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Nationalism, Soft Annexation and Hybrid Warfare: Putin's Recipe For Russian Resurgence

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Master's Thesis

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Abstract:

Over the last decades since the fall of the Soviet Union, The Russian Federation has struggled to reclaim its grasp over Eastern Europe and re-establish itself as a major player on the international scene. Increased NATO expansion towards its borders, and the “Westernization” of Eastern Europe has led to the country feeling it has been boxed into a corner. The feeling that the Russian nation has been encroached upon by the Western world has led to the rise of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia, and the marked rise in nationalism within the country. In this Master’s Thesis, I intend to discuss the history of Russian nationalism prior to and during Vladimir Putin’s reign as President of the Russian Federation, and how this nationalism has been harnessed to achieve both his domestic and international political goals; These goals namely being the unification of the Russian people in support of the Kremlin, their alienation from the rest of the world through the fostering of pre-existing xenophobic rhetoric and the implementation of nationalist driven soft annexation and hybrid warfare tactics meant to destabilize Eastern Europe and limit Western encroachment. All of this, I argue, is done to re-create a geopolitical buffer zone against Western incursion both in a physical and ideological sense- physically by destabilizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as annexing Crimea from Ukraine and fostering separatist warfare in the Donbas region, and ideologically by painting the West as an oppressor determined to re-create the East in its own visage. I will also discuss the effect Russia’s actions on the international stage have had on surrounding Eastern European countries and the threats they face from Russia today.

1. Introduction

The setting is late February 2014. For anyone in the streets of Kiev at the time, they are unaware that they are about to play a pivotal role in the history of their country, and in effect the world. The people of Ukraine are out in full voice. The past several months have been taxing, as President Viktor Yanukovich has tested their patience. A few months prior, the people of Ukraine had been one step closer to joining the European Union, a step that they clearly supported and endorsed, as their presence on the streets showed. It was a step that would have brought them farther away from the shadow of Russia, a nation with which Ukraine shares a very complicated and intertwined history. With the help of pressure applied by President Vladimir Putin, this dream was quickly destroyed. Yanukovich had turned his back on the European Union, which in effect saw him, and Ukraine, move closer to Russia. This was a message not only to the world, but also to the Ukrainian people, and it was one they could not tolerate. The Ukrainian people saw this move for what it was; an attempt to appease a regional power that was very much intent on reestablishing itself as dominant. So they marched.

The people of Ukraine were unaware at the time perhaps, but what began with protests and marches would end in violence, the ousting of their President, the annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of various separatist movements that would tear their country apart. This, as we know it today, is known as the Ukraine crisis. The Ukraine crisis is the ongoing effect of a larger strategy, or set of strategies, perpetrated and carried out by one of the original conflicts main players: Russia. As mentioned earlier, Russia, and by extension President Putin, was responsible for applying pressure onto President Yanukovich to thwart its growing relations with the European Union. This application of

“pressure” is a vague way of hinting at Russia’s very evident involvement in a shift in position and alignment of Ukraine, or rather, the prevention of one that, if carried out, would have been a direct threat to the Kremlin and their place in the international community. The Ukraine crisis is simply one example of Russia's attempts to counter any sort of Western influence on a region that historically it has held under its dominion. The Russia-Georgia war of 2008 that saw Georgia lose control over both the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was also spurred on by the meddling of the Kremlin. It too, was an intervention that still resonates today, ten years later, as it too has not come to a full conclusion.

At the same time as these interventions have taken place, scholars who study Russia would have noticed a marked change in domestic Russian politics over the course of the last two decades. As Russia has intervened within Eastern Europe, there has been overwhelming support for its actions among the Russian people. In what would infuriate many a populace, the Kremlin’s moves have seen sanctions cripple the Russian economy, leaving many living outside of St. Petersburg and Moscow in economic turmoil, and yet, support for Putin remains strong. The question then is, what accounts for this? The answer: a marked rise in Russian nationalism. The people have embraced a very Russo-ethnocentric stance that has turned them against much of the West, especially the United States and European Union, as well as many “outsiders”, be it those of different ethnic, religious, or racial groups, that try to make their home within Russia’s borders. However, this rise in nationalism is almost considered normal, especially when taking into account the times we live in. Many countries across the world have seen the rise of parties and

movements calling for the defense of national identity and culture especially following the ongoing refugee crisis and threat of terrorism.

The phenomena of Russian nationalism and the events in Ukraine and Georgia are heavily intertwined. Looking first at both The Georgian Conflict of 2008 and the Ukraine crisis, both have similar beginnings with regards to Russian involvement. Russia's presence in both conflicts indicates that they indeed had a stake in the conflicts outcome, which, in both cases, has not come into full fruition yet. Both conflicts were spurred on by a deeper force, one that transcends mere intervention. In both conflicts the parties involved were influenced by the upsurge in nationalism and evident will to separate from the nation they were originally part of. This pattern was evident in the case of Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and later in Ukraine's case in Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Both Georgia and Ukraine have become victims of processes known as soft annexation and hybrid warfare. Both processes rely on the exploitation of socio-political conditions that facilitate a situation and climate that allows for easy intervention within the manipulated country or region. It is here then, that the idea of nationalism becomes crucial. Regarding Russia's own blend of soft annexation and hybrid warfare, nationalism becomes key both domestically and internationally. Domestically the Kremlin binds the nation's population to their government by harnessing nationalism to garner support and unity that is unaffected by the Kremlin's actions and their consequences. This is done by mobilizing Russians against groups or countries presented as Russia's greatest enemies, all in the effort to prevent internal collapse. Internationally, Russian nationalism inspires pro-Russian groups and ethnic enclaves to help increase Russian dominion over the former Soviet republics and to stem the flow of Western

influence in regions too close to Russian borders. Hence, I intend to argue that the Kremlin has harnessed and cultivated a rise in Russian nationalism that has been the fuel for both internal and external politics. Internally, the rise of nationalism has solidified the Kremlin's hold on the people, by enabling Putin's government to present itself as the protector of Russians from external incursion from the West and non-Russian actors. Externally, Russian nationalism has provided support as well as a basis for hybrid warfare and the annexation of former Soviet territories, in effect creating a geopolitical buffer zone between itself and the West in the attempt to stem any derailment in the nation's resurgence as a formidable power.

2. Russian Nationalism- The Beginnings

To begin, it is important for one to establish a definition for what nationalism is and what it entails. Lowell L. Barrington quotes Michael Ignatieff's definition of nationalism. Nationalism, Ignatieff observes is "...a notion that combines the political idea of territorial self-determination, the cultural idea of the nation as one's primary identity, and a moral idea of justification of action to protect the rights of the nation against the other."¹ This definition embodies what much of the world sees as nationalism: a feeling of pride for, and identification with, one's country. This, at first glance, resembles patriotism. The difference, at least for scholars such as Barrington, lies in the second part of Ignatieff's definition of nationalism, which speaks to the "moral idea" of justification of action in defense of a nation against the other. Barrington argues that nationalism is a process as well as an idea. "Nationalism, he argues, "can be defined as an organized endeavor to control the national homeland. Some stress that this struggle must turn the homeland into an independent state; others would stop short of the requirement that the group seek its own state, accepting struggles for territorial autonomy within an existing state as nationalism."² Hence, it would be appropriate to say that nationalism is both idea and process. One of the most extreme examples of idea meeting process and action came in the form of the Serbian program of "ethnic cleansing" in the 1990's. Craig Calhoun notes that the policy of ethnic cleansing, "...like all of nationalism and ethnic politics, depended on social constructions of identity, mobilized members of the chosen ethnic

¹Barrington, Lowell W. "Nation" and "Nationalism": The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science". *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 4. (December 1997). p. 713.

² Barrington, Lowell W. "Nation" and "Nationalism": The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science". *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 4. (December 1997). p. 714.

group only unevenly, and served the interests of some participants far more than others.”³ It stands to reason that nationalism is malleable in definition and can be manipulated by political leaders. It is nationalism’s ability to be both idea and process that makes it such a powerful social and political tool.

The beginnings of Russian nationalism can be traced to the Romanov empire. The Romanov Tsars often used nationalism as a means of Russification, itself a means to “demonstrate Russian political and cultural domination of national regions primarily in the western parts of the Empire.”⁴ The policy of Russification sought to spread Russian culture, identity, and language throughout the empire as a unifying and dominating force. The Romanov empire sought to create one unified populace. One means they used was linguistic Russification. For example, the Romanovs banned the use of “Polish” Latin in the Ukrainian language, and often had Ukrainian nationalists emphasize the use of the Cyrillic alphabet in Ukrainian texts and literature.⁵ With measures such as this, the Romanov empire sought to bring together the peoples of Eastern Europe under one banner and instill Russian identity, as one common language does. This cultivation of a common identity would insure Russian dominance over the region, consolidating its power and influence.

Though the Romanov empire fell into decline and succumbed to revolution in 1917, the idea of Russian nationalism endured. In the first two decades of the 20th century, Russian nationalism found its way into the hands of the very revolutionaries that sought

³ Calhoun, Craig. “Nationalism and Ethnicity”. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 19 (1993), pp. 211-212.

⁴ Wortman, Richard. “Scenarios of Power: From Alexander II to the abdication of Nicholas II”. *Princeton University Press*. (1995). p. 526.

⁵Malte, Rolf. “Reviewed Work(s): The Romanov Empire and Nationalism Essays in the Methodology of Historical Research by Alexei MILLER”. *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol. 50, No. 4. (October-December 2009). p. 888.

to reconstruct power within Russia. According to scholars such as Veljko Vujacic, the idea of Russian nationalism as we know it started in the 1920's with Soviet nationality policy.⁶ At the time, various ethnicities within USSR territories began to create "union republics and autonomous republics" that began to section off territories for their given ethnicities. This led to an extremely diverse communist party, but also turned the Soviet Union into an "incubator of new nations" instead of a "melting pot" of cohesiveness.⁷ With so many different budding nations and ethnicities, it would stand to reason that this would be detrimental to the idea of a unified Soviet Union. During this time, traditional Russia and ethnic Russians were regarded as the oppressors of smaller national groups. A need for cohesion amongst these states for the good of the Soviet empire seemed like it would be paramount to Moscow, however Vujacic argues that ethnic Russians' exalted status in the Soviet Union was not necessarily threatened. The Bolsheviks, for example, used the term Russia synonymously with "Soviet Union", even after borders for Soviet States were drawn up.⁸ Bolshevik overtones of inclusivity hid a distinction that still left the ethnic Russian people at the top of the Soviet power structure and ensured that they were the focal point of the Union, ensuring that the Soviet Union remained predominantly Russian.

During the early years of the USSR, Russian nationalism took yet another turn in its development towards what we see it as today. This took place under the Josef Stalin Era. Although Stalin started showing nationalist sentiment and an inclination towards

⁶ Vujacic, Veljko. "Stalinism and Russian Nationalism: A Reconceptualization". *Post-Soviet Affairs Vol. 23, No. 2.* (2007). p. 159.

⁷ Vujacic, Veljko. "Stalinism and Russian Nationalism: A Reconceptualization". *Post-Soviet Affairs Vol. 23, No. 2.* (2007). p. 159-160.

⁸ Vujacic, Veljko. "Stalinism and Russian Nationalism: A Reconceptualization". *Post-Soviet Affairs Vol. 23, No. 2.* (2007). p.161.

harnessing it to benefit his power in the 1920's and early 1930s, he began to truly brandish nationalist rhetoric with conviction after the conclusion of World War II.⁹ A decree issued by the Central Committee of the All Soviet Communist Party, (VKP) in 1948 is a staunch example of this. As Konstantin Azadovskii mentions in his work, the decree was issued based on denouncing an opera called "The Great Friendship" by V. Muradelli for misleading the public impression that the peoples of the Caucasus, namely Georgians or Ossetians, waged war with the Soviet Union as it came into power between 1918 and 1920.¹⁰ The VKP denied this as being true, placing blame on both Ingushetians and the Chechens. The reason, as Azadovskii points out, that this was significant is that both the Chechen and the Ingush people had been deported in large numbers in 1944 and were still living in exile. Azadovskii points to this incident as a moment of both propaganda and the stoking of Russian nationalism, and the dangerous power it possessed, namely that of being able to unite a populace against a certain foe.¹¹ It depicted the Chechens and Ingush as enemies of the state, which in turn justified their deportation to other sections of the USSR. It would be actions such as this that would lay the groundworks for the use of nationalism to aid in the achievement of political agenda. Stoking animosity toward groups, actors, or entire nations or regions became standard practice for the Soviet state and has been harnessed by the leadership of the Russian Federation as well.

⁹ Azadovskii, Konstantin. "From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism". *Journal of Cold War Studies*. Vol. 4, No.1. (Winter 2002). p. 66.

¹⁰ Azadovskii, Konstantin. "From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism". *Journal of Cold War Studies*. Vol. 4, No.1. (Winter 2002). p. 66.

¹¹ Azadovskii, Konstantin. "From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism". *Journal of Cold War Studies*. Vol. 4, No.1. (Winter 2002). p. 66.

As the Soviet Union expanded, nationalism endured within its plans as it consolidated its power over Eastern Bloc. It is important to note however that, during the Soviet era following Stalin, it never took on a singular, uniform face that it could be identified by. Scholars such as Yitzhak Brudny are quick to highlight that Russian nationalist intellectuals differed in opinion on the role that nationalism should play in the Soviet Union. Brudny notes that these nationalists were split into two groups, the “nation builders” and “empire savers.”¹² Brudny also notes that most Russians viewed the Soviet Union as a nation state rather than an empire, making the former group more prevalent than the latter. Brudny makes the distinction between three types of nationalism that were prevalent during the period between 1953 and 1991, these being liberal, conservative and radical nationalism.¹³ Liberal nationalism, as Brudny describes, found its origins in the early Post -Stalinist era and was a part of the liberal reformist movement, but did not agree with Russian liberal reformers and their, “...excessive preoccupation with individual rights and did not share their indiscriminate adoption of Western political, social and moral ills of the Russian nation.”¹⁴ Liberal nationalists believed that radical political and economic reform was necessary, especially in the realm of the Stalinist legacy in Soviet politics.¹⁵ This form of nationalism as Brudny mentions, was unlike conservative and radical nationalism in the sense that it did not advocate for anti -intellectualism and xenophobia. Brudny’s conception of conservative nationalism is starkly different. Contrary to the “liberal” nationalists, who were open to political reform,

¹² Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998). p.8.

¹³ Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998).pp.8-9.

¹⁴ Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998).p.10.

¹⁵ Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998).pp. 10-11.

conservative nationalists focused mainly on the hardships of the peasantry and the lower classes, as well as the “moral corruption of society brought about by a modern urban lifestyle and the Westernized urban intelligentsia they held responsible for this corruption.”¹⁶ This form of nationalism and its liberal counterpart did however share antipathy for the Stalinist era, blaming it for many of the hardships the Russian populace now faced. However, conservative nationalism leaned more towards radical nationalism than the liberal sort, as Brudny explains. Radical nationalism exhibited a “militant rejection of Western values that had been penetrating the Soviet Union since the end of the Stalin era”.¹⁷ Radical nationalism emphasized the necessity of an authoritarian state that could stop the spread of Western ideology.¹⁸ Radical nationalists favored the conditions that a Stalinist- like era provided. They blamed the fall of the USSR on the penetration of Western ideology. Present day Russian nationalists emulate Soviet-era radical nationalists and favor a state that keeps Russia free from Western incursions. It is no surprise then, that scholars often view Putin’s current brand of nationalism as reminiscent of the Stalinist era, in a time where one of the Kremlin’s main imperatives is stopping any Western influences from tainting their populace and turning them against the government.

