned with the True Finns party. A basic search pulled us into someone else’s agenda, this time a disturbing one.

At the same time, the social media giant Meta has stopped all political, social, and election-related advertising in the EU. The company blames new EU rules, while Facebook and Instagram are under investigation for suspicions of failing to combat disinformation and misleading advertising. These tech giants insist regulation ‘ties their hands,’ even when they failed to act responsibly in the first place. All of this of course leads to the uncomfortable question of what can truth even mean in this time, when information is fragmented, personalized and manipulated? In this issue of *Gazeta Sasha*, we explore different answers to that question.

Johanna Porkkala looks at *tanish-bilish* networking culture in Uzbekistan and what it reveals about trust and social reality. **Kristian Ostanin** and **Erik Toikka** examine the discrimination dual citizens

face when looking for work in Finland.

Leo Ooms turns to written experiences of Russian trans* individuals and their existence, while **Isaac Steinmeyer** examines how visual art in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan has been used to construct its national identity by merging the historical, mythological, and political. **Tommaso Valastro** reflects on our relationship with the truth and how our secondhand experiences shape how we consume information about Russia’s invasion against Ukraine. And of course, we learn the basics of Russian propaganda both in **Kacper Regulski’s** satirical guide and **Mirka Lindgren’s** reading of the Soviet Karelian newspaper *Totuus*.

Lastly, we warmly welcome the new *Gazeta Sasha* editorial board and wish the best of luck to the incoming Editors-in-Chief, Leo Ooms and Kacper Regulski. As we turn the page, most of our current board will be stepping down, including our long-standing and wonderful graphic designers, **Lucina Rudloff** and **Lotta Aro**. Thank you to everyone who has helped make *Gazeta Sasha* a special platform for students to learn and grow, as writers, editors or creators, amid their studies. 📖

Chair's Greetings

Dear *Gazeta* readers!

As we approach the end of the semester, and soon the end of the whole year, it is time to reflect on all that has happened. This year our beloved organization celebrated its 15th anniversary and hosted a memorable party in early November. The night was filled with joy, dancing, insightful discussions, new and old connections and good food. Just how I imagine Sasha being now and in the future years.

This year we also organized a bunch of other events and possibilities for our students to get to meet like-minded people and share their passion for the region. In the spring, we visited the Nootti museum in Tampere, and in November we had the chance to visit the Embassy of Kazakhstan in

Helsinki. We welcomed new students at our annual picnic in June and continued our monthly pub nights. I would say it was genuinely a good year.

As I am approaching the end of my Sasha career, I want to thank everyone who has joined our events, shared their ideas and thoughts, and supported the organization. I have learned so much from all of you and gained so many new perspectives. With the election of a new Sasha board coming up, I and my fellow board members encourage everyone interested to bring your ideas, join the election meeting and get the show on the road. 🇸🇫

Karoliina Keskitalo
Chair of the board



CONTENTS

- 8** **Small solutions, big problems? Problems & opportunities of tanish-bilish networking culture in Uzbekistan through a foreign lens**
by Johanna Porkkala
- 12** **A Guide on how to create Russian disinformation**
by Kacper Regulski
- 17** **The truth is not done with us yet**
by Tommaso Valastro
- 19** **Paint & Canvas: Reimagining of Kyrgyz identity in a post-soviet context**
by Isaac Steinmeyer
- 23** **The Finnish Pravda: How to spot the red flags of propaganda**
by Mirka Lindgren née Laakso
- 27** **Transing Truth**
by Leo Ooms
- 31** **Kaksoiskansalaisuus, turvallisuus ja yhdenvertaisuus**
by Kristian Ostanin & Erik Toikka
- 40** **"Truth" Movie Recommendations**
by Kacper Regulski

Text and photos – Johanna Porkkala

Small solutions, big problems? Problems and opportunities of tanish-bilish networking culture in Uzbekistan through a foreign lens



Uzbekistan is trying to open up to the world in search of foreign investments and societal development, following the reforms initiated by the president Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Chasing economic and societal development after President Karimov's death has led the country to seek to attract foreign experts from western democratic societies to work in Uzbekistan. While the country manages to bring western workforce in, its informal society and networking practices often make work difficult for these foreign experts. What kind of challenges, for example, do Finnish education representatives face while working in Uzbekistan? In this text I tackle the pros and cons of the Uzbek networking culture called tanish-bilish in the work life of foreigners, through my own experience of working as a Finnish teacher in the country's capital, Tashkent.

A year ago in September I had just arrived in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with my Finnish colleague and her husband when something peculiar happened. We had agreed to teach Finnish for a year at a private university in Tashkent, operated by the Honorary Consul of Finland in Uzbekistan. My colleague and I were supposed to get our work visas at the Tashkent airport upon arrival. However, for some reason, the officials simply let us enter the country without issuing our visas, and we didn't realise this at the moment. This caused a big bureaucratic problem, as officially we had entered the country as tourists. Our employer, however, came up with a solution quite quickly, without even making an appearance himself. The next day we returned to the airport with one of our Uzbek colleagues and our passports. The colleague called an airport employee, shook hands with

him, handed over our passports along with a noticeable amount of money, and disappeared.



After we waited for what felt like ten minutes, while glancing at the anti-corruption-stickers on the walls of the airport, the men returned happily with visas on our passports. The following day, we drove half an hour to the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and re-entered Uzbekistan in order to get stamps on our visas and finalise the odd procedure. Despite the comedic nature of it all, for us Finns it was an on-the-spot-lesson on how things get done in Uzbekistan. *Xush kelibsiz!*

This visa-case is a good example of what Uzbeks would call a good use of tanish-bilish networks. The website of the Global Informality Project describes the phenomenon of tanish-bilish as follows[1]:

“Tanish-bilish is an Uzbek term for networks/contacts used for extracting both material and non-material resources, or just for ‘getting things done’ (ishingni bitirish). Tanish-bilish literally translates as ‘acquaintance-known’, and may thus be considered a form of social capital” (Rano Turaeva, Global Informality Project).

In short, tanish-bilish is an Uzbek term for a practice of networking, a type of patron-client relationship. Even though the many kinds of this type of informal networking – widespread in Central Asia – have long been explored academically, I prefer to refer to the Uzbeks’ own concept of tanish-bilish (explained by Turaeva) to make my point fit the context of Uzbekistan.

Turaeva describes tanish-bilish as “strategic contacts who can solve problems or help one to achieve goals” (Turaeva, 2022, p. 10). In my case, the visa problem was handled quickly from my employer’s side by contacting the airport staff and paying them to help us – which did show the efficient, problem-solving nature of this informal networking. The tanish-bilish, however, has its own set of rules and cannot be exercised by everyone everywhere. Uzbekistan is a highly hierarchical society where social status, age, family background, and other forms of kinship play part in forming and using tanish-bilish. If a person is higher up in the hierarchy (katta), the lower-status person (kichkina) usually fulfills their request, forming a sort of patron-client type network (Turaeva, 2022, p. 12). Understanding one’s status in the local hierarchy is crucial for navigating this type of transactional networking – which can be a difficult nut to crack for foreigners coming from outside these social systems.



After months of working in Uzbekistan, it became apparent that this kind of networking was used almost daily by locals. My colleague and I were shocked when we realized that cheating in exams was more of a rule than an exception, even among the really good students. The weaker students would convince the better ones to help them cheat, or would simply ask us for a better grade and were surprised when we refused (without extra work).

It often felt as though we and our students didn’t understand each other’s social expectations. My colleague and I tried our best to work normally, as if we were still in Finland. After all, we were there to showcase the Finnish style of education. However, the informal culture in Uzbekistan made genuine learning and teaching very difficult, as the students tried to use tanish-bilish to get around in their studies.

For example, while working at a state university, one student asked me to raise her grade to an A, but I told her that her points were not quite enough for that. Soon after, the zav of the faculty called me and told me to raise her grade “because she works at the Dean’s office, and we all try to help each other out.” The call was, of course, a way to remind me of everyone’s position in the university’s networking system, while contradicting my Finnish work ethics. These kinds of instances made me question the whole purpose of working in Uzbekistan, despite the apparent demand for Finnish expertise in education.

As mentioned before, tanish-bilish networking can be useful for its problem-solving qualities. However, foreigners and Uzbeks often have a different idea of what is a problem to be solved. It was, of course, beneficial to have our work visas arranged quickly, but actual learning through hard work was often seen as a problem for the students to overcome – which, at the end of the day, made me question the whole purpose of obtaining those work visas in the first place.

Yet, I was happy to see at least two students truly learn out of thirty. It seemed that even small, grassroot level changes were challenged by the locals' differing priorities and reliance on informal networks. Ironically, I do realize that my own presence in Uzbekistan was itself a direct result of tanish-bilish – it was because I knew the Honorary Consul that I was able to work in different universities in Tashkent, despite not having a formal background in teaching Finnish (my background is in Russian).

As showcased through my experiences, informal practices like tanish-bilish are a two-edged sword: both constructive and destructive in nature (Aminova & Jegers, 2011). It is understandable how these informal practices came to be: they emerged to combat the uncertainty caused by failures of formal systems after the fall of the Soviet Union, all while working as an alternative space for “getting things done” (Turaeva, 2022, p. 13). For locals, this can mean getting a job or a place at a university – or even just reliable information (Aminova & Jegers, 2011).

While working in Uzbekistan, I noticed how this kind of networking indeed did get small-scale things done efficiently (for example, students getting a good grade for little work). However, it also does a great disservice for the society in the long term, as professionalism won't develop – or in our case, is not even implemented in spheres where it is needed. Not only is this a culture shock, but it also makes everyday work difficult for us foreigners, especially those coming from western democratic societies with little corrupt practices and hierarchy.

