

Clemson University

TigerPrints

All Theses

Theses

5-2024

Putin's War in Ukraine: The Evolution of Post-Soviet Russian Nationalism and Collective Identity

David Askew
daskew@g.clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses



Part of the [European History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Askew, David, "Putin's War in Ukraine: The Evolution of Post-Soviet Russian Nationalism and Collective Identity" (2024). *All Theses*. 4270.

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/4270

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

PUTIN'S WAR IN UKRAINE: THE EVOLUTION OF POST-SOVIET RUSSIAN
NATIONALISM AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
David Peter Askew
May 2024

Accepted by:
Dr. Rebecca Stoil, Committee Chair
Dr. Emily Hoge
Dr. William Terry
Dr. Michael Silvestri

ABSTRACT

Vladimir Putin is using Putinism to establish a collective identity through his war in Ukraine. Putinism is an evolution of post-Soviet Russian nationalism that is an amalgam of Imperial and former Soviet nationalism born of Putin's study of history and life experiences. There is also a relationship between Putin's desire to restore a collective through the war in Ukraine and his larger goal of reunifying Ukraine with Russia to establish a new Russian Empire. Putinism has elements and values associated with Russian and Soviet Nationalism as well as those of its creator. These include patriotism, nostalgia, Orthodoxy, and conservatism melded with Soviet tactics to promote Russo-Ukrainian reunification through collective identity through struggle against the West. Understanding how and why Putin is using Putinism to establish a collective identity could not be more important given current geopolitical events in Ukraine at this critical juncture in our history. This paper explores Russian and Soviet Nationalism in the context of Imperial Russian and Soviet history and then examines the life of Putin and analyzes his evolution of post-Soviet Russian Nationalism into Putinism. This analysis is applied to the war in Ukraine to show how Putin is using Putinism to establish a collective identity through war in Ukraine. The paper concludes with a restatement of the research question and answer, the importance of this research, and how reunification of a Russo-Ukrainian collective may serve Putin's broader goal of establishing himself as Tsar of a new Russian Empire.

DEDICATION

To my father, who gave me a passion for knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Rebecca Stoil for her input and guidance. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Meng, Dr. Emily Hoge, Dr. William Terry, and Dr. Michael Silvestri for their roles and support in this challenging endeavor. I also thank my family, the Russian Language Summer Workshop faculty and colleagues at Indiana University, Senior Collections Reference Assistant Veronika Trotter at Herman B. Wells Library at Indiana University, and Dr. Olga Volkova for recommending me to the language program. Without her support, my Russian studies and experiences at Indiana University would not have happened. Finally, I want to thank my colleagues and mentors at Clemson University for inspiring me to take on this project. These include Hayward Hood, Jared Seganti, Alex Billinis, Shelby Sibert, Jessica Foster, Darian “Shaw” Sullivan, Christopher Shumard, and Dr. Rod Andrew Jr. It is my sincere hope that this research will help us to better understand the people, history, and competing interests involved in Ukraine to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE EVOLUTION OF NATIONALISM.....	11
<i>Imperial Nationalism</i>	13
<i>Leninism</i>	23
<i>Stalinism</i>	28
III. PUTINISM AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY.....	39
<i>Putin’s Origin and Rise to Power</i>	39
<i>Putinism</i>	49
<i>“De-Nazification” and Russianness</i>	58
IV. THE WAR IN UKRAINE	65
<i>The History of Crimea</i>	71
<i>Putinism in the Ukraine Conflict</i>	80
V. CONCLUSION.....	95
REFERENCES	104

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Identity is significant to history because it defines a person, place, idea, or thing. Russia's identity is one that has changed over the course of the last century, but the utility of collective struggle as a unifying concept has remained constant. Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine reflects his mission to unify Russia through this concept of collective struggle. Putin's war in Ukraine serves to craft a sense of shared identity and preserve collective struggle using rhetorical elements that reference the Soviet Union as he seeks to establish a new Russian Empire. The concept of collective identity through struggle influenced Russian politics and culture throughout history, based largely on its aggression toward its neighbors. Past struggles between Russia and Ukraine reflect complex notions of perceived hereditary, cultural, ethnic, and religious similarities between Russians and Ukrainians to support a collective identity.

Vladimir Putin is using the concept of collective identity through struggle to unify Russia and Ukraine. He is promoting nationalist beliefs through Russian-centric history and rhetoric. Scholars of Putinist philosophy, like Stephen Kotkin in *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power 1889-1928*, argue that the Soviet Union was a major influence in Putin's life.¹ Kotkin claims that Putin's grandfather, Spiridon, was a member of Lenin's staff and took care of him in his last days.² Kotkin highlights Putin's family's personal connections to the government of the Soviet Union as proof that Putinism contains elements related to

¹ Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1889-1928* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014).

² Kotkin, 413.

the USSR. While this may be true, it does not define the entire ideology of Putinism. Another historian, Andranik Migranyan, explains in *Russia in Global Affairs* that Putinism can be recognized as an effort to revive a superficially democratic regime that concentrates power in a single leader (Vladimir Putin).³ Migranyan claims this became prevalent with the collapse of Yeltsin's Russia in 1991, which left the country decentralized until Putin consolidated his authority in 2000 by encouraging Russian influence and restoring centralization in Russia.⁴ Putin warned that Russia could end up as a bureaucratic regime again if a power struggle emerged in the State Duma between political and bureaucratic elements.⁵

Various Russian historians like the ones mentioned have tried to define Putinism based on bureaucratic and historical implications. In fact, Putinism is a relatively new concept that is often not discussed enough when studying Russian history and relates to Putin's own vision of a neo-Russian Empire with a focus on and admiration of the Soviet past. This vision incorporates elements of irredentism. According to Christopher Hale and David Siroky's "Irredentism and Institutions," in *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 53, irredentism allows a state to justify military action against another if it has similarities based on a national history and culture.⁶ Putinism is itself an irredentist

³ Andranik Migranyan, "What is Putinism." *Russia in Global Affairs*. April 13, 2004. <https://web.archive.org/web/20090205173344/http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/7/521.html>. Accessed 4/1/24.

⁴ Migranyan, "What is Putinism."

⁵ Migranyan, "What is Putinism."

⁶ Christopher Hale and David Siroky, "Irredentism and Institutions." *British Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (2023): 498–515. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123422000151>. Accessed 4/13/24.

amalgam of Imperial Russian beliefs and Soviet nationalist elements related to patriotism and nostalgia. It is not limited to either Russian Tsarist or Soviet thoughts and concepts but is instead an evolution of these elements and imbued with the personality of its creator. Understanding Putinism requires analyzing the history of Russian nationalism and its evolution under Vladimir Putin. An examination of the intersection of Russian history and Putin's life helps explain his connection to Russia's history and his war in Ukraine to reunify Russia under a collective identity. Putin's ultimate desire is to leverage that collective identity to establish a neo-Russian Empire infused with and fueled by patriotic and nostalgic beliefs.

The idea of the collective in modern-day Russia can be understood as the merging of Russo-Ukrainian identities through the war in Ukraine for Putin to create a 21st century Kievan Rus. In Volume II of *Kievan Russia* by George Vernadsky and Michael Karpovich, the Kievan Rus was a unified state that consisted of East Slavic and Northern European principalities from 878 to the Mongol invasion of 1237.⁷ The Kievan Rus is important to the foundation of Russia and Ukraine because it was Christianized by Vladimir I in 990 and he ordered all citizens in Kyiv to get baptized to establish his authority.⁸ Additionally, Vladimir set out on a successful campaign to capture Crimea and gave control of Novgorod to his son Iaroslav.⁹ Based on this understanding, Christianization was used by Vladimir I to merge collective Russo-Ukrainian identity in his vision. Putin appears to be pursuing a similar approach to accomplish Russo-

⁷ George Vernadsky; Michael Karpovich, *A History of Russia: Kievan Russia Vol. II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).

⁸ Vernadsky; Karpovich, 66.

⁹ Vernadsky; Karpovich, 67-68.

Ukrainian reunification. Notable Russian historians like Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy claim collective elements of Putinism began during the Soviet Union and they discuss how Putin is using the USSR, as well as different personas, to represent and revive the Russian state.¹⁰ While Hill and Gaddy are correct that Putin incorporates elements of himself in this creation of a collective, they do not focus enough on the manner by which he is using Russian history in depicting his life story to gain populist support of the Russian people.

Richard Pipes discusses collective identity as a national issue in *The Formation of the Soviet Union* where the Tsardom failed to implement policies which treated its citizens as equal, ultimately leading to the Revolution of 1917.¹¹ She explores how the gradual disbandment of shared identity through class division destabilized Imperial Russia. However, while the revolution primarily sought to eliminate this division, it altered the status of Imperial shared identity to one which was collectivist and Soviet. Pipes claims that Russian nationalism under Alexander III stifled Ukrainian movements for independence and grew more populist to assert national consciousness. Pipes also thinks Orthodox religion played a major factor in encouraging this unity but did not facilitate East Slavic relations. Because his work was published in 1964, it does not include Putin, but it would be interesting to see what Pipes would have thought of Putin's nationalist appeal and his policies as they relate to Alexander III.

¹⁰ Fiona Hill; Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institution, 2013).

¹¹ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1964).

Serhii Plokhy explains the concept of the collective began in Imperial Russia by cultural Russification and continued during the Soviet Union as a revision of imperialism as the nation searched for a new identity.¹² Russification refers to policies introduced by the imperial Tsarist government that imposed Russo-centric identity and Orthodoxy on newly acquired territories.¹³ Imperialism was used as the method to forcefully spread influence in conquering and integrating other regions under the single identity of a Russian Empire. However, Plokhy does not go deep enough in his analysis of how *Vladimir Putin* shaped today's Russian identity by promoting values of patriotism and nostalgia and reframing Russia's geopolitical landscape through his rhetoric to one of collective struggle. When discussing Putin, Plokhy explains that monuments such as the one of Prince Vladimir I represents his vision for Russia as a centralized state.¹⁴ He asserts that Putin focuses more on how Vladimir I's Orthodox beliefs served as a unifying factor for the Rus than he does with East Slavic ancestry.¹⁵ Plokhy has a point with this argument that Orthodoxy is part of the elements that influenced Putin and collective identity, but he does not address how Putin is modeling his neo-Russian Empire after Alexander III instead of Vladimir I.

Rather than focus on Orthodoxy as a unifying factor, David Brandenburger frames collective identity as it relates to language, patriotism, and the formation of populism in Russia using Russo-centric appeals in *National Bolshevism*.¹⁶ Brandenburger

¹² Serhii Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation From 1470 to the Present*. (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

¹³ Plokhy, 86.

¹⁴ Plokhy, 8.

¹⁵ Plokhy, 8.

¹⁶ David Brandenburger, *National Bolshevism* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

defines language as a primary factor that influenced unity in the Rus more so than Orthodoxy, and how Soviet nationalism under Stalin did not promote Russo-centrism despite attempts to do so.¹⁷ He thinks Russian nationalist emphasis was lost on Soviet nationalist supporters, since many in the USSR took propaganda as internationalist, but they failed to consider that Lenin emphasized Russo-centrism.

The role of Russo-centrism is central to this thesis which will show that the war in Ukraine is informed by Putin's own ideology, often referred to as "Putinism." Dr. M. Steven Fish at the University of California Berkeley describes the definition of Putinism in Volume 28 of *The Journal of Democracy* as "a form of autocracy that is conservative, populist, and personalistic."¹⁸ Putinism, as specific to this thesis is an amalgam of Imperial Russian and former Soviet nationalism evolved from Putin's life and study of history. There is a relationship that exists between Putin's desire to restore a sense of collective and the war in Ukraine where he is purposely constructing collective identity to get people to support the war. By interpreting his rhetoric on the annexation of Crimea and the reunification of Russians and Ukrainians, Putin believes he is destined to reclaim Russia's lost territories and preserve the idea of a country that is strengthened by its struggles.

This thesis will demonstrate how Putin's background is shaped by Soviet nationalism and how he uses certain phrases in his speeches that are significant to Russia's collective identity as he seeks to become the leader or "Tsar" of a new Russian Empire. Putin's word usage regarding the Russian people and motherland provide proof he is

¹⁷ Brandenburger, 4-5.

¹⁸ M. Fish, "The Kremlin Emboldened: What Is Putinism?" *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 4 (October 2017): 61-75. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-kremlin-emboldened-what-is-putinism/>. Accessed 4/13/24.

seeking to establish a new empire based upon his values of Russia's history and the perception of its people. The relationship between Putin's use of the concept of collective struggle and the war in Ukraine is apparent by how it applies to his own personal struggles as well as the struggles of the people of the Soviet Union.

Geopolitical events unfolding in Ukraine at this critical juncture in our history make this research highly relevant. The stakes could not be higher as regional conflicts such as this often rapidly spread beyond their borders, spiraling into world wars. All nations stand to benefit from this research because understanding the historical context and rhetoric underpinning the tensions that inform this conflict are essential to ending it and establishing a peaceful resolution.

The current geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine are related to Soviet policy and historic ethnic ideas of Russianness. However, contrary to current thoughts in mainstream articles like Politico's "Putin's Push for a New USSR Reawakens the Bloody Chaos of Soviet Collapse,"¹⁹ by Gabriel Gavin, and BBC's "Vladimir Putin: The Rebuilding of Soviet Russia"²⁰ by Oliver Bullough, this framing is inaccurate or taken out of context when analyzing Putin's intent. Putin is not trying to revive the past geopolitical structure of the Soviet Union. He is using Soviet *elements* combined with pro-Russian beliefs to evangelize a collective identity through struggle to create a new Russian Empire.

¹⁹ Gabriel Gavin, "Putin's Push for a New USSR Reawakens the Bloody Chaos of Soviet Collapse." *POLITICO*. September 19, 2022. <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-fall-russia-empire-ukraine-war-armenia-azerbaijan/>. Accessed 3/30/24.

²⁰ Oliver Bullough, "Vladimir Putin: The Rebuilding of 'Soviet' Russia." *BBC News*. March 28, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26769481>. Accessed 3/30/24.

This thesis will show that Putin's war in Ukraine is driven by Putinism, which is the evolution of post-Soviet Russian nationalism, the goal of which is to unify a Russian collective identity and establish a new Russian Empire. Although resources, including the land, its people, and its strategic value as a buffer against the West are all factors in Putin's desire for Ukraine, an analysis of the evolution of Russian nationalism and its intersection with Putin's life experiences as portrayed through his rhetoric will prove that he is using Putinism to forge a collective identity through his war in Ukraine.

In Chapter 2, the reader will be introduced to various authors and their perspectives on nationalism in Russia. This chapter covers the evolution of Imperial nationalism to those of Soviet figures such as Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin. The Soviet identity will be examined through a close analysis of translated journals and policies from the early to late years of the USSR. Chapter 2 will also address the way in which there are different interpretations of Russian nationalism from these leaders and how it is significant to their relation or opposition to the ideas espoused by Vladimir Putin and Putinism. N.N. Mikhailov's *Bad Card of the Motherland* is a significant work through which to analyze the Soviet national framework.²¹ It is a journal for the *Komsomol* or Communist Youth League that discusses their objectives for the Soviet Union, cementing Communism's identity throughout Russia. According to Mikhailov, the mission of the Soviet Union was a national objective for survival more than an international objective to secure the camaraderie of the motherland through faith in the

²¹ N.N. Mikhailov, *Bad Card of the Motherland* (Moscow: Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Komsomol "Young Guard", 1947).

Soviet effort.²² Mikhailov describes how Russia was determined to maintain national unity to such a degree that it gradually ignored the existence of other nationalities in the Soviet Union.²³ The Soviet nationalism explored in this source, as well as others, will help elaborate the establishment of collective identity in Russia.

Chapter 3 will analyze Vladimir Putin's life from childhood through the collapse of the USSR as it relates to the history of Russia, including Putin's rise to power, and how his experiences shaped Putinism. Some journalists that studied Putin believe he struggled immensely during the hardships of the Soviet Union, especially as a child.²⁴ However, upon further inspection, Putin appears to have shaped his life story to engender sympathy and support from the Russian people. He seems to model his life around Russia's history to influence supporters. Putin was also influenced by Soviet leaders fighting for patriotism and collective struggle. Putin's service in the KGB and the fundamental role of Soviet nationalism cemented in Putin the concept of collective identity through struggle. Putin's belief that his history corresponds with the collective effort of Russia heavily influenced his development of Putinism. The elements of Putinism will also be explored, including comparisons to Russian and Soviet nationalism discussed in Chapter 2.

²² Mikhailov, 161.

²³ Mikhailov, 9.

²⁴ Felicity Capon, "Cradle to Kremlin: How Putin's Childhood Casts a Shadow." *The Week*. June 2, 2023. <https://theweek.com/news/world-news/961071/how-putins-childhood-casts-a-shadow-over-his-life>. Accessed 3/30/24.

Chapter 4 applies the analysis from the two preceding chapters to prove that Putin is using Putinism to unify Russia under a collective identity through his war in Ukraine. This will require an examination of Crimea and its significance to the Russian Empire and USSR, Khrushchev's decision to give Crimea to Ukraine and Putin's thoughts on that decision, as well as how these all relate to his war in Ukraine. Putinism is being used to encourage people to fight for a Russian collective identity through struggle and by appealing to Russian values surrounding patriotism and nostalgia.

The conclusion will restate this thesis on Vladimir Putin's personal quest to reunify Ukraine through struggle as a means of achieving collective identity and lead into questions concerning the future of Russia, including whether Putin will succeed in his mission to create this new neo-Russian Empire and, if so, whether it will remain that way for very long. In this evolution, elements of Imperial nationalism, like Russo-centrism, continued throughout the Soviet Union and manifested in maintaining collective unity through authoritarianism. It is also significant to recognize how this relates to Putin as he seeks to become Tsar of a new Russian Empire and recycles many aspects of both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in his objective for collective identity in Ukraine.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EVOLUTION OF NATIONALISM

On March 18, 2014, during a cold Winter evening at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech to his council members that would forever change the world. He announced the formal accession of Crimea and how it was a historic event that would reunite the territory with Russia. In an assertive choice of language, Putin explained his nationalist ambition for this reasoning by stating “Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.”²⁵ How does nationalism evolve in Russia and particularly the way Vladimir Putin uses elements from it to create a new shared, collective, or independent Russian identity through his struggles? To answer this question, one must look back centuries through the nation’s history as well as its emphasis on nationalist ambition.

Putin has taken on the objective of becoming Tsar of a new Russian Empire. He often relates aspects of his life experiences in ways that parallel significant events in Russian history. These aspects include his self-described personal struggle to survive in the Soviet Union and strong value of irridentism. Putin not only wants to establish

²⁵ Vladimir Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, March 18, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>. Accessed 4/6/24.

himself as Tsar of a new Russian Empire using Soviet nationalist elements, but he seeks to create a shared identity in Russia through the reintegration of Ukraine. Throughout its history, Russia has demonstrated that it is a country based on conquest and willingness to spread its language and culture to survive.²⁶ This is unique from other countries because the concept of suffering is engrained in Russia's culture and fuels the desire for the nation to overcome anything that may interfere with this shared mentality.²⁷ Despite the country being invaded and occupied by other tribes and people groups, geographical elements of a fortified landscape and culture facilitate its continued existence.²⁸ However, its historical conquests and changes are best understood through the concept of shared or collective identity through struggle. Representations of shared identity can be evident in the policy of the Kadet Party. This Russian liberal party was formed to address centralizing Russia and allowed other nationalities to coexist in Russia as long as they respected Russian language and customs.²⁹ For example, the January 1906 Provisions of the Kadet Party made Russian a required language in all institutions but guaranteed freedom for people who spoke other languages.³⁰ Another decision evincing a shared identity is the Emancipation Reform of 1861, which abolished the serfdom in Russia and attempted to absorb Polish territory into the empire.³¹

²⁶ N.N. Mikhailov, *Bad Card of the Motherland* (Moscow: Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Komsomol "Young Guard", 1947), 136-146.

²⁷ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1964), 1-28.

²⁸ Mikhailov, 144-145.

²⁹ Pipes, 29-30.

³⁰ Pipes, 29-30.

³¹ Serhii Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation From 1470 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 9, 151.

Putin is emulating past leaders in Russia who developed policies that emphasize Russianness and traditional culture.³² Vladimir Putin takes history seriously as he feels it is a sacred duty that he must uphold to fulfill the incomplete prophecy of past ancestors like Prince Vladimir I. Putin views himself as a descendant of the Russian Tsardom and personifies Russia's imperial and Soviet history. This chapter will discuss how nationalism evolved in Russia from the Tsardom to contemporary times and explore the pattern which exists as it relates to collective identity and the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, this chapter will explain different historical identities that existed for each period in Russia's history to provide a better summary of how the nation evolved over time.

Imperial Nationalism

During the imperial period, the Russian Empire worked to eliminate the distinctions between Russia and Ukraine, asserting a sense of shared cultural identity. There are three significant historical cases in this section which demonstrate a desire for shared cultural identity in Imperial Russia. The first is when Ivan III eliminated desires for autonomy from the Russian Empire for the Novgorodian people through Russification in 1480 as well as making religious claims to Kyiv and the Lithuanian commonwealth.³³ In *Making Russians: Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863*, by Darius Staliunas, the definition of Russification is relative and depends on the reader's thoughts about its relation to nationality policy and the impact it had on other

³² Plokhy, 83, 115, 222, 259, 270, 281, 325.

³³ Plokhy, 44-45.

nationalities in the Baltics and Eastern Europe.³⁴ There is disagreement over whether Imperial Russia succeeded in conquering all the Rus, as proclaimed by Ivan III, and whether that can even be classified as “Russification.”³⁵ Novgorod once existed as a former republic in the Mongol Rus from the beginning of the early 1000s to 1472. The land extended from the Baltic Sea of Mongol Rus to the Ural Mountains.³⁶ Novgorod was well known for resources, including fur, forest products, and other textiles. Seeing this as an opportunity for an expansion of his power and the land of the Rus as well as proclaiming himself the ruler of all the Rus, Ivan III set out on a sacred mission to establish his reign over it, including Kyiv and Lithuania.³⁷ Shared identity was a significant concept in Imperial nationalism because it is how the Russian Empire integrated other regions in Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, Serhii Plokhy explains that Imperial Russia was an example of *independent identity* instead of shared identity regarding its need for control over Ukraine. He addresses independent identity in *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation*.³⁸ Serhii Plokhy is a distinguished professor who currently teaches Ukrainian and Eastern European History at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.³⁹ He focuses on the Cold War in Eastern Europe and is

³⁴ Darius Staliunas, *Making Russians: Meaning and Practice of Russification in Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 14.

³⁵ Staliunas, 4, 7, 9.

³⁶ Plokhy, 44.

³⁷ Plokhy, 47.

³⁸ Serhii Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation From 1470 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books).

³⁹ Harvard University, “Serhii Plokhy.” *Ukrainian Research Institute Harvard University*. N.d. <https://huri.harvard.edu/people/serhii-plokhii>. Accessed 12/18/23.

