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The Internal Debate: How National Identity Created the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

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The Internal Debate: How National Identity Created the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

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Abstract

The longstanding conflict in Ukraine has prompted more attention, discussion, and research into the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. This relationship dates back to medieval times, but its importance to contemporary issues begins in the 19-20th Centuries and come to a head after the fall of the Soviet Union. This analysis seeks to understand how and why Ukrainian national identity gradually became a solidified civic identity after the Maiden Revolution and annexation of Crimea in 2014. This starts with providing a short history between Russia and Ukraine, that looks at certain events and regions in their shared history, and are viewed differently from each nation's perspective. It follows by examining political and social events from independence in 1991, to the events of the Maiden Revolution, Russian incursion into the region, and what soon followed, up to the invasion in 2022. The gradual shift in nationhood amongst people in Ukraine was dominated by the following: the initial push of nationalism by some oligarchs in Ukraine, especially in the 2000s; younger generations feeling a better sense of belonging in Ukraine thus establishing a civic identity in contrast with some older generations, the sense of needing to differentiate and move away from Russia, and the solidification of civic nationalism after the Maiden Revolution, annexation of Crimea by Russia, and subsequent war in the Donbas. For Russia, this time was marked by the belief that Ukraine was inherently Russian due to their shared history and culture. They would seek to keep Ukraine within their sphere and with "its people" by whatever means necessary. This can best be described as Russia believing it needed to keep Ukraine from "westernizing" and doing so under the guise of protecting ethnic and linguistic Russians living in Ukraine. These opposing views on Ukraine's future and the perceived identity of those within Ukraine created a conflict in the region.

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Chapter I: A Short History

The historical relationship between Ukraine and Russia spans several centuries, with periods of separation and inclusion in the same state. Because this history is so vast, it is only necessary for us to examine critical points as they relate to Ukrainian and Russian culture and identity today, as well as the post-Cold War relationship between the two nations. The most important points are as follows: the Kyivan Rus', Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people, the Holodomor, the transfer of Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954, and Ukrainian independence from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. These will be brief but can give some historical background of the people of Ukraine and why there are cultural disputes between them and Russia.

Kyivan Rus'

The first period is that of the Kyivan Rus'. They were a collection of medieval east Slavic kingdoms and principalities that stretched from the northern half of present-day Ukraine, through Belarus, and into much of western Russia.[1] It is here that the so-called "beginning" of the Russian or Ukrainian people began, depending on which group you are speaking with. The Rus' are central to Ukrainian and Russian identity and culture. It is a major point of contention that has three major schools of historical interpretation: the Soviet, the Ukrainian, and the Russian.[2] The Russian theory developed in the nineteenth century and consists of a grand ownership over the legacy of the Kyivan Rus'. This rests on religious, ideological, and historical grounds and states that Muscovy (Moscow) is the only legitimate heir to the Rus' and continues amongst

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[1] Paul Robert Magocsi. *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas.* University of Toronto Press. Toronto, Canada. 1985.

[2] Jaroslaw Pelenski. "The Contest for the Kievan Inheritance in Russian-Ukrainian Relations: Origins and Early Ramifications." *The Contest for the Legacy of Kievan Rus'.* Columbia University Press. New York City, NY.1998.

many Russians scholars into the present day. Soviet theory gave equal representation to the nations of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia in terms of historical inheritance. It became an official state doctrine in 1954 with the signing of the Pereiaslav Treaty in 1954, thereby handing over official control of Crimea from the Russian S.F.S.R. to the Ukrainian S.S.R..[3] The Ukrainian theory of the Rus' is similar to that of Russia with the exception being that Ukraine is the sole inheritors of the legacy of the Kyivan Rus' and not Russia. From these schools of thought we can infer that the Kievan Rus', whether interpreted accurately or not, are important to the identities of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples. It is here can start to understand why Russia, culturally, is connected with Ukraine. In their view Ukraine is "an essential component of its image of a successful Slavic world."[4]

The Crimean Peninsula and the Tatars

Crimea has a long history that started well before the Russian Empire's conquest of the region in the 18th Century.Within Crimea there is an indigenous community known as the Tatars. They attribute their origins to a millennia long culmination of various peoples from the Crimean Peninsula mixing and include groups such as the Goths, Scythians, Sarmatians, Tauris, Khazars, Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Kipchiks, and Mongols.[5] Under the yoke of the Mongol horde in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Tatars unified under the religion of Sunni Islam and a common language.[6] Beginning in the fifteenth century they came under the influence of the

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[3] Ibid

[4] Marvin Kalb. "Kievan Rus': The 'First Russia'." *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*. p. 28. Washington D.C.. Brookings Institute Press. 2015.

[5] Austin Charron. "Whose Is Crimea? Contested Sovereignty and Regional Identity." *Region* Vol. 5, no. 2, *Special Issue: Centrifugal Forces? Russia's Regional Identities and Initiatives*. pp. 225-256. (2016).

[6] Ibid

Ottoman Empire and formed a state known as the Crimean Khanate, which ruled until conquest by the Russian empire in 1783. The decade following annexation by Russia saw over 300,000 of the one million native Tatars voluntarily leave Crimea for the Ottoman Empire.[7] Further expatriation of Tatars by the Russian government took place during the Russo-Turkish War of 1807-1811 and the Crimean War of 1859-1863. By the end of the nineteenth century, their population had been reduced to 34.1% of the total population of the peninsula.[8] By 1917, they made up roughly 25% of the population with Russians making up 50% and Ukrainians as well as other nationalities 25%.[9] This is mainly due to encouragement of migration to Crimea on the part of the Russian government. World War II is when mass deportation of indigenous Tatars accelerated. After pushing back the Nazis from Ukraine and Crimea in 1944, Joseph Stalin accused the population of conspiring to aid the Nazis in defeating the Soviet Union.[10] He then ordered the mass deportation of Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan as punishment. As many as 46% of the deportees perished on the journey and it is considered a genocide known as Sürgün by Tatars.[11] It was not until 1987 under reforms instituted by Mikael Gorbachev that they were allowed to return to Crimea.[12] By the time of their return, the peninsula had changed, being Slavicized by Ukrainians and Russians living there.

The Holodomor

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[7] Peter J. Potichnyj. "The Struggle of the Crimean Tatars." *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes*. Vol. 17, no. 2/3. pp. 302-319. Summer & Fall 1975.
[8] Ibid
[9] See 7
[10] See 5
[11] Aurélie Campana. "Sürgün: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Exile." *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*. June 16, 2008. www.sciencespo.fr
[12] Robin Benerji. "Crimea's Tatars: A Fragile Revival". BBC News. London, UK. October 23, 2012. www.bbc.com.

The first half of the twentieth century was a trying time for Ukrainians. The Communist Revolution in Russia caused Civil War to spread to Ukraine until it became part of the Soviet Union in 1922. With communism came various policies of collectivization and five-year plans under the new leader Joseph Stalin. In 1928 he began issuing a campaign of forced and aggressive industrialization that would require collectivization of the peasantry and a takeover of the grain industry.[13] The solution to achieve this end was removing landowners known as kulaks. By 1931, 45-46% of state acquisition of grain harvest came from the wheat growing regions of Ukraine and the North Caucasus region.[14] Any who questioned the policy were labeled as kulaks by the state and imprisoned thereby making any kind of entrepreneurship illegal. The duty of collectivized farms was to grow grain and sell it to the state at under-market prices to feed industrialization of the Soviet Union.[15] In 1930, this resulted in over 2,000 mass protests in Ukraine against the collectivization policies implemented.[16]

With most of uprisings against the policy occurring in Ukraine, it is suspected Stalin intentionally targeted Ukrainians in the coming years to suppress nationalistic fervor and drive political and ideological assimilation into bolshevism.[17] There was a record harvest in 1930 that set the standard for how Stalin expected harvests to be. He ordered mass acquisition in the Fall of 1931 that would bring famine to Ukraine by the Spring of 1932.[18] Despite shortages and reports

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[13] Norman M. Naimark. *Stalin's Genocide's*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ. 2010.
[14] Nicolas Werth. "Strategies of Violence in Stalinist USSR". *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared*. p. 80. University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln, NE. 2004.
[15] Serhii Plokhy. *The Frontline: Essays on Ukraine's Past and Present*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA. 2021.
[16] Ibid
[17] Amos Fox. "Russo-Ukrainian Patterns of Genocide in the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Strategic Security*. Vol. 14, no. 4. pp. 56–71. University of South Florida Board of Trustees. Tampa, FL. 2021.
[18] See 15

of mass death, quotas for the harvest did not change that year. In June of 1932 Stalin and Soviet government premier Viacheslav Molotov wrote a letter to the Ukrainian Communist Party, "No manner of deviation—regarding either amounts or deadlines set for grain deliveries—can be permitted from the plan established or your region for collecting grain from collective and private farms or for delivering grain to state farms."[19] Stalin viewed crop failures as the fault of Ukrainian leadership.[20] In December of 1932 he and Soviet government premier Vyacheslav Molotov signed a decree, "On the procurement of grain in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and Western Region", to better meet government quotas on grain collection.[21] Mass starvation and death continued into 1933; from 1928 to 1930 the exporting of grain rose from 100,000 metric tons to 4.84 million metric tons, respectively.[22] In 1931 that number rose again to 5.18 million metric tons.[23] People became so desperate that they eventually resorted to cannibalism, eating the dead bodies of relatives and neighbors to survive.[24] The Holodomor (голодомор) is a Ukrainian word that translates to "extermination by hunger."[25] It is estimated that Ukraine suffered 4.5 million deaths due to the Holodomor, mostly in rural agricultural communities.[26] The Holodomor continues to significantly influence Ukrainian national identity and culture.

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[19]L. Kosheleva, L. Rogovaia, V. Lelchuk, V. Naumov, Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, and Robert C. Tucker. *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936.* Edited by Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov, and Oleg V. Khlevniuk. p. 230. Yale University Press. 1995.
[20] Ibid
[21] See 15
[22] Steven Bela Vardy and Agnes Husar Vardy. "Cannibalism in Stalin's Russia and Mao's China". *East European Quarterly*, Vol 42, no 2. Duquesne University. June 2007.
[23] Ibid
[24] See 22
[25] See 13
[26] Omelian Rudnytskyi, Nataliia Levchuk, Oleh Wolowynal, Pavlo Shevchuk, and Alla Kovbasiuk. "Demography of a man-made human catastrophe: The case of massive famine in Ukraine 1932–1933." *Canadian Studies in Population*, Vol 42, no. 1–2. pp. 53–80. 2015.

The Transfer of Crimea in 1954

The transfer of the Crimean Peninsula from Russia to Ukraine is among one of the most consequential geopolitical decisions in the history of the Soviet Union. On February 19, 1954 a decree was issued by the presidium of the of the Soviet Union, finalizing the transfer after approval from the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[27] There is no singular cause attributed to the move and declassified Soviet documents give two causes for the transfer: commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyslav and the "reunification of Ukraine with Russia" as well as the geographic proximity and cultural and economic relationship between Crimea and Ukraine.[28] Both of these justifications have their flaws in reasoning. First, the Treaty of Pereyslav was signed in 1654, 129 years before the Russian annexation of Crimea. Second, cultural ties prove void given that over three-quarters of the peninsula's population was ethnically Russian after forcibly removing the indigenous Tatar population in 1944.[29] There is reasonable suspicion to point to Nikita Khrushchev, former state head of the Ukrainian SSR and later general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was influential in the decision. Statements from the February 19th meeting associating the close relationship of Ukrainians and Russians along with keeping Ukraine under the Communist Party and Soviet government suggest that Khrushchev saw Crimea as a way of increasing state control over the region.[30] An ethnically majority Russian Crimea would be influential in a republic that already

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[27] "Meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." February 19, 1954. Wilson Center. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive. Published in *Istoricheskii arkhiv* issue 1, vol. 1. Translated by Gary Goldberg. 1992. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119638
[28] Ibid
[29] Mark Kramer. "Why did Russia Give Away Crimea Sixty Years Ago?". Wilson Center. Washington D.C.. 2014. www.wilsoncenter.org.
[30] Ibid

had a significant Russian minority population. The controversy of the transfer would not come to fruition until the dissolution of the USSR in 1991.

Ukrainian Independence and the Dissolution of the USSR

In 1991, after 69 years as a state and 74 years after the Communist Revolution, the Soviet Union dissolved into fifteen independent states. The fall of the Soviet Union should be considered the greatest political event of the twentieth century. With it came the end the Cold War and what could have been a restart in relations between the West and the inheritors of the Soviet legacy, Russia. Ukraine gained its independence out of the collapse. The 1990s are the beginning of the post-Cold War dilemma between Ukraine and Russia. Its causes are not only strategic and political but also cultural in nature.

Along with the situation of independence in Ukraine, it is important to note what was happening in the Russian SFSR and Soviet government in Moscow shortly before its collapse. Boris Yeltsin had become the first elected president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR). At the time, the Russian state government was a shell compared to the power of the Soviet Union, but over the course of Yeltsin's presidency he began picking away at Soviet institutions to make them inherently Russian.[31] This consequently gave other Soviet governments the view that central Soviet organization was starting to be controlled by the Russian SFSR rather than the Soviet Union. Ukraine responded by cementing control over Soviet forces and

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[31] Paul D'Anieri. *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War.* Cambridge University Press. New York, NY. 2019.

material in their territory to the ire of Russia.[32] Ukraine held a referendum shortly after that received resounding support for independence.

Following the referendum, Yeltsin met with Belarusian president Stanislav Shushkevich and Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk in Belarus to formally dissolve the 1922 Union Treaty between the three states effectively renouncing the legal basis for the Soviet Union.[33] In its place would be independent states, but also needed security guarantees that Yeltsin and Kravchuk disagreed on. In the wake of dissolving the treaty and with it the Soviet Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was formed and made up of former Soviet republics from Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan), and the Caucasus region (Armenia and Azerbaijan). Yeltsin's hope for the CIS was to create a sort-of confederation centered around Russia to maintain a level of control over the former-Soviet bloc, especially Ukraine.[34] Kravchuk was opposed to many of the measures proposed by Yeltsin as he feared it would interfere with Ukrainian sovereignty. One major provision opposed by him was the creation of a single CIS military. Ukraine refused to ratify the CIS charter due to these concerns and was joined by Belarus, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. Ultimately, Ukraine and Turkmenistan were the only nations to never ratify the CIS charter.

Another security dilemma was created upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. Newly independent nations inherited Soviet military equipment, bases, and nuclear missiles. Ukraine became the center of a political struggle in the 90s due to their new inheritance of nuclear

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[32] Raymond L. Garthoff. *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War.* Brookings Institute. Washington D.C.. 1994.
[33] See 31
[34] See 32

warheads from the Soviet regime.[35] This creates two problems for Ukraine in relation to Russia: the Russian Federation was refusing to recognize Ukrainian sovereignty and independence and they were being pressured to give up their nuclear arsenal to Russia with backing from the United States.[36] Ukraine not only had to decided whether or not they were going to hold and maintain the world's third largest supply of nuclear weapons overnight, but had to fight for international recognition. Ukraine's 1990 declaration of sovereignty stated that they had the intention to denuclearize which the United States insisted was a binding document as they pressured them to give up their newly inherited nuclear arsenal to Russia.[37] The George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations took the stance that Russia being the only state in that region with nuclear capabilities was a better foreign policy and international security outcome than having two nuclear states.[38] An agreement was ultimately reached in Budapest, Hungary known as the Budapest Moratorium on Security Assurances. The agreement was signed between Ukraine, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom and stipulated the following: official recognition of Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, and its current drawn borders; Ukraine would be compensated for giving up their nuclear weapons (this was taken care of by the United States later on); security assurance by Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom.[39] Ukraine official became a non-nuclear state in 1996 when they turned over the last of their nuclear warheads to Russia.

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[35] Douglas Jehl. "Ukraine: Nuclear Power with Untested Loyalties." *The New York Times*. New York City, NY. December 2, 1993. www.nytimes.com.
[36] See 31
[37] Wall Street Journal Editorial Board. "How Ukraine Was Betrayed in Budapest." *The Wall Street Journal*. Washington D.C.. February 23, 2022.
[38] See 31
[39] The Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, 1994. Budapest, Hungary. December 5, 1994.

Concluding Remarks

      The history between Russia and Ukraine is arduous and complex in many different ways. They both claim to be the legitimate heirs to a medieval legacy that originates out of Kyiv, Ukraine; Russia spent a century conquering the modern territorial boundaries of Ukraine and considers its people and territory crucial to that of Russian legitimacy; and Ukraine experienced a man-made famine and arguable genocide at the hands of a Stalinist regime out of Moscow. Since the end of the Cold War their relationship has only become more fraught with disagreement over Ukraine's place in European and Russian history and their future. With some historical background on their relationship and context on the origins of many historical disagreements, we can begin to deeply examine how Ukrainian and Russian culture and identity have in some ways influenced the current security dilemma between the two states. Especially in the realm of Ukrainian desire for westernization.

Chapter II: Westernization of Ukraine

Ukraine in the 21st Century has chosen to pursue a future of integration with the rest of Europe. A key part of this integration includes attaining membership in NATO and the European Union (EU). However, in doing so Ukraine has begun distancing itself from Russia, a major power it has a shared history with dating back centuries. Because of this, tensions between the two states became antagonistic beginning in the 2010s with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent separatist movement and war in the Donbas region. These issues culminated in February 2022 with Russia launching a large-scale invasion of Ukraine that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and military personal, and led to Europe's largest refugee crisis since 2015.[1] Knowing the historical connection between the two countries, it is critical to comprehend several key matters: Russia's views on Ukraine and its people, the perceived threat of Ukrainian westernization, Ukrainian identity in relation to Russia, and how Vladimir Putin factors into these issues. The security dilemma itself is complex and thus requires a more diverse understanding of their relationship and the issues that have arisen post-Cold War.

Russia's View of Ukraine and Its People

As noted in the previous chapter, Ukraine and Russia have a long and tumultuous history that dates back to the 9th century. Much of their history is intertwined and thus so is their identity. Today, Ukraine still holds a special place in Russian culture and politics. The memory of a "united" Russo-Ukrainian state is still implanted in the minds of most Russians, but especially those who remember what life was like under the Soviet Union. After

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[1] Ancha Vohra. "Europe is ready for Ukraine's Refugees." *Foreign Policy.* Washington D.C.. March 11, 2022. foreignpolicy.com.

the collapse of the Soviet government, it became clear that "Russians who could accept the idea that Lithuanians and Kazakhs want to maintain separate national identities, became infuriated when Ukrainians…" sought the same future for themselves.[2] This is part of the grand idea of nationalism within Russia and develops into the idea of a "Greater Russia."

The Russian Identity

The 1990s were a turbulent time in Russia. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union came about debates over the future of Russia, its neighbors, and Russian identity. The state was weakened and fears of further breakup of the nation were prevalent amongst the political elite.[3] Nationalism became more of a focal point in Russian politics to discern the question over "Russianness", especially as it pertains to foreign policy in the former Soviet states. The desire for a new "Russian idea" was the focal point of this debate in the mid-1990s and would later appear in Putin's "Millennium Message" speech on New Year's Eve 1999 as he assumed the office of the presidency.[4]

In 1996 Igor Chubais, a famous Russian philosopher and brother of liberal economic reformer Alexander Chubais, released a book titled *Ot russkoy idea k ideye novoy Rossii* (From the Russian Idea to the Idea of a New Russia).[5] Chubais's book sparked a debate over Russian identity, culture, history, and the role of the state. Previous debate around this new "Russian idea" was circulated by Andrei Kokoshin, Russian first deputy defense minister from 1992-1997, Gennady Zyuganov, former presidential candidate and chair of the Communist Party of Russia,

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[2] Robert P. Hager. Review of *History and Culture in Russia and Ukraine: How to Complicate a Crisis of European Security* by Marvin Kalb, Rajan Menon, and Eugene Rumer. *Democracy and Security*. Vol. 12, no. 3. pp. 211–18. 2016.
[3] Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Brookings Institution Press. Washington D.C.. 2013.
[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid

and Georgy Satarov, former presidential aide to Boris Yeltsin and prominent political thinker. Satarov in particular had been instructed to chair a group of scholars to formulate a new "Russian idea" in time for the new millennium.[6] Both the report written by Satarov and Chubais's book were released the first year that Vladimir Putin began working in the Kremlin. The debate sparked by Chubais can be interpreted as a debate over Russian nationalism and who is in fact Russian.

In the Russian language there are the terms *rossiyskiy*, to be associated with civic Russianness, and *russkiy*, to be associated with ethnic Russianness. Leaders such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party from 1992 until his death in 2022, advocated for legislation making laws more favorable for ethnic Russians.[7] While Zhironovsky's version of strident ethno-nationalism is not the majority opinion in Moscow, it has a sizable following and influences thinking about Russian identity in regards to the former-Soviet Union and especially the eastern slavic countries of Belarus and Ukraine. Taras Kuzio, an expert on Ukrainian political; economic; and security affairs, identifies five areas of debate around Russian national identity: a union identity where Russians establish a supranational state (imperialistic nationalism), the inclusion of Ukraine and Belarus as part of Russia (east slavic nationalism), a Russian nation of Russian speakers (lingual nationalism), racial Russianness (ethno-nationalism), and civic Russianness (civic nationalism).[8] Upon examining these various identities, we can see how they play into foreign policy, Russian domestic politics, and the cultural question of "who is Russian."

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[6] Ibid
[7] Ibid
[8] Taras Kuzio. "Russian National Identity and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis." Federal Academy for Security Policy. Berlin, Germany. 2016.

First, the union identity is an example of contemporary imperialistic thought. This idea is heavily promoted by Russian ideologue Aleksander Dugin in the form of Eurasianism, an ideology that seeks to distance Russia from Western Europe, politically and culturally, and instead argues for Russia being a standalone civilization.[9] Dugin argues that the status of becoming a "regional power" in the international political order is "tantamount to suicide for the Russian nation."[10] Russia being a standalone civilization from Europe and Asia is meant to be an expansive empire. This "new Russian empire" will be an ardent opponent of Atlanticism, a term he coins to describe American political and cultural influence, and will span ethnic and religious groups as an empire of nations.[11] Plainly, Dugin is describing a multi-national empire centered around the Russian people. It's both reminiscent of the old Soviet and czarist statism and territorial holdings while advocating for a future system that does not necessarily fully mimic either system, acknowledging their faults.

The second ideal known as East Slavicism is very important in relation to recent events surrounding Ukraine and Russia. The historical and cultural relationship between the two states is highlighted here, but with a catch. Russians and Ukrainians are *odin narod* (one people) and this point has been especially highlighted by Putin in the last eight years. Culturally and politically, Ukraine is the most important region to Russian identity outside of Russia itself. The desire of keeping Ukraine within the Russian sphere of influence become a foreign policy priority of Vladimir Putin following the Orange Revolution of 2004.

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[9] Sarah Dixon Klump. "Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire". The Kennan Institute of the Wilson Center. Washington D.C.. no date. www.wilsoncenter.org.
[10] Aleksander Dugin. *Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia.* English translation. Independently Published. p. 113. Russia. 1997.
[11] Dugin. *Foudations of Geopolitics*. 1997.

The third idea is Russia as a nation of Russian speakers. This transcends national borders to expand Russia far into the former Soviet Union. Due to its historical ties to these countries, several states have ethnic Russian and Russian speaking minority populations. These include: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Russia has engaged in military conflict in the nations of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine since the fall of the Soviet Union. Russian military units are stationed in the Russian speaking and breakaway region of Moldova, known as Transnistria, the breakaway regions, known as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in Georgia, and in the annexed territory of Crimea and breakaway regions of the People's Republics of Luhansk and Donetsk in Ukraine. Ukraine is currently at war with Russia after Russian troops invaded eastern, northern, and southern Ukraine in February of 2022.[12] The notion of a Russian nation of Russian speakers has been invoked by Vladimir Putin several times in the past and most importantly in relation to Ukrainians. Recently, Putin has spoken about Russians in Ukraine being killed in Donbas or discriminated against by the Ukrainian government and used this as partial justification for war along with encroaching NATO membership pushed by the West.[13] This idea has similar characteristics to Russian imperialism in that it is a supranational ideology and can be used as justification for "reuniting" Russia with "its people" or intervening militarily in these regions.

The fourth area is ethno-nationalism and it has been a contentious issue in Russia since the 1990s. Ethno-nationalists advocate for a Russian ethno-state in which ethnic Russians have a special status in society. As mentioned previously, Vladimir Zhironovsky was the primary

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[12] Silvia Aliosi and Frank Jack Daniel. "Timeline: The Events Leadings Up to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine." Reuters. Washington, D.C.. March 1, 2022. www.reuters.com.
[13] Max Fisher. "Word by Word and Between the Lines: A Close Look at Putin's Speech." The New York Times. New York. NY. February 23, 2022. www.nytimes.com.

political supporter of ethno-nationalism in Russia from the 1990s until his death in 2022.[14] It should be noted that since Vladimir Putin has had political influence in Moscow, he has been opponent of ethno-nationalism within Russia, with the exception to this issue being Ukraine.[15] This again demonstrates the cultural significance surrounding Ukraine to Russia and how this factors into Russian foreign policy decisions made towards them.

Russian nationalism plays an intricate role in Russian politics and belief. It is a divergent ideology and cannot be considered singular nor black and white. It rests on the belief that Russia is an extraordinary nation and should therefore have a special place within the international order. Ukraine is looked upon as part of Russia through historical and cultural connections. It is for this reason that Russia refused to recognize Ukrainian sovereignty in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[16] Ukraine had for centuries been a part of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union as a state within it. Unfortunately for the Russians, their leverage over Ukraine waned during this period due to several reasons. One of the main reasons behind this was the fact that Ukraine had inherited a stockpile of Soviet nuclear weapons with their newly found independence.[17] It took years of negotiations and pressure from both Russia and the United States for Ukraine to end its internal debate on keeping the stockpile and agree to give it up to the Russians. The caveat to this, however, was an agreement on the part of Russia to respect Ukrainian sovereignty and to act as a protector of it in the event of a foreign threat.[18] In addition, the United States also agreed to recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine. Initially,

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[14] See 3
[15] Naray Aridici. "How Vladimir Putin Has Changed the Meaning of 'Russian'". The Conversation. April 9, 2014. www.theconversation.com.
[16] Paul D'Anieri. *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War.* Cambridge University Press. New York, NY. 2019.
[17] Ibid
[18] Ibid

President George H.W. Bush refused to acknowledge Ukrainian sovereignty without an unconditional relinquishment of nuclear weapons. This also included American refusal to send needed foreign aid to them until conditions were met. For Russia, while formally they had agreed to recognize Ukraine, there was still debate within political and social circles over this issue. Some rejected the territorial boundaries set in 1991 that the West and Ukraine both accepted; others accepted the boundaries while still insisting on Russia having a "special role" within the region.[19] The issues continue to be a point of contention between Ukraine and Russia. NATO border growth in the late 1990s and 2000s exacerbated these issues. Russia under Yeltsin and Putin had come to and understanding that NATO boundaries would not expand eastward into former Warsaw Pact and Soviet territory, claiming an agreement was made by Russia and the NATO.[20] NATO claims such an agreement never existed between Russia and them, but rather NATO and the Soviet Union. It was an agreement to not expand eastward after the reunification of Germany and was signed in 1990 by Gorbachev. NATO did not recognize the agreement after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Putin has since seen this as a betrayal on the part of the West and held this grudge since 2004 when NATO continued expansion into the Baltic States. This relationship would further worsen after the Bucharest Summit in 2008 in which Georgia and Ukraine were both formally invited to join the defense pact to the ire of Putin.

The Russian Orthodox Church and Ukraine

The cultural significance of Ukraine to Russia is deeply influenced by Orthodox Christianity's spread to Eastern Europe and modern-day Russia. Volodymyr the Great of the Kyivan Rus' decided to convert and be baptized as a Christian to enter into marriage with a

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[19] Ibid

[20] Gavin E.L. Hall. "Ukraine: The History Behind Russia's Claim That NATO Promised Not to Expand to the East." The Conversation. February 14, 2022. www.theconversation.com.

Byzantine princess in the late tenth century.[21] Subsequently, Orthodox Christianity spread to the rest of the Rus' territory and would become an influential aspect of both Ukrainian and Russian history. Following the collapse of Constantinople and with it the Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, Moscow began seeing itself as the successor to the legacy of the Byzantines and Orthodox Christianity. Rome fell in the sixth century to the Vandals which then asserted that Constantinople was the "second Rome". The fall of Constantinople lent more credence, later on, to the assertion that the city of Moscow, the most influential and powerful center of Orthodoxy following the demise of Constantinople, was in fact the "third Rome" and would never fall. In the sixteenth century, Russian monk Filofei of Pskov began writing to the Muscovite Grand Prince asking him to do more to quell astrological heretics as the ruler of the "Third Rome".[22] According to this belief, the ruler was obligated to help serve the Orthodox Church. This belief was circulated amongst churchmen and clerics for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but never attained popular status as an expansionist ideology. It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that this idea was reintroduced into elite circles and around the Russian Orthodox world after Filofei's ideas were published for the first time.[23] The tsarist era shaped the relationship between church and state in Russia and allowed for the state to take advantage of the church, seize its wealth and land, and use that to enrich and increase the power of the state.[24] Subsequently, the church became an instrument of the state, and the state

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[21] Serbia Plokhy. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine.* Hachette Book Group. New York, NY. 2015.

[22] Marshall Poe. "Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a 'Pivotal Moment.'" *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*. Bd. 49, no. 3. Franz Steiner Verlag. pp. 412–429. 2001.

[23] Ibid

[24] Neelesh Kumar Tripathi. "Orthodox Church and Russian National Identity." *International Research Journal of Management, Sociology & Humanity.* Vol. 7, Issue 6. New Delhi, India. pp. 82-88. 2016.

became an image of the church. The state would go so far as to interfere in later church councils

and remove the title of patriarch from the Moscow patriarch until it was restored after the Russian

Revolution in 1917.[25] Into the twentieth century, this idea was used by the Soviet Union to justify

expansion as part of "revolutionary messianism" that arose during the communist revolution of

1917.[26] It is part of a grander theme within Russian Orthodoxy in which nationalism and the

Russian Orthodox Church often ideologically intertwine.

The Russian Orthodox Church lost its power and prestige under Soviet communism,

forcing those who chose to continue membership in the church into hiding, or to keep all public

mention of their religious affiliation secret. In the 1990s, there arose new opportunity for Russian

Orthodoxy to once again take hold as the premier religious institution in Russia with special

privileges given its historical and cultural history in the country and within the government. This

spurred discussion in Kremlin circles and the Duma as to how religion as an institution should be

viewed, and what freedoms religious institutions should enjoy within Russia. In 1990, a liberal

religious freedom law passed that allowed for extensive religious freedom and with it came the

influx of traditional religious groups in Russia such as Russian Orthodoxy and Islam but also

more historically, non-traditional religions such as Roman Catholicism, Scientology, and

Evangelical Christians.[27] This had the potential to challenge the place of Russian Orthodoxy in a

future Russia that allowed for the return of religious influence in the country. However, the

Orthodox Church prevailed in reestablishing their place in Russian society as an important

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[25] Ibid

[26] Vatro Murvar. "Messianism in Russia: Religious and Revolutionary." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion Vol. 10, no. 4. Published by Wiley on Behalf of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. Oxford, UK. pp. 277–338. Winter 1971.

[27] Derek H. Davis. "Editorial: The Russian Orthodox Church and the Future of Russia." Journal of Church and State Vol. 44, no. 4. Oxford University Press. Oxford, UK. pp. 657–70. Autumn 2002.

cultural marker. In 1997, a more restrictive religious freedom lack was passed by the Duma that acknowledged the unique cultural, historical, and statist contributions the church had on Russian society dating back to the introduction Orthodox Christianity by the Kyivan Russ' in the 10th Century to Muscovy and much of modern-day Russia.[28] To this day Russian Orthodoxy has a role to play in how Russian view their own nation and those around them. It especially works to promote a pro-Russian stance towards Ukrainian sovereignty and culture.

