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Wild East, Mild Center

Any geographically challenged British journalists who still confuse the <u>CR</u> with <u>Romania</u> and <u>Ukraine</u> should print out copies of the recent U.S. human-rights reports on these three countries and do some comparative reading. The U.S. State Dept. doesn't talk in its reports about such topical issues as government debt levels and Swiss-franc mortgages that differentiate the various economies of Central and Eastern Europe, but details about widespread corruption, security-forces excesses and other human-rights abuses in Romania and Ukraine are enough to make attentive readers realize there are some fundamental differences in the region. Not that the CR is a saint. Compared to Germany, the CR sounds like a cesspool of judicial mafias, political intervention and peopletrafficking. The Czech report gives the impression that the interior ministry, not the banks, is the one that needs more international oversight. But compared to his counterparts in the Wild East, even Minister Ivan Langer seems rather harmless.



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