On a larger scale, international organisations like the EU and OSCE have been formally trying to implement practices like good governance, media freedom, and other western ideals into Central Asian societies since the late 1990s, yet with little visible change. Ideally, to tackle this paradox between theory and practice, both Uzbeks and foreign experts should engage in meaningful dialogue to better understand each other's roles and goals in implementing foreign knowledge and practices in Uzbekistan. But can we even begin to understand each other's priorities in this problem solving equation, where tanish-bilish was born?

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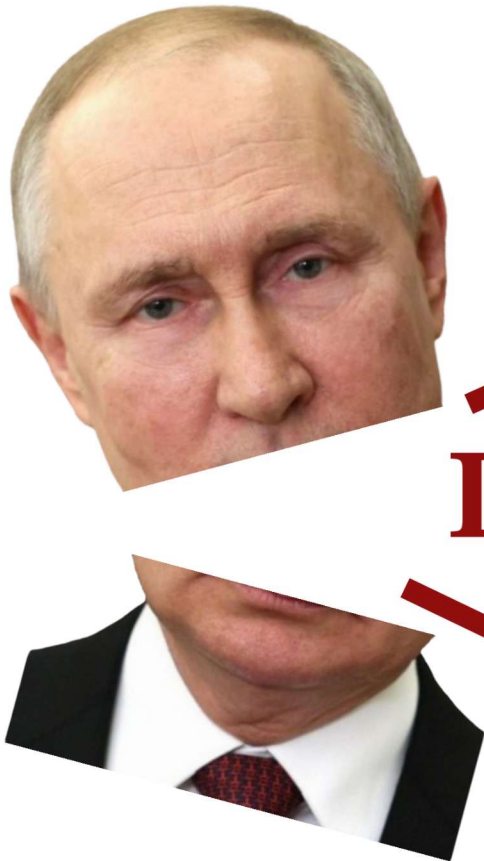
**Guide
on how
to create
Russian
disinfo**



ormation

Graphic - Daniel Aleksandersen

Text - Kacper Regulski



DISCLAIMER!

This is a satirical text aimed at exposing and mocking Russian propaganda narratives and talking points surrounding the brutal invasion of Ukraine. For that purpose, the language used in the text heavily draws from the Kremlin lexicon, utilizing terms such as SVO, goyda, or Gayropa. Similarly, I opted for the Russian spelling of Kyiv – that being Kiev – for linguistic accuracy. I also refer to existing Russian disinformation campaigns, such as the “[Merry Anti-Russian Christmas](#)” campaign. For additional information on how to

combat Russian disinformation and develop resistance to manipulative tactics, please visit [debunk.org](#) or read “[Seven Tips for Spotting Disinformation Related to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#)” – [Stanford Report](#). There exists a plethora of remarkable guides on dispelling Russian manipulation; those are just two that I have used in the past when working on the Russian media landscape. You are also more than welcome to email me. I will gladly share the resources I have amassed on the topic.

Greetings, dear compatriot!

We are pleased that you could join us today for the tutorial on how to spread honest and truthful information that serves the people! We will walk you through core concepts, which will help you provide truthful information to your audience, while also exposing the lies of foreign agents. We will touch upon the fundamental strategies: dismiss fakes, straighten out facts, point in the correct direction, and inform of the true condition. Let's begin!

Firstly, you need to know how to spot a fake and how to react effectively. Let us imagine a situation – you enter a conversation about the *Special Military Operation (SVO)* and someone starts accusing the Russian Federation of unprecedented aggression in Ukraine. What do you do? CORRECT – We need to curb their audacity by highlighting their internal contradictions. They say “Ukraine,” you say “What about Iraq?” and “What about Kosovo?” This should prompt that Western piece of filth to reconsider its own moral compass.

Secondly, if that somehow does not satisfy their craving for getting obliterated by facts and logic, you remind them who the true victim here is and who defeated the Nazis! Who took Berlin by storm? Was it the Americans? The English or the French? It was the Red Army! Remind them that it is the Ukrainians who are reviving the *neo-Nazi ideology* and that we are just continuing the fight of our forefathers. In case they dare call it a “w*r” interrupt them swiftly and remark that you need a declaration of “w*r” for it to constitute one and educate them on the proper terminology – “*Special Military Operation*” that will end any moment from now. Remind them that we are not on the offensive. Through the *SVO*, we are simply protecting the Russian-speaking majority of Ukraine from the *Kiev junta*.

Thirdly, it is crucial to let the *LGBT-fascists* know that they cannot exist within their ukro-lies. Point them to the truth. Counter their disinformation on “Russian aggression” by pointing to the relentless American imperialist expansion to the East. As we all know, Gorbachev negotiated that NATO would not move a step eastwards, and what? Pribaltika, three natively Russian-speaking republics, have been claimed as Washington's satellites. It is essential to know history; to understand what really happened and why we were forced to save *Malorossiya* from betraying us. If they continue to undermine the constitutionally-backed territorial integrity of our great nation, remind them that Texas has all the potential for secession with its oil and warm water ports! I bet they never thought about that!

Finally, the mindless slave of NATO propaganda is most likely deluded to the extent that they believe that they are any sort of a match for our military. Ask that *Gayropean*, if he truly believes that the Americans will care to die for their little strategically insignificant shithole? The answer is short – no. You need to have them realize the nature of their conditions – there is nothing worse than a motivated *Gayropean*, who believes that his petty alliance stands a chance. We would not like to draw the blood of the sons of our nation for no reason, would we? However, as the last bastion of Christianity and conservatism on this god forsaken continent, it is our duty to sacrifice them.

Given that we have a bit of time, it is also important to point the Westerner to a valuable source of information. You cannot allow all your hard work to go down the drain the next time they watch a TikTok from a *sex-LGBT-NATO instructor*, can you? If they continue to feel positively about their colonizers (Stockholm syndrome), remind

them about the fact that summer does not last forever. Winter, which, may I remind you, is cold, is coming. And do you know what they, those resources-deprived misguided *pindosy*, need? Energy. A lot of it! Remind them that they shall freeze without us and our gas. Sure, the last couple of winters were warm, and they were fine without us, but time will prove us right!

Also, encourage them to understand that they cannot solely rely on Western so-called “media.” For a comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted situation, they should integrate genuine sources. In case they are still too brainwashed to understand merit and proper journalism, at

least tell them to listen to the few “smart” Westerners that are left remaining in that liberal nightmare. Maybe that will have their rusty gears turning in that polluted remnant of a brain.

Ah, I almost forgot – when interacting online, pretend to be an American or whatever that gives you the moral high ground. Call yourself something like “@TheTruePatriot89” or “@SaveEurope204,” and do not forget to use your VPN!

On this note, I would like to thank you for your attention, patriot! The battle is on, again, goyda! 🇺🇸



GLOSSARY

Foreign agent (rus. иноагент) – designated term for any person or organization, whom the Russian government claims to be working under foreign influence or receiving financial assistance from abroad.

Kiev junta (rus. киевская хунта) – term used by the Kremlin to refer to the current Ukrainian government as they claim the Revolution of Dignity to be a coup d’etat.

Malorossiya (rus. Малороссия) – a historical term for Rus territories majority of which lay in modern-day Ukraine. Russian propaganda abuses it nowadays to legitimize its claims over Ukraine.

Pindos (rus. пиндос) – a homophobia-charged slur for Westerners, particularly Americans.

Gayropa (rus. Гейропа) – a homophobic propaganda term, which is meant to delegitimize European civilization by associating it with non-traditional values and lifestyle.

Sex-LGBT-NATO instructor – an anti-Western term coined by the pro-Kremlin political scientist Aleksander Mal’kevich, who was complaining about an HSE lecturer openly discussing homosexuality during a talk, which was supposedly attended by an underage girl.

Goyda (rus. зойда) – a forcefully revived Russian version of the old Turkic interjection “hayde” that can be understood as a call to action akin to “come on” or “let’s go”. It was (in)famously popularized by Ivan Okhlobystin, a Russian actor, during an event celebrating the annexation of four Ukrainian oblasts.

THE TRUTH IS NOT US DONT SMITHS ONE YET WITH NOT

'Is this supposed to be good news? This is awful news.'

'LaMont, are you willing to listen to a Remark about what is true?'

'Okeydokey!'

'The truth will set you free. But not until it is finished with you.'

Infinite Jest, p. 389
David Foster Wallace

Text – Tommaso Valastro

Anyone who has even the slightest interest in the post-Soviet space is intimately familiar with the whirlwind of anger and disbelief that enveloped us in the months following February 24, 2022. To be honest, there are many ways in which we were not protagonists in those events, and in a certain sense it seems almost presumptuous to bring them to light in order to talk about ourselves. Yet, apart from the obvious moral responsibility of not having done enough, that first period of cold sweats tells us a great deal about us, and in way more than one aspect.

I have no intention of reiterating how unprepared many Europeans were for the concept of war: distant in time and space, I fear that for many, war will continue to be something that happens to others, until it happens to them. Nor do I think it is useful to revisit the various prejudices that, with the help of deliberate disinformation campaigns, have long prevented informed analysis of Ukraine from reaching the general public. To tell the truth, what I am about to develop is an intentionally banal reflection, as banal as water is to fish in David Foster Wallace's famous metaphor: a reflection on the uneasy and twisted relationship we have developed with that public good called truth [1].

We live and breathe in a saturated information environment: a high-choice and high-pace media ecosystem in constant transformation, in which we consume and produce content at insane rates. This hyper-mediation of our social reality has the paradoxical effect of increasing our reach to world events and decreasing our share of non-mediated knowledge. By now, each of us has found some way to adapt to this informational overload. Unfortunately, many have given up on understanding most things, to the point that they try to avoid most news. But could people really do that after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine? Let's explore it with three examples.

It's February 24th, 2022. Imagine Riccardo, an Italian man in his forties with an upturned nose and a slightly hoarse voice. While shaving his beard, he listens to the news at full volume on his cell phone, much to his wife's complaints. As he notices a few gray hairs peeking out above his sideburns, the news manages to intermittently capture his attention through the buzzing of the electric razor. Or imagine Johann, a young German student with a passion for both revolutionary socialists and very avoidable missed deadlines. While hastily eating his breakfast, he compulsively updates his Twitter feed, with the grim frown of somebody who will not remain once the platform transforms into "X".