Throughout the USSR, the spread of Russian language and literature was vast. In schools in Poland, for example, it was required of children to learn the Russian language, undoubtedly an attempt to bring the Soviet states together through a common dominant

¹⁶ Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998).pp. 11-12.

¹⁷ Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998).p. 12.

¹⁸ Brudny, Yitzhak. “Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State 1953 - 1991”. *Harvard University Press*. (1998).p. 12.

language, as the Romanovs had done during their time in power. Scholars such Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver have conducted studies that show Russification influenced ethnic re identification within the USSR. Ethnic re identification, which Anderson et. al use as synonymous with assimilation, is defined as the “inclusion of small groups (or of separate individuals) of one people in the body of another-usually a larger or more developed Community.”¹⁹ The results of Anderson et. al’s studies show that through ethnic Russification between 1959 and 1970, “...Russians gained an estimated 599.9 thousand in the 0-38 age cohort (ages 11-49 in 1970), while non- Russians lost an estimated 638.5 thousand” through populations who re identified as such.²⁰ Clearly, Russification was employed to keep the Russian population, or the population of those who identified as Soviet rather than their individual ethnicity, high enough to continue to stoke a binding nationalistic flame.

¹⁹ Anderson, Barbara A. and Brian D. Silver. “Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity Among Non-Russians in the USSR”. *Demography*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (November 1983). p. 462.

²⁰ Anderson, Barbara A. and Brian D. Silver. “Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity Among Non-Russians in the USSR”. *Demography*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (November 1983). p.479

3. Post-Soviet Nationalism

In an ironic twist of fate, one of the driving forces that put an end to the Soviet Union was in fact nationalism. The early 1970's saw the first push for reform come from Poland of all places. As one of the Soviet satellite states, the rise in nationalism in Poland is important to discuss as it was one of the first Soviet controlled territories begin the uprising across Eastern Europe. It was exiled Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski who first tried to formulate a plan that would lead Poland, and eventually other nations out of the Soviet Union's grasp. In "Hope and Hopelessness," Kolakowski maintained that because the Soviet system was, "entangled in contradictions" and that the current system held itself together by preventing resistance within civil society, it could be changed via social resistance.²¹ This was noted by activists such as Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, who, in the 1970's, put together the Komitet Obrony Robotnikow [The Workers Defense Committee], or KOR.²² Movements such as Ruch Obrony Praw Czlowieka i Obywatela, (ROCiO), which translates to "The Movement of Rights of the Human and Citizen" followed. These organization engaged in social resistance in the hope that they could help alleviate the grasp that the Soviet Union held over the nation. It would be these social movements that would be the foundations upon which the Solidarity movement was built. Solidarnosc, as the movement was known, came to the forefront of Polish society in the fall of 1980 when Polish communists granted the movement legal recognition.²³ It was the first time since 1945 that there had been a fully autonomous organization that was

²¹ Bernhard, Michael. "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe". *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 108, No. 2. (Summer, 1993). pp. 312-313.

²² Bernhard, Michael. "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe". *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 108, No. 2. (Summer, 1993). p. 313.

²³ Kubik, Jan and Amy Lynch. "The Original Sin of Poland's Third Republic: Discounting "Solidarity" and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation". *Polish Sociological Review*, Vol. I.(153). (2006). p. 13.

beyond Soviet control. In the year that followed, martial law was declared and Solidarity was banned. Unfortunately for the Soviets, the movement had grown much too large to stop.²⁴ Solidarnosc did what many other movements had failed to do, and that was separate society from the ruling regime.²⁵ Nationalism role in this was direct and impactful. As scholars such as Jon E. Fox and Peter Vermeersch contend, “Solidarity ...relied almost exclusively on its form – the symbols, visual images and slogans of the opposition movement of the 1980s “we, the nation” against “them, the communists”, “we, the Catholics” against “them, the atheists”, and so on.”²⁶ Solidarity’s used nationalism, as Fox et. al. state, as a motivator to identify who the enemy was, namely the Communist party. That in turn helped fracture the communist regimes legitimacy within the country.²⁷ Just as nationalism had been used to mobilize a populace, for example during the Stalinist era, especially when looking back at the example provided by the decree issued by the Central Committee of the All Soviet Communist Party, (VKP) in 1948 which was meant to target the Chechen and the Ingush people, the same tactic was used against the communist hierarchy to unite the Polish people under one common front to face the incursion that the existence of the Soviet Union and communist regime represented. In time, nationalist movements began to sprout across the Baltic States, and then spread over to the rest of the Eastern Bloc. In 1988, representatives of varying nationalist movements, including those in Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia established contact and created a coordinating committee amongst

²⁴Kubik, Jan and Amy Lynch. “The Original Sin of Poland’s Third Republic: Discounting “Solidarity” and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation”. *Polish Sociological Review*, Vol. I.(153). (2006). p. 13.

²⁵Kubik, Jan and Amy Lynch. “The Original Sin of Poland’s Third Republic: Discounting “Solidarity” and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation”. *Polish Sociological Review*, Vol. I.(153). (2006). p. 13.

²⁶ Fox, Jon E. and Peter Vermeersch. “Backdoor Nationalism”. *European Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 51, No. 2. (2010), p. 333.

²⁷ Fox, Jon E. and Peter Vermeersch. “Backdoor Nationalism”. *European Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 51, No. 2. (2010), p. 333.

themselves. These groups met, shared documents and ideas and material support when they could, allowing nationalism to take on a concrete form where, “nationalist paradigms were consciously exported and borrowed, organizational resources were shared and challenging groups sought inspiration from one another.”²⁸ Just as nationalism had given, it had taken as well, unraveling the bindings of the Soviet Union in the same fashion that they had been brought together.

²⁸ Beissinger, Mark R. “Nationalism and the Collapse of Soviet Communism” *Contemporary European History* Vol. 18, No.3. (August 2009). p. 340.

4. Russia Under Yeltsin- The Precursor to Putin

The years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union were a tumultuous time for Russia. The country lost its identity and vast swaths of territory. For any country, this would have been difficult. Yeltsin came into power in June of 1991, and formerly took up the role as Russia first president. The country was in decline, and the population was suffering. In 1989, it was calculated that an average citizen spent 40-68 hours standing in store lines a month when looking to go shopping for their needs.²⁹ By 1991, polls showed that 1 in 8 respondents had not seen meat in stores controlled by the state, and less than one in 12 had seen butter.³⁰ In fall of 1991, it was predicted by CNN that the oncoming winter would result in starvation for many Russians.³¹ It is important to note then that the transition period after the Soviet Union's fall started off with complications, which did not make Yeltsin's job any easier.

Unlike his Soviet counterparts, which had often used nationalism as a glue for the state, Yeltsin did not subscribe to any concrete form of nationalism. According to scholars such as Peter Rutland, the farthest he came was during his pre- presidency days when he, "...used appeals of Russian sovereignty to undermine the position of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. But Yeltsin never subscribed to a clearly-articulated concept of Russian national identity. For Yeltsin, the most important symbol of the new Russian

²⁹ Schleifer, Andrei and Daniel Treisman. "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 19, No. 1. (Winter 2005). p. 153.

³⁰ Schleifer, Andrei and Daniel Treisman. "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 19, No. 1. (Winter 2005). p. 153.

³¹ Schleifer, Andrei and Daniel Treisman. "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 19, No. 1. (Winter 2005). p. 153.

state was – Yeltsin himself.”³² Instead of trying to consolidate central control through pushing the idea of a single Russian identity, he often did the opposite. His focus leaned towards implementing economic reforms. To highlight this shift, Yeltsin was a vast supporter of self-rule on behalf of the various ethnic republics that had sprung up after the Soviet Union’s collapse.³³ Yeltsin famously said that these republics should “take as much sovereignty as [they] could swallow” during a speech in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, one of the ethnic republics in question.³⁴ Yeltsin’s “hands off” approach to these ethnic republics was very much a double-edged blade, however. Although giving these ethnic republics leave to set up their own governing systems and giving them special minority status helped Yeltsin during the 1996 presidential elections, with the number of voters in favor of him rising by 8% in the aforementioned republics, his policies often led to conflict. Much of the conflict revolved around ethnic republics such as Tatarstan and Chechnya, the former of which declared itself a sovereign state after a referendum held in March of 1992, which saw 61% of the population vote in favor of independence, and the latter of which declared its independence in October of 1991, a move that eventually led to war.³⁵ While Yeltsin improved his relations with the ethnic republics, conflicts such as these did not sit well with the general Russian populace.

³² Rutland, Peter. “The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia”. Chapter from: *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, by Julie Newton and William Tompson. *Palgrave Macmillan*. (2010). p. 116.

³³ Rutland, Peter. “The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia”. Chapter from: *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, by Julie Newton and William Tompson. *Palgrave Macmillan*. (2010). p. 118.

³⁴ Rutland, Peter. “The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia”. Chapter from: *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, by Julie Newton and William Tompson. *Palgrave Macmillan*. (2010). p. 118.

³⁵ Rutland, Peter. “The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia”. Chapter from: *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, by Julie Newton and William Tompson. *Palgrave Macmillan*. (2010). pp. 118-119.

On top of these debacles involving ethnic republics, Yeltsin's presidency did little to reduce poverty levels. Andrei Schleifer and Daniel Treisman indicate that, in the early 1990's, "the poverty rate was highest among children aged 7 to 15; among adults, it was higher among women than men."³⁶ A collapse in what the state could provide throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's left many Russian's in a state of poverty and hopelessness. The democratic reforms and change Yeltsin offered seemed promising at first. But during his presidency, Russia saw not a dip, but a spike, in poverty rates. As Olena Nikolayenko highlights, poverty rates throughout the 1990's rose from 11.5 in 1990, to 26.2 in 1995, and reached a high of 34.2 in 1999.³⁷ Hence on top of political turmoil, the Yeltsin era was one of economic privation. The political chaos and mounting economic problems did not endear him to many Russians.

³⁶ Schleifer, Andrei and Daniel Treisman. "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 19, No. 1. (Winter 2005). pp. 156.

³⁷ Nikolayenko, Olena. "Life Cycle, Generational and Period Effects on Protest Potential in Yeltsin's Russia". *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*. Vol. 41, No. 2. (June 2008). p.446.

5. Russia Under Putin- A Return to Nationalism:

In many ways Yeltsin left Russia in 1998 worse off than he'd found it when his presidency began. Not only was the country in economic tailspin, it had fought through taxing conflicts, among them the Chechen war. For a country in Russia's state, Yeltsin had clearly not been the answer. Yeltsin's shortcoming, however, left the door open for Vladimir Putin. Putin's rise to power can be contributed to the fact that Russia was lacking a strong leader, and Putin offered just that. Unlike Yeltsin, Putin's rise was based on protecting and elevating the Russian people, uniting them under a single banner and bringing them out of economic turmoil. It was using this turmoil that Putin staked his claim to the Russian presidency in 1998. The West have often criticized Putin's use of both the Chechen war and control over media outlets as one of the main reasons for his popularity amongst voters.³⁸ Following his election, Putin's path to power was made quite easy. Although the country had been a "democracy" under Yeltsin, the government structure made it easy for Putin to exploit. Sergei Rogov of the Moscow Institute of USA and Canada studies is quoted in stating that, "We [Russia] adopted a constitution towards the end of 1993 which gave enormous authority to the executive without appropriate checks and balances. The legislative branch is weak and is dominated by executive authority. The judiciary is not independent...Yeltsin abandoned the notion of checks and balances and created a democracy for the bureaucracy and operated by the bureaucracy."³⁹ With a weak government structure created, as Rogov highlights, for the purposes of bureaucracy, Putin had free reign in shaping the direction Russia would now

³⁸ Cohen, Ariel. "The Rise of Putin: What It Means for the Future of Russia" *The Heritage Foundation*. March 28th, 2000. Web.

³⁹ Desai, Padma. "Russian Retrospectives on Reforms from Yeltsin to Putin". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 9, No.1. (Winter 2005). pp. 101-102.

take. Consolidating control over this bureaucracy, in Putin eyes, was the first step in improving Russia. He wasted no time in transitioning the Kremlin into a well-oiled machine to fit his purposes. In his first term from 2000 to 2004, Putin replaced elected governors in the upper house of the Russian parliament with his own appointees, sent Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a prominent oil tycoon, to prison for politically motivated reasons and installed Kremlin-vetted appointees seven Russian sectors to make sure that the regional laws conformed with the federal norms he would begin to propose.⁴⁰ It is often argued that, although some of these actions may indeed be corrupt, the state of Russia after the Yeltsin era mandated that Putin take this “strong leader” stance to take control of the spiraling Russian economy. Boris Jordan, one of the key figures in the setup of Renaissance Capital, which is one of Russia’s largest investment banks, was quoted in a 2004 interview saying that, “I am not sure that Putin views the consolidation of political power as necessary for promoting economic reform. I think he views the consolidation of control over his own bureaucracy as promoting economic reforms.”⁴¹ While it can be argued that Putin’s actions clearly overstep the boundaries that delineate control over bureaucracy and consolidation of political power, as we will see, one thing is clear: the economy under Putin has improved. Under Putin, there has been an increase in “energy exports”, with the building of new pipelines at the forefront of this. Simeon Djankov highlights that Russia has diversified its exports to previously untapped markets, these of which include China, Japan and Korea by building and expanding the Trans-Siberian oil pipeline, as well as the Sakhalin– Khabarovsk–Vladivostok gas pipeline

⁴⁰ Desai, Padma. “Russian Retrospectives on Reforms from Yeltsin to Putin”. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 9, No.1. (Winter 2005). p. 102.

⁴¹ Desai, Padma. “Russian Retrospectives on Reforms from Yeltsin to Putin”. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol 9, No.1. (Winter 2005). p. 103.

which can be found in the Russian Far East.⁴² One of the most notable deals signed by Russia with regards to its pipeline systems was with China in May of 2014. The agreement was signed between the two nations to deliver over 400 billion dollars worth of oil within the next 30 years.⁴³ It is also worth noting that the Russian economy saw a growth in GDP from 764 billion USD to around 2 trillion USD between the years of 2006 and 2014.⁴⁴ Of course, the Russian elite enjoyed most of this growth. Since Putin has come into power, extreme wealth in the Russian economy has gone up significantly, with 111 Russian's finding themselves on the Forbes World's Billionaire list, which increased from 42 in the Yeltsin years.⁴⁵ This has also been followed by a rise of billionaires close to Putin such as Vladimir Yakunin, Yury Kovalchuk and Roman Abramovich, replacing the old guard of Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky and the like which thrived under Yeltsin, and even leading to their exile.⁴⁶ Even in this sense, Putin has shifted and made changes to the Russian hierarchy that fit him and his agenda. By replacing those who hold monetary and economic power, he has created a new hierarchy that has allowed his grasp to tighten over his position of power. This would of course only be the beginning for Putin, however, as he would take his role of reinventing Russia by manipulating nationalism, which will be discussed below.

Nationalism under the Putin regime has taken on a variation of forms, depending on what it has been called to do. In the beginning of his term as President, and then later as

⁴² Djankov, Simeon. "Russia's Economy Under Putin: From Crony Capitalism to State Capitalism". *Peterson Institute for International Economics. No. PB15-18.* (September 2015). p. 1.

⁴³ Luhn, Alec and Terry Macalister. "Russia signs 30-year deal worth \$400bn to deliver gas to China". *The Guardian.* (May 21st, 2014). Web.

⁴⁴ Luhn, Alec. "15 years of Vladimir Putin: 15 ways he has changed Russia and the world". *The Guardian.* (May 6th, 2015). Web.

