

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

“THE USE OF HISTORY IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA”

JAMES C. PEARCE

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is an examination of the past’s current situation in Russia and analysis of how the Russian state uses history to create a broad coalition of consensus and forge a new national identity. History is central to issues of governance and national identity, and is therefore used for the purpose of state building and reviving Russia’s national consciousness in the twenty first century. In assessing how history mediates the complex relationship between state and population, this thesis analyses the selection process of constructing a preferred historical narrative in Russia to create loyal patriotic citizens and aid modernisation. This research critically analyses history in different spheres of Russian life, such as culture, politics, education and anniversaries. The research involves an in depth analysis of these spaces where the past is used for modernisation. An analysis of speeches, official documents and the media is conducted. This thesis also uses original semi-structured interviews conducted in the Russian Federation with history teachers. This includes the first with trainee teachers as well as an assessment of newer school textbooks, exams, homework tasks, historical monuments, public celebrations and events. Many paradoxes exist with history in contemporary Russia. While the majority of the population favour a patriotic past, the narrative is often passively rejected. The ‘preferred’ narrative is packed with inconsistencies, yet the aim is to prevent falsifications. While the past is used it to promote national unity, many episodes expose deep divisions in society. It must be equally rigid, attractive and malleable to the needs of a growing civil society to stand the test of time. History is not only a state matter, but it is a top socio-political issue to tackle in order to modernise the country as a whole.

Keywords:

Consensus, Continuity, Education, History, Identity, Narrative, Patriotism, State.

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List of Abbreviations

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
COE- Council of Europe
EU – European Union
EEU – Eurasian Economic Union
FOM – Public Monetary Fund (English)
KPRF – Communist Party of the Russian Federation
LDPR- Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
NATO-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PARNAS – Party of People’s Freedom
RUR – Russian Ruble(s)
UK – United Kingdom
UR – United Russia Party
US – United States
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VTsIOM – Russian Public Opinon Research Center (English)

Russian-English Transliterations

Е – ye
Ё – yo
Ж - zh
И – i
Й - iy
Ч - ch
Ц- ts
Ш - sh
Щ - shch
Ь/Ъ – will both be replaced with an apostrophe (‘)
Ы – y
Э – e
Ю – yu
Я – ya

All other letters are replaced with their Latin and or English equivalents.

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Introduction

At his State of the Federation address 2012, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, proclaimed:

In order to revive national consciousness we need to link historical eras and get back to understanding the simple truth that Russia did not begin in 1917, or even in 1991, but rather, that we have a common, continuous history spanning over one thousand years and we must rely on it to find inner strength and purpose in our national development.¹

For the Russian nation to modernise in its own unique fashion, reacquainting with its past is essential. Since 1991, Russian history has been as uncertain as its future at the best of times. To build a modern state and national identity surrounding it, a narrative depicting successes and glory is sought after. A narrative that is in line with traditions and supported by figures, events and myths that underpin success act as a model of how to construct a new Russia out of the old. Complimentary to this, the past can also serve as an example of what to avoid. The ‘newness’ of Boris Yeltsin’s national idea and symbols of Russia were shallow and meaningless, but more importantly, did not create a sense of historical development in line with traditions that could explain the current situation.² Yeltsin’s new Russia was polarising because it rejected the experience of the USSR as the country dove into chaos. This ‘decade without patriotism’ was symbolic of the deep pessimism and lack of hope. Russia had not defined its past, therefore, it could not map out a successful future. In other words, the past must be compatible with the current situation to define what Russia is and ‘should’ be.

This thesis is an examination of the past and its contemporary relevance to state policy and construction of a national identity. This will henceforth be referred to as the ‘Putin Agenda’, which Russia’s president sets out to achieve national unity and stability. It will be referred to as the Putin Agenda because, as the prior paragraph sets out, the state under his leadership now has

¹ President V.V. Putin State of the Federation Address, 2012

² Edwin Bacon, *Contemporary Russia*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p.179

a clear idea of what Russia is and should be. This idea is rooted in the past but borrows from it where appropriate. This agenda stresses the need for continuity of the Russian state, tradition, culture and the necessity of Russia's great power status. This requires a greater role and presence in geopolitics, enhanced security and a new national idea. All of the aforementioned must be based on success stories in the Putin Agenda. In addition, symbols are a commitment to this unity, assume many forms (textbooks, youth groups or monuments) and are the ultimate reinforcer of a contemporary Russian identity. The past can supply answers to the present when confusion and disillusionment occurs, often acting as a justification for state policy (see Chapter 2). The Putin Agenda is determined to reconcile with the problematic and unusable past. However, much controversy surrounds its motives and policies concerning an already problematic period that divides the population and ruling elites alike. There are concerns that ignoring the traumatic episodes of the past will be detrimental to Russia's development and bring great instability to the present. The period under investigation in this thesis (1881-1945) was chosen because it represents two separate Russias (the Imperial and Soviet past) that are filled with grandiose events and continue to effect the country today. Not only this, but it receives great attention from academics, the media and civil society alike. The period is a less straightforward one to grapple with, directly plays on the identity of the new Russians and is usable for explaining the country's situation. This makes Russian history and its historic identity something of a mosaic on an awkwardly shaped canvas. It also makes the concept of history in Russia harder to comprehend as well. On the one hand, there is a new government funded textbook series, busts of Stalin in Moscow, historical monuments on the newly incorporated Crimean peninsula and films on the Great Patriotic War, which are fictional yet presented as fact.³ On the other, there is a memorial to the victims of the great terror in central Moscow, a monument of reconciliation for the Civil War and continuous reconstructions of churches. At face value, history appears to be some sort of game with inconsistent rules. Beneath the surface, it is an important quest to win the battle of ideas about the past to answer the most important questions of the day.

³ 'Stalin's Bust Unveiled in Moscow as Part of 'Rulers' Alley'', *Business Insider*, available at <<https://www.businessinsider.com/ap-stalins-bust-unveiled-in-moscow-as-part-of-rulers-alley-2017-9>> , accessed 15/12/2018; examples of these films are *White Tiger* and *Panfilov's 28 Men*, which are discussed in Chapters Three and Six.

This research will address four issues. Firstly, to ascertain what the ‘glory days’ of Russian history were and discuss why these have been selected and others were left out, even ignored. Secondly, to assess how far and to what extent history impacts the identity of Russians today. Third, to investigate the nature of history in secondary education and public celebrations. Finally, this research will analyse history within the context of the Putin administration’s agenda considering issues such as order, continuity and patriotism.

Education and public celebrations are two spaces where governments can largely control the narrative. They are places where the government can have its say and makes both ideal mediums through which to channel the preferred images of the past. The desired narrative is more evident in textbooks funded by the government, speeches made at celebrations and the images selected to represent it are symbolic of the legacy and mirage of continuity. However, the narrative is inseparable from Russian traditions. The link between history, culture and power is stronger in Russia than its neighbours, and stresses its own uniqueness. Therefore, it is also necessary to unpack the ‘Russian idea’ and components making up Russia’s historic identity. Alongside this, history has, since the beginning of the Russian Federation, been a high profile political topic. Political parties fight over the past’s legacy and seek to define the final say on certain episodes, the Soviet period especially. It also defines many of their policies and political positions. Moreover, Russia’s relationship with the outside world and former Soviet space has often been defined by the past and justified by auspicious episodes. The notable example identified is the Great Patriotic War (1941-45).

While a broad scope, the boundaries of this research are defined as follows. First is to focus on the period 1881-1945. Russia has a thousand year history from which examples could be analysed, and are used by the Russian state. The period 1881-1945 contains important events and movements. These include conservatism and reaction, 1905 revolution, the First World War, fall of the monarchy, revolutions, the Stalin era and Great Patriotic War. These continue to impact the state’s legacy and Russian identity today, with the latter remaining the main force of historical unity and patriotism in the modern day. One *Levada* poll also found public interest in the period as a whole to be modestly high, compared to others (World War II 38%, the ‘Silver

Age' 18%, 1917 revolution 13% and Stalin era 12%).⁴ This allows for a more comprehensive look at Imperial and Soviet Russia and the main issues surrounding both in contemporary Russia. Another boundary is restricting the field research to Moscow, Moskovskaya Oblast, St. Petersburg and Vladimirskaya Oblast. These regions are, generally speaking, more developed and have higher populations. Schools tend to be better funded with more modern equipment. This includes textbooks and better-trained teachers who are more representative of the demographics. Not only this, but education reforms in Russia are often slow to materialise or take effect. Therefore, the two capitals and their surrounding regions tend to be the 'testing grounds' and more able to enact the reforms (see Chapters Three, Four and Five). This is also why this research analysed a selection of the 2015 'state sponsored' textbook series, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five, used by the interviewed teachers and schools visited. There are almost 100 school history textbooks in Russia today, yet in the regions included in this study, most use the same textbooks. Furthermore, most public celebrations and commemorations are centered in the largest cities, especially the two capitals. This not only provides easier access for the population, but also makes them more symbolic and tied to the country's traditions.

History in Russia today

The Russian state is often at the centre of the national history. In many ways, the narrative aims to provide an explanation of state development and the political implications for society. Putin and his government seek to present itself as the natural historical heirs to Kievan Rus', pre-revolutionary Russia and the USSR. This requires auspicious episodes to reflect the goals of the modern state. When justifying the modern day situation, the new history must also explain the Russian experience of democracy because of the USSR's collapse and global integration; both of which came because of events in the period 1881-1945.⁵ History is not just a study of past events, but a product and idea for modernisation and consolidating the nation. With this in mind, three main problems with history in Russia today are particularly bothersome for the state in its attempts to establish consensus around a usable past. These three problems are as follows: Russia does not have a non-imperialist history; the position of Russian society, President Putin

⁴ Russian History, *Levada Tsentr*, 03/04/2017, <http://www.levada.ru/en/2017/04/03/russian-history> accessed 03/04/2017

⁵ Olga Malinova, 'Sotsialnoi proektsii proshlogo', PostNauka, uploaded to *YouTube* 31/10/2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpCikWiKuBA&t=35s accessed 16/12/2017

and the outside world are all at loggerheads concerning Russian history; the ‘official’ narrative remains a puzzle.

The period under focus is a striking reflection of these three problems and show a high level of crossover between them. The Russians are still going through a post-imperial readjustment. This is something that took Britain and France decades and recent events show that this still not wholly complete. Both had to adapt to a rather less significant place in the world, and grappling with the basic question of whether they are a mono or multicultural state.⁶ While Russia has its own historical peculiarities, it is not principally different in this regard. There is also a clear distinction between the state and people often overlooked in the West. After centuries of incorporating other nations and peoples, the label of chauvinist imperialists is applied in the West to the Russian. Meanwhile, most of the Russian population are the descendants of serfs and peasants; they do not view themselves as brutal colonisers or oppressors.⁷ Russia must tell its story in a new language, and one that is free of any ideology or exclusive. While the new narrative embraces the Tsarist period, it also relies on achievements from the Soviet era – a clear distinction between Putin and Yeltsin. In this respect, the product and idea of history is becoming a collection of carefully selected events, periods and figures depicting the idea of a strong nation united behind a patriotic message on a march to greatness. While all nations do this, history is a fundamental part of the modernisation and governing process in contemporary Russia. The population is living through a highly politicised period where fragments of the past are used to explain the construction of skyscrapers over welfare reform. The past also stresses the messianic mission that has been commonplace in Russia’s state traditions. The message is adapted and shifts to reflect the mood of the government, and close attention is paid to the controversial segments of the past and how these influence the message. At best, these are downplayed and at worst ignored so they do not become an unwanted distraction. In creating a success story (and one of unity), certain things do not fit. Examples from this period would be the revolutions, Aleksandr Kerensky’s leadership and the Stalinist terror. These represent weak states, leaders and chaos while the latter is a humanitarian stain on the state’s record. As history is in part a quest for legitimacy and identity, not only can issues undermining the overarching message not be tolerated (to a certain extent), this requires incredible flexibility and a great deal

⁶ Email conversation with Mark Galeotti.

⁷ Michele Berdy, ‘What Makes The Russians So Russian’, in *The Moscow Times*, *Russia For Beginners*, (Moscow: United Press, 2009), p.157

of effort to package them for consumption. 'Russia' has been an imperial nation, part of the Soviet experiment, and is now an independent, notionally-democratic state with an infant living memory. Selecting one thing over another to represent contemporary Russia and the Russian state says much about the identity it wants, and will have far-reaching consequences for the future. This is also where memory becomes important and proves to be quite an obstacle for the state in establishing a consensual narrative that brings society together. Russian society is not yet ready to reach a unanimous verdict on the USSR, yet it was equally disappointed with the reality of post-Soviet Russia and democracy.⁸ Externally, the Eastern and Western version of European history do not concur with the of Russian/Soviet (homogenous) one. This has caused tremendous geopolitical frictions, which in turn has sparked Russian lawmakers to invoke the past to justify their stance.

The 'feel-good' factor, which is central to the use of history for this goal, is not helped by nuance either. It should be acknowledged that Russian history is, in many ways, a very traumatic one. This period is no exception. A traumatic history can be delegitimising for the state's legacy if it is not handled properly, as it can undermine continuity and the positive notions surrounding it. Abusive regimes that were often uncaring, murderous, incompetent or all three mark many segments of Russian history. Yet, there are examples where these and the actions of its leaders are justified in the name of progress, modernisation, self-defense or to achieve some other greater good. One survey found that more than half of Russians (62%) agree that boards, busts and other attributes telling the successes of Joseph Stalin are needed in public places, including 77% of young people.⁹ Another showed that more than 40% had in one way or another, justified the purges.¹⁰ The historical record means that the 'glories' are questionable and is an uncomfortable reality. For instance, how far was industrialisation on the back of Gulag slave labour? How many innocent veterans of the Great Patriotic War were sent to the Gulag during 'high Stalinism' when they returned home? Every country has cruel and unhappy sides to its history, but Russia's is largely painted in dark and bloody tones. Uncomfortable questions surrounding the glories are naturally quite unwelcome in seeking to establish a narrative. Most importantly, though, the handling of this demonstrates a core trait of the narrative, which asserts

⁸ Justyna Prus, 'Russia's Use of History as a Political Weapon', *PISM*, No.12, 114, May 2015, p.1

⁹ 'Ustanovku pamyatykh znakov v cest' Stalina podderzhalo pochtu 80% molodyozhi', *RBK*, <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/597057059a79472210e669c9> accessed 08/01/2017.

¹⁰ 'Bolee 40% rossiyan opravdali Stalinskie repressii', *RBK*, <https://www.rbc.ru/society/05/07/2017/595cbe919a794737273b109e> accessed 08/01/2017.

that the hardship endured in this shared experience, was not in vain. Thus, key to modernisation is a reconciliation with the problematic past. As will be discussed below, this is a taboo in modern Russia and ‘criticism’ of the official narrative is deemed socially unacceptable and can even result in criminal charges. From the reverse angle, Russians might question the West’s sincerity throughout history, as well, which reflects the defensive tone. Did the Entente provide the Russian Empire with enough assistance on the Eastern Front? Had the Soviet state fallen during the Second World War, would this have genuinely troubled Great Britain or the USA? Why is so little made of foreign involvement in the Russian Civil War? These legitimate questions influence the historical narrative and besieged mentality.

To develop this further, history has become unavoidable in the limited political debates, but this mix has seen questionable results. Objectivity in history is extremely difficult (if not impossible) whereas politics is purely subjective. If historical fact is replaced with a politically convenient pseudo-history, it risks morphing into propaganda. While many, such as Miguel Vazquez Linan, have stated that history has been utilised as a propaganda tool, this is not in fact the case. Vasquez Linan writes that in the media and state funded textbook, the ‘well defined priorities’ of ‘sovereign democracy’ (*samostoyatel’nost’*) have become the only pedagogical objective and pushes the narrative that ‘Putin will solve all the problems as he picked Russia up off its knees before’.¹¹ However, this thesis will argue that the past is not used as propaganda in modern Russia; rather it is a bargaining chip. Firstly, the state does not have a monopoly on the historical narrative for it to be readily mobilised as propaganda. Propaganda is more readily available than the current usable past, as well. The lack of consensus over the usable past means pushing an unpopular narrative could expose and widen the fractures in society. Secondly, the Russian state is continuously seeking a new basis for legitimacy, particularly because one party and president has ruled for most of the twenty first century. It is not uncommon in any democracy for parties and leaders to seek new forms of legitimacy. Russia’s democracy is young and the politicians have been in power for a long time. The past has proven a reliable legitimisation instrument in Russia before, meaning it will likely be used again. However, there is an underlying fear among Russian lawmakers of chaos and instability due to Russia’s historical experience. While Putin’s first presidency was based on order and stability, his third term was defined by a standoff with the West (see Chapter One). Meanwhile, his second term was characterised by economic

¹¹ Miguel Vasquez Linan, ‘History as a Propaganda Tool in Putin’s Russia’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43 2010, p.173

redistribution, yet Western sanctions 2014 caused a retraction of Russia's economy and people's personal incomes (see Chapter Three). Applying references to a glorious past, or even the most recent past, appeals to the population's patriotic sentiments and offers a 'Russian solution' to its own problems.