The Russian Orthodox Church is part of the grander Eastern Orthodox Christian faith which includes other national churches within its scope such as the Georgian Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Church, and Serbian Orthodox Church. Within orthodoxy there are high bishops known as patriarchs who are the most influential and powerful in the religion. Of these, the two most influential are the Patriarch of Moscow and the Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul). The latter is considered first among equals but both patriarchs rival each other in terms of influence with other national churches, as well as in the scheme of international politics. Ukraine in particular has been at the heart of conflict between the two leaders. It demonstrates how, within the Russian Orthodox Church, politics influences decisions made by church leadership and affects relations with other orthodox churches.

The leader of the Russian Orthodox Church since 2009 has been Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. Kirill is an international figure mired in controversy not only for many of his orthodox views on Russia and its role in the world, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church, but also for his relationship with Vladimir Putin and rumors stating that he is a former spy with the KGB much like Putin himself. Since 2014, this he has especially been subject to criticism by western political and religious leaders for his stance in justifying as well as promoting Russian military

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[28] Ibid

actions in Ukraine.[29] This has resulted in the church alienating itself from other autocephalous

Orthodox Churches such as the Cyprian and Greek Orthodox Churches, and created conflict

between Constantinople and Moscow over the question of Ukrainian sovereignty and church

authority. While we are not analyzing religious doctrine and opinions, examining these disputes

regarding the Ukrainian Church shows how, not only politics, but cultural and historical

narratives have become a central part of the Russian Orthodox Church. Additionally, it shows

how Kirill aides Putin in his foreign policy narratives surrounding Ukraine and much of the

former Soviet Union.[30] For the 2022 invasion, Putin has spoken of the conflict using nationalistic,

religious, and conservative language to justify the war and in using this language he has the full

support of Kirill to accomplish many of the same ambitions and ideals he holds for Russia.[31]

Kirill, additionally, has further argued that the war has religious justification because it is a war

on western culture infiltrating the Russian sphere.

Ukrainian Identity and Westernization

The Ukrainian view on its identity, history, culture, and place within Europe differs from

that of the Russian world view. It should be noted that while there is a large ethnic and

linguistically Russian population within Ukraine, this is the general overall view that Ukrainians

have in comparison to the Russian worldview. Much of the shared history between Ukraine and

Russia is disputed between the two nations as both claim legitimacy over it. The greatest

example of this being the legacy of the Kyivan Rus. Most of the contention between the two

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[29] Canon Dr. Paul Oestreicher. "Patriarch Kirill Has Betrayed the Christian Faith." The Guardian. London, United Kingdom. April 8, 2022. www.theguardian.com.
[30] Gregory L. Freeze. "Russian Orthodoxy and Politics in the Putin Era." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Task Force White Paper. Washington, D.C.. February 9, 2017. www.carnegieendowment.org.
[31] Janine di Giovanni. "The Real Reason the Russian Orthodox Church's Leader Supports Putin's War." Foreign Policy. April 26, 2022. www.foreignpolicy.com.

nations post-Soviet Union has revolved around Ukrainian sovereignty. Ukrainians, especially

since the Orange Revolution in 2004, have advocated for greater independence from Russia

politically and economically. This coupled with regional security issues for Russia has helped to

create a security dilemma that ultimately culminated in the 2014 annexation of Crimea and

conflict in the Donbas region, and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Ukrainian nationhood was not fully realized until independence in 1990. The idea of a

Ukrainian nation is something that steadily grew in the minds of people living within Ukraine

regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background over the course of a quarter century. This is

where it differed from the newly independent Baltic states in the Soviet Union (Estonia,

Lithuania, and Latvia) who chose to and continue to exclude many ethnic and lingual Russians

from citizenship.[32] At the time of independence, ethnic Russians (not including lingual Russians)

accounted for 22% of Ukrainians population, however, Ukraine as a whole still maintained a

developed national consciousness despite Soviet tactics to integrate the Slavic peoples with in-

migration of Russians into non-ethnic Russian territories in the Soviet Union.[33] Over the course

of the several years, a trend that continued well into the new millennium, this national

consciousness led more people, regardless of their native language or ethnicity, to identify more

as Ukrainian than Russian. Between 1989, the time of the last Soviet census in Ukraine, and

2001, Ukraine's last recorded census date, the share of people identifying as Russian nationals

[32]Rogers W. Brubaker. "Citizenship Struggles in Soviet Successor States." *The International Migration Review* Vol. 26, no. 2. Sage Publications on behalf of the Center for Migration Studies of New York. pp. 269–91. Summer 1992.
[33] Ibid

decreased by roughly 3 million.[34] This increase resulted in a 5.4% increase nationally in the

population identifying as Ukrainian from 1989-2001 with the total percentage showing 72.7%

Ukrainian and 22.1% Russian in 1989 and 78.1% Ukrainian and 17.3% Russian in 2001.[35]

Though, it should be noted the 2001 census does not take into account actual ethnic background.

This is purely from changes in how people are identifying. However, while this is a national

trend, it should be noted that central and eastern Ukraine is where the bulk of ethnic and lingual

Russians live to this day, and where much of the conflict in Ukraine resides surrounding

conflicting national identity. The 2001 census data backs this up when examining Ukraine at the

city and oblast level due to the high percentage of people identifying as Russian in these areas. In

particular, the areas the stand out are: Luhansk Oblast (39%), Donetsk Oblast (38.2%), the

Autonomous Republic of Crimea (58.3%), Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (17.6%), Zaporizhzhzia Oblast

(24.7%), Mykolaiv Oblast (14.1%), Odessa Oblast (20.7%), Kherson Oblast (14.1%), Kharkiv

Oblast (25.6%), and the city of Sevastopol (71.6%).[36] These regions also happen to be either fully

or partially occupied by the Russian army as of the Summer of 2022, or are currently being

fought over between the Russians and Ukrainians.[37] Additionally, the census shows native

language demographics of Ukraine around this time. Of the total demographic, 29.6% of the

population in 2001 identified their native language as Russian with the highest percentages being

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[34] Ihor Stebelsky. "Ethnic Self-Identification in Ukraine, 1989-2001: Why More Ukrainians and Fewer Russians?" *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* Vol. 51, no. 1. Taylor & Francis Publishing. pp. 77–100. March 2009.
[35] Ibid
[36] All-Ukrainian population census-2001 data. State Statistics Committee of Ukraine. web.archive.org/web/20111217151026/http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general
[37] Kateryna Stepanenko, Grace Mappes, Layne Philipson, George Barros, and Frederick W. Kagan. "Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment." Institute for the Study of War and Critical Threats Project 2022. Institute for the Study of War. Washington, D.C.. July 15, 2022. www.understandingwar.org.

amongst those identifying as Russian (95.9%), Belarusian (62.5%), Jewish (83%), Greeks (88.5%), Germans (64.7%), and Georgians (54.4%).[38] The only non-Ukrainian group with a majority to speak Ukrainian were those identifying as Polish (71%).[39] In total, 67.5% identified Ukrainian as their native tongue. When examining the territories listed above at a linguistic level, we find higher percentages of the populace speaking Russian than necessarily identifying themselves as Russian. The data for Russian speakers is as follows: Donetsk Oblast 74.9%; Luhansk Oblast 68.8%; Autonomous Republic of Crimea 77%, Kharkiv Oblast 44.3%; Kherson Oblast 24.9%; Dnipropetrovsk Oblast 32%; Zaporizhizhzia Oblast 48.2%; Odessa Oblast 41.9%; and Mykolaiv Oblast 29.3%.[40] In addition, Russian speaking is much more concentrated in urban cities within these regions as well as bigger cities outside such as Kyiv.

Any data that comes after this census is done via polling as Ukraine has not conducted a census since 2001. One such poll conducted between 2006 and 2007 assessed the preferred language of Ukrainians, among many other former-Soviet states, and found that Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine were the only nations in which a significant majority request their interviews be conducted in Russian. Of the 1,000 people interviewed, 83% said they preferred the interview to be conducted in Russian over Ukrainian.[41] Ukraine was and continues the be the only country of the three where Russian does not enjoy a special status, instead it is considered a minority language. Further polling in 2014 around the annexation of Crimea give more insight into the divided political dynamic in Ukraine that is heavily divided along regional, linguistic, and ethnic lines. The survey was conducted across Ukraine with 1,200 permanent residents and

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[38] See 36
[39] Ibid
[40] Ibid
[41] Sergei Gradirovski and Neli Esipova. "Russian Language Enjoying a Boost in Post-Soviet States." Gallup. August 1, 2008.

the results are given both represent the country as a whole and are divided according to their regional origin. The results showed that there is a noticeable discrepancy between answers given by Ukrainians from southern and eastern Ukraine as compared with the rest of the country, as well as ethnic Russians.[42] When asked whether they agree with Russia's decision to send its army out to protect the russophone population of Ukraine, 43% agreed or mostly agreed. When asked what economic union Ukraine should join, 59% of those in eastern Ukraine preferred to join the customs union with Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. The only other region with a significant population in favor of the same union was southern Ukraine with 37% in favor as the plurality answer. The answers were also similar when asked about joining the European Union (EU). In eastern Ukraine, 55% said they would vote against joining the EU and 37% in southern Ukraine said the same. On voting to join the customs union with Russia, 62% of respondents in eastern Ukraine would vote yes while 31% in southern Ukraine concurred. However, it should also be noted that in this poll there was an equitable distribution of people from southern Ukraine saying they would vote to join (31%), vote against joining (32%), and choosing not to partake in voting (35%). When asked about Ukraine signing an association agreement with the European Union, 61% of respondents in eastern Ukraine disagreed with this and 50% in southern Ukraine disagreed. It should be mentioned that for every answer given for eastern/southern Ukraine, northern/western Ukraine have opposite answers. The polling answer in regards to Ukraine joining NATO are even more telling of the disparity between eastern/southern Ukraine and central/western Ukraine. When asked about voting for or against Ukraine joining NATO, 67% of people from eastern Ukraine and 52% of those from southern Ukraine said they would vote no.

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[42] "Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine: March 14-26, 2014." International Republic Institute. Survey conducted by Gallup. 2014.

In contrast, 47% of central Ukraine and 64% of western Ukraine answered with a yes vote. Opinions on the Crimean vote also differ with over 87% of those in central Ukraine and 94% of those in western Ukraine seeing as a threat to Ukrainian independence while only 48% of southern and 40% of eastern Ukraine agreed. Overall, this study in 2014 shows, at the time of the invasion, there was still a stark difference in opinion between Ukrainians in eastern/southern Ukraine about the relationship Ukraine should seek with Russia and the West compared with Ukrainians in western/central Ukraine.[43]

Finally, the most recent survey taken prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine took place in November of 2021 with data going as far back as March 2012 in some areas. It had a sample size of 2,400 respondents and a response rate of 53%. Most of the questions revolved around corruption, the economy, and COVID-19, however, one section highlighted opinions regarding Ukraine joining NATO and the EU. The surveys showed that, overall, interest in joining the EU was not held by the majority until after the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014.[44] Afterwards, the level of support varied as a majority but most recently showed the level of support at 58% as of November 2021. With NATO, overall majority support for joining NATO was not attained until the summer of 2019 with as much as a 28% of the population against joining.[45] This survey does not show the regional differences in opinion for joining NATO and the EU. Based upon the previous survey from 2014, it is likely that the greatest level of support for these organization lies in western and central Ukraine while the highest levels of resistance to joining them lies in southern and eastern Ukraine. Of the 2,400 people surveyed, 48% said they

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[43] Ibid
[44] "Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Ukraine: 6-15 November 2021." Center for Insights in Survey Research. International Republican Institute. November 2021.
[45] Ibid

speak Ukrainian at home, 29% stated they speak Russian, and 22% stated that both are spoken.[46] It demonstrates that even though Ukraine has been an independent country for thirty years, the Russian language to this day still has a significant presence in the country.

The westernization of Ukraine has been a slow process since independence. On a national scale, distaste for Russia and anti-Russian sentiment in Ukrainian nationalism was uncommon in the general populace and limited to a small group of hardliners.[47] That sentiment changed after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and led to Ukraine looking towards the West more for political, economic, and military support. This slow westernization can be characterized by political westernization, which consists of a greater desire to join western institutions and alliances such as the EU and NATO, and westernization of identity or Ukrainians identifying more as Ukrainian and using the Ukrainian language more over Russian. Much of this has been heightened since 2014 but there are clear instances prior to Crimea and war in the Donbas that point to earlier origins. These include the Orange Revolution in 2004, diplomatic moves made by the United States to incorporate Ukraine with the West via NATO, and the desire of former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko to sign an association agreement with the EU. The association agreement was in fact signed following the Maiden Revolution in 2014 after former president Viktor Yanukovich fled the country.[48] After the Crimean annexation, this desire for a closer alliance with the West only grew as Russia annexed much of the pro-Russian territory and fewer and fewer Ukrainians in these southern and eastern territories began to take a sympathetic

[46] See 44

[47] Steven Pifer. "How Ukraine Views Russia and the West." Brookings Institute. Washington, D.C.. October 18, 2017. www.brookings.edu.

[48] "EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: 'Quick Guide to the Association Agreement.'" European Union External Action. n.d. www.eeas.europa.eu.

stance towards Russia, as a result. We will discuss the political aspects of these changes in more detail in the proceeding chapters.

Putin and Ukraine

Vladimir Putin's tone towards Ukraine has evolved since he ascended to the presidency of Russia on New Year's Eve 1999. The reasoning behind this varies within the scholarly community, with most taking the stance that it is influenced by Ukraine's growing relationship with the West.[49] This relationship exacerbates the tensions between Ukraine and Russia as well as Putin's reasoning for his foreign policy decisions relating to Ukraine since 2004. This view can be summed up in an essay written by Putin in July of 2021 which describes the two countries as "one nation" and arguing that modern day Ukraine as a country is a product of Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union.[50] Additionally, Putin argues that the Ukrainians violated the 1922 Union treaty devised by the Bolsheviks stating they took more territory than they originally had when they joined the USSR.[51] This view is not uncommon in Russia, as was demonstrated earlier, is a large part of Putin's rationale for policy decisions regarding Ukraine. Nor does this discount the academic arguments stating that Putin is reacting to NATO and American influence in the region, but rather strengthens them by adding context to the narrative surrounding the Russo- Ukrainian identity and their history. Putin uses historical and cultural narratives oftentimes as a means to an end to either justify a political stance he takes on specific policies or to drum up support and patriotic fervor from fellow Russians and Russian sympathizers. In the instance of

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[49] See 19

[50] Vladimir Putin. "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." Office of the President of Russia. Moscow, Russia. July 12, 2021. www.en.kremlin.ru. Written in Russian, Ukrainian, and English.

[51] Ibid

Ukraine, Putin is attempting to show that Ukrainian identity does not really exist in the same way that Russian identity does due to it lacking a true historical and cultural foundation prior to the Soviet Union.[52] Putin makes it clear in his essay what he thinks of Ukrainian identity and culture. It is a mere subgroup within the grander scope of Russianness along with the other groups such as the Belarusians, Malorusians, and Cossack peoples. Additionally, he provides a historical reason for hostility with the West in mentioning the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Austro-Hungarian Empire as the causes behind a Ukrainian identity emerging in the 19th century as a means to combat the Russian Empire.[53] Historical reasoning can then be used to justify continued hostility towards to West and military action in Ukraine. In Putin's mind, he is acting on the defensive against an aggressive Western, liberal alliance of the United States and Europe that seeks expansion to spread its ideology and prowess thereby endangering Russia and its sphere.[54]

Conclusion

The differing views on national identity and legacy of shared history have helped to exacerbate tensions between Ukraine and Russia that as of 2022 led to a war with Russian troops invading Ukraine. Since 1994, political actions on the part of Ukraine, the United States, NATO, and Russia have worked to create this security crisis. We have noted in this chapter the logic and reasoning behind differences in identity between Ukraine and Russia with regard to how each views Ukrainian identity and the place of the country itself in history and the world. In both instances it is a case of conflicting points that in ways have objective merit and in other ways are

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[52] Dmitry Shlapentokh. "Putin and Ukraine: Power and the Construction of History." Institute of Modern Russia. New York, NY. September 8, 2021. imrussia.org.
[53] See 50
[54] Richard Sawka. "Greater Russia: Is Moscow Out to Subvert the West?" Kent Academic Repository. University of Kent. Canterbury, UK. 2020.

indiscernible from what is objectively true. In either case, policy decisions were made based off these beliefs that influence geopolitics in the region. In the chapters that follow, we will discuss how the continued westernizing nature of Ukrainian identity and politics eventually helped to create the security dilemma seen in the contemporary sphere through a series of events and decisions made throughout the 2000s and 2010s.

Chapter III: Independence, NATO, and the Tumultuous 90s

The 1990s were a tumultuous time in Eastern Europe and Russia. The Soviet Union collapsed officially on December 26, 1991, leaving behind it 15 newly independent states. The 90s were a period economic and political turmoil with nations writing new constitutions, attempts at de-centralizing their governments and economies in favor of western style capitalism and liberalization, and establishing themselves within their regions and within the international community. This was especially the case in Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine spent the 1990s fighting for international recognition from the United States and much of the West, but faced an internal dilemma with inheriting old Soviet nuclear missiles. This situation resulted in tensions between Ukraine and Russia that would serve as the catalyst of the Russo-Ukrainian tensions of the 21st century. Tensions that gave rise to the Orange Revolution of 2004, NATO expansion in the 1990s and 2000s, and finally direct Russian military action in Ukraine in the 2010s and 2022.

Ukraine attained independence officially in 1991, much to the ire of the Russian Federation. There were two problems, for Russia, with Ukrainian independence. First, Ukraine could not be a legitimate state due to its historical and cultural ties with Russia. Second, Ukraine in becoming independent had inherited the third largest arsenal of nuclear warheads behind only the United States and Russia.[1] This was a catalyzing moment for Ukraine. Having achieved independence for the first time as a nation, the notion of a Ukrainian nation was already being challenged by two powers on the United Nations Security Council. With the aid of the United States, Russia challenged any idea of Ukrainian sovereignty and sought to delegitimize them in the international community. Considering the political climate of the 2010s and 2020s, it is hard

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[1] Paul D'Anieri. *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. 2019.

to imagine Russia and the United States cooperating on such as matter as Ukrainian independence. The Bush administration of the early 1990s sought to accomplish two key diplomatic items during this time: establish relations with the Russian Federation by continuing the line of progress that had been made by Reagan in the 1980s with the Soviet Union and Gorbachev; and to ensure a newly formed nation like Ukraine would not be tempted to maintain nor seek a nuclear weapons program. Bush's first visit to Ukraine in August of 1991 gave a clear indication of where his administration stood on Ukrainian independence in his so-called "Chicken Kiev" speech. This was shortly before Ukraine officially voted on and declared independence from the Soviet Union, a change from originally agreeing to sign the New Union Treaty proposed by Gorbachev for a less centralized Soviet Union.[2] Bush believed that the nationalistic fervor sweeping throughout the USSR was detrimental to international security and agreed with Gorbachev to discourage Ukrainian independence during his visit. He warned of "suicidal nationalism" and in a speech stated, "…freedom is not the same as independence. Americans will not support those who seek independence in-order to replace a far off tyranny with a local despotism."[3] Bush's statements drew condemnation from Ukrainian nationalists and American conservatives back home who helped to coin the name of the speech.[4] Four months later in December of 1991, he changed his tone and was more open to the idea of recognizing states such as Ukraine now that the Soviet Union was dissolving in the wake of a failed coup

[2] Ibid
[3] Susan D. Fink. "From 'Chicken Kiev' to Ukrainian Recognition: Domestic Politics in U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Ukraine." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies.* Harvard Ukrainian Research Insitution. Vol. 21, no. 1/2. pp. 11-61. June 1997. Quote page 13.
[4] William Safire. "Putin's Chicken Kiev." *The New York Times.* New York, NY. December 6, 2004.

attempt in August, and wave of independence referendums and declarations that came soon after. This is where the Ukrainian nuclear weapons crisis of the 1990s begins.

The Commonwealth of Independent States

Before examining the crisis, itself, it is important to address the political landscape in the fall of the Soviet Union and the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as it is crucial to two opposing views of security in the post-Soviet region between Ukraine and Russia. The CIS was formed out of the ashes of the Soviet Union as a new intergovernmental alliance of former-Soviet republics. Its roots can be traced back to the December 8th meeting of Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, Leonid Kravchuk, President of Ukraine, and Stanislav Shushkevich, Belarusian Parliamentarian Chairman, to Minsk, Belarus for the historic Belovezh Accords. It was here that the three leaders of the signatories of the 1922 Union Treaty met to dissolve the USSR completely and, in its wake, established the CIS for newly independent republics of the Soviet bloc.[5] On December 21, the five Central Asian republicans along with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova officially signed onto the CIS and affirmed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Four days later, Mikhail Gorbachev officially resigned his presidency and the Soviet Union was officially dissolved on December 25, 1991.

The creation of the CIS was intended to create a political, economic, and security union of the former Soviet republics. Russia in particular saw this as an opportunity to take the lead as the official successor state of the USSR and become a regional power over the CIS states. Evidence for this can be found in Russia's attempt to establish a single CIS military out of the

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[5] "Agreements Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States." European Commission on Democracy Through Law. Council of Europe. Strasbourg, Germany. Signed in Minsk, Belarus and Alma Alta, Kazakhstan. December 8, 1991 and December 21, 1991. English translation from September 8, 1994.

former Soviet military forces. Their priority around this time was to establish relations with other former-Soviet republics and to ensure their place as a rightful, powerful successor within the region.[6] In doing so, Russia could take control of the Soviet military from its ashes and reestablish economic and political control over the republics, within their sphere of influence, under what Russians may call the *russkiy mir* (Russian world).[7] We can refer to this as eurasianism in its infancy. Russia officially fulfilling its supposed place in the world as unique sphere and civilization.

Ukraine was vehemently opposed to the idea of a CIS military for it wanted full military independence from Russia no matter the cost.[8] It sought to build a Ukrainian military out of the Soviet forces left within its borders. Here, Ukraine became faced with a new option: maintain Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles as a deterrent to future Russian aggression, or relinquish them and pursue a future as a nonnuclear state. It also created a staging point for future disagreement and conflict over the Crimean Peninsula. Ultimately, Ukraine's desire for military independence is what helped to create the security conflict of the early 1990s.

The Nuclear Crisis

With independence came the inheritance of much of the infrastructure and military hardware of the former USSR. Most notably of these were high grade Soviet nuclear warheads in silos throughout the country. While not fully operational, this nevertheless posed a major question to the newly independent nation of whether or not they should keep the weapons as a

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[6]Alexei G. Arbatov."Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives." *International Security*. Vol 18, no. 2. The MIT Press. pp. 5–43. Fall 1993.
[7]Alexander Nikitin. "Russian Foreign Policy in the Fragmented Post-Soviet Space." *International Journal on World Peace*. Vol 25, no. 2. Paragon House. pp. 7–31. June 2008.
[8] See 1

form of deterrence from future aggression from Russia, or to surrender them for the prospect of full recognition and a future diplomatic relationship with both Russia and the West. This question has come up more recently with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Some scholars, notably John Mearsheimer, originally criticized the decision of Ukraine to denuclearize, arguing that they needed nuclear weapons for national security purposes as a deterrent to future Russian aggression.[9] In the present day, many speculate whether or not denuclearization of Ukraine in the 1990s was the correct foreign policy move on the part of the United States.[10] Had the Bush or Clinton administrations coerced the Ukrainians, they almost certainly would have been willing to keep their weapons given their history with Russia and the latter's unwillingness to recognize the newly independent republic. Many others, however, argue otherwise, stating that automatically having nuclear weapons would not have saved Ukraine, but may have actually led to war sooner.[11] As we will examine, this argument has some credence due to the political situation in Eastern Europe and Russia in the 1990s. We often have a tendency to romanticize or perceive historical events in the modern lens and believe that contemporary political events could have been avoided had a different action been taken. However, this is not always the case and crisis are more complex and complicated, especially the circumstances surrounding potential Ukrainian nuclear enrichment. To examine this, we must look at the political climate of the early 1990s in Ukraine and Russia,

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[9] John Mearsheimer. "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent." *Foreign Affairs.* Vol 72, no. 3. pp. 50-66. Washington, D.C.. Summer 1993.
[10] William J. Broad. "Ukraine Gave Up a Nuclear Giant Arsenal 30 Years Ago. Today There Are Regrets." *The New York Times.* New York, NY. February 5, 2022. www.nytimes.com.
[11] Tom Nichols. "No, Ukraine Should Not Have Kept Nuclear Weapons." *The Atlantic.* Washington, D.C.. February 1, 2022. www.newsletters.theatlantic.com.

what transpired and why, as well as discussing why and why not the hypotheticals are plausible given what we know.

Ukraine and Russia in the early 1990s were regions full of civil and political unrest as well as economic turmoil. The fall of the Soviet Union opened a vacuum in the former Soviet Union. The turmoil was especially apparent in the Russian Federation. The 1990s are looked upon by Russians a time that is best to be forgotten. It was a decade of weakness for the Russian state, economic collapse, political upheaval, and loss of international clout that was previously enjoyed during the Soviet Union. For Ukrainians, the 1990s were a time of economic and political struggle, but worth it in the face of new found freedom and independence from Russia. The nuclear weapons crisis was the first hot button issue to appear in the region after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Ukraine debated internally on what to do with its new cash of long-range nuclear weapons. While not fully operational, the weapons themselves could have been used as a potential deterrent to Russian, as stated previously, but with their own risks involved.

The first downside to refusing a non-nuclear future was isolation. Ukraine in the 1990s was a new state and was weak politically and economically, being one of the poorest of the post-Soviet republics, with a GDP that only Azerbaijan, Georgia, and three of the Central Asian states lagged behind.[12] Between 1991-1996, Ukraine's economy contracted anywhere from 9.7-22.7 percent annually and was burdened by hyperinflation.[13] Not to mention that political instability and corruption prevented the state from properly collecting taxes and made the economic struggles of transitioning to a liberal, market economy much worse. Had Ukraine actively

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[12] Pekka Sutela. "The Underachiever: Ukraine's Economy Since 1991." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington D.C.. March 9, 2012. www.carnegieendowment.org.
[13] Ibid

refused to relinquish old Soviet nuclear weapons to Russia, the country never would have had the

recognition of western powers to establish proper diplomatic channels to receive aid from the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) necessary to mitigate their newfound economic struggles.

Ukraine would have been treated, within international diplomacy, in a similar manner that North

Korea and Taiwan are. They exist in a manner of speaking; however, they receive little

recognition from the United States and, with respect to Taiwan, are in a peculiar circumstance of

existence without real state legitimacy.

The second problem with Ukraine maintaining a nuclear weapons stockpile was that the

weapons themselves, with the intention of keeping them for deterrence, may have actually

sparked a war with Russia. While a hypothetical, it is not unreasonable to suspect that Boris

Yeltsin and Russia would have refused to accept a future alongside a nuclear Ukraine. Not only

was this a national security threat, it was a spit in the eye to Russian legitimacy in a region they

had controlled since the 18th Century. It was also a security threat in the eyes of the United

States. The world's sole superpower could not afford to allow a new, rouge nuclear to appear on

the map, especially in a region of political and social instability. It posed too many risks and

questions regarding the real safety of the weapons themselves and whether Ukraine could be

trusted with properly maintaining them. There is also the possibility of Ukraine potentially

selling parts of the weapons to foreign adversaries of Russia and/or the United States.[14] The

deterrence itself could not have been realized by Ukraine for several years if not over a decade.

Russia had the codes to the old Soviet weapons in Ukraine and throughout the former Soviet

Union. Not to mention that had Russia decided to invade Ukraine under the guise of national

security, international security, or terroristic threats in relation to the nuclear arms within the

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[14] See 7

country, it is quite plausible the United States would have accepted such a move and let Ukraine fend for itself. This scenario begs many questions and we cannot know all of them with great certainty, but we do have some ideas based upon the political environment of the early 1990s.

The security dilemma over the weapons began in the fall of 1991, shortly after the failed coup attempt in Moscow against Gorbachev. The independence referendum was scheduled for December and Ukraine the year prior had declared their desire to became a nonnuclear state. Then Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine, de facto head of state, and later elected president, Leonid Kravchuk had met with General Varennikov, a coup conspirator, who stated that Ukraine must comply with the organized coup or risk the might of the red army.[15] This is where the debates surrounding maintaining the nuclear stockpile begin. Kravchuk and other Ukrainian politicians in that moment sensed the vulnerability Ukraine faced against a more powerful Russian state, and needed to find some security reassurance to ensure their nation's survival. Ukrainian politicians did not want to give up their weapons to Russia due to their territorial claims over Crimea. At this time, Crimea was a hotbed of ardent, communist, loyalists seeking to become independent of Ukraine either by become an autonomous Soviet Republic or by joining Russia. This led to them openly challenging to status of Russia being the sole, rightful heirs of the Soviet legacy after the independence referendum and dissolution of the USSR.[16] The dilemma within the Ukrainian power circles led Kravchuk to reverse course after stating at the UN General Assembly in August of 1991 that Ukraine intended to become a nonnuclear state.[17]

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[15] See 1

[16] Mariana Budjeryn. "The Power of the NPT: International Norms and Ukraine's Nuclear Disarmament." *The Nonproliferation Review.* Vol. 22, issue 2. pp. 203-237. Monterey, CA. 2015.

[17] See 1

In March 1992, Kravchuk ended the shipment of nuclear warheads to Russia while simultaneously grappling with a divided parliament over how to handle their remaining stockpile of weapons.[18] He stated that he had no guarantees that Russia was destroying the weapons they were receiving, but also did not provide evidence behind his claims. Kravchuk's reversal of the weapon's export shows both the divisions evident within the Ukrainian government over nuclear weapons exportation as well as their distrust of the Russian state.

During this dilemma, the United States was focused on ensuring Ukraine denuclearized at all costs to ensure that the United States could salvage the START-I treaty, a treaty signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in July 1991, and move forward with the START-II treaty with Russia. This began in May of 1992 when Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus signed the Lisbon Protocol, which signed them onto the previous START-I treaty and began the process of moving towards affirming the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) as nonnuclear states.[19] Kravchuk verbally committed to disarmament at Lisbon, however, he still faced a divided parliament and a new prime minister, Leonid Kuchma, who opposed further denuclearization. In June 1993, the Rada, Ukrainian parliament, began debating the ratification of START-I. Their confirmation of the treaty was watched closely by Yeltsin and the Russian Duma. Not confirming the treaty and/or deciding to retain nuclear weapons in any capacity risked Russia not ratifying START-I nor START-II, the latter of which had been signed earlier that year. During parliamentary debates, Kuchma accepted the idea of giving up nuclear weapons specified in START-I, but insisted Ukraine maintain all other missiles and declare themselves a

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[18] Serge Schmemann. "Ukraine Halting A-Arms Shift to Russia." *New York Times*. New York, NY. March 13, 1992. www.nytimes.com. Originally in print.
[19] Steven Pifer. "The Trilateral Process: The United States, Ukraine, Russia, and Nuclear Weapons." The Brookings Institute. Washington, D.C.. May 2011.

"temporary nuclear power".[20] Shortly thereafter, the Russian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution declaring Sevastopol to be a Russian possession, though Yeltsin tried to distance the government from this vote.[21] Immediately after hearing about the resolution, Kravchuk stopped his push on parliament to ratify START-I.