Imagine also Lucía, a bright law student from Madrid who just recently moved to Brussels for an internship at the European Commission. While sitting on the tram, she listens to a breaking news podcast. All three of them, by the end of the day, are very likely to have consumed the Russian aggression as a main course of their media diet. You may ask them: “Is it true that the Russian army has just crossed the border with Ukraine?” They’ll most likely reply that this is true. Lucía will also have no problem asserting that Russia illegally invaded a sovereign state, and Riccardo will probably shrug without much bother. With Johann, we might already run into some specifications about NATO expansion but, in the end, he’ll at least admit the formal violation of international law. Terrible as the truth may be, it’s at least shared and public.

Fast forward to late March 2022: the inhumane bombing of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theater in Mariupol by the Russian Armed Forces makes its way to the media diet of our protagonists [2]. While Riccardo keeps trimming his beard, Lucía pauses the podcasts and starts drafting a long LinkedIn post about it, urging for more sanctions. In the meanwhile, Johann has shifted his doomscrolling from Twitter to Telegram, where the channel “Anti-Spiegel” labels the bombing as “Western propaganda.” All of a sudden, the truth has turned from public good to private belief. Confused by the contradictory reports, Riccardo will soon conclude that he can’t really tell what’s happening outside of his personal experience, which is the best way he can find to feel better about civilians being bombed by an aggressor. If you thought that only in Putin’s Russia nothing is true and everything is possible, you may want to reconsider: in Johann’s mind, the 600 victims of that bombing will easily become just a propaganda tool of the Associated Press, while Riccardo will be too bothered by his own life to care about numbers. Furious about the slaughter, Lucía will include independent reports of the event in a policy note for her internship, but she’ll be too busy with her tasks to actually read them through. In the end, all three of them will have reached what is their personal truth: a coherent way to account for a

headline without putting anything too much into discussion.

How did we get from shared knowledge to private truth? As anticipated, the key lies in our relationship with truth. The prevalence of second-hand experiences in our knowledge of world events has become an excuse for our ignorance, but it could be easily overcome. All of us, at different points, have been Riccardo, Johann, or Lucía: too busy to be bothered with politics, too uncomfortable to accept some truth, or too irritated to challenge falsehood. And in this frenetic pursuit of some short-term comfort, we may have missed a chance or two to give our contribution to restore truth as a public good. Overcoming the urge to look for immediate comfort requires effort; to restore a reasonable societal agreement on the epistemological foundations of our world, we need to make this effort together. Only then, maybe,

“And in this frenetic pursuit of some short-term comfort, we may have missed a chance or two to give our contribution to restore truth as a public good.”

will truth be done with us, setting us free. 

[1] DFW was an American novelist and philosopher. In his famous commencement speech at Kenyon College in 2005, he employed the image of fish not knowing what water is to describe those self-evident, all-encompassing conditions of existence that, being so constant and unremarked upon, remain unseen by virtue of their very ubiquity. Similarly, I argue that the very ubiquity of our problem with truth consigns it to the unnoticed background of most lives..

[2] The Russian Armed Forces bombed the theatre, which was being used as a shelter by over 1,200 people, on March 16, 2022, with an unknown death toll. An AP news investigation suggests that approximately 600 people were killed. Images circulated of the theater which had “CHILDREN” painted in massive Cyrillic letters around the theater.

Paint and Canvas: Reimagining of Kyrgyz Identity in a Post-Soviet Context

Text — Isaac Steinmeyer

Photo — Gapar Aitiev (1912–1984), Kerme-Too, 1969. Painting. Image sourced from the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts (KCRMS). © Gapar Aitiev. https://kcrms.org/collection/Data_Code_923



In the years following Kyrgyzstan's independence on August 31st, 1991, the task of reshaping the nation was not only political but cultural. The collapse of Soviet authority in December 1991 left behind a vacuum of symbols, narratives, and belonging. Artists and cultural institutions became some of the first to fill this void, not merely by creating new works, but by reassembling fragments of myth, memory, and history into a coherent image of nationhood. Through paintbrushes, monuments, and cameras, they helped to construct a vision of the past that merged what was historical with what was legendary, alongside the considerations for what the state needed for its own legitimacy. These reconstructed memories projected across the landscape and culturescape, giving Kyrgyzstan an image of continuity at a time when continuity itself was in question—from **Gapar Aitiev's** mountainous landscapes to the monumental figure of Manas and the restless gaze of contemporary videographers documenting the bustle of modernization. Taken together, these works show that Kyrgyz identity has been rebuilt not only through past archives, but also through images that remember the nation's history. This work examines three of these forms—Aitiev's landscape portrait of Kerme-Too, the Manas Monument in Ala-Too Square, and **Kasmalieva** and **Djumaliev's** video-art piece “A New Silk Road”—to trace how Kyrgyzstan assembles an imagined memory in a post-Soviet moment.

Among the first visual languages used by the Kyrgyz nation to see itself was the work of Gapar Aitiev (1912–1984), often referred to as the father of Kyrgyz modern art (Vecherniy Bishkek 2022). Painting in the late Soviet period, Aitiev merged realism with local imagery. His mountainous scenes, marked by white peaks reminiscent of yurts and plains riddled with riders and animals, became not just depictions of nature but reconstructions of ancestral memory. In portraying the landscape as sacred, Aitiev clearly connected the Kyrgyz nation with the modern

state as a part of the Soviet Union. After independence, these same images were absorbed into the national iconography, serving as proof of deep cultural endurance. What began as subtle resistance to Soviet homogenization later became a foundation for state mythology. Though this idea did not originate from Aitiev, his work clearly showed how the mountains served not as mere geography, but as an imagined origin of the people.

If Aitiev's work painted memory, the Manas Monument in Bishkek's Ala-Too Square sculpted it into power. The monument, erected after the statue to **Lenin** was removed in 2003, signaled a deliberate act of state re-imagination (Wood 2022, 2–4). Manas, who is a mythical-historic hero, was elevated as the embodiment and symbol of Kyrgyz sovereignty. His metallic form, raised on a horseback staring out at the Ala-Too mountains, transformed the world's largest oral epic, the Epic of Manas, into political legitimacy. This has, in turn, acted as one of the state's most visible acts of cultural synthesis: fusing legend, history, and governance into a single location. The square surrounding the monument moved from being an area for Soviet control to a monument for national rituals like independence day ceremonies and Nowruz festivals, as well as the protests that later unfolded. In doing so, the Kyrgyz government turned cultural memory into civic legitimation, using the figure of Manas to naturalize its authority by rooting political power in mythic continuity. Manas moved from being just a character into being an instrument of the state, a symbol through which it could claim the right to be a continuation of a primordial path. This symbolic expansion continued even more recently: in August 2025, the government installed a new Manas statue, and formally renamed the city of Jalal-Abad to Manas in September 2025, extending the symbolic presence from the capital into the national map itself (Bishkek Mayor's Office 2025; Tukueva 2025).



Opening ceremony of the “Айкөл Манас” monument, Bishkek, August 2025. Photo courtesy of the Bishkek Mayor’s Office, official website. (© 2025 Мэрия города Бишкек).

By the early 2000s, a new generation of artists began reimagining the image of their nation. In the video-art project ‘A New Silk Road,’ Gulnara Kasmalieva and Muratbek Djumaliev followed convoys of trucks across the mountainous Kyrgyz highways, showing them hauling goods and labor between China and Europe (Queensland Art Gallery 2006). The mountains fade into the smog of the future, engines replacing the singing of the Epic of Manas. This work portrays Kyrgyzstan not as a timeless land of legend, but as a new cog in the international order. In contrast to the state’s heroic stillness, these artists visualize memory within the international order, bringing together the imagery of camels crossing the Tien Shan with new flows of goods between China and Europe. Their film transforms trade from just economic to a cultural piece as well. Where the government falls upon a historical understanding of Kyrgyz nationhood, Kasmalieva and Djumaliev highlight the window to the future for the Kyrgyz people. Their work marks a shift from mythic continuity to lived

transience, in the valleys of the mountains where the roads wind.

Across these pieces, Kyrgyz nationhood emerges not as a discovery, but as a design into a new understanding. Each artwork reflects a stage in the state’s construction of imagined memory. Aitiev provides the ancestral landscape, Manas provides the heroic lineage, and Kasmalieva and Djumaliev expose the uncertain present that follows. Together they reveal how post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan built its national identity up by merging the historical, mythological, and political. This process did not erase genuine culture, but reorganized it. The nation that looked backward to find itself ultimately found that memory could be shaped as easily as canvas, metal, or film. In this sense, Kyrgyzstan’s visual art does more than reflect independence, but builds it. Through art, the state transformed fragments of past and myth into an image of continuity, constructing a nation which had been held down for so long under Russian colonialism. **g**

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First lesson

If someone especially exclaims that they are telling the truth, it's usually a red flag, implying signs of propaganda. *Totuus*, or "Truth" was a Soviet Karelian newspaper published in the area of Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic from 1940 until 1955. As some of you might guess, it was, simply put, the Finnish-language equivalent of the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, *Pravda*.

Totuus announced in its first issue that "the newspaper is the sharpest weapon of the Party." Indeed, it was vital for the Communist Party to control the media – and therefore the narrative – not only of communist ideology, but also of other ideologies, such as imperialism. Nowadays, the Soviet communist propaganda is probably one of the most recognizable historical examples of propaganda, and *Totuus* was no exception. To get its message across, different methods and means of propaganda were put to use in the paper. With the help of *Totuus*, I will teach you to detect more red flags in media, which will help you evaluate whether something is propaganda or not.