There is an ongoing attempt to finally put the past to bed by seeking an all-inclusive way of being 'Russian' in the twenty first century. The aim of this is to create patriotic citizens proud of the motherland and its achievements in order to clear the way for modernisation, led by a strong state. Yet, here also lies what is arguably the biggest obstacle for any Russian government and president. This takes a substantial amount of effort to create and enforce. As this research will show, there is no guarantee or enough evidence to suggest that the population is buying into it. While Putin's popularity has remained astronomically high into his fourth term and patriotic feelings are stronger than ever, the research carried out for this project has shown the population is equally prone to rejecting the narrative, as they are to buy into it. At the same time, many more remain ambivalent and uninterested altogether. A better-known example would be A.V. Filippov's teacher handbook funded by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2007, which attracted enormous criticism for its portrayal of the Stalin era. Most teachers, meanwhile, have never even heard of it (see Chapter Five). Then again, as this thesis will demonstrate, it reflects that the narrative is more symbolic rather than a deep search for the truth and soul of the country. History is a source of mobilisation, but only if it is creative enough to convince people.¹² Even among the elite and Russian lawmakers, there is no consensus on different periods, in particular the USSR. Putin's speeches demonstrate this, as these are worded appropriately to suit different audiences. In fact, Putin's personal opinion generates huge interest making headlines in Russia and the West alike. One example would be his comment at a meeting of United Russia (UR) party activists, where he said that Lenin placed a time bomb under the USSR (see Chapter One).

The Putin Agenda

All children currently in the Russian school system were born after Putin became president and remember only him and Dmitry Medvedev. They are very much a product of the new Russian state, and are recipients of the Putin Agenda's message used to create a broad coalition, and is why education is of particular interest to this study. Before exploring the Putin Agenda more

¹² This came up in two separate conversations the author had with Mark Galeotti and Boris Kolonitskiy.

thoroughly, it is worth stressing at this point that public interest in politics is not high. Just 32% claimed to be interested in the 2018 presidential election.¹³ Moreover, voter turnout for the 2016 Duma elections was just 47.88% nationally, and was even lower in some regions (figures for the two capitals were 20% Moscow and 16% St. Petersburg).¹⁴ Certain issues are still taboo to bring up, but history has become a favourite fallback; people are always willing to discuss the past and it is an area where political points can be scored.¹⁵ Public politics is limited, meaning historical politics (*istoricheskaya politika*) immediately gains a greater significance. Certainly, the pride Russians have in their country largely focuses around history (46%).¹⁶ Critics have often labelled history as a useful distraction from the economic and political situation.¹⁷ A minor recession in comparison to the 1990s, more recent economic woes arose in the aftermath of Maidan. Russia was expelled from the G8 and placed under economic sanctions for annexing the Crimean Peninsula.¹⁸ The effects on the population will be noted in subsequent chapters, but while calling it a distraction is not in itself unreasonable, the past did prove to be a reliable instrument for the government to energise support against ‘hostile others’ and enemies seeking to weaken and undermine Russia. In this sense, an objective history is less important than securing the country and its interests, which is the top priority for the Russian government. The Culture Minister, Vladimir Medinskiy, wrote, ‘The facts themselves don’t mean too much. I will be more brutal: in the historical mythology, they do not mean anything... Everything begins not with facts, but interpretations. If you like your motherland, your people, history, what you will be writing will always be positive’.¹⁹

Working within this context, Putin came to power in 1999 at a time when Russia was in a desperate situation. As Justyna Prus writes, bringing history into the realm of state policy was part of Putin’s way of ‘bringing Russia up from its knees’ and reversing Russia’s geopolitical weakness, caused to a degree by the West.²⁰ Contributing to this was also a ‘flight from

¹³ The Russian Presidential Election, *Levada Tsentr*, 15/11/2017, <https://www.levada.ru/en/2017/11/15/the-russian-presidential-election-2/> accessed 14/12/2017

¹⁴ Shaun Walker, ‘Russia stays loyal to the Kremlin in election with record low turnout’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/19/russia-stays-loyal-kremlin-election-record-low-turnout> accessed 14/12/2017

¹⁵ Conversation with Boris Kolonitskii.

¹⁶ Gordost’ za stranu i narod, *Levada Tsentr*, 21/12/2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/12/21/17311/?fromtg=1> accessed 21/12/2017

¹⁷ Alexei Navalny interview, *BBC Hardtalk*, January 18 2017

¹⁸ In the Russian Federation, Crimea’s annexation is referred to as a reunification.

¹⁹ V. Medinskiy, *Voina. Mify SSSR. 1939-45*, (Moscow, 2013), p.658

²⁰ Justyna Prus, *Russia’s Use of History as a Political Weapon*, p.1

sovereignty' and retreat from traditions. Among the goals of the new Russian president were restoring his country's international prestige, a greater self-assertion and consolidating society. Methods of doing this were rather limited; ideology is prohibited by the new constitution, which also established the separation of church and state. In addition, even though Russia was now a democracy on paper, the population was impatient, longing for great change and a source of optimism for the future. More importantly, the Russian people had never known or lived in a democracy. While this was true for most former communist countries, Russia found itself in a unique position. It was no longer a superpower with retracted borders and citizens living beyond those of the modern state. All the while, it was beset by crime and appalling socio-economic problems.²¹ History became an underlying force in rebuilding Russia, providing it with a new identity and sense of belonging and purpose in the modern world.

The Putin Agenda, therefore, is comprised of consensus, patriotism, unity, stability and continuity. These are the auspicious ways to secure the country on the 'right' path and history acts as its scaffolding, but is also presented as the soil from which it grows. The goal of the Putin Agenda is to restore Russia to normality and uses Russia's rich history a 'proof', which will be explored throughout. However, the subjective nature of history also means that the state can bend the narrative at any time, particularly as education continues to become more centralised. Although the destination does not change, the route might; examples from the past must justify this. As will be explored in subsequent chapters, the Putin Agenda is very much in the spirit of the 'Russian Idea' discussion born in the nineteenth century, which is self-legitimising by creating an aura of homogeneity.

To create a historical framework that shows continuity, there must be particular characteristics and models of identification, which persist in the historical record. Those deemed positive are instruments in creating an identification with the state, state traditions, and stress the uniqueness of Russian culture. This is why culture, education and anniversaries are key to understanding the use and purpose of history in twenty first-century Russia. It can, for instance, explain the interest in the Cossack revival, linking priests to patriotic school projects and the emphasis on military victories in history lessons. These can bring the past back to life and make it seem relevant in the modern climate, and as chapters in this thesis will show, is easier during times of

²¹ Jake March, 'Russian Nationalism Under Putin: a majority faith?' in Katlijn Malfiet and Ria Laenen (eds.), *Elusive Russia: Current Developments in Russian State Identity and Institutional Reform Under President Putin*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), p.33

crisis or poor relations with the West. This also explains why the revolution and civil war are left out, since these represent disruptions and can undermine the narrative. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, this is partly why the centenary received minimal commemoration or mention from lawmakers.

The Use of History in Putin's Russia

Whilst 'The Use of History in Putin's Russia' is a relatively broad canvas, previous works magnified only certain areas like education or the nature of the state under his presidencies (Igor Torbakhov).²² The most recent works have capitalised on timeliness, often coinciding with anniversaries of some kind. These focused on the retelling of Stalin (Thomas Sherlock), the Great Patriotic War (Elizabeth A. Wood) or the centenary of the revolutions (James Ryan).²³ Whilst scholarly enquiry is growing on the use of history, this thesis brings the different spheres together in order to explain how history affects state policy and the construction of a modern Russian identity. The claim of originality of this thesis is twofold, relying on two main features: qualitative interviews with history teachers, and a comparison of the major history textbooks published for use in Russia's schools in recent years. Putin has attempted to draw on key moments of Russian history from both the Soviet and Imperial past, seeking to emphasise the greatness of the state and its people. This thesis will demonstrate how government policies surrounding patriotic education, state symbols and national holidays are a reflection of Russia as a historic entity. It will also explore this anniversaries and commemoration, which is a relatively new sphere of scientific enquiry.

As well as the newest textbooks published in 2015, this research is also the first to interview trainee teachers in the Russian Federation. These interviews considered how the teaching force view the content, newer textbooks and exams. It also enquired about their own opinions concerning the period. By interviewing those about to enter the teaching force who were not

²² Igor Torbakhov, History, Memory and National Identity: understanding the politics of history and memory wars in post-Soviet lands, *Demokratizatsiya*, summer 2011.

²³ James Ryan, 'The Politics of National History: Russia's Ruling Elite and the Centenary of 1917', *Revolutionary Russia* June 2018; Thomas D. Sherlock, 'Russian Politics and the Soviet Past: Reassessing Stalin and Stalinism under Vladimir Putin', *Communist and Post Communist Studies*, 2016; Elizabeth A. Wood, 'Performing Memory: Vladimir Putin and the Celebration of WWII in Russia', *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 38, 2 (2011).

born in the USSR, this research will provide insights into the generational shifts and indicate how likely the message of the Putin Agenda is to succeed beyond his presidencies. Quantitative methods would have missed the nuances and subtleties that were picked up. This group of people have not been previously interviewed and neither has any group of history teachers from Vladimirskaya Oblast. As such, the interviews provide insights into teaching in this region and its perception of Russian history. What makes this even more interesting is that region includes cities on Russia's historic 'Golden Ring'.²⁴ Reminders of the past and the ideal image it should assume are an everyday part of life for this group. Vladimir is also a former capital and has a particular spiritual significance in modern Russia; the Grand Prince whom it is named after brought Christianity to Russia.

This thesis also shows why the collective experience of the Russian people is often prioritised over critical reconstructions of the past by professional historians. This will not only show how the past is the negotiating space between state and population, but what these negotiations look like. It could be argued that history, as well as cherry picked sub plots, is an uncritical reconstruction of collective memory to suit the government's agenda. This boils down to building a modern state based on the population's legitimacy, and projecting a preferred image of the past aids this. Receiving the support of the population is key to securing this. However, this support is sometimes passive and out of indifference rather than genuine approval.

The timeliness of this research is also significant. Firstly, commemorations of the revolutions' centenary have been analysed throughout 2017 in the Russian Federation first hand. This has allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the period under focus and the revolution's legacy in Russia today; the general lack of attention it received from the government is demonstrative of how it handles difficult topics. Secondly, the 2015 textbooks, published by the state's preferred publication houses *Drofa* and *Prosveshchenie*, are also analysed. *Prosveshchenie* controls around 40% of Russia's education market and is poised to grow to 85%. The government has also cut the number of approved school textbooks from 3,000 to 863 in the last few years.²⁵ The oligarch, Arkady Rotenberg, owned this publication and holding company until the summer 2017. Along with anniversaries, school textbooks continue to resurface and attract

²⁴ 'The Golden Ring' is a ring of ancient cities and towns Northeast of Moscow. These played a significant role in the formation of the Orthodox Church and are where several important events of Russian history took place.

²⁵ 'The Real Russia Today, *Meduza*, February 14, 2019, available at <<https://meduza.io/en/brief/2019/02/15/the-real-russia-today>> accessed 11/03/2019.

attention. Choosing to analyse a certain period within these scopes enables a deeper investigation into the use of history in contemporary Russia and where the most contentious topics exist. Finally, many of the newer historical exhibitions and monuments that have been created since the start of Putin's third term will receive analysis in subsequent chapters and is a particularly new sphere of enquiry.

Approach and Methodology

Twenty-one semi-structured open-end question interviews were conducted for this study, specifically for the chapters on education. This is because the transmitters of the message are often teachers and schools, where Russian citizens first encounter the narrative in a controlled and purely educational environment. The interviews are not typical of oral history in the sense that participants were recalling past events or experiences. As stated, this research is about the past in the modern day; however, the purpose of conducting the interviews remains the same. The interviews were designed to draw out underlying feelings and internalised attitudes about the past, and the reasons behind this.²⁶ The practices began with wide, non-contentious questions, and followed the participants' lead.²⁷ The tone of the interviews, therefore, was very important and is something a survey such as those conducted by Joseph Zajda (2015) missed. However, the relatively small number of interviewees from European Russia means the conclusions have some limitations.

Memory and sociological aspects must be also considered. As will be discussed, history, particularly in education, is about socialisation and upbringing in contemporary Russia. This is reflected through the laws on Patriotic Education, emphasis on Russian culture and 'traditional' pedagogy. A person's individual history (experience) shapes their actions and views unconsciously.²⁸ Pierre Bordieu referred to this as 'habitus'. This is often used as a conceptual and methodological tool with sociological, cultural and education studies where capital is concerned. Memory and history are resources used in practices through different mediums in Russia, and are capitalised on in order to play on the group mentality. The long-term aim is to generate loyal and patriotic citizens, through constructing a social perception of the facts, which

²⁶ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: oral history*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.175

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 229-231

²⁸ Pierre Bordieu, *Sociology in Question*, (London: Sage, 1993), p.86

suit the needs of the majority as well as the government.

The interviews for this research are divided into two groups; qualified (eleven) and trainee teachers (ten). Most of the interviews were conducted face to face whereas three were via *Skype*. Teachers are the main agents of the message, and the interviews aimed to get a sense of the training, their feelings towards the education reforms and textbooks are and the challenges history faces. Moreover, to see how teachers are adapting to the new history and contributing to the shaping of new Russian citizens. However, a key purpose to comparing both groups is to see the success of the new history in winning over different parts of the population. There were some generational differences apparent, which are telling for the future of history in Russia. Questions ranged from teaching experience, their own history education, quality of the textbooks and their content, the new examinations, the broader picture of history in Russia today and for their own opinions about certain historical figures and events. This was to see how much of their opinions filtered through into classrooms and how far they line up with the ‘official’ narrative and Putin Agenda. The participant information for groups one and two are displayed below. The full names of each participant and their institutions are omitted as participants were offered the chance remain anonymous in the briefing.

Group One: Qualified Teachers

Sex	Age	Years of Experience	Location	Type of School
Male	56	38	Moscow	Private
Female	27	5	Volokolamsk	Gymnasium
Female	41	21	Volokolamsk	Gymnasium
Male	61	44	Moscow	State*
Male	33	10	St. Petersburg	State
Female	36	13	St. Petersburg	State
Female	36	13	St. Petersburg	State
Female	62	46	Moscow	State*
Female	53	32	Moscow	State
Female	45	23	Moscow	Gymnasium
Female	50	28	Moscow	Gymnasium

*School specialises in history/treats history as a special subject.

Group Two: Trainee Teachers

Sex	Age	Location
Female	21	Vladimir
Female	23	Vladimir
Female	21	Vladimir
Female	21	Vladimir
Female	22	Vladimir
Male	22	Vladimir
Female	23	Vladimir
Male	22	Vladimir
Female	22	Vladimir
Female	21	Vladimir

The initial aim was to have ten in each group. There are, however, eleven participants in the first group because one of the school directors insisted on both of her school's history teachers being interviewed. Important to highlight here is that two teachers in Moscow started teaching (in some capacity) as teenagers. The reason one gave was 'you understand there was nothing [jobwise] I was heading toward. There was an opportunity to go into teaching and I like children. To be honest, I had nothing better to do *and* there was a need for teachers.'²⁹ In the second group, some were already teaching at schools in Vladimirskaya Oblast while completing their final year of study. Two others already had teaching jobs lined up for after their graduation, and two others went into the profession within a year.

The candidate also approached the Ministers for Culture and Education and Science as well as President Putin via his spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, to discuss the themes of this thesis. The Russian President was unable to find time in his tight schedule. The Ministry for Education and Science replied in Spring 2017 that it would respond to the enquiries made within thirty days, however, this was never received (Appendix A). The Minister for Culture, Vladimir Medinsky, did not respond to both requests.

As well as the interviews, to critically assess the nature, use and purpose of history in Russia today a wide range of various sources were relied on, as several topics are explored. School history lessons and patriotic projects were observed to get a feel for the new patriotic history and assess its implementation. Statistical data from polling companies (notably *Levada*, *VTsIOM* and *FOM*) and international organisations are also used. This thesis also made good

²⁹ Interview with Irina, school history teacher, Moscow 14/03/2017.

use of government documents, speeches from lawmakers, educational texts used by students and teachers alike, newspaper and magazine articles (from Russia and the West), films, museums and exhibitions, public events and historical monuments in the Russian Federation.

Common Themes and Literature

This research explores several different topics relating to the use of history in Putin's Russia. Though interconnected, the themes of each chapter are still quite distinct, and for this reason, the key literature will be reviewed within each chapter. However, some common themes emerge when considering history as a whole in modern Russia. These should be broken down and recent research taken into consideration in order to fully explore the topics of this thesis.