In September of 1993, Yeltsin and Kravchuk met in Yalta, Crimea to sign the Massandra Accords, following a previous meeting by Kuchma and Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin in Kyiv.[22] It is also worth mentioning that part of the reason the negotiations were happening was pressure put on Ukraine by Yeltsin via cutting off natural gas.[23] This would be the first of many instances in which Russia pressured Ukraine through energy dependence. The meeting was intended to settle security issues, most notably the Black Sea Fleet, Ukrainian energy debt to Russia, and Ukrainian nuclear warheads. The first issue had been a position of disagreement between Moscow and Kyiv since independence. The Black Sea fleet was vital to Russian security in the region and rested in Crimea, an area Russia claimed for both historical and strategic reasons. The Russian navy held roughly 70% of the fleet at this point and needed to ensure they were able to garner the other 30% from the Ukrainians. Additionally, Russia needed to ensure they could, at the very least, maintain the naval base at Sevastopol since it was not realistic at that time for them to take ownership over the whole of Crimea. Ukraine held $2.5 billion worth of energy debts to Russia and needed a way to pay off a debt it could not maintain. It also wanted assurance that Russia would dismantle any nuclear weapons it gave to the them.

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[20] See 1
[21] Serge Schmemann. "Russian Parliament Votes a Claim to Ukrainian Port of Sevastopol." *The New York Times.* New York, NY. July 10, 1993. www.nytimes.com. Originally in print.
[22] See 19
[23] Paul D'Anieri. "Ukrainian Foreign Policy From Independence to Inertia." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies.* Vol. 45, Issue 3-4. pp. 447-456. December 2012.

Kravchuk and Yeltsin reached a compromise for the moment: Ukraine would sell of the remaining portion of the Black Sea fleet to Russia in return for having its energy debt forgiven; in addition, Russia would dismantle all the nuclear weapons transferred to it by Ukraine and the Ukrainian Rada would ratify the Lisbon Protocol and START-I treaty within two years of the meeting.[24] When he returned to Kyiv, Kravchuk was met with fierce opposition and criticism from the Rada. The Massandra Accords collapsed soon after due this opposition from Ukrainian politicians. They believed Kravchuk gave up too much in the agreements and pushed for him to amend the agreement so that Ukraine would still hold onto some of their weapons. Soon after, Kravchuk turned to the United States for assistance in writing and negotiating a more concrete agreement through a trilateral process. Previously, in July of 1993, Yeltsin met with the leaders of the G-7 conference in Tokyo and proposed pushing forward with a trilateral process as well when discussing the nuclear crisis with Ukraine.[25] By the end of 1993 it was clear that the United States was needed if a deal between Ukraine and Russia were to be worked out successfully.

By 1993, President Bush had lost his reelection campaign the prior year and so the negotiations were led by the Clinton administration. Ukraine was adamant about not agreeing to any deal with Russia that involved transferring their nuclear weapons without a security and compensation guarantee from the United States.[26] In November of 1993, the Rada did ratify the START-I treaty, but with several conditions that essentially made the treaty void. At this time, Russia was attempting to take the place of the Soviet Union in being the arbiter of security within the post-Soviet sphere by interfering in conflicts in eastern majority ethnic Russian

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[24] See 19

[25] Strobe Talbott. *The Russian Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*. Random House Trade Paperbacks. New York, NY. May 13, 2003.

[26] See 23

portion of Moldova known as Transnistria, in the majority ethnic Russian region of Georgia known as Abkhazia, and in Azerbaijan to quell tensions between them and ethnic Armenians. Seeing this action, Ukraine used it to argue against giving up nuclear weapons without a proper security guarantee because without them it is quite possible, according to Ukraine, that Russia could and would have taken similar military actions within Ukraine.[27] Ukrainian officials suggested that the United States give Ukraine a security guarantee similar to that of Article V of the NATO charter, committing American military forces to Ukraine's defense in the event of aggression from Russia.[28] Such a suggestion went nowhere with American officials. The Clinton and Bush administrations of this time wanted to craft a document that would win the Ukrainians over but that was simultaneously not legally binding.[29] Neither president wanted to risk putting a multilateral treaty before the Senate to be ratified and so they were sure to craft a document with careful legal language.

In the weeks that followed the Rada vote in November, American officials began working on a deal with Ukrainian and Russian officials and scheduled state visits to assure that negotiations progressed and a deal could be reached. In December of 1993, Vice President Al Gore went to Moscow to meet with Yeltsin and Chernomydrin regarding negotiations and commitments to ending the crisis. To ensure cooperation and proper channeling between both Moscow and Kyiv, Gore sent National Security Advisor Strobe Talbott, Assistant Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, and National Security Council Director Rose Gottemoeller to Kyiv to meet with the Ukrainian negotiating delegation led by Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Valeriy

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[27] See 1
[28] Steven Pifer. *The Eagle and the Trident: U.S.—Ukraine Relations in Turbulent Times*. Brookings Institute Press. Washington, D.C.. 2017.
[29] Ibid

Shmarov.[30] From then until a final agreement was made in January of 1994, they worked out an

agreement that detailed Ukraine's compensation for the nuclear materials they surrendered; an

agreement on the part of the United States to provide a "security guarantee" similar to that in the

Nonproliferation Treaty, but not rising to the definitive nature of Article V in NATO; and it

acknowledged Ukraine's sovereignty as a member of the international community.[31] The

Trilateral Statement was signed by Clinton, Kravchuk, and Yeltsin in Moscow in January

confirming the negotiations that took place in December.[32] It led to the signing of the Bucharest

Memorandum in December of 1994 by the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, Ukraine,

Belarus, and Kazakhstan to officially end the nuclear crisis with Ukraine, Belarus, and

Kazakhstan giving up their nuclear weapons to Russia.

NATO Expansion: A New Security Dilemma for Russia

While Russia surrendered officially acknowledging the sovereignty of Ukraine, it is not

something that was internally believed by state officials nor by its citizenry. Yeltsin's legacy in

Russia is not looked upon positively by most Russians and the failures on his part, from their

perspective, in Ukraine are a major sticking point. Moscow was unable to unilaterally nor

bilaterally negotiate with Ukraine to end the nuclear crisis, lost a prized possession in Crimea,

and had to lease a major naval base from the Ukrainians to ensure they kept the Black Sea fleet.

A few years after the crisis Russia would watch as former members of the Soviet Union began

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[30] See 28

[31] *Joint Declaration of the Leaders of Ukraine, Russia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.* Conference on Disarmament. December 21, 1994.

[32] "Trilateral Statement by the Presidents of the United States, Russia, Ukraine." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*. Vol. 20. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. pp. 313-316. 1996.

seeking membership and joining NATO, moving away from Russia's sphere of influence and shrinking the border between them and the West.

Around the time of the signing of the Trilateral Agreement, President Clinton began pushing for NATO expansion into former Soviet territory. He began by establishing the NATO Partnership for Peace in February after announcing at the Trilateral signing that Ukraine had been invited to join.[33] Clinton officially signaled to the world NATO was open for expansion and was looking to expand. This could not have been more alarming news for the Kremlin after negotiating with American officials to put an end to the nuclear crisis. While Russo-American relations were at their peak during this time, Russia was still hostile to an institution that was founded with the intention of being a counter weight against them during the Cold War.[34] There was also a sense of betrayal in Russia that has come up more recently in political, media, and academic circles since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. To fully understand the claim, we need to examine the Russian and Western perspectives on NATO expansion.

Let's examine the Russian perspective first. As stated previously, Russia believes itself to be the true successor of the Soviet Union and has developed a foreign policy around this idea of an exceptional Russian state and people. The Soviet Union itself, while made of several ethno-states, was a state centered out of and ruled from Moscow. Russians and their language enjoyed a favored status within that country. Speaking about the Soviet Union during the Cold War was synonymous with speaking about Russia. The origin for a claim by Russia that the United States

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[33] "The President's News Conference with President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine in Kiev." January 12, 1994. www.presidency.ucsb.edu.
[34] Matthew Evangelista. "Commentary: The 'Soviet Threat': Intentions, Capabilities, and Context." *Diplomatic History*. Vol 22, no. 3. Oxford University Press. pp. 439-449. 1998.

promised not to expand NATO eastward lies in The Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect

to Germany. This treaty was an agreement between the Soviet Union, the United States, the

United Kingdom, France, and a soon to be unified Germany to not position NATO forces into

the former territories of East Germany.[35] Gorbachev was worried that the unification of German

would lead to movement of NATO forces eastward and this treaty averted that while the Soviet

Union still existed. He knew it was something he could not stop and wanted to make the best of

the situation before him.[36] After its dissolution, Russia claimed inheritance over the Soviet

legacy and therefore interpreted the treaty to still be in place and applied to states in Central and

Eastern Europe. In 1993, Yeltsin wrote to Clinton regarding NATO expansion and stated that the

agreement regarding Germany in 1990 "precludes the option of expanding the NATO zone into

the east."[37] He further stated that he didn't believe NATO expansion immediately posed a threat

to Russia but noted that public opinion would not be favorable towards such action if it

persisted.[38] Yeltsin was trying to be optimistic towards a hopeful future with West but also

understood the underlying issues that many within Russia, especially his conservative rivals

within Moscow, would oppose any form of NATO expansion into the former-Warsaw Pact

nations and former-Soviet Union. It is also worth mentioning that Yeltsin was misled into

believing, or misunderstand, that the Partnership for Peace was an alternative to NATO

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[35] *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany.* Signed by the Federal Republic of
Germany, German Democratic Republic, France, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. Translated
into German, English, French, and Russian. September 12, 1990. treaties.un.org.
[36] See 1
[37] Letter from Boris Yeltsin to William J. Clinton. Yeltsin Letter on NATO Expansion.
Unclassified by the U.S. Department of State. Document No. C175336698. National Security
Archive. The George Washington University.Unclassified June 15, 2016. Written September 15,
1993. Translated into English by U.S. State Department.
[38] Ibid

expansion and was meant to include Russia for a more cooperative security arrangement in the whole of Europe.[39] In a meeting with Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Russia in 1994, Yeltsin asked if states associated with the CEE, Central and Eastern Europe, would be NIS, Newly Independent States (of the Soviet Union), would be on equal diplomatic footing and that the partnership would not be a membership in NATO.[40] Christopher confirmed this to Yeltsin who remarked that it was a "brilliant stroke" on the part of Clinton.[41]From this angle, it seems reasonable to assume that Yeltsin was not expecting Clinton to declare NATO open for and seeking new members in Central and Eastern Europe when he went to sign the Trilateral Agreement in January 1994.[42] The United States now made NATO expansion a foreign policy priority and with it Ukrainian security and liberalization. The beginning of tensions in Russo-American relations in regards to Ukraine begins at this moment.

The American and Western perspective on NATO expansion is different from that of Russia's. They refer to the Russian narrative as a myth concocted by Vladimir Putin to justify souring of relations with the West and military invasions in Georgia and Ukraine.[43] They argue that the Treaty with Respect to Germany should not be seen as expanding beyond the scope of Eastern Germany. The United States does not recognize Russia's claim as the true or sole inheritor of the Soviet Union and their foreign policy positions since its collapse are proof of this. For example, the United States did have the opportunity to recognize those claims and

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[39] "Secretary Christopher's Meeting With President Yeltsin, 10/22/93, Moscow." Unclassified by U.S. State Department. Doc 1993SECT017027. National Security Archives. The George Washington University. October 22, 1993.
[40] Ibid
[41] See 39. p. 9.
[42] See 33
[43] Gavin E.L. Hall. "Ukraine: The History Behind Russia's Claim That NATO Promised Not to Expand to the East." The Conversation. February 14, 2022. theconversation.com.

Russian authority over their claimed sphere of influence but chose not to. The Russian state at this point was weak and much of the former Soviet Union was politically unstable, Russia included. Yeltsin avoided a coup in 1993 by sending military envoys to bomb Russian parliament, call for new elections, and confirm a new Russian constitution giving the president autocratic authority to preserve and strengthen the state at the expense of the Duma.[44] This lack of recognition boiled over with the Yugoslavian Civil War of the 1990s and the subsequent NATO bombings in 1999, in which NATO found a new purpose to continue existence in the post-Soviet political landscape. All of this to the ire of Russian foreign policy interests in Europe.

The most convincing piece of evidence for eventual NATO expansion lies with the former Warsaw Pact member states and Soviet republics themselves. States such as Hungary and Poland made NATO membership a priority upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Ukraine was the first the join the Partnership for Peace and was soon joined by the Central European States. Three years later Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were accepted into NATO in the first round of NATO expansion. Ukraine had hoped the partnership would allow for future membership but knew that the prospect of immediate membership was unlikely and feared being left in a limbo state between Russia and NATO.[45] Historically callous relations between Russia and the states of Central and Eastern Europe created a political situation in which Western liberalization would move eastward into their claimed sphere of influence and territories of historical, strategic, cultural, and political importance. The most important of these being Ukraine.

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[44] Zoltan Barany. "Superpresidentialism and the Military: The Russian Variant." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 38, no. 1. Wiley. pp.14–38. March 2008.
[45] See 28.

Kuchma Takes Over

1994 was a significant year for Ukraine politically. Other than the signing of the Bucharest Memorandum that "guaranteed" Ukrainian security and sovereignty, a no confidence vote in the Rada began a back and forth election cycle that continued through the Maiden Revolution of 2013. Domestically, Ukraine was divided between aligning itself more with the European Union, Russia, or trying to find a middle ground between the two. This is apparent on their presidential election maps between 1994-2010 as the country voted along geographic lines.[46] The 1994 election pitted an unpopular Kravchuk against his prime minister, Leonid Kuchma. Kravchuk became positioned as a ardent nationalistic candidate and painted Kuchma as pro-Russian. Ukraine was struggling economically, worse than Russia, and Kuchma's proposal was to reopen economic and political relations with Russia to help with development.[47] He was supported by Ukraine's industrialists, oligarchs, as well as citizens in southern and eastern Ukraine, regions with greater populations of ethnic and lingual Russians. The Kremlin favored Kuchma in this election and hoped his victory would allow them to re-enter Ukrainian politics as a measurable influencer for the future. Kravchuk won the majority of votes in western Ukraine in region more ethnically and linguistically Ukrainian. Kuchma won the election in the second round of voting with 52% of the vote compared to Kravchuk's 45%. Ironically, Kuchma's election, while supported by majorities in eastern regions such as the Donbas and in Crimea, undermined autonomy movements within those regions by seeking closer ties with Russia and favoring the Russian language's use within Ukraine.[48] Kuchma's time in office is marred by

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[46] See Ukrainian presidential election maps for 1994, 1999, 2004, and 2010.
[47] See 1
[48] Taras Kuzio. *Ukraine-Crimea-Russia: Triangle of Conflict.* Ibidem Press. Stuttgart, Germany. 2007.

accusations of corruption in which he enacted policies that enriched himself and the Ukrainian oligarchic class.[49] This "balancing" act was also seen in his foreign policy where Kuchma began taking a middle ground on relations between the West and Russia. Taking a neutral stance allowed Kuchma to curry favor from both nationalists and Russian-sympathizers in the country.

Economically, the 90s were a decade of a shrinking economy and population as many Ukrainians fled to seek better living standards and paying jobs elsewhere, usually in Russia but it should also be noted that Russia struggled economically throughout this decade as well.[50] The population of Ukraine decreased by 5% between 1989-2001. Russia relied heavy on the exports of gas and oil during this time to mitigate the effects of economic recession and Ukraine was simultaneously dependent on Russian gas imports to meet energy demands, a narrative that continued for Ukraine through to the 2022 invasion.[51] The Ukrainian government under Kuchma was also reluctant to follow through on economic liberalization efforts to privatize their economy and sell state-owned companies. It was not until 1995 that Ukraine began to enter into a process of privatization, however, the way in which it was organized allowed for oligarchs to arise who were previously known as the "red directors" of the state-run enterprises.[52] Kuchma himself had been a "red director" during the Soviet era and reaped the benefits of a new economy run by oligarchs. The Ukrainian economy would not begin to see improvement and growth again until 1999, during his reelection bid.

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[49] Taras Kuzio. "Neither East nor West: Ukraine's Security Policy Under Kuchma." *Problems of Post-Communism.* Vol 52, no. 5. Routledge. pp. 59-68. 2005.
[50] Serhii Plokhy. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine.* Revised Edition. Basic Books. New York, NY. 2021.
[51] Andrian Prokip. "30 Years of Ukrainian Independence and Energy Dependence." The Wilson Center. The Kennan Institute. September 7, 2021. www.wilsoncenter.org.
[52] See 50.

Crimea: Ethnic Division and the Black Sea Fleet

The greatest point of conflict between Ukraine and Russia, after the conclusion of the nuclear crisis, were negotiations over the Black Sea Fleet and feared "Ukrainization" of the peninsula.[53] These fears were felt not only by the Kremlin, but also by separatist leaders of Crimea around this time. Crimea was over 70% ethnically Russian and Russian was the predominant language of most of its inhabitants. In 1990 there was a push amongst Crimean leadership for Crimea to be an independent participant of Gorbachev's proposed Union Treaty, a last-ditch effort by him to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union, following the declarations of sovereignty by both Russia and Ukraine. A referendum was held within Crimea to reestablish the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) that passed by a wide margin of 94%.[54] The ethnic Tatar population of Crimea boycotted the vote believing that only they, the indigenous population, should have a say about the future of the peninsula.[55]

Upon the fall of the Soviet Union, the Crimean ASSR renamed itself the Republic of Crimea and began work on its own constitution separate from that of Ukraine's. This along with the Black Sea Fleet proved difficult for a newly independent Ukraine trying to break away from Russian influence. In May of 1992, Crimea's parliament voted to hold an independence referendum in hopes of creating closer ties with or reuniting with Russia.[56] Most of the ruling class in Crimea during this time were communist hardliners and Russian sympathizers and they

[53] Roman Solchanyk. "The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine." *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 46, no. 1. Taylor & Francis. pp. 47–68. 1994.
[54] Victor Tkachuk. *The Crimea: Chronicle of Separatism, 1992-1995*. Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research. January 1996.
[55] Jane I. Dawson. "Ethnicity, Ideology and Geopolitics in Crimea." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 30, no. 4. pp. 427-444. December 1997.
[56] Serge Schmemann. "Crimea Parliament Votes to Back Independence from Ukraine." *The New York Times*. May 6, 1992.

led the charge for separation from Ukraine. The movement of the 1990s was led by Yuri

Meshov, a former KGB agent and Russian nationalist, and the Republic Movement of Crimea.

Following the vote, the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, predecessor of the Duma, passed

a resolution rejecting the legality of the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954.[57] Kravchuk was

pressured by members of the Rada and government to immediately dissolve Crimea's parliament

and take control over the peninsula to stamp out an independence movement. Instead, Kravchuk

began negotiating with Crimean leadership, after sending a letter of condemnation, in hopes of

reaching a solution that did not end with Russia taking the region. He managed to find one

temporarily in 1992 that allow for greater autonomy of Crimea and the creation of the position of

president of Crimea, but the problem reignited when Meshov was elected president in 1994.[58]

Moscow supported separatist leadership in Crimea and ardent Russian ethno-nationalist

Zhirinovsky compared Crimea with Kuwait stating that "both should be returned to their 'legal

owners'."[59] Crimea was further used by Russia to attempt to delegitimization their claim to

sovereignty in hopes that the West would favor or recognize Russian authority over the region so

that it would capitulate to a form of reintegration through institutions such as the CIS. In 1993,

Yeltsin political advisor Sergej Stankevich argued that Western diplomats should not setup

embassies in Kyiv because they would eventually become consulates in due time.[60] In 1994, with

the election of a separatist, Ukrainian president Kuchma took a different approach than his

predecessor. Crimea was given an ultimatum, align their constitution and laws with that of the

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[57] John Iams. "Russian Parliament Calls Crimea Transfer Illegal, But Urges Negotiation." *The Associated Press.* May 21, 1992.
[58] Doris Wydra. "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War Between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination." *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights.* Vol. 10, no. 2. Brill. pp. 111-130. 2003.
[59] Ibid. p. 115.
[60] See 58

Ukrainian government, or their parliament would be suspended. Meshov flew to Moscow to meet with Yeltsin in hopes of garnering open support from the Russian president to pressure the Ukrainian government into allowing for Crimean independence and potential reunification with Russia. While Yeltsin was interested in regaining control over the whole of Crimea, he was more concerned with improving relations with the West, building a Pan-European security alliance, and moving forward on negotiations regarding the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, so he rejected Meshkov's pleas who in turn interpreted this as a betrayal on the part of Yeltsin.[61] Yeltsin did this despite numerous appeals and resolutions by the Duma to reincorporate Crimea into Russia.[62] It is widely speculated by experts such as Taras Kuzio that Yeltsin may have actually wanted Crimea to remain in Ukrainian to give him more leverage in negotiations and pressure that state into having closer relations with Moscow than the West.[63]

During the summer of 1994, the Ukrainian Rada amended the Ukrainian constitution to allow it to usurp Meshkov's authority and that of his parliament, who were moving closer towards attempting separation from Ukraine.[64] In the Spring of 1995, the Rada once again moved to limit the independence movement in Crimea by disbanding the Crimean parliament, removing Meshkov and eliminating his position, and giving Kuchma total authority over the peninsula. Meshkov fled to Moscow soon after. One of Kuchma's first acts was to re-appoint a relative, Anatoliy Franchuk, as Prime Minister, who had previously been removed by Meshkov as part of

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[61] James Coomarasamy. "Crimea: Yuri Revels in Reversal of Fortune." *BBC News.* London, UK. March 23, 2014.
[62] See 48
[63] See 49
[64] Bohdan Fediw. "The Crimean Problem: Post-Independence Ukraine's Regional Instability." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*. Vol 4, no. 2. Kapur Surya Foundation. pp.76-88. April-June 2000.

his campaign to strip the Crimean government of anybody too "pro-Ukrainian" to allow for greater odds of a successful separation from Ukraine.[65] Kuchma was popular in Crimea and so he was able to avert any domestic backlash from removing Meshkov and the nationalists from power. The primary reason, however, why a pro-Russian separatist movement never flourished in Crimea or in the other heavily Russian speaking and ethnic region of Ukraine, the Donbas, is due to the Ukrainian Communist Party not supporting reunion with Russia. Rather, the party favored closer economic and political ties and respected the territorial integrity of Ukraine.[66]

The Black Sea Fleet negotiations culminated in 1995 with Yeltsin and Kuchma meeting in Sochi to sign new agreements. Kuchma proposed selling Russia over 30% of its share of the fleet, giving Russia control of roughly 80% of the total fleet, in exchange for partial cancellation of Ukrainian debt and renting the port in Sevastopol via energy supplies.[67] The negotiations appeared to be going well and relations between the two states began improving. The nationalist fervor in Crimea also began to die down allowing for Kuchma to relinquish total control over the territory in August of 1995. However, Yeltsin disagreed with the restricting of Ukrainian debt and believed they were not making enough concessions favoring Russian ownership of the port. He was constrained by international institutions such as the IMF for funding and who did not want to see Ukraine's economy collapse from Russian pressure.[68] This led to Yeltsin delaying or outright canceling scheduled meetings with Kuchma over disagreements on the treaty. It is also worth mentioning that Yeltsin was in the middle of a reelection campaign and had a good chance

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[65] Ibid

[66] See 48

[67] See 64

[68] Georgy Bovt and Natalya Kalashnikova. "Russian-Ukrainian Talks: Agreements with Ukraine Might Be Reconsidered." *Kommersant-Daily.* April 20, 1995. Translated in *Current Digest of the Russian Press.* Vol. 47, no. 16. May 17, 1995.

of losing to his more conservative, nationalistic rivals and the newly revived communist bloc led by Gennady Zyuganov. Yeltsin could not afford to make any concessions to Kuchma or it would further damage his already weak presidential bid. The negotiations surrounding the fleet would not be solved until 1997 with the signing of the Friendship Treaty.

Yeltsin Pushes the CIS and the 1997 Friendship Treaty

Ukraine's security threat, which it used to argue for maintaining nuclear weapons to a degree, had not been solved and had arguably worsened because it was so economically dependent on Russia. Avenues did not open up for Ukraine to trade or enter into NATO despite improving relations with the West. Kuchma knew that Russia, while politically risky, was an avenue to achieve better economic conditions and solve some of its hardships in the short run. Yeltsin knew Ukraine was reliant on Russian gas/oil and needed to take advantage of the situation. He saw the CIS as a tool for this. Neither Yeltsin nor Russia truly acknowledged nor respected Ukrainian independence and they certainly would not allow for them to slip out of their sphere of influence.[69] Kuchma knew this and so approached the CIS with caution. In 1994, while attempting to gain concessions from Moscow regarding economic preferences, joined the CIS Interstate Commerce Committee, alongside a host of conditions.[70] Russia was intent on economic integration with CIS members to include political integration in the long term with priority given to Ukrainian integration. Many within the Kremlin believed that the CIS would

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[69] Roman Solchanyk. "Ukraine, Russia, and the CIS." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*. Vol. 20. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institution. pp. 19-43. 1996.
[70] Roman Wolczuk. *Ukraine's Foreign and Security Policy: 1991-2000.* Routledge. London, UK. October 2002.

eventually help lead Ukraine to reintegration with Russia and lead to a powerful Russian state once more.[71] In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus signed an integration deal that was supposed to build an economical and political alliance through a Eurasian customs union. The plan was for Ukraine to additionally join this pact but Kuchma refused due to too much alignment with Moscow. Russia soon abandoned the deal in favor of a union treaty with Belarus that became official in 1999.[72]

Tensions were high in Moscow for the negotiations to come to an end regarding the Black Sea Fleet. Yeltsin up to this point has begrudgingly accepted Ukrainian sovereignty but both his enemies and allies within the government still did not in 1996. Secretary of the Russian National Security Council, Aleksandr Lebed, published in an open letter that "Sevastopol is a Russian city" in what was and is considered a popular sentiment within Russia.[73] The fleet negotiations were wrapped up in Russian demands for some form of capitulation from Kuchma, but also future worries of Ukrainian membership in NATO, however bleak those may have been in the 90s. Simultaneously, Kuchma was pushing a new constitution through the Rada that was crucial to any deal. Prior to the new constitution, it was debated within elite circles as to whether or not a lease deal was constitutional as it would allow a foreign military to be stationed on sovereign territory.[74] A change to the constitution allowed for the temporary stationing of foreign military forces on Ukrainian territory under a lease agreement ratified by the Rada.[75] That summer Yeltsin had narrowly avoided being voted out of office in favor of Communist Party

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[71] Marvin Kalb. *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War.* Brookings Institution Press. Washington, D.C.. 2015.
[72] See 54
[73] See 1. p. 81.
[74] See 1
[75] Ukrainian Constitution. Chapter XV. Paragraph 14

leader Zyuganov by allying himself with the nation's oligarchs. By winning, Yeltsin had more room to negotiate with Kuchma but was still constrained by officials in Moscow. By 1997, the Treaty of Friendship and The Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet started coming together thanks to Yeltsin's election victory and changes pushed through by Kuchma. They ultimately agreed to transfer the Ukrainian portion of the fleet to Russia in exchange for Russia forgiving some of Ukraine's energy debt. Additionally, port facilities and the naval base at Sevastopol were to be leased out to Russia through 2017. Ukraine was also able to include provisions that required Russia to respect Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and stay out of its internal political affairs.[76] The Friendship Treaty promised to end tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Both states agreed to "respect each other's territorial integrity and confirm the inviolability of their common borders."[77] Despite this, there were still calls from officials in Moscow to take control of Sevastopol, and to some extent Crimea. The Friendship Treaty was nothing more than a hopeful declaration that the relationship between Ukraine and Russia would gradually improve overtime. That the history and culture between the two states would allow them to be more aligned. The truth is that the Ukrainian desire for independence outweighed its desire to sow better ties with Moscow. Russia gave loosed its grip on Ukraine momentarily but could not allow it to move further towards allying with the West. This is ultimately why the treaty failed.

Russia and Ukraine Sign Agreements with NATO

Russian fears of Ukrainian NATO membership never subsided through any treaty negotiation they were involved in. This is especially true when dealing with the United States

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[76] Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet.
[77] Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Article II. May 31, 1997.

and NATO with regard to security in Europe and the Partnership for Peace. Kuchma favored

joining the partnership because it allowed for him to balance relations with the West while

simultaneously playing the Kremlin to Ukraine's benefit. Ukrainian membership prospects were

dim and a goal that was plausible a couple decades in the future but not in the mid-90s. Yeltsin

knew he could not fully rival NATO so he sought to convince the US to promote a Pan-European

security partnership in which Russia had equal say to Western officials who may disagree with

or totally oppose Russian foreign policy prerogatives.[78] This never came to fruition but

nonetheless NATO allowed Russia to also join the Partnership for Peace in mid-1994. Kuchma's

enthusiasm for NATO's partnership led Russian officials to believe that he was vying for future

NATO membership. In 1995, he proposed a "Charter for Distinctive Partnership between

Ukraine and NATO". In 1997, Kuchma signed that treaty at the 1997 Madrid Summit that

offered NATO membership to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.[79] It did not offer a firm

security guarantee to Ukraine but nonetheless guaranteed partnership between the two and

Ukraine's desire to reform its defense sector. Prior to the Madrid Summit, Russia signed the

NATO-Russia Founding Act, a treaty meant to reassure Russia that NATO expansion would not

be a risk to Russian security and interests. Additionally, they were invited to join the G-7 group.

General opinions on both matters were rather negative in Russia.[80] Yeltsin had allowed, without

much resistance, for NATO to expand to former Warsaw Pact states and for Ukraine to join the

Parternship for Peace. NATO represented a threat to Russian sovereignty as a leftover institution

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[78] See 37

[79] Charter on Distinctive Partnership Between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine. July 9, 1997.

[80] See 1

of the Cold War, which was also viewed in Russia largely as a threat by outside forces to their own independence.[81] Ukraine is an inclusion of that interference from the Russian perspective.

Kuchma Wins Reelection

In 1999, Kuchma faced reelection against a communist much like Yeltsin did in 1996. Also, like Yeltsin, Kuchma needed an alliance with oligarchs to win and used various fraudulent measures to do so. Most of them included various forms of election fraud and the silencing of journalists who opposed him.[82] He also attempted to consolidate power by marginalizing parliament but he was unsuccessful.[83] Following his victory, tapes were released by the opposition Oleksandr Moroz, leader of the Socialist Party of Ukraine, that exposed Kuchma's private dealing which included bribery, media suppression, and other forms of corruption.[84] The recordings also implicated him in the disappearance and death of journalist Georgi Gongadze in September of 2000. His body was discovered outside of Kyiv, decapitated. Kuchma's actions are identical to those committed by future Russian president Vladimir Putin. The Cassette Tape Scandal, as it was called, exposed the corruption riddled Ukrainian presidency and government for the first time. Kuchma was eventually able to shake the scandal but his political career never recovered as it invigorated a new generation of activists within Ukraine. They started a "Ukraine without Kuchma" movement.[85] Unlike Putin, Kuchma was not successful in consolidating power

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[81] Andrei P. Tsygankov. "The Russia-NATO Mistrust: Ethnophobia and the Double Expansion to Contain 'the Russian Bear.'" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol 46, no. 1. University of California Press. pp. 179-188. March 2013.
[82] Serhy Yekelchyk. *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know.* Oxford University Press. 2015.
[83] See 50
[84] Patrick E. Tyler. "New Tapes Appear with Threats by Ukraine's President." *The New York Times.* February 19, 2001.
[85] Paul D'Anieri. "Explaining the Success and Failure of Post-Communist Revolutions." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies.* Vol. 39, no. 3. University of California Press. pp. 331-350. 2006.

for the long run and left office after the revolutionary 2004 election, which came to be known as the Orange Revolution. Kuchma's demise led to the rise in popularity of Viktor Yushchenko, a political advocate for greater integration with the West and abandoning a future prospect of closer ties with Russia.