⁴⁵ Djankov, Simeon. "Russia's Economy Under Putin: From Crony Capitalism to State Capitalism". *Peterson Institute for International Economics. No. PB15-18.* (September 2015). p. 1.

⁴⁶ Djankov, Simeon. "Russia's Economy Under Putin: From Crony Capitalism to State Capitalism". *Peterson Institute for International Economics. No. PB15-18.* (September 2015). p. 3.

Prime Minister, the role nationalism played was not, as scholars such as Luke March would put it, “militaristic or expansionist”. March indicates that, particularly before the Georgian conflict of 2008, Russian nationalism was, “conservative as opposed to reactionary, and that is oriented toward pragmatism, not ideology.”⁴⁷ Nationalism during the first half of the Putin era, (we shall call it this, because although Medvedev was president for several years, it is obvious he only held that role in name), was conservative, and focused on separating themselves, at least at face value, from more extremist versions nationalism. March is clear to point however that nationalism was indeed used in the domestic sphere by using, “more aggressive ethno-nationalist sentiment in the domestic sphere for legitimacy and mobilization purposes.”⁴⁸ Hence with this we get our first glimpse at the true image of the current state of Russian nationalism-- a phenomenon that has been molded over centuries by various rulers into a means for manipulation for political gain and domestic stability, with its basis founded upon a heavily guarded idea of the Russian people in need of protection from the outside world, which is filled with enemies and ideologies that seek to harm and debilitate the Russian state and its populace. As we will see, the Kremlin has used already existent reserves of nationalism built up over years of struggle before, during and after the Soviet era to help pave the way for Russia’s reestablishment as a great power.

⁴⁷ March, Luke. “Is Nationalism Rising in Russian Foreign Policy? The Case of Georgia”. *Demokratizatsiya*. Vol. 19, No. 3. (Summer 2011). p. 188.

⁴⁸ March, Luke. “Is Nationalism Rising in Russian Foreign Policy? The Case of Georgia”. *Demokratizatsiya*. Vol. 19, No. 3. (Summer 2011). p. 189.

6. Ivan Ilyin: A Basis for the Present?

An exploration of nationalism during the Putin era cannot begin without the mentioning the influence on Putin of Ivan Ilyin. Ilyin, a thinker well known for his nationalistic inclinations, is often credited as the inspiration behind Putin's true domestic and foreign policy. Although Ilyin was born of a German mother and Russian father, he clearly viewed Russia as his mother country. His family on his father's side had strong links to the Kremlin, with his grandfather holding the post of "Keeper of the Kremlin Gates." His father was born within the Kremlin, and Tsar Alexander II was reportedly his godfather.⁴⁹ Ilyin's strong connection with the Kremlin could be one of the many reasons for Putin's fondness of Ilyin's work, a connection to the central hub of Russian political power mirroring his own, a symbol of legacy and strength. But of course, such a link is too weak to stand on its own. A closer look at Putin's rhetoric and political actions reveals that the current Russian president and Ilyin seem to be of one mind. Over the course of his life, Ilyin created a legacy and self-definition based upon painting the West as the enemy. Scholars such as Lilia Shevtsova have highlighted this as a similar facet of Putin's rhetoric, "Western nations cannot stand Russian uniqueness. ... They seek to dismember Russia", Ilyin complained while calling for the "Russian national dictatorship." Putin has not yet talked of "national dictatorship," but he loves to complain about Western efforts to back Russia into a corner."⁵⁰ It was not simply the West that Ilyin saw as the enemy. During World War One Ilyin supported Hitler's treatment of the Jews by equating them with the Bolshevik movement, which he saw as a full eruption of the disease that Western

⁴⁹ Ljunggren, Magnus. "Freud's Unknown Russian Patient". *Poetry and Psychiatry: Essays on Early Twentieth-Century Russian Symbolist Culture Academic Studies Press*. (2014). pp.115-116.

⁵⁰ Shevtsova, Lilia. "The World According to Putin" *The Crisis with Russia*". Aspen Institute. (2014). p. 40.

democracy had caused.⁵¹ He attempted to persuade Russians that the Jewish people were “agents of Bolshevism”, which was not an accident, as, according to Timothy Snyder, most Jews were not communists, and most communists did not ascribe to the Jewish faith, which leads one to believe that his idea of “judeo bolshevism” was the use of religious prejudice as a tool to unify the Russian people against a common “enemy.”⁵² This sort of focusing the Russian people against a specific enemy has been mirrored by various Soviet leaders, such as Stalin in his alienation and deportation of the Ingushetian and the Chechen people, as well as with regards to Putin with his rhetoric framing the West as the enemy. Ilyin’s political ideas also emphasized the role of the Russian Orthodox church and “...traditional values that would bring about the spiritual renewal of the Russian people,” who he believed were heavily influenced by the Western political and social constructs he so opposed.⁵³ This is mirrored in Putin rhetoric and policies. For example, in the 2000 National Security Concept, states that, “Assurance of the Russian Federation’s national security also includes protecting the cultural and spiritual-moral legacy and the historical traditions and standards of public life.”⁵⁴ This document appeared before Putin's interest in Ilyin’s work became clear, so Putin was already inclined to see himself as the guardian of Russian culture and identity. Not until 2006 would Putin openly begin to quote Ilyin in his speeches. In one speech, Putin referred directly to Ilyin, stating that his ideas reflected principles that the Russian state should stand by. “We must,” Putin said, “always be ready to ward off potential external

⁵¹ Snyder, Timothy. “Ivan Ilyin, Putin’s Philosopher of Russian Fascism”. *The New York Review of Books*. April 5th, 2018. Web.

⁵² Snyder, Timothy. “Ivan Ilyin, Putin’s Philosopher of Russian Fascism”. *The New York Review of Books*. April 5th, 2018. Web.

⁵³ Payne, Daniel P. “Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?”. *Journal of Church and State Advance Access* (November 9, 2010). p. 2.

⁵⁴ Payne, Daniel P. “Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?”. *Journal of Church and State Advance Access* (November 9, 2010). p. 2.

aggression and acts of international terrorism. We must be able to answer any and all attempts to put external political pressure on Russia, including those that aim to strengthen their own position at our expense.”⁵⁵ Moreover, Putin arranged for the reinternment of Ilyin’s remains in Russia, and the head of his political party, Dmitry Medvedev, has been known to recommend Ilyin’s writing to Russian youth.⁵⁶ Statements and actions such as these make Ilyin’s influence on Putin’s thinking very clear. Putin has sought to legitimize his rule in part by anchoring it in Ilyin’s nationalist ideas, especially by stressing the need to stand tall against the West.⁵⁷ Moreover, Putin has drawn Ilyin’s ideas to call for unity among the Russian populace and to resurrect patriotism based in part on enmity towards the West-and enmity from the West. This has helped Putin burnish his image as not just president and leader, but as a pious leader who believes in Russian Orthodox ideals, and acts as Russia’s “savior” from the machinations of foreign enemies.

⁵⁵ Barbashin, Anton and Hannah Thoburn. “Ivan Ilyin and the Ideology of Moscow's Rule” *Foreign Affairs*. September 20th, 2015. Web.

⁵⁶ Snyder, Timothy. “Ivan Ilyin, Putin’s Philosopher of Russian Fascism”. *The New York Review of Books*. April 5th, 2018. Web.

⁵⁷ Barbashin, Anton and Hannah Thoburn. “Ivan Ilyin and the Ideology of Moscow's Rule”. *Foreign Affairs*. September 20th, 2015. Web.

7. Xenophobia: “The Monster That is the Other”:

Having established the basis upon which Russian nationalism has been founded and how it has morphed over the years, it is important now to look at some of its more specific facets, the first of which is xenophobia. The term xenophobia refers to, in its most basic form, a hate and fear of individuals and groups that come from countries and ethnicities other than one’s own. As aforementioned, the role that xenophobia plays as a facet of Russian nationalism is the alienation and targeting of the outside world as the enemy. It is important to note that xenophobia, as one of the pillars of Russian nationalism, while it has not directly been openly referenced by the Kremlin, has played a pivotal role in helping maintain levels of domestic cohesion. In effect, xenophobia has been a resource for the Kremlin to tap into, not through policy, but by ignoring it and letting it grow into a force that helps provide fuel for a domestic agenda that demands unity. Xenophobia lends itself to this by framing the Russian people a separate from the “other” or the “outsider”. The distinction of the Russian people from the “other” has become a crucial pillar upon which Putin has built his power. Yet the rise of xenophobia predates Putin by many years. In the 1970’s for example, there was a massive migration of Russian Jews leaving the country for both the United States and Israel, after years of having lived under the very anti-religious regimes of Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, under each of which Yiddish and Hebrew texts were largely banned.⁵⁸ Feeling unwelcome they were forced to leave Russia behind seeking more accepting pastures. Their mass migration was seen by many as a positive, as rates of anti-Semitism within the country have always been high. According to Vladimir Shlapentokh, data from as

⁵⁸ Orleck, Annelise, “The Continuing Russification of Jewish New York”. *One out of Three: Immigrant New York in the Twenty-First Century*. Columbia University Press. (June 2013) . p. 91.

recently as 2007 shows that 13% of Russians support an all-out ban on Jewish organizations within Russia, 18% believe there should be a limit as to how many Jews live within Russia's borders, and 34% have been recorded to not condemn anti-Semites. In tandem with this, 44% believe the Jewish people should be limited in their involvement within the political, business, law, and educational spheres.⁵⁹

Although xenophobia has been a general facet of Russian society, the major spike that saw its levels skyrocket occurred in 1991, and then once again in 2000. The fall of the Soviet Union saw many countries and ethnic groups become the targets of hatred throughout Russia. According to Shlapentokh, this is due to the emergence of several former Soviet States as enemies of the Russian state. Statistics provided by Shlapentokh highlight that in 2006, 35% of the public viewed Ukraine's stance towards Russia as negative, which is telling because a similar percentage stated the same regarding US policies.⁶⁰ Other statistics also mention a growing hatred for the Baltic Republics and Georgia. Two of the three examples mentioned have become targets of Russian military action, which is a telling sign that the xenophobic enmity between the Russian population and outsider states and ethnicities surely played into the hands of Russian foreign policy, as the public would have had little complaints pertaining to both of Russia's recent military excursions.

The manifestations of xenophobia within Russia have been known to be extreme. Over the course of the last two decades, "extremist crime" has skyrocketed. According to a report submitted to the UN Universal Periodic Review, in 2009, xenophobic related

⁵⁹ Shlapentokh, Vladimir. "The Hatred of Others: The Kremlin's Powerful but Risky Weapon". *World Affairs*, Vol 169. No.3. (Winter 2007). p. 136.

⁶⁰ Shlapentokh, Vladimir. "The Hatred of Others: The Kremlin's Powerful but Risky Weapon". *World Affairs*, Vol 169. No.3. (Winter 2007). p. 136.

violence rose from 130 registered extremist acts in 2004, to 152, 263 and 356 in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively.⁶¹ One of the most striking outlets of this violence has been European football hooliganism. On August 23rd, 2012, for example, both AZ Alkmaar and Anzhi Makhachkala held a friendly, preseason football match. In the stands, scores of Lokomotiv fans (a club that plays in the Russian league), stood vigil over the game. As the game progressed, a chant began to ring out, “Russians forward! F**k the Caucasus!” Anzhi, a team from Russia’s mostly Muslim Caucasus region, was renting Lokomotiv’s stadium in Moscow for the friendly to take place. Throughout the match, police went on to detain about 80 fans, but this did little to curb the ensuing violence, “...after their victory, groups of hooligans attacked Anzhi fans in the metro station...splattering the platform in blood.”⁶² A Russian nationalist organization later said on social media that 70 Lokomotiv fans had taken part in the assault using traumatic pistols (handguns that fire rubber bullets).⁶³ Many scholars have tried to develop a reasoning behind this hatred of the “other”, and how it has spread to become so vicious. To some, it is the effect of mass migration into the country, leaving many Russian’s on edge. Between the years of 1992-1995, Hillary Pilkington highlights that migrants seeking refugee status began to pour in from across the old Soviet Union. Approximately 180,00 migrants from Tajikistan, 170,000 migrants from Kazakhstan, and about 140,000 from Uzbekistan made their way into the Russian Federation. Migrants from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and

⁶¹ Sevortian, Anna. “Xenophobia in Post - Soviet Russia” *The Equal Rights Review*, Vol. 3. (2009). p. 20.

⁶² Luhn, Alec. “Racism in Russia laid bare: more than 100 incidents in just two seasons”. *The Guardian*. June 4th 2015. Web.

⁶³ Luhn, Alec. “Racism in Russia laid bare: more than 100 incidents in just two seasons”. *The Guardian*. June 4th 2015. Web.

Moldova made up a large part of the refugee pool as well.⁶⁴ These figures show that over the course of the 1990's, Russia's became far more diverse. Pilkington notes that for a nation which suffers from rising mortality but falling birth rates, migration logically should be a good thing. This idea, however, doesn't consider the political consequences that a such a steep increase in the number of foreigners had. Russia's political situation at the time was fragile; the country had lost control over much of its Soviet territories. In these circumstances, an influx of refugees and migrants from former Soviet States would not be received kindly by ethnic Russians. States that had broken away from Soviet control were now sending people to it—the very same people which wanted to break from Russia's control in the first place. At the same time however, one becomes hard pressed to overlook the role Russian politics has played in the manipulation of said xenophobia.

As mentioned previously, anti-former Soviet State sentiment surely played a role in legitimizing the Kremlin's advances on both Georgia and Ukraine. With regards to Ukraine, much of the animosity and distaste Russians feel towards the nation can be attributed to the Russian media, which often depicts Ukraine as "...Russia's fiercest enemy and an ally of the United States. An army of Kremlin propagandists and politicians have vehemently denigrated Ukraine, gloated about its problems, and indulged in ethnic disparagements."⁶⁵ This is clear case where xenophobia and hatred have been used as a tool, or even as a weapon directed, at least at the time, at a potential political adversary on the international arena. Few could expect how Russia's attitudes towards

⁶⁴ Pilkington, Hilary. "Migration, Displacement and Identity in Post - Soviet Russia". *Routledge*. (1998). p. 8.

⁶⁵ Shlapentokh, Vladimir. "The Hatred of Others: The Kremlin's Powerful but Risky Weapon". *World Affairs*, Vol 169. No.3. (Winter 2007). p. 138.

“Russian identity” could unfold on the international arena, but internally it was clear that garnering and directing support was not difficult for the Kremlin to do.

8. Russian Orthodoxy and a Conservative Return to Traditionalism:

The Russian Orthodox Church is yet another facet of the current state of Russian nationalism, and a major tool in Putin's arsenal for political and social control over the Russian people. Firstly, The Russian Orthodox Church, or ROC, is known as a pillar of Russian tradition and culture, and has been for centuries. The church draws its first links to Saint Cyril and Methodius in 863. The two men traveled north towards the Byzantine empire and converted Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia to the Orthodox faith.⁶⁶ The religion goes back over a millennium, making it one of Russia's most traditional cornerstones. With Putin's will to bring Russia back to "traditionalist" Russian ideals to help keep the people unified, the Church seems like an obvious glue for this unification.