First is the notion that history is, primarily, a resource. Whilst this will mostly be explored in the next chapter, following chapters demonstrate the ways in which this resource is extracted and capitalised on. Ilya Kalinin has most notably written on this topic. He argues that it is not only a blueprint for how to achieve goals, but like any natural resource, the 'nostalgic' past is key to the modernisation process.³⁰ This is why the 'battle for history' is important to the state, as securing the past will enable stability and order. A major attempt at distraction from a slight economic downturn has been nationalism surrounding events in Crimea. This deployed history in support, though as will be stated in Chapters Three and Six, it alone could not fill this void. Unlike natural resources, the past cannot be monopolised or have one author (see Chapter One). As Michael Waller states, in modern Russia monopolies have to be resisted.³¹ This is primarily for reasons of credibility and so that the state can distance itself from an authoritarian label. This also shows a slight paradox. Although the Marxism-Leninist discourse has gone, some elements of Soviet patriotism remain (Chapter Four). The main idea here is to use examples of what has worked in the past in order to modernise, and is why erecting a statue of Kalashnikov was so symbolic. It connects Russia's greatest victory to progress and has familial resonance. Alongside this, establishing a modern identity based upon nineteenth century concepts of Russia

³⁰ Ilya Kalinin, *Nostalgic Modernization: the Soviet Past as 'Historical Horizon'*, *Slavonica*, 2011.

³¹ Michael Waller, *Russian Politics Today*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.108

coupled with Soviet elements seems contradictory. This is until both are framed within the context of the Putin Agenda and presented as a fitting cultural scheme to build on.³²

Following on from this, the Russian and post-Soviet aspects of history, memory and myth must be understood. Although Russia is signed up to international programmes surrounding the nature of the communist past, its issues with communism are unique and do not affect other nations' in the same way.³³ The Russian experience is often dismissed in Eastern and Western Europe, alike. This has far-reaching consequences that are still affecting the nation today and influence the construction of the historical narrative. Weber wrote that legitimacy is the capacity of a system to engender and maintain belief that the existing political institutions are most appropriate for their particular society.³⁴ Thomas D. Sherlock extends this further to note that non-democracies often rely on myths more since they have greater challenges in maintaining public support.³⁵ Whilst a reconstruction of the past must be approved by society and cannot be one sided, myths can provide structure and content to the ambiguous or abstract. Historical narratives in Russia must have a strong symbolic significance, which means that objectivity can suffer.³⁶ This is because when myths are over relied on, facts have the ability to discredit the desired version and diminish its meaning. Yet, it is the ambiguity of myths, which also determine the values negotiated by the state and society (see Chapter 2). Typical for nations in transition to democracy (which Russia still is), the political space is open for debate, yet it is essential for the Russian state to maintain the upper hand. Unlike liberal democracies, the society tends to be less stable and tolerant of competing ideas, which could prove 'harmful'. This is why the control over the 'resource' is sought after by the state, according to Olga Malinova.³⁷ Furthermore, and according to Sherlock, this is why anti-regime sentiment becomes privatised and fear of the alternative is exploited. A recent example of this was at his annual press conference 2017, when Putin responded to a question from TV personality and socialite, Kseniya Sobchak, (who ran for president in 2018) about 'real competition' in elections. Raising the candidacy of Alexei Navalny, Putin's responded to Sobchak in line with the agenda outlined, saying that "These

³² Olga Malinova, 'Politka pamyat' v post sovetsskoi Rossii', PostNauka, *Youtube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4mysej5Mx8&t=3S5s accessed 16/12/2017

³³ One example would be Resolution 1481, January 25th 2006, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which states that the communist parties of all former Soviet Bloc states should reassess their history and seek to distance themselves from it. This will receive more analysis in Chapter Three.

³⁴ Weber quoted in Rodney Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.49

³⁵ Thomas D. Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, p.10

³⁶ Ibid. p.5

³⁷ Olga Malinova, 'Politka Pamyat v post sovetsskoi Rossii'.

people you refer to are, excuse me, Russian Saakashvilis... and you want these Saakashvilis to destabilise the situation in the country?”³⁸ Using the Colour Revolutions as an example from the ‘recent past’, of how to govern Russia and avoid ‘Westernising’ has proven affective (see Chapter Three), and so this argument is preserved.

When relating to the past, particularly the USSR, myths and memory do create problems. As will be explored in several chapters, a positive repackaging or idealisation of the darker episodes in Russian history (Stalin’s rule will receive a great deal of attention in this regard) limits society’s ability to define a political identity in civic and democratic institutions. This also represents a fundamental difference in both the narrative and values system in contemporary Russia and the West. The focus is less on human rights and democratic freedoms. Instead, military might and cultural legacies are a preferred focus. The patriotic education and celebrations have focused less on Russia’s path to becoming a democracy, and more on depictions of strength in recent years.³⁹ The state and people remain traumatised by the experience of democracy in the 1990s, and the nostalgia for unity displayed in the heroic segments of the past is Russia’s coping mechanism for the modernisation process.

Another notable factor comes from the Russian sociologist, Boris Dubin. He contends that a lack of change in Russia makes the past appear closer, and therefore, the need to protect the old belief in a grand mission, great power status and heroic ordeals is an insurance policy at state and societal level.⁴⁰ The longevity of tradition gives the country a sense of hope that its future has been previously mapped out and the sacrifices were not in vain. A symbolic reunification with the past is therefore a major factor in securing the future. This thesis will further explore these ‘traditions’, what they mean in modern Russia and how legitimising it is. This will appear in each chapter of this thesis. In addition, it is necessary to consider the consequences of the past entering the public space and the current environment. Nataliya Zubarevich’s theory of ‘Four Russias’ displays the many divisions within Russian society and how these can be manipulated to legitimise the Russian state.⁴¹ It further sets out how events since the annexation of Crimea

³⁸ ‘Kseniya Sobchak Can’t Figure Out If She’s A Journalist, Candidate or Social Justice Warrior’, *Vesti News, YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O1d4USMMb0> accessed 29/12/2017

³⁹ James C. Pearce and Anastassiya Yuchshenko, ‘Defending Russia, Securitising the Future: How the Past Shaped Russia’s Political Discourse Regarding Crimea’, *Europolity*, June 2018, p.

⁴⁰ Boris Dubin, ‘The “Special Path” and the Social Order in Today’s Russia’, *Sociological Research*, vol.50 no.3 May-June 2011, pp.56-76

⁴¹ N. Zubarevich, ‘Four Russias: rethinking the post-Soviet map’, in *Regionalism(s): A Variety of Perspectives from Europe and the Americas*. Innsbruck : Institut fur Federalismus, 2014, p. 71-88.

in 2014 and following sanctions has impacted the government narrative surrounding ‘Russia’ and how each group responds. This thesis will analyse how the past directly affects each group in their daily lives and how far it can be used to obtain support for the ‘Putin Agenda’.

Concerning education and patriotic citizenship in contemporary Russia, Joseph Zajda has written extensively on this subject. Zajda analysed textbooks, teachers and reforms to the education system, surveying 200 history teachers in four Russian cities. While his findings provided useful insights, the overall conclusions were rather simplistic. Providing a basic demographic outline of the teaching force, it fails to consider why a unilateral narrative was welcomed by some or what the true reasons for finding the textbooks unsatisfactory are. Textbooks are informed by the concept of modernisation, which as previously mentioned, can limit the moral boundaries of state behaviour.⁴² Although this can spur civil society to engage in a more open discussion about the past, less attention and assistance from the government and media is devoted to the complex narratives, simply because these do not promote a patriotic spirit. Both groups interviewed for this research showed a willingness and desire to broaden the historical discussion, have a more open discussion about the negative past, but also what the obstacles to this are. Michael W. Apple has also written on this, and argues that the school curriculum becomes a way of controlling the population by promoting its social and economic values.⁴³ Eleftherios Klerides supports this, stating that textbook readers are treated as members of a nation and passive observers. The textbooks must be positioned in a sensitive way, with the language ruling out the ‘unacceptable’.⁴⁴ This is also the case with statues, memorials and commemoration events. These are a reflection of how the state wants to portray the nation, and the success of this narrative will affect its legitimacy. Then again, as Lisovskaya and Karpov highlight, not every idea is represented by a symbol. Value-laden ideas related to historical, political and cultural issues can replace concrete symbols.⁴⁵ Therefore, a state sponsored textbook and monument has the same meaning as an anniversary or concept. Furthermore, the omission or facts from a textbook and decision not to erect monuments also reveal a lot about how a nation wants to be perceived. Uncomfortable topics can highlight a vulnerability of the

⁴² Thomas Sherlock, Making Sense of Self-Representations: how the United States and Russia view their contentious pasts, *Global Affairs*, No.2, 2012, available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Making-Sense-of-Self-Representations-15574> accessed 29/11/2017

⁴³ Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 3rd edn., (London: Routledge, 2004), p.59

⁴⁴ Eleftherios Klerides, Educational Transfer as a Strategy for Remaking Subjectivities: transnational and national articulations of “New History” in Europe, *European Education*, vol.46,1, Spring 2014, p.16

⁴⁵ Elena Lisovskaya and Vyacheslav Karpov, New Ideologies in Post Communist Russian Textbooks, *Comparative Education Review*, vol.43, 4, pp.525-526

state or society, and the self-suppression of a broader discussion often suggests the wounds have not fully healed. For this thesis, the revolutions and Civil War are stand out examples that will be critically assessed.

What these themes show overall is that history as a negotiating space between civil society and the Russian government reflects the grey transitional zone the country currently sits. Most of the criticism centers around the government trying to push its view and agenda and trying to drown out voices from civil society. This reflects the desire to ‘win’ the battle for history but also the problem of openness, which started during *Perestroika*. History is a deep socio-political problem for these reasons, and should be treated as such.

Structure

While a relatively broad investigation, this study does not cover every aspect of the past in contemporary Russia. However, to understand the use of history in Russia today, its application and socio-political ramifications, several spheres should be assessed. As Anna Sanina writes, patriotic education is a good example of how a political idea can lead to the formation of social structures, and how, over time, these can restore the original political goal.⁴⁶ However, this alone would not be sufficient. In order to understand the roots of the patriotism, the national identity should be understood as should the political battles surrounding the past. It is these which feed into other areas, such as education and anniversaries, and the materialisations of the past reveal a lot about the complexities of history in Russia today.

The first chapter lays out the problems of history in contemporary Russia, and the issues with conceptualising the past. No government can simply set out to establish a new history and hope to create consensus around it. Although history is a resource and has been used differently by each Russian state, its subjective nature cannot be monopolised. A negotiation process must occur and is on going. Creating consensus around the past requires a lot of creativity. Moreover, the state is contending to be its sole author and is in an ideal position to be, yet cannot afford to be seen as ignoring facts in creating a consensual past. The figures and events of the period are also tough to grapple with and presenting them requires immense effort and flexibility.

⁴⁶ Anna Sanina, *Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia*, p.30

The second chapter unpacks Russian national identity and the concept of 'Russia'. While the founding myths remain important in the development of Russian national culture and state traditions, here, it is argued that the Russian identity is a multi-history, since it relies on episodes from the past from a range of different 'sub-plots' to support the myth of the state, an organic culture and their greatness. Moist mother earth, Stalin and White Army generals can be equally used as examples of what it means to be Russian, and to foreigners is often confusing. This chapter will consider which episodes from the past continue to play on the Russian identity, nostalgia and how these are used to justify the modern political and social discourse. The recycling and repackaging of imperial and Soviet identity need to be considered. These assume a new meaning, play a different role in the twenty first century, and stress the need for continuity.

The third chapter looks at the politics of the past in Putin's Russia. Politics are unavoidable as history in post-Soviet Russia is a high profile and contentious topic. In addition, it is a socio-political problem, and this past has an affect beyond the borders of the modern Russian state. Like the previous chapter, this will show how the position of Russian society and the outside world is fully at loggerheads with the Russian government when it comes to the past and explore the development of the Russian state and its relationship with history. Moreover, those political questions surrounding it are still unresolved, meaning reconciliation is ongoing as is the state building process. Righting past mistakes to help maintain stability is central to the Putin Agenda. In this sense, Putinism becomes a narrative (or continuum) with a formula of how to safeguard the country's interests in light of the past.

The fourth chapter focuses on the education system and the significance of history within it. Education and history as a subject are key in demonstrating the use and projection of the past in modern Russia, and how it is becoming more centralised. In essence, both history as a subject and education as a whole are being used as channels for the state to accomplish its goals by getting through to the population at the early stages. After all, the population legitimise any government and its message by accepting it. The updated school textbooks and renewed focus on teachers to transmit the socially acceptable history are just the tip of the iceberg. However, the modern school system, not unlike the Soviet one, appears to use a patriotic emphasis as a mask for modernisation. Patriotic education is used as the means to assist the national revival without actually modernising the schools system, despite the many problems Russian education has.

The fifth chapter looks at the teaching process of history in Russia today. This chapter relies on the conducted interviews, which shed light on how and why the government's version can be rejected. The re-establishment of traditional (imperial and Soviet) pedagogy and citizenship education show the importance of continuity, and that to establish a modern country it must be done through past techniques and means which have been proven successful. This chapter analyses how the textbook narratives line up with the Putin Agenda, what the challenges of teaching the history are and whether or not at the grassroots level the aims are being achieved instead of students being taught to simply pass the new (and unpopular) exam.

The sixth and final chapter scrutinises anniversaries and memorabilia, as this is where the narrative manifests in public for the majority of the population to access and participate in the patriotic past. Concrete (sometimes literally) examples of statehood, greatness and triumphalism are rife. These are by far the most mythologised representations of the past in an attempt to recreate the glories for modern consumption. While the greatest military victories, leaders and cultural figures are examples of how the country wants to represent itself, they also show the limitations of the past, with the darker episodes in particular. In addition, this chapter shows the extent to which civil society is involved in the creative process, sparking questions about whom anniversaries and memorabilia are designed for in the first place.

History has to symbolise the link between the state and modernisation process, and is fundamental in accomplishing this. Russia as a whole never fully answered the fundamental 'who are we?' question facing it after 1991, and this process only properly began in Putin's presidencies. The use and nature of the historical narrative in Russia says a lot about the character and intentions of the state, but also the consequences this has had for it and the population. It is becoming increasingly important for the state to be viewed in a positive light through the lens of history and uncritically. Being critical is perceived as unpatriotic and undermining of national unity that helped Russia through tough periods in the past. Continuity is therefore, at the core of the narrative to ensure the views persist.⁴⁷ Not only this, but for normality to return the state must lead the modernisation process to secure the country as it did in the glorious past. The format of the past is also becoming more defined by the state, and the ways in which this is applied and the obstacles it faces will now be explored.

⁴⁷ Ola Cichowlas, 'How Putin Manipulates Russians Using Revisionist History', *Forbes*, www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2014/05/05/how-putin-manipulates-russians-using-revisionist-history/#6966485057ff accessed 10/09/2015

Chapter One

The Problems of History in Putin's Russia

Like a natural resource, history must provide people with something essential. As will become a consistent theme throughout this thesis, history can supply answers to the questions of the present. It can explain what is, what ought to be and why.⁴⁸ The past acts as a model for social norms and development. Yet, and as is always the case with the past, its subjective nature makes it a competition to maintain the rights to production, reproduction and royalties. However, in order to 'win', the past must be attractive to influence the consumer's worldview so that they can accomplish the goals of the producers. The bigger problem here stems from the subjective and fluid nature of history. The past cannot have one sole owner meaning competition will always exist, particularly surrounding the big questions of the modern day.

What makes Russia unique is the ferocity, variation and pace of the competition. In Russia, the past has always been a 'go to' cultural mediation tool for the state (*historia, magistra vitae*). On at least four occasions, Russia has undergone re-writes and revisions of its past: the fifteenth century, the reign of Catherine the Great, the USSR and finally post-Soviet Russia. On each occasion, these revisions served the same purpose. Russian history often being a history of the state, and with it, its continuity and survival meant that each needed a back-story propped up with tales of greatness, success and an 'organic' depiction. In post-Soviet Russia, the past has seen two major transformations. Firstly, under Boris Yeltsin, where narratives were hollow (Imperial Russia) or negative (the USSR). The second began after Vladimir Putin became president, which saw a shift in focus to a patriotic history stressing continuity, sovereignty and stability (see Chapter Three), and with other subtle changes reflecting the themes of each particular term. More importantly, the past in Russia today is primarily seen as an important modernisation tool. Yet, the complexities in (re)packaging the past for modern consumption reveal a lot about Russia's ability to modernise and its constraints for the near future.

⁴⁸ James V. Wertsch, Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis: official history and post-Soviet Russia, *Ethos* 28(4) 2001, p.518

This chapter unpacks how the past is the ideal resource for state construction and the obstacles it faces in the selection process in constructing a narrative. Apart from the inability to have one sole owner of history, the modern Russian state also has to neutralise and normalise the past, the period 1881-1945 in particular. This requires meticulous negotiations as the narrative must be rooted in facts and evidence, which are inherited not produced, as well as special actors and loyal adherents. Russian history must be placed into a wider framework. It must fit within an international context as well as a homogenous one, and be consumable instead of obligatory. Historical debates in Russia today are very active, vibrant and high profile, which is encouraging to say the least. However, the constraints of the modern state and population often give way to political trends, myths and gross over simplifications. A great deal of sympathy is needed, the possibility of rejection from a polarised society is high and mishandling the past could open such fractures that harm the general well-being of the country. Modernisation, building consensus and creating a modern identity through a patriotic past have become increasingly centralised in order to prevent a rupture that could lead cause instability; a very Soviet way of ‘making sure’. More importantly, these attempts are symbolic to the ongoing state building process, Putin Agenda, and add a sense of validity. It is centralisation without monopolisation, which will now be analysed.