Director of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard and Mykhailo S. Hrushevskyi Professor of Ukrainian History.⁴⁰ While growing up as a child, Plokyh moved to Zaporizhzhia in Ukraine, and attended the University of Dnipropetrovsk in 1980 for a degree in history and social sciences.⁴¹ Plokyh is also a Ukrainian nationalist and claims Russia has always had an independent identity and seeks to eliminate other ones.⁴² However, Russians and Ukrainians have also shared collective bonds. These bonds can be understood through the Khmelnytskyi Uprising and Treaty of Pereiaslav. According to *The Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising: A characterization of the Ukrainian revolt* by Dr. Franke Sysn at the University of Alberta, an uprising by the Cossacks in Khmelnytskyi had taken place in 1648 for a few reasons. One of them includes Ukraine's desire to maintain its identity while still cooperating with Tsarist Russia.⁴³ The purpose of this uprising was to establish a government, called the Cossack Hetmanate, that would facilitate Ukrainians reunifying with Russians.⁴⁴ Bogdan Khmelnytskyi, the leader of the uprising, advocated for Russo-Ukrainian unity and an alliance with the Muscovy.⁴⁵ Another reason was to defend this alliance from the influence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth because it had sought to occupy Cossack territory.

⁴⁰ Lydialyle Gibson, "The Return of History: Ukrainian Scholar Serhii Plokyh on the War in His Home Country." *Harvard Magazine*. October 2023. <https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2023/08/features-serhii-plokyh-ukriaine>. Accessed 3/18/24.

⁴¹Gibson, "The Return of History."

⁴² Plokyh, 47, 107, 120.

⁴³ Franke Sysn, *The Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising: A Characterization of the Ukrainian Revolt* (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003).

⁴⁴ Sysn, 117.

⁴⁵ Sysn, 124-125.

When referring to the uprising and acknowledging the claim that it relates to a fight for independent identity, Sysn states, “In general the rebels sought to preserve Ukraine from the changes that had occurred in the two generations before the revolt.”⁴⁶ Plokhy argues an individual cultural identity is the best way to understand pre-revolutionary Russia because it effectively denied the autonomy of other regions in the Rus and eliminated the identities of those regions.⁴⁷ As evidenced in the explanation of Sysn’s excerpt, Plokhy elaborates how the war in Ukraine is affiliated with Vladimir Putin’s objective for creating a new Russian Empire that reestablishes the Kievan Rus but denies Ukraine the right to sovereignty.⁴⁸ Plokhy’s account is intriguing because he thinks that despite Russia demonstrating a clear desire for shared identity, the actions taken toward ‘reunification’ works toward an independent one which supersedes that of being a heterogeneous melting pot of other cultures and nationalities. Plokhy claims that Ivan III desired a Russian state independent of these regions despite their many similarities but under a shared Russian identity. He highlights that Ivan III was unsuccessful in reintegrating all the regions of the Rus and that he missed Kyiv.⁴⁹

Kyiv was considered as part of Lithuania during this period. Although some other sources on Ivan III such as *Medieval Russia, 980-1584* by Janet Martin contradict Plokhy’s claims, they are still relevant to the evolution of Russian nationalism. Ivan III’s rule was dedicated to the shared reunification of Russia with Novgorod and the

⁴⁶ Sysn, 131.

⁴⁷ Plokhy, 7-12.

⁴⁸ Plokhy, 126-128.

⁴⁹ Plokhy, 49.

Lithuanian region.⁵⁰ Martin disagrees with Plokhy that Ivan sought to reunite “all Rus”, including Kyiv.⁵¹ Furthermore, this move was supported by Prince Casimir who was the grand prince of Lithuania at the time and demonstrates that the Russian Empire sought shared identity with other cultures. Most of the Lithuanians even accepted Russian rule and supported the actions of Ivan III when he got them to sign the Treaty of Muscovy and Lithuania in 1494.

Martin specifically states, “In this context, it was significant that, in a treaty concluded between Muscovy and Lithuania in 1494, the Lithuanians recognized Ivan III’s right to use the title ‘sovereign of all Rus.’”⁵² Ivan III managed to acquire Lithuania through diplomatic means using the concept of a shared identity. He could do the same for Kyiv and exalt the Kyivan legacy out of respect to the royalty of Moscow and the heritage of their ancestry. Russia was not interested in imperial conquest through war but sought to merge other regions diplomatically. This meant states could not exist independently and their people must exist under the Muscovy.⁵³

The second historical case that must be addressed is Catherine the Great’s push for a shared Russian state as described in the Manifesto of 1763 and how she intended for this to be achieved. According to Hosking, there was no such thing as Russia prior to both her and Peter the Great.⁵⁴ Furthermore, she thought the emphasis on Russia as a powerful nation would not have been possible without peasant labor despite her

⁵⁰ Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584* (London: Cambridge University Press), 275.

⁵¹ Martin, 368.

⁵² Martin, 292.

⁵³ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 374-375.

⁵⁴ Hosking, 479.

revilement of the practice. In Nancy Whitelaw's work *Catherine the Great and the Enlightenment in Russia*, Catherine's major reforms are discussed, as well as a biography of her life. Whitelaw writes that Catherine thought serf labor or the sobornye system was a necessary evil to maintain shared identity among Russian serfs.⁵⁵ Catherine "established a few rules by which she hoped to govern. One was, 'One should do good and avoid doing evil as much as one reasonably can out of love for humanity.'"⁵⁶ Catherine was authoritarian but also fair to maintain a shared unity. She did not desire division between the nobility and the peasants but knew that was unavoidable. Catherine wanted Russia to have a strong military. She saw this as necessary because European powers surrounding Russia were getting militarily more powerful and seeking to expand.⁵⁷

Fearing a conflict, Catherine wanted Russia to have a military that was prepared to deal with these threats to form an alliance with Poland through diplomacy before completely occupying the nation.⁵⁸ Unlike Plokhy, Whitelaw gives a summary on Catherine. However, in this briefing, she explains that Catherine failed to prevent a revolt of the Bolsheviks by refusing to abolish the sobornye system.⁵⁹ As the Tsardom would grow more powerful and Russia would expand, the division which existed between the farmers and nobility would continue to grow. Robert Conquest addresses this in *The Harvest of Sorrow*.⁶⁰ Conquest mentions differences between medieval serfs under

⁵⁵ Nancy Whitelaw, *Catherine the Great and the Enlightenment in Russia* (Greensboro: Morgan Reynolds, 2005), 76-78.

⁵⁶ Whitelaw, 79.

⁵⁷ Whitelaw, 81.

⁵⁸ Whitelaw, 87-89.

⁵⁹ Whitelaw, 148-149.

⁶⁰ Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

feudalism and Ukrainian serfs in terms of treatment.⁶¹ Medieval serfs in Western Europe were given limited rights by the lord and the lord answered to the king. However, in Eastern Europe, the serfs had no rights and must obey the king.⁶² This system was unfair to the Ukrainian serfdom, made them into involuntary servants, and the abuse continued despite abolishment in 1861 as freed serfs were limited by redemption payments.⁶³ He claims that these payments were unfair, devastated the economy, and forced peasants into assistance with owning land. Conquest argues that before the Soviet Union, the Russian government controlled the rights and economy of the peasant class through subordination. As emphasized by Conquest, “The economic pressure on the peasants was great. But in addition they almost universally regarded the landlord as an enemy, and his land as rightfully theirs.”⁶⁴ Although there was a desire for shared identity among different nationalities, the divisive class system created major problems that rapidly worsened in the later years of the Imperial era.

Peter the Great appears to have used Russification to expand the Rus.⁶⁵ Vissarion Belinsky addressed this as referenced by Geoffrey Hosking in his work *Russia: People and Empire*. According to Hosking, Belinsky discusses Peter as having helped define the Russian motherland, writing, “We are so many individuals outside a society because Russia is not a society [...] Russia before Peter the Great was only a people (narod): she became a nation (natsiia) thanks to the impetus supplied by the reformer.”⁶⁶ While Ivan

⁶¹ Conquest, 14-27.

⁶² Conquest, 14.

⁶³ Conquest, 15-16.

⁶⁴ Conquest, 17.

⁶⁵ Hosking, 295-296.

⁶⁶ Hosking, 292-293.

III sought to expand the Russian Empire through diplomatic means, Peter desired to construct its identity by recognizing that it is Russia's people and ancestry that make up its statehood. Major reforms by Peter the Great included a return to 'sobornye' principles.⁶⁷ These principles were set in place by Ivan and allowed Russian nobility and peasants to exist relatively peacefully without widescale significant tension or division. However, Peter exacerbated this class distinction by encouraging the nobility to pursue conquest.⁶⁸ Thus, the peasantry began to distrust the Russian nobility, which created a rift in relations.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, despite these differences, both displayed a need for shared identity. Alexander III also encouraged principles of orthodoxy, autocracy, and *narodnost* to facilitate a shared identity. He also supported the policy of Russification, which resulted in the empire adopting nationalism during the period between 1882 and 1894.⁷⁰ Putin incorporates and evolves these principles as elements of Putinism, which is further explored in Chapter 3, and also demonstrates an affinity for Alexander III as evidenced through his unveiling of a monument to Alexander III in Yalta, Crimea in 2017, as further addressed in Chapter 4.

The third and final case for understanding the shift from shared identity to collective identity deals primarily with pressure on Tsar Nicholas II's decision to expand Russia during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, incompetence as a leader during World War I, and inner turmoil with the royalty and other nationalities prior to the October

⁶⁷ Hosking, 274.

⁶⁸ Hosking, 274-275.

⁶⁹ Hosking, 274.

⁷⁰ Peter A. Zaionchkovsky, *The Russian Autocracy Under Alexander III* (Florida: Academic International Press, 1976), 65.

Revolution of 1917. Nicholas II's failure to retain control of the Russian Empire demonstrated the fallibility of shared identity as a way of maintaining unity. During his reign, civil unrest increased within the empire, effectively changing its identity. The Russo-Japanese War contributed to instability within the empire because it demonstrated Nicholas's incompetence in handling the war. According to Edvard Radzinsky in *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II*, this indecision was clear in the relationship between advisor Count Sergei Witte and the Tsar; Radzinsky claims that Witte influenced Nicholas to go to war with Japan.⁷¹ Witte was described by others in the Russian political circle as an advisor who held a lot of power over Nicholas II and emphasized how previous leaders like Alexander III increased Russia's strength militarily.⁷²

The pressuring influence from advisors which Nicholas II faced pushed him into making impulsive decisions involving expansion that placed the stability of the empire in jeopardy. Nicholas II's journal entry on January 26, 1904, expresses uncertainty.

“Returning home, received a telegram from Alexeyev with the news that that night Japanese torpedo boats had carried out an attack against the Tsesarevich, Pallada, etc., which were at anchor, and put holes in them. Is this undeclared war? Then may God help us!”⁷³ This quote demonstrates the lack of preparation Nicholas had for defending against a spontaneous attack on the country and only led to public scrutiny for him by the Russian people and his advisors. Radzinsky creates the narrative of a king who was ordered around by his advisors. Nicholas II's advisors assured him that Japan would not

⁷¹ Edvard Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II* (London: Doubleday, 1992), 61.

⁷² Radzinsky, 15.

⁷³ Radzinsky, 61.

attack and would be intimidated by the amount of territory Russia occupied, however the opposite happened. Japan attacked without warning and threw the empire into a war they were not prepared for.⁷⁴ Aside from the military, the Tsardom was growing noticeably weaker and made more impulsive economic decisions.⁷⁵ A revolution against the failed policies of the empire was imminent among dissatisfied socialist revolutionary groups that sought to punish the Tsardom for their incompetence.⁷⁶ As discussed by Edmund Walsh, the fall of the Russian Empire reflects an end to shared identity in which dissatisfaction among working class people in various regions would peak to the breaking point.⁷⁷ In the beginning of the revolution as indicated by Walsh, the empire was already in a weakened state and worker strikes as well as riots began to break out in January 1905.⁷⁸ These riots would continue, encouraging the creation of a class consciousness among the proletariat who revolted against low pay from industries and sought to invoke change through demonstration.⁷⁹ According to Walsh, “This phase culminated in the tragedy of ‘Bloody Sunday’ or ‘Red Sunday’ [...] on January 22, 1905 [...] The Cossacks, without warning, fired into the thickest part of the crowd [...] Five hundred men, women, and children lay dead in the snow.”⁸⁰ This quote demonstrates the desperate situation Nicholas II faced from the outcry, but he refused to address the issue and sent the military in to deal with it instead. This shows Nicholas’s lack of concern for stability

⁷⁴ Radzinsky, 61.

⁷⁵ Radzinsky, 71-72.

⁷⁶ Radzinsky, 70.

⁷⁷ Edmund Walsh, *The Fall of the Russian Empire; The Story of the Last of the Romanovs and the Coming of the Bolsheviks* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928).

⁷⁸ Walsh, 72.

⁷⁹ Walsh, 74.

⁸⁰ Walsh, 75.

in the empire and assumption the rioters would back down. He also underestimated Japan attacking Russia before the start of the Russo-Japanese War. Russia's influence and vast territory contributed to its overestimation by many leaders, especially Nicholas II.

Russification served as a major factor in the collapse of a shared identity because of the unrest being caused by self-seeking factions within the imperial Tsardom.⁸¹ As Walsh explains, "The destruction of the primitive political and social forms common interest was dispelled by the tyrannous exaction of landholders, petty clerks, and military governors responding with tribal solidarity [...] Thus the Russification and expansion policy operated, to a measurable degree, as an obstacle in the formation of a self-conscious, national state."⁸² This quote suggests that Russification could never be achieved. In fact, World War I led up to the 1917 revolution, marking the official end of the empire and shared identity as many traditional monarchies across Europe dissolved and adopted a modern government of national identity.⁸³ However, it marked the beginning of industrialization and the emergence of *collective identity* from the ashes of shared identity in Russia.

Leninism

The Bolshevik revolution would transform traditional Russian nationalism based on a sense of shared cultural identity to Soviet collective nationalism which saw Russia and Ukraine as part of a larger entity, the Soviet Union. The fall of the Tsardom ended traditional nationalism and replaced it with Soviet patriotism related to the concepts of a

⁸¹ Walsh, 148.

⁸² Walsh, 150

⁸³ Walsh, 5.

proletarian uprising that united different cultures under a collective class identity.⁸⁴

However, despite a major change in political dynamics, the Russian Revolution was more “Russian” than one might expect with evolution to a Soviet identity that still emphasized Russian nationalism.⁸⁵ In fact, Soviet leaders Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Joseph Stalin took different positions regarding the question of whether the Soviet Union existed as a collective entity or separate national entities. Soviet nationalism explains how the concept of Imperial nationalism changed economic and cultural conditions of Russia from before to after the October Revolution.⁸⁶

Marxism had a significant impact on the peasantry before the 1917 October revolution even started and dissatisfaction with the Tsardom propelled a shift from shared cultural identity to collective cultural and class identity. The Bolsheviks accused Tsar Nicholas II of ignoring the needs of the working class as a global entity and the original Soviet definition of patriotism before the rise of Stalin was more international than exclusive to Russia since the revolution focused on the proletariat of international workers.⁸⁷ Vladimir Lenin capitalized on the significance of Marx's ideas related to the Soviet people and the Communist Party, particularly regarding identity. In *Bad Card of the Motherland*, Nikolai Nikolaevich Mikhailov writes about the Soviet Union’s objectives for the national greater good as well as for all people in the USSR.⁸⁸ Mikhailov addresses how collective unity became cherished as a universal phenomenon

⁸⁴ Conquest, 37.

⁸⁵ Plokhy, 218.

⁸⁶ Mikhailov, 136.

⁸⁷ Mikhailov, 40.

⁸⁸ N.N. Mikhailov, *Bad Card of the Motherland* (Moscow: Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Komsomol “Young Guard”, 1947).

related to the idea of motherland by stating “The victory of the collective farm system in the countryside increased the economic power of our socialist Motherland.”⁸⁹ While a student, Mikhailov was invited to collaborate in numerous propaganda campaigns organized by the Soviet government and even was awarded the Stalin Prize in 1948, indicating that he subscribed to Soviet orthodoxies.⁹⁰ One of his publications was featured in a Soviet magazine called *Our Achievements* during World War II, which was dedicated to bolstering support in the country while emphasizing collective identity.⁹¹ Mikhailov’s research as a geographer argues that the Soviets valued labor as it would lead to efficient production of goods which would ensure the achievement of a collective utopia.⁹² According to Mikhailov, labor would liberate an individual in the Soviet Union as well as support the country in its struggle.⁹³

Lenin believed that industry and labor were essential to the survival of the Soviet Union. According to Mikhailov, the mission of the Soviet Union was a national objective for survival as much as it was an international objective to secure support of the proletariat worldwide and encourage Marxist revolution.⁹⁴ Ukraine was seen as a region that must undergo development to allow it to provide for the rest of the USSR to fulfill collective idealism of the proletariat.⁹⁵ Mikhailov argues that reform of agricultural

⁸⁹ Mikhailov, 136.

⁹⁰ Vladimir Moskovkin, “The Forgotten Soviet Geographer and Famous Writer Nikolai Nikolaevich Mikhailov (1905–1982) Experience of Internet Search and Bio-bibliographic Analysis,” *Modern History of Russia*, vol.13, no.1, 2023, pp. 122–140. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu24.2023.108>. Accessed 4/17/24.

⁹¹ Moskovkin, 130-131.

⁹² Mikhailov, 137-140.

⁹³ Mikhailov, 138, 144-145.

⁹⁴ Mikhailov, 43.

⁹⁵ Mikhailov, 136-137, 146.

policy by the Bolshevik Party was necessary to implement a new identity for Russia as part of a collective. Mikhailov thought that the “Soviet people, united and organized by the Bolshevik Party, overcame all obstacles on the way to their goal”⁹⁶ According to Mikhailov, this identity was based on the concept of the collective and how industry would lead the Motherland to a new sense of national interest.⁹⁷

Leninism sought to overcome all hardships as a collective state and ensure the original ideas of revolution concerning Marx were fulfilled.⁹⁸ Leninism additionally implied that all forms of industry in the Soviet Union were interconnected just as the proletariat are united as observed in his work *State and Revolution*.⁹⁹ Lenin envisioned a new utopia that honored the creed of a single proletarian identity laboring for the sake of a nation empowered by industrial strength and the will to survive any obstacle consistent with bourgeois ideals of old Russia.¹⁰⁰ As a geographer, Mikhailov describes the farm system of the Soviet Union as diverse and inclusive of other ethnicities while not focusing much on their differences. For example, in one instance he claims, “These successes were brought to us by the collective farm system, which armed the villages with technology and culture, united the peasants, and merged their interests with the interests of the entire state.”¹⁰¹ Geography also plays a critical role based on the roughness of its landscape and the raw minerals contained in its mountain ranges.

Mikhailov claims “Five tons of stones for laboratory research were carried from Khilbiny

⁹⁶ Mikhailov, 38-44.

⁹⁷ Mikhailov, 45, 135.

⁹⁸ Mikhailov, 136, 140.

⁹⁹ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *State and Revolution* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1947).

¹⁰⁰ Lenin, 120.

¹⁰¹ Mikhailov, 137.

Mountains; it is interspersed with the apatite ore in gray veins and spots.”¹⁰² Mikhailov is using geography as a metaphor for collective struggle and the toughness of Russians in achieving their objectives. Lenin did this as well in his descriptions of the Motherland, including the fertilization and production of the land as it related to survival, the abolishment of private land, and collectivization.¹⁰³

Despite the optimistic tone of his writing, Mikhailov expressed concern with the need for this unity to be maintained for the stability of the Motherland explaining that this will be done through labor and collective farming.¹⁰⁴ Mikhailov additionally claims that the shift to collective farming as well as industrial labor were beneficial to the nation in their struggle with droughts and poor climate.¹⁰⁵ Lenin saw Russia’s identity as an international phenomenon not limited to the notion of statehood and addressed this in, *What is to be Done?*¹⁰⁶ According to Lenin, the revolution is international, “The fulfillment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but also (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, places the Russian proletariat in the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, the goal of the revolution was to create a global proletariat uprising against the bourgeoisie and capitalist system. This differs from Stalin’s approach, which emphasized Soviet nationalism rather than bourgeois nationalism.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Mikhailov, 44.

¹⁰³ Lenin, 70.

¹⁰⁴ Mikhailov, 136.

¹⁰⁵ Mikhailov, 136.

¹⁰⁶ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What is to be Done?* (New York: International Publishers, 1929).

¹⁰⁷ Lenin, 80.

¹⁰⁸ Lewis Siegelbaum et al., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008), 265.

Stalinism

The collective farm system was a significant Stalinist principle meant to reform agriculture and implement a communal identity for the land of Russia concerning geopolitical structure. This included using Ukraine as an opportunity to produce more grain, seeing it as a potential region for the biggest amount of growth regarding food, and collecting produced goods.¹⁰⁹ It is important to recognize how the Holodomor was a purposely crafted famine weaponized by Stalin which forcefully established the collective, encouraged Soviet patriotism, and discouraged Ukrainian nationalism. This is an ironic contradiction of the USSR being anti-imperialist while glorifying patriotism as part of the collective. According to Conquest, “Stalin seems to have realized that only a mass terror throughout the body of the nation --- that is, the peasantry --- could really reduce the country to submission [...] ‘The nationality problem is, in its very essence, a problem of the peasantry.’”¹¹⁰ Stalin used famine to resolve the nationality problem by starving millions of Ukrainians while also facilitating a collective Soviet identity by destroying Ukrainian identity in the Soviet Union.¹¹¹ Fear of disunion likely drove Stalin to view state patriotism as the defining and necessary principle of revising and enforcing Marxist-Leninism.¹¹² Stalin’s disturbing revision of Marxist-Leninism was additionally full of contradictions which portrayed the Soviet collective as strong through struggle.¹¹³ Additionally, the famine, as per collectivization, enforced this unity through terror and

¹⁰⁹ Mikhailov, 137.

¹¹⁰ Conquest, 219.

¹¹¹ Conquest, 4.

¹¹² Siegelbaum et al., 209.

¹¹³ Siegelbaum et al., 172.

violence against the Ukrainian peasantry. Stalin was more concerned with nationality and maintaining Soviet patriotism than Lenin because Lenin viewed the international influence of the Soviet Union as most important. This is especially true for Lenin when it came to exporting the revolution. Lenin viewed all people in the USSR as Bolshevik citizens in *State and Revolution* by referencing Friedrich Engels' work regarding the need to establish a public society of workers.¹¹⁴ A public society of workers was necessary to maintain an ideal state where there was no emphasis on independent identities but rather the Soviet effort. As Mikhailov states, "Freed from bondage, the new collective farm village had the opportunity to make its life more and more cultural and prosperous. With the help of the Soviet state, she raised new people- people with broad, national interests and high culture, people of selfless labor and civic value."¹¹⁵ Stalin was much less concerned with this *national interest* as it related to collective identity in the Soviet Union.