Besides the ROC's history in Russian culture and tradition, its link with Russian nationalism is strong. Many members of the Church and clergy associate with nationalist groups. For example, the largest nationalist group in Russia, Russian National Unity (Russkoye natsional'noye yedinstvo), has actively worked with ROC clergy.⁶⁷ Similarly, while the ROC has not claimed to be openly anti-Semitic, anti-Semitic texts are often found on sale in Orthodox churches.⁶⁸ While it is true however, as some scholars such as Aleksandr Verhovskiy argue, that an entire church or religious sect cannot be nationalist or xenophobic, especially when some of the most outspoken, liberal voices in Russia do indeed come from the ROC and its Bishops, nationalism remains an important facet

⁶⁶ Bishop Kallistos Ware. "Excerpts from the Orthodox Church Part 1: History" *Excerpts from the Orthodox Church* January 8th 2000. p. 2

⁶⁷ Verkhovskiy, Aleksandr. "The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Nationalist, Xenophobic and Anti-western Tendencies in Russia Today: Not Nationalism, but Fundamentalism" *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4. (2002). p. 333.

⁶⁸ Verkhovskiy, Aleksandr. "The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Nationalist, Xenophobic and Anti-western Tendencies in Russia Today: Not Nationalism, but Fundamentalism" *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4. (2002). p. 333.

within the ROC, with large sects of the ROC ascribing to very radical nationalist views.⁶⁹ For Verhovsky, the phenomenon of nationalism and anti- Westernism within the Church is not directly a product of their faith, but more of a world outlook he calls Russian Orthodox Fundamentalism, which, according to Verhovsky, is in favor of, "...the restoration of autocracy, a state structure on the imperial model, restrictions on the Jews and confessions other than Orthodoxy, the status of state church for the ROC, rejection of the concepts of democracy and human rights (in particular, as far as freedom of conscience is concerned), opposition to any forms of Western influence within the country and struggle against such influence beyond Russia's borders, rigid paternalism by the state in all areas and the compulsory imposition of 'Orthodox values' in everyday life, culture and even the economy."⁷⁰ These views align with Putin's idea of controlling the populace. If the people support an outright autocracy, and the spread of these Russian Orthodox fundamentalist values can be spread, manipulation and control of the populace is much easier. His acceptance of the Russian Orthodox religion, and through his parading of it when he appears publicly, be it by visiting holy sites or by wearing a cross, Putin inspires the people to follow suit. A leader who stands for what the people stand for surely cannot be the enemy, but a friend, or savior attempting to liberate them from the grip of the Western world. In a speech given before the Bishop's Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, President Putin stated that the Church "...inspired people to

⁶⁹ Verkhovsky, Aleksandr. "The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Nationalist, Xenophobic and Anti-western Tendencies in Russia Today: Not Nationalism, but Fundamentalism" *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4. (2002). p. 333.

⁷⁰ Verkhovsky, Aleksandr. "The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Nationalist, Xenophobic and Anti-western Tendencies in Russia Today: Not Nationalism, but Fundamentalism" *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4. (2002). pp. 333-334.

constructive action and heroic deeds for the Fatherland.”⁷¹ It is this sort of sentiment for the Orthodoxy that brings to the forefront a side of Putin that wishes the Russian people to stand with him in a time where, he argues, Russia needs those willing to be constructive and do “heroic deeds” to ensure that Russia stays Russia, and does not become part of the Western world.

The Kremlin’s relationship with Russian Orthodoxy does not stop there. As aforementioned, the 2000 National Security Concept of the Putin administration created a link between the ROC and security of culture and tradition in Russia as being of paramount importance to the nation's well being. Similarly, in 2002, Patriarch Alexey II consecrated a church in the Lubyanka, the headquarters of the Federal Security Bureau, an act that showed the close link the Kremlin was trying to create between the two institutions.⁷² This coming together of church and state signaled that to be Russian meant to be Russian Orthodox. The symbolic merging of Patriarch Alexey II’s consecration was a message that these two institutions stood as one to protect the Russian people and their identity as such. This of course extended to Russians outside the borders of Russia, however this will be explored a little later.

⁷¹ Pertsev, Andrey. “President and Patriarch: What Putin wants from the Orthodox Church” *Carnegie Moscow Center*. December 19th, 2017. Web.

⁷² Payne, Daniel P. “Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?” *Journal of Church and State Advance Access*. (November 9, 2010). p.4.

9. The Current State of Russian Nationalism-The Effect of Putin’s “Two Pillars”:

The coming together of both pillars of Russian nationalism has had important political consequences. Firstly, as aforementioned, football culture has become heavily charged with nationalist and, by extension, xenophobic rhetoric, creating a portion of the population that, in many cases has been at the center of violence towards outsiders. This violence is often geared to include individuals that were born within Russian territory, however do not fall under the conditions of what is seen to be truly Russian, meaning they do not fit the category of “russkiy” a term reserved for the ethnic Russian people, which has been used by Putin in speeches, namely one in particular to the Duma, during which he opted to not use the more inclusive “rossiyskiy”, which envelops all Russian “citizens”.⁷³ This would target groups that are not inherently Russian Orthodox, which would explain the chants used in the AZ Alkmaar and Anzhi Makhachkala game in 2012, where the fans displayed their hate for the Caucasus, a predominantly Muslim region of Russia. The violence and hatred is not limited to hooligans on hooligans. The violence that took place after this game targeted individuals not because of their support for a given club, as it usually does in violent scenarios between hooligans of two clubs, but because of religious intolerance and a sense of superiority over what Lokomotiv fans and many other Russian hooligan groups see as ideas that threaten Russian culture and identity. This hatred also encompasses the realm of the clubs these groups support, and the image they wish their teams to carry. In 2012, for example, fans of Russian Club Zenit St. Petersburg released a public letter stating that they did not want black or gay

⁷³ Stuttaford, Andrew. “The (Re)birth of Ivan Ilyin” *National Review*. (April 19th, 2014). Web.

players representing their club.⁷⁴ Much of this sentiment reflects the partnership between the Kremlin and the ROC. With the government spurring rhetoric that, while inexplicitly fuels such behavior, it can only lead to groups such as this feeling empowered, and even justified. If Russia is to truly only be for the “russkiy” people, hooligans may see it as their duty to let “the other” know that they are not welcome and that they are there to defend what it means to be Russian.

Nationalism has also been on the rise among segments of Russia’s youth. In most cases around the world, one would expect the older generation to be much more nationalistic and for youth to be more welcoming of ideas from the outside world. In the case of Russia, however, the rise of ethnic nationalism as is striking among youth. It has taken two distinct forms: a rise in youth skinhead groups and the rise of the youth nationalist group “Nashi”. Nashi, as an organization was founded back in 2005 with explicit Kremlin backing. “Nashi” translates directly to the phrase “Ours”. The group’s main goal, at the time of its formation, was to facilitate, “Russia’s global leadership in the 21st century...prepare a ‘revolution of cadres’ in Russia...educate a new generation of state officials, and... oppose the threat of an ‘orange-revolution’ in Russia’ as well as large amounts of anti-fascist campaigning.”⁷⁵ By simply looking at Nashi’s founding goals, and keeping in mind its close ties to the state, it is clear that the Kremlin uses it to promote nationalism among Russians. By using groups such as Nashi to plant the idea of ethnic nationalism in young minds, the Kremlin seeks to ensure that the next generation will be pro Kremlin and pro Putin. The co-opting of youth and training them as state

⁷⁴ Watson, Matthew R. “The Dark Heart of Eastern Europe: Applying The British Model of Football Related Violence and Racism” *Emory International Law Review* Vol. 27. (2013). p. 1066.

⁷⁵ Wales, Oscar. “Skinheads and Nashi: What are the reasons for the rise of nationalism amongst Russian youth in the post-Soviet period”. *Slovo*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Spring 2016). p. 114.

officials is a step taken by the Kremlin to groom the youth in a way that benefits the Kremlin's political agenda. The more of the population the state grooms, the less dissent there will be. The question, then is, how has the youth group worked to groom individuals? In some sense, it can be argued that Nashi seems to be working to counter radical nationalism. The group has sent out pamphlets and stood against hyper nationalist sentiment, stating that, "Cultural diversity is Russia's greatest asset in the modern world. Religious and ethnic cooperation empowers our country to develop further... Our generation's task is to prevent the spread of fascist ideas, aggressive nationalism, religious intolerance and separatism that threatens the unity and territorial integrity of Russia...", and at the same time, the group has also looked to Russian nationalist sentiments to recruit its members, an example being a march the group worked on in 2007 with United Russia's youth wing, Molodaya Gvardia.⁷⁶ During this march, the popular slogan "Russia for the Russians" was championed. This slogan, as aforementioned, is used by far-right groups that imply not only anti-Western, but anti-immigrant and outsider sentiment. While it is argued that the use of this was simply meant to garner support for anti-Western meddling, its connotation with anti-immigrant and outsider sentiment blur the lines as to where the group really stands and how they intend to influence Russia's youngest generation.

Much more worrisome is the growth of the skinhead population. The phenomenon dated back to the 1990's, when youth often emulated the behaviors of their western counterparts.⁷⁷ Over the years since the fall of the Soviet Union, there have been massive

⁷⁶ Wales, Oscar. "Skinheads and Nashi: What are the reasons for the rise of nationalism amongst Russian youth in the post-Soviet period". *Slovo*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Spring 2016). pp. 114-115.

⁷⁷ Wales, Oscar. "Skinheads and Nashi: What are the reasons for the rise of nationalism amongst Russian youth in the post-Soviet period". *Slovo*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Spring 2016). p.108.

fluctuations in skinhead activity, with a dip occurring in 2008. However, skinhead groups have been on the rise in recent years. Researchers from the SOVA Centre of Information and Analysis predicted a rise in skinhead activity following the breakout of the Ukraine crisis, and their predictions have not been off the mark.⁷⁸ More and more violence follows the nationalist rhetoric that has been ingrained in political discourse, almost giving groups like the skinheads the justification to continue their reign of violence, even if Russian laws prohibit such behavior. It would seem counterintuitive to champion a slogan such as “Russia for the Russians” if the laws were truly meant to protect ethnic groups from violence. This of course then would dictate that the laws are simply a guise, and that actions speak louder than written law, making these laws worth less than the ink used to print and codify them. Instead, letting this breed of violent nationalism fester and go meekly challenged is productive, as it sews more enmity against the outside world without the Kremlin even having to mobilize the people themselves. In the case of the skinheads, they are harnessing a resource that simply made itself available due to the country’s circumstances.

⁷⁸ Wales, Oscar. “Skinheads and Nashi: What are the reasons for the rise of nationalism amongst Russian youth in the post-Soviet period”. *Slovo*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Spring 2016). p. 109.

10. When Rhetoric Fails- The Kremlin and its Insurance Against Dissent:

Of course, it cannot be said that the Kremlin's constant harping on nationalism has swayed everyone in Russia. There are those, of course, individuals, parties, and organizations, that oppose Putin and his government's rhetoric. But Putin has not been tolerant toward opposition. In Russia, the kidnapping and killing of journalists has become a favored pastime for the Kremlin. The death of Anna Politkovskaya is just one example of this happening. Murdered in 2006, Politkovskaya was one of many that had offended the Kremlin with her work. According to Amy Knight, those silenced permanently for their infractions and attempts to revolt against Kremlin political agenda included Igor Domnikov, who, "...was brutally beaten by a hired thug and later died...and Yury Shchekochikhin, who died in July 2003 of a sudden, mysterious illness, apparently the result of poisoning."⁷⁹ This violence towards outspoken opponents has reached not only journalists, but outspoken politicians as well. The deaths of Boris Nemstov and Boris Berezovsky highlight just how far Putin's reach can extend. Nemstov had been, in his earliest years, a member of post-Soviet Russia's "young reformers", and although he had supported President Putin's initial succession of Yeltsin, he fell out of favor with Putin 2011 by leading massive street rallies against parliamentary election results as well as writing reports on corruption involved in the case.⁸⁰ In 2015, it would seem someone had had enough of Nemstov and his meddling, and several hours after he had urged the Russian people to march against Russia's involvement in the Ukraine crisis, he was shot 4 times in the back. Putin took personal control over the investigation, and to this day a

⁷⁹ Knight, Amy. "Who Killed Anna Politkovskaya?". *The New York Review of Books*. November 6th, 2008. p.1.

⁸⁰ Filipov, David. "Here are 10 critics of Vladimir Putin who died violently or in suspicious ways". *The Washington Post*. March 23rd, 2017. Web.

killer has not been identified.⁸¹ Boris Berezovsky, on the other hand, had been a Putin stalwart for many years and was credited with helping Putin rise to the heights he has achieved today, especially in the very early stages of his rise to power. In the late 1990's, Berezovsky ran a smear campaign against Putin's political opponents, which helped him win the presidency after Yeltsin stepped down.⁸² He was also credited with helping propagate a campaign that smeared Boris Nemstov's image.⁸³ After Berezovsky had a falling out with Putin, he went into exile in the United Kingdom, from where he decided to "vow to bring down" President Putin, after which he proceeded to accuse the Kremlin with involvement in the death of Alexander Litvinenko, a former intelligence officer and whistleblower that had been poisoned to death in 2009.⁸⁴ It wouldn't take long thereafter for Berezovsky's body to turn up in his own bathroom, with a noose around his neck that made his death look like a suicide, but when the coroner performed an autopsy the cause of death remained a mystery.⁸⁵ Berezovsky's case is a curious one especially with regards to the links to Nemstov, as if whoever perpetrated his murder was tying up several loose ends at once.

Killing is of course one of the more extreme measures Putin has taken to silence dissent. It has not always been the case that this option has been necessary. As aforementioned, smear campaigns to denounce political opponents have often been

⁸¹ Filipov, David. "Here are 10 critics of Vladimir Putin who died violently or in suspicious ways". *The Washington Post*. March 23rd, 2017. Web.

⁸² Lipman, Maria. "How Putin Silences Dissent: Inside the Kremlin's Crackdown". *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 95, No.3. (June 2016). p. 39.

⁸³ Filipov, David. "Here are 10 critics of Vladimir Putin who died violently or in suspicious ways". *The Washington Post*. March 23rd, 2017. Web.

⁸⁴ Filipov, David. "Here are 10 critics of Vladimir Putin who died violently or in suspicious ways". *The Washington Post*. March 23rd, 2017. Web.

⁸⁵ Filipov, David. "Here are 10 critics of Vladimir Putin who died violently or in suspicious ways". *The Washington Post*. March 23rd, 2017. Web.

enough to keep his opponents at bay This has been very effective especially due to the Kremlin's, and in extension Putin's, control over large swaths of Russian media. After Putin's re-election in 2012, as Maria Lipman highlights, "...the Kremlin relied on loyal media owners to shut down or reformat outlets the government did not approve of and on advertisers, who readily refused to conduct business with those they deemed disloyal."⁸⁶ An example of this is the shutting down of the liberal Moscow channel "TV Rain". In 2014, cable television operators loyal to the Kremlin terminated contracts with the channel, forcing it to operate online, which caused its viewership to drop from 12 million to approximately 70,00 paid subscribers.⁸⁷ The Kremlin's advances to control the domain of media is a safeguard against anti - Kremlin rhetoric reaching the ears of the populace. The channels drop in viewership signifies this as even if the channel still operates, its messages are reaching far less of the population, making those that may subscribe to its views and standpoint a minority.

The manipulation of votes garnered during elections has also been attributed to Putin's claim to power, and the subordination of his opponents. In 2011, online activists were said to have discovered that election officials were set to tamper with the upcoming parliamentary election. Large numbers of young people volunteered to join election monitoring teams. These volunteers discovered vast amounts of voter fraud during their time at the polls, including ballot stuffing, counterfeited voting registers and "merry go round" voting.⁸⁸ It was also note that anyone who attempted to call out officials at voting

⁸⁶ Lipman, Maria. "How Putin Silences Dissent: Inside the Kremlin's Crackdown". *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 95, No.3. (June 2016). p. 43.