Second lesson

"Kansan kaikki voimat murskaamaan vihollista!"
"All the might of the people to crush the enemy!"
Totuus, July 5th 1941

Does the text urge you to act in a certain way? There's the next red flag. During the Second World War, *Totuus* aimed to engage every single reader in war efforts, either by fighting at the front, working hard in the industry or agriculture or contributing in some other way. The call for action can sometimes be less direct. In *Totuus*, for example, big headlines were devoted to various kinds of competitions in which citizens at least seemingly participated. Factories would compete on who can produce most goods in the shortest time, and the editorial board of *Totuus* was even challenged to a marching competition. The purpose of these kinds of texts was to encourage citizens to join in the same efforts.

According to this lesson, most advertisements are propaganda as well, since their purpose is usually to make you buy something. **Joonas Pörsti** has argued that the aim of propaganda is to change how people behave – not how people think. It makes sense after a short scrutinization – your thoughts exist only in your head, but what shows outside and therefore matters to others, to communities, societies, and businesses, is how you act. Both **Lenin** and **Hitler** emphasized political action over ideological doctrines.

Third lesson

"Stalinin nimi huulillaan sankarilliset punaiset soturit murskasivat Karjalan kannaksen rautabetoniset linnoitukset – –"

"With Stalin's name on their lips, the heroic red warriors crushed the iron concrete fortresses on the Karelian Isthmus – –"

Totuus, September 29th 1940

Is the text grandiose, loud, absolute, perhaps even irritating? If the style leaves little room for other voices, that is another red flag. *Totuus* accepted only one version of the story: the communist one. For example, the Winter War was painted as a threat from Finland that had materialised, while the opposite – the Finnish side of the story – was never heard.

The language used in *Totuus* was indeed often grandiose, loud and absolute, definitely something one could also find irritating. For example, when comparing the Finnish society with the Soviet one, the opposites were truly polar. The Finnish society was not only bad, it was horrible and hopeless and on its way to the worse, while the Soviet society was idealised as dreamy, excellent, and on its way to take over the world.

Sometimes propaganda may slip from absolutes and begins to contradict itself. This happened in *Totuus* as well. For example, the state of Finland was sometimes presented as evil itself, but at other times as a mere vessel for the Western imperialists such as Great Britain. Pörsti introduces an idea

famous in propaganda studies: propagandists themselves should not believe in the propaganda they spread, since doing so would make it difficult to change the message when needed. Propaganda is, by nature, an instrument to achieve a goal, and it does not have to follow any ideals, such as consistency.

Fourth lesson

”– – valkosuomalaisten lentokoneet pakenivat heti, kun Punaisen Armeijan lentokoneet lähestyivät niitä.”

”– – the airplanes of the White Finns fled immediately when the airplanes of the Red Army came closer.”

Totuus, October 5th 1940

Is something too good – or too awful – to be true? There is no denying that horrible events have taken place around the world lately, and therefore the news have been truly awful as well. However, if a media outlet thrives on shock value of either extreme positives or extreme negatives, you might want to consider that a red flag.

Totuus published many war reports as well as industrial statistics, both of which tended to exceed all expectations and celebrate Soviet success. It has been proven that the Soviet media grossly exaggerated their victories and hid their losses, which is very obvious in *Totuus* as well. In its pages, Finnish soldiers are always losing, and the Red Army is always winning. The stories make war seem easy and sometimes even amusing, since according to *Totuus*, the White Finns are hilarious with their bad skills and even worse habits.

The purpose of such texts was likely to calm families on the home front. Enemy images had to be carefully balanced – they needed to be frightening enough to evoke hatred, but not so scary as to cause worry and fear. Balancing is probably one of the big challenges of modern media as well. Consider, for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russo-Ukrainian war, and the atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza. How to

report on these events without wreaking more havoc and causing unnecessary fear among people, yet still present a realistic picture of what is going on? The step towards propaganda is sometimes a slippery one, and truth is often stranger than fiction.

Fifth lesson

”– – suomalaiset valkobandiitit luulivat hyötyvänsä neuvostokansan kustannuksella.”

”– – the white Finnish bandits thought they could take advantage of the Soviet nation.”

Totuus, August 14th 1941

Do you notice the same words appearing time and time again? Always the same storyline and recurring concepts? Repetition is one of the strongest tools of propaganda, and therefore it makes a fitting final lesson.

In *Totuus*, an enemy image of the Finnish people was created by consistently attaching the word “white” to “Finnish” or “Finns”. This was a way for *Totuus* to separate the good Finns – the red ones, aka communists – from the enemy Finns, the white ones, aka capitalists. When parts of Finland had been attached to the Soviet Union after the Winter War, **Stalin** promoted the Finnish language in Soviet Karelia. As a result, the writers of *Totuus* were mostly Finns or Karelians. The word “white” was therefore essential in constructing the enemy image – otherwise, the propagandists might have been targeting themselves. For the Soviet Union, the communist ideology was more important than nationality.


You can test yourself on this fifth lesson with a simple thought experiment. Choose a few debated terms and do a “rapid fire” exercise: say the very first thing that comes to mind when you hear a certain term. You may quickly notice suspicious combinations, such as immigrants and crime. No matter your ideology, you, too, are a victim of current mass media, and therefore might hold surprising connections in your subconscious without ever having consciously formed them. Repetition is the key to effective propaganda. If

you tell a lie often enough, people will eventually start to believe it.

Resisting propaganda

Totuus serves well as a case study example of propaganda, as it breathes the communist narrative, delivers fierce war-time messaging, and strives to create strong images of both the enemies of the Soviet Union and its own readers – being the central newspaper of a newly formed region. In *Totuus*, therefore, propaganda is often clear and recognizable. However, this is not always the case especially with modern media. Sometimes propaganda is very subtle, believable and great at hiding.

With the help of my five short lessons, you can now analyze information to see whether it is malicious or not. Does it claim to speak the truth, urge you to act in a certain way, speak very loudly, exaggerate its message, and repeat it often? There you have enough red flags to confidently declare a message as propaganda.

In fact, after reading this article, you will probably start noticing more red flags in the media than before. It is difficult to spot attempts at influence when caught off guard, but once you know the signs, you know what to look for. When propaganda can be recognized, its influence can be resisted. Therefore, I urge everyone to learn more about propaganda in order to survive in the modern information mayhem – all while acknowledging that I am, in fact, urging you to take action, just as any proper propagandist would. 



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TRANSISTING
TRUTH

Writing any marginalized subject into being is fraught with reliance on a vocabulary that has historically been used to impose discursive violence as the lexicon used to signify the existence of these groups was initially conceptualized to oppress them. When writing Russian, trans* subjects into being—as this article intends to do—one has to carefully broach this issue of language as its tendency to legitimize binary oppositional logic may further violate the very individuals whose experiences the writing is intending to honour.

This dilemma illustrates the difficulties in articulating the notion of trans Truth. Beyond being reliant on anglocentric expressions which have historically been weaponised against trans* subjecthood, the recognition of the instability of the identity paradigm underlying trans*-ness negates the existence of a stable, palatable truth to be represented in writing. Still, my preferred method of expression remains to be the written word. As I seek solace in working within this confinement, I hope that the following piece is able to critically engage with the infinite truths of trans* existence in Russia by offering a tentative exploration of the topic. To this end, this writing operationalises the denotation trans* by virtue of the asterisk's grammatical ability to attach to innumerable suffixed terms affirming the multiplicity of trans* experience (Green & Bey, 2017).*

Text – Leo Ooms

In the mid-2000s, following the establishment of a collective LGBT identity, queer protest activities emerged in Russia as activists drew on the long-standing eurocentric paradigm of LGBT visibility politics. Engaging in public protest and developing an elaborate vocabulary to articulate non-heterosexual experience in the Russian Federation were strategies to advocate for queer rights (Buyantueva, 2022). While visibility can be a site of embodied resistance critical to furthering the rights of marginalized individuals, this has proven to be problematic in the context of authoritarian Russia (Edenborg, 2020; Stella, 2013, 2015). The Russian state exposes the vulnerabilities of visibility by utilising it to further dehumanise queer individuals and making them hypervisible as an alien, foreign, unified entity embodying a threat to Russia's national traditions in order to present itself as a transnational defender of traditional values (Chandler, 2021; Healey, 2019). Considering the extensive history of trans* individuals in Russia, as evidenced by their explicit recognition by the state's legal and medical institutions throughout the 20th century, claims of queerness being a foreign import are baseless (Kirey-Sitnikova, 2025b). Still, rather than visibility being an opportunity for queer individuals to narrate their lives autonomously, its politicisation in Russia merely exacerbates the violence they experience. For trans*

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individuals in particular, this extends to legal and medical violence, as well as everyday violence in light of their hypervisibility as transgressive individuals undermining the Russian state having resulted in rising attacks (Katsuba, 2023; Kondakov, 2022; Kirey-Sitnikova, 2025a).

In light of the increasingly repressive sphere surrounding Russian trans* existence, activism has shifted away from a visibility paradigm towards internal community-building (Levitanius & Kislitsyna, 2024). The contemporary emergence of a trans* autobiographical genre within Russian queer communities exemplifies these efforts. Trans* autobiographical works directly challenge the idea of a singular Truth as it affirms the notion of limitless trans* subjectivities by displaying a breadth of trans* voices embodying the transformative potential of the concept. Reliance on lived experience and a first-person perspective allows the genre to be untethered from medicolegal structures of oppression, enabling trans* individuals and their loved ones to cultivate solidarity and compassion amongst themselves (Dowling, 2022). This writing seeks to honour these efforts and trouble the notion of a singular trans* Truth by first exploring its historical distortions from a medical and legal perspective, before juxtaposing this with

contemporary Russian trans* autobiographical articulations. In doing so, this article hopes to embed Russian trans* activism within Black feminist thought as it argues for the applicability of an ethic of love. To do so, the article relies on Vykhod's [выход] collection of trans* autobiographical stories entitled "We're Here: A Collection of trans* Stories" [Мы здесь. Сборник транс*историй] (2017). Rather than highlight individual works, this piece regards the collection of autobiographical works as a whole and refuses to reiterate these stories to respect the agency of individual authors.