Collective identity and farming would additionally help with the war effort against Germany during World War II.¹¹⁶ Various materials were produced and given to regions of occupied USSR that were recently liberated. These included livestock, raw minerals, tea, grapes, and different fruits.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, despite these strides for unity, the state underwent massive struggles. These were natural disasters like droughts which led to a lack of irrigation, poor soil quality, and a difficult task called vernalization.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Lenin, 15.

¹¹⁵ Mikhailov, 136.

¹¹⁶ Mikhailov, 40, 136.

¹¹⁷ Mikhailov, 138.

¹¹⁸ Mikhailov, 142, 145.

Vernalization was a method which involved cutting the amount of time it takes to ripen plants so that they could be harvested beforehand.¹¹⁹ The reason this was done is because due to the rough landscape of the Soviet countryside, it was necessary to ensure the growth of food while enduring harsh climates. Vernalization was an element of the Soviet collective since it addressed the need for survival and agriculture in desperate situations. Therefore, vernalization represents the USSR's need to stabilize national interest through collective effort.¹²⁰

While using this language, Mikhailov is attempting to humanize the country and the Party with its objectives of serving as a liberator that oversees the establishment of a public utopia where every worker contributes to the success of the state through collective struggle.¹²¹ The differences in political rhetoric between Stalin and Lenin highlight their different visions for the Soviet Union. Lenin was not as concerned with Soviet patriotism.¹²² Instead, he saw the USSR as an international entity related to the will of the people instead of the Party. Lenin rejected the concept of imperialism as a primary element of the Soviet Union, as illustrated in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.¹²³ Unlike Stalin, Lenin argued that the goals and identity of the USSR should stick to the concept of avoiding the capitalist principle of subjugating the working class.¹²⁴ He believed capitalism presented an oligarchical class structure that oppressed

¹¹⁹ Mikhailov, 142-143.

¹²⁰ Mikhailov, 41.

¹²¹ Mikhailov, 43.

¹²² Lenin, 65.

¹²³ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline* (New York: Progress Publishers, 1917).

¹²⁴ Lenin, VII.

the working man, stating, “Imperialism is the epoch of finance of capital and of monopolies, which introduce everywhere the striving for domination, not for freedom.”¹²⁵ Lenin is criticizing capitalism as an ideology that rewards capitalists who subjugate the working class.¹²⁶ Communism was portrayed as a principle that would break the never-ending loop of class struggle in a bourgeois system meant to oppress the working class and glorify the rich.¹²⁷ Lenin understood capitalism as a tool used by the Tsardom to drive their imperial agenda. Observed in *What is to be Done?*, Lenin remained unconvinced that the revolution should intend for anything other than fighting a war against the bourgeoisie to end class division.¹²⁸ He never wanted to use the Marxist framework as an excuse to justify Soviet imperialism, as he considers imperialism to be an element of capitalism, but rather to create awareness of the injustice he felt the proletariat faced under the Tsardom and to expose them.¹²⁹ It was not Russia’s goal to alter the definition of Soviet patriotism and collective unity to fit that of an imperial standard.¹³⁰

On the other hand, Stalin thought that nationalism can and should exist in the Soviet Union as a means of preserving Russian language and identity. However, this type of nationalism must be careful to not exalt old ideas of imperialism and glorify the Soviet collective. When discussing this topic in *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin states, “Is it not obvious that the theory of the dying away of national languages and their

¹²⁵ Lenin, IX.

¹²⁶ Lenin, VII.

¹²⁷ Lenin, VII.

¹²⁸ Lenin, 158.

¹²⁹ Lenin, 84.

¹³⁰ Lenin, 40.

fusion into a single common language within a single state in the period of extensive socialist construction, in the period of socialism in one country is an incorrect, anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist theory?”¹³¹ Plokhly argues that Soviet nationalism is an attempt at imperialism with respect to Ukraine. National collective identity was forced by Soviet Russia’s exploitation of Ukraine for its product and the Party’s vision became obscured toward a pro-Russian bias. Joseph Stalin encouraged this through Soviet patriotism. As Stalin took over, many of the proletariat in Russia shifted from respecting the ideals of Marxism as it applied to the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and evolved into the Party against all.¹³² The Great Patriotic War marked a turning point for this shift.¹³³ Following the solidification of the revolution in the 1930s, Russia industrialized as a state, and the Central Committee became noticeably more prominent with its need for control.¹³⁴ Stalin was increasingly using the Party as a political tool to secure the camaraderie of the motherland through faith in the Soviet effort. The central theme related to Soviet nationalism was now motivated by the Party’s vision under Stalin, particularly with how it applied to Russia.

As Mikhailov states, “The Party is leading us Soviet people, directing the efforts of millions into one channel. Stalin shows us the forward to new victories. He builds the happiness of the people. He inspires the Soviet people to work, to exploits.”¹³⁵ Mikhailov

¹³¹ Stalin, 213.

¹³² Karl Marx; Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Ohio: Bookmasters Inc., 2010).

¹³³ Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, “Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square, Moscow,” transcript of speech delivered at Red Square, Moscow, November 7, 1941, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1941/11/07.htm>. Accessed 3/18/24.

¹³⁴ Stalin, “Speech at the Red Army Parade,” ¶3.

¹³⁵ Mikhailov, 9.

wants the Soviet citizenry to see Stalin as a new leader to continue the glory of the USSR after Lenin and maintain the status quo of collective identity.¹³⁶ However, Stalin held pro-Russian thoughts that the mission of the Soviet Union was to serve as a federation to establish *forced* unity through domination of ethnic Russians to encourage a majority rule.¹³⁷ Stalin emphasized this in his 1941 work, *Marxism and the National Question*. In one section of the text, Stalin discusses the country of Russia as a federation that must rely on maintaining a union of people from other states under one Russian entity. Stalin effectively glorified the concept of collective identity by which a national federation must *ensure* unification of a Soviet entity. Ironically, Stalin criticizes the Tsarist government as an imperialist institution that forcibly Russified many of the regions surrounding Russia like Ukraine and the Baltics.¹³⁸ Using patriotic elements combined with the people's struggle brought on by Stalin's reign, the USSR glorified collective conflict through revolution to define the entire nation.

Soviet rhetoric also humanized the Party as a parental figure with children to look over in a metaphorical sense. With the understanding of this notion, Stalinism is a totalitarian ideology that implements the tenets of Marxist-Leninism through centralization, industrialization, collectivization, and Soviet nationalist effort. Policies like collectivization of Ukraine encouraged the poverty of the Soviet people and the revolution was exclusive of different identities based on class, especially differences

¹³⁶ Mikhailov, 135, 136-138.

¹³⁷ Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question Selected Writings and Speeches* (New York: International Publishers, 1942).

¹³⁸ Stalin, 92-94.

between kulaks and non-kulaks.¹³⁹ An individual was considered part of the kulak class and an outsider of the motherland based on socioeconomic distinctions. Specifically, if peasants owned land in any way or practiced capitalist principles that opposed the union, they were classified as kulaks. As explained in Stalin's excerpt, The Party is seen as a guardian for Russia that sees the kulaks as disobedient children representing concepts of independent identity from the union. Stalin explains, "The duty of the party in relation to the toiling masses of these peoples [...] is to unite their efforts with the efforts of the toiling masses of the local Russian population in the struggle for emancipation from the kulaks in general."¹⁴⁰ Stalin feared that this new developing class would disrupt the socialist society which the Bolsheviks worked to achieve and opposed the collective union of the states.

Linguistic analysis also helps to understand collective identity as it applies to the motherland. Mikhailov uses the term «Родина», which translates to "home" or "motherland."¹⁴¹ «Мать» is also a root word related to mothers that personifies Russia in this role.¹⁴² For example, there is the first basic definition of the home as дом or жилище. There is also the meaning of making one's presence at home or будьте как дома. The second numerical definition designates home as a place, kingdom, or domain that belongs to an individual and is listed as родной дом and родина, as previously mentioned. The third definition relates the concept or term of home as one that describes

¹³⁹ Stalin, 213.

¹⁴⁰ Stalin, 94.

¹⁴¹ Asya Gorlova, "Unit 1 Week 1." *Quizlet*, May 30, 2023. <https://quizlet.com/804353051/unit-1-week-1-flash-cards/?funnelUUID=51e59050-162c-4329-9220-a3d606daa18e>. Accessed 4/6/23.

¹⁴² Gorlova, "Unit 1 Week 1."

family. The dictionary lists this as семья, домашняя жизнь; домашний очаг, and уют.¹⁴³ All these definitions are like nouns that reference a specific person, place, or thing. With these many definitions of “home”, Russia can justify its actions of imperialism against other countries as defending land they claim belongs to them or is part of their “homeland.” The importance of the concept of “*Motherland*,” coupled with Soviet nationalist principles, is evident in Stalin’s 1941 address to the Red Army Parade in Moscow. Stalin rallied the Soviet people to unite against the Germans and commemorates the 1917 October Revolution as a form of resistance to oppression. As Stalin claimed, “Comrades, it is in strenuous circumstances that we are to-day celebrating the twenty-fourth anniversary of the October Revolution [...] Death to the German invaders! Long live our glorious Motherland, her liberty and her independence.”¹⁴⁴ Stalin’s rhetoric is both incendiary and idealistic as it applies to the Soviet Union’s industrial power and collective bond of resistance against ideological and military threats.¹⁴⁵ Stalin emphasized that a nation’s people must remember the sacrifices made during the revolution to establish prominence and identity as a country with an obligation to liberate the world from fascism and achieve victory.¹⁴⁶ *Liberation* is a major concept in Stalin’s speech and in the USSR because World War II was viewed as a fight against the bondage imposed by Nazi Germany.

Stalin acted to liberate his people from fascism and only through the collective unity of a single people under one national identity could this common goal be achieved.

¹⁴³ V.K. Muller, *Russian-English Dictionary* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc, 1944), 415.

¹⁴⁴ Stalin, “Speech at the Red Army Parade,” ¶ 2, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Stalin, “Speech at the Red Army Parade,” ¶6.

¹⁴⁶ Stalin, “Speech at the Red Army Parade,” ¶6.

Furthermore, there is an underlying tone of bondage during intense hardship which can be observed in the speech. Stalin thought that struggle made the Soviet people stronger in their collective suffering. Stalin reflected the view that Russia's occupation by other entities throughout history have hardened the people. As stated by Stalin, "There were times when our country was in a still more difficult position. Remember the year 1918, when we celebrated the first anniversary of the October Revolution. Three-quarters of our country was at that time in the hands of foreign interventionists. The Ukraine, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East were temporarily lost to us."¹⁴⁷ Stalin viewed old Russia as imperialistic toward the collective union of states.¹⁴⁸ Stalin also called Imperial Russia *chauvinist*. Cambridge Dictionary states that this type of political chauvinism is a strong and unreasonable belief that a nation is superior or more significant than others.¹⁴⁹ Stalin agreed with Lenin's idea that the Soviet Union should serve as the Motherland for all who are members of it. However, he differed from Lenin in believing that anyone *not* considered part of the Soviet identity should be purged and replaced. According to Stalin, this purging and replacing would require a collective national effort against Great-Russian chauvinism. Stalin explains, "When the survivals of nationalism are a peculiar form of defense against Great-Russian chauvinism, the surest means of overcoming nationalist survivals is to wage war on Great-Russian chauvinism."¹⁵⁰ Thus, poorer individuals who disagreed with the policies of

¹⁴⁷ Stalin, "Speech at the Red Army Parade," ¶3.

¹⁴⁸ Stalin, 93.

¹⁴⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, "Chauvinism" N.d.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/chauvinism>. Accessed 4/13/24.

¹⁵⁰ Stalin, 132.

collectivization and who were born outside of the Motherland were considered kulaks and purged from society.¹⁵¹ The Soviets demonstrated loyalty to the Party under Stalin's command, rather than allegiance to Lenin's principles of how the government should function.

While Stalin's actions differed from that of Lenin in many respects, Stalin stated his mission was to continue the war of liberation in his honor as well as the ancestors of the Russian Empire as indicated in his 1941 Red Army Speech.¹⁵² Stalin thought he was liberating the rest of Europe from fascism and the imperial ambitions of conquest from outside forces like Germany. Ironically, Stalin purged his opposition in horrific events like the Holodomor, demonstrating his willingness to use imperialistic means to achieve his ends. The Holodomor involved the killing of millions of the population in Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. This was accomplished primarily using government caused famines through collectivization that extorted grains from the region. Nevertheless, it was perceived as an atrocity that was necessary to maintain collective identity and stability in the USSR. In *The Harvest of Sorrow*, Richard Conquest discusses this atrocity as it relates to Russian imperialism and the concept of Stalinism.¹⁵³ Conquest explores how the collectivization of wheat by Stalin's government was a devastating event that led to millions of deaths. He describes how Stalin's regime used terror famines against the peasantry and wants to give the west an improved understanding of how devastating these atrocities were. It addresses the central role fear played in allowing the USSR to

¹⁵¹ Stalin, 213.

¹⁵² Stalin, "Speech at the Red Army Parade," ¶6.

¹⁵³ Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

establish national collective dominance in Ukraine and other regions through the collectivization of their crops.

Conquest also contrasts “kulak” and “non-Kulak” by economic status and social differences.¹⁵⁴ The kulak label relates to Soviet national identity because kulaks were excluded from the collective. Conquest explains, “The formula in the countryside for the new socialist phase was an alliance with the poor peasant and the ‘village proletarian’ against the ‘kulak’, with the ‘middle peasant’ neutralized [...] The struggle was bitter, and became increasingly bitter. [...] A decree of 9 May 1918 ‘on the monopoly of food’ empowered the Commissariat of Food to extract from the peasants any grain held in excess of quotas set by the Commissariat, adding that ‘this grain is in the hands of the kulaks.’”¹⁵⁵ Stalin did not consider kulaks Bolsheviks. Although being a kulak was not an ethnic category, many kulak peasants lived in Ukraine.¹⁵⁶ According to the 1926 census, “738,000 farming families, 120,000 of them in Ukraine, used hired labor.”¹⁵⁷

Conquest expresses cynicism for the Soviet regime under Stalin and assesses dekulakization as an excuse to dehumanize opponents of the Party while reinforcing a forced national collective. After understanding how nationalism changed from Russian imperialism through the Stalinist school of thought, its evolution to Putinism will be explored by examining the life of Vladimir Putin.

¹⁵⁴ Conquest, 22-24.

¹⁵⁵ Conquest, 45-46.

¹⁵⁶ Conquest, 30.

¹⁵⁷ Maksudov, ¶3.

CHAPTER THREE

PUTINISM AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Putinism is best understood by examining the life of its creator, Vladimir Putin. His experiences from childhood through the collapse of the USSR, along with his rise to power, shaped Putinism as an evolution of post-Soviet Russian nationalism. Leaders who fought for the concept of Soviet patriotism and collective struggle were major influences on Vladimir Putin. Soviet nationalism also played a role in cementing within Putin the concept of collective identity through struggle. Putin often portrays himself as having had to overcome struggles as a child, implying that he had to endure like the nation. Putin's belief that his history corresponds with the collective effort of Russia heavily influenced his development of Putinism. Finally, there are elements of Putinism that are similar to and different from elements of Russian and Soviet nationalism, but their common thread is one of collective identity through struggle.

Putin's Origin and Rise to Power

Putin's background plays an essential role in his attempt to forge a collective identity in Russia through struggle. Historians Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy address this concept in their work, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, where most of Putin's life is described as a struggle with those who opposed him and mimics a rags-to-riches story in his rise to power and influence over those inside and outside of his political circle.¹⁵⁸ Although the authors acknowledge that Putin takes on numerous personas, they do not address in detail

¹⁵⁸ Fiona Hill; Gaddy G. Clifford, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2013).

his propensity to relate certain aspects of his life to events that he describes from Russia's history. Putin often portrays his life as average to convey relatability to the "common" Russian.¹⁵⁹ According to his biography on his personal website for the Kremlin, he was born in October 1952 as the only child to his parents Maria Ivanovna Shelomova and Vladimir Spiridonovich Putin.¹⁶⁰ Putin also claims that he held a deep affection toward his mother, despite her being critical of his decision to join a judo class as an adolescent. He states, "Every time I went to a practice session, she would grumble, 'He's off to his fights again.'"¹⁶¹ However, it is unclear whether Putin is being truthful or sarcastic with the relationship he had with his mother. The relationship between Putin and his mother reflects the Soviet focus on youthful disobedience. In Lenin's discussion on the Crisis of Menshevism and eventual October Revolution of 1917,¹⁶² he refers to Friedrich Engels where he declares, "We are the party of the future and the future belongs to the youth. We are a party of innovators, and it is always the youth that most eagerly follows the innovators. We are a party that is waging a self-sacrificing struggle against the old rottenness, and youth is always the first to undertake a self-sacrificing struggle."¹⁶³

Thus, Putin suggests that he was fighting his own "civil war" against his family. In his biography on the Kremlin website, Putin claims he often attended judo matches that his mother did not initially support. In this story, Putin serves as a form of proletariat

¹⁵⁹ Vladimir Putin, "Vladimir Putin: Biography." *Vladimir Putin – Personal Website; Kremlin*. N.d. <http://en.putin.kremlin.ru/bio/page-0>. Accessed 3/13/24.

¹⁶⁰ Putin, "Biography."

¹⁶¹ Putin, "Biography."

¹⁶² Lenin, Vladimir. "The Crisis of Menshevism." *Proletary*, December 7, 1906. From Lenin Collected Works, Progress Publishers, 1965, Marxists Internet Archive, 2004. (2004).

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/crimensh/iii.htm>. Accessed 3/14/24.

¹⁶³ Lenin, III.

struggling against his mother's command as she was unwilling to listen to his demands for change. Putin's emphasis on his interest in judo leverages his self-described story of hardship to relate to the identity of the Russian people during the revolution.

The concept of youth served a major role in the formation of Soviet political entities and legislation such as the Komsomol.¹⁶⁴ According to Pravda article "*Program of the Komsomol*" by the Tenth Congress on April 21, 1936, "The All Union Leninist Communist League of Youth is a mass non-partisan organization allied to the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and unites in its ranks broad masses of advanced and politically conscious young persons living in towns and villages [...] educates the youth demonstrating to them the examples of heroic struggle of workers and toiling peasants against capitalists and landowners."¹⁶⁵ Putin might be relating his experiences as a child to mirror the youth of the proletariat.

Putin appears to view the USSR as a rebellious nation that fought for its liberation from the Tsardom. Putin asserts that his family changed their perspective on his judo lessons after the coach informed them of his feats in judo.¹⁶⁶ Putin seems to equate that acceptance with Russia as the Motherland finally accepting the revolution once the USSR was established in 1922.¹⁶⁷ As stated in the "Declaration of the Creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," "Finally, the very structure of the Soviet Government,

¹⁶⁴ Komsomol; Tenth Congress, "Program of the Komsomol." Seventeen Moments in Soviet History, *Pravda*, April 21, 1936. From Michigan State University, National Endowment for the Humanities, Macalester College, August 31, 2015 (2015). <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1936-2/childhood-under-stalin/childhood-under-stalin-texts/program-of-the-komsomol/>. Accessed 3/13/24.

¹⁶⁵ Komsomol; Tenth Congress, "Program of the Komsomol."

¹⁶⁶ Putin, "Biography."

¹⁶⁷ USSR, "Declaration on the Formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." 1924, *CEC USSR*. <https://www.prlib.ru/en/item/720026>. Accessed 3/18/24.

international by virtue of its class nature, leads the working masses of the Soviet Republics along the road towards one united socialist family.”¹⁶⁸ Putin seems to draw an analogy between him being rewarded for his self-described victories over struggles and the Bolsheviks being rewarded with the seizure of power in Russia.

Putin makes claims about his father’s military service and his grandfather’s personal service to past Soviet leaders. These claims are unsubstantiated but serve to promote Putin’s narrative of national patriotism and serving the motherland as part of a collective. Specifically, Putin claims his father served in World War II, and that his grandfather was the personal cook to Lenin and Stalin. He does not mention much about “The Great Patriotic War” other than that his father participated nor much about his grandfather.¹⁶⁹ *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self Portrait by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin*, is a biography published in 2000 that was based on interviews with Vladimir Putin about his life experiences and background as president. Putin provides slightly more detail on his background, stating, “He had been assigned to a demolitions battalion of the NKVD. These battalions were engaged in sabotage behind German lines. My father took part in one such operation [...] My father jumped into a swamp over his head and breathed through a hollow reed until the dogs passed by. That’s how he survived.”¹⁷⁰ However, according to “Could This Person be Vladimir Putin’s Real Mother?”, Vera Putina claims that Putin was born in a rural town in Georgia after his

¹⁶⁸ USSR, “Declaration on the Formation.”

¹⁶⁹ Putin, “Biography.”

¹⁷⁰ Vladimir Putin, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 6.

father's father, a Russian mechanic named Platon Privalov, got her pregnant with Putin while he was married to another woman.¹⁷¹

Whether Putin or the woman is telling the truth cannot be verified, but Putin uses these stories to serve his agenda by drawing parallels between his life and Russian historical events. He uses metaphorical language to convey that he is a representation of Russia and is destined to save the nation as Tsar of a new Russian Empire by making claims of personal connections to its major figures and events. In an interview in a Russian magazine called "Rus Pioneer", Putin claims his family made dramatic sacrifices in The Great Patriotic War to save the country.¹⁷² Putin elaborates on the brutal nature of the war and the role of his family by explaining "my father didn't touch the subject. All my information about the war, about what was happening to my family, came from these conversations between adults. But sometimes they spoke directly to me [...] 'The man', he said, looked at us attentively, [...] And threw these grenades at us. [...] 'Life is so simple and cruel.' [...] And there wasn't a family where someone didn't die."¹⁷³

Putin views the Great Patriotic War as a collective struggle against an opposition. When discussing his father, Putin's cousin Aleksandr states that Mikhail, Aleksandr's father, and Putin's uncle, was a competitive individual who taught judo and worked in construction.¹⁷⁴ This supports Putin's narrative of parallel struggles with Russia because

¹⁷¹ Kate Weinberg, "Could This Woman Be Vladimir Putin's Real Mother?" *The Telegraph*. December 5, 2008. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/3568891/Could-this-woman-be-Vladimir-Putins-real-mother.html>. Accessed 3/18/24.

¹⁷² Vladimir Putin, "Class Journal- 'Life Is So Simple and Cruel.'" *Russian Pioneer*. April 30, 2015. <https://ruspioneer.ru/cool/m/single/4655>. Accessed 3/19/24.

¹⁷³ Putin, "Class Journal."

¹⁷⁴ Chris Monday, "What's Hiding in Putin's Family History?" *History News Network*. January 22, 2023. <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/whats-hiding-in-putins-family-history>. Accessed 3/19/24.

his extended family valued hard work, collective effort, and a sense of pride in self. The Great Patriotic War is a reminder of the struggles his family witnessed and personally endured. Putin glorifies the concept of suffering by explaining that as a child he had to entertain himself by chasing rats with a stick.¹⁷⁵ Whether intentional or not, Putin conveys a masculine appeal to appear invincible to hardship. Putin seems to equate his transition from childhood to adolescence as the same type of transition from the Russian Empire to the USSR.