The Past is a Resource

This idea is most prominently put forward by Ilya Kalinin.⁴⁹ History is a prime resource for national and state construction. Links to the past are useful because they provide a sketch for how to accomplish goals. The main goal in the Russian Federation is modernisation, and for this to be achieved, the nation must maximise the use of its natural resources. As Olga Tukhaniya writes, Russia has a thousand year history beneath our feet, layers oozing with it.⁵⁰ The past is a favourable resource for the Russian state because, unlike oil for instance, it does not require physical extraction; in many cases, the existing history simply requires repackaging. Yet, as with any resource, somebody is expected to profit from it, and as is usually the case in Russia, it is the elite. Their payment, according to Kalinin, is political

⁴⁹ Ilya Kalinin, ‘Carbon and Cultural Heritage: the politics of history and the economics of rent’, p.65

⁵⁰ See the blog of Olga Tukhaniya at <http://tuhanina.ru/2012/09/istoricheskij-klondajk/> accessed 20/08/2017

loyalty (from above and below). This is because, for modernisation to occur in Russia, there needs to be a level of political order to allow for the past's reproduction (and at the level of the elite's interests).⁵¹ By treating the past as a resource, it becomes one indivisible subject, with the people led (unified) by the state who grants access to the past. Unsanctioned access (falsifications) is blocked and in many cases condemned as attempts to destabilise Russia. The past then becomes more homogenous and less open to critical interpretations. Russia by no means has a closed history, yet in recent years, differing opinions or challenges to the 'preferred' narrative have resulted in legal repercussions.⁵²

The profits from the 'knowledge economy' come from mobilising the culture. The affirmation of tradition and unity from below confirms said nation's sovereignty, legitimacy and direction for the future. Rejecting history, as John Tosh notes, is a blow to a regime's legitimacy.⁵³ A break with the past can create a new order whereas reminding people of past glories plays on nostalgia, memory and grants people partial access to the past. In modern times there can be no sole owner of history, yet the battle for history continues because the state argues that for Russia to return to 'normality' (or modernise), the past must be reconciled with (normalised). In short, the knowledge economy and resource of history can generate patriotic energy among Russian citizens to be loyal. This is precisely why the patriotic education programmes were introduced, yet while they appeared to come out of nowhere, they are not in fact 'new'. As will be examined in subsequent chapters, these were based on USSR citizen education, which also emerged during a time of crisis.

Whilst oil and gas form the basis of Russia's material wealth, *istoricheskaya politika* is an attempt to influence a worldview, which acts as political loyalty to the state. *Istoricheskaya politika* subjects the population to the state's will, values and ideas system to allow for a smoother and beneficial modernisation. The media is a powerful ally in this regard too, as its forms are mediums, which grant further insight into the past for modern citizens. The fact that the most popular news and television channels are owned directly or indirectly by the state benefits this enormously, and prevents perceived falsifications. It also massively helps that the

⁵¹ Ilya Kalinin, 'Carbon and Cultural Heritage: the politics of history and the economics of rent', p.65

⁵² Maksim Strugov, 'Ssylka v Nyurenberg: Zhitel' Permi oshtrafovan za repost materiala ob uchastii SSSR okkupatsii Pol'shi v 1939 godu', *Kommersant*, kommersant.ru/doc/3026212 accessed 26/10/2016

⁵³ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 5th edn., (London: Pearson, 2010), p.31

majority receive their news information from television.⁵⁴ As one of the trainee teachers remarked in the interviews, ‘our parents and grandparents believe everything they hear on TV. And I mean everything! Our generation gets its news from the internet and unfortunately, we believe this, too.’⁵⁵ The aforementioned values system is an already existent one, but due to Russia’s recent past experiencing seismic transformations (the First World War, the revolutions and Soviet collapse to name ideal examples), there is a fear of it being ‘lost’. The leadership is advancing its own norms to make Russia look attractive, legitimate and credible (as resources make nations appear powerful), but its success will depend on the state’s ability to go beyond the Soviet legacy, use new mediums and reject anything hinting at neo-imperialism.⁵⁶ There is still a perceived need for resurrecting and reconstruction in order for the modernisation process to be successful and the ongoing battle for history means profits are not being fully felt or coming in (yet). A nation and its people need a historical consciousness in the same way they need natural resources. It is key to the functioning and harmony of society.

Writing and re-writing narratives of history

Paul Ricoeur wrote that narrative is a fundamental part of human understanding.⁵⁷ The value of life is significant and to conceive of existence, a person must have an understanding of their origins. Developing this further, many historical theorists such as Simon Gunn and Ludmilla Jordanova assert that historians are in the position of judge. Selection is a central skill for the historian, particularly if the material or issue is tricky.⁵⁸ Attraction is, therefore, also necessary to make it consumable and recognisable.⁵⁹ However, as Gunn aptly notes, the historical reality is gone and beyond reconstruction.⁶⁰ This leads to an over reliance on ‘quasi plots’ (particular past events, periods and figures) to cover any gaps in the narrative, highlight what is important,

⁵⁴ ‘Posmetrei novosti’, *Levada Tsentr*, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/07/28/prosmotr-novostej/> accessed 05/04/2018.

⁵⁵ Interview with Maria, Trainee Teacher, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

⁵⁶ Victoria Hudson (Kings College), ‘Russia’s Soft Power in the Post-Soviet Space’, in Natasha Kurt and Valentina Feklyunina, *Assessing Russia’s Power: a report*, (Kings College London and Newcastle University, 2017), pp.31-32

⁵⁷ Ricoeur quoted in Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory*, (London: Longman, 2006), p.37

⁵⁸ Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), p.142

⁵⁹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: visual and material evidence in historical practice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.98

⁶⁰ Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory*, p.38

and identify the ‘socially correct’ answers to explain what is sensitive to Russia’s current position. Whilst this will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters, it is worth noting that the fundamental transformations that Russia experienced throughout the last century demonstrate that the historical narrative is not a straightforward one to construct.⁶¹ Much of the citizenry were born in a different country (the USSR) with a different story told in a purely ideological language. They were brought up on songs about the Soviet people and a different special path to communism, as the lyrics in the former national anthem stated. This demonstrates how history is inseparable from human consciousness and the desire to create a past based on success stories can give way to a narrative rooted in nostalgia and patriotism lacking historical specificity.

Different Russian states have used and viewed history’s purpose differently. Political and economic goals have affected how each sought to define the past and retell it. For Vladimir Lenin, Russian history was viewed through the lens of *politicheskaya pravil’nost’*. Whilst literally translated as ‘political correctness’, it contained references to the correct (and incorrect) politics or ideological viewpoints, ultimately reinforced by the ‘right’ interpretation of history. For the revolution to be successful, history had to be interpreted correctly. The implication of this is that political events can be read through the past.⁶² Stalin continued this by creating a single history textbook for all Soviet schools which demonstrated how only one ‘right’ interpretation of history was acceptable in the construction of socialism. Soviet public holidays were the ultimate reinforcement of this, designed specifically to match the ideological message. A huge consequence is that political truths gained greater status than those discovered through more traditional means, such as research and data collection. Incorrect interpretations of the past made one an ‘enemy of the people’; history meant nothing more than complying with the party line. One glaringly obvious problem was finding periods that fit into a Marxist scheme that were applicable to all of society.⁶³ The problem of constructing a narrative in the Soviet system, which already had self-imposed restrictions, was that its contradictions and hypocrisy could be easily exposed. That is why during the *Perestroika* period, opening up history would be the USSR’s own undoing. Stalin’s reappraisal of Ivan IV, Peter I, the knights of ancient Rus’ and victory in

⁶¹ James V. Wertsch, ‘Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis’, p.518

⁶² See the introduction of John Lea, *Political Correctness and Higher Education: British and American Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁶³ Leo Yaresh, ‘The Problem of Periodization’ in C.E. Black (ed.), *Rewriting Russian History: Soviet Interpretations of Russia’s past*, (London: Atlantic Press, 1957), p.32

the Patriotic War of 1812 helped promote loyalty to the state and its leadership who defended Russia against hostile (capitalist) enemies and charted its unique path of modernisation. However, the narrative largely placed everything into an economic framework to explain society's development and justify the implementation of socialism. National histories were of secondary importance to create the idea of a Soviet people. After Stalin's death, his legacy became complex for the regime to retell, but the Soviet state now also had an achievement it could rally round; one of shared triumph and success which was experienced by the entire population. The first history of the Great Patriotic War, *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-45*, appeared 1960-65 and was a six-volume set.⁶⁴ There were many obstacles and restrictions in its construction, and the legacy of Stalin and his personality cult was just the tip of the iceberg. The USSR was now involved in an ideological struggle with its former allies, and much of the population could lay claims to the achievement. Many veterans would later hold high-ranking positions in the Soviet government. Hence, this profound achievement became such a unifying event, and one that could not be undermined at any cost.⁶⁵ Some of Zhukov's letters and memoirs, which many thought would provide an objective view of the war, were often met with criticism or simply not published. Under Brezhnev, a twelve volume set was published to much debate, although some sub plots were never objectively examined. The events of 1941 particularly stand out (or rather do not) in this regard. This was due to the perceived harm it would cause the state. Victory Day itself became a 'memory to Victory', and is essentially the same tone as in Putin's Russia without the Soviet ideology.

The importance of the USSR's narrative to Putin's government derives from the need for national unity before normality in politics. In the USSR, the diverse population was united around Marxism-Leninism as the 'right' path to modernisation, whereas today it is a patriotism

⁶⁴ These six volumes are G. A. Deborin et al., *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony Soyuz SSR, 1960); N. A. Fokin et al., *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945*, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony Soyuz SSR, 1961); Y. P. Petrov et al., *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945*, Vol. 3 (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony Soyuz SSR, 1961); M. M. Minasian et al., *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945*, Vol. 4 (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony Soyuz SSR, 1962); S. I. Roshchin et al., *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945*, Vol. 5 (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony Soyuz SSR, 1963); V. A. Vasilenko et al., *Istoriya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945*, Vol. 6 (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony Soyuz SSR, 1965).

⁶⁵ For a more in depth overview, see the introduction of Yan Mann, "Contested Memory: Writing the Great Patriotic War's Official History in Khrushchev's Thaw", unpublished PhD thesis, Arizona State University, August 2016.

of everything. One drawback is the publicity history receives. Arguments over the narrative and differences are very much in the spotlight and heavily scrutinised. This is unhelpful because it can expose weaknesses and gaps in the message the state tries to convey, yet shows how history is healthy for Russian democracy. Banning discussion makes the state look authoritarian whereas encouraging discussion shows how civil society is maturing. The Russian filmmaker, Andrei Nekrasov, refers to this as ‘Matilda syndrome’.⁶⁶ The Soviet legacy still lives on in many respects, but glorifying certain aspects means that popular trends can take precedent over knowledge and fact. For instance, the tone of Putin’s presidencies has had a direct impact on the narrative’s shifts. His first presidency centered on restoring authority and order, the second on redistributing wealth and the third on a standoff with the West.⁶⁷ In his third presidency, school history lessons on Crimea were introduced along with more military history and a revival of the Cossacks. During the first and second, reassessments of the Stalin era began to focus more on the positive aspects (modernising the economy and Stalin as an effective manager), Soviet symbols were reinstated and references to the Great Patriotic War increased. After Putin’s infamous ‘Munich speech’, Filippov’s state backed teacher handbook was published. This change in narrative is also reflected in the content of Putin’s speeches over the years, many of which will be analysed throughout this thesis. The tone of his fourth term 2018 began with the need for further economic development in the digital economy and a further redistribution of wealth. What this means as far as the past is concerned remains to be seen. A few days after his inauguration on Victory Day 2018, however, Putin vowed to never let any force falsify the Great Patriotic War and downplay Russia’s role in the victory.⁶⁸ It is worth stating at this point, however, that Putin is, on occasion, genuinely sincere, but this usually in tandem with spontaneity. A good example is during the Oliver Stone interviews when he gave his opinion of historical Russian leaders.⁶⁹ On other occasions, namely the unveiling of a monument to Russia in the First World War at Park Pobedy, he is politically correct to match the occasion and get the message across. In this particular case, it was about honouring the memory of the dead and needing to explain why Russia had no victory. The blame was deflected from the Russian state

⁶⁶ ‘Matilda syndrome’ refers to how the Russian population reacted to the film *Matilda*. This will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Six, but the phrase arose in an interview the author conducted with Russian film maker Andrei Nekrasov, London, 21/02/2018.

⁶⁷ Joshua Yaffer, ‘What the Russian Protests Mean for Putin’, *The New Yorker*, March 27 2017, available at www.newyorker.com/news-desk/what-the-russian-protests-mean-for-putin accessed 26/06/2017

⁶⁸ Official Reception to Mark Victory Day, 09/05/2018, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57438> accessed 14/05/2018.

⁶⁹ Oliver Stone (Dir.), *The Putin Interviews*, (New York City: Showtime Networks, 2017).

onto the Western powers and revolutionaries (more on this in Chapter 6).

The European history framework also poses problems in modern Russia. The Russian narrative of the twentieth century differs from Western and Eastern Europe, and internationally, it is not widely accepted. Integrating the narratives is a necessary thing, yet the current geopolitical situation makes this all but impossible in the near future. From Russia's side, this is perceived as competition and a security threat, adding to the idea of Russia being surrounded by hostile others. In fact, history is written into Russia's Doctrine of National Security. The battle for history in Europe is a very real one. According to Igor Torbakhov, there are three competing versions of European history: Western, Soviet/Russian and Eastern European.⁷⁰ In the twentieth century, much of the Western and Russian narrative focuses on defeat of the Nazis and the Cold War, albeit from two different standpoints. Eastern Europe, by contrast, projects a narrative of huge tragedies and victimhood whose histories were sucked up by Stalinism and as a land where a lot of blood was spilled. While both Western and Eastern European history is designed with Russia in it, there is a tendency to cast it as 'non-European' or an oppressor (with the notable exceptions of Belarus and Armenia).⁷¹ Russia, in its new narrative construction, attempts to combat this 'perverse habit' of being accused of hostilities, most notably at the European Histories conference Vilnius in 2009. While an agreement was reached to incorporate the totalitarian experience into European history, no framework for doing so was properly crafted.⁷² Russian lawmakers did not appreciate a resolution that stated Stalinism equally caused the Second World War. Another by the European Union (EU) in 2004 that recognised Stalin's deportation of the Chechens and Ingush as genocide (Russia does not) also sparked criticism.⁷³ The former goes against its narrative of liberating Eastern Europe and overcoming a struggle with foes, whereas the latter contradicts the narrative that projects catastrophes as triumphs in contemporary Russia. This also demonstrates the importance of politics. All former Soviet republics have experienced a politicisation of history to create a cohesive national identity and

⁷⁰ Igor Torbakhov, History, Memory and National Identity: understanding the politics of history and memory wars in post-Soviet lands, *Demokratizatsiya*, summer 2011, p.214

⁷¹ Ibid. p.216

⁷² European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> accessed 21/03/2018.

⁷³ Chechnya: European Parliament recognises the genocide of the Chechen people in 1944, *UNPO*, February 27 2004, available at <<https://unpo.org/article/438?id=438>> accessed 03/03/2019.

in some cases, identify ‘enemies’. In countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and the five Central Asian Republics, this was much harder to do. By contrast, in the Western world equating the USSR with Stalin seems obvious, whereas in Russia this is not so simplistic.

Supplementary to this, Kalinin also highlights that the [Soviet] past is reproducible and is *only* reproduced instead of transformed or updated.⁷⁴ The purpose of this is to neutralise the past so it does not threaten to split society, and recent events showed this might easily occur. In 2017, the Russian government handed St. Isaac’s Cathedral back to the Orthodox Church as an act of reconciliation for the Civil War. This alone was enough to spark protests in St. Petersburg.⁷⁵ Whilst many Russians may identify as Orthodox, the protests showed that, although public sympathies no longer lie with Lenin and the Bolsheviks, it did not necessarily place it with the other side. Since historical knowledge is inherited, it cannot ignore memory and nostalgia. Whilst tradition is the deepest root of identity, to create a national idea or story the past must be (re)produced to convince people of its validity. The many different competing versions of the past make the battle so fierce; disinformation, falsifications or unpopular trends are harmful to the fabric of society. Associations become important, so that consumers can decide whom or what is the most reliable. When including school textbooks in this picture, teachers must decide which authors and publishers are the most convincing. Likewise, the publishers must consider how the product will be received. As Maria Repoussi and Nicole Tutiaux Guillon state, teachers are negotiators of the message and this is why the state has begun to reassert its importance and why this thesis chose to analyse the education system.⁷⁶ The Russian state views teachers as reliable agents and the ‘good’ textbooks are used as weapons in the battle for history with the hope they will be the basis for convincing people of the ‘correct’ narrative. The state sponsored textbooks for example have special stickers on the top-left of the front covers and on the title page the message ‘Recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science’ (see below). In this regard, textbooks and teachers can act as a passive or active opposition to the falsifications of history.