Conclusion

The 1990s as a decade helped to shape Ukrainian national identity leading into the 21st century. For Russia, it is a time that is best to be forgotten as it was the weakest moment for the nation since the end of the czarist era in World War I. They sought to consolidate holdings over former Soviet territory and show strength where they had little. We can trace some of Eurasianism's more modern roots to this decade as Russian nationalists gained influence within the government and were able to influence policy more effectively. Examples include Zhironovsky's Liberal Democratic Party enjoying early success in parliamentary elections and Kremlin officials such as Aleksandr Lebed espousing rhetoric calling for Russian authority over Ukrainian territory.[86]

Ukraine made many gains at the expense of Russian foreign policy goals. They garnered recognition from Western nations, most notably the United States; they joined the Partnership for Peace and began diplomatic relations with NATO; they avoided a nuclear crisis with Russia; and avoided an ethnic conflict in Crimea that could have sparked additional separatist movements in the Donbas region. The decisions made by Kuchma ultimately help create the conditions for the Orange Revolution in 2004. We can note that Ukrainian nationalism begins to take shape during

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[86] See 1

this time as well. Unlike other former-Soviet states, excluding Belarus, Ukraine did not have a thriving nationalistic fervor that led to its independence.[87] It avoided most ethno-nationalistic identity that helped to influence and sometimes destabilize the political environment of other nations such as Georgia and the former Yugoslavian states. That identity began with the Orange Revolution and was further stabilized and invigorated by the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and national invasion in 2022. Vladimir Putin will be one of the most influential figures in the formation of this identity that pushes Ukraine further towards westernization and self-determination outside the sphere of Russia.

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[87] Andrew Wilson. *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith.* University of Cambridge Press. October 1996.

Chapter IV: The Arrival of Putin, The Orange Revolution, and Ukraine's Push West

December 31, 1999 is the official day of Boris Yeltsin's resignation as president of the Russian Federation. His legacy in Russia is seen as a humiliation due to the economic and political catastrophe that was the 1990s with only Gorbachev viewed in a worse light as far as recent Russian political leaders. In his place he what was then a rather unknown figure. He had previously worked in the KGB until the end of the Soviet Union when he began working under Anatoly Sobchak in the St. Petersburg Mayor's Office as Deputy Mayor, before finding his way to the president's cabinet in Moscow in 1996. Afterward, he ran FSB, successor of the KGB, and became prime minister in August of 1999. His name is Vladimir Putin, and his succession of the Russian presidency and coalescing of power would forever change Russia's relationship with the West and how it interacted with NATO and Ukraine.

Putin released his Millennium Message three days before succeeding Yeltsin in office, directly challenging his predecessor's vision for a future Russia.[1] He envisioned a Russia in which the role of the state would be restrengthened to its former glory, a necessity to ensure a

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[1] Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin.* Brookings Institution Press. New and Expanded Edition. Washington, D.C.. 2015.

stronger Russia because of the history of the Russian people and the state. He sought to revitalize the "Russian idea" whose values encapsulate patriotism, collectivism, solidarity and *derzhavnost* or a belief that the Russia is destined to be great power in the world political theatre.[2] In all this, Putin imagined and demonstrated to fellow Russians that he is a *gosudarstvennik*, or man of the state. Much of Putin's belief, coupled with the general ideas of Russia's great power status and Ukraine, have directed Russian foreign policy in the former-Soviet sphere with special consideration given to Ukraine. His first term of office was spent attempting to revitalize control over the Ukrainian government, its people, and then seeking to stop further westernization of the country upon his return to the presidency in the 2010s.

2002 Parliamentary Elections: Regional and Ethnic Divisions Become Apparent

The early 2000s saw the revelation of the corruption within the Kuchma government in Ukraine and the beginning of Putin's decades long reign in Russia. The seeds for the Orange Revolution were planted during this time with the increasing popularity of Victor Yushchenko. In the midst of the controversy Kuchma began making political moves to ally with Putin as his relations with the West deteriorated. He met with Putin eighteen times between the years 2000 and 2002 and went so far as agreeing to reconnect their energy grids in February 2001.[3] 2001 was also a year full of protests and opposition to Kuchma led by Yulia Tymoshenko and Oleksandr Moroz, Speaker of parliament and leader of the Socialist Party of Ukraine.[4] Moroz leaked the recordings of Kuchma that led to the mass protests and "Ukraine without Kuchma"

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[2] Ibid

[3] Rosario Puglisi. "Clashing Agendas? Economic Interests, Elite Coalitions and Prospects for Co-Operation between Russia and Ukraine." *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 55, no. 6. pp. 827–45. September 2003.

[4] Paul D'Anieri. "Explaining the Success and Failure of Post-Communist Revolutions." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 39, no. 3. University of California Press. pp. 331–50. September 2006.

movement. 2001 can be argued to be a precursor to the 2004 protests that are the Orange

Revolution. The reason these protests were never successful was due to divisions apparent within

the opposition that Kuchma and the security forces were able to take advantage of. Plus, they

were never supported by Victor Yushchenko who was still within Kuchma's cabinet as prime

minster at the peak of the protests. He would later be removed from office after a no confidence

vote by a coalition of communists and centrist parties led by oligarchs in the energy sector who

were displeased with his economic policies that hurt their bottom line.[5] Yushchenko's ouster

from the prime ministership helped Kuchma to consolidate power around powerful oligarchs and

pursue closer relations with Moscow. However, Kuchma would never enjoy the total

consolidation and control over the Ukrainian oligarchy that Putin achieved in Russia. In the lead

up to the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Party of Regions began emerging out of Donetsk

oblast in eastern Ukraine having previously been formed after the consolidation and renaming of

the Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine with several smaller political parties. They would

become Kuchma's key to support and closer ties with Moscow. With support from eastern

Ukrainian oligarchs, the Party of Regions (member of the pro-Kuchma For United Ukraine! Bloc

in the 2002 election), the Communist Party, and several independent candidates Kuchma

successfully blackmailed into supporting him, he was able to have effective control over

parliament after the 2002 parliamentary elections in spite of his unpopularity.[6] His party, Our

Ukraine Bloc, won a plurality of votes at 23.5% and 112 out of 450 seats in the Rada. The vote

tallies were divided geographically, as will be the case for all Ukrainian elections through 2012,

[5] Ian Traynor. "Ukraine's Popular PM Forced Out." *The Guardian.* London, UK. April 26, 2001.
www.theguardian.com.
[6] Paul D'Anieri. *Understanding Ukrainian Politics: Power, Politics, and Institutional Design.*
Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. New York, NY. 2007.

with Yushchenko's support coming from western and northern oblasts while Kuchma garnered support from southern and eastern Ukraine. Parliament then selected Viktor Yanukovych to become the next prime minster, who would go on to be Yushchenko's chief rival in the 2004 presidential election.

The rise of the party of regions signaled a shift in Ukrainian politics for pro-Russian alliances. Previously, communist and far-left wing parties in southern and eastern Ukraine, funded by oligarchs, were the premier voice for supporting closer ties with Russia. Economic liberalization that came with closer relations with the West would prove detrimental to the state-owned and monopolistic industries that they controlled and so they opposed it. The eastern region, coalescing around Donetsk oblast, became the most influential region within Ukrianian politics and elections and explains the rise of Yanukovych, who at the time was an unknown, unpolished, and non-mainstream figure.[7] The Ukrainian oligarchs at this time were dependent on Russian industries and thereby their oligarchs to stay enriched and to some extent empowered in Ukraine. However, they pushed back against efforts by Russian oligarchs and firms to consolidate power fully in Ukraine through economic and political means.[8] Russian and Ukrainian industries, especially those in the energy and metallurgy sectors, have close infrastructure ties dating back to the Soviet Union when nearly all-natural gas and oil being sold to Europe flowed through Ukraine.

The communists in particular are a clear example in Ukrainian politics during the 2000s of ethnic divisions being prominent in party and candidate choice. They viewed Yushchenko as

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[7] Paul D'Anieri. *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. 2019.
[8] See 3

nationalist and puppet of the Americans meant to liberalize Ukraine.[9] It is an example of ethnic

tensions within the Ukrainian ruling elite over the future path Ukraine should pursue: the West or

Russia. The party of regions, later led by Yanukovych, would take the lead in this region, taking

advantage of the ethnic quagmire of Ukrainian politics at the time to pursue a policy of more

economic cooperation and closer relations with Russia than the West. Such policies appealed to

the mostly ethnic and linguistic Russians living in southern and eastern Ukraine. During the

presidency of Yanukovich, the party would openly propose that Russian become a second

official language like it was in a few other former-Soviet states such as Belarus and

Kazakhstan.[10]

Putin and Ukraine

It is within the interest of the Russian state to ensure it will assume its status as the great

power it espouses to be, and that comes with the unity between Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine.

Otherwise, Russia will be forced under the banner of Western liberalism or of China, and thereby

abandon the principles and ideals of Eurasianism as proclaimed by men such as Alexander

Dugin.[11] This is why Ukraine has been such a foreign policy priority for Putin since becoming

president. It would be dishonest to say that we are certain that Putin is an ardent believer in

Eurasianist ideology, but we can say some of its aspects appeal to him in his mission to

strengthen the Russian state and expand its influence in the "near abroad" of former-Soviet

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[9] Taras Kuzio. "Regime Type and Politics in Ukraine under Kuchma." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 38, no. 2. University of California Press. pp. 167-190. June 2005.
[10] Richard Balmforth. "Ukraine Leader Signs Contentious Russian Language Bill into Law." *Reuters*. August 8, 2012. www.reuters.com.
[11] Nikolas K. Gvosdev. "Why Ukraine is Key to Russia's Pursuit of Great Power Status." Russia Matters. Harvard Kennedy School for Science and International Affairs. February 25, 2022. www.russiamatters.org.

Union. By including the influences of Slavic and Turkic groups that are apparent in Eastern

Europe and Central Asia, respectively, he can bridge the gap in having an inherently "Russian"

state while simultaneously appealing to its multiethnic makeup and history.[12] However, Ukraine

is an exception to this rule of "bridging the gap" per se. Due to the long standing history that

Ukraine and Russia share; similarities between their languages; and a long history of Russian

repression of Ukrainian identity; Putin, along with most Russians, considers Ukrainian to be a

sub-group of "Russianness" and therefore within a common identity, but with an appetite for

independence from Moscow that was born out of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union and sprung up

in the wake of the its collapse in the 1990s.[13] Not to mention that because of its history with

Russia throughout the imperial period through the Soviet Union has led to integration of the two

and created a situation in which nearly a fifth of Ukraine is ethnically and linguistically Russian.

Putin will use the this as justification for interference in Ukrainian elections, politics, and the

annexation of predominantly ethnic Russian regions of Ukraine throughout his presidency.

Under this rule set by him, Ukraine is allowed sovereignty with conditions, or as he puts it "with

respect."[14] Ukraine must stay within the orbit of Moscow and away from integration with the

West and its institutions, especially NATO. Them abandoning this orbit poses national security

risks, upends deep rooted cultural, ideological, and historical beliefs in Russia about their place

in the world, and would lead to those within the *russkiy mir*, or "Russian world", being

incorporated into Europe. *Mir* is this case meaning the grander world in which we live as well as

the that in the smaller scale of communities, or a commune in which there is peace and

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[12] See 1

[13] Vladimir Putin. "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." Office of the President of Russia. July 21, 2021. www.en.kremlin.ru.

[14] Ibid

cohesion.[15] To disrupt this would prove catastrophic. Many of these ideas date back to the days

of Muscovy and thus are deeply imbedded.[16] Putin himself created "The Fundamentals of State

Cultural Politics" in a 2014 speech to address discussions over Russian history and tradition.[17] It

is his way of taking charge of history and ensuring Russia's place in the world is where he

envisions it to be.

Putin in the early 2000s did not act entirely on all of these beliefs but he nonetheless still

internalized them. Up until the latter half of the 2000s, Putin spent his time trying to ally and

cooperate more with the United States in hopes that Russia's position and interests within the

world order were secure. Additionally, he wanted the them to see Russia as an equal on the

world stage in diplomacy and world affairs just as they did with the Soviet Union, Russia's

claimed predecessor. It is important to note this because Putin's interactions with Ukraine are

heavily influenced by his relationship with the United States and this can be mapped from the

time he enters office up to the present day. Major policy differences and decisions changed the

trajectory of this relationship until he officially broke with the West in 2007 at the Munich

Security Conference. The primary areas to examine are: neoconservative foreign policy

sentiments within the George W. Bush administration, the Iraq War, NATO expansion coupled

with Putin's inability to cement a united Russo-European security apparatus, and the Orange

Revolution.

Putin early on in his presidency made comments that in 2022 would seem outlandish and

naïve to ever be said by or about him and Russia. In a 2000 interview with David Frost Putin

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[15] See 1
[16] Marshall T. Poe. *The Russian Moment in World History.* Princeton University Press.
Princeton, NJ. 2003.
[17] See 1. Speech transcript available in Russian: http://kremlin.ru.

stated that "Russia is part of the European culture" and "it is hard for me to visualize NATO as the enemy."[18] He additionally went so far to say that he would not rule out Russian membership of NATO in the future as long as this included Russia as an equal partner. We should not take this completely at face value, however, because Putin never intended for Russia to move in a direction of Western, liberalization. Rather, he intended for Russia to become more autocratic in order to ensure it had a strong state once again, and that meant weakening his checks on power over time.[19] He additionally still maintained opposition to NATO expansion at this time.[20] Though, it may be true that Putin did not believe the West was necessarily a direct threat to him at the time and instead he approached them with a cautious optimism. This belief, if true, would have quickly diminished over the course of 2000s as NATO expanded and many of his policy objectives were opposed by the US and Europe.

The neoconservativism that directed policy in the second Bush administration can be reasoned as heavily influential in the dissolution of already tense relations between the US and Russia. After the terroristic bombings of September 11th in New York City, Putin used the tragedy as an opportunity to strengthen relations between both states and was the first world leader to call Bush to offer condolences. He went as far as welcoming American military forces to Central Asia which would have been unthinkable for a Russian leader just a decade earlier.[21] The plan was for Russia to build a cooperative agreement with the United States centered around

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[18] David Frost. "Vladimir Putin, Interview by David Frost." *Breakfast with Frost.* BBC News. March 5, 2000. news.bbc.co.uk.

[19] Michael McFaul. *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Boston, MA. 2018.

[20] See 18

[21] John O'Loughlin. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, and Vladimir Kolossov. "A 'Risky Westward Turn'? Putin's 9-11 Script and Ordinary Russians." *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 56, no. 1. Taylor & Francis. pp. 3–34. January 2004.

anti-terrorism. Such a relationship could eventually see Russia a greater power politically and

economically because of it. The Bush administration, however, did not view the Russian state in

the same light. In the early 2000s, most American scholars and foreign policy experts believed

Russia was a declining power that needed to be managed to prevent further chaos, and potential

dissolution, like that in the 1990s under Yeltsin.[22] Some scholars in the minority, such as

Michael McFaul, pressed for Russia to be integrated into Western institutions to help combat the

growing influence of China.[23] Bush and the neocons of his presidency did not take McFaul's

recommendations, instead focusing on the war on terror and the spread of liberal, democratic

institutions. With regard to the war on terror, the US was initially less critical of Putin's war in

Chechnya, going as far as designating three Chechen separatist groups as "terrorist

organizations" and freezing their American assets.[24] After 9-11, Bush's foreign policy turned

toward democratization and human rights. This included being critical of the increasing

authoritarianism of Putin and war crimes being committed in Chechnya by the Russian army.[25]

American criticism of the Second Chechen War dates back to Clinton in 1999 when Russian

forces carpet bombed and invaded Grozny after informing its residents that anyone remaining in

the city would be considered an enemy combatant.[26]

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[22] Thomas Graham Jr.. *Russia's Decline and Uncertain Recovery.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, D.C.. 2002.
[23] See 19
[24] James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul. *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia After the Cold War.* Brookings Institute Press. Washington, D.C.. 2003.
[25] Jefferey Donovan. "U.S. Official Says Bush Will Press Putin on Chechnya at Summit." *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty.* May 10, 2002. www.rfelr.org.
[26] Celestine Bohlen. "Russia Reacts Angrily Over Western Criticism on Chechnya." *The New York Times*. December 8, 1999. www.nytimes.com. Originally in print.

These criticisms coincided with American withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic

Missile (ABM) Treaty, a move heralded by conservatives in the United States.[27] They argued

that such an agreement was outdated and no longer needed now that the United States was the

world's remaining superpower. Leaving the treaty allowed the US to update its missile system

and better prepare for foreign threats. This move was opposed by Russia, who lagged behind the

United States in missile defense technology. Because of this, it is very likely they saw the move

as a potential threat and destabilizing as it gave the Americans an advantage in the event of a

nuclear war.[28] Putin attempted to renegotiate the treaty with Bush but his concerns did nothing to

stop the American withdrawal. Reacting to the withdrawal from the ABM treaty, Putin stated

that Russia would not abide by the START-II treaty that was the intended to stop the

advancement and buildup of intercontinental ballistic missile. The consequences of American

withdrawal would become more apparent in the 2010s as Russian tensions with both Ukraine and

the United States began to build up to levels not seen since the Cold War.[29]

The second area that led to the dissolution of Russo-American relations in the early 2000s

was the Iraq War. While wildly unpopular and criticized by the international community for

humanitarian reasons as an unjust war, Putin was not opposed to the war on those grounds.

Instead, he opposed the American invasion for fear that it would destabilize the region and to

protect Russia's economic interests in the energy sector as well as debt owed by Saddam Hussein

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[27] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsey. "Unilateral Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty is a Bad Idea." *The Brookings Institution.* Washington, D.C.. April 30, 2001. www.brookings.edu.
[28] Terence Neilan. "Bush Pulls Out of ABM Treaty; Putin Calls Move a Mistake." *The New York Times*. December 13, 2001. www.nytimes.com. Originally in print.
[29] James M. Action. "The U.S. Exit from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Has Fueled a New Arms Race." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.* December 13, 2021. www.carnegieendowment.org.

for weapons purchases. Additionally, Putin saw the move as the United States expanding its global hegemony and his views toward Bush began taking a negative turn.[30] Prior to the invasion, he sought to use American allies in Europe (France and Germany) to pressure the United States into not moving forward with invasion plans. The American delegation at the UN Security Council put forward a resolution calling for a UN inspector to investigate Iraq for weapons of mass destruction. This decision was approved of by Russia in order that they may moderate the resolution and use other Security Council members (France and China) to agree to allowing the inspector to do their due diligence in the face of the American's impatience and desire for military action in Iraq.[31] Putin was also able to garner support from Germany for the UN inspection in Iraq and allowing them to do so without a hard deadline. Due to the timeline and impatience of American officials, the American delegation put forward a security resolution to authorize a UN military mission to Iraq and had then Secretary of State Colin Powell given a presentation before the Security Council arguing in favor of it due to evidence of Iraqi collusion with terrorist organizations and possession of weapons of mass destruction. Over a decade later, Powell would state that his presentation was a "blot" on his record and an "intelligence failure", one that was spearheaded by Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.[32] Powell's speech was full of inconsistencies and poor intelligence that was meant to convince leaders and the public of the necessity to invade Iraq and eliminate Saddam Hussein. Putin was ultimately successful in maintaining joint opposition with China and France, eliminating any possibility of a UN mission to Iraq, but that did not stop the Bush administration

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[30] See 19
[31] Galia Golan."Russia and the Iraq War: Was Putin's Policy a Failure?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 37, no. 4. University of California Press. pp. 429-459. December 2004.
[32] Jason M. Breslow. "Colin Powell: U.N. Speech 'Was a Great Intelligence Failure'." *PBS News: Frontline.* May 17, 2016. www.pbs.org. Interview.

from moving forward with an invasion regardless. It should be noted that Germany also opposed an invasion demonstrating opposition within Europe, aside from leadership in the UK, as well. It was seen as a show of brute force to exert the will of the United States, in both Europe and Russia, a rare example of unity and agreement between the two regions. Putin will harken back to Bush's Iraq in the following two decades, using military force to demonstrate dominion over Ukraine and reclaim what he believes to be rightfully Russia's.

NATO Expands Again

NATO, arguably, is one of the primary causes of Putin's inability to create a unified Russo-European security order. American influence over the organization contends with Putin and the Russian elites' desire for a Europe in which Russia could effectively counter the American hegemony. Those ambitions dissipated as NATO further expanded towards Russia and Ukraine upon expansion in 2004 and is why it's a primary area to examine for Putin's break with the West in the latter half of the 2000s.

In 2002, two announcements related to NATO occurred: Bush and other NATO leaders decided to invite Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia to join the alliance, and the NATO-Russia Council was established to meditate discussions on security issues between the two blocs. The foundation of the council, however, was flawed in how it was designed. While Russia was allowed an equal vote on issues brought before it, this was only guaranteed as long as NATO member states agreed to bring issues before the NATO-Russia Council and did nothing to prevent NATO from pursuing policies that Russia opposed, namely expansion into Eastern Europe.[33] The NATO-Russia Council was a way for NATO to placate Russian fears of their organization by giving them a slight voice at the table. The voice they were

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[33] See 7

given, though, did nothing to stop expansion nor future NATO military exercises and partnerships in Eastern Europe. Therefore, it was much more of a formal arena to ensure Russian influence was predicated upon it succumbing to the will and policies of American influence in the region. Something that is only possible when their priorities, goals, and beliefs were aligned which steadily became rarer over time. The council was doomed to fail from the start because of these fundamental disagreements.

NATO expansion in 2004 was simultaneously marked by EU expansion into Eastern Europe, namely the Baltic States that were formerly within the Soviet Union, putting a Western institution officially on Russia's border. The EU gradually became a bigger issue for Russia over the course of several years as relations with it deteriorated, and the prospect of Ukraine vying for membership were then a reality. To further its goals of eventual integration and influence in the post-Soviet region, Russia led the way for the signing of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002 to fill the political gaps that it was unable to accomplish within the CIS.[34] That is it created a security agreement between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and for a moment Uzbekistan. Ukraine refused to join the organization. By creating a Eurasian security agreement, Russia could promote its regional prowess and institutionalize opposition to NATO enlargement. However, unlike the United States and NATO, the organization would not become the tool for influential expansion they had hoped for. The 2022 invasion of Ukraine demonstrated the unwillingness of CSTO members,

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[34] Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. *Regions and Powers: The Structures of International Security*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. 2003.

aside from Belarus, to aid and abet the invasion.[35] It also prevented Armenia from receiving

CSTO military assistance upon renewed military conflict with Azerbaijan shortly thereafter.[36]

The accession of the Baltic States into NATO in 2004 was seen as the continuance of a

humiliation in Russia that began in the 1990s and was cemented with NATO expansion in

1999.[37] The Duma passed a resolution condemning NATO and called for deployment of

additional military forces for national defense. With NATO on their doorstep, Russia could

conceivably be attacked by fighter jets within minutes in cities such as St. Petersburg. NATO

ground forces would now have the capacity to enter into Russian territory rather quickly in the

event of war. NATO justified expansion as pertinent to fighting the war on terror, as this was

their newly stated purpose in the post-Soviet world.[38] To Russia, even if NATO's new strategy

was fighting terrorism, this did not justify expansion into Eastern Europe nor justify them

building military bases in Central and Eastern Europe, nor deploying new weaponry there.[39]

The Orange Revolution

The final event and most influential in Putin's gradual break and dissolution of relations

with the West came from the events of the Orange Revolution. It was the finale in a series of

"color" revolutions that occurred in Europe and Asia in the 2000s that additionally included the

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[35] Marlene Laruelle. "The End of the Post-Soviet Order: How Putin's War Has Hurt Russia in Central Asia and the Caucasus." *Foreign Affairs.* Council on Foreign Relations. October 13, 2022.

[36] Simon Maghakyan. "The U.S. Might Be the Surprising Determining Factor in the Future of Armenia." *Time*. October 3, 2022.

[37] R.G. Gidadhubli. "Expansion of NATO: Russia's Dilemma." *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 39, no. 19. Economic and Political Weekly. pp. 1885-1887. May 8-14, 2004.

[38] "Remarks by U.S. President George W. Bush at the NATO Accession Ceremony." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.* NATO Online Library. March 29, 2004. www.nato.int.

[39] Guardian Staff. "New US missile bases likely in eastern Europe." *The Guardian*. February 19, 2007. www.theguardian.com.

Bulldozer Revolution in Yugoslavia in 2000, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. The color revolutions were an example of popular uprisings after the execution of elections that were were scrutinized for their corruption and lack of fairness. Putin saw these uprisings as a threat to Russian influence in the sphere and purported them as American devised projects to spread liberalism, fearful that it could spread to Moscow.[40] He would later echo these sentiments in 2013 during the Maiden Revolution in Ukraine.

The Orange Revolution centered around the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine pitted Kuchma's chosen successor and candidate of the Party of Regions, prime minister Victor Yanukovych, against former prime minister and pro-EU proponent and ally of "radical nationalists" Victor Yushchenko.[41] Russia had an interest in seeing Yanukovych winning as he was interested in passing what can be regarded as pro-Russian legislation, most notably making Russian Ukraine's second national language, as well as aligning Ukraine more with Russia and moving away from relations with the West.[42] He was known as the pro-Russia candidate. Yanukovych, in contrast, led a campaign centered around growing Ukrainian relations with the West and working towards EU membership in the future. Items that did not sit well with Moscow.

The spectacle that ensued from this election should be noted as a prime example of the lack of continuity of political parties throughout Ukraine. Yanukovich was supported by Russia,

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[40] Anthony H. Cordesman. "Russia and the 'Color Revolution': A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the U.S. and the West." *Center for Strategic & International Studies.* May 28, 2014. www.csis.org.
[41] Richard Sakwa. *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands.* Bloomsbury Academic. London, UK. 2015.
[42] Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov. "Russia's Role in the Orange Revolution." In *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough.* Edited by Anders Åslund and Michael McFaul. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. pp. 145-164. 2006.

mostly ethnic and lingual Russian populations in eastern and southern Ukraine, and oligarchs

with a financial stake in the energy sector centered in the Donbas. Yushchenko was supported by

nationalists in western Ukraine, populations in western and northern Ukraine, and the West.

They relied primarily on regional identities to influence voter behavior.[43] Yanukovych was not

the only candidate with oligarchs backing him. In Ukrainian politics, oligarchs compete for

power within the system, some have more allegiances towards Moscow while others towards

Europe and/or Ukraine. This has been the case in all of Ukraine's election since independence.

One ideal they all share, however, is Ukrainian sovereignty. The debate within these circles

focuses on whether or not to maintain a balance between Russia and the West, give preference to

the West, or give preference to Russia. This system is described by British political scientist

Richard Sakwa as "oligarch democracy" due to their influence in politics, using the state as a

source of enrichment, and the fact that roughly one hundred people controlled 80-85% of

Ukraine's wealth as of 2014.[44] These figures are unlikely to have changed as of the prelude to the

Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 due to corruption still being prominent within the Ukrainian

government and economy.

Yushchenko did have support from oligarchs with more nationalistic tendencies and from

the banking industry that he was a part of, though it should be noted he also openly criticized

many oligarchs during his presidential campaign.[45] His greatest support came from Yuliya

Tymoshenko, a gas industry oligarch, ardent nationalist, and leader of the liberal nationalist

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[43] Serhiy Kudelia. "Revolutionary Bargain: The Unmaking of Ukraine's Autocracy through Pacting." In *Democractic Revolution in Ukraine: From Kuchmagate to Orange Revolution*. Edited by Taras Kuzio. Taylor & Francis Group. New York, NY. 2009.
[44] See 41. pp. 60-67.
[45] Jonathan Steele. "Orange Revolution Oligarchs Reveal Their True Colours." *The Guardian*. October 13, 2005. www.theguardian.com.

Tymoshenko bloc.[46] She originally ran for the election herself but withdrew to throw her support

behind Yushchenko when it became clear he was the favored candidate of the opposition. As a

co-leader of the Orange Revolution, she would become his prime minister. The regionalized

factions of oligarchy under Kuchma, such as the Donetsk faction that led the Party of Regions,

later became much more divisive under Yushchenko due to some aligning with the Orange

faction of Yushchenko and others with the blue faction of the Party of Regions.[47] Yanukovych

received support from more influential oligarchs in the energy sector and the media with three

out of the four most influential media oligarchs backing him.[48] He listened to backers in Moscow

and denounced the opposition as fascists such as Stepan Bandera, a radical and controversial

Ukrainian ultranationalist from World War II.[49] This was part of the campaign taken by both

campaigns to take advantage of the factional politics of the day. Yushchenko would go onto

posthumously award Bandera the title Hero of Ukraine, the highest honor a person can be

awarded, in 2010.[50] The move was swiftly denounced by Russia, the European parliament, as

well as Jewish politicians and organizations due to his history and views surrounding fascism

and anti-Semitism.

While the association of Bandera would not hurt Yushchenko in the more nationalistic

corners of western Ukraine where Bandera was from, it could in southern, eastern, and

potentially parts of central Ukraine where the ideals Ukrainian nationalism were less popular or

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[46] Matthias Williams and Pavel Polityuk. "Ukraine's Tymoshenko: 'Gas Princess', Prisoner, and Next President." *Reuters*. March 4, 2019. www.reuters.com.
[47] See 44
[48] Yuliya Yurchenko. *Ukraine and the Empire of Capital: From Marketisation to Armed Conflict*. Pluto Press. London, UK. 2018.
[49] See 7
[50] "Wiesenthal Center Blasts Ukrainian Honor for Nazi Collaborator." *Simon Wiesenthal Center*. January 28, 2010. www.wiesenthal.org.

nonexistent at this point.[51] Putin publicly announced his support for Yanukovych believing that Russia had enough popular support and influence in Ukraine for it to aid his campaign. Yanukovych was overall a very weak candidate with a criminal history dating back to his youth and was not popular nor mainstream. He came to his position because of his oligarchic connections in Donetsk through the Party of Regions and the subsequent election would demonstrate that it is possible the establishment could have won a victory in the 2004 election had they picked a more palatable candidate.[52]

Putin believed in the 2004 election if voters had a choice between voting for westernization or Russia, they would choose Russia. So, he not only publicly supported Yanukovych's campaign, but sent Russian officials to aid his campaign. Putin himself made a few campaign stops in Kyiv along with Belarusian president Alyaksandr Lukashenka to bolster support. He was convinced that Russian election tactics of ballot manipulation, mass media ad blitzing, coercion, and falsification of results would end with their victory, free of domestic backlash.[53] They hoped to capitalize on labeling Yushchenko's campaign as ethno-nationalist and pro-western. However, his campaign did not publicly focus on Ukrainian nationalism but more so on modernization of the country's political system and economy and closer ties with the West. There were also two noteworthy assassination attempts on Yushchenko: first near fatal

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[51] "World Jewish Congress Troubled by Honoring of Nazi Collaborator in Ukraine." *World Jewish Conference*. December 18, 2018. www.worldjewishconference.org.
[52] See 48
[53] See 42

poisoning in September 2004 that scarred him for the rest of his life, and second a failed

bombing attempt on his election headquarters in Kyiv.[54]

The first round of voting came in with Yushchenko leading 39.9% to 39.3%, but delays

sparked concern and belief that the leader was much greater and being manipulated.[55] The

second round of voting was held on November 21 and almost immediately sparked backlash.