Putin is self-described as an aggressive troublemaker who enjoyed getting into fights as an adolescent and had little interest in doing well in school or being a Pioneer as he says.¹⁷⁶ He also took other combat sports besides judo, like wrestling and sambo, a technique that combines judo and wrestling.¹⁷⁷ His stories about his development from primary school through adolescence are used to advocate for robust, even violent, Russian patriotism. As he declares in his biography on his personal website, his teachers saw potential in him as a special person, and one named Vera Gurevich explained, “In the fifth grade, he still hadn’t found himself yet, but I could feel the potential, the energy, and the character in him. [...] I thought, something good will come of this boy so I decided to give him more attention, to distract him from boys on the streets.”¹⁷⁸ Putin and his supporters mold his biography into one which tells an underdog story of a rags to riches individual who needed to stand out from others. He is promoting a narrative that his

¹⁷⁵ Putin, 2.

¹⁷⁶ Putin, “Biography.”

¹⁷⁷ Hill; Gaddy, 21.

¹⁷⁸ Putin, “Biography.”

alleged aggressiveness showcased his potential to lead his nation to glory as inspired by Russia's history of struggle.

In fact, emerging from World War II, it is easy to understand how the USSR might have seen itself similarly as an underdog. As previously explained, the USSR and its people endured much suffering during The Great Patriotic War. Putin's self-proclaimed role as a troublemaker parallels this context. Putin plays the trope of an unwilling hero who comes to recognize through certain events, that he is meant to save his country through violent struggle. Putin comments on this self-realization when he changed his priorities saying, "Other priorities were emerging. I was asserting myself through sports, achieving something. There were new goals, too. No doubt, this had an enormous effect."¹⁷⁹ Similar to the Soviet Union building itself up during this period of its history, Putin likewise claims that he was building himself up and beginning to assert his own dominance. Putin graduated from high school in the 1970's. According to his personal website, he then went on to attend Leningrad State University and earn his law degree in 1975.¹⁸⁰ Before attending law school, however, Putin states that he became interested in multiple careers ranging from a sailor to a pilot and also intelligence.¹⁸¹ Although Putin was never clear about what he wanted to do, his purpose was to convey that he is a multifaceted individual like the Soviet Union is a multifaceted nation. After graduating law school from Leningrad State University in 1975, Putin joined the KGB where he worked his way up to the rank of lieutenant colonel.¹⁸² In *First Person*, while

¹⁷⁹ Putin, "Biography."

¹⁸⁰ Putin, "Biography."

¹⁸¹ Putin, "Biography."

¹⁸² Hill; Gaddy, 21.

discussing his time in the KGB, Putin claimed that the agency originally did not try to recruit him. However, they wanted to test his intelligence to see if he was capable.¹⁸³

The story Putin presents is that of an eager young adult seeking to prove himself in the political dynamics of Russia and to serve his nation as part of a collective effort. Putin explains “The cooperation of normal citizens was an important tool for the state’s viable activity ... These agents work for the interest of the state. It doesn’t matter what this work is called. The important thing is upon which basis this cooperation takes place.”¹⁸⁴ Upon observing how Putinism fits into the dynamic of Putin’s service in the KGB, it details a national collective in defense of Russia from its enemies and the *duty* of a Russian citizen to uphold one’s *honor* to their country. In *Putin and the Rise of Russia*, Michael Stuermer explores who Vladimir Putin really is, his objective for Russia, and the crafting of a state which emphasizes a new empire.¹⁸⁵ Stuermer implies Putin exaggerates much of his background as a KGB officer and debunks how he is not the James Bond stereotype but rather a bureaucrat serving the interest of both the Soviet and Russian state against a world order led by the West.¹⁸⁶ He writes, “Putin did not rise to be a Soviet James Bond but stayed in Leningrad and became a bureaucrat in the KGB administration [...] Putin then proceeded to put Russia forth as a *champion* of international law against the US.”¹⁸⁷ Therefore, Putin is utilizing himself and his experiences for the war in Ukraine by which he highlights his service in the KGB to portray himself as a patriotic

¹⁸³ Putin, 39-40.

¹⁸⁴ Putin, 39-40.

¹⁸⁵ Michael Stuermer, *Putin and the Rise of Russia*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008).

¹⁸⁶ Stuermer, 20.

¹⁸⁷ Stuermer, 19.

representative of Russia. Thus, Putin's service in the KGB influenced Putinism by incorporating a sense of patriotism and nostalgia in the collective struggle of the Soviet Union against the West.

In *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West*, Catherine Belton discusses Putin's time in the KGB as a demonstration of his ambition to prove himself as a leader, eventually marking his rise to power.¹⁸⁸ Belton details Putin's connections with his colleagues at the KGB and with Anatoly Sobchak, his mentor. She explains Putin's KGB service as a way for him to claim that he "served his country as a military *chinovnik*; now he was a civilian official, serving --- as he had before --- his country 'outside the realm of political competition.'¹⁸⁹ Putin's time in the KGB instilled in him the utility of using the defense of the collective against the influence of the West and he incorporated this into Putinism.

Putin also worked in Dresden as an officer in East Germany in 1985 and, while studying law, met a professor named Anatoly Sobchak with whom he formed strong bonds. Sobchak was a mentor to Putin and a close friend.¹⁹⁰ Sobchak would help to facilitate the ratification of the first Russian Constitution, which placed significance on the idea of Russianness. In fact, in a speech in St. Petersburg following Anatoly Sobchak's death on February 24, 2000, Putin expressed sympathy for his deceased friend, and stated that Russia has an obligation to emphasize the Russian individual and their

¹⁸⁸ Catherine Belton, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West* (London: HarperCollins, 2020).

¹⁸⁹ Belton, 22.

¹⁹⁰ Vladimir Putin, "Speech at the Funeral of Anatoly Sobchak, Former St Petersburg Mayor," transcript of speech delivered at St. Petersburg, February 24, 2000. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24142>. Accessed 3/19/24.

rights.¹⁹¹ This sentiment is found in the Constitution of Russia because Sobchak helped facilitate ratification of the first Constitution of Russia and placed significance on the idea of Russianness.¹⁹² This signaled a conservative shift in Putin's ideology from a Soviet to a Russian nationalist identity. This shift in Putinism dovetailed well with Putin's service in the KGB, as he viewed that mission as defending Russia against the West. During the 1980s-90s, Putin continued to serve in the KGB and had a front row seat for the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. He resigned from the KGB and entered the political arena as deputy mayor of St. Petersburg.¹⁹³ He also served as the Director of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and later became Secretary of the Russian Security Council.¹⁹⁴ Putin saw first-hand the chaos that had ensued from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the lack of cohesion under Yeltsin. This shaped his worldview and reinforced in Putin the critical need to maintain order.¹⁹⁵ Sobchak and even Yeltsin relied on Putin to establish and maintain order and encouraged his intervention as necessary to defend Russia.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, Putin sees his war in Ukraine as a collective defense against a world order led by the West. All these events and experiences served not only to mark the collapse of the Soviet Union and birth of the Russian Federation, but they also informed Putin's rise to power and evolution of Putinism to promoting a Russian collective identity through struggle.

¹⁹¹ Putin, "Speech at the Funeral of Anthony Sobchak."

¹⁹² Garant-Internet, "The Constitution of the Russian Federation, Article 35-44." *Constitution.ru*. 2001. <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-02.htm>. Accessed 2/28/24.

¹⁹³ Belton, 328.

¹⁹⁴ Michael Ray, "Vladimir Putin." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Putin>. Accessed 4/14/24.

¹⁹⁵ Belton, 328-329.

¹⁹⁶ Belton, 87-96.

Putinism

Putinism is an amalgam of imperial Russian beliefs and Soviet nationalist elements related to patriotism. It is not limited exclusively to Russian Tsarist or Soviet thoughts and concepts, but instead an evolution of these elements and imbued with the personality of its creator. The development of Putinism begins with examining the changes Russia underwent from 1991-2000. Continuing the influence of Sobchak, Russia's Constitution, ratified December 12, 1993, changed the structure of Russia's government. Specifically, in *Chapter 2. Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen*, this included property rights for all citizens of the Russian Federation, freedom of religion, conscience, and right to choose those beliefs, freedom of ideas and speech that do not express any supremacy of one race, religion, or ethnicity.¹⁹⁷ The Russian Constitution shares similarities with the U.S. Constitution in guaranteeing certain freedoms for Russian citizens but differs in prioritizing collective governance and requiring military service. Similarly, Imperial nationalism emphasized Russianness and was pan-Slavic.

As stated by Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrudin in *The New Russian Nationalism* when discussing Slavophilia, “The Slavophiles of the 1890s and the early 1900s (Nikolai Danilevskii, Konstantin Leontiev, Vasilii Rozanov, and others) developed the idea of Russia's special path. It was this cohort of Slavophiles that began to contrast the special national character of Russians [...] These later Slavophiles harnessed the concept of nation [...] to preserve autocracy and imperial power.”¹⁹⁸ Therefore, Russification was a

¹⁹⁷ Garant-Internet, “The Constitution of the Russian Federation.”

¹⁹⁸ Pål Kolstø; Helge Blakkisrud, *The New Russian Nationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 50-51.

significant political element of the Russian Empire that influenced different Slavic cultures in forming Russia through the use of shared language and social norms.¹⁹⁹ For example, Slavophilia was a political movement that originated in 19th century Russia that expressed passion for autocratic principles of Tsarist framework, praised Slavic culture, and rejected Western influence (Западничество).²⁰⁰ Thus, Russian nationalism in the Tsarist empire shared several principles with modern Putinism, including that Russian people are special, Russia will remain Russian, and Russia will defend its people.²⁰¹ This pan-Slavic theme runs through the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Federation as well as Putinism. It helps promote the concept of a negative influence by Western European culture that is used by Vladimir Putin in his narrative that Ukraine must be reunified through struggle as part of the Russian collective identity.²⁰²

“The Russian Idea,” as expressed in Gaddy and Hill’s work, is a philosophy that Putin claims as essential when considering Russianness.²⁰³ This philosophy involves patriotism, collectivism, and *Derzhavnost*, which is nationalist thinking that Russia is the chosen nation to expand its culture and influence beyond its borders.²⁰⁴ The prevention of Western influence can be observed in many aspects of Imperial nationalism as far back as the nineteenth century. The three defining principles of “Official Nationality” first formulated by Count Uvarov for Tsar Nicholas I in 1833, asserted that “orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality” should be the intellectual traits which must become part of

¹⁹⁹ Kolstø; Blakkisrud, 50-51.

²⁰⁰ Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians* (Maine: Intercultural Press, 2003), 25.

²⁰¹ Kolstø; Blakkisrud, 51.

²⁰² Garant Internet, “The Constitution of the Russian Federation.”

²⁰³ Hill; Gaddy, 78.

²⁰⁴ Hill; Gaddy, 78.

Russia's doctrine.²⁰⁵ These principles continue to be embodied in Putinism, which views Western entities like the European Union and NATO as a threat to the Russian collective. Putin frames this alleged threat as one that requires a Russian campaign of counter-expansion to overthrow the West. For example, during the invasion of Ukraine, Russian military vehicles had the letter "Z" emblazoned on them, which some claim is short for the Russian term "Zapad" or "Запад" or "West."²⁰⁶ Although meant to identify a military unit, it may also be intended to represent Russia's fight against the West.

Putin may also be encouraging the immigration of Africans who accept the Russian national collectivist philosophy of Putin, so he can use them to wage a war against the West.²⁰⁷ He knows that Islam is perceived by many Americans and Europeans as a great ideological threat to Western civilization, and may view the spread of African migrants in Europe to weaken pro-NATO and Western European countries.²⁰⁸ Putin claims that anyone, regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion, can identify as Russian as long as they support Russia and oppose the West.²⁰⁹ Ironically, however, he often refers to the Russian Orthodox Church in his appeal to a collective identity. The Church played a major role in Imperial nationalism, and Putin uses it to sanction his war in Ukraine and reunify Russia as a collective against the West. For Putin, Russianness is more than nationality. Russianness is a cultural identity that has been debated among historians and

²⁰⁵ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia 1822-1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 75.

²⁰⁶ Marcus Wheeler, *The Oxford Russian-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 215.

²⁰⁷ Daniel Kochis, "Russia's Weaponization of Migrants Hasn't Gone Away." *The Heritage Foundation*. November 18, 2022. <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/russias-weaponization-migrants-hasnt-gone-away>. Accessed 2/28/24.

²⁰⁸ Kochis, "Russia's Weaponization of Migrants Hasn't Gone Away."

²⁰⁹ Kochis, "Russia's Weaponization of Migrants Hasn't Gone Away."

political scholars. Some authors like Simon Franklin argue that Russianness is an identity which relates to the idea of a “Russian soul,” and it is necessary to preserve Russian traditions to allow the soul to survive. This can include cultural, historical, and religious notions which all effectively glorify the state and its people.²¹⁰ According to Franklin, there are two forms of identity that exist: imperial and national. Imperial Russian identity can be represented by the word “Rosiiskii” or “Росийский” and national Russian identity is represented by Russkii or “Русский.”²¹¹ Although differences exist between what these words mean, they both emphasize Russianness. Franklin argues that “For the current phase of the story of Russia in time, the ethno-cultural was disentangled from the geopolitical, and the continuity of Russianness could be presented as a continuity of culture.”²¹² Russia’s self-proclaimed defense against NATO and Western aggression to determine its own sovereignty and borders illustrates these concepts.

First Person addresses the concept of defense against NATO and the West as a recurring theme for Putin. When Putin discusses the role of the West in Russia’s struggle during the tumultuous Yeltsin era, he asserts that the use of military force against Serbia by the U.S. was a betrayal of its assurances of restoration and democratization following the collapse of the Soviet regime.²¹³ Additional insights on why Putin perceives or at least portrays NATO as a Western aggressor can be gleaned from a now declassified Department of State memorandum from the National Security Archive, “Memorandum of

²¹⁰ Simon Franklin, *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²¹¹ Franklin, 5.

²¹² Franklin, 18.

²¹³ Putin, *First Person*.

Conversation Between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker in Moscow.”²¹⁴ On February 9, 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev and Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze met with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker of the Bush Administration at the Kremlin in Moscow to discuss the inevitability of German unification and the coming demise of the USSR. Baker assured Gorbachev that NATO would stay in Europe but would not expand to the east of the continent, considering Russia’s concerns over Western expansion, and would establish a government that was not hostile to the country of Russia.

Baker gave Gorbachev a choice of Germany remaining neutral with no assurances that NATO would not expand or a NATO-aligned Germany with assurances that NATO will not expand. As stated directly from Baker, “We don’t favor a neutral Germany [...] We understand the need for assurances to the countries in the East. If we maintain a presence in Germany that is a part of NATO, there would be no jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east [...] would you prefer a united Germany outside of NATO that is independent and has no U.S. forces or would you prefer a united Germany with ties to NATO and assurances that there would be no extension of NATO’s current jurisdiction eastward?”²¹⁵

Gorbachev replied that he understood these conditions but had concerns on whether they would be like the Treaty of Versailles which punished Germany after World War I and whether the U.S. would have interest in Afghanistan regarding influence and

²¹⁴ James Baker; Mikhail Gorbachev; Eduard Shevardnadze, “Memorandum of Conversation Between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker in Moscow” (199504567, U.S. Department of State, February 9, 1990, No. 9, Part 1 B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D). <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16116-document-05-memorandum-conversation-between>. Accessed 4/6/24.

²¹⁵ Baker, 6-9.

possible presence.²¹⁶ Baker responded, “We want to have a political solution in Afghanistan. We are convinced, however, that we cannot bring the Mujahadin along unless there is some mechanism where at the end of the transition process, there will be a change in government. We have no interest in a fundamentalist regime in Afghanistan”²¹⁷ Some of the memo has yet to be declassified, particularly regarding U.S. interests in Afghanistan and what Gorbachev was seeking from American cooperation in the Middle East. However, Baker’s assurances that NATO would not extend eastward if Russia agreed to a united Germany with ties to NATO is significant because Russia agreed to this and yet NATO expanded eastward anyway. Thus, Putin uses this as an example of Western aggression.

Beginning in 1991, Serbia was accused of crimes against humanity by both NATO and the United Nations against Kosovar, Bosnian, and Croat populations of Yugoslavia.²¹⁸ Militant Serbs were committing egregious acts of inhumanity toward Muslims in the Srebrenica regions of Bosnia which resulted in tens of thousands being forced to flee persecution.²¹⁹ Many in the West, especially the United States, viewed Slobodan Milosevic, then President of Serbia, unfavorably and demanded intervention to prevent further aggression. In referencing an article from The Washington Post, Samuely stated, “Western governments have come to view Milosevic, in the words of U.S. and West European diplomats, as a brutal adventurer, a polished con man and an inventive

²¹⁶ Gorbachev, 9.

²¹⁷ Baker, 10.

²¹⁸ United Nations. “UN Tribunal Investigating Death of Accused Genocide Mastermind Slobodan Milosevic.” *ICTY*. March 12, 2006. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2006/03/171822>. Accessed 2/13/2024.

²¹⁹ George Samuely, *Bombs for Peace: NATO’s Humanitarian War on Yugoslavia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 2013).

tactician whose survival in power guarantees bloodshed in the Balkans.”²²⁰ Consequently, the United States in collaboration with NATO, launched an operation on March 24, 1999 called *Operation Allied Force* which sought to cripple Serbia’s efforts and encourage the independence of Kosovo through military retaliation, including airstrikes.²²¹ NATO-led bombing runs over Belgrade effectively forced Serbia to surrender territory to an independent Kosovo and refrain from aggression against its neighbors in the Balkans as well as from committing war crimes against Bosnian Muslims and Albanian minorities. However, the bombings resulted in mass casualties of innocent Serbian civilians with approximately 2,500 killed, leading to condemnation of both the United States and NATO by the Russian Federation.

From the Russian perspective, these bombings violated international law in the same way that Serbia was being accused of violating international law. Thus, Operation Allied Force was perceived as a refusal by U.S. and NATO entities to cooperate with Serbia to mitigate and resolve the conflict in Yugoslavia. Several years later, Russia refused to recognize Kosovo’s independence in 2008, and, in an article from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Putin stated, ““The precedent of Kosovo is a terrible precedent, which will de facto blow apart the whole system of international relations [...] They have not thought through the results of what they are doing. At the end of the day it is a two-ended

²²⁰ Samuely, 162.

²²¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Kosovo Air Campaign (March-June 1999) Operation Allied Force.” *NATO*. 1999. Last updated May 17, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49602.htm. Accessed 2/9/2024.

stick and the second end will come back and hit them in the face.”²²² Putin took the opportunity to imply that the U.S. and NATO entities are hypocritical aggressors. Putin claims that the United States is using NATO to expand Western influence to undermine Russian sovereignty and encourage Western imperialism against a Russian collective identity. Putin’s concerns with Serbia demonstrates that he views NATO and the United States as objects of struggle against which he must reunify Russia under a collective identity. Putin claims through the Yugoslav conflict, the West pushed Russia away from the international community and into a defensive position regarding its desire to be involved in global affairs. Even twenty-five years later, Putin reiterates events from the conflict in Yugoslavia to promote his narrative.

In an interview with Tucker Carlson at the Kremlin on February 6, 2024, Putin lambasted the Clinton administration for their role in allowing U.S. aggression against Serbia in 1999 as a means of expanding NATO influence which violated the past agreements that NATO was not to expand east of Europe as previously mentioned.²²³ During the interview, Putin discusses how the bombing of Belgrade was an example of U.S. imperialism against allies of Russia backed by the UN Charter and how they violated international law in its context. According to Putin, Boris Yeltsin, who was president of Russia at the time, stood up for the Serbs and voiced his criticism of the decision made by the United States. Putin explains, “The promise was that NATO would

²²² The Sydney Morning Herald, “Putin Calls Kosovo Independence ‘Terrible Precedent.’” February 23, 2008. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/putin-calls-kosovo-independence-terrible-precedent-20080223-gds2d5.html>. Accessed 2/3/24.

²²³ Vladimir Putin, “Tucker Carlson Interviews Vladimir Putin,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 6, 2024, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/tucker-carlson-interviews-vladimir-putin-transcript>. Accessed 2/28/28.

not expand eastward, but it happened five times. [...] Remember the development in Yugoslavia before Yeltsin was lavished with praise? As soon as the developments in Yugoslavia started, he raised his voice in support of the Serbs, and we couldn't help raising our voices for Serbs in defense."²²⁴ Putin vowed retribution against NATO for what they did as he affirms that their action was "a two-ended stick and the second end will come back and hit them in the face."²²⁵ Putin continues using the actions NATO took against Serbia as justification for pursuing a counter campaign of aggression against the West today.

In the interview with Tucker Carlson, Putin also mentions the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 and claims the U.S. supported terrorist groups in the Caucasus when the Chechen Wars occurred. He claims, "I repeatedly raised the issue that the United States should not support separatism or terrorism in the North Caucasus, but they continued to do it anyway. And political support, information support, financial support, even military support came from the United States and its satellites to terrorist groups in the Caucasus."²²⁶ The Chechen Wars were a series of conflicts in the Chechnya region of Russia which began in 1994 and ended in 2009. The entire conflict was split into two major wars which included the First Chechen War from 1994 to 1996 and the Second Chechen War from 1999 to 2009.²²⁷ According to the U.S. State Department, during the Second Chechen War and following the September 11th attacks, Vladimir Putin initially

²²⁴ Putin, "Tucker Carlson Interview," 28:51.

²²⁵ The Sydney Morning Herald, "Putin Calls Kosovo Independence 'Terrible Precedent.'"

²²⁶ Putin, "Tucker Carlson Interview," 33:45.

²²⁷ Gregory Feller, "Russia: Putin's Statements on Chechnya May Reflect Public Opinion," *Radio Free Europe*. November 13, 2002. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1101362.html>. Accessed 2/28/2024.

promised to help the United States in the War on Terror and in return wanted a resolution to the violence in the North Caucasus.²²⁸ Russia also wanted to prevent other Western countries like Denmark and Belgium from hosting separatist Chechnya at the E.U.-Russia Summit on November 11-12, 2002 in Brussels.²²⁹ Putin characterized the Chechen separatist government as terrorists, asserting that the U.S. and their allies provided support for those terrorist groups against Russia.

“De-Nazification” and Russianness

In the Victory Day parade on May 9, 2023, Putin gave a rousing speech in the fight against what he described as Nazism perpetrated by the West and condemned the U.S. and NATO for the situation in Ukraine.²³⁰ On that same day in front of a crowd of thousands in Moscow eager to hear him speak, Putin strongly claimed that the West, “have forgotten all that had to be done to free Europe from Nazism. Nazism, a time when monuments were destroyed [...] And they appeared to have forgotten exactly what Nazism did back in the day [...] Because Nazism was [] to destroy Russia, to destroy the global order, to stifle the new centers of development that we see around the world.”²³¹ Clearly, The Great Patriotic War remains significant to Vladimir Putin today because it represented the Soviet Union’s defense against Nazi aggression in Europe.

²²⁸ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Policy on Chechnya: Statement Before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,” *U.S. Department of State*. May 9, 2002. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/10034.htm> Accessed 2/28/2024.