⁷⁴ Ilya Kalinin, *Nostalgic Modernization: the Soviet Past as ‘Historical Horizon*, *Slavonica*, 2011 p.157

⁷⁵ ‘Head of Russian Orthodox Church personally arranged transfer of St. Isaac’s Cathedral with Putin’, *Meduza*, <https://meduza.io/en/news/2017/04/27/head-of-russian-orthodox-church-personally-arranged-transfer-of-st-isaac-s-cathedral-with-putin> accessed 17/10/2017

⁷⁶ Maria Repoussi and Nicole Tutiaux Guillon, ‘New Trends in History Textbook Research: issues and methodologies toward a school historiography’, *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society*, Vol.2, Issue 1. Spring 2010, p.155



Figure 1: Mark approving textbook by the Ministry of Education and Science

If any narrative is to be successful there has to be some basis in facts and evidence. Constraints become evident because if the facts do not reflect the desired narrative and message, it will be rejected. If it is rejected or resisted then it cannot have the desired impact or benefits. History must be consumable like a product or resource, meaning its packaging is equally important. This is also, why the media is a powerful ally, as it can shape the narrative further. As the past is designed to be consumed, the media is better placed to enhance its attractiveness. School textbooks and monuments on the other hand are unavoidable and can rely less on their image. Then again, the huge demand for history also brings in another factor that works against objectivity. As Jordanova writes, the past (in whichever form it takes) is often commissioned to look better than it is.⁷⁷ The shared experience is beyond normal human activity and the author's imagination. For people to connect with abstract concepts, a certain measure of sympathy is necessary. The selection process is essential to this and as Barbara Hernstein Smith aptly notes, the narrative cannot be independent of its authorship.⁷⁸ Moreover, since the author (or judge) is in many cases the Russian state or initiated on its behalf, the narrative must reflect its version of events. These are carefully chosen to establish a broad coalition of consensus and achieve the

⁷⁷ Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, p.142

⁷⁸ Barbara Hernstein Smith, 'Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories', in W.J.T. Mitchell, *On Narrative*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.215

goals of the state. Although views among the leadership often differ, the same conclusions are reached to help promote the appearance of unity to the population. This explains why some darker episodes are left out entirely, receive little attention or in some cases become exploited. If it is consumable, then a particular past segment can be manipulated to suit the producer's goals. If it is questionable or controversial, it can have the opposite effect, although both explain why romanticism and myths become simplified and popularised in society. Exposing the true extent of the Stalinist terror added to the disillusionment in the 1980s, as did failing to create a positive definition of Yeltsin's new Russia.

Politics are important too, and as will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three, the past often becomes a substitute for taboo political issues. Each political groups' approach to the past are often a good indication of their political and ideological difficulties. The Communists cannot tolerate negative depictions of the USSR as this smears its own image whereas liberal groups want the state to abandon its 'imperialist goals' and align with the nations of Western Europe to modernise instead of using recycled historical patriotism as its motivation. In other words, groups and individuals understand patriotism differently, and their own interpretations of the past dictate this. While the state is striving to have its say on the past be the dominant one, unlike the Soviet era there is no attempt to monopolise it. Other versions are permitted and available in bookshops across the country, yet come with an unofficial warning. Marlene Laruelle has written about the huge variation of Russian histories one might find browsing through the average bookshop, some denying things like the Mongol invasion. Consumers can naturally draw their own conclusions, but a textbook possessing a 'state recommendation' sticker (Appendix B) on the cover can passively lead people in the desired direction.

The Problem of 1881-1945

A number of vital questions arise concerning how to package this period for consumption. First, what is Russia? Is the desired image or model Russia of the late nineteenth century or the 1930s? As the editor of one of Russia's liberal magazines *Snob* stated, 'We do not know whether to

build churches or monuments to Stalin'.⁷⁹ Both convey different messages and building both simultaneously sends conflicting signals. Alongside this, arises two other questions: Where is Russia? and who owns Russia? To champion the Stalin period over pre-revolutionary Russia means the Russian Federation is still primarily 'Soviet' and could benefit the Communist Party. To embark down a route of Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality meanwhile empowers the nationalist anti-Western groups. This period requires immense flexibility because many 'battle fields' exist and are comprised of many 'armies' (communists, liberals, nationalists and so on). When selecting any figure from this period, each of the aforementioned groups would have entirely different opinions and interpretations. The state under Putin, therefore, seeks to find consensus among them, to foster national unity in order to become the main beneficiary. As Maria Lipman writes critically, as long as loyalty to the state is implied and the message is anti-liberal and anti-western, one can glorify Stalin, worship the last Russian tsar and the secret police who executed him and his family.⁸⁰ In principle, there is no difference between preserving churches and Stalinist buildings. One way to achieve this is to use its ability to influence the population through auspicious channels (education, the media and public celebrations). These channels represent a state and what is involved in the official history becomes 'narrative', especially if the issue is contentious.⁸¹ In the worst-case scenario, the issue is entirely omitted, although not without the majority's approval.

The question of how one dominant version can appease 147 million citizens is, in itself, also important to address. Of course, that would be impossible but it does not prevent attempts to centralise the history or state led efforts to establish a dominant view. Public polls and surveys, particularly those conducted by the *Levada Tsentr*, *VTsIOM* and *FOM* are quite telling of the divisions in society on the past, issues of identity and their potential roots, and this period is no exception. While this thesis will make use of these, the limitations of such surveys lie in what to do next. The results may be fascinating and reflect a relatively accurate picture of modern Russia, but they appear to have little impact elsewhere. The Russian and Western press are

⁷⁹ Nikolai Uskov interviewed on "In Search of Putin's Russia, 'The State of the Arts'", *Al Jazeera English*, aired November 20 2015.

⁸⁰ Maria Lipman, 'Putin's nation-building project offers reconciliation without truth', *Open Democracy*, April 12 2017 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/maria-lipman/putins-nation-building-project-reconciliation-without-truth> accessed 08/05/2017

⁸¹ James V. Wertsch, *Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis: official history and post-Soviet Russia*, p.

happy to report the findings and academics to interpret them; but they are not used as an impetus for changes in the modernisation process, at least not by the ruling elites. Then again, they are useful tools for showing that commonly held viewpoints are often inconsistent and contradictory. An example of this would be on textbooks and certain figures. According to one poll in 2008, 70% of Russians ‘form their views about the past’ from secondary school history textbooks. Another conducted by *FOM* in 2014 of 1,000 participants from 320 cities and 160 villages, showed that only 1% ‘get their information’ of the First World War from textbooks.⁸² This suggests it could only be certain periods and figures, and if this is the case, can explain why modern opinions of Stalin are inconsistent. It is not uncommon to find people, for instance, who support busts of Stalin and the rebuilding of churches. The historical record suggests such a position should be inconsistent. It could also be that Russians turned to other sources for their historical information 2008-14. Taking into consideration the polling discussed earlier by *Levada* on where Russians get their news, this is perfectly plausible. Even more so, when sizeable portions think the quality of education has ‘not changed at all’ (45% in 2017) or ‘declined somewhat’ in recent years (21% in 2017).⁸³ Moreover, 52% of respondents in the same poll thought history ‘needed more attention in schools’.⁸⁴ This indicates that education may indeed be losing ground in the information space, and provide enough justification for the creation of new school textbooks.

The process of neutralising and normalising the past for consumption also means an occasional ‘glossing over’ of the more troubling or dark periods to focus instead on the positive sides. Stalin and Stolypin are the same (efficient managers) as part of the normalisation process, as are Aleksandr Nevsky and Zhukov (victors over the Germans). Normalising creates a living chain that can hold together a long past and stress continuity, national idea and version of national political culture. All of this shows that Russian history is a mosaic and one piece in the wrong place could ruin the consumer’s perspective or convey a different image than the desired one.⁸⁵ While the above-mentioned narratives are the most accepted, many liberal groups, intellectuals

⁸² The polls are available at: Vladimir Rudakov, *Kak istoriya vernet dostoinstvo*, Profile, No. 32(587), February 2008, available at http://history.standart.edu.ru/info.aspx?ob_no=16528 accessed 12/04/2018; ‘Obraz Pervoi Mirom’, *FOM*, 31 July 2014, <http://fom.ru/proshloe/11637> accessed 05/08/2017.

⁸³ Table 8.22 ‘How has the quality of education changed over the last year’ was answered by 1,600 respondents across Russia. See *Russian Public Opinion 2017*, (Levada Analytical Centre: Moscow, 2018). p.76

⁸⁴ Table 8.25 ‘What school subjects should be paid the most attention to’, *ibid.* p.78

⁸⁵ Ilya Kalinin, ‘Nostalgic Modernization: the Soviet Past as ‘Historical Horizon’’, p.158

and even those interviewed for this research would disagree, as within any democracy. However, challenging the narrative is much harder and attempts at this will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

Is the past material, a metaphor or mythology?

The construction and success of any historical narrative requires mastery, creativity, resistance and knowledge. In modern Russia, creativity is the most absent ingredient and is precisely why repetition, reproduction or ‘spin’ is so common. Kalinin is correct to argue that modernisation is motivated by nostalgia, as when one analyses speeches from the Russian leadership and other lawmakers, the message is to follow the example of ones ancestors to modernise. This is why a statue of the Kalashnikov inventor was erected in Moscow as it is linked to a success story and to encourage greater technological development. Using examples from the past puts things into a familiar language that is easy to consume. The Russian population and bureaucracy are not well equipped for a Westernised version of modernisation. In addition, this thesis will demonstrate how this has been widely rejected since the mid-1990s after Yeltsin’s controversial re-election, NATO expansion and Kosovo. Using the past as a metaphor is useful but when it is taken literally and or becomes mythologised both domestically and in the West, it can be harmful. There is a tendency for Western countries to depict Russia as having imperial ambitions and trying to restore the USSR, even though no Russian leader after 1991 has ever mentioned it. Furthermore, although metaphors by definition are not literally applicable this does not stop them from being taken out of context and materialising. When this occurs, metaphors can be used to justify almost anything and the lines between fiction and reality blur. History is, therefore, a socio-political problem, and not purely one or the other.

The biggest problem concerning historical transformation in the modern era is its intensity and pace. It is difficult for the state and population to keep up, as too much is happening at once. History has remained a high profile topic as shown by the constant changes to history in the education system and thinking up of new monuments to erect. The focus on patriotism is also not from a critical perspective. This is problematic because ‘criticism’ is perceived as detrimental to democratisation. Reproducing the past is a fallback, simplistic and uncreative.

The purpose of producing new narratives is to respond to old ones. Therefore, as Wertsch retorts, these must follow in the tradition of a nation's ancestors (to whom its citizens are loyal) to highlight continuation and modernisation.⁸⁶ Continuity can only be highlighted if the narratives themselves align, and the emerging narrative is a multi-sided history for the majority to painlessly digest a difficult past. The intention to normalise the past for patriotic sentiment to help the country as a whole move forward is not disingenuous or dishonest, nor does it need to be interpreted this way. Attempting to have only one correct version is criticised as authoritarian, especially when laws have been established to protect the narrative from 'falsifications'.⁸⁷ Ultimately, the line between protecting against falsifications and creating one 'correct' version is thin and should be walked carefully. Moreover, establishing one school textbook is not necessarily undemocratic, and there is a great deal of public support for doing so. Nevertheless, the rocky nature of this means the problem of history is a tricky balancing act, which either could bring great gains or be hugely damaging as it was for Yeltsin and Gorbachev. The problems of history in Russia have unique characteristics, but its handling is not, altogether, different. History, regardless of its authorship's origins, is socially and politically accepted truths. The Russian state simply relies on these for reconciliation and modernisation, despite supplementary problems it may bring.

⁸⁶ James V. Wertsch, *Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis*, p.528

⁸⁷ An example would be a law against offending veterans of the Great Patriotic War, *O veteranakh*, Federalniy zakon no. 5-FZ ot 12/01/1995, <http://base.garant.ru/10103548> accessed 09/05/2016

Chapter Two

Russia and Russianness: a multi-history

Vladimir Putin told participants of a Leader's Club session in February 2016 that Russia has no national idea besides patriotism and that there can be no other.⁸⁸ The referred to patriotism is rooted in Russia's historical identity. Using the past as a source for patriotism is designed to create a unifying identity. Instead of trying to forge a new Russian idea like Boris Yeltsin following the USSR's collapse, Putin understood that restoring pride and belief in the future meant Russia had to recognise, revisit and reinstate aspects of its historic identity. This involved a reconnection with pre-revolutionary Russia, more specifically, its values and myths that (essentially) governed Russian society and constructed its global outlook for centuries. Moreover, it meant that Russia could no longer afford to ignore or demonise the Soviet experience. This should not, however, be confused with trying to restore the empire or USSR, as political commentators often claim. Historical reconciliation is a part of the healing process to make the endured experience compatible with the modern situation. The future cannot be mapped out if the present is uncertain. Progress cannot begin if the foundations are fragile and the population cannot unite behind something they lack the means to identify with. Dmitry Peskov stated that without the trust of the people, Putin cannot expect a positive impact of his presidencies.⁸⁹ The lack of a 'Russia for Russians' was one of Yeltsin's biggest shortcomings and Putin inherited a bruised and lost nation after a decade without patriotism.

This chapter examines the ideas behind contemporary Russian identity, asserting that it is largely centred on historical patriotism. The preferred history that comprises this identity is not, as the government would like to portray, one long uninterrupted march from the days of Kievan Rus' to Putin. Russia has experienced a number of transformations at state and local level. For this reason, it will be argued that 'Russianness' and the patriotism surrounding 'Russia' is a 'multi-history'. The term was first used by Stephen M. Norris, who contends that the past is

⁸⁸Vladimir Putin's speech at a meeting with the core group of Leader's Club members, and informal association of small and medium sized business of various economic sectors, February 3rd, 2016, Novo-Ogaryovo Moscow Region <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51263> accessed 18/07/2016

⁸⁹ Ellen Barrynov, "Putin, in need of cohesion, pushes patriotism", *The New York Times*, November 20th, 2012 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/21/world/europe/vladimir-putin-pushes-patriotism-in-russia.html?_r=0 accessed 23/03/2016

being packaged for patriotic consumption in the media. Like Kalinin, Norris argues the patriotic culture is centred on Russia's pasts so it can appeal to nostalgia.⁹⁰ In establishing consensus for a new patriotism, the state must rinse out a sought after important meaning from the past, where the heroes and ways of life can serve as models for today (sub plots). Norris points to the difficulty in locating these 'glory days' and highlights the existence of a 'multi-history':

[Russia is] the Siberian forests, Tsarist officers, *maslenitsa*, pre-revolutionary Moscow, church music, folklore, nineteenth century literature, the far north landscapes, Russia's suffering, ancient history, art, *izba*, Slavic traditions, the Time of Troubles, New Year's Eve, Brezhnev and military patriotism.⁹¹

More than one Russia is possible at once. The shared historical experience, however big the contrast between different segments, is combined to provide a sense of 'destiny' and justification for the current situation. Even the darkest days, sometimes blocked out, are painted as 'not in vain' and continue to impact who the Russian people are. Experiencing two seismic changes in the twentieth century alone, this attempt to create an image of continuity and attachment to national values seeks to increase patriotic fervour by stressing the idea that Russia is a unique country with a rich history and bright future. Thus, a patriotic history becomes a complex picture held together by abstract links. Nevertheless, various polls show a feeling that Russia has 'returned' and that a big aid in this is restoring old identity concepts or 'tradition'.

This chapter will also analyse how the government tries to create patriotic citizens using a recycled identity. Recycling the past touches all parts of Russian life and lawmakers increasingly advocate patriotism as a substitute for ideology after the collapse of communism. In May 2016, the Head of Russia's Investigative Committee, Aleksandr Bastrykin, said the community should jointly develop a national idea along with a strategy for its implementation in a legal base.⁹² While nothing has yet come of it, Bastrykin stressed that it should be 'fully

⁹⁰ Stephen M. Norris, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia: movies, memory and patriotism*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.304-308

⁹¹ Ibid. p.316

⁹² 'Chief investigator proposes law on Russia's 'national idea', *RT*, May 26th, 2016.

based on the internal and external situation in which our state exists' and highlighted the historical traditions, which he thought must be included.

Since it is argued that Russian identity is established from a huge and jigsaw like multi-history, this chapter will consider which pasts are used to help form a modern identity. Those quoted by Norris hark back to a rosier time where life was 'stable' and organic, and these aspects will be analysed along with the period under focus. In addition, Russian schools teach Russian history from 'the dawn of the Slavs' up to the present day in a short period of time and must be sensitive to the country's multi ethnic status. This chapter will also look at concepts of 'Russianness' to assess the consistency of 'continuity' in order to see how it must be adapted to suit the population.