Two different polls were being released that led to this predicament. Official state results

announced a Yanukovych victory while NGO sponsored exit polls indicated that the state count

was fraudulent and that the real winner should be Yushchenko. Prior to the election, Ukrainian

NGOs received funding from many western governments in order to help create a freer election

environment and prevent the certification of a fraudulent election.[56] While Western funding had

dissipated in 2004, especially by the United States due to Bush's belief that Kuchma had illegally

sold Saddam Hussein a high-tech radar system on the eve of the American invasion of Iraq,

Russia took the funding as them funding Yushchenko's election efforts.[57] Unlike Putin, Bush

intentionally omitted a public declaration favoring one candidate over the other despite being in

favor of a Yushchenko victory. There was fear amongst American officials that if Bush publicly

sided with Yushchenko that it would automatically turn the election in favor of Yanukovych due

to hostility towards the American president.[58]

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[54] Taras Kuzio. "State-Led Violence in Ukraine's 2004 Elections and Orange
Revolution." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 43, no. 4. University of California
Press. pp. 383-395. December 2010.
[55] See 7
[56] Andrew Wilson. "Ukraine's Orange Revolution, NGOs, and the Role of the West." *Cambridge
Review of International Affairs*. Vol. 19, no. 1. Taylor & Francis Group. pp. 21-32. March 2006.
[57] Ibid
[58] See 7.

Upon hearing the results, Tymoshenko called upon Yushchenko's supporters to carry his banner into the streets of Kyiv to protest the results. Another oligarch known as the "chocolate king", Petro Poroshenko, was a close associate of Yushchenko, being one of his main financiers, owned *5 kanal* at the time of the protests and ran stories that painted the protesters in a favorable light.[59] In addition to televised support, the Kyiv Mayor Oleksandr Omelchenko did nothing to shut down entry into Maiden nor Kyiv and did not attempt to disperse protesters forcefully as he did in 2001 during the anti-Kuchma protests.[60] Their support for Yushchenko during such a critical moment is arguably a major contributing factor to the success of the Orange Revolution. Hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered for weeks in Maiden Square in Kyiv to protest the election results, despite the cold, winter conditions. The majority of protesters arriving from outside Kyiv were arriving by train from cities such as Lviv in western Ukraine, a hotbed of nationalism and hive for Yushchenko's support.[61] Kyiv was also a major supportive center for him with over three-quarters of the city voting for him.[62] Both factions were expecting mass protests to take place following the election, but they were not expecting the turnout in Kyiv to be to the scale it was.Yanukovych's supporters were centered in Donetsk and thus he enjoyed little support in or around Kyiv and few traveled there to support him.

Reactions to the second round of elections received differing responses from Russia, the EU, and the United States. Putin prematurely called to congratulate Yanukovych on his victory believing that their strategy had worked. The European Union and the United States refused to recognize the results of the election as free and fair. This angered the Kremlin who responded by

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[59] Jan Maksymiuk. "Profile: Poroshenko Expecting to Get Yushchenko's First Prize." *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty.* January 12, 2005. www.rferl.org.
[60] Andrew Wilson. *Ukraine's Orange Revolution.* Yale University Press. New Haven, CT. 2005.
[61] Ibid
[62] See 60

stating that "the only position favored by the EU was that of either Victor Yushchenko will win, or the elections will be found anti-democratic, falsified, and counter to world standards."[63] Putin was furious of the West's unity and involvement regarding the election. This comes back to a position Russia still holds about the Orange Revolution: it was orchestrated by the West because they would not accept any other result than the victory of Yushchenko, and that was hypocritical to their espoused democratic value system. Ultimately, the Ukrainian Supreme Court ruled that the election would be redone by the end of December 2004. The rerun vote tally showed Yushchenko claiming victory with 52% of the vote compared to Yanukovich's 44.2% with over 12,000 election observers working on the election.[64]

In the aftermath of the election, Yushchenko appointed Tymoshenko as his prime minster. A decision that would be reversed eight months later due to infighting between the two and several resignations from senior officials such as Petro Poroshenko, head of the National Security and Defense Council.[65] The Orange Revolution should be remembered for its mix of popular revolution as well as its role in Ukrainian oligarchic power politics. We would be remiss if in the name of promoting popular uprising, we forget that domestic politics, especially in the post-Soviet sphere, is primarily influenced by the role of oligarchs, powerful factions, and oftentimes, in Ukraine's case, identity politics. Putin would view the Orange Revolution as a lesson that the United States was still willing to try and undermine Russia's influence within the former Soviet bloc. Rather than proceeding with traditional military tactics, he believed the United States was implementing new-age strategies to attack Russia through artificial uprising

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[63] See 7. p. 131.
[64] C.J. Chivers. "Pro-West Leader Appears to Win Ukraine Election." *The New York Times*. New York, NY. December 27, 2004. www.nytimes.com. Originally in print.
[65] See 41

and coups.[66] It signifies Putin's official break with the West over a firm red-line, Ukraine. He would make this official announcement in Munich in 2007 as his first two terms in office came to a close, but it was a formality. He would return to office in 2012. Ukraine would come out of this with the much of the same corruption that has plagued it since independence. This time, it would enjoy more nationalist figures leading the country who spoke of fighting the oligarchs, but alas allowed their power to continue prospering and influencing domestic politics. Ukraine at this point, outside of Lviv, still did not have a strong nationalist movement to motivate the people towards a stronger national identity. Putin, in spite of defeat, still found ways to influence Ukrainian politics and believed he could continue using Ukraine's ethnic and lingual division to this end.

Yushchenko and the 2007 & 2008 Parliamentary Crisis

Victor Yushchenko declared in his victory speech on December 27, 2004 that Ukraine is a "free" and "a new country now."[67] As time went on, this statement became more and more fatuous. Yushchenko promised to be a opponent of the oligarchs, yet he too benefitted from the oligarchic system and was supported by oligarchs. Ukraine's domestic issues were not resolved and relations with Russia worsened as Ukraine openly began pursuing EU membership and sought NATO membership. To make matters worse for Yushchenko, Yanukovych soon found his political career resurrected as the Orange coalition of Yushchenko fell apart and the Party of Regions became a powerful force in parliament. To stir support, he would turn to nationalist figures and policies towards the end of his presidency.

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[66] See 60
[67] Adrian Karatnycky "Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 84, no. 2. Council on Foreign Relations. p. 47. March-April 2005.

Tymoshenko quickly transitioned from the role of Yushchenko's greatest ally, to his biggest rival. Yushchenko's Orange Coalition that led him to victory was a partnership of Tymoshenko's Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party and Yushchenko's Nasha Ukraina (Our Ukraine) bloc, as well as Oleksandr Moroz's Socialist Party. Ukrainian scholar Paul D'Anieri lists three primary reasons for the collapse of the Orange Coalition: tension within the Ukrainian politics system, control over redistribution of economic assets, and the rapid deterioration of the personal relationship between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko.[68] A rivalry between Poroshenko and Tymoshenko exacerbated tensions within the government with the former believing he could use his position and oligarch status to negotiate better gas prices with Russia despite pushback from Tymoshenko and her allies.[69] To make matters worse for the government, Tymoshenko soon found herself embroiled in a series of corruption allegations regarding her connections and enrichment to the gas industry, as well as the man deemed as Yushchenko's "first assistant of corruption", Oleksandr Tretyakov, with his corrupt dealings and connections with the nation's oil and gas industry, telecommunications industry, and board position at Oschad Bank, Ukraine's largest bank at the time.[70] These issues led to Poroshenko and Tretyakov resigning from their positions within months of taking office. Yushchenko eventually forced Tymoshenko out of office by forcibly dissolving parliament eight months into her term in office. Such circumstances allowed for Yanukovych to take advantage of the divisions within the Orange Coalition to spring board back into government during the next parliamentary elections.

[68] See 7. pp. 141-142.
[69] Roman Kupchinsky. "Ukraine: Corruption Allegations Abound." *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. September 8, 2005. www.rferl.org.
[70] Ibid.

The 2006 parliamentary elections were marked by a major electoral victory by the Party of Regions and total collapse of the Orange Coalition with their socialist allies vying instead to form a coalition with the Party of Regions and Communist Parties. The inability of Yushchenko's Fatherland Party to stay united with Tymoshenko's bloc led to them directly competing with one another, and not competing with nor targeting votes in eastern and southern Ukraine that went to the Party of Regions. In the aftermath of the election, there was a parliamentary crisis due to mistrust within the Orange Coalition members trying to form a government and disagreement over whether Poroshenko or Moroz should be speaker of parliament.[71] This is why the Socialist Party of Ukraine left the Orange Coalition for the opposition, which led to Yanukovych returning as prime minster. The vote tallies were as follows: Party of Regions received 32.14% and 186 seats; Tymoshenko's bloc received 22.29% with 129 seats; Our Ukraine received 13.95% with 81 seats; the Socialist Party received 5.69% with 33 seats; the Communist Party received 3.66% with 21 seats; and 24.6% of the votes went to parties that did not reach the 3% threshold necessary to receive parliamentary representation.[72] Of the votes cast, the vast majority of support for the Party of Regions came from regions in southern and eastern Ukraine, notably the Donbas and Crimea. Yushchenko's support base came from western Ukraine around Lviv. Tymoshenko's support was mostly in northern and central Ukraine, centered around Kyiv. The Party of Regions ultimately made a deal with the Socialist Party that if they formed a coalition with them and the Communist Party, Morez would be name speaker of parliament and Yanukovych as prime minister. The agreement was set and both men took their positions.

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[71] See 60

[72] "Ukraine Parliamentary and Local Elections: Election Observation Final Report." *The International Republican Institute.* Washington, D.C.. March 26, 2006.

Another parliamentary crisis ensued in 2007 and with it more elections. It resulted from infighting between the majority aligning with the prime minster while the minority was allied with the president. This was partially fueled by Yushchenko's cabinet members being paid upwards of $300,000 for switching to the Party of Regions to oppose the president.[73] The plan was to reach a parliamentary super-majority of 300 votes to override the president's veto and pass constitutional changes limiting his power. The results of the election are as follows: the Party of Regions received 34.37% of the vote and 175 seats; Tymoshenko's bloc won 30.71% of the vote and 156 seats; Our Ukraine/People's Self-Defense won 14.15% of the vote and 72 seats; the Communist Party won 5.39% of the vote and 27 seats; and the Lytvyn bloc, a centrist bloc, led by Volodymr Lytvyn won 3.96% of the vote and 20 seats.[74] The Socialist Party fell short of the 3% threshold, being punished for its alliance with the Party of Regions in the previous election. Tymoshenko's bloc won big in the election and dominated in Yushchenko's home region of western Ukraine. Once again, she returned to the prime ministership by forming a coalition with Yushchenko's party. In her final term as prime minster, Tymoshenko would attempt to usurp Yushchenko's power and authority by passing legislation aimed at increasing her positional powers at his expense.[75] He responded by withdrawing his party from the coalition, hoping it would spark new elections as he did not have the authority at the moment to call new elections. Tymoshenko was able to barter a deal and formed a new coalition with her bloc, Our Ukraine, and the Lytvyn Bloc, making its leader the new speaker of parliament. This

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[73] See 7.

[74] "Ukraine Parliamentary Elections: Election Observation Final Report." *The International Republican Institute.* Washington, D.C.. September 30, 2007.

[75] Yuri Zarakhovich. "Why Ukraine's Pro-Western Coalition Split." *Time.* September 4, 2008. www.time.com.

third crisis was tied directly with Russia and will be discussed in the section on Yushchenko's

policies towards Russia.

Ukrainization Politics in the Yushchenko Era

Yushchenko should be considered a nationalistic political figure during his tenure in

politics and this can be traced to his western Ukrainian base, the heart of Ukrainian nationalist

thought and opinion. During his term in office, Yushchenko pushed back on proposals put

forward by the Party of Regions to give Russianness an equal and national position to that of

Ukrainianism. Ukraine struggled for its first two decades trying to find an identity due to its

ethnic and linguistic split of Ukrainians living mostly in the west and north, and Russians living

in the south and east. The Party of Regions developed a platform for the 2006 parliamentary

elections that included: making Russian a second national language alongside Ukrainian, a more

pro-Russian foreign policy, regionalist identity, and converting Ukraine into a federation. The

focus points for this agenda will be on Russian as a national language, foreign policy, and

Ukraine as a federation, as well as propositions put forward by Yushchenko that were opposed

by the opposition and Russia.

The first point of focus for the opposition was making Russian a second national

language, a policy fervently opposed by Yushchenko and his allies. The Ukrainian language is

enshrined in Article 10 of the Ukrainian constitution as the nation's sole language.[76] This was

done so despite the commonality of the Russian language in urban centers such as Kyiv and in

the oblasts of southern and eastern Ukraine, where it enjoys majority status; all of which was

discussed in detail in the second chapter. Language is an instrumental feature in defining

nationhood for a state and its people. British historian Eric Hobsbawn argues that "the privileged

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[76] Chapter 1, Article 10. *Constitution of Ukraine.* 1996.

use of any language as the only language of education and culture in a country is, thus, political, ideological, or, at best, pragmatic."[77] Nationalist movements have traditionally used language as a cornerstone for nationhood and, due to this fact, we must consider language to be an indispensable aspect of nation status. Western Ukrainians want Ukrainian to be the sole language of their country because it is an indistinguishable aspect of their nation status. Russian speakers, however, exist throughout the country, causing political tensions surrounding Ukraine's nationhood. They see recognition of Russianness having national status as detrimental to that. This also feeds into their disagreements with the Party of Regions regarding the federalization of Ukraine. Federalizing the country would entail giving regions more autonomy and therefore political and cultural freedom to keep regionalized barriers to a national Ukrainian identity. Therefore, the issues regarding language, federalism, and, to a lesser extent, relations with Russia are all intertwined. The failures of the opposition to implement laws raising the status of Russian at the national level were revisited upon Yanukovych winning the presidential election in 2010.

The next issue is the federalization of Ukraine and its impacts on domestic politics. As stated previously, federalizing Ukraine would inevitably maintain a more regionalized identity in the country, allowing Russian speakers and ethnic Russians to have some cultural and regional autonomy separate from their counterparts in northern and western Ukraine. This was a policy sought not only by the Party of Regions, but would also by Putin and the Russian government in the 2010s.[78] Doing so allows Russia to maintain influence within the *Novorossiya* regions of southern and eastern Ukraine. This will be revisited in more detail in the next chapter when

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[77] Eric Hobsbawn. "Language, Culture, and National Identity." *Social Research*. Vol. 63, no. 4. Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 1072. Winter 1996.
[78] Kelly Lilly. "Kiev Sees Russian Federalization Plans as Attempt to Destroy Ukraine." *The Washington Post.* April 5, 2014.

examining the Minsk agreements following the annexation of Crimea. Federalization was never

a serious prospect under Yushchenko for obvious reasons. It allows for more Russian influence

in the region and is antithetical to the forced unified nationalism sought by many Ukrainian

nationalists, creating a regional divide.[79] This divide is much more pronounced in the Crimean,

Luhansk, and Donetsk oblasts but is evident throughout southern and eastern Ukraine due to the

difference in language.

Putin has used the *russkii mir* as a tool for maintaining influence and referring to many of

these people as "compatriots" to the Russian Federation.[80] After the Orange Revolution, Putin's

use of the *russkii mir* became a primary tool in Russia's foreign policy in the "near abroad."[81]

This was met with pushback from Yushchenko using Ukrainian nationalism to fortify a more

unified national identity. Yushchenko began with policies to reinforce the Ukrainian position

regarding the Holodomor as a recognized genocide perpetrated by Joseph Stalin and the Soviet

government. In 2006, he introduced a draft law to parliament to formally recognize the

Holodomor as genocide.[82] Since 1998, there has been a national day commemorating those who

perished in the famine on November 25, but it was not officially recognized as a genocide. The

following year Yushchenko pressed for denial of the Holodomor as a genocide to be a criminal

offense, similar to the criminality of Holocaust denial in some countries.[83] The law would pass

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[79] See 41

[80] Michał Wawrzonek. "The 'Russian World' and Ukraine." In *Politics of the Russian Language Beyond Russia*. Edited by Christian Noack. Edinburgh University Press. pp. 19-44. Edinburgh, UK. 2021.

[81] Ibid

[82] "Yushchenko to Introduce a Draft Law on Recognizing Holodomor as an Act of Genocide." *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group*. Kharkiv, Ukraine. October 26, 2006. www.khpg.org.

[83] "Holodomor and Holocaust Denial to be a Criminal Offense." *День (The Day)*. Kyiv, Ukraine. April 3, 2007. www.day.kyiv.ua/en.
Access to law only available in Ukrainian. www.zakon.rada.gov.ua.

with most opposition coming from the Communist Party, but also from over 200 abstentions by members of the Party of Regions. This also included measures to erect monuments and spread awareness throughout the country about the famine. Russia believed Yuschenko was using the famine to gain political favor domestically, arguing that the Holodomor occurring during mass famine throughout the Soviet Union and to ignore such a fact was insulting to other nationalities.[84] There was additional opposition within Ukraine to Yushchenko and his allies declaring it a genocide from the head of the Communist Party claiming that there was no evidence for it.[85]

Yushchenko also pursued romanticizing and memorializing many Ukrainian nationalist heroes, such as Stepan Bandera, despite their connections to anti-Semitism, short-termed collaboration with Nazis early in World War II, and fascism. In addition to Bandera, Yushchenko honored veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UAP) led by Bandera and tried unsuccessfully to give them veteran status.[86] Such measures by Yushchenko were meant to stir up nationalistic fervor and help create a national mythos surrounding Ukrainian independence and nationality, a common tactic used by many nationalist movements. He created the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory with the intention that it be used to help create a national myth around Bandera, the UAP, and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), all of which have ties to fascism and anti-semitism.[87] The nationalist narrative being that they were a guerrilla

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[84] Laura Sheeter. "Ukraine Remembers Famine Horror." *BBC News*. London, UK. November 24, 2007.
[85] Ibid
[86] Illia Ponomarenko. "Former WWII Nationalist Guerillas Granted Veteran Status in Ukraine." *Kyiv Post.* March 26, 2019. www.kyivpost.com.
[87] Ivan Katchanovski."Terrorists or National Heroes? Politics and Perceptions of the OUN and the UPA in Ukraine." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol 48, no. 2/3. University of California Press. pp. 217-228. June/September 2015.

unit used to fight Soviet, German, and Polish forces. It completely ignores the fact that they aided in the mass killing of Jews in what is now western Ukraine (then southern Poland), and attempts to justify the mass killings of Polish civilians in the late 1930s and early 1940s.[88]

Relations with Russia

Ukrainian relations with Russia during the Yushchenko era marked a decline in collaboration and growth in confrontation between the two states. Putin's failure in the Orange Revolution sparked a renewed interest in ensuring Ukrainian westernization could be stopped or the very least heavily mitigated in one way or another. Putin's belief in the spread of the Orange Revolution was solidified by street protests in Moscow in 2005 over pension payments, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in March that same year that deposed its longtime ruler Askar Akayev.[89] Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov proclaimed the Kremlin views and narrative surrounding the color revolutions as "exports of revolution to CIS states…", doubling down the belief that they were artificial revolutions meant to disrupt the Russian sphere.[90] Yushchenko's policies soured relations with Russia as he pursued closer ties with the West. Along with memorializing Nazi collaborators, he aligned with Georgia in the 2008 Georgia-Russia War, stated that he would not extend Russia's lease on the naval base in Sevastopol, actively sought membership in both the EU and NATO, and engaged in disputes over gas exports with Putin and later Medvedev when he became president in 2008.[91]

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[88] Ibid

[89] Claire Bigg. "Protests Across Russia Force Putin to Double Increase in Pension Payments." *The Guardian.* January 19, 2005. www.theguardian.com.

[90] Richard Haas. "The World in the 21st Century: Addressing New Threats and Challenges." *The Council on Foreign Relations*. Interview. January 13, 2005. www.cfr.org.

[91] See 7.

The gas disputes occurred in 2006 and 2009 and led to direct involvement from the European Union due to their gas imports being cut in both instances. The first dispute in 2006 was over Ukrainian gas payments to Russia and the cost associated with them. Russia had previously lowered the prices in 2004 believing lower energy prices would aid Yanukovych in his election campaign.[92] Gazprom, Russia's state-owned gas company, did not want to be stuck with selling Ukraine well under-market value gas without Russia being able to receive political reassurances like they do in states such as Belarus. In December of 2005 they gave Ukraine an ultimatum, agree to a major price-hike or see their gas supply cut off in the middle of winter. The EU got involved after Gazprom followed through on promises that led to gas shortages in Ukraine and in the EU. Much of the EU's natural gas imports from Russia went through Ukraine at this time and this would lead the former to propose the Nord Stream pipeline with Germany as an alternative to avoid future European cuts in the event of a dispute between Ukraine and Russia. They ultimately came up with a deal that resulted in Ukraine's gas prices doubling as well as added fees for consumption.[93] The 2009 crisis was also a result of Ukraine's inability to pay for gas. This crisis was exacerbated by its domestic turmoil and infighting between oligarchs and politicians. Tymoshenko was ultimately the one who ended the crisis by agreeing with Russian leaders to move Ukraine towards European prices for gas.[94] The deal was criticized by both Yushchenko and Yanukovych and would be used as a pretext by the latter to imprison her on corruption charges.

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[92] Alexander Motyl. "Ukraine vs. Russia: The Politics of an Energy Crisis." *Insight Turkey*. Vol. 7, no. 4. SET VAKFI Iktisadi Isletmesi. pp. 26–31. October-December 2006.
[93] Ibid
[94] See 7.

Munich and Bucharest: Putin Breaks with the West

Yushchenko made NATO membership a goal of the Ukrainian government after it had

previously been abandoned by his predecessor. He began this by prioritizing the modernization

of Ukraine's military in line with the standards of NATO forces.[95] At the time, the concept of

Ukraine joining NATO was not popular amongst the public and the Party of Regions used this to

push against membership, believing that a national referendum on the issue would be the best

course.[96] In 2008, Yushchenko's cabinet approved a four year plan to raise awareness and

support for NATO membership after polling came out that less than a third of Ukrainians

supported accession to NATO.[97] After years of defeat and failure to receive an invitation for

membership, Yushchenko got his wish in 2008 at the Bucharest Summit. Putin at this point was

in the process of breaking with the West, having made a speech in 2007 at the Munich Security

Conference beginning that process.

Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference formally established Putin's open

distrust of Western institutions and is where he begins actively opposing their foreign policy

prerogatives. In his speech he stated that "we are seeing greater and greater disdain for the

principles of international law" and that "first and foremost, the United States, has overstepped

its national borders in every way."[98] Putin argued before the international community that the

United States was an obstacle to international stability and was attempting to institute its will by

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[95] Marten Malek. "The 'Western Vector' of the Foreign and Security Policy of Ukraine." *Journal of Slavic Military Studies.* Vol. 22, no. 4. Taylor & Francis Group. pp. 515-542. 2009.
[96] Ibid
[97] See 95.
[98] "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy." Speech given by Vladimir Putin. *Office of the President of Russia.* February 10, 2007. www.en.kremlin.ru.

force, using its position as a hegemon to do so. His examples include its disregard for international institutions such as the UN, its unwillingness to ratify the adapted Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and deploying new missile systems in central Europe.[99] He additionally argued against the expansion of NATO into eastern Europe as it was and continues to be a national security risk for Russia. This comes after years of being sidelined by the Bush administration in the foreign policy arena on significant issues such as Iraq and NATO expansion in 2004, as well as Putin's interpretation of Western orchestrated coups in the color revolutions, most notably Ukraine's Orange Revolution. Putin's speech is the beginning of a major pushback to American foreign policy interests by a major international actor. One year later after the Bucharest Summit he would respond for the first time using the Russian military.

The Bucharest Summit of 2008, held in Romania, is the meeting where NATO officially began deliberations to offer NATO membership to Ukraine and Georgia. Prior to the meeting, Yushchenko along with Tymoshenko sent a letter to the NATO Secretary General requesting a Membership Action Plan. Putin was also invited to the summit to participate in bilateral NATO-Russia talks regarding missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. Former Ambassador to Russia Williams Burns noted that "Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of red-lines for all the Russian elite" and "it will create fertile soil for Russian meddling in Crimea and eastern Ukraine."[100] The failure for the United States in this conference was not getting support from Western European allies to formally present Ukraine and Georgia with a Membership Action

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[99] Ibid

[100] John J. Mearsheimer. "The Causes and Consequences of the Ukraine War." *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 21. Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development. pp.18-19. Summer 2022.

Plan.[101] Bush voiced support prior to the summit in July after receiving support from within his cabinet from men such as Vice President Dick Cheney. This set up a situation at the end of the summit where there was still disagreement over when Ukraine should receive membership. However, a declaration was made at the end stating that "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO" and "…these countries will become members of NATO."[102] Putin knew his time was running short to prevent Ukraine from attaining NATO membership and he had to act soon to prevent the alliance from further encroaching on Russia's border and within its claimed sphere of influence. Probably the most memorable statement made by Putin at the summit is what he is reported to have said to Bush. When they met, he reportedly said, "You realize, George, that Ukraine is not even a state! What is Ukraine? A part of its territory belongs to Eastern Europe, while another part, a significant one, was given over by us!"[103] Here Putin begins espousing what he has probably believed for quite some time, that Ukraine is a made-up country with no legitimacy.

As a reaction to the open ambitions of NATO to one day extend membership to Ukraine and Georgia, Putin invaded Georgia under the pretext of defending ethnic Russians in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the northern half of the country. The conflict only lasted eight days and ended in a ceasefire with Georgia losing total control over the regions.[104] Without them, Georgia as of 2022 still has no path toward NATO membership. This

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[101] Herni de Grossouvre. and Côme Carpentier de Gourdon. "The Nato Summit in Bucharest: Origins and Consequences for Europe of a Historic US Defeat." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*. Vol. 12, no. 3. Kapur Surya Foundation. pp. 84-93. Autumn 2008.
[102] "Bucharest Summit Declaration." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.* NATO Press Release. April 3, 2008.
[103] See 95. p. 539.
[104] See 19

is the first in a series of foreign policy moves made by Putin to obstruct American foreign policy ambitions.

Conclusion

The 2000s were a decade marked by drastic change in foreign policy relations between Russian and Ukraine as well as Russia and the West. Ultimately the decade is marked by failures in all three countries in the foreign policy arena. For Putin, he failed to create a more unifying arena for Russo-European security in which Russia had equal say on matters relating to foreign policy and security in the region; he failed to mitigate Ukraine's elite campaign to westernize the country and move away from Russia; and he failed to elevate Russia's international status with cooperation with the United States. For the United States, Bush failed to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and he allowed for relations with Putin and Russia to disintegrate in order to spearhead his foreign policy agenda in Europe and the Middle East. Ukraine failed at finally receiving a Membership Action Plan from NATO and at making progress in their pursuit of a pathway to EU membership.

Russia in the 2010s will continue pursuing the Ukraine issue but will have an easier time with their leadership with Yanukovich making a comeback and winning the presidency in 2010. Putin's next push will be for further integration from CIS members with the Eurasian Economic Community (EEA) and will push for Ukraine's inclusion as a last option for peaceful solutions to the conflict between the two. After the surprise ouster of his ally in Kyiv, Russia will finally reintegrate Crimea into Russia through a forceful annexation of the peninsula in 2014. The first half of the 2010s will see Russia take a more offensive foreign policy turn on Ukraine, ensuring that their positions are met regardless of the international criticism and pushback by Ukraine. This will be marked by Putin's official return to the presidency in 2012.

Chapter V: Yanukovych, Putin, and the Maiden Revolution

       The decline of Yushchenko was caused by the collapse of the fragile Orange Coalition,

made up of Ukrainian nationalists, oligarchs, and centrists. This collapse was marked by

divisions over power and corruption, giving rise to the opposition Party of Regions and its leader

Viktor Yanukovych. His return to political prowess and eventual presidential victory in 2010

changed the course of Ukraine's political direction, albeit temporarily. When faced with an

ultimate decision on whether to choose Russia or the EU, Yanukovych would choose Moscow

and cause political unrest not seen since the Orange Revolution in 2004. The fallout of the

turmoil would permanently affect the relations between Ukraine, Russia, and the West and Putin

began making hard foreign policy decisions in an attempt to forcibly change the course of

foreign policy and international security in Eastern Europe.

Yanukovich Makes a Comeback

The decline of Yushchenko was marked by the comeback of Yanukovych and the

strengthening of the Party of Regions. Over the course of five years, he was able to refurbish his

image away from the unpopular criminal into a stronger, more appealing politician thanks to the

help of American political consultant and future campaign manager for Donald Trump, Paul

Manafort. Manafort helped to change Yanukovych's appeal domestically and internationally by

convincing many leaders that he was supportive of European integration and was much more

sophisticated than he appeared in 2004.[1] His chief rival in the election was Prime Minister Yulia

Tymoshenko, who used nationalist and anti-Russian rhetoric as the basis for her campaign and

appeal. Yushchenko's inability to live up to campaign promises, a stagnant economy, and the

continuation of widespread corruption within the government prevented him from having

popular appeal in 2010. He ran nonetheless but only received 5.5% of the popular vote in the

first round of voting.

The election played well into Yanukovych's favor in part due to the 2008 global

recession which hit Ukraine's economy hard, reducing its GDP output by 15%. Given that

Tymoshenko was the prime minster throughout the financial crisis and the 2009 gas crisis with

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[1] Simon Shuster. "How Paul Manafort Helped Elect Russia's Man in Ukraine." *Time*. October 31, 2017. www.time.com.

Russia, he could campaign against her as an outsider who could be a competent manager of the government. There was also a sense of growing apathy and, to an extent, hostility towards European integration after multiple failures by Yushchenko to successfully sign an association with the European Union.[2] Tymoshenko was positioning herself as nationalist, middle ground candidate who believed Ukraine could exist in a middle-ground area between the EU and Russia and used her energy connections to pursue that goal.[3] Yanukovych, who was still the more pro-Russia candidate, softened his tone on the matter as he wanted to be perceived as a candidate open to European integration, pursuing modernization, and not wholly bought into greater integration with Russia despite his party fully support it.

The second round of voting took place in February 2010 and resulted in Yanukovych winning with 49% of the vote compared with Tymoshenko's 45.5%.[4] The demographic results of the election were similar to those in 2004 as Yanukovych and his Party of Regions dominating the vote in southern and eastern Ukraine while Tymoshenko won over 80% of the vote in western Ukraine. It is also worth noting lower voter turnout worked in Yanukovych's favor as he won the 2010 election with 360,000 fewer votes than he earned in his 2004 defeat while Tymoshenko received 3.5 million fewer votes than Yushchenko did that same year.[5] The outcome sparked Tymoshenko to immediately dispute the results of the election, stressing fraud and interference. In the lead up to the election, both candidates believed that the other would

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[2] Volodymyr Yermolenko. "Mutual Distrust Blurs EU-Ukraine Summit." *EUobserver.* December 7, 2009. www.euobserver.com.

[3] Elena Gnedina. "EU Running on Empty in Ukraine." *EUobserver.* November 16, 2009. www.euobserver.com.

[4] Nathaniel Copsey and Natalia Shapovalova. "The Ukrainian Presidential Election of 2010." *Representation.* Vol. 46, no. 2. Taylor and Francis Group. pp. 211-225. 2010.

[5] Ibid

attempt to win the election through fraudulent means so it is no surprise that she made these accusations upon losing.[6] On February 17th she successfully appealed to the Higher Administrative Court of Ukraine to have the election results suspended while they reviewed her case for having the election thrown out due to fraud.[7] Yanukovych had already received congratulations and acceptance for his victory from the United States, United Kingdom, the EU, Russia, and many other international leaders and organizations. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitored the election and noted that it was my their standards a free and fair election, though consistent accusations of fraud hurt voter confidence in the fairness of it.[8] After much pressure from denial in the face of evidence, Tymoshenko withdrew her appeal three days after the election's suspension and resigned from the prime ministership, allowing Yanukovych to assume the presidency on February 25th without any doubt of his victory.