²²⁹ Feller, “Russia: Putin’s Statements on Chechnya.”

²³⁰ Vladimir Putin, “Victory Day in Russia-Putin Delivers Address to Nation from Red Square (2023),” transcript of speech delivered at Red Square, Moscow, May 9, 2023, 0:04-14:07, https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/AFP_s6435oNRWudp7ex9_uqH0i5yaMahOpof8VknwzeB4ktpbsq8dvJFW7HazOy_pbyncf2tN6aanQ09JFrJwpse80?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=3.87. Accessed 2/27/2024.

²³¹ Putin, “Victory Day in Russia,” 02:30-3:46.

Putin is framing the war in Ukraine as Russia's fight against modern-day "Nazism" being perpetrated by a Western international order seeking to destroy Russia and its sense of collective identity. Therefore, Putin portrays Russianness as being rooted in self-defense against NATO and the European Union, which he asserts are threatening to destroy Russia's traditional culture.

In the West, particularly NATO countries, Nazism is generally understood as a fascist political ideology associated with the Nazi Party in Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.²³² According to Britannica, Nazism or National Socialism "is the political doctrine evolved and implemented by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party."²³³ This concept is understood in the context of World War II. An article published on August 24, 1939 in "*The Manchester Guardian*," a well-known British newspaper, read in part, "In a monstrous partition of Poland, without even the mention of an independent Polish buffer state. [...] Stalin and Hitler, for their respective immediate purposes, are hand in glove and anything beyond their immediate purposes, any prospect that in the by-and-by they may fall out, is irrelevant to the struggle that faces us."²³⁴ This reflects the contrast between Western and Russian perspectives on World War II. Putin's claims about Russianness also tend to emphasize conservativeness such as Orthodox values, Russian imperialism, statism, economic interventionism, advocacy for Russian influence and

²³² Britannica, "The Origins, Principles, and Ideology of Nazism," *Britannica*. N.d. <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Nazism#:~:text=Nazism%2C%20or%20National%20Socialism%2C%20Totalitarian%20movement%20led%20by>. Accessed March 2, 2024.

²³³ Britannica, "The Origins, Principles, and Ideology of Nazism."

²³⁴ The Manchester Guardian, "Russia and Germany Non-Aggression Treaty to be Signed," N.d. *Guim.co.uk*. 30_Sept_39.jpg (727×3217) (guim.co.uk). Published August 24, 1939. Accessed 2/28/24.

rejection of late modernist era Western culture.²³⁵ Putin likens Nazism to “an ‘ideology of superiority’ that seeks world domination and is ‘inherently disgusting, criminal and deadly,’ where ‘Western globalist elites still talk about their exclusivity’, provoking ‘bloody conflicts, hatred, Russophobia,’ and ‘destroying family, traditional values that make a person a person.’”²³⁶ Putin claims this “Nazism” spread to Western-allied institutions like NATO who are using it in Ukraine to further a globalist agenda.

Putin thus describes de-Nazification as justification for Russian intervention in Ukraine. Putin’s narrative describes Poland as permitting Nazi persecution of Ukrainians when much of the Ukrainian territories were part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.²³⁷ Putin states that a small group of elites who were a part of the Polish government collaborated with Hitler during World War II and were responsible for many of the atrocities committed against both Poles and Ukrainian Jews.²³⁸ Putin is asserting de-Nazification is required to purge “Nazism” that infected portions of Eastern Europe, such as in Ukraine. Rather than acknowledging the Soviet Union’s invasion of parts of Poland under the Soviet-Nazi nonaggression pact, Putin claims the USSR acted “honestly” by requesting Poland’s permission to move troops through the country to help Czechoslovakia, as it was occupied by German forces at the time.²³⁹ While the Polish government may not have collaborated with Germany, there were instances of pro-Nazi

²³⁵ Mikhail Suslov; Dimitry Uzlaner, *Contemporary Russian Conservatism Volume 13* (Groningen: Brill, 2019), 7-34.

²³⁶ Putin, 0:04-14:07, “Victory Day in Russia.”

²³⁷ Putin, 55:33, “Victory Day in Russia.”

²³⁸ Putin, 56:42, “Victory Day in Russia.”

²³⁹ Putin, 14:59, “Victory Day in Russia.”

support among many civilians in Poland.²⁴⁰ According to Dr. John Connelly in *Slavic Review*, various departments of the Polish police purposely aided Nazi soldiers in separating and persecuting Jewish people in ghettos.²⁴¹ Furthermore, Connelly states that SS units were established that attracted many volunteers from Ukraine, stating, “Some Polish police were involved in ghetto clearing, but the Germans much preferred to use Baltic and Ukrainian forces. [...] elsewhere they formed SS units that attracted hundreds of thousands of volunteers from Ukraine.”²⁴² Putin is emphasizing these Nazi elements in Poland and Ukraine during WWII to argue that Ukraine continues to require de-Nazification eighty years later, thereby justifying his war in Ukraine.

De-Nazification is central to Putin’s ambitions for gaining support for the war in Ukraine because it labels all NATO aligned civilians and entities as those who supported Nazis and Ukrainian nationalists during World War II. Thus, to Putin, “Nazism” applies to entities and people opposed to Russia that seek an international and global order headed by NATO aligned nations like Ukraine, Germany, Poland, and even the United States. Putin believes he must create a new Russian order that requires reunification of Ukraine with Russia to prevent a Western counter globalist order led by what he asserts is a corrupt political cabal in the United States. This may have been reflected during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics opening ceremony with the Russian alphabet video that

²⁴⁰ John Connelly. “Why the Poles Collaborated So Little--- And Why That is No Reason for Nationalist Hubris,” *Slavic Review*, Vol 64, No. 4 (Winter, 2005), 771-781.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272584372_Why_the_Poles_Collaborated_So_Little-And_Why_That_Is_No_Reason_for_Nationalist_Hubris. Accessed 2/28/24.

²⁴¹ Connelly, 772.

²⁴² Connelly, 772-773.

played before the performance and the “mishap” in the presentation of the Olympic rings that occurred.

On the night of February 7, 2014 at Fisht Stadium in Sochi, thirteen days before the start of the Russo-Ukrainian War, there was a spectacular performance organized by Vladimir Putin and the Olympic committee which featured the history of Russia beginning from ancient times all the way to post-World War II Soviet era.²⁴³ During the ceremony, spectators witnessed many traditional dances and performances which paid tribute to the history and culture of Russia. Before the performance, there was a clip of major Russian figures, history, geography, and achievements. Each was represented with a letter from the Cyrillic alphabet. Among these letters, several exemplify the elements of Putinism, including the tenth letter representing the Russian Empire which shows a portrait of Peter the Great, the thirty-first letter which shows a shot of the St. Basil Cathedral in Moscow and Red Square with swarms of crowds representing the Russian people, the thirty-second letter which shows the word “Lubov” which symbolizes love for their land, and the thirty-fifth letter which shows the word “Russia” featuring little girls with shirts representing each letter.²⁴⁴ Although it is not unusual for Olympic themes to center around the history and culture of their host nation, the entire opening ceremony was meant to glorify Russian history and nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Each of these individuals and subjects had something to do with the country’s development and past and their contribution was acknowledged.

²⁴³ Super Catman, “2014 Sochi Olympic Opening Ceremony,” YouTube, February 4, 2018, video, 34:43-2:22:50, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygluZ0tB8S4>. Accessed 2/28/24.

²⁴⁴ Super Catman, 34:43-38:06, “2014 Sochi Olympic Opening Ceremony.”

While the first part of the overview presented during the opening of the 2014 Olympics highlighted a chaotic Russian history, it evolved into a more humorous and nostalgic presentation of bustling cars and Pravda newspaper in an unthreatening manner that evoked tranquility and collectiveness among the Soviet people.²⁴⁵ While strict, the people have grown to accept the Communist state that exists and eventually a sense of a utopia is conveyed. The people are united and all working together to contribute to the greater good of the country. These concepts of Russian history as depicted through the alphabet clip and the nostalgia and national patriotism as a collective from the Soviet Union clip are critical components of Putinism. Putin's anti-Western position, however, was on show when, during the festivities, the Olympic rings were presented to the stadium and the red ring failed to open.²⁴⁶ This caused a huge controversy when it occurred. According to the 1950 International Olympic Charter, the rings represent the five continents of the world that participate in the games.²⁴⁷ When Baron de Coubertin first decided to create the Olympic rings in 1914, which later appeared in 1920, it he stated, "These rings represent five continents, blue for Europe, yellow for Asia, black for Africa, green for Australia, and *red for America*." (emphasis added)²⁴⁸

Putin's speech at Red Square on May 9, 2007, seven years before the Olympic opening ceremony, provides a precursor for this sentiment. Putin condemns new threats

²⁴⁵ Super Catman, 2:20:00-2:22:50, "2014 Sochi Olympic Opening Ceremony."

²⁴⁶ Super Catman, 44:10-44:32, "2014 Sochi Olympic Opening Ceremony."

²⁴⁷ Henry Latour-Baillet; J. Edstrom; International Olympic Committee, *The International Olympic Committee and the Modern Olympic Games*, (IOC: 1950).

²⁴⁸ Latour-Baillet; Edstrom, 18.

and implies, but does not explicitly state, that the United States' collaboration with NATO aligns with the Third Reich. According to Putin, "These new threats, just as under the Third Reich, show the same contempt for human life for human life and the same aspiration to establish an exclusive dictate over the world."²⁴⁹ Putin sees the West, particularly America, as the enemy and successor of Nazi Germany. He emphasizes the U.S. government's collaboration with Nazis in the past to make the claim that the U.S. is a successor to the Third Reich.²⁵⁰ Thus, Putin is using the term "Nazi" to define anyone he claims is opposing Russia. Putin portrays Russia as a liberating nation that fights to conserve its values and traditions and preserve its culture from those who would oppose and subvert them. Russianness requires loyalty to traditional values, such as conservatism, patriotism, and nationality, fighting against any form of "Nazism" encouraged by the West, and seeking to fulfill the vision of collective identity under a neo-Russian Empire instead of surrendering to international institutions led by the United States and NATO. Putin is using Putinism to justify his actions in Crimea and drive support for his war in Ukraine.

²⁴⁹ Vladimir Putin, "Speech at the Military Parade Celebrating the 62nd Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War," transcript of speech delivered at Red Square, Moscow, May 9, 2007, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24238>. Accessed 2/28/24.

²⁵⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Radio TV Reports Inc." *The Daily Drum- WHUR Radio Pacifica Network*. May 17, 1982. <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88-01070R000100200004-9.pdf>. Accessed 3/1/24.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Putin's pursuit of the war in Ukraine begins with Crimea because Putin is using its *history* to promote through Putinism the concept of Russo-Ukrainian reunification through a collective struggle in Ukraine. This chapter will discuss the history of Crimea and its significance to the Russian Empire, Khrushchev's decision to give Crimea to Ukraine, Putin's disagreement with that decision, and Putinism as a driving force behind the Russian struggles with Crimea and Ukraine. The current geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine are related to Soviet policy and historic ethnic ideas of Russianness. Some authors misunderstand Putin's intent in Ukraine. One article by Gabriel Gavin from Politico, "Putin's Push for a New USSR Reawakens the Bloody Chaos of Soviet Collapse" asserts that "When Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, he was hoping to restore the glory days of the Soviet Union in the 1950s, when it was at the peak of its power."²⁵¹ This type of framing is inaccurate or lacks context when analyzing Putin's intent in Ukraine. Putin is not trying to revive the Soviet Union. He is using Putinism, Soviet *elements* combined with pro-Russian beliefs, to unify Russia as a collective identity through the motif of struggle.

Putin explains this in certain speeches such as, "*On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*."²⁵² Putin passionately argues that past attempts at diplomacy

²⁵¹ Gavin, "Putin's Push for a New USSR Reawakens the Bloody Chaos of Soviet Collapse."

²⁵² Vladimir Putin, "Article by Vladimir Putin On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, July 12, 2021, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/66181>. Accessed 3/20/24.

with the West have failed. He claims Ukraine is being used as a geopolitical pawn against Russia and its people by institutions like NATO and the EU.²⁵³ Throughout the excerpt, Putin claims that Russians and Ukrainians are “one people--- a single whole” based on their history as being united with Russia under the Ancient Rus and more recently the Soviet Union.²⁵⁴ Putin’s speech is nostalgic because he focuses on the history of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine from the Kievan Rus up to the USSR. This nostalgia includes emphasis on cultural, religious, linguistic, and economic similarities Russians and Ukrainians shared under Prince Vladimir and Alexander I.²⁵⁵ However, after the February Revolution of 1917, the Rada government was formed through Ukrainian nationalism which unsuccessfully advocated for separatism from Russia.²⁵⁶

Putin also asserts Ukrainian nationalism attempted to disunify Russia and Ukraine and was encouraged by Poland to Polonize Western Ukraine.²⁵⁷ He claims treaties such as the 1921 Treaty of Riga ceded land from control of Moscow to Poland and laid the groundwork of a Ukrainian state under the USSR in 1922.²⁵⁸ Putin understands the Soviet Union in a bittersweet perspective that despite promises of maintaining Russo-Ukrainian unity by the Bolsheviks, their diplomatic mistakes of establishing the possibility of Ukrainian statehood via localization discouraged unity. Putin’s criticism of the USSR debunks the argument that he is attempting to model Russia after the Bolsheviks.

²⁵³ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

²⁵⁴ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

²⁵⁵ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

²⁵⁶ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

²⁵⁷ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

²⁵⁸ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

Putin uses rhetoric to encourage support for a military intervention to “save” Ukraine from western influence and preserve the idea of a shared history of collective struggle. His goal of Russo-Ukrainian reunification requires the use of a collective through struggle because he is trying to “correct” the “mistakes” of past leaders under the USSR that encouraged Ukrainian separatism and ignored the historical linkage between Russia and Ukraine. Putin highlights shared Russo-Ukrainian cultural elements in his speeches by explaining the historical bonds between Russians and Ukrainians under the Kievan Rus. For example, on June 30, 2021, Putin was asked by a Russian citizen named Igor Oboimov during the talk show “Direct Line with Vladimir Putin” why Ukraine was listed as an unfriendly country and if he would meet with President Volodymyr Zelensky.²⁵⁹ Putin said he does not consider Ukraine an unfriendly nation and Russians and Ukrainians are a single people.²⁶⁰ He reasoned that the Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian people all originated from the Ancient Rus, which was the largest state in Europe at the time.²⁶¹ Various Slavic tribes across Ancient Rus were united in their use of the Old Russian language. Additionally, many held St. Vladimir as a significant figure who inspired the Orthodox belief that the Rus was of sacred significance to all Eastern Slavic peoples.²⁶²

Putin’s inspiration from Orthodoxy in creating a new Russian Empire focuses on the shared beliefs of Russians and Ukrainians around St. Vladimir because St. Vladimir

²⁵⁹ Vladimir Putin, “Direct Line with Vladimir Putin,” transcript of speech delivered at Moscow, June 30, 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65973>. Accessed 3/27/24.

²⁶⁰ Putin, “Direct Line with Vladimir Putin.”

²⁶¹ Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

²⁶² Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.”

established the Orthodox Church in the Kievan Rus and attempted to convert the people under a single faith.²⁶³ Orthodoxy inspired the concept of a united commonwealth with countries like Lithuania and led to the Zaporizhian Cossacks in Ukraine defining themselves as ethnic Russian Orthodox people. Putin uses the notion of a shared faith in his dialogue along with cultural similarities that influenced how Russia was organized into a single state. On February 21, 2022, Putin announced the war in Ukraine and explained in his speech “Since time immemorial, the people living south-west of what has historically been Russian land have called themselves Russians and Orthodox Christians.”²⁶⁴ Putin is seeking to reunify Russians and Ukrainians with Orthodoxy, which is an element of Putinism. He references St. Vladimir as an inspiration and Crimea as the underlying catalyst to achieve reunification. Upon discussing Crimea in his speech on March 18, 2014, Putin explains, “This is the location of the ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization, and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.”²⁶⁵ Putin is emphasizing the shared language, religion, and culture of Russians and Ukrainians by addressing the state of the Kievan Rus and how it was influenced by different Russian ethnicities.

²⁶³ Eduard Glissant; UNESCO, *The Courier: Thousandth Anniversary- The Christianization of Kievan Russia* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1988), 5.

²⁶⁴ Vladimir Putin, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 21, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828>. Accessed 3/27/24.

²⁶⁵ Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation.”

Putin also frequently refers to Russia and Ukraine as the “motherland,” using words like “our” or “nash”, and others that symbolize a collective.²⁶⁶ This collective includes Ukraine, as it was once part of the Motherland under the USSR, and Putin frames the current situation as one where the Ukrainian people were denied the freedom to live under Russia. In his speech on February 21, 2022, before launching what he described as a “special military operation,” he explains “Let me remind you that the people living in the territories of today’s Ukraine were not asked how they want to build their lives when the USSR was created or after World War II. Freedom guides *our* (emphasis added) policy, the freedom to choose independently [...] The current events have nothing to do with a desire to infringe on the interests of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.”²⁶⁷ Therefore, it can be understood from this speech that Putin seeks a collective resolution which includes Ukraine under Russian control for their own protection. Putin uses the rhetoric of “Motherland” to aspire the establishment of a new Russian nation that seeks reunification with Ukrainians as an act of defending that collective identity. This act of self-defense, implied by Putin, also treasures Soviet nostalgia based on the desire for reunification. Additionally, the Russian word for mother is мать “mat” and the phrase for the term “people” is людей or ludi. This language is used in rhetoric and propaganda related to Russian and Soviet nationalism and is can even be found in government and the constitution of the USSR. One example is a 1965 Soviet-era stamp that had “Родина-

²⁶⁶ Marcus Wheeler, *The Oxford Russian-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 387.

²⁶⁷ Putin, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation.”

мать зовёт” or “The Motherland calls!”²⁶⁸ This same phrase is found on a statue in Volgograd dedicated to the Battle of Stalingrad during The Great Patriotic War and uses a woman to personify the USSR.²⁶⁹ Further evidence can be found in legal works from 1972 like “Soviet Criminal Law and Procedure” where it describes betrayal of the Motherland as an act of treason.²⁷⁰

Putin’s speech helps explain the pro-Russian aspect of Ukraine as a land of the Russian people and the idea of a collective identity for the nation that includes Ukraine. Putin is drawing primarily on Ukraine’s membership in the Soviet Union and existence as part of the Kievan Rus to push for this unity. Putin believes the USSR failed to fully incorporate Ukraine. Ukraine is important to Putin because of its historical ties to Orthodox Christianity in the Kievan Rus and its cultural similarities around Russian language and ethnicity. Putin claims Ukraine is most at risk of being used against Russia by other actors like NATO that seek an anti-East Slavic agenda. Putin is aware that Ukraine was Polonized by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and discouraged from collective unity with Russia in the past. He fears the same thing is happening again with NATO and recognizes Poland as a member of that same alliance. Putin is working to reunify Ukraine with Russia and his primary tool is to promote the idea of collective

²⁶⁸ Irakil Toidze, *Soviet Postage Stamp of 1965 by the Poster Irakil Toidze “Motherland Calls,”* photograph, Wikimedia, October 6, 2011, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/Rodina-mat-zovet-po-plakatu-I-Toidze--ic1965_3198.jpg. Accessed 3/27/24.

²⁶⁹ UNESCO, “Mamayev Kurgan Memorial Complex ‘to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad.’” *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. N.d. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5936/>. Accessed 3/27/24.

²⁷⁰ R.S.F.S.R, *Soviet Criminal Law and Procedure- The RSFSR Codes* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972).

identity using Putinism. In fact, his actions in Crimea and war in Ukraine are driven by Putinism.

The History of Crimea

Crimea has undergone massive struggles in various wars fought by different empires like the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Ottoman Empire. During the Khmelnytskyi Uprising, the Commonwealth attempted to control grain in the Baltic states, diminished livestock, adversely impacted the economy, and caused general unrest in the western regions of Ukraine.²⁷¹ This led to the Cossack-Polish War in 1648 which began when Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, commander of the Zaporizhian Cossack military, launched an assault on Poland to establish Ukraine as a state under the influence of Muscovy.²⁷² Khmelnytskyi advocated for Ukraine as a state because the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was attempting to impose Catholicism on Orthodox Christians in Ukraine. This movement away from the religious atmosphere of Poland involved a turbulent alliance with the Crimean Khanate, in which the Cossacks would use the Tartars as leverage against Poland in later conflicts.²⁷³ However, the Cossacks turned against the Tartar Khanate when they began encroaching on territories where Tartar control and influence was strong.²⁷⁴ Thus, Crimea was a target of interest for the Ukrainian Cossacks, Muscovy, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Understood in Brian Glyn Williams' work, *The Crimean Tartars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest*, it was

²⁷¹ Davies, 29.

²⁷² Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003).

²⁷³ Britannica, "Poland - the 17th-Century Crisis." *Britannica*. 2024.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/The-17th-century-crisis>. Accessed 3/17/24.

²⁷⁴ Snyder, 114.

a tempting place for spreading influence between these groups because of its geography being close to the Black Sea, cultural past related to the indigenous Tartars, and strategic potential with its cliffs and fortified position.²⁷⁵

Things came to a head between the Zaporizhian Cossacks and the Muscovy with the end of the Khmelnytskyi Uprising and The Pereiaslav Agreement in 1654 which affirmed that Little Russa (Ukraine) would swear loyalty to the Tsar as a part of the Muscovy (Russia).²⁷⁶ The official history of Crimea under Russia begins during this period, including the establishment of the city of Sevastopol in June 1783. The city served as a strategic base for Russian naval vessels in the peninsula. “The Three Earliest Charts of Akhtiar (Sevastopol) Harbour” by Aleksey Zaytsev explains that Crimea’s entire demographic was reshaped by the Russian Empire when it was captured from the Tartar Khanate in April 1783.²⁷⁷ Zaytsev specifically argues these changes included renaming ships that belonged to Tartars and compared charts of the peninsula by various Russian admirals to demonstrate as an example of Russification.²⁷⁸ Zaytsev’s research shows how changes to Crimea are best observed through Russia’s renaming and reshaping of the territory itself. In an eerie similarity to the 2014 annexation, Catherine II accomplished reintegration by recognizing the territory as an independent state in 1774

²⁷⁵ Brian G. Williams, *The Crimean Tartars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin’s Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15-20.

²⁷⁶ Alexander Ohloblyn, “Review of Treaty of Pereyaslav 1654.” *University of Chicago, Canadian League for Ukraine’s Liberation Organization for the Four Freedoms of Ukraine*. 1954. https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Ukraine/_Topics/history/_Texts/OHLPER/Appendices/1*.html. Accessed 3/17/24.

²⁷⁷ Aleksey K. Zaytsev, “The Three Earliest Charts of Akhtiar (Sevastopol’) Harbour.” *JSTOR*. 2000, 112–23. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1151481>. Accessed 3/17/24.