⁸⁷ Lipman, Maria. "How Putin Silences Dissent: Inside the Kremlin's Crackdown". *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 95, No.3. (June 2016). p. 43.

⁸⁸ Lipman, Maria. "How Putin Silences Dissent: Inside the Kremlin's Crackdown". *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 95, No.3. (June 2016). p. 41.

locations were removed from the premises.⁸⁹ It was these parliamentary elections that Nemstov had opposed. Of course, while these accusations cannot be directly linked to the Kremlin, these measures would seem to be effective tools for a leader attempting to maintain cohesion on the domestic front. The more voices that oppose him, the less likely he is to succeed internationally. A battle fought on two fronts does not bode well for a man trying to build a legacy and restore a former empire.

⁸⁹ Lipman, Maria. "How Putin Silences Dissent: Inside the Kremlin's Crackdown". *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 95, No.3. (June 2016). p. 41.

11. Russia Reclaiming its Empire-Historical Basis for the “Buffer Zone”:

Having discussed the internal use of nationalism as a tool to pacify and control the Russian populace to help steer the country’s political agenda in the Kremlin’s favor, I will now turn to the international sphere. As has been discussed, nationalism has been used to garner support for the nation’s activities beyond its borders. An important part of the aforementioned goal is the re- establishment of former spheres of influence to create a buffer zone between Russia and the West, but also to rise again as a great power, which these spheres of influence would certainly help Russia achieve. Russia’s approach closely resembles that of a onetime empire reclaiming former territories, in this case former Imperial and then Soviet territories in Eastern Europe, especially in the Balkan and Baltic regions. Much of this modern “land grab” and geopolitics has quite a deep history, starting even before the emergence of the Soviet Union. It is important to understand this history if any of the Kremlin’s most recent moves are to make sense.

Imperial Russia’s history began in the year 882. It is important to go back this far in time to note that, at the time of the first iteration of what would become the Russian empire, it was the first Eastern Slavic state to come into existence.⁹⁰ The state, known as Rus, or Kyiv Rus, is often referred to as the origin of Eastern Slavs, which indeed resonates with many Slavic nations now part of Eastern Europe. It is also important to note that, during this time, the capital of “Kievan Russia” was, as the name suggests, the city of Kiev, which is now the capital of Ukraine. Of course, Eastern and Western scholars have been unable to agree on what this means for the joint Russo-Ukrainian history. Scholars in the West often see “Kievan Russia” as a part of the Russian history,

⁹⁰ Curtis, Glen. E. “Kievan Rus and Mongol Periods *Russia: A Country Study*. Washington, DC: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress. (1996). Web.

however those of the Russophile (Russian) school have a deeper view on the matter. To the Russian people, Kievan Russia is not simply a former capital of a once-unified Slavic state. Many of them see Kyivan Rus as the root civilization of the Russian people, with the Ukrainian and Belarusian people's only appearing after Kyiv Rus's fall in 1240. In traditional Russophile histories, the Ukrainian people only appear in the 17th century and are depicted as an ethnic group yearning to join the Russian empire.⁹¹ This reading of history provides Russian nationalists with a justification for their attempts to subjugate Ukraine. With Kiev seen as the capital of Russian origins, and with the Ukrainian people portrayed as coming into existence after Russian power left Ukrainian lands, there is a primacy given to the Russian ethnicity; It is portrayed as the origin of Slavic people, and in effect highlights Russia as the rightful heir of a landmass that ethnic Russians originated from. The mention of 17th century Ukrainians as a group that merely wished to rejoin the Russian empire also gives the impression that there was never meant to be a free Ukraine, and that it is only right that Russia and Ukraine remain together.

Of course, Russia's history of trying to maintain control over Eastern Europe doesn't simply stop with Ukraine. The Romanov empire expanded into other Eastern European territories, namely Poland and Latvia. The three partitions of Poland, as they are known, took place in 1772, 1793 and 1795.⁹² The Russian empire played a part in tearing what was then known as the Polish- Lithuanian Commonwealth apart, alongside Prussia and Austria. This, of course, was then mirrored in a very similar way in the lead up to World War II. Prior to the joint invasion of Poland in September of 1939, the USSR and Nazi

⁹¹ Kuzio, Taras. "National Identity and History Writing in Ukraine". *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 34, No. 4. (September 2006). p. 409.

⁹² O'Leary, Brendan. "Analyzing Partition: Definition, Classification, and Explanation". *Political Geography* Vo. 26. (2007) p. 888.

Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement on the 23rd of August 1939. It was initially seen as a pact of non-aggression, but contained a “secret protocol” that stated- “In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic states (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR.”⁹³ The secret protocol laid out a plan for the division of territory if the Russians and Germans worked together to occupy Eastern Europe. A clause was added onto the agreement, pertaining to the division of Poland. It specified that, “...the question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish state and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined during further political developments.”⁹⁴ History shows how this was handled, with the USSR and Germany each occupying a piece after the 1939 invasion. The USSR, which had argued Polish territories belonged to it after World War One since “Poland had not existed prior to the war”, would have some comfort in knowing they had snatched a decent chunk of their former empire from the clutches of those that would oppose them.

⁹³ Altshuler, Mordechai. “The Distress of Jews in the Soviet Union in the Wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” *Yad Vashem Studies*. Vol 36, No.2. (2008). p. 79.

⁹⁴ Altshuler, Mordechai. “The Distress of Jews in the Soviet Union in the Wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” *Yad Vashem Studies*. Vol 36, No.2. (2008). p. 79.

12. The History of Crimea and Russia:

Crimea, as recent events show, plays a crucial role in the Kremlin's plans of re-emerging as a global power. This has been historically true for Russia, as Crimea has been pivotal for centuries. Russia first obtained control over the Crimean Peninsula in 1783 when Catherine II conquered the territory, along with Southern Ukraine.⁹⁵ An increase in orientalist literature and culture was sweeping through Europe at the time, and this was Russia's first "Orient".⁹⁶ It also provided the Russian empire with access to the Black Sea, which, over the course of history has become an important part of Russia's plans to strengthen itself.

Russia's first conflict over the territory came in the form of the Crimean War came in 1853 when a religious conflict with between Russia, France and Ottoman Turkey escalated and Russia occupied several Turkish principalities.⁹⁷ Once the war ended, the 1856 Treaty of Paris made the Black sea neutral, meaning no Russian warships could sail through the region.⁹⁸ This of course undercut Russia's influence over the region, creating uneasiness over the Crimean Peninsula for the Russian empire. Having controlled this territory in the past, the lack of ability to patrol the Black sea with their ships was debilitating. Over the decades to follow, several more conflicts over that region erupted, the most prominent being the uprising of nationalist Crimean Tatars during the October Revolution. The conflict saw involvement from the Bolsheviks, the White Russians, and

⁹⁵ Dickinson, Sarah. "Russia's First "Orient": Characterizing the Crimea in 1787". *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 3, No.1. (Winter 2002). pp. 3.

⁹⁶ Dickinson, Sarah. "Russia's First "Orient": Characterizing the Crimea in 1787". *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 3, No.1. (Winter 2002). pp. 3.

⁹⁷Lieutenant Colonel James B. Agnew. "The Great War That Almost Was: The Crimea". (1853-1856) pp. 48.

⁹⁸ Candan, Badem. "The Ottomans and The Crimean War". *Institute of Social Sciences, Sabanci University*. (2007). p. 2.

the Germans, who occupied the peninsula at the time. At this conflicts conclusion, Vladimir Lenin and the victorious Bolsheviks went about making the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which of course became part of the Soviet Union.⁹⁹ During World War Two, the control of Crimea would once again fall under the jurisdiction of what was now Nazi Germany. The conclusion of this war created the roots for modern day conflict between Russia and Ukraine over Crimea. After the reconquest of the peninsula from Nazi Germany in 1944, Stalin set about punishing the native Tatar population of Crimea by deporting them from their ancestral home. According to KGB records, “37,750 families, or 151,424 spetposekentsev (special settlers), were registered in Uzbekistan by July 1, 1944. This number apparently did not include those Tatars who at that time were serving in the Red Army. They too were banished from the Crimea, bringing the total number of deportees close to 200,000.”¹⁰⁰ After this, there was little to no mention of the native Tatar population. In 1954, the Crimean Peninsula, now once again seen as a portion of Soviet territory, was gifted to the Ukrainian Republic as a symbolic gesture in light of celebrations surrounding the 300th anniversary of Bogdan Khmelnytsky’s union with Moscow.¹⁰¹ It would be this action that would become one of the main talking points in the international community during the initial stages of the modern-day Ukraine crisis.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, much of Imperial Russia's former territories have been lost. The Soviet republics are now independent states. Some, like Poland,

⁹⁹ Vardys, Stanley. V. “The Case of the Crimean Tatars”. *The Russian Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2. (April 1971). p.102.

¹⁰⁰ Vardys, Stanley. V. “The Case of the Crimean Tatars”. *The Russian Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2. (April 1971). p.102.

¹⁰¹ Vardys, Stanley. V. “The Case of the Crimean Tatars”. *The Russian Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2. (April 1971). p.102.

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have drifted towards the West, leaving Russia feeling exposed. This has led to Russia's attempts to reclaim parcels of the territories in question. In most recent times, the two most prominent examples are the 2008 conflict in Georgia, and the ongoing Ukraine crisis, which started in 2013. These two events are clear signs that the Kremlin's agenda on the international scene is bearing fruit in a way that has allowed Russia to reclaim some of its lost territory, and begin to re-create a region that, in their eyes, keeps the nation safe from Western incursion.

13. Georgia: Abkhazia and South Ossetia:

Like most of the modern conflicts surrounding Russia, The Russia-Georgia war of 2008 has roots that go back to key events in the past couple centuries. Its roots can be traced to the fall of the Soviet Union. In the late 1980's, Zviad Gamsakhurdia took power in Georgia during a period known as "Soviet liberalization", in part sparked by a rise of nationalism amongst the former Soviet States, with the battle cry for Georgia a familiar resounding "Georgia for the Georgians"¹⁰², which is very closely related to the cry of "Russia for the Russians" that the world is hearing from Russia today. Over the course of Gamsakhurdia's rule, Georgia saw this nationalism harnessed, and the alienation of ethnic minorities began to take place. Minority groups such as Adjars, Armenians, Azeris, Greeks, Russians, Abkhazians, and Ossetians all feared for their cultural rights and right to self-rule, which had been offered in the clauses of Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika.¹⁰³ Because of their continued reliance on the Kremlin and Kremlin law, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were labeled "traitorous pawns of the Kremlin" in Georgia. Protests grew and eventually reached the doorsteps of both the capitals of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Sukhumi and Tbilisi, where they devolved into violence.¹⁰⁴ Because of outbreaks, violence, and clear animosity between the groups, Abkhazia and South Ossetia both sought ways to distance themselves from Georgia, with South Ossetia even holding a referendum to secede from Georgia, which was set to become independent from Russia in 1990-1991.¹⁰⁵ This, of course, was stifled by Georgia. On December 11th, 1990, the

¹⁰² English, Robert. "Georgia: The Ignored History" *The New York Review of Books*. (2008). p.1.

¹⁰³ English, Robert. "Georgia: The Ignored History" *The New York Review of Books*. (2008). pp.1-2.

¹⁰⁴ English, Robert. "Georgia: The Ignored History" *The New York Review of Books*. (2008). p.2.

¹⁰⁵ English, Robert. "Georgia: The Ignored History" *The New York Review of Books*. (2008). p.2.

Georgian parliament cancelled South Ossetia's status as an independent state, and in 1991, Zviad Gamsakhurdia became Georgia's first elected President.¹⁰⁶ Both actions were threatening to both the historically oppressed Abkhazians and South Ossetians. In South Ossetia, war broke out, which only furthered tensions as Georgian troops came in to quell the violence and reinstate control over the region. In the case of Abkhazia, the 1978 Abkhazian constitution was abolished in 1992 by Eduard Shevardnadze, the former President of Georgia, after Zviad Gamsakhurdia was ousted from power through military coup between 1991 and 1992.¹⁰⁷ This abolishment and the reinstatement of a pre-Soviet Abkhazian constitution ensured that the lines of Abkhazian sovereignty were blurred to the point that Georgia could maintain control over the region with relative ease. Having seen their efforts come to no avail, the regions remained under Georgian control until 2008, when Russia stepped in to help these regions disassociate with Georgia as they had wanted to almost two decades earlier.

The Russo-Georgian conflict of 2008 was a short one. The peak of the conflict only lasted a couple of weeks, and at the end of August 2008, the Kremlin could count two more provinces towards a region that would not assimilate with the West. The moves Russia made in the lead up to the final confrontation, in hindsight, however, were remarkably clever. Firstly, it is important to note that in the years between 1992 and 2004, South Ossetia saw peace under Georgian rule. It was over this grace period that Russia formed what Roy Allison calls a "symbiotic relationship" with the region. Allison highlights that during this period, the Kremlin very openly gave out Russian passports to

¹⁰⁶ Coppieters, Bruno. "The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict". *Journal on ethnopolitics and minority issues in Europe. Vol. 1.* (2004). p.4.

¹⁰⁷ Coppieters, Bruno. "The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict". *Journal on ethnopolitics and minority issues in Europe. Vol. 1.* (2004). p.4.

South Ossetian nationals, effectively making them citizens of Russia as well.¹⁰⁸ On top of this, Eduard Kokoity, a Russian citizen and a resident of Moscow, was elected President of South Ossetia in 2001.¹⁰⁹ Between the years of 2005 and 2006, it is noted that a decline in Russian and Georgian relations occurred. This decline occurred during a time where Georgia was on the cusp of joining NATO.¹¹⁰ Although a formal alliance was not on the table, the Bucharest summit of NATO seemed to make such an alliance possible in the future. Point 25 of the Summit Declaration states, “NATO welcomes Ukraine’s and Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations.”¹¹¹ Russia, of course, could not allow the entirety of a nation so close to their borders become part of a Western-centric, more directly a US centric military alliance, and so it had to think of a solution. The Kremlin was well known for its actions towards improving relations with both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in April 2008 this was further evidenced by a Presidential decree that solidified official Russian relations with both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.¹¹² With increasing interest in the region came increasing conflict. July and August of 2008 saw violence erupt across South Ossetia, with Ossetian separatist militias attacking Georgian settlements. In tandem with this offensive, volunteer troops began to arrive the Russian

¹⁰⁸ Allison, Roy. “Russia resurgent? Moscow’s campaign to ‘coerce Georgia to peace’”. *International Affairs*. Vol. 84, No.6. (2008). p. 1147.

¹⁰⁹ Allison, Roy. “Russia resurgent? Moscow’s campaign to ‘coerce Georgia to peace’”. *International Affairs*. Vol. 84, No.6. (2008). p. 1147.

¹¹⁰ March, Luke. “Is Nationalism Rising in Russian Foreign Policy? The Case of Georgia”. *Demokratizatsiya*. Vol. 19, No. 3. (Summer 2011). p. 195.

¹¹¹ Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest. *Bucharest Summit Declaration*. Point 25. (April 3rd, 2008). Web.

¹¹² Allison, Roy. “Russia resurgent? Moscow’s campaign to ‘coerce Georgia to peace’”. *International Affairs*. Vol. 84, No.6. (2008). p. 1147.

border to help the South Ossetian forces fight the Georgian military.¹¹³ It was in August of 2008 that the conflict spilled over into outright war, and within 3 days, Georgian troops pulled out of South Ossetia.¹¹⁴ This left both the separatists forces of South Ossetia and the volunteer Russian fighters with a victory they could savor.