The Yanukovych Presidency

With Yanukovych in the president's office and a more pro-Russian political party heading the majority coalition in parliament, many of the more nationalistic agendas pursued by Yushchenko and Tymoshenko were set to be discarded. The first go was the posthumous award to Stepan Bandera as a "Hero of Ukraine" shortly after taking office. Other items would also be

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[6] See 5

[7] "Ukrainian Election Result Suspended After PM's Appeal." *BBC News*. February 17, 2010. www.news.bbc.co.uk.

[8] "Ukraine: Presidential Election 17 January 2010 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report." *OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*. Warsaw, Poland. April 28, 2010.

on the agenda: the position of the Russian language within Ukraine, choosing whether to enter

into an association agreement with the EU or EEA with Russia, punishing his rivals and attempts

to quell the opposition, and overall relations with Russia. His presidency was mired by

controversy and continued the two decades long period of persistent corruption within the

government. He may go down as one of if not the most corrupt president in Ukraine's history.

Stepan Bandera's recognition was revoked shortly after Yanukovych assumed power. He

had backing from the Party of Regions who put forth legislative propositions to aid in annulling

the award. In April 2010 a court in Donetsk ruled that Bandera could not receive the award due

to him not ever being a citizen of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and that Yushchenko's

presidential decree was therefore illegal. The Constitutional Court of Ukraine refused to get

involved in the matter and declined to hear a case. As of 2011, the order was declared annulled

by the presidential office.[9] However, the legacy of Bandera and his use in nationalist politics was

not over and further debates over his legacy and attempts to memorialize and celebrate his legacy

would return in the latter half of the 2010s.

Being elected by a slim majority and not having a majority hold on parliament,

Yanukovych needed to find a way to consolidate power. He was successful but did so using

illegal and corrupt techniques. This process started by gutting the constitutional amendments

passed in 2004, as well as the various laws passed by parliament under Yushchenko meant to

move power away from the presidency towards parliament with the prime minister. After

assuming power, Yanukovych set out to change the power structure in parliament by usurping

the majority. He did so by convincing many members of the elected majority to switch sides and

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[9] "Update: Stepan Bandera is No Longer a Hero of Ukraine." *Kyiv Post*. Staff Report. January 12, 2011. www.kyivpost.com.

share in the new spoils of power. To bypass parliamentary rules, the Party of Regions along with several independent independent MPs to allow for the Party of Regions to form new a new governing coalition and usurp power from Tymoshenko's coalition.[10] In March they successfully formed a new coalition known as Stability and Reform with the Communists, the Lytvyn Bloc, and 16 MPs who crossed party lines, illegally, known as the *tushki* or "roadkill" in Russian.[11] Two years prior, the Ukrainian Constitutional Court had ruled that individuals could not be used to create coalitions within parliament but stayed silent when Yanukovych did so in 2010, setting a new precedent and essentially guaranteeing him control over the new parliament and high court. He then began appointing many loyalists to government such as longtime ally Mykola Azarov to the position of prime minister. With effective control over parliament and the executive cabinet, he could then move onto overturning constitutional amendment passed abruptly in the wake of the Orange Revolution. The Party of Regions did not have the 300 votes necessary to amend the constitution so they went about passing laws that violated certain amendments so that the Constitutional Court would declare them unconstitutional.[12] It is unknown how he was able to consolidate power within the Constitutional Court but it is believed that bribery was involved.[13] With all three under his control, Yanukovych moved onto his policy priorities that would be the mark of his short-lived presidency: complete consolidation of power with a loyal state security force, get rid of Tymoshenko as an effect leader of the opposition, prep

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[10] Alexander J. Motyl. "Ukrainian Blues: Yanukovych's Rise, Democracy's Fall." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 89, no. 4. Council on Foreign Relations. pp. 125-136. July/August 2010.
[11] Ibid. p. 127.
[12] Jose Antonio Cheibub, Zachary Elkins, and Tom Ginsburg. "Beyond Presidentialism and Parliamentarism." *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 44, no. 3. Cambridge University Press. pp. 523-524. July 2014.
[13] Paul D'Anieri. *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. 2019.

for the 2012 parliamentary elections, ensure the Russian language has an equatable status in the country to Ukrainian, and relations with the EU and Russia.

Yanukovych was poised to create a more autocratic and corrupt state and had the tools at his disposal to do so. The final step in consolidation was ensuring the state security forces were loyal to him and the government to prevent another Orange Revolution. Scholar Taras Kuzio argues that his temporary consolidation of power is a sort of "Putinization" of Ukrainian security politics.[14] Being from the Donetsk oligarch faction, Yanukovych believed in neo-Soviet, autocratic politics. Stability was one of the primary motivators behind this line of thinking and is one of the reasons why Putin was allied with the *Siloviki* (Russia's security faction) and spoke openly about the importance of stability in geopolitics. Yanukovych's consolidation was temporary for a few reasons, aside from the revolution on Maiden in 2013. First, he unable to completely turn the whole of the oligarchy against the opposition and in support of the government. Putin was successful in doing this within his first five years in the presidency by setting rules for the elite to stay out of politics, or risk being punished by the state. Yanukovych, on the other hand, wanted the oligarchs to be involved in politics but to only support him and withdraw support from the opposition.[15] The most consequential result of this would be allowing the media continued influence in politics as it proved to be his downfall three years later. The most important difference between the "Putinization" of Ukraine and Putin's Russia is that Yanukovych can correctly be considered a president of and for the oligarchs in the Donbas

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[14] Taras Kuzio. "Russianization of Ukrainian National Security Policy under Viktor Yanukovych." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. Vol. 25, no. 4. Taylor & Francis Group. pp. 558-581. 2012.
[15] Ibid

region, while Putin set out to set new rules and boundaries between the state and the Russian oligarchy, not to incorporate them into it necessarily.

A final sticking point for Yanukovych was imprisoning his years long rival Yuliya Tymoshenko. Their history dates back to them aligning in opposing factions during the Orange Revolution. In 2011, the state prosecutor's office opened an investigation into her role in the 2009 gas negotiations with Russia, claiming it was possibly linked to an abuse of power on her part and ended up spiking gas prices in the country.[16] With the government and security services firmly under Yanukovych's control, the decision was predetermined. She was sentenced to seven years in prison in October of 2011. The judges in the case ended up receiving promotions and financial benefits for their cooperation.[17] Physical coercion became the political norm in Ukraine sparked criticism from outside human rights organizations. One example is Freedom House, an NGO dedicated to advancing and promoting human rights and democracy, downgraded Ukraine from a free nation to a partly-free nation, in their 2011 survey of political rights and civil liberties throughout the world, due to the increasing authoritarianism of Yanukovych's government.[18]

In early 2012, Yanukovych signed the 2012 Law on the Principles of the State Language Policy. This was the culmination of two decades of internal debates within Ukraine of what kind of status the Russian language should enjoy. Overall, it has little more than a symbolic effect on the status of language within the country. Most media enjoyed in Ukraine at this point was in Russian and education outside of western Ukraine was available in Russian, for the most part.

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[16] Olzhas Auyzov. "Ukraine-Russia Gas Deal: Tymoshenko's Biggest Bet." *Reuters*. October 11, 2011. www.reuters.com.
[17] Serhiy Kudelia. "The House That Yanukovych Built." *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 25, no. 3. Johns Hopkins University Press. pp. 19-34. July 2014.
[18] Edited by Arch Puddington, Aili Piano, Eliza Young, and Tyler Roylance. "Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties." *Freedom House*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. New York, NY. 2011.

Most elected Ukrainian leaders, including the nationalistic figures such as Tymoshenko, tried using passable Ukrainian in public but privately still spoke Russian. This is a common theme and still exists as of 2022 with President Zelensky, himself a native Russian speaker. In 2012, this issue was a hot topic within nationalistic circles, Russian speaking regions, as well as for Russia. The nationalists wanted to assert that Ukraine was fully Ukrainian and that meant moving the whole of the country away from any semblance of Russianness, most importantly the spoken language. However, Russian as a popular language, is the native language to a large share of the population in southern and eastern Ukraine, and is popular in urban centers such as Kyiv and Kharkiv. It was important for Russia because the ethnic and linguistic Russians allowed for it to assert influence as well as historical and cultural connections to the country. Ultimately this had been a campaign promise fulfillment by Yanukovych. The law itself could not designate Russian as an official national language due to it requiring a constitutional amendment, but they worked around this by allowing oblasts to declare official regional languages within the country. This included other languages besides Russian but it was meant to "mobilize a pro-Russian electorate" and thereby creating a culture war, which Ukrainian nationalists had spent years pining for.[19] The opposition was so appalled and against the bill that a fistfight ensued between the pro-Yanukovych and pro-Tymoshenko factions in parliament while the bill was being deliberated.[20] Some protests and rioting also broke out in Kyiv after the law was passed. Tymoshenko commented from prison, stating that elevating the status of the Russian language

[19] Volodymyr Ishchenko. "Ukraine's Fractures: Interview." *New Left Review*. Issue 87. London, UK. May/June 2014.
[20] "Brawl Erupts in Ukraine Parliament Over Russian Language Bill." *The Telegraph*. May 24, 2012. web.archive.org/web/20120525003749/http://www.telegraph.co.uk.

was "a crime against Ukraine, the nation, its history, and the people."[21] Attempts would be made in 2014 to repeal the law and this would be used partly as justification for Russian intervention in Crimea when Yanukovych fled the country.

With Tymoshenko out of parliament and therefore unable to be a force of opposition to him, Yanukovych focused on ensuring the Party of Regions came out victorious in the 2012 parliamentary elections. This is considered the most corrupt election cycle in independent Ukraine's history.[22] Prior to the election, parliament passed many reforms to make party representation in parliament more difficult. These reforms include: raising the threshold to be represented from 3% to 5%; eliminating voting bloc factions for election purposes; and using a mixed voting system whereby half of the seats were voted in my national, proportional vote and the other half by single member districts elected using a first past the post-election system.[23] The mixed voting system had previously been adopted in 1998 and 2002. These laws gave the Party of Regions an advantage but also allowed for smaller parties and more nationalistic parties to succeed in the election. The Party of Regions was able to succeed due to the inclusion of single member district seats and mass fraud. The results were as follows: The Party of Regions won 30% of the vote and received a total of 185 seats; Batkivshchyma, Tymoshenko's party, won 25.54% of the vote and received a total of 101 seats; the United Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) won 14% of the vote and received 40 seats; The Communist Party of Ukraine won 13.2% of the vote and received 32 seats; Svoboda, a radical ethno-nationalist party that emerged

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[21] Howard Amos. "Ukraine Language Bill Prompts Clashes Between Police and Protestors." *The Guardian*. June 5, 2012.
[22] Richard Sakwa. *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. Bloomsbury Academic. London, UK. 2015.
[23] Mark Rachkevych. "Experts: Proposed Election Law Casts Cloud Over Next Year's Parliamentary Contest." *Kyiv Post*. October 3, 2011. www.kyivpost.com.

as an ally to Tymoshenko and the opposition, won 10.5% of the vote and received 37 seats; and the remaining 50 seats were won by several smaller parties and independent candidates.[24] Of the 185 seats won by the Party of Regions, 113 of them were from single member districts, swept seats in southern and eastern Ukraine for proportional seats but single member seats were throughout the country. Svoboda enjoyed support in far western Ukraine around and near the city of Lviv, the heart of Ukrainian ultranationalism. Tymoshenko's party won seats in central and western Ukraine.

The OSCE reported stated the following: "the tabulation of results was assessed negatively in 77 of the 161 DECs (District Election Commissioners) observed. Transparency of the tabulation process was limited, especially since access to rooms where results were entered into the computer system was restricted to only a few authorized people. OSCE/ODIHR EOM (Election Observation Monitor) observers reported cases of tampering with election materials delivered by PECs (Precinct Election Commissioners), errors and omissions in PEC protocols and mistakes in data transmitted to the CEC. Some 25 DECs observed by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM experienced serious problems during tabulation, including cases of manipulation of results, interference in the work of election commissions."[25] After the election, the opposition parties (Batkivshchyma, UDAR, and Svoboda) formally refused to accept the results of the election and vowed to impeach Yanukovych, though doing so would be impossible without a supermajority, let alone a majority of parliament.[26]

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[24] "Ukraine: Parliamentary Elections 28 October 2012 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report." *OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*. Warsaw, Poland. January 3, 2013.
[25] Ibid. p. 3.
[26] Associated Press. "Ukraine Opposition Protests Election Results." *Kyiv Post*. November 12, 2012. www.kyivpost.com.

Between Russia and the EU

Yanukovych's diplomatic relations with Russia and the EU became a matter of choosing sides by the time he was forced out of office by the Maiden Revolution. The most important foreign policy agenda at this time was deciding whether to move forward with and formally sign an association agreement with the EU, when negotiations and conditions were met to do so, or to abandon the deal and instead choose closer ties with Russia via the Eurasian Economic Association (EEU). The EEU is Russia's Eurasian version of the EU. Ultimately, the end result of this decision gave way to years of conflict in Ukraine and heightened tensions between Ukraine and Russia as well as Russia and the West. To examine the choice at hand, we need to look at Yanukovych's relations with Putin and Medvedev in his three years in office, what the association agreement with the EU entailed, the negotiations behind it, why Russia hated the agreement, and what the EEU could have brought for Ukraine had riots not broken out in Kyiv.

Formally, Yanukovych's relations with Russia were with Russian President Medvedev until 2012 when Putin returned to the high office, but behind the scene Putin was still very much in charge of Russia. Upon his assumption of the presidency, Yanukovych was focused on repairing relations with Moscow, due to the decline under former president Yushchenko. It can be formally summarized in a 2009 letter Medvedev wrote to Yushchenko in which he criticized the president for "pro-Western policies", which included declining to extend to naval lease on the base in Sevastopol; seeking NATO membership; and a "nationalistic interpretation" of the Holodomor as a deliberate act of genocide.[27] To make matters worse for Yanukovych, Putin's

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[27] Michael Schwirtz. "Moscow Signals Widening Rift with Ukraine." *The New York Times*. August 11, 2009.

views of him were, at best, in low regard, but better than his hatred of Yushchenko.[28] One of his first foreign policy decisions to improve relations was granting a 25 year extension on the lease in Sevastopol, which would last through 2042.[29] In return, Ukraine was supposed to receive a 30% reduction on its gas bill from Russia. However, five days after what is known as the Kharkiv Agreement, Medvedev announced plans that were contradictory. This also resulted in a parliamentary fistfight between Yanukovych supporters and opponents, with Tymoshenko referring to it as "a black day in the history of Ukraine."[30] Opponents used eggs and smoke bombs in the parliamentary chamber to protest and disrupt the proceedings, as well. To continue this trajectory of improving relations, Yanukovych set out to appease Russia by following through on the list of demands made by Medvedev in his 2009 letter to Yushchenko, notably naming Azarov as his prime minster who in tern pursued more Russian friendly security policies.[31]

In May 2010, Yanukovych announced, after a vote of parliament, that Ukraine was returning to its non-bloc status mentioned in the 1990 Declaration of Sovereignty, which was viewed as him stressing that Ukraine would no longer seek to join NATO.[32] This did not, however, immediately include abandoning ambitions to sign the EU association agreement and integrate with Europe. The association agreement was still popular with Yanukovych's oligarchic allies in the Donbas. They wanted a more balanced approach of integration with

[28] See 15.
[29] Luke Harding. "Eggs Fly and Fists Fly in Parliament as Russia Given New Naval Base Lease." *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Taras Kuzio. *The Crimea: Europe's Next Flashpoint?* The Jamestown Foundation. Washington, D.C.. 2010.
[32] "Ukraine's Parliament Votes to Abandon NATO Ambitions." *BBC News*. June 3, 2010. www.bbc.com.

Europe while simultaneously enjoying friendly and close relations with Russia. Something that inevitably would not last as Putin views the westernization of Ukraine as a threat to Russian security and an abomination to their intrinsic historical and cultural ties of the "Greater Russia." Additionally, Yanukovych was Putin's last opportunity to peacefully coerce Ukraine back into the Russian sphere as he pursued policies antithetical to the unified Ukrainian nationalism espoused by rivals in western Ukraine.

The EU association agreement was the product of years of negotiations between Ukrainian and EU leaders. These negotiations first began in the latter half of Yushchenko's term in office and continued under Yanukovych. The primary issues surrounding the hesitancy of the EU to sign an agreement revolved around rampant corruption within the Ukrainian government, political policy concerns, and economic policy concerns. Tymoshenko's trial and imprisonment, in particular, were seen by EU member states as an obstacle to a ratified agreement.[33] In their view, Tymoshenko was a political prisoner arrested on trumped up charges.[34] Later comments by Putin reinforce this notion as he did not understand the ruling made either.[35] In 2012, the EU Parliament appointed EU Parliament President Pat Cox and former Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski on a "special mission" to Ukraine, with the intention of saving the association agreement by resolving the Tymoshenko debacle.[36] This diplomatic mission lasted eighteen

[33] Istvan Perger and Paola Buonadonna. "Tymoshenko Trial Could Jeopardize EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, Says MEPs." *European Parliament*. Press Room. October 27, 2011. www.europarl.europa.eu.
[34] "EU, Ukraine to Initial Association Deal, But Bicker Over Tymoshenko." *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. March 30, 2012. www.rferl.org.
[35] Interfax-Ukraine. "Putin: Tymoshenko Verdict Unfair." *Kyiv Post*. October 11, 2011. www.kyivpost.com.
[36] Macej Olchawa. *Mission Ukraine: The 2012-2013 Diplomatic Effort to Secure Ties with Europe*. McFarland & Co.. Jefferson, NC. 2017.

months between 2012 and 2013. Efforts made by the EU demonstrate the extent they were

willing to go to push for Ukrainian incorporation into the Western sphere. This was not looked

upon in a realist mindset of security, though this should have been considered given Russia's

stake in the region. Rather, the EU believes that the expansion of itself as an inherent good that

European states should aspire to, due to its economic and political benefits.[37] The same year that

diplomatic efforts intensified, relations worsened due to the fraudulent nature of the 2012

parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Plus, there was no certainty as to whether the agreement,

which amounted to hoping technocracy would ameliorate Ukraine's corrupt, oligarchic

government system, would effectively move Ukraine away from oligarchy in totality as many

oligarchs favored EU membership for their own business interests.[38] As these negotiations were

ongoing, Putin returned to the presidency in Russia and made Ukrainian membership in the EEU

a foreign policy priority.

Putin officially returned to the highest office in Russia in 2012 after constitutional

changes by his predecessor to allow him to run for office again. Upon his return, he continued

using rhetoric that began in the last couple years of his presidency, turning to more assertive and

nationalistic themes by focusing on Russian identity as an alternative to Western modernity and

hegemony.[39] Putin was fearful of the potential spread of previous color revolutions into Russia

and his fears amplified after a series of protests broke out in Moscow, from late 2011 to early

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[37] "Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014." *European Commission*. Brussels, Belgium. October 8, 2014.

[38] See 22.

[39] Donald R. Kelley. *Russian Politics & Presidential Power: Transformational Leadership from Gorbachev to Putin*. Sage Publications. Los Angeles, CA. 2016.

2013, regarding rigged parliamentary elections and Putin's return to the presidency in May

2012.[40] He also saw the window for stopping the westernization of Ukraine closing and needed

to act before drastic measures needed to be taken. Part of the reason for the formation of the EEU

was to coerce Ukraine away from the EU agreement and incorporate them into a Russian

economic zone of which it already shared over a third of its trade. For Russia, the EEU signified

an alternative institution from the EU but one that could also partner and cooperate with them in

the long run. It was Russia's way of liberalizing trade on its own terms and with its own rules.

Sakwa argues that the union, while a basis for the expansion and stability of a Russian hegemony

in the former Soviet space, as a pillar upon which the "Common European Home" envisioned by

Gorbachev would be built.[41] Putin formed the EEU in 2010, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan,

with the goal to form a full trade union by 2015.[42] Ukraine was at a point in its history where it

could no longer continue balancing relations between the West and Russia. It had to decide what

its future would hold.

To coerce Ukraine into the trade union, Putin used a two-pronged approach: offer trade

incentives and if those fail use political pressure. A Ukraine in the EU meant a precipitous

decline in Russian influence in the country and likely a quicker application process to joining

NATO. Russia made three arguments for Ukraine to join the EEU: market access to Russia and

other member states, a better negotiated trade deal on gas imports, and there were disadvantages

[40] Tom Parfitt. "Anti-Putin Protestors March Through Moscow." *The Guardian*. February 4, 2012. www.theguardian.com.
[41] Richard Sakwa. "How the Eurasian Elites Envisage the Role of the EEU in Global Perspective." *European Politics and Society*. Vol 17, no. S1. Taylor & Francis Group. pp. 4-22. 2016.
[42] Chris Miller. *Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia*. University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, NC. 2018.

to Ukraine joining the EU that would not be apparent in the EEU, lack of a membership

guarantee being one. This is not to mention that Russia also threatened retaliation if Ukraine

joined the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which is the EU free trade

zone.[43] In the long run, joining the EU is undoubtably more beneficial for Ukraine economically

than the EEU, but it is not a guarantee to completely stifle the corruption apparent within the

government, would not guarantee them the eventual status of a country like France or Germany,

nor would it guarantee it even moderate economic status with countries such as the Czech

Republic or Ireland. It was likely that Ukrainian accession to the EU would more than likely be

similar to that of Romania and Bulgaria, stagnant poverty and slow growth within a prosperous

free trade zone, which leads citizens to migrate to other EU member states seeking better

economic opportunities.[44] As of 2022, the prospect of Ukrainian membership in the EU has

increased in likelihood, with approval of candidate status from mounting international pressure

to forgo a more normalized candidacy process due to the Russian invasion. That will be

discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Putin's ultimate goal, as stated previously, was for greater integration of Ukraine with

Russia via the EEU. The preservation of Russian identity and Russianness in Ukraine being one

of the primary issues and goals. In July 2013, he traveled to Kyiv to mark the 1025th anniversary

of the Christianization of the Kyivan Rus' with a religious service led by Russian Patriarch

Kirill. While there, he attended a conference organized by Viktor Medvedchuk, a Ukrainian

oligarch, former chief of staff to Leonid Kuchma, and the parent of Putin's goddaughter, titled

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[43] See 14.
[44] Stephen McGrath. "Bulgaria, Romania See Benefits and Snags Since Joining EU." *The Associated Press*. January 5, 2022. www.apnews.com.

"Orthodox Slavic Values: The Basis of Civilizational Choice in Ukraine."[45] The main argument purported by the conference was that traditional, Slavic values and ideals are superior to the emerging liberalism that is the norm in Western Europe, and moving eastward. This argument for Ukrainian membership in the EEU was more of an internal argument than external but Putin nevertheless stressed the importance of unity between the Ukrainian and Russian people as a single unit. In the wake of the Maiden Revolution, Putin would turn to these themes of historical and ethnic identity in an attempt to stoke a separatist movement in the region formerly known as *Novarossiya* (New Russia), which includes the oblasts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, as well as the Donbas region.

The Maiden Revolution

The Maiden Revolution will be regarded in history as one of the most consequential events in the history of Ukraine. It marks a transition of Russo-Ukrainian relations as well as Ukrainian national identity. This is the point in which an elitist led Ukrainian nationalist movement begins to take more of a grassroots turn towards unity throughout the country, mostly. There will still be pockets of resistance but Ukrainian regionalism starts to lose its political significance due to the events of Maiden and what soon followed. To comprehend this anomaly, we need to do the following: revisit the public opinion polls discussed in chapter two to see how Maiden shaped change in domestic opinion and identity, discuss the revolution itself, see where the pockets of identity remained after, Putin's response, and how the Ukrainian response to the Minsk Agreements was influenced by this rapid change.

We must remember that prior to Maiden, public opinion throughout Ukraine was heavily divided on the issues of the EEU and EU. The pockets of collective acceptance for the issues

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[45] See 14.

were based in the industrial Donbas region and Crimea, for the EEU, and in the nationalist center of Lviv and urban Kyiv, for the EU. We should note that in November 2013, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted a national poll on Ukraine joining either the EU or EEU. When asked about EEU membership, 40.8% approved while 33.1% disapproved; and when broken down by region, 64.5% in the east and 54% in the south approved.[46] EU membership, in contrast, was approved by 66.4% in the west with minor support in central Ukraine at 43.4% approval.[47] Support for the EU is notably higher amongst younger generations of Ukraine, most likely due to their disconnect from the Soviet Union, unlike older generations where support for the EEU was the norm. NATO, however, would continue to be a divisive issue outside of western Ukraine for several years after the events of Maiden as it was still widely unpopular amongst the general population. Three events changed these views over time: the Maiden Revolution, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the separatist war in the Donbas supported by Russia.

EU membership has for years been a goal and symbol of independence and modernism by Ukrainian nationalists. An important item to note, however, is that while most in the country in 2013-2014 still did not agree with EU membership, the vast majority outside of the Donbas and Crimea did identify themselves as Ukrainian, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background. The events that transpired in those two years and beyond are proof of this. These events were transformative for Ukrainian national identity not because they suddenly created a holistic sense of what it meant to be Ukrainian, or that the population experienced a revolutionary surge of nationalistic allegiance. Rather, it proved a notion of Putin's about

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[46] David R. Marples. *Ukraine in Conflict: An Analytical Response.* E-International Relations Publishing. pp. 22-24. Bristol, UK. 2017.
[47] Ibid

Ukraine to be incorrect, that those within Ukraine who spoke and/or were ethnic Russians would relish an opportunity to rejoin Russia or at the very least separate from the Ukrainian state if given the opportunity. The ideals of Ukrainian nationalism are divisive within Ukraine just as the arguments of what constitutes a "true" American are within the United States, but people nevertheless still identify with the nation despite their differences. This is especially the case amongst younger people who do not remember or were not born during the Soviet era. The military involvement of Russia is what invariably created the circumstances for a more unified Ukrainian civic identity to take hold, ironically. However, as was just stated, Ukrainian nationalism is a divisive topic, with issues and features that are not completely agreed upon such as national figures and laws, that people continued to debate after the Maiden Revolution. These differences were so much in the Donbas region that it helped to inspire separatist ambitions within the region. Crimea and the Donbas are the only exceptions to this.

The Maiden Revolution was the result of Yanukovych buckling to pressure from both Moscow and his base in Eastern Ukraine to not sign the association agreement with the EU in favor of EEU membership and closer ties with Russia. His announcement came on November 21, 2013 and crowds began gathering soon after. Mustafa Nayyem, a journalist with *Ukrainska Pravda* (Ukrainian Truth) sent a message on Facebook calling for protests on Maiden Square, also known as Independence Square, in Kyiv.[48] These protests started small but soon grew to be in the hundreds of thousands across the country by November 29. Attempted police interference the night of November 29 to disperse the people caused protests to swell and by December there were well over 800,000 Ukrainians protesting in Kyiv and in other cities throughout Ukraine.

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[48] See 22.

The largest protests were in the cities of Kyiv and Lviv but there were smaller protests in Kharkiv and Odessa, two cities in eastern and southern Ukraine respectively.[49]

Maiden itself looks similar to the Orange Revolution but differs from it in many ways. First, the 2004 protests associated with the Orange Revolution were strictly limited to Kyiv and western Ukrainian cities such as Lviv. The Maiden Revolution had more of a national impact and showing. Second, Maiden did not have a singular leader to look to for support such as Yushchenko was in 2004, rather what formed was an opposition bloc of Yanukovych's enemies in parliament to support the demonstrations in hope of ousting him. They included Tymoshenko's Fatherland party, the ultra-nationalist Svoboda party, UADR, and Front for Change led by Arseniy Yatsenyuk.[50] Fourth, unlike the Orange protests, the Maiden protests were violent at times when Yanukovych instructed police to disperse or stop protesters by any means necessary. Later, Ukrainian authorities would claim he ordered snipers to shoot at protestors and called for Russian security aid to maintain power.[51] Finally, as the Minsk agreements will demonstrate, foreign influence to quell tensions between the rivaling factions was not as effective as in 2004.[52] Olga Onuch's survey research in Kyiv showed that most Maiden protestors were middle-aged, middle class Ukrainian males. By February, the main message was support for Ukrainian independence and to see Yanukovych impeached. Early reports of students being a main protest group responsible for organizing protests were not inaccurate, but they overlook the fact that over 67% of protesters were over the age of 30, 60%

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[49] Olga Onuch. "The Maiden and Beyond: Who Were the Protestors." *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 25, no. 3. Johns Hopkins University Press. July 2014.
[50] See 22.
[51] Maria Danilova. "Ukraine: Yanukovych Ordered Snipers to Shoot." *The Associated Press*. April 3, 2014. www.apnews.com.
[52] See 49.

were male, and that student and journalists were "early joiners" that were not involved during many of the peak points of protest and when things turned violent.[53] Less than a third of activists, therefore, were focused on EU membership so much as they were on the preservation of independence, corruption within the government, and the impeachment of Yanukovych.

By February, nationalistic rhetoric was the primary symbolism behind many of the signs and slogans of the protestors. This allowed factions from Ukraine's ultra-nationalist wing, namely Svoboda, to emerge in the midst of the chaos and gain greater international recognition and become a media frenzy in Russia.[54] While the majority of protestors were not ultra-nationalists, the more radical and Bandera idealizing groups made an impression with his symbolism and their songs of revolution. This was perfect for the Kremlin's propaganda mill and they took full advantage to label the Maiden protestors as "extremists" and "anti-semites" bent on a coup of Yanukovych.[55] Much of the symbolism, success of far-right groups in Western Ukraine between 2010-2014, and the success of the Maiden Revolution will be the basis of Russia's claims of neo-Nazis taking control of Ukraine, or that nationalism in Ukraine should be equated to nazism due to controversial figures such as Bandera.

The far-right groups associated with Maiden, aside from Svoboda, included the notorious fringe organization known as *Pravy Sektor* (The Right Sector). It was a loose group of several

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[53] Clare Saunders et al.. "Explaining Differential Protest Participation: Novices, Returners, Repeaters, and Stalwarts." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly.* Vol 17, no. 3. pp. 263-280. September 2012.
See also 49.
[54] Anton Shekhovstsov and Andreas Umland. "The Maiden and Beyond: Ukraine's Radical Right." *Journal of Democracy.* Vol. 25, no. 3. pp. 58-63. Johns Hopkins University Press. July 2014.
[55] Pravda Editorial Team. "Russia's Lavrov Slams EU and US for Double Standards on Ukraine." February 20, 2014. www.english.pravda.ru.

thousand people with little central organization but, nonetheless, was associated with far-right state assaults.[56] It was a brand name for small local groups for the most part. Svoboda, in contrast, had roots dating back to 1991 when it was called the Social-National Party of Ukraine, notorious for using neo-Nazi symbolism, militarism, and ethnic-nationalism. It changed it's name in 2004 to help its goal of attracting a broader base of supporters. The Right Sector was full of Banderite idolizers and was a collection of the following paramilitary groups: the Stepan Bandera All-Ukrainian Organization Trident, the Ukrainian National Assembly, the Social-National Assembly, and White Hammer. The goal of Svoboda partnering with the even more fringe Right Sector was to help oust Yanukovych, whom they viewed as a Russian imperialist, and after unite to form a political party with the intention to gain parliamentary seats and continue fighting for ultra-nationalist policies, but notably EU membership.[57] They viewed the EU as the key to ending Russian imperialist ambitions in Ukraine, despite the fact that the European Union would not be supportive of much of their anti-semitic rhetoric and radical policies. Membership, therefore, was more symbolic to these groups than anything. Much of their role in the protests was to instigate violence, to garner more attention for their cause, and to differentiate themselves from other leftist groups involved in Maiden; especially on the events of December 1, 2013 when protesters began violently clashing with security outside of parliament.[58] They were also responsible for the dismantling of the Lenin monument on Shevchenko Boulevard in Kyiv a week later. The violence led by these radical, right-wing

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[56] See 55.
[57] See 55.
[58] Vyacheslav Likhachev. "The 'Right Sector' and Others: The Behavior and Role of Radical Nationalists in the Ukrainian Political Crisis of Late 2013-Early 2014." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 48, no. 2/3. pp. 257–71. University of California Press. June/September 2015.

groups gave the impression to many that they represented a large portion if not most of the 800,000 protestors during that time.[59] While not the majority, they ensured the continuation and popularity of protests amongst the general populace through tight organization.[60] Their goals of bringing attention to and prolonging the Maiden Revolution were met because of that.