²⁷⁸ Zaytsev, 115-117.

before breaking the agreement a year later.²⁷⁹ Russia treated Turkey as a threat to its influence and declared the Kuban area autonomous from the rest of the territory. After this, Catherine II sent Russian troops to Perekop; the land connecting Crimea to Russia and established a khan under her sovereignty.

From the Russo-Turkish Wars to 1878, Russia fought a series of twelve conflicts against the Ottoman Empire to control access to the Black Sea and limit Ottoman influence.²⁸⁰ Additionally, Balkan nationalism rose during this period and the Ottoman Empire's desire to retain influence in the Mediterranean threatened Russia's influence and the sovereignty of its allies, Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro.²⁸¹ According to Kelly O'Neill's "1783: The Founding of Sevastopol- A Vignette", the Crimean Peninsula has been considered critical to provide Russia access to the Black Sea because of its proximity and structure as a fortified marina. The geography of Crimea allowed Russia to defend against threats to the mainland after successfully occupying it.²⁸² O'Neill's work also explains that specific aspects like steep hills, potential for militarization, and easy access to harbors for ships proved essential to Crimea's strategic appeal.

Another reason Russia is interested in Crimea is because the land represents their stronghold on Eastern Europe. Russia would not easily maintain their Southern territories

²⁷⁹ M.S. Anderson, "The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1783-4." *JSTOR*. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 37 (88): 17–41. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4205010>. Accessed 3/20/24.

²⁸⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Russo-Turkish Wars: Russo-Turkish History." *Britannica*. 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Russo-Turkish-wars>. Accessed 3/17/24.

²⁸¹ John Brueilly, *The Oxford Handbook: The History of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 585.

²⁸² Kelly O'Neill, "Imperii: 1783: The Founding of Sevastopol." *Harvard University*. 2018. <https://scalar.fas.harvard.edu/imperii/1783-the-founding-of-sevastopol>. Accessed 3/17/24.

through military strength without acquiring the peninsula against threatening influences like the Ottomans, Tartars, Zaporizhian Cossacks, and Poland. *Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe* by Brian Davies, asserts the strategic importance of Crimea as shoring up Russia's southern flank. According to Davies, "The new Russian bases at Azov and Taganrog deterred Crimea Tartar operations here and made it harder for the khan to enforce his suzerainty over the Nogai Tartars of the Kuban, who began to form their own independent polity under a deli sultan."²⁸³

However, Russia fortified its position in Crimean settlements like Kerch, Taganrog, and Azov which proved more difficult for these entities to be victorious. Furthermore, the additional support from Southern and Western Russian cities such as Belgorod and Izium led to an even greater likelihood of victory in Crimea for the Muscovites.²⁸⁴ After securing victory in the major phases of the Russo-Turkish Wars, Russia suffered a devastating defeat in the Crimean War at the hands of Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, France, and Sardinia. However, despite this loss, the Treaty of Paris of 1856 allowed Russia to keep the port of Sevastopol. This provided further incentive for Russia's claims to Crimea that are often disputed between Ukrainians and Russians. According to the treaty's Article IV, the Russian emperor was allowed to retain "the Towns and Ports of Sebastopol, Balaklava, Kamiesch, Eupatoria, Kertch, Jenikale, Kinburn, as well as all other Territories occupied by the Allied Troops."²⁸⁵ This treaty

²⁸³ Davies, 17.

²⁸⁴ Davies, 15.

²⁸⁵ Treaty of Paris of 1856, "Peace Treaty between Great Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire, Sardinia, and Russia, Article IV." (Paris: March 30, 1856).
https://content.ecf.org.il/files/M00934_TreatyOfParis1856English.pdf . Accessed 3/20/24.

allowed Russia to maintain control of Sevastopol, providing further incentive for claims to Crimea that are often disputed between Ukrainians and Russians.

Following the conclusion of the war, Russia faced challenges during the early 1900s like a struggling economy, inadequate workforce, lack of technological progress, and these issues all relate to control of Crimea with how the empire sought to maintain dying influence through “Official Nationality.” As mentioned in Chapter 1, Alexander III encouraged principles of orthodoxy, autocracy, and *narodnost* as a solution. These principles were discussed in the last chapter as fundamental elements of Putinism and hold particular relevance to Crimea. In fact, Alexander III spent the last six years of his life in Livadiya, a city in Crimea that was the favorite vacation location for the Romanov family. Vladimir Putin unveiled a monument dedicated to Alexander III in Yalta on November 18, 2017.²⁸⁶ This was a significant move by Putin relating to efforts for collective identity in Ukraine because Alexander III was an advocate for Russian nationalism and based his political decisions on Orthodoxy, autocracy, and *narodnost*.²⁸⁷ These three elements would become “Official Nationality” under Alexander III’s successors and define Imperial Russia’s geopolitical landscape.²⁸⁸ Putin is trying to mirror this with preserving the unity of the Russian people and implies reunification with Ukraine based on the statue’s location in Crimea. Additionally, Putin unveiled another

²⁸⁶ TASS, “Putin Unveils Monument to Russia’s Tsar Alexander III in Crimea.” *TASS*. November 18, 2017. <https://tass.com/society/976333>. Accessed 3/20/24.

²⁸⁷ Hannah Dalton; Michael Fordham; David Smith, *A/AS Level of History for AQA Tsarist and Communist Russia 1855-1964* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6.

²⁸⁸ Hannah Dalton; Michael Fordham; David Smith, *A/AS Level of History for AQA Tsarist and Communist Russia 1855-1964* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.

statue of Alexander III in Leningrad on June 5, 2021.²⁸⁹ For Putin, monuments of Alexander III represent his desire for them to “become yet another symbol of the restored continuity of time and generations. Because we can move forward, confidently develop and reach new heights only if we draw on respect for our past, for our outstanding forefathers who faithfully served our people and Russia.”²⁹⁰

Although Tsar Nicholas II held the same affection for Crimea as had Alexander III, the end of the Romanovs in 1917 brought a shift to Russia’s identity that had significant impacts on Crimea over the next few decades. Crimea’s shift to an autonomous republic added the potential for Crimea to be used as a bridge to encourage a collective identity between Russians and Ukrainians in the Soviet framework before Khrushchev. During the years of 1921 to 1936, Crimea eventually became an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. When The Great Patriotic War began a few years later, there were attempts and proposed plans to construct a railway bridge across the Kerch Strait to reunify the R.S.F.S.R with the Ukrainian SSR and to provide reinforcement for supply lines. constructed. The bridge was not completed since the Soviets suffered from adverse weather conditions and ineffective equipment, as well as lacking appropriate raw resources and facing demolition attempts by the Nazis. Chief Specialist of Russian State Archive of Economics M.M. Kudyukina states in an article “Bridge Across the Kerch Strait” that “German troops destroyed both the cable car crossing and the unfinished bridge (Missing necessary materials and equipment – cement,

²⁸⁹ Vladimir Putin, “Unveiling of Monument to Emperor Alexander III,” transcript of speech delivered at Leningrad, June 5, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65751>. Accessed 3/27/24.

²⁹⁰ Putin, “Unveiling of Monument to Emperor Alexander III.”

timber, sleepers, fuels and lubricants, transport, etc.” This shows the historical struggle experienced by the USSR to achieve Russian unification with Ukraine. The plan for the bridge at that time was to have a statue of Joseph Stalin at one end commemorating the overthrowing of the Tsardom.²⁹¹

Therefore, while the Soviets intended to build the bridge, the task was never completed until recently; the bridge’s construction serves as a metaphor for the connection between Russia and Ukraine. This notion of unity is further evidenced with Putin’s speech on the official annexation of Crimea on March 21, 2014, prior to completing the bridge in 2018. In that speech, Putin spoke at the Kremlin in officially considering the two entities as part of Russia. He explained that Crimea has always been an object of foreign influence from adversarial forces in Turkey, Kyiv, and NATO. Putin’s Speaker of the Federation Council, Valentina Matviyenko explains: “250 years ago, during the reign of Catherine the Great, the famed land of Taurida became part of Russia. [...] There were many attempts to take Crimea from Russia, many attempts to prevent Russia from having access to the Black Sea. The heroic defence of Sevastopol during the Crimean War and the city’s immortal feat during the battles against Nazism are engraved forever in our chronicles [...] Crimea’s tragic history began not with Kiev Maidan, but with Khrushchev’s arbitrary decision, taken in violation of the Soviet Union’s constitution.”²⁹² Matviyenko lambasted Khrushchev on Putin’s behalf for

²⁹¹ Global Security, “Kerch Strait Bridge - History.” *Global Security*. November 29, 2018.

<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kerch-sea-of-azov-2.htm>. Accessed 3/20/24.

²⁹² Vladimir Putin, “Ceremony Signing the Laws on Admitting Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, March 21, 2014, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20626>. Accessed 3/20/24.

“betraying” Russia and violating the Soviet Constitution by giving Crimea back to Ukraine. According to the “Meeting of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet” on February 19, 1954, this was done to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the reunion between Ukraine and Russia and to strengthen the link between peoples. The document addresses historical links between the Ukrainians and Russians while encouraging cooperation. It additionally states that the Crimean Peninsula serves as a key strategic territory for resources like wheat. The Presidium notes that “The Crimean Oblast plays a considerable role in the economy of the USSR ... and as a land growing high-quality wheat. [...] Comrades... The transfer of the Crimean oblast to the Ukrainian SSR is occurring in remarkable days, when all the people are marking the 300th anniversary of the reunion of Ukraine with Russia.”

When understanding the significance of Putin’s ambition to complete the bridge, it is evident how this side objective is part of his bigger goal to use Crimea as a bridge for the reunification of Russia and Ukraine. Vladimir Putin announced the completion of the bridge in May 2018. In a speech on May 15, 2018, marking the opening of the bridge. in the city of Kerch, briefly referenced past attempted efforts to complete the project from World War II to the 1950s and how this was an important day in Russia and Crimea’s history. Putin declared that “this is truly a historic day because in different historical eras, including during the Tsars’ reign, people dreamed of building this bridge. They came back to it in the 1930s, then the 1940s, and the 1950s. [...] This is an excellent result that

has made Crimea and the legendary Sevastopol stronger and brought us closer.”²⁹³

Putin’s speech signifies the fulfillment of the task of reunification of Russia and Ukraine as he seeks to become Tsar of a new Russian Empire.

In his personal journal, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev Volume 2: Reformer 1945-1964*, Khrushchev pondered whether Crimea should become an autonomous state independent from the R.S.F.S.R. Furthermore, he proposed to Stalin a plan for resettling Jews in Crimea after the deportation of the Tartars at the end of World War II.²⁹⁴ Stalin believed that members of the Jewish Antifascist Committee were working in partnership with the United States to encourage an independent Crimean state. Therefore, Stalin thought this was meant to weaken the Union and so he aggressively opposed Khrushchev’s proposal.²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Khrushchev was able to influence the Central Committee to permit Crimea to become an autonomous state in 1954. Thus, this decision was not made out of respect for Ukraine but was instead a plan to use Crimea and Ukraine for their resources and as a buffer against the Western bloc.

Understanding Crimea’s history provides context for how Putin is using Crimea to promote a collective identity through war in Ukraine and Russo-Ukrainian reunification as the end goal. Putin explains, “In 1954, Khrushchev *took away from Russia* for some reason ...”²⁹⁶ Putin’s narrative is that Crimea belongs to Russia. The implication is that it must be reunified with Russia. Similarly, Putin has criticized Stalin

²⁹³ Vladimir Putin, “Opening of Crimean Bridge Motorway Section,” transcript of speech delivered at Taman, Kerch, May 15, 2018, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57472>. Accessed 3/20/24.

²⁹⁴ Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev Volume 2: Reformer 1945-1964* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 54.

²⁹⁵ Khrushchev, 55-56.

²⁹⁶ Putin, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation.”

for ceding Russian territory to Poland and its allies.²⁹⁷ It is evident through his criticisms of both Soviet leaders that Putin thinks decisions like encouraging Crimea's status as an autonomous region under the Ukrainian SSR is a grave lapse in collective identity strategy that leads to much bigger problems later. Thus, Putin is implying Khrushchev's decision to give Crimea back to Ukraine contributed to the Maidan Revolution and a greater role for the United States and the West in Ukraine.

Putinism in the Ukraine Conflict

Putin has repeatedly raised concerns over what he calls outside involvement in Ukraine's affairs throughout history and up to the present. This raises some important questions about Putin: What role does Ukraine have in Vladimir Putin's efforts to establish a new Russian Empire as a means of collective self-defense against a globalist world order led by the United States and NATO? Why does Vladimir Putin specifically present Ukraine as a pro-Nazi entity and how does he think the conflict originally started prior to 2022, which included U.S. involvement? The answer involves a major historical instance from World War II, which spurred geopolitical factors and scandals from the early 2000s and 2013, a regional conflict in 2014, and gradually evolving over the next decade. According to the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, on June 30, 1941, there was an effort to make Ukraine an independent state from the Soviet Union by an activist group called *Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists*.²⁹⁸ This organization for independence was led by Stepan Bandera who attempted to form a separatist government

²⁹⁷ Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation."

²⁹⁸ Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, "June 30, 1941 in the History of Ukraine and in Yaroslav Stetsko's Biography." N.d. *SZRU*. <https://szru.gov.ua/en/history/stories/june-30-1941-in-the-history-of-ukraine-and--in-yaroslav-stetskosc-biography>. Accessed 3/28/14.

under German occupation for Ukraine. In Marco Carynnyk's "Nationalities Papers", he references *Surma*, a Ukrainian nationalist propaganda publisher that wrote antisemitic articles to discourage Jewry in Ukraine and was endorsed by Bandera.²⁹⁹ One excerpt from *Surma* reads, "Jewish behavior toward the Ukrainian population, their Russifying and Polonizing mission, engendered *the hatred of the Ukrainian population for the Jews* and created the grounds for the pogroms, against which the small Ukrainian army was helpless."³⁰⁰ Putin tends to cherry pick and emphasize these types of questionable facets of Ukraine's history as a justification for treating elements in Ukraine's current government as pro-Nazi even 80 years later.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's relationship grew more strained with Russia and began to shift in favor of the West, NATO, and the EU, much to Russia's disdain. During the Orange Revolution in 2004, demonstrators who supported Viktor Yushchenko against Viktor Yanukovich accused the runoff 2004 Presidential Elections in Ukraine of being fraudulent.³⁰¹ Eventually, the protests settled when Yushchenko was officially declared the winner in a controversial decision. Yanukovich's supporters claimed that he won the election fairly, adding to growing tensions between pro-Russian and anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine. Yushchenko was a more pro-Western candidate of the Our Ukraine Party who believed Ukraine should join NATO, the EU,

²⁹⁹ Marco Carynnyk, "Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions About Jews, 1929-1947." *Nationalities Papers*, 39(3), 315–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>. Accessed 3/27/24.

³⁰⁰ Carynnyk, "Foes of Our Rebirth"

³⁰¹ The Washington Post, "Widespread Vote Fraud Is Alleged in Ukraine," *The Washington Post*. November 23, 2004, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/11/23/widespread-vote-fraud-is-alleged-in-ukraine/e4c76edb-7e7f-4e9c-83f6-fe2fe321eb28/>. Accessed 3/1/24.

and distance itself from Russia.³⁰² Grigory M. Pereplytsia's "NATO and Ukraine: At the Crossroads", asserts two-years after the 2004 election in February 2006, President Viktor Yushchenko desired that Ukraine should join the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which would establish closer diplomatic ties to Russia.³⁰³ On the other hand, Viktor Yanukovich insisted that Ukraine keep strong ties with Russia and even encouraged Ukrainian collaboration with the United Russia party later in 2009.³⁰⁴ In an article from the *Kyiv Post* on November 22, Yanukovich claimed, "Political parties of professionals and patriots must be a real school raising the statist class. And for us is too important and valuable the experience of 'United Russians' who in fact became the backbone state force in the Russian Federation."³⁰⁵ Thus, the divide between pro-Russians and pro-Ukrainians would continue to grow based on the preferences of these candidates.

Another moment that marked Ukraine's shift to the West was the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement on February 22, 2013.³⁰⁶ Through this agreement, Ukraine sought to align itself more with the European Union. 315 of the 349 Ukrainian MPs supported approval of the agreement. According to Section B of the agreement, "The aims of this association are: a. to promote gradual reproachment between the Parties based on

³⁰² Grigory M. Pereplytsia, "NATO Review - NATO and Ukraine: At the Crossroads." *NATO*. April 1, 2007. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2007/04/01/nato-and-ukraine-at-the-crossroads/index.html>. Accessed 3/27/24.

³⁰³ Pereplytsia, "NATO and Ukraine: At the Crossroads."

³⁰⁴ *Kyiv Post*, "Party of Regions Hopes for Strengthening Collaboration with 'United Russia' Party - Nov. 22, 2009." *Kyiv Post*. November 22, 2009. <https://archive.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/party-of-regions-hopes-for-strengthening-collabora-53358.html>. Accessed 3/27/24.

³⁰⁵ *Kyiv Post*, "Party of Regions Hopes."

³⁰⁶ Interfax-Ukraine, "Parliament Passes Statement on Ukraine's Aspirations for European Integration," *Kyiv Post*. February 22, 2013, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/6963>. Accessed 3/1/24.

common values [...] increasing Ukraine's association with EU policies"³⁰⁷ Later in November of that same year, Yanukovich, then president of Ukraine who held many sympathies toward Vladimir Putin and Russia, was given a choice to sign and accept or refuse and reject the association agreement. He rejected the agreement, arguing that Ukraine must not infuriate Moscow because Putin would retaliate with trade sanctions against Ukraine if he signed the agreement.³⁰⁸ Yanukovich's rejection of the EU Agreement, together with the 2011 arrest of opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko, eventually led to an outcry that devolved into violent riots contesting the orientation of Ukraine toward Russia.

In the months that followed the rejection to the beginning of 2014, this brutal demonstration became referred to as "Euromaidan" and served as the prelude to the Revolution of Dignity on February 20th.³⁰⁹ On the night of November 13, 2013, large crowds gathered in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and began demonstrations calling for Yanukovich's resignation as president. During the protest, demonstrators physically clashed with police, burned, destroyed public property, toppled Soviet statues as backlash against Russian influence. Fearing for his life, Yanukovich fled Ukraine for Russia. According to UN documentation, police opened fire and killed over 108 protesters in

³⁰⁷ European Union, *Association Agreement Between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, Ukraine, and the other part*, 02014A0529(01) — EN — 10.11.2023 — 008.001. (OJ L 161 29.5.2014, p. 3).

https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/7bc1ad04-d02d-11ee-b9d9-01aa75ed71a1.0005.02/DOC_1. Accessed 3/1/24.

³⁰⁸ Richard Balmworth, "Kiev Protesters Gather, EU Dangles Aid Promise," *Reuters*. December 13, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-idUSBRE9BA04420131212/>. Accessed 3/1/24.

³⁰⁹ Euronews, "Ukrainian Opposition Uses Polls to Bolster Cause." *Euronews*. January 28, 2014. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140128023135/http://www.euronews.com/2013/12/13/ukrainian-opposition-uses-polls-to-bolster-cause/>. Accessed 3/1/24.

what was condemned by many as an act of suppression against the pro-Maidan citizens of Ukraine.³¹⁰ However, there were also allegations of unjust and extreme violence against pro-Russian opposition and law enforcement that supported Yanukovich and the police trying to quell the protests. Yanukovich also made a public statement condemning the violence when confronted by reporters during the riots.³¹¹ When interviewed by journalists, Yanukovich stated, ““Different provocations escalated the situation. Radicals and those who manipulated them were guilty. They provoked the bloodshed.”” The Ukrainian leader added that ““all the leaders at Maidan protests carried out political responsibility for the deaths.””³¹²

Putin claims the Maidan Revolution was a coup encouraged by U.S. intelligence to provoke Russia into a war with Ukraine.³¹³ Putin told US journalist Tucker Carlson that “cooperation ties were close since the times of the Soviet Union [...] A coup d’état was committed. Although I shall not dive into details now, as I find doing it inappropriate. The U.S. told us, ‘Calm Yanukovich down and we will calm the opposition. Let the situation unfold in the scenario of a political settlement.’ [...] We said, ‘All right, agreed. Let’s do it this way.’”³¹⁴ Putin implied the reason the U.S. government did this was to weaken Russia by discouraging trade with Ukraine and

³¹⁰ UNHCR, “Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Accountability for Killings in Ukraine From January 2014 to May 2016.” *United Nations*. 2014. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/OHCHRThematicReportUkraineJan2014-May2016_EN.pdf. Accessed 3/1/24.

³¹¹ Pavel Polityuk; Natalia Zinets, “Ukraine’s Yanukovich Blames Radicals for Bloodshed at Maidan Protests.” *Reuters*. November 28, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN13N1ZT/>. Accessed 3/1/24.

³¹² Polityuk; Zinets, “Ukraine’s Yanukovich.”

³¹³ Putin, “Tucker Carlson Interview,” 42:37.

³¹⁴ Putin, “Tucker Carlson Interview,” 45:00-46:00.

encouraging Ukraine to join the EU while serving as a satellite state for joint American and NATO interests against Russia. Yanukovich, Putin suggested, was perceived as a threat to U.S. interests in Eastern Europe because he wanted to strengthen collective ties between Russia and Ukraine. Putin uses these claims of conspiracy together with past decisions by NATO which he claims discouraged Russia as political leverage for the war in Ukraine. All of this culminated in his announcement of the special military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Putin declared the United States and NATO left him with no choice because of their past interventionist approach to foreign policy and refusal to cooperate with Russian interests.³¹⁵ He explains his reasoning for this by claiming “First a bloody military operation was waged against Belgrade ... Then came the turn of Iraq, Libya and Syria ... *in many regions of the world where the United States brought its law and order*, this created bloody, non-healing wounds and the curse of *international terrorism and extremism*. ... December 2021, we made yet another attempt to reach agreement with the United States and its allies on the principles of European security and NATO’s non-expansion. Our efforts were in vain.”³¹⁶

Putin used past U.S. interventions to provide justification for his 2022 invasion. When mentioning the 2021 agreement in another address to the Federal Assembly on February 21, 2023, Putin alleged the U.S. was using Ukraine to expand influence,

³¹⁵ Vladimir Putin, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 24, 2022, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67843>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³¹⁶ Putin, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation.”

including as it relates to Crimea being targeted.³¹⁷ He explained, “Finally, in December 2021, we officially submitted draft agreements on security guarantees to the USA and NATO. In essence, all key fundamental points were rejected ... Those who plotted a new attack against Donetsk in the Donbass region, and against Lugansk understood that Crimea and Sevastopol would be the next target.”³¹⁸ Putin uses Ukraine’s actions to “prove” his point about NATO aggression along with rejections of treaties as perceived hostilities.

