



# DECOLONIZING RUSSIA A Moral and Strategic Imperative

## Witness Biographies

### **Fatima Tlis** **Circassian Journalist**

Fatima Tlis is a Voice of America journalist in Washington, D.C. who testifies in a personal capacity. Fatima, an ethnic Circassian, previously was chief editor of the Russian news agency Regnum and reported for The Associated Press on the turbulent situation in her home region of the North Caucasus. In 2007, the United States granted Fatima asylum after series of threats and attacks on her by Russian security services. Fatima helped found the VOA fact-checking and anti-disinformation site [Polygraph.info](http://Polygraph.info). Polygraph launched in 2017 with a focus on Russia, though the site now covers China and oppressive regimes in other parts of Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Mideast.

### **Botakoz Kassymbekova** **Associate Professor, College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University**

Dr. Botakoz Kassymbekova is a Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Basel, Switzerland. She specializes in Russian and Soviet history, Stalinism and post-Stalinism. She is the author of “Despite Cultures. Early Soviet Rule in Tajikistan” (Pittsburgh University Press, 2016), which traces Soviet imperial strategies in Central Asia and guest editor of the “Stalinism and Central Asia” with *Central Asian Survey* (2016). Her current research project deals with the post-Stalinist Soviet Union and analyzes how Soviet citizens (un)processed Stalinism in their private lives. Another book project, which she co-authors with Kimberly St. Julian-Vernon (University of Pennsylvania), titled “Imperial Innocence,” traces major narrative tropes and imagery of Soviet imperialism.

### **Erica Marat** **Lecturer, University of Basel**

Erica Marat is an Associate Professor at the College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University in Washington, DC. Her research focuses on violence, mobilization and security institutions in Eurasia, India, and Mexico. Before joining NDU, Dr. Marat was a visiting scholar at the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center. She is an author of several books. Her articles appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *Washington Post*, and *Open Democracy*.

**Hanna Hopko****Chair, Democracy in Action Conference; former Member of the Ukrainian Parliament**

Dr. Hanna Hopko is an expert in advocacy, international relations, on Russian expansionism and hybrid warfare. She chaired the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Ukrainian Parliament from 2014-2019. Dr. Hopko was one of the civic leaders of the EuroMaidan during Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity. She was elected to Parliament from the pro-European Self-Reliance Party in 2014 and later served as an independent MP.

In 2014, Foreign Policy magazine named Dr. Hopko a "Leading Global Thinker". That same year, she received the "Certificate of Merit" from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service Leadership Seminar and was honored with the National Democratic Institute Democracy Award for her efforts to further the cause of democracy in Ukraine.

She belongs to Young Global Leaders Networks of WEF (World Economic Forum) and Munich Security Conference. Now, she is ANTS (National Interests Advocacy Network) Chair of the Board and Chairwoman of Democracy in Action Initiative.

Since the Russian full-scale escalation of Ukraine established together with other Ukrainian activists the International Center for Ukrainian Victory (ICUV) in cooperation with the Casimir Pulaski Foundation. The ICUV advocates for Ukrainian interests internationally and supports civil society actions for Ukraine's victory.

**Casey Michel****Author, *American Kleptocracy***

Casey Michel is an American author and journalist who covers illicit finance, kleptocracy, and developments in countries and regions formerly or currently occupied by the Russian and Soviet empires. He is the author of *American Kleptocracy*, and his writing has appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *Financial Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *the Washington Post*, among other publications. He received his Master's degree in Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies from Columbia University's Harriman Institute.