In response to the growing violence and notoriety of the protests, Yanukovych forced through several anti-democratic, pro-policing laws in January 2014, aimed at forcefully dispersing protestors.[61] They were similar to laws in Russia regarding political protest but included harsher sentences. Attempts to quell and stop the large crowds in Kyiv were a futile initiative by Yanukovych. There were too many people and the more radical groups in the opposition were willing to die if it meant ousting him and restoring the 2004 constitutional reforms created in the wake of the Orange Revolution. His time was running short. The Western response at this time was to fully support and embrace the Maiden protestors. The United States, as was later disclosed in a leaked phone call, was working behind the scenes to influence which opposition leader should take charge of the government as prime minister once Azarov was gone.[62] They never denied the contents of the call but rather blamed the leak on Russia.

On February 18, 2014, more violence erupted on Maiden and resulted in 28 people dying, including ten riot police officers. Two days later on February 20th mass violence ensued when snipers began firing on protestors and police, killing 39 protestors and 17 police officers. The angles of the shots suggest they came from buildings occupied by insurgents such as

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Spiegel Staff. "The Right Wing's Role in Ukrainian Protests." *Der Spiegel*. January 1, 2014. www.spiegel.de.
[61] Ibid
[62] Jonathan Marcus. "Ukraine Crisis: Transcript of Leaked Nuland-Pyatt Call." *BBC News*. February 7, 2014. www.bbc.com.

Philharmonic Hall.[63] With the level of violence increasing, leaders from Germany, France, and

Poland flew to Kyiv to broker a deal with Yanukovych to end the violence. There were six key

provisions: within 48 hours Yanukovych was to sign a bill restoring the Orange Revolution

amendments to the constitution, to allow parliament to form a "unity" government within ten

days; the new government would draft a new constitution by the end of spring 2014 to further

limit presidential powers; early presidential elections were to be held as soon as the constitution

was adopted, no later than December 2014, along with a new election commission and electoral

law; an investigation was to be held, regarding the events of Maiden, and overseen by

authorities, the opposition, and the Council of Europe; the authorities would not introduce a state

of emergency and all sides would renounce the use of force accompanied by the withdrawal of

government forces from the Maiden along with the disarming of militia groups; and the

European leaders called for a ceasefire.[64] Prior to this escalation of violence and increased

involvement from EU leaders, a Maiden Council was created in December 2013 by the main

parliamentary opposition leaders to help coordinate and negotiate for demands of the revolution.

When this EU proposal was brought before them, they soundly rejected it, demanding that

Yanukovych immediately resign, release jailed protestors, and sign the association agreement

with the EU. However, with government security forces dispersed, protestors took advantage and

immediately stormed into parliament and took control of the government. Yanukovych, despite

pleas from Putin not to leave Kyiv, left for a conference in Kharkiv, possibly to seek aid from

oligarchs in the east, or to ensure items were in order so that he could flee.[65] He had no choice

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[63] See 22.
[64] See 22. p. 88.
[65] Andrew Wilson. *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West.* Yale University Press. New Haven, CT. 2014.

but to flee the country for Russia. At best, Yanukovych would be put on trial for his presidential actions in Maiden and be thrown in prison. At worst, he risked potential assassination at the hands of the more radical members of the opposition.

Russia Annexes Crimea

Putin and the Russian elite reacted to the Maiden Revolution with surprise and anger. The one figure in Ukrainian politics who could stop the westernization of Ukraine was run out of office in a massive revolutionary protest movement. Putin blamed the United States, claiming they performed a coup and interfered in affairs within the Russian sphere.[66] After Yanukovych fled, the Ukrainian parliament gathered and voted unanimously to impeach him from office. He refused to acknowledge the validity of the vote and called it a coup, refusing to concede power from abroad in Russia.[67] Additionally, parliament voted to revoke the anti-democracy laws Yanukovych rammed through in hopes of ending the Maiden protests. Tymoshenko ally and speaker of parliament Alexander Turchynov was appointed as acting president until a new round of elections could be held in May 2014. He appointed Yatsenyuk, an individual mentioned by American officials as the best candidate to lead the government, as the acting prime minister.[68]

Putin decided he needed to act swiftly and decisively in reaction to what he saw as a coup. This meant a "counter-coup" of sorts that would also be taken as a surprise by Ukraine and the West. Ukraine was now on a trajectory to pursue and apply for future membership with the EU and NATO, or at the very least increase cooperation significantly with both organizations in the near future. This put Russia's security in jeopardy and meant that an area, of what it

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[66] Al Jazeera Staff. "Putin Accuses US of Orchestrating 2014 'Coup' in Ukraine." *Aljazeera*. June 22, 2021. www.aljazeera.com.
[67] See 65.
[68] See 62.

considers part of "Greater Russia" in the eastern Slavic community of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, was about to be permanently divided as one region abandoned its Slavic roots for Western modernity. On February 20, during the height of the protests and two days before Yanukovych fled Kyiv, Vladimir Konstantinov, speaker of the Crimean parliament, began suggesting that Crimea may secede from Ukraine.[69] This was an open opportunity for Putin and the Russians to act. American scholar Daniel Treisman argues, through interviews conducted with Moscow leadership, that Russian troops were put on alert on February 18, and were given order to begin "peacekeeping" operations on February 20.[70] This was kept out of public view and Putin did not acknowledge that Russia would be annexing Crimea until a couple weeks after Russian troops spread over the peninsula.

On February 25, with more than a thousand pro-Russian protestors surrounding city hall, the city council voted to depose a Kyivan appointed mayor, Vladimir Yatsuba, for a pro-Russian, Russian national, Alexsei Chaliy.[71] At this point, there were both pro-Maiden and pro-Russian protests occurring in Crimea but the pro-Russian sentiment and protests outnumbered the former. Crimean Tatars made up most of the pro-Maiden protestors. On February 27, sixty heavily armed men seized the Crimean parliament and Council of Ministers, raising Russian flags over both. The previous day, parliament had met to discuss holding a referendum for separation from Kyiv but did not have a quorum necessary to vote. With pro-Russian militants in control of both government buildings, parliament voted to replace the Yanukovych appointed Crimean prime

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[69] Daniel Treisman. *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*. Brookings Institution Press. Washington, D.C.. 2018.
[70] Ibid. pp. 287-288.
[71] Howard Amos. "Ukraine: Sevastopol Installs pro-Russian Mayor as Separatism Fears Grow." *The Guardian*. February 25, 2014. www.theguardian.com.

minister with pro-Russian politician, Sergei Aksenev.[72] He was a member of the ardently pro-Russian party Russian Unity, which only held three seats in their parliament. In addition, the party was the political wing of an avowed pro-Russian group known as the Russian Society of Crimea, headed by Sergei Tsekov, who became deputy speaker. Everything about the proceedings broke parliamentary rules and was held in secret.

Shortly after the prime minster was deposed, unmarked soldiers that later become known as the "little green men" began circulating around Crimea and especially Sevastopol. Initially Putin denied any association of them with the Russian military, but would congratulate Russian officers for their role in recapturing Crimea on March 28, later acknowledging the troops were in fact Russian by May.[73] The spread of these forces spread fear in the Baltic States that they may be the recipients of a similar fate, considering they have large Russian minority populations. Such fears, of course, are unrealistic due to the fact that they have all been NATO member states since 2004 and are protected under the Article V defense pact. It was not long before the Russian soldiers had swept over the peninsula and had effective control over it. The next item would be for Russia to organize a referendum of separation from Ukraine and to rejoin Russia. To the ire and criticism of the West, Russia organized what is considered a fraudulent and predetermined referendum with two choices for voters: to separate from Ukraine and rejoin the Russian Federation or to remain in Ukraine and return to the 1992 constitution that allows for more autonomy within the country. The election results that were released showed 96% of voters choosing to leave Ukraine with roughly 83% participation from eligible voters. No international

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[72] See 22.

[73] Steven Pifer. "Watch Out for Little Green Men." *The Brookings Institution*. July 7, 2014. www.brookings.edu.

observers were allowed to oversee the referendum. In reality, according to documents from the

Russian Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, the voter turnout rate was in

the 30-50% range with 50-60% actually casting ballots in favor of unification with Russia.[74] The

city of Sevastopol, according to this documentation, had a voter turnout rate of 50-80%, the

highest of any region in Crimea. Crimean Tatars actively boycott the vote, after an

announcement by the leader of the Tatars, Refat Chubarov.[75] This caused most Tatars to abstain

from the referendum. However, given the evidence mentioned and previously discussed

regarding opinion polls in Crimea, even with a majority of Crimean residents voting and the

Tatars not abstaining, it is reasonable to presume that Crimea would have voted to rejoin Russia

with a free and fair referendum. In the years since rejoining Russia, it also appears that the

majority of Crimeans are happy being part of Russia, giving credence to this presumption.[76]

Russia officially annexed the Crimean Peninsula on March 21, 2014, an action that has never

been recognized as legitimate by the West. They responded with some economic sanctions but

overall did little to try and directly address the annexation. In annexing Crimea, Russia

effectively ended Ukraine's chances of ever achieving NATO membership by creating a disputed

territory within their country. Something that has also kept Moldova, with Transnistria, and

Georgia, with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, from being able to join the military alliance.

Three days prior to Putin officially signing the documentation to make Crimea a Russian

territory, he delivered a speech before a myriad of Russia's leadership in the Kremlin. In it, he

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[74] Paul Roderick Gregory. "Putin's 'Human Rights Council' Accidentally Posts Real Crimean Election Results." *Forbes*. May 5, 2014. www.forbes.com.
[75] "Crimean Tatars: Leaders Announces Boycott of Crimean Autonomy Referendum." *Unrepresented Nation and Peoples Organization*. March 6, 2014. unpo.org.
[76] John O'Loughlin, Gerald Toal, and Kristen M. Bakke. "To Russia With Love: The Majority of Crimeans Are Still Glad for Their Annexation." *Foreign Affairs*. April 3, 2020. www.foreignaffairs.com.

emphasized the historical unity and ties of Crimea to Russian history and culture; mentioned the previous plight of the Tatars under the Soviet Union, equating it with that of many different peoples during the communist era; compared the ethnic diversity of Crimea with that of Russia while ensuring its Russianness; and how the reunion of Crimea with Russia corrected a gross, historical error and injustice to Russia and her people.[77] Putin also resorted to language that will reappear in 2022 when he invades Ukraine. Unequivocally referring to Ukrainian protestors and the events of Maiden as a "coup" executed by "nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes, and anti-Semites."[78] He framed the Crimean annexation as a plea by Crimeans to escape from the clutches of an illegitimate regime that had just taken hold in Kyiv, with the intention of enacting radical, nationalistic laws with no regard for the Russian minority within its borders. With all that taken into account, he drew from the UN Charter and declared his actions humanitarian and necessary for the security of Crimea and Russia. Putin drew heavily on international norms and history to make his case, though he violated many of the norms he claimed to be upholding. This is an example of strategic "cherry-picking" to fit a narrative to make it defensible on the international stage, in the face of resistance and opposition from the West and Ukraine. While there may be an argument to be made for Crimea to be part of Russia, the route taken by Russia violates international law.

The Donbas Erupts

In the midst of Maiden and protests in Crimea regarding its sovereignty, the Donbas also experienced mass protests. These ultimately culminated in the creation of two quasi-independent states: The People's Republic of Luhansk and The People's Republic of Donetsk. Much of the

[77] Vladimir Putin. "Address by President of the Russian Federation." *Office of the President of Russia.* March 18, 2014. www.en.kremlin.ru.
[78] Ibid.

opposition in the region was spurred by visual representations of radical, nationalist figures such as Stepan Bandera being paraded in Kyiv during the Maiden Revolution. The Donbas region was the most "Soviet" of all the regions of Ukraine, had a prominently Russian speaking population, and was the industrial heart of the country. These visuals brought back memories of fighting Nazis decades prior and this fueled anger and resentment in a population and region that already had a stronger regional identity than that of a Ukrainian identity. Additionally, parliament voted on February 23 to repeal the 2012 language law, revoking the ability of regions to create official regional languages. These characteristics combined created a protest movement that looked very different from the middle-class movement in Kyiv. The Donbas protests were mostly led by working, lower class workers and were smaller in scale than those seen in Kyiv and in very pro-Maiden regions such as Lviv. One of the largest protests in Donetsk, for example, boasted roughly 7,000 pro-Russian protesters and occurred on March 1st.[79] Scholars are divided on whether or not to consider the events that took place in the Donbas region to be a genuine separatist movement that led to a separatist war, or an invasion by Russia. Clearly, there were genuine elements of regionalism, separatism, and anti-Maidenism in Luhansk and Donetsk, but within Ukrainian politics any organization or group that was friendly towards Moscow automatically had its support. So, when these groups called for support from Russia, they naturally obliged.

When the protests first broke out, the Ukrainian government dismissed them as minority agitators led by Russian nationals from across the border. While it is true that there were some protesters that came to assist from across the border, the vast majority of them were Ukrainian and from the Donbas region. Therefore, we should approach the protests as genuine

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[79] See 22.

demonstrations and not artificially created by the Kremlin, though Russia did make attempts through state media to stoke and exacerbate the crisis.[80] On March 9, several dozen pro-Russian protestors stormed the regional government buildings in Donetsk and Kharkiv. In Kharkiv, 20,000 protestors took part in anti-Maiden protests after Yanukovych was driven from power and the opposition formed a new government, with 300 attempting to storm the government building.[81] On March 9, supporters in Luhansk stormed the regional government building calling for a referendum to join Russia. This coincided with a new pro-Russian mayor assuming office in Sevastopol so it is possible they believed Russia would come to their aid if they made calls for the same.[82] Police quickly regained control of the buildings for the time being. The March protests continued through April where they delivered the creation of separatist governments in Luhansk and Donetsk. There was not enough popular support in Kharkiv for the same to occur. The Kharkiv incident in particular was purported by some more pro-EU, anti-Yanukovych Ukrainians as a dramatized incident in a larger information war between both sides.[83] Such demonstrations were common around this time as political theatre for their cause.[84] Protests mostly focused on calls for federalization of Ukraine, recalling the parliamentary vote to restore Russian as their official regional language, and for Ukraine to join the EEU with Russia.[85] The aim was to pressure the new government into Kyiv to allow for regional autonomy for those in

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[80] Michael Kofman et al.. "Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine." Rand Corporation. Santa Monica, CA. 2017.
[81] "Pro-Russian Activists Storm Government Building in Ukraine." *NBC News*. March 1, 2014. www.nbcnews.com.
[82] See 80.
[83] C.J. Chivers and Andrew Roth. "In Eastern Ukraine, the Curtain Goes Up, and the Clash Begins." *The New York Times*. March 17, 2014. www.nytimes.com.
[84] Allison Smale. "Power Shift Inspires Joy in Kiev, Fury in East." *The New York Times*. February 23, 2014. www.nytimes.com.
[85] See 80.

Eastern Ukraine, risk losing them to total separation, or, at worst, reunion with Russia. This allowed the separatist sentiment to grow in the Donbas region, unlike in Kharkiv where what little of it was apparent was quickly suppressed and dissipated. On March 11, the new government in Kyiv ordered all Russian language broadcasting to be stopped in the Donbas in order to stamp out the protests and anti-Maiden sentiment. This escalated the crisis in the region and led to more militarization of the protesters. By the end of April, armed insurgents would storm television broadcasting stations in Donetsk to restore Russian language programming and subsequently cut off any Ukrainian language programs.[86]

The Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics (LPR and DPR respectively) came about in April after the escalation of tensions in the Donbas. This was caused by failed attempts of the weakened government in Kyiv to stamp out protests, cooperation of some regional police officials with pro-Russian protestors, support of separatists by local oligarchs in Donetsk, and militarization of the pro-Russian separatist groups. Armed insurgents, from April 6-23, took control of regional and local government buildings in Luhansk and Donetsk with the goal of declaring independence from Ukraine. On April 7, the DPR was declared by armed insurgents after 1,000 people stormed the regional government building, demanding a referendum on independence, with protestors raising the Russian flag outside the building chanting *Rossiya* (Russia).[87] Ukraine's Interior Minister publicly accused Putin and the Russian government of "ordering and paying for another wave of separatist turmoil in the country's east", ignoring popular anti-Maiden and pro-Russian sentiment within the region.[88] A few weeks later, the LPR

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[86] Luke Harding. "Ukraine: Pro-Russia Forces Seize TV Station in Donetsk and Parade Captives." *The Guardian*. April 27, 2014. www.theguardian.com.
[87] "Pro-Russian Storm Offices in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv." *BBC News*. April 7, 2014. www.bbc.com.
[88] Ibid.

was declared in Luhansk. The insurgents from these groups were comprised of local residents. The Ukrainian Interior Ministry responded by deploying their own security units as well as members of the Ukrainian army. These measures failed due to calculated checkpoints created by separatist forces, along with pro-Russian civilian crowds and mobs.[89] The Ukrainian army at this point was small in scale with only 6,000 troops and its leaders were largely Russian speaking, dissuading them from wanting to engage with the separatist forces. Overall, Ukraine was unprepared for this situation. At the local level, police and some servicemen began defecting with roughly 8,000 having defected by August 2015.[90]

Leadership of the DPR and LDR tried to capitalize on the now popular separatist movement in the Donbas and formed the Novarossiya Republic, or New Russia Republic, in hopes of spreading the movement to other predominantly ethnic and linguistic Russian areas of Eastern and Southern Ukraine. It was declared on May 24, 2014. The suspension of the project by January 2015 is evidence that the will of most people within these regions, aside from the Donbas, was to stay within Ukraine even if they did not agree with joining the EU, were not ethnic Ukrainians, nor spoke Ukrainian natively. This is also a failure for Putin who openly, through Russian media and backing the DPR and LDR, began referring to the parts of Southern and Eastern Ukraine as *Novorossiya* (New Russia), stating that "God knows" why they became part of Ukraine in the 1920s.[91] Putin believed that because these regions had historically been inhabited by ethnic Russians and predominantly spoke Russian as their native language, they would be more aligned with and identify more with Russia than Ukraine. Prior to 2014, this

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[89] See 80.
[90] See 80.
[91] David M. Herszenhorn. "What is Putin's 'New Russia'?." *The New York Times*. April 18, 2014.

interpretation could arguably have been correct, or at least more accurately viewed as such, due to the lack of militant conflict within the country to truly test the theory, outside of the regions' support for the Party of Regions. Putin's announcement began an internal project within the Kremlin that can be considered the *Novorossiya Project*.[92] The goal was to spread discontent throughout the Russian speaking regions of Ukraine, weaken the national government in Kyiv, and regain control of territory it believed to be inherently Russian. This territory included the oblasts of: Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa.[93] In doing so, Putin was denying the existence of Ukrainian sovereignty, just as he did in 2008 in a meeting with George W. Bush, and exemplifying the Russian belief of Ukrainians and Russians as "one people" in a historical and cultural sense. This move was celebrated by many nationalists within Russia.[94] Alexander Dugin, notably, welcomed the move as the creation of a "Large Russia" that would ignite Russia's great-power status and position it to realistically oppose the West.[95] Though, it should be noted, that while Russian nationalists greatly supported Putin's move to realize *Novorossiya*, there is no evidence men like Dugin directly influenced Putin's decision on the matter. These were likely reserve measures set out by the Kremlin in the event they lost control of Ukraine and the country moved to fully westernize by joining institutions such as the EU and NATO.[96]

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[92] Gerard Toal. "The Novorossiya Project." In *Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus*. Oxford University Press. pp. 237-273. New York, NY. 2017.
[93] John O'Laughlin, Gerard Toal, and Vladimir Kolosov. "The Rise and Fall of 'Novorossiya': Examining Support for a Separatist Geopolitical Imaginary in Southeast Ukraine." *Post-Soviet Affairs*. Vol. 33, no. 2. Taylor & Francis Group. pp. 124-144. 2017.
[94] Paul Goble. "Russian National Identity and the Ukrainian Crisis." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*. Vol. 49, no. 1. University of California Press. pp. 37–43. March 2016.
[95] See 92. p. 246.
[96] See 92.

Putin tried to influence groups in these regions by comparing the conflict in Ukraine with the plight of the Soviet Union fighting off Nazis during the Great Patriotic War, what Russians call World War II.[97] In doing so, he was attempting to create a historical sense of unity through shared suffering in the war against Nazi Germany, but also by "otherizing" and comparing the new government in Kyiv as "fascist" and "neo-Nazi." Themes that Putin will continue to use in an attempt to delegitimize them and, later, justify military invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In the Donbas, such themes could be successful due to how "Soviet" the region is compared with the rest of Ukraine. He could also draw on the imagery of radical ethno-nationalist groups and political parties, such as Svoboda, as fuel for the Russian propaganda machine, even if the groups themselves were not popular outside of Western Ukraine.

The reasons for the failure of *Novorossiya* are as follows: lack of support within the Russophone territory for union with Russia, revitalization of the weakened Ukrainian government through the election of Poroshenko, and a national conscription to stamp out the separatists in the Donbas. The first failure was something unrealized by Putin but also by many analysts prior to 2014. Ukraine did not have a true unitary civic nationalist sentiment until the events of Maiden and the annexation of Crimea. This is when citizens had to decide whether or not they viewed themselves as Ukrainians despite their ethnic or linguistic background. Even in the Donbas, there were varying views on how to approach their future with Ukraine and Russia. The majority held separatist attitudes, at 54%, with views split on whether to join Russia or become a federal state within Ukraine. This runs contrary to two narratives: that put forward by

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[97] Jade McGlynn. "Historical Framing of the Ukraine Crisis Through the Great Patriotic War: Performativity, Cultural Consciousness and Shared Remembering." *Memory Studies*. Vol. 13, Issue 6. Sage Journals. pp. 1-23. 2018.

the West and Ukrainian government that the leaders and insurgents behind the rebellion were "terrorists", while also hurting the Russian narrative that these people were actively seeking to join Russia.[98] In reality, the popular sentiment within the Donbas was anti-Maidenism and distrust of the government in Kyiv. In that same survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in April-May 2014, the vast majority in other provinces of Eastern and Southern Ukraine supported staying within Ukraine, with sizable portions favoring expanded regional powers within the country.[99] The government in Kyiv viewed federalism as equitable to secession or as too pro-Russian so they equated it with "terrorism." To stop separatist forces, they launched the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), led by the Ukrainian security service, in mid-April. This demonstrated the disconnect between those in the Donbas and leaders in Kyiv.

The governors of the LPR and DPR announced referendums for independence were to be held on May 11, 2014 despite urging from Putin to postpone referendums. The DPR and LPR reported a 75% participation rate with 89% and 96%, respectively, voting for independence.[100] Neither Ukraine nor any Western state accepted the results as legitimate. After the vote, Russia began pushing for Ukraine to come to the negotiating table to determine the future of the Donbas. This came a month after diplomats from Ukraine, Russia, the EU, and the United States met in Geneva to negotiation and try deescalating the conflict.[101] Russia planned on using diplomatic pressure from the Geneva agreement to prevent Ukraine from using the ATO and any other means of military action in the Donbas. This is a prelude to the Minsk Agreements that are

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[98] Ivan Katchanovski. "What Do Citizens of Ukraine Actually Think About Secession?." *The Washington Post*. July 20, 2014.
[99] Ibid.
[100] "Ukraine Separatists Declare Independence." *Al Jazeera*. May 12, 2014. www.aljazeera.com.
[101] "Joint Geneva Statement on Ukraine from April 17: The Full Text." *The Washington Post*. April 17, 2014.

a basis for international law regarding peace in Ukraine. The separatists rejected the Geneva agreement as they did not take part in the negotiation and discussion. They instead tried to expand their area of control so that *Novorossiya* could be realized, but they ran into issues that ranged from lack of weapons supplies, which they were able to mitigate in some areas, to lack of volunteer support in cities such as Sloviansk in the northern reach of Donetsk oblast.[102] Hopes of a repeat of the Crimean situation were fading and as Ukrainian military forces began bearing down on the separatists, it looked as though they were doomed to failure. This can also be attributed to the failure of *Novorossiya*. Failures from DPR and LPR forces meant that there would be no further growth in the movement and it would failure without outside support from Russia.

Conclusion

Ukrainian civil nationality fully became realized following the Maiden Revolution and annexation of Crimea by Russia. It's revealed that, aside from Crimea and to a lesser extent the Donbas, people throughout Ukraine identified as Ukrainian regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background. This does not dismiss the fact that regional differences still existed in Ukraine, but people saw themselves as Ukrainian and wanted representation within the country. It was more common in Southern and Eastern Ukraine for people to exhibit views that their territories have more regional control and, to an extent, autonomy and this is exhibited in the clashes of Maiden and anti-Maiden protestors. Putin's vision of a "Greater Russia" in which the Russian diaspora was united once again and Russia enjoyed its great power status was looking bleaker. The options before him: forcibly take the territory through a military invasion, walk away with Crimea and continue to pressure Ukraine using other means at his disposal to disrupt Ukraine

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[102] See 80.

and mitigate westernization, or press forward and use the Geneva agreement as a starting point to blame Ukraine for failing to follow diplomatic protocol and intervene. Putin would choose the third option, seeing it as the most viable option for weakening the Ukraine and supporting ethnic Russians in the region. This would be a legacy altering decision for Putin and is where the prelude to the 2022 invasion begins to unfold. Ukraine, now without opposition from Crimea and the Donbas, would proceed with more nationalistic policies aimed at unifying the Ukrainian state and people. Such laws would bring Moscow into more conflict with Kyiv, as the essence of Ukrainian nationalism, as espoused by people like Tymoshenko and more virulent nationalists in Western Ukraine, was anti-Russianness.

Chapter VI: The Russo-Ukrainian War

Russia's annexation of Crimea and incursion into the Donbas region began a campaign by Russia to regain control over the Russian speaking territories of Ukraine; a nation that it does not consider to be legitimate but rather a collection of various territories leftover from the czarist era. Western nations responded with sanctions on the Russian state and Russian elites. Advances by the DPR and LDR began failing soon after they began which put Russia in a difficult situation. The ATO's counteroffensive was chipping away at separatist territory and by August the DPR and LDR only controlled a third of their claimed territory. Simultaneously, Russia and Ukraine were engaged in international negotiations alongside the OSCE, France, and Germany with the goal of bringing long term peace to the region and ending hostilities. These negotiations would eventually culminate into the Minsk Protocol in 2014 and later Minsk II in 2015. The failure of these agreements led to an eight-year civil conflict strictly centered in the Donbas that grew in 2022 after Putin announced a "special military operation" in Ukraine with the goal to eliminate "Nazis" and "fascists" controlling the government in Kyiv. The period from 2014-2022 is a mix of deescalations and escalations in the conflict, as well as degradation in the relationship of Russia with both Ukraine and the West.

Poroshenko and The Minsk Agreements

By August of 2014, Ukrainian ATO forces had advanced deep into the Donbas and were cornering separatist forces, who only controlled a third of the total territory. Without assistance from the Russian army, their desire to successfully break away from Ukraine would never come to fruition. New Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko, who was elected back in the May

election with 54% of the vote in the first round of voting, had stated goals upon entering office: bringing about a "united" Ukraine with peace and stability in the Donbas and reclaiming Crimea, pursuing plans outlined in the association agreement with the EU, improving the Ukrainian army, and negotiating a new international treaty to ensure Ukraine has a guaranteed security status in the future.[1] The fourth goal was a stated guarantee to pursue NATO membership as president. We are going to focus on the first goal as it relates to the Minsk Agreements, but more importantly reasons why Russia and Ukraine failed to live up to them.

Poroshenko's goal of regaining control of Crimea was unrealistic at the time. While it is understandable politically why he should envision a day when Ukraine could and would retake the peninsula, Ukraine did not have the military capacity, technology, nor enough international support to do so. That is why Poroshenko also stated he would upgrade and improve the army, something that would pay off eight years later when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of the country.[2] Improvements focused on cracking down on corruption within the military, creating a volunteerism culture in the country, and improving logistics. In addition, the United States began sending military aid to Ukraine. By the end of 2021, the United States had given Ukraine $2.7 billion dollars worth of aid, and been training Ukrainian soldiers at Yavarov military base.[3] It is also worth noting that Poroshenko began cooperating and meeting with senior officials from NATO in 2016 for advice on effectively modernizing the Ukrainian army, to meet NATO standards for membership.[4] Something that nationalists in Ukraine had long aspired to but they

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[1] "Excerpts from Poroshenko's Speech." *BBC News*. June 7, 2014. www.bbc.com.
[2] Liam Collins. "In 2014, the 'Decrepit' Ukrainian Army Hit the Refresh Button. Eight Years Later, Its Paying Off." *The Conversation*. March 8, 2022. www.theconversation.com.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Rahim Rahemtulla. "Ukraine Relies on Advice from Defense Reform Advisory Board." *Kyiv Post*. November 17, 2016. www.kyivpost.com.

now frantically sought, after Russia's annexation of Crimea. There remained two issues with this prospect. First, despite the Maiden Revolution, loss of Crimea, and conflict in the Donbas, NATO membership was still not popular among the majority of Ukrainians.[5] However, by 2017 these events had enough of an impact that opinion shifted towards more in favor but it was only a plurality at 47%. Regional divisions still remained with the lowest support in Southern Ukraine with only 20% of those surveyed in support. By 2021, we can say that there is more of a consensus amongst the general population with 59.2% of the total population supporting NATO membership.[6] This also includes 67.1% support for EU membership by 2021. The westernization of Ukraine and level of desire amongst the general population was great enough that there was little that Russia could do to change public opinion in Ukraine. Even in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, regions that traditionally did not support accession to either organization, by 2021 53.5% supported EU membership and 42.3% supported NATO membership. The events of 2014 almost certainly had an effect on changing people's views in these regions. So, we can say that this issue was only temporary and can only be applied to Poroshenko's presidency and not Zelensky. Second, now that Russia had control of Crimea and roughly a third of the Donbas was under separatist control, Ukraine had a major obstacle in its path towards membership. Russia had effectively found a way to ensure that Ukraine could not realistically or easily join. Ukraine would instead have to opt for closer cooperation with NATO and the West, as well as seeking avenues towards membership via diplomacy.

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[5] "Public Opinion of the Population of Ukraine on NATO." Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. Kyiv, Ukraine. July 5, 2017. www.dif.org.ua.
[6] "Attitudes Towards Ukraine's Accession to the EU and NATO, Attitudes Towards Direct Talks with Vladimir Putin and the Perception of Military Threat from Russia: The Results of a Telephone Survey Conducted on December 13-16, 2021." Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. December 24, 2021. www.kiis.com.ua.

To bring peace and stability to the Donbas, Ukraine along with Russia, Germany, France, and EU officials began negotiations for what became known as the Minsk Protocol. It was built upon the agreements signed in Geneva but sought to expand upon them and bring peace. Going into these negotiations there were several problems that were influential in the Minsk Protocol failing which led to a renegotiated peace under Minsk II in 2015. First, Russia, while not officially recognizing the DPR and LPR as legitimate countries, was allegedly supplying military assistance to their militias under the guise of humanitarian aid.[7] This drew condemnation from the West, especially after the shooting down of a civilian aircraft over the Donbas with Russian military equipment.[8] This is not to mention that many in Ukraine were convinced that all the separatist forces were just Russian army fighters and not locals.[9] By August 2014 the level of Russian aid to the breakaway regions was overwhelmingly viewed by the West as the primary reason for the stalling of Ukrainian advances into the region and survival of the breakaway governments.