Engagement with sensitive materials originating from a highly marginalised group necessitates acknowledgement of the researcher's positionality. As a rather vocal and visible trans*, queer researcher, I find that my lived experiences are intricately connected to those described in the autobiographical works. This allows me to move through them with ease and care, finding familiarity and sanctuary within the transnational community, while maintaining a relevant distance as I am not Russian myself. Despite my trans* identity, this piece undoubtedly furthers the problematic politics of visibility by articulating non-cisgender identities in an academic setting (Buyantueva & Shevtsova, 2021). Therefore, it is important for academics writing on trans* lifecourses to be cognisant of this and ensure that the safety of trans* individuals remain at the core of their writing.

RUSSIAN MEDICOLEGAL TRANS* HISTORY

To counter the view that identities fulfilling the demands of the non-traditional epithet that has become mainstream in contemporary Russian politics are Western imports, the following section traces Russia's institutionalised trans history. It should be noted that tracing trans* lives in historical discourse is realistically impossible as their lives were frequently conflated with homosexuals or—as with penal transsexuality—simply seen as performative (Rachamimov, 2006). To illustrate, it is relevant to consider a widespread attitude of Russian doctors towards lesbians as individuals who must have their sex surgically changed to correct their transgression from heterosexuality (Stella, 2015). If we consider the occurrence of phalloplasty as evidence of a trans* life, then these individuals would supposedly

be included in the scope of this article. Healey (2019) aptly describes the many issues present in biographical works seeking to represent trans* lives: "Falsification, evasion, silence, trivialization, mistranslation, contempt, voyeurism" (p. 193).

Still, this article traces the modern, top-down recognition of gender-variance to the establishment of sexology in the early 20th century. In the 1920s and 1930s, Soviet sexology emerged as a scientific discipline concerned primarily with supposedly curing intersex individuals by performing sex-change operations which inadvertently revolutionised the field of gender-affirming care (Kirey-Sitnikova, 2025b). The lack of clear guidelines and vaguely liberal attitudes of Soviet sexologists enabled trans* individuals to access these treatments, if they were able to pose as intersex or hermaphrodites, a term which was more prevalent in Soviet discourse (Healey, 2019). Following the use of loopholes, the 1960s and 1970s formally marked the emergence of gender-affirming surgeries explicitly intended for trans* individuals. This emergence was accompanied by numerous decrees enabling the change of legal sex and name which was institutionalised in legal practice both in 1976 and 1997 (Kirey-Sitnikova, 2025a). Despite these formal arrangements enabling trans* individuals to obtain legal and medical gender recognition and supposedly affirming their livelihoods, recognition was reliant on trans* people engaging in a further violation of their own truth.

Accessing institutional arrangements involves a careful bureaucratic balancing act, where individuals have to prove their identities by obtaining a certificate from a medical commission consisting of a psychiatrist, sexologist, and a medical psychologist. This requires trans* individuals to reframe their livelihoods to align with a particular notion of trans normativity to access care (Halberstam, 2005). This normativity entails presenting an experience of disproportionate suffering due to the incongruence of their psychological experience of gender and their body. If a trans* individual delivers a convincing performance, then medical and legal staff might provide them with adequate care, but this is reliant on a delicate framing of their gender identity which does not leave room for discrepancies or doubts. This enables the occurrence of a medical transition which cures all ailments by aligning trans* people's gender and sex, making them a comprehensible individual who fits neatly into the category of woman or man once again. This

transnormative structure represents the margins of trans* experience, as it affirms only those who embody binary transness and wish to engage in a convincing performance of masculinity or femininity the moment their body aligns with female or male norms. Beyond these structures delegitimising non-binary existence, binary trans* individuals also undergo significant stress in aggrandising their suffering to awaken enough pity in professionals to allow them care. Expectations of a transnormative lifecourse persist in the Russian Federation, and in most other countries, as even despite the 2023 prohibition on gender-affirming care, there are still trans* individuals seeking informal care (Kirey-Sitnikova, 2025a).

Knowing this, it is shortsighted for anyone to claim trans* identity is a foreign import, as Russian history is exceedingly marked by instances of social, medical and legal gender incongruence. These episodes have resulted in the establishment of clear boundaries that mark trans* existence within the realms of a bureaucratic truth.

A TRANS* TROUBLING OF TRUTH

While it is an interesting endeavor to unearth trans* history through institutional narratives, it is one that is fundamentally opposed to the humanisation of contemporary trans* individuals who seek to reclaim the written word. This is at the centre of Vykhod's autobiographical collection, as trans* authors rewrite their own lives to affirm their humanity and connect to others. To respect authors in Vykhod's collection (2017), I do not wish to include excerpts from the writing as it would feel disrespectful and counterintuitive to cherry-pick phrases convenient to further this article's argument when attempting to honour trans* lives. As the collection is publicly available, the referenced text can be easily uncovered and can thus deepen individuals' understanding of trans* existence.

Following the public silencing of trans* voices through repressive legislation—such as the 2023 law framing queer individuals as extremists and the 2023


prohibition of gender-affirming care—these stories assume an introspective character as they are created for circulation within the queer community (Dowling, 2022). Writers in the collection explicitly state worries regarding their ability to remain anonymous following its publication in light of the danger of social repercussions were they to be outed. This is particularly evident for trans* feminine individuals whose gender identity is seen to violate the traditional masculinity so

“[...] it is shortsighted for anyone to claim trans* identity is a foreign import, as Russian history is exceedingly marked by instances of social, medical and legal gender incongruence.”

pervasive within contemporary Russian society (Edenborg, 2020). Their visible transgression of hegemonic gender norms already imposes an insecurity, resulting in a lack of willingness to further risk their safety to engage in community-building with others. The collection clearly acknowledges the intent for these works to remain within

the community. This is reflected in narratives that recognise the fluidity of identity, as the works are unconcerned with palatability to a wider audience, as the sole reason many trans* individuals cling onto labels and the transnormative narratives of extensive suffering is to legitimise themselves to access care or aid (p. 76). Rather than situate themselves in the identity paradigm that has informed visibility politics and medicolegal violence, some reject any notion of gender altogether (p. 119, 144). Beyond refusing to render an image of trans* livelihoods comprehensible to cisgender presumptions of gender, authors highlight moments of doubt which remain at the core of non-normative identity formation (p. 34; p. 42). Truth here does not assume a stable form, it fluctuates and is shown as inherently disorienting for lives whose bodily existence marks a departure from normative social existence. Unstable representations of truth are critical in moving beyond the imposition of medical and legal constructions of trans* existence as they are reliant on the imposition of a consistent vocabulary to systematically categorise and erase non-normative gender experiences (Kirey-Sitnikova, 2025b). The refusal to engage in this is an act of resistance towards these institutions. Though this resistance need not be publicised—as it is naive to assume the current Russian state would be receptive to any such claims—its reiteration in these works provides ample support for trans* individuals as their discomfort with the

institutional architecture is affirmed.

These trans* life stories are ways of strengthening community bonds that allow individuals to move beyond self-interest in challenging their oppression at the hands of the Russian state by fostering mutual understanding and care. In doing so, the collection recognises the centrality of love to the affirmation of trans* gender as loved ones, particularly those who are also trans*, allow for an individual to soften, enabling them to move beyond the experience of domination and feel alive (p. 27). This notion aligns with hooks' love ethic (1996; 1998), which is framed as an ethical approach against oppression by recognising various interlocking systems of domination. Rather than this collection being centred around the individuality of experience, the stories expose an inherent love and appreciation for humanity as a whole. Despite the oppression many individuals in the collection suffer, they make an active effort to extend kindness to others by recognising their humanity (p. 183). Awareness and community are critical to make sense of how systems of power have shaped one's experiences and understandings of self, and to reclaim love for personal and political recovery. In doing so, a love ethic provides a radical alternative to identity politics by emphasising community and commitments to ending another's oppression and exploitation. This claim mirrors the intent of the collection as one of the editors expressed the wish for the stories to not merely represent individual views, but be utilised as a voice for the collective Russophone trans* community (p. 6). By cultivating a space for themselves through the written word, the trans* individuals in this collection have effectively extended themselves to reclaim their own humanity and aid others who require the same, in light of the dehumanisation trans* individuals face. 

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KAKSOIS- KANSALAISUUS,



TURVALLISUUS JA YHDEN- VERTAISUUS

Kaksoiskansalaisuus, turvallisuus ja yhdenvertaisuus

Text – Kristian Ostanin & Erik Toikka

Venäjänkieliset ovat suurin vieraskielinen vähemmistö Suomessa (THL, 2025), ja tällä hetkellä Suomessa asuu noin 100,000 venäjänkielistä. Tilastokeskuksen mukaan Suomessa oli vuonna 2024 noin 41,000 Venäjän kaksoiskansalaista. Venäjän kaksoiskansalaiset ovat kuitenkin alttiita syrjinnälle, ja tämä näkyy myös työmarkkinoilla (Vähemmistövaltuutettu, 2010; Larja ym., 2012). Artikkelimme tuo esiin epäkohtia, jotka vaikuttavat Suomessa asuvien Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisten työnhakuun.

Venäjän laajamittaisen hyökkäyksen Ukrainaun alettua poliittinen ilmapiiri Suomessa on kiristynyt venäläisiä kohtaan. Heistä monet ovat kaksoiskansalaisia, ja sodan seuraukset ovat vaikuttaneet heihin laajasti. Käsittelemme artikkelissamme Suomen ja Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisten kokemuksia työhaussa ja valintaprosesseissa sekä sitä, miten ne ovat monesti ristiriidassa eri lakien kanssa.