'Russianness' Through Patriotic Terms

If any patriotic message is to be successful, it needs to be communicated in the appropriate language. In the Russian case, the patriotic terminology is increasingly recycled in order to project this continuity and establish a connection with the past. There is also an aspect of differentiation in the Russian identity resulting from a separate and unique existence in its historical experience. The strength of it can be measured through actions, but also in the actual subtext and depth of meaning. For instance *rodina*, can be translated as 'motherland' yet so can words like *otechestvo* (although closer to fatherland) and *rodina mat'*. *Rodina*, however, has a special connection to the soil and earth or the natural surroundings of the Eastern Slavs. It also features prominently during wartime, notably both Great Patriotic Wars, and is frequently referenced in anniversary speeches. *Rodina* is also deeply intertwined with the idea of a mother figure, sense of eternalness and place of birth. The pre-Christian Russians had the Slavic Pagan goddess 'moist mother earth', concerned with fertility as well as the connection between body and nation. She was then replaced by Mary, the Mother of God, joy of all sorrows and lady of loving kindness. This demonstrates the importance of preserving life as it is known to Russian culture, with *rodina* so powerful a term that it has persisted throughout history. It greatly featured during the Great Patriotic War to help rally the people to what has become a sacred

triumph. It allowed the Soviet state to immortalise the dead, suggesting that the motherland takes them into herself for their patriotic sacrifice.⁹³

It is important to mention the concept of *byt*. It has no direct translation, but in essence, *byt* is a type of existence and being relating to real and everyday life.⁹⁴ The *byt* is one example of how Russia's historical experience was unique, special and separate. During in the USSR, *byt* is often thought to have been a unifying factor in Soviet life, as the regime created a uniform everyday life experience for almost everyone. It might also be added that the *Kommunalka* flats of the USSR were a unique type of existence and experience that the population endured together. Other concepts such as *narod*, *sobornosti* and *obshchina* materialised and represent the collectiveness of peasant life, which persisted for centuries. Some aspects of it are still evident. A collective spirit and togetherness is part of the Putin narrative, which strive to serve the nation's interests as it once did the village community.

Russian citizens today are referred to as *Rossiyanin*. The reappearance of this word in the 1990s was an attempt to be all inclusive of Russia's many peoples in the different krais, oblasts, okrugs and republics. The purpose of this was to help unite a multi-national country, providing all an equal status.⁹⁵ It creates a clear distinction between passport holders and ethnic Russians (*Russkiy*), however. It is also a true reflection on the Yeltsin years, which failed to make Russia and being Russian a positive thing. Positive historical connotations to underpin the identity have been core to rebuilding 'Russia' after the turbulent 1990s. If a country does not feel good about itself, it can stall the modernisation. The appearance of a unique people living a special existence can add fuel.

Finally, another term used in a tweet by *RT*'s former editor, Margarita Simonyan, caught people's attention following Putin's election victory in 2018; *vozhd'*:

⁹³ Elena Hellbirg-Hirn, *Soul and Soil: The symbolic world of Russianness*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p.118

⁹⁴ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: mythologies of everyday life in Russia*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.30

⁹⁵ Misha Friedman, 'To Be A Russian', *The New York Times*,

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/06/opiion/sunday/exposure-russian-patriots.html?r+0> accessed 15/12/2015

Original: “Раньше он был просто наш президент и его можно было поменять.
А теперь он наш вождь. И поменять его мы не дадим.”

Transliteration: *Ran'she on byl prosto nash prezident i ego možno bylo
pomenyat'. A teper', on nash vozhd'. I pomenyat' ego my ne dadim.*

Translation: “Before he was just our president and could be replaced. Now, he is
our Leader. And we won't let him be replaced.”⁹⁶

This was not an isolated usage of term. In a one year period from 19 December 2017-2018, the term surfaced in 225 articles in the Russian newspaper *Kommersant*, and was used mostly in articles about Lenin.⁹⁷ In *Vedomosti*, there were 804 items although more were related to Stalin.⁹⁸ Its connotations are significant not just for understanding Putin's personal role in contemporary Russia, but also that of Russian leaders. *Vozhd'* has three related but distinct meanings. First, it used to describe the chief of a tribe in Russian literature and fairy tales. The second is a military leader, although this usage is now obsolete. The third is the sense of Leader with a capital “L”. This might be someone who is a charismatic and inspiring leader in a sphere of science and the arts. More commonly, it is someone who is a father of the nation and source of inspiration.⁹⁹ The term was used for Stalin, Lenin, Nicholas II and Catherine II, among other Russian leaders. It suggests that Putin has a special place in history with the great Russian leaders. More importantly, it suggests that Putin is the ideal leader for a country like Russia and that its leadership must possess certain qualities.

⁹⁶ The Tweet was published on election night, 2018 and can be found here
https://twitter.com/M_Simonyan/status/975694196555304965 accessed 05/04/2018.

⁹⁷ A link to the search on *Kommersant* can be found here
<https://www.kommersant.ru/search/results?places=&categories=&isbankrupt=&datestart=19.12.2017&dateend=19.12.2018&sort_type=0&sort_dir=®ions=&results_count=&page=1&search_query=%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%B4%D1%8C&sort_by=0&search_full=1&time_range=2&dateStart=19.12.2017&dateEnd=19.12.2018> 25/01/2019.

⁹⁸ A link to the search on *Vedomosti* can be found here
<https://www.vedomosti.ru/search?query=%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%B4%D1%8C&sort=date&categories=materials&date_from=2017-12-19&date_to=2018-12-19&exclude=kp> 25/01/2018.

⁹⁹ Michele Berdy, What Kind of Leader is Vladimir Putin?, *The Moscow Times*,
<https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/what-kind-of-leader-is-vladimir-putin-60920> accessed 03/04/2018.

Russia's Founding Roots and Consolidation

The multi-history and reliance on historical patriotism rooted in Russia's cultural identity, spiritual and moral values requires some indulgence into an ancient past believed to be clear-cut, reassuring and offering refuge from today's world. This past should appear to offer lessons for today, often based on traditional values and morals. Monica Shelley and Margaret Winck contend that confusion and disillusionment cause a turn to the past, because conventional interpretations no longer meet human needs for explanation. Moreover, to support the myth of the nation, ancient myths that underpin it should be sought after.¹⁰⁰ This ties in with Sherlock's 'founding myths' assertion, which serve as a blueprint. Moreover, a patriotic history emphasises the invisible ties of a community with a common fate, reinforcing the idea of one's perpetual existence. In this sense, culture and history are inseparable. The territory and language are living examples of this and legitimises the myth of the nation with claims to 'ancientness'. Territory and language are strong components of the Russian identity, but the myths and attempts to thwart cultural change as much as possible throughout the centuries serve as examples of its 'greatness'. This has involved symbolic assertions of power (*derzhavnost'*), either through the head of state, religion or military prowess to protect Russia's earthly existence. The Russian identity has been formed out of the 'besieged fortress' mentality and adopted western concepts. In either case, the aim remains the same; to set Russia apart from other civilisations. Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis argue that in Russia, culture is presented as fact since it is largely self-referential. The tales contain the essence of Russianness and offer direct access to the soul of the people (*narod*).¹⁰¹ In addition, that 'Russia' is a cultural incorporation that lies between the lines of definitions, still presented as a question with a field of possibilities.¹⁰² Conflictingly, 'Russia' is widely used as a political imperative, which establishes clear interests, boundaries and distinctions from other European nations. Many commentators often use 'Russia' interchangeably, when referring to the state, population or country itself. In this thesis, 'Russia' shall refer to the country as one single entity. The 'Russian state' and 'Russians' or 'Russian

¹⁰⁰ Monica Shelley and Margaret Winck (eds.), *Aspects of European Cultural Diversity*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.254

¹⁰¹ Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, *All the Russia's...?* in Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (eds.), *National Identity in Russian Culture: an introduction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.57

¹⁰² Ibid. pp.4-5

population' are different entities not to be confused, and are treated separately.

Examining Russia's ancientness and founding myths, some continuity in how Russia retells its own history is apparent. Much of the founding myth has survived into the modern day and is adapted into rewriting/repackaging Russian history en masse. The ancient Russians who occupied the Slavic heartlands lived in communities that worked together and shared all the necessities of life in order to survive a harsh existence. These Slavic peoples indulged in a lot of myth making long before the Russian language and culture came into existence. This can explain why myth making in history is still prevalent; it has always been the norm in constructing history. Furthermore, no Slavic pagan ancient holy books or narratives are known to exist. Much of what is known derives from the *skazki*; purely fictional tales lacking dimension, often invoking heroic defenders (*byliny*).¹⁰³ These myths set patterns of meaning and later came to define the Russian traditions and worldview. Modern day mythmaking also follows the same pattern, lacking dimension and relying on particular figures or events. Symbols have always been used to evoke strong meanings, which though ambiguous are still championed by the state to promote something larger than humankind. This pattern has continued into the modern day, most noticeably with the Great Patriotic War. It is significant as it shows a dependency on myth in reconstructing its national history.

The state's origins largely determined the Russian character. The state has always taken a leading role in defining the borders and culture of Russia. For some (Westerners) this link is too strong, whereas for others (Slavophiles) it is an essential part of Russia's existence. This, like the period under focus, also continues to be mythologised and questioned, yet the ways in which the founding myth is told is evident in reconstructions of the past today. The role of the state in defining the national character and culture can also explain why 'Russia' is used so interchangeably; the state often has an omnipresent role throughout Russian history. Moreover, if Russia's founding myths are questionable, it opens up a debate on the legitimacy of other myths coated in glory.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Warner, *Russian Myths*, (London: The British Museum Press, 2002), pp.7-8

The conversion to Christianity was slow, but its purpose was for the Grand Prince Vladimir to consolidate his rule over a large and diverse set of pagan cults. To unify them under Christianity would help establish a sense of a nation, and with it, a central power (the state). Christianity provided Russia with two written texts in *The Bible* and a documentation of pre-Christian Russia, its first history. *The Primary Chronicle* written by the monk, Nestor, came some two hundred years after the arrival of Russia's first ruler, Rurik. Like many segments of Russian history, this is surrounded in myth and controversy concerning its accuracy. It is the only source detailing Rurik's arrival to Novgorod and becoming the first Rus-ian leader. According to the chronicle, the tribes called upon the Varangians to give them a ruler who would end the chaos and establish order over the fighting tribes (Rurik in this sense was the first *vozhd'*). This is one explanation as to why the distinction between state and population in Russia is always so clear, and this tone is evident in the Putin Agenda and narrative (see Chapter Three). Rurik's origin remains contentious in because many self-professed patriots find it challenging to accept Russia's foundations were not of purely Slav origins (the chronicle states that Rurik and his two brothers came from Scandinavia). Renowned Russian Slavophile historian, V.O. Klyuchevsky, is one example whose works are often in special sections of Russian bookstores. According to Klyuchevsky, the *Povyest Vremenykh Let* (Tales of the Bygone Years), has inaccurate chronology and contents. He concluded that it cannot be said for sure whether Rurik came of Varangian nature, though produced no evidence to support his claims.¹⁰⁴ The tone of the chronicle is also undoubtedly romanticised and partial.¹⁰⁵ In other words, Russia 'had' to be special for the new state to be legitimate, and for many, its ancientness is legitimising enough. In the modern day, a similar pattern exists where accounts of the past are often simplified, romanticised and the uncomfortable segments are sometimes refuted.

The adoption of Christianity had far-reaching and long-term consequences in Russia's historical development. First, many Slavic paganist traditions became intertwined with Orthodox Christianity, in a Christian-Pagan synchronisation. It was an obscure overlap since the peasants made no distinctions between religion, science and magic.¹⁰⁶ In other words, 'tradition' should

¹⁰⁴ V.O. Klyuchevsky, *A history of Russia*, translated by C.J. Hogarth, vol.1 (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1911), pp.10-11

¹⁰⁵ Martin Sixsmith, *Russia: a 1,000 year chronicle of the wild east*, (London: BBC Books, 2012), p.14

¹⁰⁶ 'How Holy was Holy Russia?' in Geoffrey Hoskings and Robert Service (eds.), *Reinterpreting Russia*, (London: Arnold, 1999), p.24

not be forgotten. Nikolai Berdyaev also wrote that the Russian identity rests on an extra messianic foundation, including the idea of Russians being a ‘chosen people’, or *narodboganosets* (God carrying people).¹⁰⁷ As a unifying force, Byzantine Christianity became synonymous with Russian identity, even though it was more socio-economic than socio-cultural. The Russian language has many examples of this. Words for peasant (*krest'yanin*) and Christian (*khristianin*) were used interchangeably. The old Slavonic word for an Orthodox Christian (*pravoslavnye*) has interesting connotations, too. Still used, *Pravoslavnye* derives from Greek, meaning ‘true believer’, whereas in Russian it can be literally translated as ‘praising rightfully’. In other words, only Orthodox Christians praise God correctly, not Catholics, Protestants, Jews or Muslims. ‘True’ Russians were Slavic as well as Orthodox, meaning Caucasians, nomadic steppe peoples, Tartars and many other indigenous groups were excluded from the collective identity. European foreigners who lived in Russia were also excluded and distinguished from Russian society, being labelled *nemets*, which derives from the Russian word *nemoi* (mute). Russia did not just become the easterly most point of Orthodox Christianity, but later assuming the throne as the ‘Third Rome’, never followed by a fourth. This provides further clarification of Russia’s belief in their superiority to other nations and peoples. The idea of a natural successor to the first Christian empire and solidification of a unique civilisation, is a powerful one that has remained in place since. As assessed later on in this chapter, contemporary Russia has elevated the ‘traditional’ religions to a higher status to reflect the diverse population and legitimise the notion of continuity in a different way.

Since its conception, Russia has been subject to repeated invasion attempts from abroad and a struggle to control the internal situation. In response to this external aggression, the mentality contains a degree of vulnerability. Russian and Muscovy expansion took place as a way to secure the state and cultural traditions.¹⁰⁸ The military plays a role in filling this gap, as the interests of the homeland were above those of the ruling class. State service for all, including the Tsar, was a sacred duty for everyone.¹⁰⁹ Many historical symbols that returned to prominence under Putin add to the necessity of ‘defending the fatherland’ such as St. George, the patron Saint of Moscow, and the orange and black ribbons. Moscow’s crest on the imperial coat of arms further

¹⁰⁷ Nikolai Berdyaev quoted in Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: mythologies of everyday life in Russia*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.31

¹⁰⁸ Michell A. Berdy, ‘What makes the Russians so Russian?’ in *Russia for Beginners: a foreigners guide*, pp.152-153

¹⁰⁹ Josh Sanborn, ‘Military Reform, Moral Reform and the end of the Old Regime’, in Eric Lohr and Marshall Poe (eds.), *The Military and Society in Russia*, (Boston: Brill, 2002), p.523

licenses it as the true symbol of power and Russian sovereignty. The double-headed eagle, while a Byzantine symbol bought to Russia by Sophia Paleolog, further re-emphasises unity and is surrounded with greater myths pre-dating Christianity.¹¹⁰ This is significant because it demonstrates how even pre-Christian myths are of vital importance in the modern day, adding a sense of sacredness to symbols of state power. It is a further indication as to why the state and its role is so important in the 'Russian idea'; the myth of Russia is in many ways, the myth of the state. To be successful, the state should be underpinned with tales of greatness and glory.

The survival of the Russian state is also packaged as divine and sacred. The focus on the myth of origins and continuity is designed to paint Moscow as the heir to Kievan Rus', making Putin an apogee of the past. One Moscow exhibition (analysed in Chapter Six) narrates that in the Mongol invasion Russia rejected help from the Germans because it would have entailed changing Russian culture, likely through religious conversion. Often taken for granted is that after Russia liberated itself, it was no longer considered as part of the 'civilised' world.¹¹¹ Russia became a barbaric and backward 'other' never fully accepted in the family of nations. This divide of East and West would narrow under Peter I and Catherine II, yet with the ambition of maintaining Russia's great power status; to be on par with but not part of the West. Or, as is a core theme of this thesis, to modernise. The foreign policy of Catherine II championed Russia's protection and a dominant military presence in Europe, earning her the title 'the great', as a true defender of the motherland. Divine military patriotism continued under Aleksandr I and Stalin. The Patriotic War in 1812 changed the notions of 'motherland' as Aleksandr I proclaimed Napoleon's eviction an act of divine providence, exerted through him, the Orthodox Tsar, who built the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow in honour of the victory.¹¹² The events on Poklannaya Gora, a sacred sight for Russians exerted this, as did other myths, such as a gush of wind blowing Napoleon's hat off before entering the Kremlin through the foreign ambassador's

¹¹⁰The legend of the Kremlin and its completion in 1147, according to Victor Alexandrov, came after a double-headed eagle swooped down from the sky to attack a savage boar being hunted by Stephen, son of Ivan Kuchka. After calling off the hunt, he established the village of Kuchkovo upon the hill where the double headed eagle landed. One night, Stephen had a nightmare where he saw a magnificent fortress with battlements as far as the Neglinnaya, and strange roofs resembling those of the Bassurmans, and churches coated with gold Victor Alexandrov, 'The Kremlin' reproduced in Laurence Kelly (ed.) *Moscow: A traveller's guide*, (London: Robinson, 2004), pp.21-22

¹¹¹ Vladimir Pozner, 'What do Russians Think of Foreigners?', in *Russia for Beginners: a foreigners guide*, p.25

¹¹² Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, *All the Russia's...?* in Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (eds.), *National Identity in Russian Culture: an introduction*, p.58

gate and even the harsh Russian winter.¹¹³ The cult of the Great Patriotic War 1941-45 stresses a salvation message, in many aspects in connection with the Orthodox Church. Resurrecting the collective spirit of the peasantry, the message spread at the time was that the Five Year Plan prepared Russia for war against beasts, despite a surprise attack, and saving Europe.¹¹⁴

The 'Russian Idea'

The 'Russia idea' is a recurrent theme reformulated by artists and intellectuals. It appears in different forms and times of ideological transformation.¹¹⁵ It surfaces at times of political and social unrest and takes on a special character depending on the timeliness, be it pre-revolutionary Russia, the USSR or the Russian Federation – including under Putin. Its principles are rooted in the nineteenth century tradition of *publitsistika* (essaying), which discussed the very nature of the motherland, its place in the world and destiny. It was how nineteenth century intellectuals and political figures came to see their country and explain it to the population. It communicates a set of values and principles identifiable with Russian culture and how it is 'unique'. The 'Russian idea' emerged out of Russia's interaction with the outside world and shares principles of nineteenth century romantic nationalism in Europe, reaffirming particularistic values of history and geographic awareness (a personal connection with the land and nature).¹¹⁶ This is particularly significant because as Boym notes, nineteenth century Russian culture is coupled with literature, an emblem for national identity.¹¹⁷ Its purpose was to promote and generate cultural and political consensus. Yet, the paradox here is that the most notable Russian writers were largely read outside of Russia or among its ruling elites. The audience was largely foreign or wealthy 'Europeanised' city dwellers, opposed to illiterate peasants. Three key questions dealt with in the Russian Idea, according to Marlene Laruelle, are whether Russia:

1. Is European, Asian or neither?
2. Is a nation state, empire or multi-national federation?

¹¹³ On a tour of Kolomna in October 2014, the guide told us of an old Russian tale where Mary, the Mother of God, lays a white sheet over Russia to protect her. The significance of this is largely down to army and mythical attachment to shit.

