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Estonia's President Ilves says go after the Kremlin's banks like you'd go after a terrorist's, question the legitimacy of Russian passports, and never doubt Putin's taste for territory.

As president of a small Baltic republic that was occupied by the Soviet Union for more than four decades, Estonia's Toomas Hendrik Ilves is all too familiar with the way Russia has treated its neighbors. For years he's warned about the revanchist agenda and aggressive behavior of Russian President Vladimir Putin. And now that the world has seen the Kremlin's reckless, ruthless actions in Ukraine and Crimea, influential leaders in the respectable salons of Washington, Brussels and other European capitals are starting to pay attention. Or, at least, they should be.

What's most threatening about Russia's behavior, in Ilves's view, is that "the old rules don't apply." But it should not have taken the invasion of Crimea to get that message across. The Helsinki Accords of 1975 were supposed to have established the territorial integrity of European nations, he says, and since Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia it's been clear that Putin would just ignore them when he saw fit.

The sanctions announced thus far by the United States and the European Union aren't likely to do the job, Ilves told me last weekend on the sidelines of the Brussels Forum, a conference sponsored by the German Marshall Fund. The current measures threaten visa restrictions and asset freezes against Putin's cronies, but the mood in Moscow is such that most of those on the list see having their names there as "a badge of honor," says Ilves.

So, where should the West focus its attention?

Ilves' eyes light up and he repeats one word: "Banks," he says. "Banks." The American sanctions have targeted one financial institution so far, Bank Rossiya, described by the U.S. as "the personal bank for senior officials." But such measures could go much further. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States developed a complex and stringent system for applying

economic sanctions to target terrorist funding. Ilves would like to see the same sort of tools deployed against many of the banks doing business with the Russian government and Putin's cronies.

Ilves also raises the idea of reviewing Europe's recognition of Russian passports as "trustworthy travel documents." A key element of Moscow's game plan in the territories it wants to take is "passportization," the cynical—not to mention illegal—distribution of Russian passports to citizens of other countries. That's what it did in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the run-up to the 2008 War. Earlier this month it did the same thing in Crimea. "If it were some other country that was a passport mill, there would be a reaction to that," says Ilves.

Without getting into specifics, Ilves says EU countries should "review" their entire approach to dealing with Russian passports. "This document is now being thrown all over the place, to everybody, it means nothing, and therefore we have to cease—until we come up with a new policy—recognizing this as a legitimate travel document."

Yet Ilves is worried that his fellow Europeans may not be up to the task. "Robert Kagan was completely off when he said Americans are from Mars, Europeans from Venus," Ilves said, referring to Kagan's widely discussed 2003 book, *Of Paradise and Power*, which postulated that the continent had adopted a post-martial worldview. "Europeans are from Pluto." Ilves, whose family history straddles both continents, is trying to bridge that gap.

Estonia, along with the other Baltic republics of Latvia and Lithuania, has obvious reason to fear Russian designs on its own territory. A quarter of the country's 1.3 million people are Russian-speakers, and in light of Putin's declared policy reserving Russia's unilateral right to "protect" Russians abroad—its pretext for the Crimea operation—some fear that the Baltics may be next.

Estonia has had problems integrating its ethnic Russian population, and a 2007 riot over the government's relocation of a Soviet-era war statue was just the sort of incident that the Kremlin might take advantage of to stir discord (a nationwide cyber attack followed, which the Estonian government blamed on Moscow). Language rights have been a persistent flashpoint, since state employees are required to speak Estonian. Earlier this month, a Russian diplomat delivered a speech at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva asserting that, "language should not be used to segregate and isolate groups," and Russia was "concerned by steps taken in this regard in Estonia as well as in Ukraine." To Baltic ears, that's an ominous

sounding remark.

But Ilves doesn't think Moscow will have much luck on that front. Ethnic Russians in Estonia, Ilves says, live far better, freer lives than Russians living in Russia. "If you want to not have the euro, not get the real rule of law, have free movement of labor to Siberia, and stand in line to get a visa for the EU, I guess that's an option for somebody, but it's not really a problem," he scoffs, with typically wry humor. Tallinn, he boasts, is a favorite destination for liberal Russians seeking escape from their more authoritarian society.

Ilves himself is something of a poster-boy for Estonia as a modern, cosmopolitan European country with global connections, and he's easy to pick out in a crowd, since he's usually seen at public events sporting a bow tie. Born in Sweden to Estonian refugees, he was raised in New Jersey and graduated from Columbia University. He earned his stripes as a Cold Warrior when he was the head of the Estonia desk at Radio Free Europe. After Estonia gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, he became Estonia's ambassador to the United States, and thereafter launched a career in Estonian politics. Active and popular on Twitter, he embodies his country's reputation for being tech-savvy.

Indeed, in 2012, Ilves got into a high profile, rough-and-tumble Twitter spat with New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, who mocked Estonia's austerity measures, which the country had undertaken in response to the worldwide financial crisis. "Let's write about something we know nothing about & be smug, overbearing & patronizing: after all, they're just wogs," Ilves began, unleashing a string of biting and witty responses.

Estonia may be small, but it's proud and has ambitions in the global economy. It is one of only four NATO members which actually spends 2 per cent or more of its GDP on defense, the minimum suggested by the military alliance. Estonia, the land where Skype was invented, produces more tech start-ups per capita than any other country in Europe. The hashtag #estonianmafia is playfully used to characterize the disproportionate presence of Estonians in the world of high-tech.

Estonia also has diversified its energy supply so as to become less dependent on Russia, thus serving as a model for the rest of Europe. While Estonia receives 100 percent of its natural gas from Russia, this accounts for less than 15 percent of the country's total energy use. For years, Ilves has been one of the loudest voices warning the West to reduce its energy dependence on Moscow. When U.S. Vice President Joe Biden visited Estonia last week in a show of support for

Eastern European countries feeling threatened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ilves urged him to seek changes to a U.S. law limiting gas exports to the continent. One hopes this advice, along with much else about Russia, will be taken more seriously now in Western capitals.

Many Americans, witnessing a world of tumult and weary of two long wars, may not understand why they should concern themselves with quarrels in far away countries about which most know little. For them, Ilves has stern council: "If you break the kind of rules that were just broken," he says, "you're going to find yourself in a very big war somewhere."

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