¹¹³Allison, Roy. "Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace'". *International Affairs*. Vol. 84, No.6. (2008). p. 1147.

¹¹⁴ Allison, Roy. "Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace'". *International Affairs*. Vol. 84, No.6. (2008). p. 1147.

14. South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and the Process of Soft Annexation and Hybrid Warfare:

A question that looms over the conflict in South Ossetia: What role did nationalism play, and how was this nationalism harnessed? The answers to these questions are complicated, however looking over the events that took place throughout this conflicts history, they become ever clearer upon closer examination. In fact, much more of the fault may lie with Georgian nationalism. The conflicts began in the 1980's with the alienation of the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia through Zviad Gamsakhurdia's actions which paved the way for a fractured political and social climate that facilitated growing discontent between the groups, allowing for Russia to step in. But this "stepping in" for Russia was not merely brought about by carefully stoked Georgian nationalism, Russia too played an immense role in setting up events as they occurred, through the processes known as hybrid warfare and soft annexation. Hybrid warfare, as it is defined in its most rudimentary state, "...[is] the blending of conventional and irregular approaches across the full spectrum of conflict."¹¹⁵ Throughout the 2008 conflict, Russia made use of hybrid warfare by using regular armed forces, South Ossetian and Abkhazian militias and... "Russian special operations forces (SOF) operating covertly as "local defense" troops."¹¹⁶ This definition, however, only scratches the surface, as it only illuminates the visible symptoms of Russia's plans. With this we come to the concept of soft annexation, which is sometimes used interchangeably with hybrid warfare. Soft annexation however, has a much more nuanced definition that fits Russia's actions in the Georgian conflict of 2008 more plainly. Thomas de Waal defines it as "the idea,

¹¹⁵ Wither, James K. "Making sense of Hybrid Warfare". *Connections QJ*. Vol. 15, No. 2. (2016). p. 75.

¹¹⁶ Wither, James K. "Making sense of Hybrid Warfare". *Connections QJ*. Vol. 15, No. 2. (2016). p. 75.

expressed in various forms over the years...that Russia is pulling political, economic, and military levers- all of which fall short of tradition invasion- to exploit ethnic conflicts in countries that used to be in its orbit...the goal is to leverage these tensions...to gain influence in former Soviet states, while preventing these countries from moving closer to the West.”¹¹⁷ Soft annexation, in the case of the Georgian conflict of 2008, can still be seen as an ongoing process, as the formal annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have not been announced. The process started with the realization that the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been oppressed by the Georgian government and treated as traitors and criminals. With this realization came the need to make Russia’s claim of intervention legitimate. This came through the creation of a fifth column of Russians, which would give Russia the reason they needed to intercede. The “fifth column”, as Shuster and McDonald- Gibson describe, “...combines propaganda, diplomacy, and eventually, special forces troops entering foreign territories in the guise of local rebel forces. Above all, hybrid warfare requires sympathizers inside the country.”¹¹⁸ The sympathizers Russia needed were already among the South Ossetian and Abkhazian populace, but the legitimacy came in part from the aforementioned handing out of passports to Abkhaz and South Ossetian citizens. By making them citizens of Russia, the Kremlin was inclined to act in their defense. Making them Russian citizens also quelled the domestic populace and got them behind this movement by fostering domestic nationalism, using statement such as the following, “Russia will continue to defend the rights of Russians, of our compatriots abroad, using everything we have in our

¹¹⁷ Ratner, Baz. “Putin’s Playbook: The Strategy Behind Russia’s Takeover of Crimea”. *The Atlantic*. March 2nd, 2014. Web.

¹¹⁸ Shuster, Simon, and Charlotte McDonald-Gibson. “Russia’s Fifth Column”. *Time*. February, 2015. p. 47.

arsenal.”¹¹⁹ In fostering the need to protect Russian’s abroad, the domestic populace did not argue against the Kremlin’s decisions. It is a horrifically, yet masterfully, executed plan that can help Russia recreate its sphere of influence and return to its power of old.

¹¹⁹ Shuster, Simon, and Charlotte McDonald-Gibson. “Russia’s Fifth Column”. *Time*. February, 2015. p 48.

15. Ukraine and the Orange Revolution- A Precursor to the Modern Crisis:

As we have seen, Ukraine too has become an example of what Russian hybrid warfare and soft annexation can achieve. Like with the 2008 Georgian conflict, Ukraine's political turmoil in 2013 provided Russia with an opportunity to add to its buffer zone. Specifically, Russia was determined to forestall what it saw as Ukraine's growing ties with the West. As the Kremlin saw it, the shift threatened Russia geopolitically- as well as ideologically. To put this in broader perspective, one must look back to Ukraine between 2004 and 2005, an era known as the Orange Revolution. The Orange Revolution was the result of a presidential election between Viktor Yushchenko and then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. The "revolution" itself was the phenomenon of hundreds of thousands of people in Kiev, and then millions across Ukraine, marching in protests in rebuke of President Yanukovich's supposed victory.¹²⁰ The election itself had seemed to be fraudulent. On November 21st, the election seemed to be going in Yushchenko's favor, with 52% of votes going towards him, in comparison to Yanukovich's 43%.¹²¹ When the election came to a close, however, the results had shifted in Yanukovich's favor. According to the Central Election Commission, 4 hours after Yushchenko's projected lead, the Eastern Donetsk region, known to be a predominantly Russian region of Ukraine and Yanukovich's home region, saw a sharp rise in voter turnout, rising from 78% to 96.2%, and the same was seen in Luhansk, a neighboring region of the country

¹²⁰ Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005). p. 35.

¹²¹ Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005). p. 36.

where voter turnout rose from 80% to 89% by the time the polls were closed.¹²² The polls, by the next morning, showed that Yanukovich had won.

Across Ukraine, the cry of electoral fraud spread like wildfire. It was clear to many that this election had been tilted in Yanukovich's favor. Claims of fraud came from all corners of Ukraine from groups such as the Nonpartisan Committee of Voters of Ukraine, which claimed that, after having sent out monitors to various polling sites, the number of rigged ballots came close to 2.8 million.¹²³ Similarly, The Ukrainian Security Service presented evidence that proved the guilt of various members of Yanukovich's campaign staff tampering with CEC computers to manipulate the vote in Yanukovich's favor.¹²⁴ Corruption within the bounds of this election hadn't stopped simply at this, however. There were numerous television campaigns run against Yushchenko, discrediting him as a candidate. The gravest form of corruption came in the form of Yushchenko's poisoning. Yushchenko was forced to stop his campaign a month short of the election due to a mysterious "illness", "His mysterious sickness forced him from the campaign trail for nearly a month, leaving his body weakened and his face badly scarred. Later tests revealed that he was suffering from dioxin poisoning."¹²⁵

Over the course of the next several months, Yushchenko, with his supporters rallied the country to overturn what was a terrible travesty for the Ukrainian people. Yushchenko and his supporters decided to go ahead with what Adrian Karatnycky sees as a two-

¹²² Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),p. 36.

¹²³ Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),p. 37.

¹²⁴ Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),p. 37.

¹²⁵ Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),p. 37.

pronged strategy, both revolutionary and constitutional.¹²⁶ After Ukraine's election, the country found itself with three presidents, Yushchenko who was “sworn in” on November 22nd, Leonid Kuchma, who was leaving office, and Viktor Yanukovich, who had seemingly won the vote.¹²⁷ After facing much adversity, a national ban from appearing on television, and overall opposition from the government that had been fraudulently elected, Yushchenko’s two pronged strategy, which meant pushing for change in legislature and in government with the aid of other leaders in Eastern Europe, mainly Poland's President Aleksander Kwasniewski, Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus, and the European Union's Foreign Affairs Commissioner Javier Solana, as well as harnessing the grassroots level support provided by the people, began to pay off.¹²⁸ Another election was held in the wake of the Orange Revolution, and Yushchenko was elected president by the margin he had originally held in the first. This sent a shockwave across Eastern Europe, one that Russia, could not ignore.

The Orange Revolution has had its success in deposing Yanukovich of his fraudulent victory linked to its own brand of Ukrainian nationalism. As with other post-communist revolutions, The Orange Revolution is a product of what scholars such as Taras Kuzio call “civic nationalism”. Civic nationalism is the combination of nationalism and civic engagement, as seen in Ukraine, in the face of injustices on the governmental level. As Kuzio describes it, this form of nationalism “...can generate the mobilization capacity for strong civil societies and democracies” and has been a “battery generating

¹²⁶ Karatnycky, Adrian. “Ukraines Orange Revolution”. *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),p. 44.

¹²⁷ Karatnycky, Adrian. “Ukraines Orange Revolution”. *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),p. 45.

¹²⁸ Karatnycky, Adrian. “Ukraines Orange Revolution”. *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005),pp. 45-46.

popular power for rapid mobilization.”¹²⁹ The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic and Orthodox Churches were some of the driving factors behind the civic engagement that occurred during the Orange Revolution. Unlike other forms of Orthodoxy, Ukrainian Orthodoxy differs in a variety of ways, the main difference being that instead of being coopted by the communists in the 1920’s, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was suppressed by the Soviets.¹³⁰ This automatically left the church and its members alienated by the communist regime, and decades down the line this paid off for Viktor Yushchenko as Russia and those influenced by Russia were seen as the “other” or foreign.¹³¹ Given this history, members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are inherently more Western, and during the Orange Revolution saw Yushchenko as the candidate that would bring Ukraine closer to the West and away from Russia's control. Similarly, The Greek Catholic Church suffered from having their parishes taken over by Russian Orthodox Church, and was formally abolished in 1946.¹³² During the elections that would eventually see Yushchenko achieve victory, an average of 50.35% of Orthodox believers voted for him, while a significantly lower portion, 37.83% voted for Yanukovych. In tandem with this, 51% of Ukrainian Orthodox believers were considered to be “revolutionary enthusiast” supporters of the orange revolution.¹³³ Given such numbers, the followers of both the Ukrainian Orthodox and Greek- Catholic churches provided a solid base of support for Yushchenko and his rise to power. It is also important to note

¹²⁹ Kuzio, Taras. “Nationalism, identity and civil society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 43. (2010). p. 286.

¹³⁰Kuzio, Taras. “Nationalism, identity and civil society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 43. (2010). p. 287.

¹³¹ Kuzio, Taras. “Nationalism, identity and civil society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 43. (2010). p. 287.

¹³² Kuzio, Taras. “Nationalism, identity and civil society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 43. (2010). p. 287.

¹³³Kuzio, Taras. “Nationalism, identity and civil society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 43. (2010). p. 287-288.

that the churches of Ukraine also played an immense role in making sure the Orange Revolution was a nonviolent as it was. According to Svetlana Filiatreau, various parishes and communities throughout Ukraine saw peaceful protests mainly due to the engagement of religious entities. For example, the congregation of the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations Church mobilized 25,000 members to engage in peaceful protest and resistance towards the fraudulent election results.¹³⁴ By bringing together a united front of faithful followers using their religious ties as a foundation for their unity in the face of such a pivotal moment in political history, the church's active and nonviolent engagement only underlines the role churches played as a facilitator of civic engagement and civic nationalism. It was an act of liberation facilitated by an ideological institution in the face of adversity from a foe that historically had only offered them oppression.

It is interesting to see the converse roles religion has played in the facilitation of nationalism in both Ukraine and Russia. Ukrainians, used religion as a means to liberation from Russia's influence, where for the latter it is a cornerstone under which the people share their unity under the Kremlin's watchful gaze. The mistake made by the USSR in suppressing the major churches of Ukraine may have deprived Russia of a means of political influence, especially during the Ukraine crisis as we know it today. In the end, much of Yanukovich's failure in becoming president was attributed to Western involvement. Ever the culprit, the West was seen by Russia as having swayed the election through their support of Yushchenko. Theories surrounding Western support include notions that the West helped him win the election through direct funding from the United

¹³⁴ Filiatreau, Svetlana. "Christian faith, Nonviolence, and Ukraine Orange Revolution: A Case Study of the Embassy of God Church". *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe: Vol. 29, No. 3.* (2009). p. 11.

States, which allegedly reached a figure of 65 million US dollars.¹³⁵ Others theorized that because the general consensus among world leaders was that the election in Ukraine should be free of intervention by outsider actors, the money was covertly smuggled into Ukraine via institutions such as Freedom House and the Carnegie Foundation.¹³⁶ If such accusations were to be true, Russia's necessity towards intervention, while not acceptable, becomes understandable. If the West can influence elections that take apart regimes that would benefit the Kremlin, it is in Russia's best interest to do everything it can to stop such occurrences from taking place.

¹³⁵ Wilson, Andrew. "Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West". *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. Vol. 19, No. 1. (March 2006). p. 22

¹³⁶ Wilson, Andrew. "Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs and the Role of the West". *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. Vol. 19, No. 1. (March 2006). p. 23

16. The Ukraine Crisis- Soft Annexation and Hybrid Warfare Fueled by Nationalism:

The results of the Orange Revolution left a sour taste in the mouths of Vladimir Putin and other top Russian leaders. It was no secret that the Kremlin had backed Yanukovich to win the election. During his campaign, Putin had promoted Yanukovich in interviews, as well as allegedly pumped millions of dollars into his election.¹³⁷ Yanukovich's defeat was something that would indeed influence Putin's action in Georgia, and even more so during the 2013-14 Ukraine crisis. A Yushchenko victory was not something Putin and the Kremlin could tolerate. It saw Ukraine move Westward, away from Russia's sphere of influence. This, undoubtedly left Russia feeling very bare with regards to its geopolitical defenses against the West. For the Kremlin, there was hope however. In 2010, Viktor Yanukovich was elected president. Observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said that the election was fair, and called Yanukovich's win an "impressive display" of democracy.¹³⁸ It wasn't long before Yanukovich revealed his plans for a political shift back towards Russia and the Kremlin. Yanukovich promised stronger ties with Russia, indicating a sharp change from the policies Yushchenko had undertaken. For example, Yanukovich indicated that he would renew Russia's lease on stationing their fleet on the Black Sea in Sevastopol, which Yushchenko had promised to not renew after the current lease ran out in 2017.¹³⁹ In many ways, people saw Yanukovich's election as the result of the failure of the Orange

¹³⁷ Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraines Orange Revolution". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2. (March-April 2005). pp. 49-50.

¹³⁸ Harding, Luke. "Yanukovich set to become president as observers say Ukraine election was fair" *The Guardian*. February 8th, 2010. Web.

¹³⁹ Harding, Luke. "Viktor Yanukovich promises Ukraine will embrace Russia" *The Guardian*. March 10th, 2010. Web.

Revolution to rid Ukraine of corrupt politics; but I would contest this interpretation. Yanukovich's election was less a failure of the Orange Revolution and more a failure of Yushchenko to bring about the change much of the populace wanted. While the Orange Revolution played its role as a "revolution" uprooting a fraudulent leader and allowing the one the Ukrainian people chose take office, levels of trust between politicians, the government, and the people had not been adequately mended. For example, trust for the police had not risen from the 14% it had been in 2004, trust for political parties was only at 10%, and they still viewed as the institutions with the least public respect in the country.¹⁴⁰ Yushchenko's approval rating plummeted throughout his term as President, which shows that there was minimal confidence in his leadership. His popularity fell from 45% in 2005 to about 23% in 2008.¹⁴¹ While civic and political rights had improved under Yushchenko, Ukraine still suffered from deteriorating "economic and social circumstances", which clearly meant that jobs and opportunities were not coming as quickly as many had hoped.¹⁴² This draws many parallels to the years Russia endured under Boris Yeltsin- while the country moved forward civically and politically, the economy left much to be desired, and many spent this time in less than favorable economic conditions. It would seem, then, that the limited improvements Yushchenko made during his tenure were the reason Putin's ally was now in power. What would follow in the next four years however, would demonstrate Russia's capabilities as a nation to harness nationalism as the most effective of fuels to perpetrate their breed of

¹⁴⁰ White, Stephen and Ian McAllister. "Rethinking the Orange Revolution" *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. Vol. 25, No.2-3. (November 2010). p. 245.