Käymme läpi lainsäädäntöä ja turvallisuusselvityskäytäntöjä sekä tarkastelemme laeissa ja periaatteissa esiintyviä ristiriitoja. Tämän jälkeen esittelemme neljän haastateltavan kokemuksia työhausta kaksoiskansalaisena. Lopuksi käsittelemme yhdenvertaisuutta ja oikeudellisia kysymyksiä sekä ilmiön laajempaa yhteiskunnallista merkitystä.

Katsaus lainsäädäntöön ja turvallisuusselvityskäytäntöihin

Suomen lainsäädäntö sääntelee julkisiin virkoihin liittyviä kelpoisuusvaatimuksia kansallisen turvallisuuden näkökulmasta. Perustuslaki (PL 6 §) kieltää syrjinnän kansalaisuuden perusteella, mutta mahdollistaa kansalaisuusvaatimuksen asettamisen lailla tietyille julkisille viroille (PL 125 § 1 mom.),

kunhan tämä on rajattua ja perusteltua. Lain mukaan kaksoiskansalaisuus ei pääsääntöisesti estä virkaan nimittämistä.

Vuonna 2017 hallituksen esityksestä HE 70/2017 vp virkamieslakiin lisättiin (8 c §) velvoite varmistaa, ettei nimitettävällä ole virkaan kuuluvien tehtävien asianmukaista hoitoa vaarantavia sidonnaisuuksia. Turvallisuusselvityslaki (TSL) on keskeinen mekanismi riskienhallinnassa. TSL (3 § 1 mom. 9 a kohta) määrittää ulkomaansidonnaisuudet kattavasti, sisältäen nykyiset ja aikaisemmat kansalaisuudet, ulkomailla olevan varallisuuden sekä läheiset, jotka ovat toisen valtion kansalaisia. TSL 11 § 3 momentti edellyttää ulkomaansidonnaisuuksien osalta tapauskohtaista kokonaisharkintaa, jossa arvioidaan todennäköisyyttä sille, että sidonnaisuus altistaa henkilön epäasialliselle vaikuttamiselle tai painostukselle.

Sisäministeriön mukaan luotettavuuden arvioinnissa olennaista on, voisiko ulkomaansidonnaisuus altistaa selvityksen kohteen ei-toivotulle vaikuttamiselle.

Selvityksiä laativat suojelupoliisi (supo) sekä Puolustusvoimien tehtäviin hakeutuvien osalta Pääesikunta. Vuonna 2018 Puolustusvoimien ja Rajavartiolaitoksen sotilasvirkoihin ja niihin johtaviin opintoihin liittyviä kelpoisuusvaatimuksia tiukennettiin HE 252/2018:n pohjalta siten, että nimitys tai valinta edellyttää, ettei henkilöllä ole sidonnaisuutta, joka voisi vaarantaa valtion turvallisuutta tai maanpuolustusta. Sotilasviroissa edellytetään ehdotonta lojaalisuutta Suomen valtiota kohtaan.

Vaikka suojelupoliisi ja Pääesikunta laativat selvitykset, tekee lopullisen päätöksen rekrytoinnista vastaava viranomais.

TSL 11 § 3 momentti:

Toimivaltaisen viranomaisen on selvityksen kohteen ulkomaansidonnaisuuksien merkitystä selvityksen lopputulosta harkitessaan otettava erityisesti huomioon:

1 | ulkomaansidonnaisuuksien merkitys selvityksen perusteena olevan tehtävän kannalta;

2 | ulkomaansidonnaisuuksien luonne, kesto ja jatkuvuus;

3 | sen todennäköisyys, että ulkomaansidonnaisuus altistaa selvityksen kohteen hyväksikäytölle, painostukselle, lahjomiselle tai muulle epäasialliselle vaikuttamiselle;

4 | sen todennäköisyys, että ulkomaansidonnaisuus muulla kuin 3 kohdassa tarkoitettulla tavalla on omiaan vaarantamaan selvityksen kohteen mahdollisuuksia ja kykyä huolehtia selvityksen perusteena olevaan tehtävään kuuluvista velvollisuuksista riippumattomasti ja muutoinkin luotettavasti

Ristiriidat lakien ja periaatteiden kanssa

Perustuslaki takaa kansalaisten yhdenvertaisuuden, ja yhdenvertaisuuslaki kieltää syrjinnän kansalaisuuden ja alkuperän perusteella. Valtion laillinen oikeus turvata kansallinen turvallisuus voi kuitenkin johtaa toimiin, jotka ovat jännitteessä yhdenvertaisen kohtelun kanssa. Heli Askola tuo esiin artikkelissaan “Discrimination Against Dual Nationals in the Name of National Security: A Finnish Case Study” (2022), että Puolustusvoimien ja Rajavartiolaitoksen sotilasviroissa sekä niihin johtavissa opinnoissa vaadittava kelpoisuus, ettei henkilöllä ole turvallisuutta vaarantavaa ulkomaansidonnaisuutta, voi johtaa välilliseen syrjintään kansallisen tai etnisen alkuperän perusteella. Riskin hän näkee erityisesti suomalais-venäläisten kaksoiskansalaisten kohdalla. Askolan mukaan rajoittamalla kaksoiskansalaisten pääsyä tietyille urille heidät asetetaan ”vähemmän kuuluvaksi” verrattuna niihin, joilla on yksi kansalaisuus. Tämä luo vaaran, että kaksoiskansalaisuus muodostuu akseliksi, joka syventää vähemmistöjen marginalisoitumista (Askola, 2022). Kaksoiskansalaisuus saatetaan nähdä siis riskinä, joka liittyy epäasiallisen vaikuttamisen ja painostamisen mahdollisuuteen. Tässä syntyy kuitenkin jännite yhdenvertaisuusperiaatteen ja syrjintäkiellon kanssa. Lainsäädännön tulisi edellyttää tehtävän todellisiin vaatimuksiin perustuvaa yksilöllistä riskinarviointia, minimoida ryhmien väliset erot ja perustella poikkeukset yhdenvertaisesta kohtelusta huolellisesti.

Turvallisuusselvityslain mukaan sidonnaisuuden arvioinnin on oltava tapauskohtaista. Askola viittaa artikkelissaan korkeimmassa hallinto-oikeudessa käsiteltyyn tapaukseen (KHO:2020:86), jossa poliisiammattikorkeakoulun valintakokeen läpäissyt A menetti opiskeluoikeuden turvallisuusselvityksessä ilmenneiden ulkomaansidonnaisuuksien – käytännössä Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisuuden ja perhesiteiden – vuoksi. Askolan mukaan kuitenkin se, että jopa vähäiset siteet Venäjään ovat riittäneet hylkäämään hakijan poliisikoulutuksen, osoittaa, että kansallisen turvallisuuden nimissä tehdyt erottelut voivat olla ristiriidassa oikeasuhtaisuuden vaatimuksen kanssa. Tämä jättää epäselväksi, miten turvallisuutta vaarantava sidonnaisuus käytännössä arvioidaan ja voi johtaa epä johdonmukaiseen soveltamiseen.

Esimerkitapauksia

Haastattelimme neljää kaksoiskansalaista, jotka ovat hakeneet eri tehtäviin mutta pettyneet lopputulokseen. Haastattelujen tarkoitus on havainnollistaa tutkimaamme ilmiötä ja osoittaa, että Askolan (2022) kuvaamia mahdollisesti välilliseen syrjintään viittaavia tilanteita tapahtuu tavallisille kansalaisille, joilla ei ole kytköksiä esimerkiksi Venäjän hallintoon, tai myöskään sellaisia ulkomaansidonnaisuuksia, joita arvioidaan turvallisuusselvityslain 11 §:n 3 momentin mukaisessa kokonaisharkinnassa. Pyysimme haastateltavia kertomaan lyhyesti, mihin tehtävään he hakivat ja millaisia tunteita prosessi herätti. Haastateltavat pysyvät anonymoina.

Henkilö A:

Henkilö A työskenteli tulkkien välitysyhteyksessä, joka voitti Maahanmuuttoviraston (Migri) tulkkaushankinnan. Ennen työn alkua hän täytti viisi supon turvallisuusselvityslomaketta ja osallistui noin kahden tunnin haastatteluun, jossa selvitettiin Venäjäsuhteita, matkustamisen syitä, kansalaisuutta ja perhetaustaa. Hänet nimettiin Turun Migrin tulkiksi ja hän ehti työskennellä noin kolme kuukautta. Työn jo alettua välitysyhteyksessä sai häntä koskevan käyttökiellon: supon selvityksen perusteella Maahanmuuttovirasto kielsi tarjoamasta häntä tulkiksi. Henkilö A pyysi kirjalliset perustelut ja sai Tampereen Migrissä tiedon, että häneen katsottiin liittyvän ulkomaansidonnaisuuksista johtuva turvallisuusriski, mutta tarkempia perusteita ei annettu. Henkilö A on kaksikulttuurinen, syntynyt ja kasvanut Suomessa ja samastuu ensisijaisesti Suomeen. Yhteys Venäjään liittyy isoäitiin sekä kieleen ja kulttuuriin. Hänen lojaalisuutensa on hänen mukaansa Suomessa, eikä hänellä ole kytköksiä Venäjän hallintoon. Päätös tuntui A:sta epärealistiselta, koska rikosepäilyä ei ollut eikä sidoksia Venäjän viranomaisiin, vain perhe- ja kulttuuriside. Henkilö A toivoo, että viranomaiset perustelisivat riskinarvion ja kertoisivat, miten sitä voisi lieventää. Lisäksi hän toivoo, että kaksikulttuurisuus nähtäisiin voimavarana.