Thus, Crimea was a steppingstone for Putin’s wider strategy in Ukraine. Putin used Crimea’s history under Russia to support his aspirations for reunification. His interests in Ukraine are not limited to Crimea, but it was a major part of his plan. He recognizes that nations acquire territory that geographically provides access to more resources, especially so for Crimea, Russia, and the Black Sea. In “Crimea’s Strategic Value to Russia” by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, it discusses the reasons for how and why Putin views Crimea as essential to maintaining its stability as a nation both militarily and identity-wise. The article states that “control of Crimea provides Russia with important strategic defense capabilities. ... Important as though they may be, securing the military benefits described above was probably not the only reason for Putin’s takeover of Crimea.... He probably hopes that Crimea will serve as a

³¹⁷ Vladimir Putin, “Presidential Address to Federal Assembly,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 21, 2023. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70565>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³¹⁸ Putin, “Presidential Address to Federal Assembly.” <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70565>. Accessed 3/28/24.

symbol to encourage pro-Russian factions in Ukraine to support Russia.”³¹⁹ Therefore, Putinism requires Russian control of Crimea as part of Putin’s defense of Russianness against 21st Century Western influence and to achieve Russo-Ukraine reunification.

Putin’s use of propaganda both regarding Crimea and Ukraine encourages Russo-Ukrainian reunification through collective identity. Putin’s rhetoric is chock full of nationalist undertones regarding the collective defense of both Russian and Ukrainian identity. Most recently, he gave a speech on February 29, for his State of the Nation Address which blamed the West for provoking the current conflict, mentions that NATO could send forces to Ukraine, and called for unity.³²⁰ He states, “The so-called West, ... inciting ethnic conflicts around the world, not only seeks to impede our progress but also envisions a Russia that is a dependent, declining, and dying space where they can do as they please ... Now they have started talking about the possibility of deploying NATO military contingents to Ukraine ... Our soldiers and officers --- ... people representing *different ethnicities, cultures, and regions* ... All of them, shoulder to shoulder, are fighting for our shared Motherland.”³²¹ This war speech focuses on the idea of collective struggle and unity as Putin’s objective for Russia in Ukraine. The speech is nationalist in nature but also promises aspects of unification with other peoples, which is the embodiment of Putinism and its promotion of the collective through struggle.

³¹⁹ Centre for Strategic and International Studies, “Crimea’s Strategic Value to Russia.” *CSIS*. March 18, 2014. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/crimeas-strategic-value-russia>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³²⁰ Vladimir Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 29, 2024. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/73585>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³²¹ Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.”

Putin also incorporates *nostalgia* of the struggle of the USSR during The Great Patriotic War as an element of Putinism to engender Russian support for his war in Ukraine. He portrays the Russian geopolitical landscape and culture as a state of mind that fondly values historical struggle under a collective identity. When Putin speaks about the USSR during World War II in his speeches, he invokes many parallels in comparing Ukraine's government to that of the Nazis and refers to Kyiv as the "Kiev regime".³²² He claims Russia's intention is "to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and *genocide* perpetrated by the Kiev regime ... It is not our plan to occupy Ukrainian territory. We do not intend to impose anything on anyone by force ... The outcomes of *World War II* and the *sacrifices* our people had to make to defeat *Nazism* are sacred."³²³ Putin conjures up the mental images of the USSR mobilizing against the Nazis in World War II to foster a sense of collective struggle and create support for reunification with Ukraine, all while claiming the Ukrainian people are being deceived by the West. He is using the war to encourage Russians to fight for the preservation of an identity that cherishes the collective.

Putin further weaponizes nostalgia for the USSR through his selection of major symbols to represent the war in Ukraine and a collective struggle for reunification. This includes an orange and black striped ribbon, the Ribbon of St. George, which was associated with Russian nationalist sympathy for Soviet veterans in The Great Patriotic War.³²⁴ Upon observing the *Order of the People's Commissariat of the USSR Navy No.*

³²² Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation."

³²³ Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation."

³²⁴ The Atlas News, "The Ribbon of Saint George." *The Atlas News*. March 31, 2022. <https://theatlasnews.co/conflict/2022/03/31/the-ribbon-of-saint-george/>. Accessed 3/28/24.

142 on June 12, 1942, it was decreed, “The Guards ribbon is a silk rep moire ribbon of orange color with three longitudinal black stripes applied to it.”³²⁵ This ribbon is significant to Putin because it represents the collective effort of the USSR during World War II in their fight against Nazism. He uses this significance to galvanize the Russian people to fight as a collective identity in Ukraine. In a December 29, 2022 article from *The Moscow Times*, Putin declared the desecration of this ribbon illegal under Section 3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, Article 354.1 Rehabilitation of Nazism, because it is a symbol of Russia’s glory and resistance in Ukraine.³²⁶ Section 3 provides, “expressing obvious disrespect for society about the *days of military glory* and memorable dates of Russia related to the *defense of the Fatherland*, as well as desecration of *symbols of military glory of Russia*, insulting the *memory of defenders of the Fatherland* or humiliation of the *honor and dignity of a veteran of the Great Patriotic War*, committed in public, ... are punishable by a fine of up to three million rubles.”³²⁷

Putin is leveraging nostalgic and patriotic imagery by punishing disrespect of Soviet World War II ribbons signifying the USSR’s struggle against Nazism to squelch dissent and engender support for his actions in Ukraine. Thus, he is clearly using Soviet style strategies as an element of Putinism to mobilize a collective identity through struggle in Ukraine. This may be a reason for why the Z symbol from the Saint George

³²⁵ Guns.ru, “Неве: Голосование. Георгиевская лента: Криминальные сводки.” *Guns.ru*. 2024. <https://forum.guns.ru/forummessage/103/983243-m25051148.html>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³²⁶ The Moscow Times, “Russia Makes ‘Desecration’ of St. George Ribbon Criminal Offense.” *The Moscow Times*. December 29, 2022. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/29/russia-makes-desecration-of-st-george-ribbon-criminal-offense-a79844>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³²⁷ Consultant.ru, “УК РФ Статья 354.1. Реабилитация нацизма \ КонсультантПлюс.” N.d. *Consultant*. https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_10699/be763c1b6a1402144cabfe17a0e2d602d4bb7598/. Accessed 3/28/24.

Ribbon pattern appears on billboards, institutions, and other public locations in Russia.³²⁸ For example, there is a picture on a wall in the city of Yelabuga which reads “Za Rossiyu! Nami Pravda!” This can be translated in English as “For Russia! The Truth is With Us!”³²⁹ The Z is also short for “Za” which means “For” in Russian and may apply to a collective goal (“For Russia,” “For Truth,” “For Victory”).³³⁰ Putin is also using rhetoric to present Russia as a victim that must fight for the collective good of liberating Europe again from Nazism revived by the West. In a speech on March 17, 2022, while discussing de-Nazification of Ukraine, Putin explained, “They (West) are acting *like the Nazis did* when they tried to drag as many innocent victims as they could [...] One cannot help but *remember the anti-Semitic Nazi pogroms* in Germany of the 1930s [...] Russia will never be seen in such a miserable and humiliated situation, and the *fight* we are waging is the *fight* for *our sovereignty* and the future of our country and our children.”³³¹ Putin is using rhetoric to convey the strength of Russia in the face of alleged modern day neo-Nazis and stateless adversaries that oppose Russia’s efforts to reunify Ukraine.

³²⁸ Hromadske Radio, “In Lithuania Parliament Puts up Proposal to Equate the Z Symbol and the Ribbon of St. George with the Nazi Symbols.” *Hromadske Radio*. March 24, 2022.

<https://hromadske.radio/en/news/2022/03/24/in-lithuania-parliament-puts-up-proposal-to-equate-the-z-symbol-and-the-ribbon-of-st-george-with-the-nazi-symbols>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³²⁹ Vyacheslav Kirillin, “Kazanskaya Street, Elabuga,” photograph, Wikimedia, July 15, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazanskaya_street,_Elabuga_\(2022-07-15\)_05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazanskaya_street,_Elabuga_(2022-07-15)_05.jpg). Accessed 4/14/24.

³³⁰ The Washington Post; Sergei Guneyev, “Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during a Moscow event on March 18, the eighth anniversary of Russia’s annexation of Crimea,” photograph, The Washington Post, March 9, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/09/letter-z-russia-symbol-pro-war/>. Accessed 4/14/24.

³³¹ Vladimir Putin, “Meeting on Socioeconomic Support for Regions,” transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, March 16, 2022, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67996>. Accessed 3/28/24.

In order to understand the impact and effectiveness of Putin’s speech and propaganda, a study was done by Peter Dickinson from *Atlantic Council* on why so many Russians support the war in Ukraine.³³² In his article, “More Than Three-Quarters of Russians Still Support Putin’s War”, he states, “A survey conducted in late May by Russia’s only remaining independent pollster, *Levada Center*, found that 77% of Russians currently back the war.”³³³ One may question how this could be possible and it is because Putin is silencing opposition as part of his propaganda efforts and this mimics those of Soviet-style enforcement. The most prominent example was the fate of Alexy Navalny on February 19, 2024. Navalny, who was arrested and even poisoned before, was a past and outspoken critic of Vladimir Putin and his effort in Ukraine.³³⁴ Even stating in a BBC article while detained on May 24, 2022, ““You will suffer a historic defeat in this stupid war you started. It has no purpose or meaning. Why are we fighting a war?” ... His colleagues say he is due to be moved to a facility in Melekhovo, where one former prisoner has made allegations of systematic torture.”³³⁵

Putin treats opposition to the war similar to how “traitors” were treated by the KGB in the Soviet Union. In “How Did the KGB Work?” from *Russia Beyond* by Nikolay Shevchenko, dissent was specifically executed in political purges, surveillance,

³³² Peter Dickinson, “More than Three-Quarters of Russians Still Support Putin’s Ukraine War.” *Atlantic Council*. June 6, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/more-than-three-quarters-of-russians-still-support-putins-ukraine-war/>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³³³ Dickinson, “More than Three-Quarters of Russians Still Support Putin’s Ukraine War.”

³³⁴ Tara Law, “Why Some Ukrainians Aren’t Happy with Navalny’s Oscar Win.” *TIME*. March 13, 2023. <https://time.com/6262460/oscars-alexei-navalny-documentary-ukraine-russia/>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³³⁵ BBC News, “Ukraine War: Russia’s Jailed Navalny Attacks Invasion as Judge Rejects Appeal.” *BBC News*. May 24, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61564440>. Accessed 3/28/24.

and intimidation of opposition.³³⁶ As stated on the website, “Its raison d’être was the protection of the CPSU, ensuring the stability of the USSR’s political system, suppressing opposition and dissidents, gathering intelligence, overseeing counter-intelligence activities in the USSR, conducting clandestine operations abroad and protecting Soviet borders, to name just a few.”³³⁷ Likewise, Putinism incorporates elements of Soviet style tactics and propaganda to mobilize the Russian people to support the war and, ultimately, establish a new Russian Empire through Russo-Ukrainian reunification. It is also possible that Putinism and his war in Ukraine are a means to an end and that the real basis for Putin’s concern with Crimea and Ukraine is the desire for its resources. Putin’s concern with resources reflects his desire to purposely deny access to them for the West as a means of claiming the defense of Russo-Ukrainian interests and necessary reunification through the war. An article by Aura Sabadus at the *Atlantic Council*, “discusses the implications of the Black Sea as it relates to a greater potential for a resource war between NATO and Russia.”³³⁸ Interestingly, this article was published on March 30, 2021, one year before the further invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin and helped to predict a possible impending conflict between nations in Eastern Europe over resources like oil. This would not be the first time that Russia sought out control for Ukraine specifically over oil, but also grain as observed with Stalin’s policies of collectivization in Chapter 2.

³³⁶ Nikolay Shevchenko, “How Did the KGB Work?” *RBTH*. November 18, 2021. <https://www.rbth.com/history/334427-how-kgb-work>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³³⁷ Shevchenko, “How Did the KGB Work?”

³³⁸ Aura Sabadus, “Why the Black Sea Could Emerge as the World’s Next Great Energy Battleground.” *Atlantic Council*. March 30, 2021. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-the-black-sea-could-emerge-as-the-worlds-next-great-energy-battleground/>. Accessed 4/6/24.

Although he denies the war being over resources, it is possible that collective identity must be something that Putin needs to maintain so he can have influence on the resources that Ukraine possesses and not allow the U.S. and NATO to have access to them. In Putin's address at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Plenary Session on June 17, 2022, he accuses energy sanctions against Russia as "evidence" that both the U.S. and its allies are seeking to undermine the country's pure intentions in Ukraine for their own benefit and falsely believe the invasion is over resources.³³⁹ Putin assures, "We did not mine the Black Sea ports of Ukraine ... The West not only sought to implement an 'anti-Russia' scenario, but also engaged in the active military development of Ukrainian territory ... Today our soldiers and officers ... are fighting to protect their people."³⁴⁰ Putinism incorporates claims of protecting Ukraine's economic interests as necessary to reunify and defend the people.

Putin also highlights business deals and interactions between people associated with the U.S. government and Ukraine as examples justifying his defense of Ukraine's economic interests and the need for reunification. He specifically points out the interactions between CEO Mykola Zlochevsky and Hunter Biden, while on the board of Burisma Holdings Inc. from 2014 to 2020. According to a recently declassified FBI report by Chairman James Comer, a Confidential Human Source met with Zlochevsky in 2016 and asked him questions related to Hunter Biden and any deals made between Burisma and energy firms in the United States as well as Hunter's role serving as an

³³⁹ Vladimir Putin, "St Petersburg International Economic Forum Plenary Session," transcript of speech delivered at St. Petersburg, June 17, 2022, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/68669>. Accessed 3/28/24.

³⁴⁰ Putin, "St Petersburg International Economic Forum."

advisor for U.S corporate interests.³⁴¹ Zlochevsky responds, “Hunter Biden advised Burisma it could raise much more capital if Burisma purchased a larger U.S.-based business that already had a history in the U.S. gas and oil sector. CHS recalled Zlochevsky mentioned some U.S.-based gas businesses in Texas, the names of which CHS did not recall.”³⁴² Putin uses examples like these as support for Putinism, which promotes the concept of defending Ukraine and Russia against the corrupt influences of the West. In understanding the relationship between Putinism and the war in Ukraine as it relates to Russo-Ukrainian reunification, Putin uses elements like the history of Crimea to serve his struggle for collective identity. Putin leverages his knowledge of history and propaganda to encourage the Russian people to establish a new Russian Empire in his image. This objective for Putin will only become more relevant as the war continues and its influence spreads beyond Russia.

³⁴¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Authorized for Public Release by Ranking Member Grassley/Chairman Comer F0-1023 FEDERAL BUREAU of INVESTIGATION!” N.d. Accessed March 2, 2024. https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fd_1023_obtained_by_senator_grassley_-_biden.pdf.

³⁴² CHS; Zlochevsky; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Putinism is driving the Russo-Ukrainian war to achieve a collective identity. This study has also shown that Putinism is imbued with Vladimir Putin's interpretation of Russian history in the context of his self-described life experiences. It is a history of Russian struggle that emphasizes a national collective. Putinism seeks to reunify the nation as a collective identity that values Russian Orthodoxy, Russian imperialism, statism, economic interventionism, advocacy for Russian influence, Soviet patriotism and nostalgia, and the rejection of modernist Western culture. Putinism is an amalgam of Imperial and Soviet Nationalism. This study has shown that Imperial nationalism was guided by the concepts of orthodoxy, autocracy, and narodnost as a solution to political and economic challenges in Russia that facilitated a collective identity through struggle.³⁴³ This shared identity then evolved to one of a collective identity during the struggle of the Bolshevik Revolution. Stalin later evolved Lenin's interpretation of Soviet Nationalism by using force and propaganda on the Soviet people instead of advocating for a more internationalist nation.

Putin understood that the Russian Empire under Imperial nationalism was an autocratic state that advocated for a collective national identity using the concept of struggle and he wanted to achieve a collective identity that would commemorate his interpretation of Russian and Soviet history based on his self-described life experiences

³⁴³ Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia 1825-1855*.

during his childhood and rise to power. Whether these stories or experiences are accurate is less important than how Putin uses them to support his further evolution of post-Soviet Russian Nationalism. Putinism leverages Russia's perceived struggles against the West as a powerful mechanism to facilitate a collective identity. As previously discussed, Putin uses Russian history in often revisionist and irredentist portrayals that support his narrative. Putin uses his alleged turbulent relationship with his family as a reflection of the Bolshevik rebellion against Tsarist Russia, the initial struggles of the USSR, the ideological influence of nostalgia and patriotism under Soviet Nationalism, and the reviving of Imperial nationalism to establish himself as Tsar of a new Russian Empire.

Putin's actions in Ukraine imply that he is exercising historical privilege as a new Tsar to reclaim Crimea and to correct prior political mistakes that discouraged this type of struggle against Western influences and encouraged segregation of the collective. Crimea is especially significant to Putin because it represents Russia's historical connection to Ukraine. He celebrated the completion of the Kerch Bridge and drove a truck across with the Russian flag on it in 2018 to commemorate the bridge as a personal legacy. He is using his interpretation of Russian history to engender support for reunification. Since Putinism evokes thoughts and feelings of Russian patriotism to defend the country against western influence, Crimea serves as a bastion against this influence. For Putin, Ukraine is being influenced by the West to subvert and threaten Russia's culture and sovereignty. Putin believes Russian control of Crimea is required to defend the Ukrainian people from what he claims is NATO's agenda against Russia's influence, culture, and sovereignty.

Putin's ultimate desire is to utilize the Russian collective identity he is developing with Putinism to forge a neo-Russian Empire that will be infused with and fueled by nationalist and nostalgic beliefs of the Russian people. Thus, Putin's view is that he is a direct descendant of the Tsardom and destined to establish a Neo-Russian Empire. Putin purposely parallels his life with that of Russia's history in his biographies and writings. Putin does this to evoke in the Russian people a sense of collective identity infused with patriotic and nostalgic beliefs that he is the chosen leader for establishing a new Russian Empire that will fight for the people against the corrupting and subversive influence of the West.

These beliefs are anti-Western and serve to portray Russia as a defender of traditional values. This 21st century empire equivalent to the Kievan Rus requires reunification with Ukraine. Putin believes he must intervene in Ukraine to prevent Westernization and U.S. intervention in Russia's affairs. The war in Ukraine is the driving force in this effort and will continue to influence the relationship between Russians and Ukrainians. Although many Ukrainians criticize the war and think it is unjustified, this does not apply to the entire nation. In fact, there are some in Ukraine who support Putin's efforts and express pro-Russian sympathies. Strong support for Russia is especially seen in eastern parts of Ukraine currently occupied by Russian forces.

Prior to the Revolution of Dignity and Russia's claimed liberation of Donbas in 2014, there were Ukrainians who expressed strong support toward Viktor Yanukovich

and Russian nationalism.³⁴⁴ Yanukovich had strong ties to Russia and to Vladimir Putin. According to political demographics in the eastern Ukrainian towns of Donbas, many praised Yanukovich while those in the capital Kyiv and Western Ukraine condemned him. Thus, there is a divide among Ukrainians between Zelensky's supporters and those who support Putin's efforts to reunify Ukraine with Russia. Consequently, the war is more likely to continue or possibly worsen division in Ukraine, rather than facilitate reunification.

Putin claims that the relationship between Ukrainians and Russians will gradually recover once the war has concluded.³⁴⁵ Putin claims Ukrainians strongly identify as Russians based on their shared history. Putin states, "It'll take a lot of time, but they will heal. [...] Ukrainian soldiers got encircled [...] Our soldiers were shouting to them, 'There is no chance. Surrender yourselves. Come out and you will be alive.' Suddenly, the Ukrainian soldiers were squealing from there in Russian, perfect Russian saying, 'Russians do not surrender' [...] They still identify themselves as Russian. What is happening, to a certain extent, is a civil war."³⁴⁶ However, Putin may be overly optimistic since most of Ukraine has shifted favor from Moscow to Kyiv.

Putin thinks Ukrainians identify as Russians because the two are interlinked with each other based on being Eastern Slavic peoples. Putin focuses heavily on demographics of the Kievan Rus, a vast ancient empire that included modern-day Russia and the land of

³⁴⁴ Pew Research, "Despite Concerns about Governance, Ukrainians Want to Remain One Country." *Pew Research*. May 8, 2014. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/05/08/despote-concerns-about-governance-ukrainians-want-to-remain-one-country/>. Accessed 3/23/24.

³⁴⁵ Putin, "Tucker Carlson Interview," 02:05:19.

³⁴⁶ Putin, "Tucker Carlson Interview," 02:05:19.

Ukraine under the Rurik dynasty. He knows that Ukrainians once belonged to the East Slavic land of the Rus. According to studies done by George Vernadsky in “*The History of Russia Volume 1: Ancient Russia*,” “An interesting example of a social group united by culture and language [...] is the Russian nobility. Some of the oldest Russian noble families derive their ancestry from the Alan and Varangian chiefs; others have Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, German, Swedish, Mongol, Tartar, Armenian, or Georgian blood.”³⁴⁷ Putin draws on this historical bondage between Russians and Ukrainians to advocate for reunification. He remains confident most Ukrainians will understand his noble intention despite the destruction inflicted.

However, Putin ignores that the current government under Zelensky is more aligned with the European Union and NATO than it is with him and Russia. Additionally, although Ukraine became a state in 1918 under the USSR, it declared its independence in 1991 and has mostly rejected collective identity with Russia. Since Ukraine’s culture became more accepting of the West, many Russians believe Ukraine is being used to threaten Russia’s sovereignty. On the other hand, Ukrainians think Russia is overreaching under Putin. Therefore, forceful reunification will only cause further animosity among Ukrainians toward Putin and Russo-Ukrainian bonds. Despite their shared history for millennia, both nations and peoples now have differing interests since the end of the Cold War. Putin may prove correct that Russo-Ukrainian bonds will heal in time, but bitterness

³⁴⁷ George Vernadsky, *History of Russia Volume 1: Ancient Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 3.

is more likely to persist based on his imperialistic tendency toward a forced collective identity.

While some Ukrainians will embrace Putin's vision for a Neo-Russian Empire in Donbas, many in Kyiv and Western Ukraine will not. Since the end of World War II and the Cold War, influence from NATO and the European Union has encouraged globalism. It is significant to understand how this applies to different regions of Ukraine, as well as generational differences. Geopolitical differences exist in different regions of Ukraine, and the younger generation tends to prefer a pro-European Ukraine that values a globalist vision, while the older generation tends to prefer a Neo-Russian Empire to defend traditional values and identities of East Slavic peoples, even if that is a Russian identity. The younger generation believes the future lies with trust in Kyiv and Ukraine's accession to both NATO and the European Union. Additionally, many supported the efforts of the Maidan Revolution and hope Ukraine continues pursuing a liberalist path which allows broader collaboration with the international community.³⁴⁸ This generation also condemns Putin for his efforts to create a Neo-Russian Empire because they think it violates Ukrainian sovereignty to revive the Soviet Union. Ukrainian nationalism is the political philosophy of the younger generation of Ukraine which represents change and opposes Putinism. This ideology ironically praises not just a national identity for Ukraine, but a shift toward pro-European and internationalist thought. The young possess idealism

³⁴⁸ John Baylis; Steve Smith; Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 29.

for a new Ukraine as part of a European conglomerate which opposes a Neo-Russian Empire.