The second reason for failure is the Ukrainian government's unwillingness to allow for greater autonomy of the Donbas and other regions in Ukraine. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the majority residents of the Donbas support greater regional autonomy from the Kyiv government. This follows a history of regionalism dating back to the 1990s when over two-thirds of residents voted for Ukraine to be a federation rather than a unitary government.[10] The national

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[7] "Ukraine Crisis: Rebel Fighters 'Trained in Russia'." *BBC News*. August 16, 2014. www.bbc.com.

[8] "Council Conclusion on Ukraine: Foreign Affairs Council Meeting." *Council of the European Union*. Brussels, Belgium. August 15, 2014.

[9] Niko Vorobyov. "Ukraine Crisis: Who are the Russian Backed Separatists?" *Aljazeera*. February 4, 2022. www.aljazeera.com.

[10] Serhiy Kudelia. "Civil War Settlements and Conflict Resolution in the Donbas." In *The War in Ukraine's Donbas: Origins, Contexts, and the Future*. Ed. David R. Marples. Central European University Press. Budapest, Hungary. 2022.

government did not entertain the idea of regional autonomy for the Donbas for two reasons:
belief that it was disrespectful of their national sovereignty and therefore treason, and the belief
that Russia would use federalism to further divide the region and influence Ukrainian politics.
There is some truth to the latter argument. The high proportion of the population in the Donbas,
especially in Donetsk, that preferred integration with Russia and viewed the country meant it was
an outlier, along with Crimea, in how it views Russia and its own regional identity.[11] Russia
would have an easy time influencing the population through local oligarchs and Russian state
media. However, they could also do this without federalization and did do so prior to the war.
Ukrainian democracy is very flawed and heavily influenced by oligarchs. The only thing that
would truly change that is sweeping reforms aimed at removing their influence over politics and
economic markets. So, this particular issue is mixed from both angles. For Ukraine, it could
potentially interfere with the goal of creating a unitary, civic nationalist identity that has been
realized in the rest of the country and could embolden more radicalism from varying factions.[12]
For residents of the Donbas, not allowing for a federalized Luhansk and Donetsk interferes with
their desire for more regional autonomy and the ability to maintain their regional identity
separate from the rest of the country. Additionally, granting autonomy to the Donbas or
relinquishing it entirely was seen as wildly unpopular by the general populace. By 2015, only
15.3% were willing to give the Donbas to Russia in exchange for peace and only 26.4% agreed
with granting substantial autonomy to Luhansk and Donetsk.[13]

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[11] Ibid.
[12] See 10.
[13] Lawerence Freedman. *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy*. Oxford University Press. New York, NY. 2019.

The third reason for failure is the lack of consensus between Ukraine and Russia over enforcement of the treaty and ceasefire. Russia argued that it was not a party in the conflict and that the war in the Donbas was between Ukrainians, or a civil war. Ukraine stated that Russia was in fact a party and had a duty to enforce the accords.[14] Without a consensus on enforcement from the signing parties, there was no way to guarantee a ceasefire. The Minsk Protocol was signed on September 5, 2014 and was the first attempt at peace in the region. Signatories included representatives from Russia, Germany, France, and former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma.[15] The agreement promised a ceasefire, prisoner exchange from both sides, decentralization of power around the Donbas region by the Ukrainian government, OSCE monitoring in the region, and a ban on the prosecution or persecution of conspirators involved, humanitarian measures, start of early elections, and the removal of unlawful military hardware and personnel.[16] After a week, the ceasefire ended when DPR forces advanced on the Donetsk airport to regain control of it from Ukrainian forces.[17] Both sides were critical of the other for allowing the ceasefire to fail. This led to an additional memorandum being added to the documents two weeks after it was originally signed to mitigate the fighting and prevent escalation. The agreement reached was similar to a peace memorandum proposed by both Putin and Poroshenko prior to negotiations.[18] Additionally, Putin managed to get representatives from the DPR and LPR factions to sign the agreement and meant Ukraine officially recognized the

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[14] Marc Champion. "Why the Minsk Accords Failed to Bring Ukraine Peace." *The Washington Post*. February 23, 2022. www.washingtonpost.com.
[15] "Protocol on the Results of the Trilateral Contact Group, Signed in Minsk, 5 September 2014." *Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe*. September 5, 2014. www.osce.org. Document only available in Russian.
[16] Ibid.
[17] "Fighting over Donetsk Airport Intensifies." *Aljazeera*. October 2, 2014. www.aljazeera.com.
[18] Paul D'Anieri. *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. 2019.

leaders of the quasi-states in negotiations. On September 16, the Ukrainian parliament granted a "special status" to Donetsk and Luhansk by giving them more autonomy, but only temporarily for a three-year period. It technically followed along with the text of the protocol but did not want to make this autonomy permanent or go to the extent of federalism. While not perfect this was progress with the given circumstances. However, the lack of cooperation and willingness to listen from rebel fighters meant the ceasefire and therefore the Minsk Protocol was an absolute failure. This led to renewed negotiations in January 2015 for what would become Minsk II.

One of the primary reasons for the failure of the Minsk Protocol, aside from domestic reservations and disagreements about implementation, was that the agreement was vague. For example, the agreement to hold elections and implement decentralized authority had no time table. Nor did it specify whether or not it should occur before, during, or after OSCE monitoring in the region began. Another example, which follows the disagreements about implementation, is Ukraine insisting that Russia withdraw "unlawful military formations" from the region, Russia denied the existence of their own forces there.[19] So, after DPR forces broke the ceasefire and resumed fighting at Donetsk airport, fighting continued. Negotiations for a new agreement resumed in January and by February Minsk II was signed by the same parties as before. Minsk II went beyond Minsk I in some notable areas while being weak in others. It further defined decentralization in Ukraine by calling for constitutional reforms to allow for it, called on the withdrawal of "foreign armed formations," the reestablishment of Ukraine's control of its borders, and again calls for local elections on the terms of representatives from the DPR and LPR.[20] However, similar to the first agreement, it did not define windows for enacting reforms

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[19] Ibid.
[20] "Factbox: What are the Minsk Agreements on the Ukraine Conflict?." *Reuters*. December 6, 2021. www.reuters.com.

and who should do so. Russia again tried arguing they had no role to play in the conflict outside

of being diplomatically involved in a civil war on its border. This is contrary to evidence from

OSCE monitors and US intelligence that showed separatist forces receiving lethal and non-lethal

military aid from Russia.[21] By April 2016, the weekly average for ceasefire violations committed

by the rebel forces numbered over 80. Russia was also deploying special response teams from

their own border during close battles to reinforce rebel fighters. They consisted of intelligence

operatives some soldiers in a "command and control" role to assist separatist units and help

operate advanced military equipment.[22] These reports conflicted with Ukrainian reports claiming

that Russia sent 9,000 Russian army troops to fight in the Donbas against Ukrainians. The

Ukrainian report given by Poroshenko was used to justify the Ukrainian argument that Russia

was directly involved in combat and therefore was responsible for the withdrawal of troops in

order for Minsk I, and later Minsk II, to be implemented.

There were also disagreements between Russia and Ukraine over how local elections

should be carried out. Russia argued that since the local leaders of the DPR and LPR had been

recognized in Minsk I and II, they should have the authority to control local elections. This

would mean allowing for local elections before Ukraine could fully secure the region and retake

control over the political process, thereby allowing them to become a much more autonomous

region that is influenced by Moscow but remain part of Ukraine.[23] Ukraine wanted to regain

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[21] Carl Hvenmark Nilsson. "Revisiting the Minsk II Agreement: The Art and Statecraft of Russian-brokered Cease-fires." *Center for Strategic & International Studies*. CSIS Europe Program. Washington, D.C.. August 2016.

[22] "Russian Present in Ukraine in Specialist Roles: U.S. Envoy." *Reuters*. February 4, 2015. www.reuters.com.

[23] Amy Mackinnon. "Eastern Ukraine's Problematic Peace Plan." *Foreign Policy*. February 17, 2022. www.foreignpolicy.com.

control of the territory and allow for tensions in the region to settle before allowing local elections. They also disagreed over the terms of decentralization. As discussed, Russia was pursuing a policy of federalization within the Donbas to secure long-term influence over the region. However, Ukraine sought to pursue decentralization to aid in its reform towards westernization of the country and did so over the course of several years.[24] So they technically did institute decentralization of the national government but through the prism of a unitary state government and did not plan on pursuing a policy of federalism in the Donbas. This is a tactic of localization for greater control over communities but not the regionalist policies sought by the DPR, LPR, and Russia.[25] Regional leaders would still be appointed by the president and not elected. In all, we can say there were violations of Minsk II from both Russia and Ukraine. Russia, despite being a signatory, refused to assist in the implementation of Minsk II and continued shipping arms to the DPR and LPR ground forces. This made the possibility of a ceasefire much less likely and contributed to prolonged conflict. Ukraine did not live up to election promises outlined in Article 9 of Minsk II, demanding full control of region before elections were to take place, and did not want to fully recognize the leadership and autonomy of Donetsk and Luhansk, a point of contention with Russia and the separatist forces.[26]

Laws Aimed at Unifying National Identity

Poroshenko's election in 2014 represented a shift in Ukrainian politics away from the two previous decades of division over where Ukraine's future lie. In addition to opinion shifting

[24] Karen Madoian. "Devil in the Detail: Local versus Regional Approaches to Peace in Donbas." European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). 2020.
[25] Ibid.
[26] International Crisis Group. "Appendix D: Minsk II — 12 February 2015 (Unofficial English Translation; OSCE Hosts the Russian Original on Its Website.)." *Can Peacekeepers Break the Deadlock in Ukraine?*. International Crisis Group. 2017.

away from Russia in the wake of Maiden, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in the Donbas, much of the pro-Russian populations in Crimea and the Donbas were now unable to vote in the Ukrainian presidential and parliamentary elections. This meant that the Party of Regions was done for when it came election time and any future party with pro-Russian sentiments in domestic politics would not be able to achieve the success they did prior to Maiden. With that sentiment mostly gone, Ukrainian politicians with more nationalist ideals could pass legislation to unify the country to how they saw fit. One of the key tenants of Ukrainian nationalism is, in an essence, being distinct from Russia and oftentimes anti-Russian. This started becoming a pattern in Ukraine after Yanukovych fled. First, the 2012 language law was repealed by parliament almost immediately after he fled to Russia. While this law was not signed into law by Poroshenko until June 2014, it nevertheless was viewed by Russia as proof the radical, neo-Nazi, nationalists had usurped power from Yanukovych via a coup and this would be their messaging in state propaganda. Over the course of Poroshenko's presidency, and later Zelensky's, new laws would be used to continue this narrative and anger Moscow.

The start of these came in 2015-2016 and were a series of anti-communism laws aimed at demythologizing the Soviet Union, promoting Ukrainian nationalism, banning the Communist Party of Ukraine, prohibitions against "propaganda of Communist and/or National Socialist totalitarian regimes," and the opening of secret police archives to the public.[27] A few of these laws were highly controversial and were heavily criticized. Critics noted laws, especially the banning of the Communist Party and criminal penalties for "promoting propaganda," limited free speech and in some instances were vague as to what should be considered criminal under the

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[27] Lily Hyde. "Ukraine to Rewrite History with Controversial 'Decommunization' Laws." *The Guardian*. April 20, 2015. www.theguardian.com.

law. They granted exceptions to the nationalist groups in Western Ukraine that notoriously

collaborated with Nazis and were responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews during Nazi

occupation in 1939-1941.[28] Instead, these groups were granted special status and given honorary

status within the country. Proponents of the law, such as Ukrainian historian and head of the

Ukrainian Institute of Memory Volodymyr Viatrovych, claim these fears are overstated and the

laws are meant to encourage more research and dialogue over Ukraine's communist past.[29] These

disagreements within Ukraine and their willingness to celebrate controversial figures such as

Bandera and his liberation movement show a country that is trying to develop its own historical

narrative. The argument over civic nationalism is over at this point and moves instead towards

defining its own nationhood in the context of history. This also demonstrates the means that

many will go to great lengths in order to distance Ukraine from the Soviet Union and Russia. The

greatest critics of these laws came from both the West and Russia.[30] Over the next few years,

Ukraine would tear down a myriad of Soviet era monuments and rename streets and other

important sites named after communists or Russians to "decommunize" the country. Most

consequentially, the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice used the anti-communization laws to ban

communists from participating in future elections.[31] Zelensky would copy this tactic in 2022,

using the Russian invasion as cause to ban opposition parties who he claimed were collaborating

with Russian or too pro-Russian.[32]

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[28] Josh Cohen. "The Historian Whitewashing Ukraine's History." *Foreign Policy*. May 2, 2016.
www.foreignpolicy.com.
[29] Alexander J. Motyl. "National Memory in Ukraine: What the West Gets Wrong About
Liberals and Nationalists." *Foreign Affairs*. August 4, 2016. www.foreignaffairs.com.
[30] See 28.
[31] Mariana Antonovych. "Ukraine's Justice Ministry Outlaws Communists from Elections." *Kyiv
Post*. July 24, 2015. www.kyivpost.com.
[32] Grayson Quay. "Zelensky Nationalizes TV News and Restricts Opposition Parties." *Yahoo!
News*. March 20, 2022. www.news.yahoo.com.

The decommunization laws were not the only series of law enacted to create a Ukrainian identity distinct from its past with Russia. In 2017, Poroshenko signed a law aimed at education reform that also included provisions regarding language use. It used a strict interpretation of the constitution's status of Ukrainian as the official state language and sought to expand its use by legal coercion. In May 2017, it was henceforth required that all civil servants demonstrate fluency of Ukrainian and provide proof of it.[33] It also banned the use of minority languages in the classroom after the fifth grade beginning in 2020.[34] It did grant an exception for some subjects to be taught in European languages such as Romanian, Hungarian, and Polish but did not do so for Russian and received criticism from the Council of Europe's Venice Commission for discrimination against a large language bloc in the country.[35] For media, a law was passed in 2017 that stipulated that at least 75% of broadcasting had to be conducted in Ukrainian.[36]

Poroshenko's presidency was dominated by a more nationalistic push towards a unitary Ukrainian state. Aside from laws passed during his presidency, the religious sphere in Eastern Europe changed when the Patriarch of Constantinople, after years of pleas from bishops and representatives from orthodox churches in Ukraine, granted them the status of an official autocephalous church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in 2019. This came after a political push from Poroshenko. While most Ukrainians are not religious, this represented a major political

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[33] Volodymyr Kulyk. "Language Politics, Minority Rights, and International Relations: The Curious Case of the 2017 Ukrainian Education Law." In *Cossacks in Jamaica, Ukraine at the Antipodes: Essays in Honor of Marko Pavlyshyn*. Edited by Alessandro Achilli, Serhy Yekelchyk, and Dmytro Yesypenko. pp. 754-767. Academic Studies Press. 2020.

[34] Gwendolyn Sasse. "Ukraine's Poorly Timed Education Law." *Carnegie Endowment for Peace*. October 2, 2017. www.carnegieeurope.eu.

[35] Alessandra Prentice. "Criticism of Ukraine's Language Law Justified: Rights Body." *Reuters*. December 8, 2017. www.reuters.com.

[36] "Ukrainian Language Set for Media Boost in New Law." *BBC News*. March 17, 2017. www.bbc.com.

shift of Ukraine's nationhood status and autonomy away from Russia. Poroshenko's

accomplishments as president were centered around Ukraine's progress in westernization

towards the West. Ukraine's military was modernized due to closer ties with the United States

and NATO, laws were passed, for better or worse, that put more focus on making Ukrainian the

language of a united Ukraine, and Ukraine finally had a national church within the Orthodox

Church. It would be his failures and corruption, however, that led to his demise.

2019 Ukrainian Presidential Election

By the end of his presidency, Poroshenko was quite unpopular for not delivering on

peace in the Donbas and allowing for continued corruption in the government.[37] Political

newcomer and comedian Volodymyr Zelensky would hammer on both points during his surprise

presidential campaign in 2019. Poroshenko's corruption allegations centered around government

appointments to allies and not upholding campaign promises to make Ukraine more democratic

by mitigating oligarchic power.[38] This is ironic considering Poroshenko is himself an oligarch,

Ukraine's "Chocolate King," though he is not exceptionally anymore corrupt than most of his

predecessors.[39] There were some strides made during his presidency with the help of Western

funded NGOs to mitigate corruption problems but institutional problems remained.[40] In an

attempt to downplay rampant corruption in his administration and to negotiate a peaceful end to

the war in the Donbas, Poroshenko relied on nationalistic rhetoric and symbolism in his

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[37] Dennis Soltys. "Why Poroshenko Lost." *Atlantic Council*. April 23, 2019. www.atlanticcouncil.org.
[38] Balázs Jarábik. "Patriotism, Pressure, Populism: How Poroshenko Can Win." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. March 6, 2019. carnegieendowment.org
[39] Peter Dickinson. "Why a Comedian Won Ukraine's Election in a Landslide." *Foreign Affairs*. April 24, 2019. www.foreignaffairs.com.
[40] Adrian Karatnycky and Alexander J. Motyl. "How Western Anti-Corruption Policy is Failing Ukraine." *Foreign Affairs*. May 29, 2018. www.foreignaffairs.com.

campaign. His campaign slogan "Army, Language, and Faith" hit on all the nationalistic

elements of his presidency as well as his accomplishments mentioned previously. By 2019,

Ukrainians were tired of corruption, hungry for change, and anti-corruption organizers and

activists were being harassed by members of the Secret Service of Ukraine.[41] Ukrainians had the

lowest confidence in their government of any nation in the world with only a 9% confidence

rate.[42] 91% in that same gallup poll claimed that corruption was prevalent in the government. In

another poll by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 80% of people stated that they believed

the war on corruption in Ukraine had failed.[43]

Zelensky's campaign is an example of an anti-establishment, anti-war, populist campaign

bent on bringing peace to the Donbas, improving relations with Russia, and finally cracking

down on corruption to make Ukraine a fully functioning democracy. If all these prospects could

be accomplished, they could realistically join the EU. NATO membership is still a long shot due

to Ukraine not having control over their claimed territory in Crimea and the Donbas. The first

two priorities implied that Zelensky was willing to go back to the negotiating table with Russia.

From Russia's perspective, this was interpreted as Zelensky agreeing to abide by Minsk II and

allow for reintegration of a much more autonomous Luhansk and Donetsk.[44] As we will see,

negotiations between him and Putin went nowhere. Zelensky intentionally avoided using hyper-

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[41] Melinda Haring and Maxim Eristavi. "Can Ukraine Win Its War on Corruption?." *Foreign Affairs*. February 15, 2018. www.foreignaffairs.com.

[42] Zach Bikus. "World-Low 9% of Ukrainians Confident in Government." *Gallup*. March 21, 2019. www.news.gallup.com.

[43] See 40.

[44] Ivan Safranchuk. "The Conflict in Ukraine: Regional and Global Contexts – A Perspective from Russia." *Policy Perspectives*. Vol. 19, no. 1. Pluto Journals. pp. 1–5. 2022.

nationalistic rhetoric in his campaign to attract a more wholistic voter base and was the first

presidential candidate to use popular social media sites to attract younger voters.[45]

Critics of Zelensky cited his relationship to the powerful media oligarch Ihor

Kolomoisky.[46] The two had a working relationship going back several years as Zelensky was a

popular comedian on the TV station *1+1*, owned by Kolomoisky. Much of Zelensky's political

backing, media support, and legal support came from Kolomoisky and there were reasonable

suspicions that Zelensky was going to be a puppet or strong ally of Kolomoisky.[47] This had little

to no effect on his campaign and Zelensky won the 2019 presidential election in a landslide with

over 73% of the popular vote in the second round against Poroshenko.[48] His support transcended

ethnic and linguistic barriers as he won every district in Ukraine outside of Lviv. Zelensky also

became Ukraine's first Jewish president. Later that year in parliamentary elections, his party,

Servant of the People, won an outright majority in the Ukrainian Rada with 43% of the popular

vote and 254 of the 423 seats in parliament, or 60%.[49] The 2019 election resulted in over 80% of

the Rada's members being political new comers.[50] The election of Servant of the People and

Volodymyr Zelensky, at first glance, appears to be a changing moment in Ukrainian politics

towards rapid westernization and modernization.

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[45] Larissa Doroshenko. "Populists and Social Media Campaigning in Ukraine: The Election of Volodymyr Zelensky." In *Electoral Campaigns, Media, and the New World of Digital Politics*. Edited by David Taras and Richard Davis. pp. 221-243. University of Michigan Press. Ann Arbor, Michigan. 2022.
[46] Vijai Maheshwari. "The Comedian and the Oligarch." *Politico EU*. April 17, 2019. www.politico.eu.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "Ukraine Election: Comedian Zelensky Wins Presidency by Landslide." *BBC News*. April 22, 2019. www.bbc.com.
[49] Gwendolyn Sasse. "Who is Who in the Ukrainian Parliament." *Carnegie Europe*. September 24, 2019. www.carnegieeurope.eu.
[50] Ibid.

Zelensky's Term and Putin's Invasion

Zelensky's presidency has most recently gained more fame and notoriety for his role as a successful wartime president in the wake of the Russian invasion in 2022. Prior to this, Zelensky's popularity was not universal in Ukraine due to slow progress on fighting corruption and his inability to negotiate a peaceful end to the war in the Donbas. In addition, Zelensky's ability to garner an outright majority in parliament meant he faced no opposition and coalition party to check his power. This led many to worry that he would recreate a political system with heavy presidential powers over the parliament.[51] We will analyze his role in the Donbas and his relationship with Putin prior to the invasion to understand how the situation in the region went from bad to worse in less than three years.

From the beginning, there were skeptics on Zelensky's ability to successfully negotiate a peace settlement in the Donbas that did not involve Ukraine, from its perspective, surrendering some of its sovereignty to Russia and separatist forces.[52] He nevertheless made improving relations with Russia a foreign policy prerogative and did so despite backlash from critics and protests over certain actions. This began on October 1, 2019 when he announced he was signing the Steinmeier Formula, a formula outlined by former German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier that would act as a compromise between Ukraine and Russia over elections in the Donbas.[53] It stipulated that elections could be held as long as they were monitored by the OSCE and abided by Ukrainian election laws. This announcement was immediately followed by

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[51] See 49.

[52] Taras Kuzio. "Peace Will Not Come to Europe's War: Why Ukraine's New President Zelensky will be Unable to Improve Relations with Russia." *Security Policy Working* Paper. No. 14. Federal Academy for Security Policy. Berlin, Germany. 2019.

[53] Christopher Miller. "Explainer: What is the Steinmeier Formula—and did Zelensky Just Capitulate to Moscow?." *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. October 2, 2019. www.rferl.org.

protests from people in Kyiv, believing that he was capitulating to Putin. Zelensky later clarified

that "there won't be any elections under the barrel of a gun" and there would still be potential

room for disagreement over how to conduct them.[54] Meaning, he agreed to have them but not as

long as fighters remained. This was a long shot prospect but Zelensky hoped he could break the

ice and get a meeting with Putin. After trying for months, he got one in December 2019 in

Paris.[55] At the summit he hoped to end years of frozen conflict and frozen negotiations with

Russia. He did walk away with some success but the bar was very low for it to be considered

successful. Ukraine and Russia agreed on another prisoner swap and to again implement a

ceasefire agreed to back in February 2015.[56] While something, relations between Russia and

Ukraine were unlikely to improve. Prior to leaving office, Poroshenko signed a constitutional

amendment that officially committed Ukraine to NATO and EU membership.[57] This had already

been an ambition of the country for over two decades as evidenced by negotiations and foreign

policy over that period, but now there was a constitutional mandate to do so. Knowing what we

know about Putin and Russia, once that amendment was added to the constitution there was no

turning away from westernization and attempting to remove themselves from Russia's "near

abroad." Any promise of successful, long-term peaceful negotiations in the Donbas likely ended

with Ukraine constitutionally signaling it would do everything it could to officially join the

West.

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Jeffery Mankoff. "Zelensky and Putin in Paris: What is Success?." *Center for Strategic & International Studies*. December 6, 2019. www.csis.org.

[56] Andrew Higgins. "In First Meeting with Putin, Zelensky Plays to a Draw Despite a Bad Hand." *The New York Times*. December 9, 2019. www.nytimes.com.

[57] "Ukraine President Signs Constitutional Amendment on NATO, EU Membership." *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. February 19, 2019. www.rferl.org.

The COVID-19 pandemic helped to alleviate fighting to an extent as Ukraine, Russia, the

LPR, and DPR implemented social distancing and COVID-19 restrictions for their respective

citizens. In July 2020, Russia and Ukraine officially entered into what would be a 29-day

ceasefire. While short, this represented some progress given the lack of communication between

Moscow and Kyiv in the previous few years under Poroshenko. Things would not begin to

escalate again until 2021 when Russia began to build up troops along the Ukrainian border to

their highest level since the war's beginning in 2014.[58] This came after a Kremlin official,

Dmitry Kozak, warned that Russia could come to the defense of Russian citizens in Ukraine in

the wake of renewed combat. The Russians had been giving citizens in the Donbas official

Russian passports since the war broke out and by 2021 had issued an estimated 500,000

passports.[59]

In the summer of 2021, Putin released an essay discussing the historical and cultural

connections between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine.[60] In it, he argued that Ukraine as a

nation was created in the 1920s by bolsheviks, that international law had been violated upon the

breakup of the Soviet Union as many of the lands given to Ukraine during the Soviet era were

historically Russian lands, and that most of the problems with Ukrainian society and government

were due to oligarchs and nationalists controlling the corrupt political system. He also attacked

them for promoting "neo-Nazis" and promoting an "anti-Russian" identity as the only correct

identity.[61] Most would not know it but this was a prelude to his address to Russia in February

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[58] "Ukraine Conflict: Moscow Could 'Defend' Russia-Backed Rebels." *BBC News*. April 9, 2021. www.bbc.com.
[59] "Why Russia May Not Be Planning the Invasion That Ukraine Fears." *BBC News*. April 15, 2021. www.bbc.com.
[60] Vladimir Putin. "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." Office of the President of Russia. July 12, 2021. www.en.kremlin.ru.
[61] Ibid.

2022 when he began a "military operation" to rid Ukraine of "Nazis" and defend ethnic Russians

living within the region. This was a culmination of years of conflict and failed diplomacy

between Russia and Ukraine, as well as a failure by the West to mitigate tensions in the region.

Zelensky's presidency will go down in history as one marked by the invasion of Ukraine

by Russia in 2022. Few will likely remember when Zelensky was an unpopular figure as the war

and his leadership during it made him a well-regarded and popular leader. However, what we

must remember is that Zelensky is still a wild card figure in Ukrainian politics. Prior to the war,

Zelensky was embroiled in a scandal regarding the Pandora Papers, a collection of leaked

financial information of global politicians. They showed that Zelensky, like his predecessors,

has, or at least had, links to an offshore bank account and investment in several multinational

firms, with connections to Cyprus and the British Virgin Islands.[62] The issue with providing an

accurate analysis of Zelensky is that while he has connections to oligarchs and overseas wealth,

he has also made a point to crack down on corruption within the government through judicial

reforms.[63] Though he did so after allowing oligarchs to flourish in 2020 and then proceeded to

spend two years pushing to delay the process and hesitated to sanction his former ally,

Kolomoisky.[64] This comes at the expense of increasing and consolidating his own executive

authority while simultaneously combating the oligarchs.[65] He is able to accomplish this because

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[62] Luke Harding. "Revealed: 'Anti-Oligarch' Ukrainian President's Offshore Connections." *The Guardian*. October 3, 2021. www.theguardian.com.
[63] Volodymyr Zelensky. "President Zelensky: Deoligarchization is the Key to Ukraine's Future Success." *Atlantic Council*. May 18, 2021. www.atlanticcouncil.org.
[64] Andrew Wilson. "Faltering Fightback: Zelensky's Piecemeal Campaign Against Ukraine's Oligarchs." *European Council on Foreign Relations*. July 2021.
[65] Ibid.

of the remarkable success he and his party experienced in the 2019 elections, but this too ran into difficulties due to rampant corruption and bribery by oligarch factions.

His biggest success would be introducing and later signing the anti-oligarch bill in June and November 2021, respectively, which sought to classify and strip power away from elites in Ukraine. Critics argued the bill was too vague and was setup to allow for Zelensky to effectively go after his political enemies to boost his low approval ratings, at the time.[66] Evidence for this can be attributed to actions by Poroshenko and Zelensky's unilateral revocation of Kolomoisky's citizenship in July 2022. Poroshenko immediately sold his media assets when the law passed to avoid prosecution under the law.[67] Zelensky's action against Kolomoisky came under a presidential decree and included several other individuals deemed pro-Russian.[68] This came during a sweep of government in which Zelensky rid anyone with a Russian connection or deemed to be pro-Russian. Since the invasion, he has enjoyed skyrocketing popularity amongst both Ukrainians and the international community. Ultimately, Zelensky's presidency will be judged by his actions and leadership during the Russian invasion but what he does upon the war's end will be equally as important. He has an opportunity to rid Ukraine of oligarchic influence and corruption for the long-term given the mandate he has for rule and support from the West, as well as assure that democracy in Ukraine can survive and prosper. He also has an equally possible opportunity to take advantage of his soaring popularity, along with the unpopularity of Russia, and further consolidate power as an autocratic similar to that of Victor

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[66] Kira Rudik. "Ukraine's Anti-Oligarch Law: President Zelenskyy's Populist Power Grab?." *Atlantic Council*. November 15, 2021. www.atlanticcounil.org.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Bohdan Nahaylo. "Have Kolomoisky, Rabynovych, and Korben Been Stripped of Their Ukrainian Citizenship." *Kyiv Post*. July 21, 2022. www.kyivpost.com.

Orban in Hungary or even Putin in Russia. His decision will influence the trajectory of Ukraine for generations to come.

Conclusion

We have analyzed many facets of the struggle for identity in Ukraine and its materialization over the past three decades. Based upon the evidence, we should conclude that Ukrainian identity was truly solidified in 2014 at the climax of the Maiden Revolution and Russian's annexation of Crimea. It was at this point that Ukrainians had to come to a decision regarding their nationhood and they ultimately chose to be Ukrainian regardless of an ethnic or linguistic background. As of 2022, this has further been reinforced and solidified with Russia's invasion.[69] This despite decades worth of efforts from the Kremlin to avert the westernization of Ukraine. In the face of criticism, Ukraine had pursued policies to help align it with the West and reform its governmental system so as to be appropriate with EU standards for membership. After the invasion, Ukraine along with Moldova were officially accepted by the European Commission as a new candidate for membership.[70] They noted that the war was the primary reason for accepting their candidacy. We must also point to some more controversial and divisive laws passed by Poroshenko that sought to solidify Ukrainian identity at the expense of ridding Ukraine of its "Russianness" or history with Russia. Ironically though, it was Russia's intrinsic desire to keep Ukraine within its orbit that was the most influential solidifying civic nationalism within Ukraine. We cannot say for certain what the outcome of the war will be nor when it will

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[69] Ishaan Tharoor. "How Russia's Invasion Strengthened Ukrainian Identity." *The Washington Post*. August 24, 2022. www.washingtonpost.com.
[70] Luke McGee. "Ukraine's Bid to Join EU Gets Major Boost as Executive Backs Candidacy." *CNN*. June 17, 2022. www.cnn.com.

end. We can say that Ukrainian sovereignty and nationhood has been realized, despite the
outcome.

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