Henkilö B:

Henkilö B haki tutkijaksi yhteen Suomen suurimmista yliopistoista. Hakuilmoituksessa painotettiin kansainvälisiä hakijoita ja prosessi oli englanninkielinen. Haastattelu sujui hyvin, sillä

hänellä on yli 20 vuoden tutkimuskokemus suomalaisessa yliopistossa ja tehtävään vaadittava osaaminen. Hakijoita oli kymmenen, joista yhden kerrottiin olevan suomalainen. Kun Henkilö B kysyi, tarkoitetaanko häntä, koska hänellä on kaksoiskansalaisuus, vastauksena oli: ”Ei, yksi aito suomalainen”. B järkyttyi kommentista ja harkitsi hakuprosessista vetäytymistä. Myöhemmin selvisi, että valinta jäi hänen ja toisen hakijan välille. Heistä yliopisto valitsi toisen hakijan. Kun Henkilö B kysyi, valittiinko tehtävään ”aito suomalainen”, hän ei saanut vastausta.

Henkilö C:

Henkilö C haki korkeakouluharjoittelijaksi Puolustusvoimiin siviilipuolelle. Turvallisuus selvitys käynnistettiin, mutta häntä ei kutsuttu haastatteluun eikä häneltä pyydetty lisäselvityksiä. Lopulta C sai puhelinoiton, jossa kerrottiin, ettei paikkaa myönnetä. Päätöstä ei perusteltu, vaan todettiin ainoastaan, että ratkaisu on tapauskohtainen.

Henkilö C on Suomen ja Venäjän kaksoiskansalainen. Hänen lähisukulaisistaan vain yksi on kaksoiskansalainen. Sukulainen asuu pysyvästi Suomessa eikä hänellä ole vahvoja siteitä Venäjään. C kertoo, ettei hänellä ole myöskään sellaisia ulkomaansidonnaisuuksia kuten sukulais-, talous- tai omaisuussuhteita. Turvallisuus selvityksen palautteessa mainittiin ainoastaan, ettei väestötietojärjestelmässä ollut merkintää hänen kaksoiskansalaisuudestaan. Vanhemmat eivät aikoinaan ilmoittaneet väestötietojärjestelmään lapsen toista kansalaisuutta epä tietoisuuden vuoksi. Tämä oli haastateltavalle uutista, eikä hän ollut tietoinen asiasta.

Suomen kansalaisella on velvollisuus ilmoittaa väestötietojärjestelmään ulkomaan kansalaisuudesta. C oli kuitenkin itse ilmoittanut kaksoiskansalaisuutensa selvityslomakkeessa. Puolustusvoimien viranomaisen mukaan rekisterimerkinnän puute ei ollut suora syy harjoittelupaikan menetykselle, vaan asia on sen mukaan tapauskohtainen.

Koska yksilöllistä ja tehtävään sidottua riskiperustetta ei esitetty eikä mahdollisuutta täydentää tietoja tarjottu, haastateltava epäilee kielteisen päätöksen perustuneen kaksoiskansalaisuuteen. C kertoo syntyneensä Suomessa ja olevansa täysin lojaali

Suomea kohtaan. Haastateltava kertoo haluavansa käyttää Venäjän osaamistaan yhteiskunnan hyväksi, mutta kokee, että se ei ole mahdollista samalla tavalla kuin muille suomalaisille. Hänen mielestään myös pelkästään yhden maan kansalainen voi joutua uhkailun ja vaikuttamisen kohteeksi, joten kaksoiskansalaisuuden korostaminen tuntuu hänestä epäoikeudenmukaiselta.

Henkilö D:

Henkilö D valittiin Maanpuolustuskorkeakouluun kadetiksi, mutta opiskelupaikka peruttiin turvallisuus selvityksen vuoksi. Muutamaa vuotta myöhemmin hänet valittiin rauhanturvaajaksi Libanoniin. Haastateltava pääsi turvallisuus selvityksistä ”läpi”, mutta ulkoministeriön kansallinen turvallisuusviranomaisen (NSA) päätti päivää ennen lähtöä, ettei hän ole sopiva tehtävään kaksoiskansalaisuuden vuoksi. Eniten Henkilö D:tä harmittaa, että hän pystyy hakemaan tehtäviin, käymään koulutuksia ja käyttämään aikaa ja rahaa, mutta maaliviivalla odottaa kielteinen yllätys. Hän kertoo haluavansa palvella Suomea ja edistää sen turvallisuutta sekä käyttää osaamistaan Suomen hyväksi.

Haastattelujen yhteenveto

Haastateltavat kokevat, että kielteiset päätökset tehtiin kaksoiskansalaisuuden perusteella. Viranomaisten antamien perustelujen perusteella tätä ei voida kuitenkaan yksiselitteisesti osoittaa.

Haastateltavat ovat joutuneet omasta mielestään epäreiluihin tilanteisiin. Haastateltavat korostavat lojaalisuuttaan Suomelle ja identifioituvat suomalaisiksi, vaikka taustat ovat moninaisia. Heidän mukaansa heidän osaamisellaan olisi paljon annettavaa Suomessa, mutta työmahdollisuuksia poissuljetaan monissa paikoissa.

Haastateltavat kokevat, että perustelut kielteisille päätöksille olivat puutteelliset tai niitä ei annettu lainkaan, minkä vuoksi he katsovat olevansa työnhaussa heikommassa asemassa kuin ne, joilla ei ole Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisuutta. Haastattelujen perusteella päätösten läpinäkyvyys on puutteellista eikä hakijoille aina kerrota, miten arvio muodostui tai miten riskiä voisi lieventää. Hallinnolliset ja rekisteritekniset puutteet, kuten virheelliset

väestötiedot, voivat vaikuttaa arvioon ilman mahdollisuutta täydentää tietoja ajoissa. Prosessit aiheuttavat hakijoille ajallisia ja taloudellisia kustannuksia, kun hylkäys tulee vasta loppuvaiheessa. Poissulkeminen kaventaa hakijajoukkoa ja pahentaa osaajavajetta erityisesti Venäjä-osaamista vaativissa tehtävissä.

Yhdenvertaisuus ja oikeudelliset kysymykset

Useat kannanotot ovat tuoneet esiin jännitteen kansallisen turvallisuuden turvaamisen ja yhdenvertaisuusperiaatteen välillä erityisesti silloin, kun arvioidaan kaksoiskansalaisten soveltuvuutta luottamustehtäviin (Askola, 2022; Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu, 2017). Valtiolla on oikeus varmistaa kansallinen turvallisuus ja maanpuolustus, ja turvallisuuden suojeleminen on hyväksyttävä peruste erilaiselle kohtelulle. Yhdenvertaisuuslaki (1325/2014) kuitenkin edellyttää, että poikkeamien on oltava suhteellisia ja huolellisesti perusteltuja. Rajanveto kansallisen turvallisuuden ja syrjinnän välillä kulkee siinä, tunnistavatko viranomaiset todellisia yksilöllisiä riskejä vai tekevätkö he päätöksiä oletusten perusteella. Meijers-komitea (2020) tulkitsee Euroopan ihmisoikeustuomioistuimen oikeuskäytäntöä niin, että kansalliseen turvallisuuteen vetoavien rajoitusten ja tavoitellun turvallisuusedun välillä on oltava kohtuullinen suhde, eikä pelkkä kaksoiskansalaisuus voi ihmisoikeusvelvoitteiden valossa olla rajoituksen ratkaiseva peruste.

Onko Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisilla vähemmän oikeuksia?

Askolan mukaan kaksoiskansalaisuus on Suomessa noussut tekijäksi, joka voi johtaa välilliseen syrjintään etnisen tai kansallisen alkuperän perusteella. Tämä koskee erityisesti suomalais-venäläistä vähemmistöä, joka on jo ennestään altis syrjinnälle.

Lainsäädäntö mahdollistaa tietyn harkintavallan, ja esimerkiksi laki puolustusvoimien ammattivirkojen kelpoisuudesta antaa viranomaiselle oikeuden jättää

henkilö nimittämättä virkaan, jos arvioidaan, että hänen ulkomaansidonnaisuutensa saattaa vaarantaa valtion turvallisuuden. On epäselvää, katsotaanko Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisuus jo sinänsä tällaiseksi riskiksi (Askola, 2022). Tämä harkintavalta voi johtaa epä johdonmukaiseen soveltamiseen ja suhteettomaan poissulkemiseen.

Käytännössä viitteitä oikeuksien kaventumisesta näkyy turvallisuuspalveluslain (726/2014) soveltamisessa, kuten tapauksessa, jossa poliisiammattikorkeakoulun valintakokeen läpäissyt A menetti paikkansa suojelupoliisin turvallisuuspalveluksen perusteella.

Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisia on myös pyritty epävirallisesti sulkemaan pois turvallisuusluokittelemattomista tehtävistä, kuten varuskuntaravintolan keittiöapulaisen pestistä (MTV Uutiset, 2018). Lisäksi vuonna 2017 uutisoitiin väitteistä, joiden mukaan Puolustusvoimat oli ottanut käyttöön käytännön, jossa Suomen ja Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisia suljettiin pois ammatillisista viroista ja varusmiehiä rajoitettiin koulutuksessa, joka vaati pääsyä turvallisuustietoihin (Yle, 2017).

Askola huomauttaa, että tällaiset käytännöt viittaavat siihen, että kaksoiskansalaisuudesta on tullut eräänlainen salaisen syrjinnän peruste, mikä on luonut suomalais-venäläisistä ”epäilyttävän ryhmän” yhteiskunnan sisällä.

Laajempi yhteiskunnallinen merkitys

Suomi tarvitsee Venäjä-osaamista nyt ja tulevaisuudessa. Venäjänkieliset muodostavat maan

“SUOMI TARVITSEE VENÄJÄ-OSAAMISTA NYT JA TULEVAISUUDESSA.”

suurimman vieraskielisen vähemmistön, ja heidän kieli- ja kulttuuritaitonsa ovat merkittävä voimavara erityisesti turvallisuus- ja ulkoasiainhallinnon tehtävissä. Suomessa asuvien venäjänkielisten ylijäräinen arki tarkoittaa sosiaalisia ja kulttuurisia suhteita Venäjään (Oivo ym., 2021), ei suhteita Venäjän valtioon. Tämä yhteys tuottaa ymmärrystä,

joka auttaa viranomaisia tulkitsemaan kehitystä rajan molemmin puolin ja vahvistaa Suomen kriisinkestävyyttä.