¹¹⁴ See for instance the Soviet war song *Svyashchennaya Voina* (Sacred War).

¹¹⁵ Susanna Rabow-Edling, 'The Role of 'Europe' in Russian nationalism: reinterpreting the relationship between Russia and the West in Slavophile thought', in Michael Melancon (ed.), *Russia in the European Context, 1789-1914*, (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p.98

¹¹⁶ Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, *National Ideology and International Relations: three incarnations of the 'Russian Idea'*, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol.16 (4) 2010, pp.667-668

¹¹⁷ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places*, p.103

3. Is a democracy, autocracy or ideocracy?¹¹⁸

This is at the heart of the Slavophile and Westerner split, showing a lack of consensus over what Russia is. As Russia has a tendency to fall in between the gaps of definitions, history is the space where answers are sought after. ‘Russia’ assumes different forms at different times, but is never fully decisive and often contains multiple layers of justifications. The period under focus in this thesis suggests more than one Russia is possible at a time. The USSR was an autocratic ideocracy with an empire, but it was also a multi-national state, like the Russian Empire and Russian Federation. The empire was an Asian one but the state had European origins. The nobility viewed itself as Europeans, but the peasantry had little in common with the average European. One key element separating the Russia Federation apart from the Russian Empire and USSR is that ideology is prohibited by the constitution. While the USSR used Marxism-Leninism, the Russian state pre-1917 used the Orthodox Church to define societal norms and cultural values, and do its bidding (and vice versa). This is no longer the case, although the church is still a prominent and influential organisation in Russia life. It makes a case for ‘Russia’ acting as a symbol for true morals and values, deeply imbedded in the national culture. Patriarch Kirill also became the first religious leader to address the Duma in 2015, where he used the term ‘Russianness’ (*russkost*) forty-seven times.¹¹⁹

The Slavophiles idolise(d) the culture of rural peoples and the traditional, organic way of life always lived. Essentially, they wish(ed) to restore this mythical time. Many of their beliefs, aside from verging on fantasy, exert complete negativity towards the ‘decadent’ Western ‘other’ in order to establish a sense of organic and purity in Russian traditions. Danilevsky called Westernism a disease from which Russia’s social body suffers and that only historical events can remedy the spiritual decay. These events included carrying on the high calling of Israel and Byzantium to be the ‘chosen people’.¹²⁰ Yet, more than the West being ‘the other’ from which Russia must be saved, the reverse has also manifested. Susanna Rabow-Edling writes that by the 1840s, both the radicals and conservatives came to believe that it was *their* task to help Europe solve its social and political problems, because the impasse of European culture had

¹¹⁸ Marlene Laruelle, *The “Russian Idea” on the small screen: staging national identity on Russia’s TV*, Demokratizatsiya, Spring 2013, p.313

¹¹⁹ His Holiness Patriarch Kirill speaks at the 3rd Christmas Parliamentary Meetings in the Russian State Duma, 22/01/2015 <https://mospat.ru/en/2015/01/22/news114490/> accessed 22/01/2015

¹²⁰ Danilevsky, ‘Pan-Slavism’, in Louis L. Snyder (ed.), *Nationalism: its meaning and history* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 1965), p.151

destroyed the harmony and integrity of the human personality.¹²¹ Their solution and model to save humanity was the traditional *obshchina* (community), as the principles of land redistribution and social obligations would help eliminate poverty, among other things. Putin even proclaimed at the Sixth Annual St. Petersburg Cultural Forum that culture could save the world from radicalism and intolerance that is threatening ‘to our civilisation’.¹²² In addition, the views of the ultra-conservative think tank, Izborskii Club, are becoming closer to the official line. Izborskii’s formation brought together anti-Western and Eurasianist thinkers (like Aleksandr Dugin and Aleksandr Prokhanov) who push ideas of orthodoxy, militarism, revanchism, power and destiny to keep alternative governing approaches alive.¹²³ These are quite vague, however, and Putin distances himself from Izborskii’s membership.

A further but not final irony is that any romantic agenda has to stress an organic character in its culture. Whilst the Slavophiles had the upper hand in this respect, few examples showed that this culture could make a genuine contribution to the advancement of humanity. Concern and uncertainty about the backwardness of this ‘original’ Russian culture raised questions not least because the intellectuals who began this process of cultural identification borrowing systematically from Western models. While Russia could not imitate the West and hope to appear unique, there was also no ‘Russian base’ in the thinking. Therefore, Westerners had an advantage in making their case, because culture cannot develop in true isolation and without a specific role in the universal progress of history, Russian culture would become insignificant.¹²⁴ These two competing visions historically play off one another, since the Slavophiles can locate a positive history to promote while Westerners have the means to sell it. The problem with this, as previously stated, was the lack of consensus over what the positive past is. Westerners view Russia’s destiny in line with Europe’s and Slavophiles are homogenous and inward looking. Thus, the ‘multi-history’, or careful selection of the preferred past simply reflects the splits in Russian society.

¹²¹ Susanna Rabow-Edling, ‘The Role of ‘Europe’ in Russian nationalism: reinterpreting the relationship between Russia and the West in Slavophile thought’, in Michael Melancon (ed.), *Russia in the European Context, 1789-1914*, p.99

¹²² ‘Putin says culture is the counterbalance to aggressive radicalism looming over world’, TASS, <http://tass.com/society/976294> accessed 20/11/2017

¹²³ Edwin Bacon, ‘Perspectives for Russia’s Future: the case for narrative analysis’, in Richard Sakwa and Agnieszka Pikolicka-Wilcewska (eds.), *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, (E-International:REL Publishing, 2016), pp. 232-233

¹²⁴ Susanna Rabow-Edling, p.101

Concerning the last two Tsars' stance on the 'Russian idea', both men were bought up within the realms of the Westernised nobility, but believed in the resurrection of Grand Muscovy, and were a product of this 'multi-history'. The building of more churches and monasteries took place and the architecture changed to reflect this. The most notable examples would be the State Historical Museum and *Gum* Department Store on Red Square.¹²⁵ Aleksandr III felt compelled to resurrect Russia's roots in order to be respected abroad and restore order at home. The most important aspect, however, would be the focus on autocracy. Aleksandr III hated the revolutionaries who murdered his father and brought instability to Russia. Laws were introduced to combat radicalism and designed to bypass the courts in his 'Statute on Measures for the Preservation of Political Order and Social Tranquility'. This remained in force until 1917, with Lenin labelling it the 'de facto constitution of Russia'. As Daniel Beer notes, it effectively suspended the law.¹²⁶ It could be argued that his son Nicholas II's biggest misgiving was introducing the Duma. The Duma's principles were based on Western ones; Nicholas had no intention of sharing power, but in order for this to properly function, some powers would have to be relinquished. Instead, the first two Dumas served to be his personal playthings and the divisions in politics and society made it very dysfunctional. Increased censorship, lack of shared power and failure to bring others into the political process show Nicholas never cared to 'Westernise' his country, perceiving democracy as a weakness (an argument that persists). The only thing which really united Russians under his reign was the Orthodox Church. By 1918, practically all Russians were Orthodox and Moscow had a church on every street corner.

The Soviet state relied on intense Marxist-Leninist propaganda, which ranged from the gloriously enlightened Moscow leadership, class enemies and the promise of a bright and prosperous future (New Jerusalem) to unify a diverse population. It was a different multi-history, but one which also recycled old ideas. The Soviet state relied on its own heroes in replacing the saints, and the leadership cult remained. Soviet socialism was a new kind of Russian idea, one that Russified a relatively new European political ideology, sticking to the image permeating Russian culture of higher ideals (and leaders) beyond human control. For a while, at least, this worked well. The collectiveness and self-sacrificing through the promotion of wider socio-economic goals, particularly true of Stalinism, continued to be viewed as the

¹²⁵ Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, *All the Russia's...?* in Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (eds.), *National Identity in Russian Culture: an introduction*, p.63

¹²⁶ Daniel Beer, 'Russia's War on Terror', *History Today*, June 2016, vol.66 issue 6, p.39

ideal way for society to function. Something it learnt from the nineteenth century Russian ideas, especially those championed by Nicholas I, was the general absence of civic institutions needed to demand loyalty.¹²⁷ The civic identity had a weak underpinning. Sole reliance on the Orthodox Church and Russian language could only go so far, as could ideas of ethnicity because they are explicitly excluding. An important difference is that Soviet leaders were also party leaders, and the Communist Party was the vehicle and master of all walks of life, firmly in control of the country's destiny. Nevertheless, Russian was the *lingua franca*, languages with no written alphabet started using Cyrillic and a great portion of Soviet culture had Russian roots. It still stressed the idea that the USSR was a home for all peoples and social classes since Marx preached that the worker had no nationality.¹²⁸ For this reason, the Soviet government arguably set out to create a culture 'separate' from politics. A culture that required literacy and knowledge and had no time for material culture in order to overcome capitalism and eradicate backwardness.¹²⁹

The Komsomols and Pioneers became another way to share the ideas binding the nation together through socialisation and upbringing. Stalinism was a kind of proto nationalism, which although rigged with paradoxes, primarily focused on defending socialism in the face of hostile capitalist forces. Stalinism also invoked a positive usable past, the reason as Mark Sandle testifies, was to consolidate the system.¹³⁰ Also a 'multi-history', traditions from Kievan Rus' such as unity of the state and centralisation on a grander scale, were evoked and made up a large part of *derzhavnost'*. The new baroque-style buildings and heroes (Stakhanovites and New Soviet man) were all created to support the message portrayed and challenge and replace old ecclesiastical ways. Furthermore, everything came to serve a specific purpose, people included, who were all expected to participate.¹³¹ The Five Year plans, while not part of Marxist doctrine, were justified in the name of socialism. Stalin believed that in order for utopia to be achieved, yesterday's people had to be exterminated as a historical necessity. To reach this 'promised land' the journey had to be 'sped up' to purify life quickly.¹³² The Khrushchev and Brezhnev years also adhere to

¹²⁷ Luke March, "Russian Nationalism under Putin: a majority faith?" in Katlijn Malfiet and Ria Laenen (eds.), *Elusive Russia: current developments in Russian state identity and institutional reform under President Putin*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), p.36

¹²⁸ Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims: the Russians in the Soviet Union*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.150

¹²⁹ Mark Sandle, *A Short History of Soviet Socialism*, (London: Routledge, 2001) p.125

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.243

¹³¹ Martin McCauley, *Stalin and Stalinism*, (London: Longman, 2008), p.103

¹³² Ibid. p.102

the ‘Russian idea’, the latter possessing an important lesson for the modern era. The Khrushchev Thaw and his socialist fatherland’s competition with the capitalist West has parallels with the old Slavophile belief that Russia should save others.¹³³ Under Brezhnev in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the USSR had to stand out from other socialist countries, as a superpower experiencing a lack of fundamental changes (‘stagnation’) that needed masking. ‘Developed socialism’ had to create the impression that the USSR was *still* on a special path towards communism *and* more advanced than other socialist countries. The fundamental problem was that the message was disjoined from reality, and the population were no longer illiterate peasants prone to barefaced manipulation. This is why history in the modern day must be recognisable, otherwise people feel patriotic or legitimise the narrative.

Yeltsin, Putin and the search for Russia

Yeltsin claimed after the Soviet collapse that Russia needed a ‘new idea’ and quest for a new identity. The problem was it paid little attention to patriotism, national symbolism or a positive history. This made an already difficult task extremely complicated. The education system received a new set of values, but the historical narrative was a negative and complex mosaic. Public celebrations were mediocre and without new national heroes. Monuments were taken down and not replaced and street names reverted to their pre-revolutionary ones usually without explanation. According to Lynn Williams, nations whether new, transitional or old need to construct a single cultural identity to match the new political identity.¹³⁴ History has to be assimilated into the official culture with the appropriate language. Moreover, if the political and cultural identity directly match, this can cause over centralisation. The USSR is an extreme example of this, and Yeltsin wanted to avoid this scenario. Article 13.2 of the 1993 Constitution prohibits state ideology in the Russian Federation, with article 14.1 proclaiming Russia a secular state.¹³⁵ No vehicle was selected to take any such patriotic message or ‘Russian Idea’ to the population. Anything cemented in policy never filtered through to the disillusioned population. When dealing with the issue of Soviet nostalgia or the ‘Soviet Idea’, its supporters and the

¹³³ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities: a historical survey*, (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.212

¹³⁴ Lynn Williams, “National Identity and Nation State: construction, reconstruction and contradiction” in Keith Cameron (ed.), *National Identity*, (Exeter: Intellect, 1999), p.9

¹³⁵ *Russian Federation Constitution 1993 with Amendments through 2014*, Articles 13.2 & 14.1, p.5

Communist Party (KPRF) could rely on the rosier aspects of public memory to generate support in elections with Russia's deteriorating position and polarisation.

Yeltsin appeared keen to align Russia with the West and demonised the USSR at home. One major consequence of this, which still exists, is that it created hostility. This is a core part of the Putin narrative (explored in the next chapter), which essentially states that Russia fell victim to unfair treatment from the West and their domestic situation was taken advantage of. 'Liberal' or Western ideas became increasingly unpopular as many political decisions reflected the political reality (see next chapter). More importantly, such political parties have had an inability to develop an ideology of 'liberal nationalism' to legitimise this form of democracy based upon the free market and non-imperial borders.¹³⁶ NATO enlargement added to making Russia appear weak and denying it access to the European political space Yeltsin sought.¹³⁷ Yeltsin did suggest replacing NATO with the OSCE, feeling it would take Russian concerns more seriously, as well as those of Eurasia as a whole. Europe and Russia sat at different stages of evolution meaning that no full assimilation was ever likely, especially if it could only occur on one side's terms. Moreover, a weak Russia goes against the 'Russian Idea' and this hurt Yeltsin's popularity. In addition, Russia's failure to Westernise led to criticism from Western powers. This is despite the West continuing to have a direct, but passive influence on Russia. Completely embracing Western influence strays Russia from its special path, but becoming a humanistic and organic nation also has constraints.

Putin's leadership instantly had a different tone. Some of the most repeated words in the 1993 Constitution (sovereignty and integrity) have become a cornerstone of the message, along with exercising the greater powers of the presidency, than say France or the U.S. The lens of history, on the other hand, is focused on continuity, combining state borders with a multi-cultural and ethnic tone. Without the people's belief in the system, Putin lacks a mandate to revive the Russian Idea. In Putin's own words, history is a crucial part of rebuilding Russianness. In 2012, he said

¹³⁶ M. Brundy, *Reinventing Russia: nationalism in the Soviet State 1953-1991*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp.260-261

¹³⁷ Vladimir Baranovsky, *Russia: a part of or Apart from Europe?*, p.435

Russia must build the future on strong foundation that is patriotism, while seeking to preserve and enrich [Russia]. Becoming a modern and developing nation and simultaneously maintaining national features to prevent losing an identity requires respect for [our] history, traditions and spiritual values of our people spanning a thousand years.¹³⁸

This explains why the role of the Great Patriotic War, heroes and sacrifice are so important. The Great Patriotic War solidified the Soviet identity. More than a century before, the Patriotic War confirmed the myth of a sacred and holy Russia. Today, they are used to unify the multi-ethnic nation by emphasising the diverse population's shared experience. Something that sets Putin apart from the old Slavophiles and Westerners is the 'modernisation' element. Modernisation involves a central focus of urbanisation, communications and development of modern political institutions, such as the army and nation state. The re-centralisation of power and role of the state in defining this is also key. In terms of continuity, it restores the concept of a strong central figurehead and strong state, something often deemed as necessary for Russia. A *Levada* poll from 2015 found 85% were proud of the armed forces, an increase of 21% since 2012.¹³⁹ In addition, others showed that 88% believe in a strong and hard government with a further 38% wanting Putin and Russia to be tougher, and 61% preferring order and stability over democracy.