¹⁴¹ White, Stephen and Ian McAllister. "Rethinking the Orange Revolution" *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. Vol. 25, No.2-3. (November 2010). p. 245.

¹⁴² White, Stephen and Ian McAllister. "Rethinking the Orange Revolution" *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. Vol. 25, No.2-3. (November 2010). p. 246.

hybrid warfare and soft annexation in a way that made their actions in South Ossetia and Georgia pale in comparison.

Beginning in 2008, Ukraine became the center of a tug of war between Russia and the West, especially the European Union. As Dmitri Trenin highlights, Russia showed President Viktor Yanukovich and all of Ukraine, "...in the form of trade barriers, what it would be like choosing the EU over Russia and, later, in the form of an aid package, what it would gain if it made the 'right' choice."¹⁴³ In November of 2013, the situation began to heat up. Though Yanukovich seemed on the brink of signing an association agreement with the European Union, he abruptly suspended the deal. Many Ukrainians saw their hopes of economic integration with the West slip away. This was not the first time Yanukovich had done something of the sort. In 2010, when he first came into office, one of his first moves was to block a similar agreement that would have seen Ukraine join NATO.¹⁴⁴ As Trenin writes, "The November 2013 decision led to mass protests in central Kiev, which almost immediately turned into a permanent standoff on the capitals Independence Square."¹⁴⁵ These protests were the beginning of what would become called the Euromaidan movement. Among the many facets of the Ukraine crisis, the Euromaidan movement has played an intrinsic role in how the situation has developed. In the eyes of many who have watched its rise, it seemed unlikely that the movement even came to life. Five months prior to November of 2013, all of Ukraine opposition parties, including the All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland (Batkivshchyna), the All-Ukrainian Union

¹⁴³ Trenin, Dmitri. "The Ukraine Crisis And The Resumption Of Great Power Rivalry" *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (July 2014). p.5.

¹⁴⁴ Allison, Roy. "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules". *International Affairs Vol. 90, No.6*. (2014). p. 1255.

¹⁴⁵ Trenin, Dmitri. "The Ukraine Crisis And The Resumption Of Great Power Rivalry" *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (July 2014). p. 5.

Freedom (Svoboda) and Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) banded together to try and organize protests against Yanukovich under the banner of “Rise up, Ukraine”, however the protests failed to meet expectations as of the 100,00 protesters expected to show their support, only between 20,000 and 30,000 actually took part.¹⁴⁶ Yanukovich's decision to mothball the Association Agreement with the EU tipped the scales, however. For many, especially in Western Ukraine, the signing of the agreement would have been a sign for change, bringing Ukraine away from Russia's influence. One only must look back to the Orange Revolution to find reason for The Ukrainian people's willingness to stray from Russia's side, as they funded a candidate that, while was now in office, was not the most popular. This then makes it seem as if the Euromaidan movement was not as unlikely as most made it out to be. According to the index of confidence concerning governments, Ukraine ranked last among European countries, with the confidence in the Parliament standing at 1.99 on a scale of a possible 10.¹⁴⁷ In terms of general dissatisfaction with the government on the same scale, the figure sat at 2.25, with the confidence in the judicial system at 2.26, and the confidence in police sat at 2.50, each of which were the lowest scores across Europe.¹⁴⁸ Given these numbers, and Yanukovich's last-minute turn away from the European Union, the Euromaidan movement begins to seem much more understandable. In the context and framing of the current government, they did not see a way they could change the direction Ukraine was heading in, hence the protests began. In tandem with this, the driving population behind

¹⁴⁶ Bohdanova, Tetyana. “Unexpected revolution: the role of social media in Ukraine's Euromaidan uprising” *European View. Vol.13, No.1.* (2014) p. 134.

¹⁴⁷ Shveda, Yuriy and Joung Ho Park. “Ukraine's revolution of dignity: The dynamics of Euromaidan”. *Journal of Eurasian Studies Vol. 7.* (2016) p. 85.

¹⁴⁸ Shveda, Yuriy and Joung Ho Park. “Ukraine's revolution of dignity: The dynamics of Euromaidan”. *Journal of Eurasian Studies Vol. 7.* (2016) p. 85.

the Euromaidan movement, mainly youth, had little reason to back their future in the hands of Yanukovich. Under his tenure as president, youth unemployment rates, and unemployment rates in general had skyrocketed. According to reports, as of 2013, the number of registered unemployed persons stood at 435.4 thousand people, and of this number, 183.3 thousand or 42.1% were young people between the ages of 14 and 35. Among those between the ages of 24 and 29, unemployment had increased, to 9.5% from 9.2% in 2011.¹⁴⁹ The Euromaidan wanted to see Ukraine move toward the West. Yuriy Shveda and Joung Ho Park describe these aspirations as follows: “This attempt is in the same vein as the revolutionary sentiment of 1968 in Western Europe, which was also against conservative society and its legacy of political and unethical values. It was a struggle of generations, parents, and children. In this context, the ideal of the Ukrainian Youth and the impetus for the revolution lie in the hope of changing Ukrainian society and pursuing salutary European values.”¹⁵⁰ In hindsight then, one can say that Yanukovich’s turn away from the European Union meant more than just remaining close to Russia. It meant holding onto values that were conservative. But the next generation of Ukrainians did not share these values and as they saw it Yanukovich’s backtracking on the Association Agreement meant that their hopes for an economically prosperous future had been dashed. Integration with the European Union promised more economic opportunities and new market opportunities for Ukraine. In their eyes, Yanukovich and his government had destroyed the future they yearned for. The protests showed that there was a large portion of the population that rejected their government’s close ties with

¹⁴⁹Shveda, Yuriy and Joung Ho Park. “Ukraine’s revolution of dignity: The dynamics of Euromaidan”. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* Vol. 7. (2016) p. 86.

¹⁵⁰Shveda, Yuriy and Joung Ho Park. “Ukraine’s revolution of dignity: The dynamics of Euromaidan”. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* Vol. 7. (2016) p. 86.

Russia. To them, that's what an agreement with the European Union was; It was a way to have their own identity as a nation, as every nation is entitled to.

The Euromaidan, as it came to be seemed unlikely to succeed. It lacked much of what the Orange Revolution had: strong political or civic organizational backing and had an absence of popularly recognized leaders at its helm.¹⁵¹ But as some scholars note the Euromaidan's rise was helped tremendously by the availability of social media. Social media, according to Tetyana Bohdanova, played an immense role in both covering the media hype around the new agreement Yanukovych was meant to sign with the European Union, and then was the facilitator and medium that helped spread outrage across the populace once it was clear the agreement would fall through.¹⁵² In tandem with this, social media allowed for the movement to be live streamed and broadcast to a wider audience, which garnered support from abroad in its initial stages.¹⁵³ This created a wider advocacy network for the Euromaidan, which allowed outrage and external pressures to be applied on Yanukovych as well. In this way, it can be said that the Euromaidan movement applied external pressures on Yanukovych in the way that Russia had, but getting the attention of people across the globe, and in turn governments within the European Union.

Finally, the Euromaidan was energized by its own form of nationalism. The Euromaidan movement quickly made its slogan "Glory to Ukraine-Glory to Heroes!", which roused what scholars call the legacy of "20th century Ukrainian Nationalism", which indicates that, "national and social liberation in Ukraine can be established only by

¹⁵¹ Bohdanova, Tetyana. "Unexpected revolution: the role of social media in Ukraine's Euromaidan uprising" *European View. Vol.13, No.1.* (2014) p. 134.

¹⁵² Bohdanova, Tetyana. "Unexpected revolution: the role of social media in Ukraine's Euromaidan uprising" *European View. Vol.13, No.1.* (2014) p. 135.

¹⁵³ Bohdanova, Tetyana. "Unexpected revolution: the role of social media in Ukraine's Euromaidan uprising" *European View. Vol.13, No.1.* (2014) pp. 136.

creating “a Ukrainian Independent Unified State.”¹⁵⁴ This was important during the rise of this 20th century nationalism as half of Ukraine, known as “Great Ukraine” was controlled by Russia, and “Western Ukraine” had fallen under the influence of various state actors, including Austria-Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Hungary.¹⁵⁵ It only seems fitting that this would be the approach Euromaidan would take, especially with what was in store for Ukraine in the coming years. Even in the beginning however, such a rallying cry was pertinent. Ukraine could never be complete and unified, or independent for that matter, if they were as closely tied to Russia as they were. Such supervision for frankly Russian benefit would not allow the country to develop or grow, nor did it sit well with the direction that the younger generation wished their country to go in. By revitalizing this breed of nationalism and using it to invigorate those who would stand with them, the Euromaidan gained strength and caught the attention of both the Ukrainian government and Europe.

Though the Ukrainian people ready to fight Yanukovich, the Euromaidan movement started peacefully. As Trenin writes, “The essentially civic protest, which became known as the Maidan, was joined by nationalist groups, hailing from Western Ukraine”. In the eyes of the people, Yanukovich was “just an Easterner” supporting Russian views and ideals¹⁵⁶. Protests continued well until February, where they escalated into violence. President Yanukovich had decided to use force to get rid of the demonstrators. He dispatched police forces to fight the protesters, who had formed, “a capable force built

¹⁵⁴ Kvit, Serhiy. “The Ideology of the Euromaidan”. *Social, Health, and Communication Studies Journal Contemporary Ukraine: A case of Euromaidan*. Vol. 1, No.1. (November 2014). p. 34.

¹⁵⁵ Kvit, Serhiy. “The Ideology of the Euromaidan”. *Social, Health, and Communication Studies Journal Contemporary Ukraine: A case of Euromaidan*. Vol. 1, No.1. (November 2014). p. 34.

¹⁵⁶ Trenin, Dmitri. “The Ukraine Crisis And The Resumption Of Great Power Rivalry” *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (July 2014). p. 5.

around a nationalist organization called the Right Sector.”¹⁵⁷ As violence broke and Kiev burned, Yanukovych abruptly changed tactics and decided to open talks with the West and the political opposition. He held meetings with the Foreign ministers of France, Poland and Germany, during which he co-signed an agreement between the Ukrainian government and leaders of the opposition.¹⁵⁸ Although the treaty was signed, Yanukovych was forced to flee to Russia soon after signing to treaty as hostilities between radicals and his government were still strong.

From Russia’s perspective, Ukraine could not be allowed to become a partner of the West, not least because it shared a long border with Russia and was essential to Russia’s identity in the eyes of Russian nationalists. The Kremlin argued that the results of the 2010 election, having been fair, made Yanukovych’s ousting unconstitutional. President Putin was quoted saying the following: “My assessment is that it is a unconstitutional overthrow and armed seizure of power...Are the current authorities legitimate? Part of parliament yes, but the rest no. There is only one legitimate president — from a legal point of view, it's Mr. Yanukovych...”¹⁵⁹ Putin’s argument stated that as President of Ukraine, Yanukovych had every right to put aside any agreement with the European Union. It was on this basis, in tandem with Yanukovych’s plea to Russia’s leader to “defend the lives and health of Ukrainians” that Russia decided to step in.¹⁶⁰ Shortly after Yanukovych fled the country, Russia sent in its special forces to secure Crimea. Crimea itself being over 50 percent ethnic Russian in population, gave little to no resistance, and

¹⁵⁷ Trenin, Dmitri. “The Ukraine Crisis And The Resumption Of Great Power Rivalry” *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (July 2014). p. 6.

¹⁵⁸Trenin, Dmitri. “The Ukraine Crisis And The Resumption Of Great Power Rivalry” *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (July 2014). p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Kelley, Michael B. “PUTIN: What Happened In Kiev Was An Unconstitutional Overthrow And Yanukovych Is Still President” *Business Insider*. March 4th, 2014. Web.

¹⁶⁰ Kelley, Michael B. “PUTIN: What Happened In Kiev Was An Unconstitutional Overthrow And Yanukovych Is Still President” *Business Insider*. March 4th, 2014. Web.

even rejoiced the annexation. Since then, Crimea has served as a port for the Russian Black sea fleet, the only warm water port in Russia's control. This port, in many ways, is one of the many motivations behind Russia's invasion of Crimea. A warm water port is an asset that can help Russia expand its influence on an international level, as well as its influence over its neighbors.

Russia's annexation of Crimea was, of course, far more complicated than simply sending in special forces to secure the area. The first action that Putin and the Kremlin took issue with, as aforementioned, was the ousting of Yanukovich from power. Putin very clearly saw this removal of Yanukovich from power as an "unconstitutional coup", and justified his infringement on Ukrainian sovereignty by stating Russia's annexation of Crimea was at the behest of the people in Crimea and Sevastopol.¹⁶¹ Indeed, this was reflected in the referendum that was held on March 16th, 2014 in Crimea, which saw the majority Russian population vote to join with Russia. It only took two days for a treaty to be signed that led to both Crimea and Sevastopol to become part of Russia.¹⁶² Russia's actions also had an impact on the Donetsk region of Ukraine, which has become the focal point of a particularly violent separatist movement, led by what is known as the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR). Eastern and Southern Ukraine suddenly found itself in the midst of a Ukrainian power vacuum after Yanukovich was ousted from office, and this led to the coming together of varying Russian nationalist and pan-Slavic groups to form

¹⁶¹ Allison, Roy. "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules". *International Affairs*. Vol. 90, No.6. (2014). p. 1257.

¹⁶² Trenin, Dmitri. "The Ukraine Crisis And The Resumption Of Great Power Rivalry" *Carnegie Moscow Center*. (July 2014). p. 6.

the movement.¹⁶³ The formation of such a movement would become crucial to the steps Russia would take with regards to the conflict still prominent in the region today.

As in the Georgian conflict of 2008, the Ukraine crisis shows the effects of both hybrid warfare and soft annexation. Firstly, the identification of strife in Ukraine was key for Russia's tactics to work. The people of Ukraine were at odds with a leader, Yanukovich, which was inherently pro-Russian. While this was a problem for Russia, it increasingly turned into an opportunity for gain. With social and political tensions high, the power vacuum allowed Russia to take advantage of strife between western Ukraine and the combined eastern and southern Ukraine. The east and south had strong populations of ethnic Russians and Russian foreign nationals that were ready to act as a fifth column, or on the ground supporters and sympathizers. The overwhelming majority of ethnic Russians in Crimea helped legitimize both the referendum that took place, and Russia's invasion of the region, which was explained as a protection of the Russian population there. Nationalist incentives then drove Russian support of the Donetsk separatists, even if they didn't outwardly admit this. In a documentary entitled "Cold War 2.0", Vice's Shane Smith entered the front lines of the conflict between the separatist held Donetsk region and the rest of Ukraine. During the documentary, Smith interviewed several soldiers on the Donetsk side of the struggle. Of course, many are reluctant to speak with Western media, however one did indicate that he indeed came from Russia on his own behest, as did many others, to incidentally fight for the rights of the people in Donetsk and support their disdain for the Ukrainian government.¹⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, one of the soldiers interviewed stated that, "This is not about picking a fight with

¹⁶³ Kuzio, Taras. "Competing Nationalisms, Euromaidan, and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict" *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Vol. 15, No. 1, (2015). p. 163.