Ennen Ukrainan sodan kiristämää ilmapiiriä Suomen ja Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisia pidettiin selkeänä voimavarana (Yle, 2025). Vaikka suhteet ovat sittemmin heikentyneet, syvälinen Venäjä-tuntemus on edelleen keskeistä ulkoisen ja sisäisen turvallisuuden kannalta.

Useat kaksoiskansalaiset ilmaisevat sitoutumistaan Suomeen konkreettisilla tavoilla, esimerkiksi suorittamalla asepalveluksen ja osallistumalla suomalaisen yhteiskunnan ja maanpuolustuksen toimintaan. Haastatteluissa kaksoiskansalaiset kuvaavat tapoja osoittaa sitoutumistaan Suomeen: haastateltava C korostaa haluavansa käyttää Venäjä-osaamista suomalaisen yhteiskunnan hyväksi työskentelemällä Puolustusvoimien siviilitehtävissä, ja haastateltava D:n tapauksessa hän painottaa haluaan parantaa Suomen turvallisuutta ja palvella Suomea sotilasuralla. Suomalaisessa tutkimuksessa asepalvelus liitetään laajemminkin yksilön identiteettiin, lojaalisuuteen ja aktiiviseen kansalaisuuteen eli haluun toimia Suomen hyväksi ja sen turvallisuuden puolesta (Bontenbal ym., 2025).

Jos kansallisen turvallisuuden virkoihin kohdistetaan oletusarvoista epäluuloa tiettyä ryhmää kohtaan, vaarana on osajien syrjäytyminen ja kuulumisen tunteen heikkeneminen (Oivo ym., 2021). Sen sijaan, että kaksikulttuurisuutta pidettäisiin riskinä, sitä tulisi hyödyntää strategisena voimavarana, joka vahvistaa Suomen ymmärrystä, turvallisuutta ja yhteiskunnallista eheyttä.

Kohti läpinäkyvää ja yksilöllistä harkintaa

Turvallisuusselvityskäytäntöjä olisi mahdollista kehittää läpinäkyvämpään ja yksilöllisempään suuntaan. Arvioinnin painopiste voisi siirtyä muodollisista seikoista, kuten kaksoiskansalaisuudesta, kohti tapauskohtaisesti arvioitavia riskejä. Hakijoille olisi hyödyllistä tarjota selkeämpi mahdollisuus tulla kuulluiksi, toimittaa lisäselvityksiä ja saada ymmärrettävät perustelut päätöksille. Samalla työnantajille suunnattua ohjeistusta voisi täsmentää siten, että se tukee suhteellisuusperiaatteen ja yhdenvertaisuuden toteutumista.

Venäjän hyökkäyssodan pitkittyessä Venäjä-osaamisen tarve säilyy olennaisena myös valtionhallinnon eri tehtävissä. Tämä herättää tarpeen arvioida turvallisuusselvitysten käytäntöjä siten, että ne tukevat yhtä aikaa turvallisuuden varmistamista ja yhdenvertaisia mahdollisuuksia työelämässä. Pitää muistaa, että Suomen maantieteellinen sijainti ja historialliset yhteydet tekevät naapuruussuhteista ja kaksoiskansalaisuudesta pysyviä osia yhteiskunnan todellisuutta, mikä korostaa tarvetta harkituille ja johdonmukaisille käytännöille turvallisuusselvityksissä ja rekrytointipäätöksissä.

Yhteenveto


Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisten asema Suomessa on monin tavoin ristiriitainen. Vaikka perustuslaki ja

“VENÄJÄN KAKSOISKANSALAISTEN ASEMA SUOMESSA ON MONIN TAVOIN RISTIRIITAINEN.”

yhdenvertaisuuslaki takaavat kansalaisten tasavertaisen kohtelun, käytännön turvallisuusselvitykset ja viranomaiskäytännöt voivat johtaa siihen, että kaksoiskansalaiset suljetaan pois tietyistä tehtävistä, erityisesti valtion ja turvallisuussektorin viroista. Kiristynyt poliittinen ilmapiiri Krimin miehityksen jälkeen on lisännyt epäluuloa venäläistaustaisia kohtaan, mikä on heijastunut työnhaussa syrjivinä käytäntöinä ja puutteellisina perusteluina kielteisille päätöksille (MTV Uutiset, 2018).

Lainsäädäntö edellyttää tapauskohtaista harkintaa ulkomaansidonnaisuuksien arvioinnissa. Erityisesti Suomen ja Venäjän kaksoiskansalaisuuteen on kuitenkin joissakin viranomaiskäytännöissä ja julkisessa keskustelussa liitetty merkittäviä turvallisuusrisikinäkökulmia (Yle, 2017). Tämä on voinut johtanut tilanteisiin, joissa muodollinen kansalaisuus painaa enemmän kuin yksilön todellinen lojaalisuus ja sitoutuminen Suomeen. Haastattelut osoittavat, että moni kaksoiskansalainen kokee tullessaan epäoikeudenmukaisesti kohdelluksi ja menettäneensä mahdollisuuksia tehtäviin, joihin heillä olisi ollut koulutuksen ja osaamisen perusteella täydet valmiudet.

Kansallisen turvallisuuden ja yhdenvertaisuuden välinen jännite korostaa tarvetta läpinäkyvälle, suhteellisuutta noudattavalle päätöksenteolle. Pelkkä kaksoiskansalaisuus ei saa olla este työsaannille, vaan arvioinnin on perustuttava todellisiin riskeihin ja yksilölliseen harkintaan.

Venäjä-osaamisen merkitys suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa on samalla suurempi kuin koskaan. Venäjänkielisten ja kaksoiskansalaisten potentiaalin hyödyntäminen edellyttää, että kaksikulttuurisuutta ei nähdä uhkana vaan voimavarana, ja että turvallisuusselvityskäytännöt uudistetaan tukemaan tätä periaatetta. 

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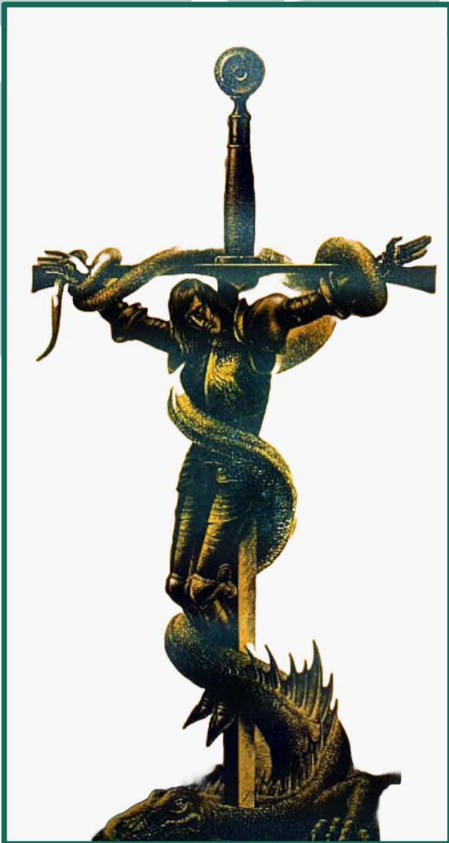
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Movie Recommendations

Text – Kacper Regulski



To Kill a Dragon - 1988, 123 min.

The late Soviet must-watch – on-screen retelling of Schwartz's stage play – brings us to a town living peacefully under the iron fist of a long-standing tyrant. However, the arrival of a wandering knight, Lancelot, disrupts the balance. Zakharov's adaptation examines the mechanisms of power and the myths that sustain it. It forces the audience to ask themselves a distressing question: *How prone are we to sacrifice truth for the sake of familiarity and supposed comfort?*

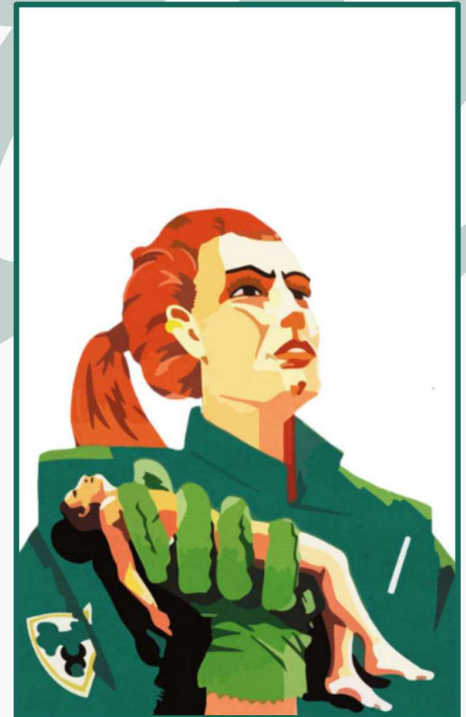
Directed by Mark Zakharov



Good Bye, Lenin! - 2003, 121 min.

A cinematic gem of German unification, set in the final days of the GDR, follows the story of the Kerner family. The mother, a devout member of the Socialist Unity Party, falls into a coma and suffers irreversible heart damage. To protect her from any potentially fatal stress, her family takes on the mantle of covering up the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Becker's production, besides being humorous, raises important questions, namely: *Is truth intrinsically good?*

Directed by Wolfgang Becker



Sexmission - 1984, 116 min.

A Polish cult classic tells the story of two men, Maks and Albert, who volunteer to be test subjects for a hibernation experiment in 1991. However, they wake up only in 2044, confronted by a radically different reality. After a war has ravaged Earth, totalitarian rule has taken hold, and men have gone extinct. Renowned for its not-so-subtle criticism of the communist dictatorship, the movie somehow managed to slip through the strict control of Polish censorship. It was even released in other Eastern Bloc countries. Machulski's piece prompts us to question core aspects of our reality: *Is anything around us truly real?*

Directed by Juliusz Machulski

Sasha ry