However, the old remain skeptical of their grandchildren in Kyiv and think globalism is the greatest threat to East Slavic identity. Despite the notion that Putin is destroying Ukraine and encouraging Russian imperialism, many in this older generation think his actions are justified. The old believe Ukraine's identity under Zelensky is corrupt and must be eliminated. They are concerned pro-EU and NATO influence from Kyiv will redefine traditional identities of Russo-Ukrainians through the destruction of East Slavic culture by foreigners. They think Moscow and Putin are taking necessary measures to prevent this threat, even if by invading Ukraine. Therefore, the older generation believes in Putin's struggle for the collective as necessary to protect Russo-Ukrainians from a global identity. Thus, younger Ukrainians are less likely to accept a Neo-Russian Empire than older ones. The young are not familiar with harsh struggles of the old world of the USSR, whereas the old are unfamiliar with the revolutionary spark of youth in an age of new media connecting the world. Thus, the old would favor a new empire to commemorate struggle and familiarity between two peoples, whereas the youth would condemn it to favor a more global identity. Despite Putin's belief his Neo-Russian Empire is invulnerable to ideological threat, he may be severely underestimating China. China is pursuing its own nationalist agenda. China's nationalism is more widespread than Russia's and encourages the spread of Chinese influence using various mediums such as Tik Tok, corporate ties with Western businesses, and a currency (the Yuan) which recently overtook the Euro. China is a growing international entity because of its

economy and influence and thereby poses a great threat to Putin. China's political philosophy holds that its people are the cradle of civilization or "zhonghua minzu."³⁴⁹ Furthermore, Russia's purchase of weapons from China only serves to further strengthen their economy.³⁵⁰

Putin relies on his alliance with President Xi for the war in Ukraine. However, this partnership is one-sided and could result in dire consequences if China is pursuing its own agenda. According to the director of Carnegie Russia Eurasian Centre, Alexander Gabuev, "Thirteen months into the war, Russia is increasingly dependent on China as a market for its commodities, as a source of critical imports, and as its most important diplomatic partner amid global isolation."³⁵¹ If Putin continues to trust China, he will give them clearance to be more involved in Russia's affairs, demographics, and endanger the stability of his East Slavic empire. Despite Putin being so opposed to foreign influence outside of Russians and Ukrainians, he is inviting Chinese interference by trusting President Xi to respect Russia's sovereignty and objectives in Ukraine. China's economic expansionism to spread worldwide influence on the markets gives them an upper hand. Conversely, Russia's isolationism may be their downfall if allies like China have hidden intentions. If this proves correct, Putin's Neo-Russian Empire will not last long.

³⁴⁹ New World Encyclopedia, "Sinocentrism - New World Encyclopedia." *New World Encyclopedia*. N.d. https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sinocentrism#Chinese_nationalism. Accessed 3/25/24.

³⁵⁰ Matt Berg; Lawrence Ukenye, "China's Calculation on Supplying Russia with Weapons." *POLITICO*. February 23, 2023. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2023/02/23/chinas-calculation-on-supplying-russia-with-weapons-00084128>. Accessed 3/25/24.

³⁵¹ The Economist, "Russia's Reliance on China Will Outlast Vladimir Putin, Says Alexander Gabuev." *The Economist*. March 18, 2023. <https://www.economist.com/russias-reliance-on-china-will-persist-even-after-vladimir-putin-is-gone-says-alexander-gabuev>. Accessed 3/25/24.

With Putin attempting to construct a Neo-Russian Empire in his vision, one cannot help but wonder what lies ahead for the West and our relationship with this new Russia. It turns out the world is being divided into two political categories regarding Putin's efforts. One is fighting for a new national order which commemorates a collective identity of traditional values of the past. The other is fighting to end all such identities. It is unknown which side be victorious. If Putin succeeds at reunification, the West will need to make a choice of either accepting a Neo-Russian Empire in its sphere of influence or continuing to fight for a global progressive identity. The geopolitical events unfolding at this critical juncture in our history make this highly relevant. The stakes could not be higher. Conflicts such as that in Ukraine rapidly spread beyond their borders, spiraling into world wars. The author's sincere hope is that this research will facilitate a deeper understanding of the historical context and rhetoric informing Putin's decisions so that a peaceful resolution of this conflict might be achieved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

- Mikhailov, Nikolai, N. *Bad Card of the Motherland*. Moscow: Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Komsomol “Young Guard”, 1947.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Article by Vladimir Putin ‘On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*. Transcript of speech delivered at the Kremlin, Moscow, Russia, July 13, 2021. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/misc/66182>.
- Public Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. *The Programme and Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Bolsheviks*. Moscow: Co-operative Pub. Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1932.
- Putin, Vladimir, V.; Gevorkian, Nataliia; Timakova, Natal’ia; Kolesnikov, A. V. and Fitzpatrick, Catherine A. *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin*. New York: Public Affairs, 2000.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Address by President of the Russian Federation*. Transcript of speech delivered at the Kremlin, Moscow, Russia, March 18, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Speech at the Funeral of Anatoly Sobchak, Former St Petersburg Mayor*. Transcript of speech delivered at the Kremlin, Moscow, Russia, February 24, 2000. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24142>.
- Stalin, Joseph, V. *Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square, Moscow*. Transcript of speech delivered at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia, November 7, 1941. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1941/11/07.htm>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Meeting on socioeconomic development in Crimea and Sevastopol*. Transcript of speech delivered at the Kremlin, Moscow, Russia, March 18, 2015. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47877>.
- Lenin, Vladimir, I. *State and Revolution*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1947.
- Baker, James; Gorbachev, Mikhail; Shevardnadze, Eduard. “Memorandum of Conversation Between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker in Moscow” (199504567, U.S. Department of State, February 9, 1990, No. 9, Part 1 B1, 1.5(B), 1.5(D). <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16116-document-05-memorandum-conversation-between>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Tucker Carlson Interviews Vladimir Putin*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 6, 2024.

- <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/tucker-carlson-interviews-vladimir-putin-transcript>.
- U.S. Department of State. “U.S. Policy on Chechnya: Statement Before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,” *U.S. Department of State*. May 9, 2002. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/10034.htm>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Victory Day in Russia- Putin Delivers Address to Nation from Red Square*. Transcript of speech delivered at Red Square, Moscow, May 9, 2023. 0:04-14:07, https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/AFP_s6435oNRWudp7ex9_uqH0i5yaMahOpof8VknwzeB4ktpbsq8dvJFW7HazOy_pbyncf2tN6aanQ09JFrJwpsc80?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=3.87.
- Toidze, Irakil. *Soviet Postage Stamp of 1965 by the Poster Irakil Toidze “Motherland Calls.”* Photograph. Wikimedia. October 6, 2011. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/Rodina-mat-zovet-po-plakatu-I-Toidze--ic1965_3198.jpg.
- Kirillin, Vyacheslav. “Kazanskaya Street, Elabuga.” Photograph. Wikimedia. July 15, 2022. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazanskaya_street,_Elabuga_\(2022-07-15\)_05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazanskaya_street,_Elabuga_(2022-07-15)_05.jpg).
- Guneyev, Sergei. “Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during a Moscow event on March 18, the eighth anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea.” Photograph. *The Washington Post*. March 9, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/09/letter-z-russia-symbol-pro-war/>.
- The Manchester Guardian. “Russia and Germany Non-Aggression Treaty to be Signed.” N.d. *Guim.co.uk*. 30_Sept_39.jpg (727×3217) (guim.co.uk). August 24, 1939.
- Latour-Baillet, Henry; Edstrom, J.; IOC. *The International Olympic Committee and the Modern Olympic Games*. Paris, The International Olympic Committee: 1950.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Speech at the Military Parade Celebrating the 62nd Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War*. Transcript of speech delivered at Red Square, Moscow, May 9, 2007. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24238>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Direct Line with Vladimir Putin*. Transcript of speech delivered at Moscow, June 30, 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65973>.

- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Address by the President of the Russian Federation*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 21, 2022. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828>.
- R.S.F.S.R. *Soviet Criminal Law and Procedure- The RSFSR Codes*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Treaty of Paris of 1856, “Peace Treaty between Great Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire, Sardinia, and Russia, Article IV.” Paris: March 30, 1856.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Unveiling of Monument to Emperor Alexander III*. Transcript of speech delivered at Leningrad, June 5, 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65751>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Ceremony Signing the Laws on Admitting Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, March 21, 2014. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20626>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Opening of Crimean Bridge Motorway Section*. Transcript of speech delivered at Taman, Kerch, May 15, 2018. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57472>.
- Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine. “June 30, 1941 in the History of Ukraine and in Yaroslav Stetsko’s Biography.” N.d. *SZRU*. <https://szru.gov.ua/en/history/stories/june-30-1941-in-the-history-of-ukraine-and-in-yaroslav-stetskosc-biography>.
- European Union. *Association Agreement Between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, Ukraine, and the other part*. 02014A0529(01) — EN — 10.11.2023 — 008.001. OJ L 161 29.5.2014, p. 3. https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/7bc1ad04-d02d-11ee-b9d9-01aa75ed71a1.0005.02/DOC_1.
- UNHCR. “Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Accountability for Killings in Ukraine From January 2014 to May 2016.” *United Nations*. 2014.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Address by the President of the Russian Federation*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 24, 2022. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67843>.
- Putin, Vladimir, V. *Presidential Address to Federal Assembly*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 21, 2023. <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70565>.

Putin, Vladimir, V. *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, February 29, 2024.
<http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/73585>.

Consultant.ru. “УК РФ Статья 354.1. Реабилитация нацизма \ КонсультантПлюс.”
N.d. *Consultant*.
https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_10699/be763c1b6a1402144cabfe17a0e2d602d4bb7598/.

Putin, Vladimir, V. *Meeting on Socioeconomic Support for Regions*. Transcript of speech delivered at Kremlin, Moscow, March 16, 2022.
<http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67996>.

Putin, Vladimir, V. *St Petersburg International Economic Forum Plenary Session*. Transcript of speech delivered at St. Petersburg, June 17, 2022.
<http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/68669>.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. “Authorized for Public Release by Ranking Member Grassley/Chairman Comer F0-1023 FEDERAL BUREAU of INVESTIGATION!”
N.d.
https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fd_1023_obtained_by_senator_grassley_-_biden.pdf.

Secondary Sources:

Kotkin, Stephen. *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1889-1928*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014.

Hill, Fiona; Gaddy, G., Clifford. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institution, 2013.

Plokhy, Serhii. *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation From 1470 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 2017.

Pipes, Richard. *The Formation of the Soviet Union*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1964.

Brandenburger, David. *National Bolshevism*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Gorlova, Asya. *Unit 1 Week 1*. Quizlet, 2023. <https://quizlet.com/804353051/unit-1-week-1-flash-cards/?funnelUUID=ab231aed-235b-44f0-88c8-40485daa3a8c>.

- Migranyan, Andranik. "What is Putinism." *Russia in Global Affairs*. April 13, 2004. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/what-is-putinism/>.
- Hale, Christopher; Siroky, David. "Irredentism and Institutions." *British Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (2023): 498–515. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123422000151>.
- Vernadsky, George; Karpovich, Michael. *A History of Russia: Kievan Russia Vol. II*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- Fish, M. "The Kremlin Emboldened: What Is Putinism?" *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 4 (October 2017): 61-75. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-kremlin-emboldened-what-is-putinism/>.
- Gavin, Gabriel. "Putin's Push for a New USSR Reawakens the Bloody Chaos of Soviet Collapse." *POLITICO*. September 19, 2022. <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-fall-russia-empire-ukraine-war-armenia-azerbaijan/>.
- Bullough, Oliver. "Vladimir Putin: The Rebuilding of 'Soviet' Russia." *BBC News*. March 28, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26769481>.
- Capon, Felicity. "Cradle to Kremlin: How Putin's Childhood Casts a Shadow." *The Week*. June 2, 2023. <https://theweek.com/news/world-news/961071/how-putins-childhood-casts-a-shadow-over-his-life>.
- Staliunas, Darius. *Making Russians: Meaning and Practice of Russification in Belarus after 1863*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Harvard University. "Serhii Plokyh." *Ukrainian Research Institute Harvard University*. N.d. <https://huri.harvard.edu/people/serhii-plokhii>.
- Gibson, Lydialyle. "The Return of History: Ukrainian Scholar Serhii Plokyh on the War in His Home Country." *Harvard Magazine*. October 2023. <https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2023/08/features-serhii-plokyh-ukriaine>.
- Sysn, Frank. *The Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising: A Characterization of the Ukrainian Revolt*. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.
- Martin, Janet. *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Hosking, Geoffrey. *Russia: People and Empire*. London: HarperCollins, 1997.

- Whitelaw, Nancy. *Catherine the Great and the Enlightenment in Russia*. Greensboro: Morgan Reynolds, 2005.
- Zaionchkovsky, Peter, A. *The Russian Autocracy Under Alexander III*. Florida: Academic International Press, 1976.
- Radzinsky, Edvard. *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II*. London: Doubleday, 1992.
- Walsh, Edmund. *The Fall of the Russian Empire; The Story of the Last of the Romanovs and the Coming of the Bolsheviki*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928.
- Moskovkin, Vladimir. "The Forgotten Soviet Geographer and Famous Writer Nikolai Nikolaevich Mikhailov (1905–1982) Experience of Internet Search and Bibliographic Analysis." *Modern History of Russia*, vol.13, no.1, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu24.2023.108> (In Russian). 10.21638/spbu24.2023.108.
- Siegelbaum, Lewis; et al., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents*. Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Gorlova, Asya. "Unit 1 Week 1." *Quizlet*. May 30, 2023. <https://quizlet.com/804353051/unit-1-week-1-flash-cards/?funnelUUID=51e59050-162c-4329-9220-a3d606daa18e>.
- Muller, V.K. *Russian-English Dictionary*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company Inc., 1944.
- Cambridge Dictionary. "Chauvinism" *Cambridge*. 2024. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/chauvinism>.
- Conquest, Robert. *The Harvest of Sorrow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Weinberg, Kate. "Could This Woman Be Vladimir Putin's Real Mother?" *The Telegraph*. December 5, 2008. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/3568891/Could-this-woman-be-Vladimir-Putins-real-mother.html>.
- Monday, Chris. "What's Hiding in Putin's Family History?" *History News Network*. January 22, 2023. <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/whats-hiding-in-putins-family-history>.
- Stuermer, Michael. *Putin and the Rise of Russia*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008.

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "Kosovo Air Campaign (March-June 1999) Operation Allied Force." *NATO*. 1999. Last updated May 17, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49602.htm.
- The Sydney Morning Herald. "Putin Calls Kosovo Independence 'Terrible Precedent.'" February 23, 2008. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/putin-calls-kosovo-independence-terrible-precedent-20080223-gds2d5.html>.
- Feller, Gregory. "Russia: Putin's Statements on Chechnya May Reflect Public Opinion." *Radio Free Europe*. November 13, 2002. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1101362.html>.
- Belton, Catherine. *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West*. London: HarperCollins, 2020.
- Ray, Michael. "Vladimir Putin." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Putin>.
- Kolstø, Pål; Blakkisrud, Helge. *The New Russian Nationalism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Richmond, Yale. *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians*. Maine: Intercultural Press, 2003.
- Wheeler, Marcus. *The Oxford Russian-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Kochis, Daniel. "Russia's Weaponization of Migrants Hasn't Gone Away." *The Heritage Foundation*. November 18, 2022. <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/russias-weaponization-migrants-hasnt-gone-away>.
- Franklin, Simon. *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Samuely, George. *Bombs for Peace: NATO's Humanitarian War on Yugoslavia*. Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 2013.
- Britannica, "The Origins, Principles, and Ideology of Nazism," *Britannica*. 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Nazism#:~:text=Nazism%2C%20or%20National%20Socialism%2C%20Totalitarian%20movement%20led%20by>.
- Suslov, Mikhail; Uzlaner, Dimitry. *Contemporary Russian Conservatism Volume 13*. Groningen: Brill, 2019.

- Connelly, John. "Why the Poles Collaborated So Little--- And Why That is No Reason for Nationalist Hubris." *Slavic Review*, Vol 64, No. 4. Winter, 2005.
- Catman, Super. "2014 Sochi Olympic Opening Ceremony." *YouTube*. February 4, 2018. Video. 34:43-2:22:50. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygluZ0tB8S4>.
- Glissant, Eduard; UNESCO. *The Courier: Thousandth Anniversary- The Christianization of Kievan Russia*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1988.
- UNESCO. "Mamayev Kurgan Memorial Complex 'to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad.'" *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. N.d. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5936/>.
- Snyder, Timothy. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Britannica. "Poland - the 17th-Century Crisis." *Britannica*. 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/The-17th-century-crisis>.
- Williams, Brian, G. *The Crimean Tartars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Ohloblyn, Alexander. "Review of Treaty of Pereyaslav 1654." *University of Chicago, Canadian League for Ukraine's Liberation Organization for the Four Freedoms of Ukraine*. 1954. https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Ukraine/_Topics/history/_Texts/OHLPER/Appendices/1*.html.
- Zaytsev, Aleksy, K. "The Three Earliest Charts of Akhtiar (Sevastopol') Harbour." *JSTOR*. 2000. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1151481>.
- Anderson, M.S. "The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1783-4." *JSTOR. The Slavonic and East European Review* 37. December 1958. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4205010>.
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Russo-Turkish Wars: Russo-Turkish History." *Britannica*. 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Russo-Turkish-wars>.
- Brueilly, John. *The Oxford Handbook: The History of Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- O'Neill, Kelly. "Imperia: 1783: The Founding of Sevastopol." *Harvard University*. 2018. <https://scalar.fas.harvard.edu/imperia/1783-the-founding-of-sevastopol>.

- TASS. "Putin Unveils Monument to Russia's Tsar Alexander III in Crimea." *TASS*. November 18, 2017. <https://tass.com/society/976333>.
- Dalton, Hannah; Fordham, Michael; David Smith. *A/AS Level of History for AQA Tsarist and Communist Russia 1855-1964*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Global Security. "Kerch Strait Bridge - History." *Global Security*. November 29, 2018. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kerch-sea-of-azov-2.htm>.
- Carynnyk, Marco. "Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions About Jews, 1929-1947." *Nationalities Papers*, 39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2011.570327>.
- The Washington Post. "Widespread Vote Fraud Is Alleged in Ukraine." *The Washington Post*. November 23, 2004. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2004/11/23/widespread-vote-fraud-is-alleged-in-ukraine/e4c76edb-7e7f-4e9c-83f6-fe2fe321eb28/>.
- United Nations. "UN Tribunal Investigating Death of Accused Genocide Mastermind Slobodan Milosevic." *ICTY*. March 12, 2006. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2006/03/171822>.
- Pereplytsia, Grigory, M. "NATO Review - NATO and Ukraine: At the Crossroads." *NATO*. April 1, 2007. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2007/04/01/nato-and-ukraine-at-the-crossroads/index.html>.
- Ukrainian News. "Party of Regions Hopes for Strengthening Collaboration with 'United Russia' Party." *Kyiv Post*. November 22, 2009. <https://archive.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/party-of-regions-hopes-for-strengthening-collabora-53358.html>.
- Interfax-Ukraine. "Parliament Passes Statement on Ukraine's Aspirations for European Integration." *Kyiv Post*. February 22, 2013. <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/6963>.
- Balmworth, Richard. "Kiev Protesters Gather, EU Dangles Aid Promise," *Reuters*. December 13, 2013. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-idUSBRE9BA04420131212/>.
- Euronews. "Ukrainian Opposition Uses Polls to Bolster Cause." *Euronews*. December 13, 2013. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140128023135/http://www.euronews.com/2013/12/13/ukrainian-opposition-uses-polls-to-bolster-cause/>.

Polityuk, Pavel; Zinets, Natalia. “Ukraine’s Yanukovich Blames Radicals for Bloodshed at Maidan Protests.” *Reuters*. November 28, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN13N1ZT/>.

Centre for Strategic and International Studies. “Crimea’s Strategic Value to Russia.” *CSIS*. March 18, 2014. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/crimeas-strategic-value-russia>.

The Atlas News. “The Ribbon of Saint George.” *The Atlas News*. March 31, 2022. <https://theatlasnews.co/conflict/2022/03/31/the-ribbon-of-saint-george/>.

Guns.ru. “Neve: Голосование. Георгиевская лента: Криминальные сводки.” *Guns.ru*. 2024. <https://forum.guns.ru/forummessage/103/983243-m25051148.html>.

The Moscow Times. “Russia Makes ‘Desecration’ of St. George Ribbon Criminal Offense.” *The Moscow Times*. December 29, 2022. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/29/russia-makes-desecration-of-st-george-ribbon-criminal-offense-a79844>.

Hromadske Radio. “In Lithuania Parliament Puts up Proposal to Equate the Z Symbol and the Ribbon of St. George with the Nazi Symbols.” *Hromadske Radio*. March 24, 2022. <https://hromadske.radio/en/news/2022/03/24/in-lithuania-parliament-puts-up-proposal-to-equate-the-z-symbol-and-the-ribbon-of-st-george-with-the-nazi-symbols>.

Dickinson, Peter. “More than Three-Quarters of Russians Still Support Putin’s Ukraine War.” *Atlantic Council*. June 6, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/more-than-three-quarters-of-russians-still-support-putins-ukraine-war/>.

Law, Tara. “Why Some Ukrainians Aren’t Happy with Navalny’s Oscar Win.” *TIME*. March 13, 2023. <https://time.com/6262460/oscars-alexei-navalny-documentary-ukraine-russia/>.

Kirby, Paul. “Ukraine War: Russia’s Jailed Navalny Attacks Invasion as Judge Rejects Appeal.” *BBC News*. May 24, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61564440>.

Shevchenko, Nikolay. “How Did the KGB Work?” *RBTH*. November 18, 2021. <https://www.rbth.com/history/334427-how-kgb-work>.

Sabadus, Aura. “Why the Black Sea Could Emerge as the World’s Next Great Energy Battleground.” *Atlantic Council*. March 30, 2021.

- <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-the-black-sea-could-emerge-as-the-worlds-next-great-energy-battleground/>.
- Pew Research. “Despite Concerns about Governance, Ukrainians Want to Remain One Country.” *Pew Research*. May 8, 2014.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/05/08/despite-concerns-about-governance-ukrainians-want-to-remain-one-country/>.
- Vernadsky, George. *History of Russia Volume I: Ancient Russia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943.
- Baylis, John; Smith, Steve; Owens, Patricia. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- New World Encyclopedia, “Sinocentrism - New World Encyclopedia.” *New World Encyclopedia*. 2024.
https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sinocentrism#Chinese_nationalism.
- Berg, Matt; Ukenye, Lawrence. “China’s Calculation on Supplying Russia with Weapons.” *POLITICO*. February 23, 2023.
<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2023/02/23/chinas-calculation-on-supplying-russia-with-weapons-00084128>.
- The Economist. “Russia’s Reliance on China Will Outlast Vladimir Putin, Says Alexander Gabuev.” *The Economist*. March 18, 2023.
<https://www.economist.com/russias-reliance-on-china-will-persist-even-after-vladimir-putin-is-gone-says-alexander-gabuev>.