¹⁶⁴ Smith, Shane, "Cold War 2.0". *Vice. HBO*. (February 12th, 2018). 18.58-19:11

Ukraine, it's about a greater Slav world.”¹⁶⁵ Admissions by these fighters recall the Georgian crisis, during which “volunteer fighters” came and fought to defend what might be called their “Slavic brothers”, mainly the Russian nationals that held Russian citizenship. This is by no means a small indication that, if indeed these were volunteers from Russia with no military training, the words of Putin’s domestic nationalist rhetoric had hit their mark. The people were mobilizing to defend their country without the government’s intervention, meaning they themselves believed in the movement the Kremlin had started. It is here where the hybrid warfare aspect of Russia’s plan comes into play. In pulling social and political levers within Ukraine, the mobilization of a, “...Russian-speaking counter-revolution against the Euromaidan throughout eastern and southern Ukraine” provided a smokescreen for Russian special forces to enter Ukraine and fuel the revolution at hand, with many of these forces aiding the separatists in taking control of official buildings and governmental structures.¹⁶⁶ This Russian speaking revolution has taken the fight to the Ukrainian government, leaving both the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of the country in a war-torn state. Several ceasefires have been put in place, but these have often been broken, leading to more death and destruction. The effects of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine become very clear: A region that was once not only a Soviet State, but for several centuries was part of the older Russian empire, which had been on the cusp of joining the European Union and NATO, now had large swaths of its territory swallowed up by the former hegemon of the region, and the rest of the country was now in a state of disarray and distress. Russia, using nationalist rhetoric

¹⁶⁵ Smith, Shane, “Cold War 2.0”. *Vice. HBO*. (February 12th, 2018). 18.58- 19:11.

¹⁶⁶ Kuzio, Taras. “Competing Nationalisms, Euromaidan, and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism. Vol. 15, No. 1*, (2015). p. 163.

infused with soft annexation and hybrid warfare, had destabilized the region and added to a buffer zone of territory, foiling the political advance of the West in the process.

17. Security Fears and Human Rights Violations:

Besides affecting Ukraine and Georgia, Russia's efforts to create a buffer zone against the West through nationalism-fueled soft annexation and hybrid warfare has sent shockwaves around the region. Russia's actions in Crimea have created a vast array of human rights issues for the Crimean natives, the Crimean Tatars. As of Putin's annexation of Crimea, Crimean Tatars have been forced to flee their homes. As of May 2014, upwards of 7,000 Crimean Tatars have fled Crimea due to the discrimination they would face if they stayed. According to John Dalhuisen, of Amnesty International, "...Those who have stayed face the unenviable choice of having to give up their Ukrainian citizenship and accept a Russian one or become 'foreigners' in their own homeland."¹⁶⁷ Tatars are being given the choice between giving up their identity as citizens of Ukraine and becoming citizens of Russia, or being outcasts in the land they have inhabited for generations, which has forced many to leave their homes behind. The abuses don't stop there, however. According to Amnesty International, "Tatar activists have been detained and ill-treated by groups of armed men, and in one case (as of March 2014), killed."¹⁶⁸ Here, it is easy to see the freedom of speech and expression that the Tatars had prior to Russia's annexation is being threatened to a great degree. On top of this, "Mosques, schools (madrasas), community centers, firms and private homes belonging to Tatars have been searched and raided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs...The Crimean Tatars only independent television station, ATR, has come under heavy pressure and many activists, journalists and bloggers have been forced to leave

¹⁶⁷ *Amnesty International*. "Crimean Tatars: At Risk of Persecution and Harassment in the New Crimea". May 23rd, 2014. p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Amnesty International*. "Crimean Tatars: At Risk of Persecution and Harassment in the New Crimea". May 23rd, 2014. p. 2.

Crimea.”¹⁶⁹ Not only are their public meeting spaces threatened, Tatar media outlets have become targets of persecution by their Crimean authorities. In March of 2015, the pressure on Crimean Tatar media outlets turned into a shutdown. According to Amnesty International researcher Krasimir Yankov, “In the past, Crimean Tatar broadcasters have been accused of spreading inter-ethnic hatred and extremism, which are very serious charges under Russian law...Now there will be a total control of information by Russia.”¹⁷⁰ The basic premise behind the pressure and shutdown is to stop Crimean Tatar media outlets from spewing what Russian leaders would call, “extremist propaganda” to the public. They saw these outlets as a danger to their grasp on Crimea, and had to stamp them out, in the process infringing on the rights of the Tatars.

On top of infringing on the human rights of the major minority group in Crimea, Russia’s actions have unfortunately put many of the countries in both the Balkans and Baltics on red alert. In Lithuania, for example, the annexation of Crimea and ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine has led to a massive rise in expenditures with regards to the military budget. On top of this, as of April 2015, the Lithuanian government introduced compulsory military service, in response to the growing fear that Russia is indeed becoming a geopolitical threat once again.¹⁷¹ More and more, Lithuanians seem to regard Russia as the biggest threat to their country. For example, a 2002 survey showed that the Lithuanian population was mainly concerned with internal threats to security. The survey

¹⁶⁹ Ryzhkov, Vladimir. “Russia’s treatment of Crimean Tatars echoes mistakes made by Soviets”. *The Guardian*. November 25th, 2014. Web.

¹⁷⁰ Capon, Felicity. “Crimean Tatar Media Forced to Shut Down Under Russian Law”. *Newsweek*. March 31st, 2015. Web.

¹⁷¹ Vileikienė, Eglė and Diana Janušauskienė. “Subjective Security in a Volatile Geopolitical Situation. Does Lithuanian Society Feel Safe?”. *Journal on Baltic Security Vol 2, Issue 2*. (2016). p. 110.

indicated that only 1% of population referred to external threats in their answers.¹⁷² By contrast, in a 2016 survey 21% of Lithuanians indicated geopolitical military threats as being their major security fear.¹⁷³ Poland has also been put on red alert. Somerville et al. summarize these concerns very concisely, "... as well as being the European state with the westernmost border with Russia, at the latter's Kaliningrad exclave, Poland also borders Belarus, a close Russian ally...borders are heavily militarized...The Zapad-2009 and Ladoga-2009 military exercises in August and September 2009... saw over 30,000 Russian and Belarusian military personnel take part in a series of exercises...this also included simulating suppression of a Polish minority uprising in Belarus, and the rehearsing of coastal landings and even a nuclear first strike on Polish territory."¹⁷⁴ Hence Poland's wariness of Russian aggression is well founded, and sharing a border with a staunch Russian ally only furthers concerns. Lithuania and Poland, among other states in the region that feel threatened, are part of NATO. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, states that, "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that... in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith...such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain...security..."¹⁷⁵ Given this fact, NATO would be forced to act in

¹⁷² Vileikienė, Eglė and Diana Janušauskienė. "Subjective Security in a Volatile Geopolitical Situation. Does Lithuanian Society Feel Safe?". *Journal on Baltic Security Vol 2, Issue 2.* (2016). p. 116.

¹⁷³ Vileikienė, Eglė and Diana Janušauskienė. "Subjective Security in a Volatile Geopolitical Situation. Does Lithuanian Society Feel Safe?". *Journal on Baltic Security Vol 2, Issue 2.* (2016). p. 117.

¹⁷⁴ Somerville, Andrew. Ian Kearns and Malcolm Chalmers. "Poland, NATO and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe". *Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI).* (2012). pp. 3-4.

¹⁷⁵ "Affiliated NATO Member States". *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization.* 1949. Accessed May 4th, 2018. Web.

defense of either Poland or Lithuania, if either became the next target for Putin and the Kremlin. This could drag most of the world into a horrific European war. The President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė is quoted in stating that, “If the behavior of especially today’s leadership in Russia will become even more unpredictable, even more aggressive, of course some kind of provocation can be. The threats which we are already seeing via exercises on our border in the Kaliningrad region...That's why we need to be prepared to defend ourselves. In 1940, we made a mistake. We didn't fight back Russia's invasion, and we stayed, because of that, in the Soviet Union for 50 years. We will not repeat this mistake, we will defend ourselves.”¹⁷⁶ In response to this, The Lithuanian government has enforced practiced military drills along the Lithuanian border with Russia.”¹⁷⁷ Given both the complications highlighted by these states NATO’s membership, as well as the words of the Lithuanian president, these nations seem resolved to not lay down, belly first, and let Russia walk over them and bring them back into their sphere of influence, only highlighting even more that this conflict could have devastating worldly consequences, and deserves the attention it has been starved of over the past few years.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, Shane, “Cold War 2.0”. *Vice*. 31:22-32:15

¹⁷⁷ Smith, Shane, “Cold War 2.0”. *Vice*. 28:30-29:51

18. Is Russia Alone to Blame?

It cannot be said, by any margin, that the West bears no blame for the animosity between Russia and itself. Since the Cold War, The United States and NATO have disregarded Russia, seeing it as a small player, a ruined nation on the international stage. Its empire broken, the conditions in Russia in the early 1990's were abysmal, which of course allowed for nationalism to fester, and a leader like Putin to lay claim to power. In the 2000's, the United States, and NATO, further became involved in what could be seen as aggressive moves that may have put Russia on the defensive. In 2007, it was announced that the United States planned to deploy "elements of missile defense in Poland, which amounted to 10 anti- ballistic missiles and a radar installation to track the launch of missiles within the Czech Republic."¹⁷⁸ While these measures didn't necessarily indicate offensive intent against Russia, the mere introduction of any NATO weaponry into the region was sure to escalate any sort of conflict that would erupt between the two. The acceptance of such measures is also an indicator that Eastern Europe felt the need to be under the umbrella of protection of NATO, which means, even before the events in Georgia, there was a semblance of threat that remained visible to nations within the region. It would be too far to say that this action alone was responsible for the annexation of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, or Crimea, but it surely tipped the scales in favor of such actions. The closer the West got to Russia, the more threatened the country became, like a cornered animal. Indeed, Russia lashed out, and we now have current events as they stand today. The West was simply not prepared to deal with the tools Russia had developed to

¹⁷⁸ Sakwa, Richard. "New Cold War' or twenty years' crisis? Russia and international politics" *International Affairs Vol. 84, No.2.* (2008). p. 255.

defend what it considers its sphere of influence, which makes the use of nationalist rhetoric to fuel this international agenda even more surprising, amazing, and terrifying.

19. Conclusion and Prognosis:

The playing field has been set for an interesting future for both Russia, Eastern Europe, and the world. Putin has done, on his part, as much as he can to cause havoc in the region and destabilize the progress of the Western front. In 2008 he helped in the destabilization of Georgia which had its eyes turned by the European Union and prospective membership. By playing a role in Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's informal secession the Kremlin added a geopolitical layer of protection, and set the stage for a potential land grab in the future. History shows that both the Abkhaz and South Ossetian people have felt much closer to Russia than they have ever felt to the Georgian State, and down the line the world cannot be certain that Russia will not incorporate the regions into the Russian Federation. To highlight this, the Ossetian population was set to vote in the Russian elections this year.¹⁷⁹ For a state that has not been fully annexed and made part of the Russian Federation, taking part in what should be a "foreign" election is an interesting step to take. Ossetians including Lyudvig Chibirov, former president of South Ossetia, still view President Putin as a liberator of the Ossetian people, which only highlights his stature amongst Ossetians.¹⁸⁰ In tandem with this, in July of 2017, Russia moved its border several hundred yards into Georgian Territory.¹⁸¹ All the signs are pointing towards a creeping "soft" annexation of the territories, with Russia inching ever closer in small ways with the help of the sentiment they had amassed with the Abkhaz and South Ossetian people.

¹⁷⁹ Mackinnon, Mark. "Back to the USSR: Putin and the new Cold War" *The Globe and Mail*. March 16th, 2018, Web.

¹⁸⁰ Mackinnon, Mark. "Back to the USSR: Putin and the new Cold War" *The Globe and Mail*. March 16th, 2018, Web.

¹⁸¹ Pasha- Robinson, Lucy. "Russia quietly moves border hundreds of yards into occupied Georgia" *The Independent*. July, 2017. Web.

As for Ukraine, after several failed attempts at peace, the first being the Minsk Peace Protocol back in 2015, and more recently the failed 2017 ceasefire agreement, the conflict rages on, and violence is rampant in Luhansk and Donetsk, which make up the general Donbas region. A new ceasefire was reached on April 5th, 2018. It is yet to be seen whether it will hold, or fall apart like the rest. According to Volodymyr Yelchenko, Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States, the death toll has reached 10,000 and hundreds of thousands more have been displaced.¹⁸² Yelchenko spoke at length about the conflict which has now lasted 4 years at Princeton University, where he highlighted that the low-profile nature of the conflict was just what Russia wanted, its strategy of hybrid warfare meant to not attract attention from the international community.¹⁸³ Just days after this occurred, Russia attacked a total of 66 times within 24 hours, leaving 70 dead, according to Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸⁴ The Crimean peninsula, unsurprisingly remains under the control of Russia. This indeed has the feeling of a "long game" for Russia. With attentions turned elsewhere, prior attempts at sanctions failing and the region still destabilized, Russia's worries for Western incursion can be curtailed for the moment, and the recent attack in the Donbas region shows they are hardly using this as a moment to slow down. Indeed, the next few years will be a prime window for them to expand their influence in the region as focus remains on more immediate issues.

Not coincidentally, Putin has been elected to a third term. According to reports, he won the election by a landslide 75% of the vote, but of course as with every election within the Russian Federation for the last two decades, there were cries of ballot box

¹⁸²UNIAN. "Ukrainian ambassador to UN talks Crimean crisis". *UNIAN*. April 5th 2018, Web.

¹⁸³UNIAN. "Ukrainian ambassador to UN talks Crimean crisis". *UNIAN*. April 5th 2018, Web.

¹⁸⁴ UNIAN. "Ukraine MFA: "Russia escalates more in Ukraine as it is pressed more over Syria" *UNIAN*. April 13th 2018, Web.

stuffing and forced voting.¹⁸⁵ This will of course mean 6 more years of Vladimir Putin as president, which puts him in the perfect position to continue his work both at home and abroad. That means 6 more years of expansion, an extension upon which he can build on his work and continue his fight to keep the West at bay. It seems unlikely that Putin will change anything about both his domestic or international politics, and they have worked wonders for him up until now. By nullifying any sort of prominent dissent through the promotion of Russian nationalism for the Russian people as both a fuel and a cohesive force to bring them together against the outside world, projected by the government as an “ever present oppression” of the Russian people and nation, the Kremlin and Putin have been able to justify their political agenda and actions on the international stage. What’s more, using nationalism as a fuel for both the destabilization of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as well as the annexation of Crimea and the continued conflict in Ukraine has led to a symbiotic state where the domestic population not only does not oppose these actions, but actively encourages such behavior for the good of ethnic Russians and Russian nationals abroad. It is this link that makes nationalism such a powerful tool for Russia, and what makes their strategies of hybrid warfare and soft annexation so potent and successful. The participation of “volunteer forces” in both situations shows how deeply nationalism has been woven into the populace, and how easily it can be used to carve out geopolitical territory to help recreate Russia’s old sphere of influence, and oppose the West in a region it’s dominion has stood for centuries, and will stand if its continued efforts go unchecked by the international community. For now, Putin is on course to re-establish some semblance of Russian greatness on the international scene,

¹⁸⁵ Reuters and the Associated Press, “Russia Elections: Putin Wins Re-election With Nearly 75% of Votes” *Reuters*. March 19th, 2018. Web.

and his legacy is being painted by the use nationalism, soft annexation and hybrid warfare in the blood of those unfortunate enough to stand between him and the revival of Russian dominance.

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