Culturally, 'Russianness' is still being fought over, though with far more concreteness than Yeltsin. As Jeffrey Murer stated, feeling oneself as Russian and the notion of *rodina* does not prevent one from speaking a Siberian, Finno-Ugric, or Altaic language.¹⁴⁰ He concedes that the Russian language is important for separating oneself from the Finns, Lithuanians etc, but this statement does match up with many recent television documentaries and the Russian Constitution, which as a way of inclusion suggest non-ethnic Russians are a part of the 'wider-Russian identity'. Examples would be Article 3.4 of the Constitution and *Kto my?* (who are

¹³⁸ Putin discusses Russian Patriotism, *Moral Foundations*, Kremlin text, BBC Monitoring former Soviet Union: London, 13th September 2012

¹³⁹ 'Pride and Patriotism', *Levada Tsentr* 9/12/2015 <http://www.levada.ru/en/2015/12/09/pride-patriotism/> accessed 24/08/2016

¹⁴⁰ Maria Zamanskaya, *On Russia and Russianness: there is continuity between the Russia and the Soviet-a view from the West*, interview with Dr Jeffrey Murer, *Sputnik News* http://sputniknews.voiceofrussia/2013_02_20/On-Russia-and-Russianness-there-is-continuity-between-the-Russia-and-the-Soviet-a-view-from-the-West/ accessed 12/01/2016

we?), a documentary on the culture channel *Rossiya-K* ('K' is for *kultura*).¹⁴¹ Modern discussions of the Russian idea help make historical continuity visible, especially on television, where the effort to keep history alive is massive. A majority of the population believe television provides reliable information, and therefore, those channels run directly or indirectly by the state can reproduce a cultural and political consensus more effectively.¹⁴² This was also true of Putin's decision to restore imperial and Soviet symbols to the public sphere. As previously mentioned, symbolism is central to defining Russianness and reflects this as a 'multi-history'. This was a battle Putin had to win to secure his own legitimacy. The Russian compatriots are another example of trying to establish a wider Russian identity that goes beyond the state's modern borders. Putin views compatriots as a resource to achieve certain aims and restored the idea of a larger homeland for the compatriots, who featured prominently in the Foreign Policy Concept 2013. The countries who fall under the Moscow Patriarchy are included in the 'compatriots' definition, yet Putin at one time stretched it to all Russian speakers beyond the 'historic homeland'. Since Crimea, there have been attempts to disassociate Russians abroad with their country of residence to establish political or emotional loyalties.¹⁴³ There are many paradoxes and inconsistencies with the compatriots, however. While often used as Russia's 'excuse' to intervene in the affairs of the former Soviet states, cultural norms and traditions must be desirable instead of enforced if the message is to be genuinely successful. At present, it is hard to ascertain the degree of success with the compatriots, but some recent developments have proven popular. After Maidan, the Russian state made it easier for Ukrainian refugees to obtain education grants and places at school and university using their Ukrainian passports, and for foreigners serving in the military to gain Russian citizenship.¹⁴⁴

Regarding the place of religion in Russia today, there is a clear closeness between the state and Orthodox Church without official connection. However, since 2012 a new policy for state run schools to teach the 'fundamentals of religious cultures' was enacted.¹⁴⁵ The new fourth-class

¹⁴¹ Article 3.1 stipulates that the Russian Federation's sovereignty shall be beared by its multi-national people.

¹⁴² Marlene Laruelle, *The "Russian Idea" on the small screen: staging national identity on Russia's TV*, p.313

¹⁴³ A. Cheskin, *Russia's Compatriot Policy: the consolidation and 'Rossification' of Russian speakers abroad*, 2014, available at file:///C:/Users/aser/Downloads/Russia_s_compatriot_policy_The_consolida.pdf accessed 29/08/2017.

¹⁴⁴ Order No. 844 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of July 28, 2014. Retrieved from <http://base.garant.ru/70764076/> accessed 02/01/2017

¹⁴⁵ Amendments to the Law on 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations', Article 9 (1), 13/07/2017, www.consultant.ru/document/cons/doc_LAW_79440/9120f33f541ad2acd9d5e260401f5a0c84247c/#dst100015 accessed 01/02.2018

course teaches the ‘traditional’ religions of Russia – Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism – which are transmitted from one generation to the next.¹⁴⁶ Whilst the intention is to promote inter-religious harmony and tolerance, this law, according to Lisovskaya and Karpov, is deliberately exclusive. Firstly, nothing is taught of Western Christianity, and Orthodoxy is presented as the ‘first among equals’.¹⁴⁷ The focus of ‘traditional’ religions creates a privileged status for them and in recent years, the ‘nontraditional’ religions have had their rights curtailed.¹⁴⁸ This is an attempt to solidify the wider Russian identity and break down the barrier of religion. After the Soviet collapse, religions were able to claim the peoples of a certain territory or ethnicity as their own, regardless of whether they followed a particular religion or not. Placing all under the ‘Russian’ umbrella through a shared history is essential to upholding stability, particularly in more sensitive regions like the North Caucasuses.

Then again, Putin believes that the Orthodox Church was and is doing a lot to educate Russian citizens in the spirit of patriotism, love for the motherland and spiritual values.¹⁴⁹ The Orthodox Church is an instrument of soft power, which provides a moral justification to the situation in Russia today. It does so via stressing the ties of family as well as reinforcing the notion of spiritual unity and the code of conduct in society, yet with a sense of national identity added. While the former Patriarch Aleksei advocated an active partnership between church and state, he did so in a very cautious and diplomatic manner. Dmitry Medvedev also trod carefully with patriotic statements. Kirill is far less cautious. The indirect message that Russia’s universal mission is alive and well helps to quell domestic threats if the population feel a greater sense of spiritual togetherness. A *VTsIOM* poll in June 2015 found 47% of Russians believe the church ‘should ideally influence society’s spiritual life, but not intervene in political affairs, yet 64% approved of the secular principle’.¹⁵⁰ Traditionally anti-Western, the Orthodox Church’s classical isolation and xenophobia went hand in hand with the counter sanctions during Maidan 2014. Their role as the unifier of all the Russia’s and specific culture that developed in Russia includes Ukraine and Ukrainians in its own definition. The emphasis the Church places on

¹⁴⁶ Elena Lisovskaya, ‘Religious Education in Russia: Inter-Faith Harmony or Neo-Imperial Toleration?’, *Social Inclusion*, Vol.4,2, 2016, p.125

¹⁴⁷ Elena Lisovskaya, *Religious Education in Russia: Inter-Faith Harmony or Neo-Imperial Toleration?*, p.118

¹⁴⁸ In 2017 for instance, Jehovah’s Witnesses were banned from Russia and labeled an ‘extremist group’.

¹⁴⁹ Prime Minister Vladimir Putin meets with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia at the Moscow based Saint Daniel’s Monastery 5/01/2010. Mr Putin and His Holiness discussed aspects of co-operation between church and state.

¹⁵⁰ Press release no.1746, ‘Church and Society: together or apart?’, *VTsIOM*.

ethnicity and nationality has sparked a sense of betrayal among Russians, to the point where Ukraine has been viewed as increasingly unfriendly to Russia. In general, their mission and reason for central inclusion is as the ‘tradition keeper’.¹⁵¹ Thus, continuity thrives as the new Russian Idea restores past glories to improve today’s ills, as the organic way is the ‘right’ way.

Putin has also sent conflicting messages to the West over what kind of Russia he is trying to construct. Recently, there has been an attempt to distance Russia from the West. How Putin refers to the West is often ambiguous, as it has been historically. As Igor Zevelev states, the construction of a self-image is in part formed by what other’s think.¹⁵² To this end, Russia’s foreign policy rhetoric often influences public opinion and the historical narrative alike. For instance, when the ‘besieged fortress’ mentality emerges, like in the Foreign Policy Concept 2016, the state becomes more assertive and the narrative starts to champion ‘strong leaders’. The ambiguity is partly to create distance but also to display sovereignty and assert the state’s interests. Putin has referred to Western countries as ‘friends’, ‘partners’ and even ‘colleagues’ like in the aftermath of the Crimean Annexation.¹⁵³ It suggests that while a working relationship is desirable, their interests are principally different and perhaps incompatible. Russia as the great military power and potentially threatening ‘other’ plays into the Putin narrative this way, too. The desired image is one of a state capable of defending its interests. This encourages a modern day mythologising of the leader; the t-shirts depicting Putin bare chested on horseback in the Siberian Mountains or wearing military uniform are all designed to create this effect. While a working relationship has been desired since Putin became president, it is clear that he and the Russian population fear Western involvement in domestic affairs. The reason, as noted, is a distortion from the historic and moral consciousness has more than once led to state weakness and loss of sovereignty. The memory of the 1990s is still fresh, and the arrest of figures like Mikhail Khordokovsky was widely popular. In 2016, the Duma also passed a law giving Russia’s courts to oppose any international law if it conflicts with home law.

This has played its part in restarting discussions about whether Russia is a unique civilisation

¹⁵¹ Alexander Agadjanin, *Turns of Faith, Search for Meaning: orthodox Christianity and the post-soviet experience*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), p.177

¹⁵² Igor Zevelev quoted in Valentina Feklyunina, *Battle for Perceptions: projecting Russia in the West*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, 4, June 2008, p.608

¹⁵³ Putin used the Kosovo Precedent in justifying the annexation of the Crimea, citing that it [Kosovo] “was created by our Western colleagues in a very similar situation”, see Vasile Rotaru, *Russia’s Post-Crimea Legitimization Discourse and its Challenges for the EaP Countries*, EURINIT Proceedings 2016, http://cse.uaic.ro/eurint/proceedings/index_htm_files/EURINT%202016_ROT.pdf accessed 07/08/2017

and given way to the new philosophy of Eurasianism. While Putin initially continued to co-operate and work closely with Europe, it has become increasingly clear that he wants to build a different system based upon the historic peculiarities of Russia. The widening gap between the West and Russia since 2014 caused a pivot eastward to focus on ties with the former Soviet republics. The roots of this arguably start in 2004 with the Colour Revolutions, reflecting the supposed struggle between the ‘Atlanticists’ and post-Soviet space. Eurasianisms’ most famous advocate is philosopher and political activist, Aleksandr Dugin. Dugin rejects liberalism, Marxism and fascism, and is a staunch nationalist who believes that the ideal society is based upon tradition. According to Dugin, history must be the history of traditions, with politics playing a secondary role.¹⁵⁴ Tying in nicely with the Putin narrative, Eurasianism’s goal is to create a Eurasian socio political network to counter the American dominated ‘Atlanticists’. The Eurasian Economic Union is seeking ever-closer union and additional members to equal the EU. This is also a reactionary response and signs of the besieged fortress mentality, whereby the state feels surrounded and encircled by western powers seeking to undermine it. Important to note here is that Eurasianism has not really taken off and Dugin is mostly known *outside* of Russia. Eurasianism became a reactionary approach to protect and secure the country’s interests in a homogenous fashion. Its significance for Russianness stems from the focus on the ‘near abroad’ and what is similar between them that separates their interests from the West. It could act as a self-fulfilling prophecy concerning Russia’s destiny; neither Europe nor Asia. It keeps alive the continuity aspect and would be a final rejection of the Kozyrev Doctrine.

Conclusion

Putin’s ‘Russian idea’ is strengthening Russia’s ties to its past, highlighting the right way for its future development is organic, through traditions which set it apart from the world. The refocus on the history of ideas and Russia’s unique experience is designed to increase a sense of patriotism that is rooted in past glories and a lost time. It should also be stressed at this point that the historic identity and the reassessment of the past is not conducted from a purely moral standpoint. Hence, the darker sides are easier to incorporate or dismiss without huge uproar.

¹⁵⁴ Alexander Tolstoy and Edmun McCaffray, ‘Mind Games: Alexander Dugin and Russia’s war of ideas’, *World Affairs*, 2015, vol. 177, 6, p. 27

Continuity helps foster the idea that the USSR was separate neither from Russian history, nor in vain. Moreover, that despite the radical change of direction, the 'Russia that we lost' has not disappeared forever. Inventing a new Russian idea proved to be impossible, meaning falling back onto past ideas of Russia as a humane, spiritual great nation with a long history of a country largely unaffected by the outside world, which also reached great achievements, is more secure. The multi-history that Russianness is also reflects the nature of *istoricheskaya politika*, which will be analysed in the next chapter.

If one argues that Russia is unique, it must be specified what it is different from; in this case, it is different compared to the average European country. The difference comes from a historical experience that developed separately from the European context, and when it collided, systemically borrowed auspicious aspects that became 'Russianised'. There may be an eventual clash with the principle of modernisation while trying to maintain ancient traditions and principles, as well as imperial and Soviet customs. This would require a further revaluation of Russia. Moreover, if Peter I, Stalin and Putin are considered worthy models, the reinterpretation promises significant and far-reaching outcomes.

The Slavophile and Westerner split continues in Russian life, although now under the labels of conservative (or patriots) and liberal. The conservatives argue to see Russia and the Russian state from a homogenous standpoint. This is why they have an easier time appealing to people's nostalgia. Today, conservatives also want a return to a mythical time, or at least, to see the more auspicious values and principles championed and put centre stage. The lines of division and politics of history for championing a better Russia will be explored in the next chapter. The calls for the restoration of the Romanov family to Russia and Soviet style health and education system reflect how important continuity is in Russian society. They also show that more than one Russia is possible and exists in the minds of the people. Putin, therefore, seeks to uphold the traditions as a consensus builder as well as restorer of Russia and protector of its interests.

Chapter Three

The Politics of History in Putin's Russia

As Russian history is often related to the state, the 'glory days' or rosier episodes are those when it was strong and the country on a clear path fulfilling its messianic mission. In the absence of ideology and a state religion, a cherry picked past stressing the role of the state (*derzhavnost'* or 'stateness') helps fill the void. State power is symbolic to the idea of 'Russia' as it fills the role of protector and oppressor; Putin is its current face. In the new Russia, the treatment of history is also a question about democracy. How the state handles the past directly reflects its own image. Therefore, the political battle for the possession of history is not a façade, but a key part of completing state formation. It is also an ideal channel for their message. According to the Putin narrative, the state has to assert itself in order to safeguard the nation's interest.¹⁵⁵ Like Aleksandr III and Nicholas II, Putin has a continued idea of what Russia is (and was). To re-assert this, the state must smooth over the fractures of history and focus on a positive past to consolidate the nation.¹⁵⁶ Whilst this idea is a recycled one (and therefore a product of the past itself), it should be stressed that its main purpose is to use the past to explain modern complexities and set the agenda of what Russia 'should be'.

This chapter will analyse the Russian state's formation post-1991 and focus on how *istoricheskaya politika* (historical politics) was the hot iron used to solder a crumbling state back together. It was also the fuel that started a fiercely contested political battle to secure Russia's future and shape its identity. As well as analysing the necessity of history in the state building process, this chapter will demonstrate the complex political issues surrounding the past, promoting it to Russia's population and using it as a backdrop and legitimisation tool for policy. History is a space where the government can make deals to resolve social conflicts, define itself and be used as a marker for progress. This explains why *istoricheskaya politika* has become so prevalent, and this chapter will explore its use and purpose in politics. This chapter also

¹⁵⁵ Edwin Bacon, Public Political Narratives: developing a neglected source through the exploratory case of Russia in the Putin-Medvedev era, *Political Studies* 60/4 2012.

¹⁵⁶ 'Putin's Russian Idea', Power Vertical Podcast *RFERL*, 17th February 2017, <http://www.rferl.com/a/podcast-putins-russian-idea/28316006.html> accessed 20/02/2017

considers how Russian foreign policy is a response to the domestic situation, and the role the past had in selecting Russia's image projection abroad. The past has come to define the chosen method of foreign policy, as well influencing the development of Russian political culture post communism.

Russia's past remained an unavoidable political debate for the government, but the way it has been handled since 2000 added to Putin's own personal credibility. History became a progress marker and reflection of the country's status in a positive light by focusing on the 'glory days'. In general, history is a soft power tool (cultural influence) that can explain the state of Russian democracy. It also acts as a glue to hold the country together, filling the vacuum created after the collapse of the USSR - whereby the ideology and Communist Party which held the country together, vanished. Consensus on a 'continued' Russian state (the legal successor to the USSR) asserts *istoricheskaya politika*'s necessity. Putinism centers on stability, unity, social consensus, sovereignty and patriotism as the building blocks of state consolidation. These all flow and derive from the ability of the Russian state to exercise its power. Sovereignty and stability are considered as key to securing some form of democratic governance in Russia. These were absent in the initial state building process post communism. By focusing on these aspects, safeguarding history and preventing 'falsifications' keeps the myth of the state and Russia alive. Symbols are the ultimate reinforcement of this, serving as a constant reminder of the state's longevity.

Russia is unique because no political consensus formed after the collapse of communism. While it had historical traditions of power and statehood it could fall back on, the selection process and path forward has been boldly contested. Boris Yeltsin wrote in his *Midnight Memoirs*, that had Russia chosen to be the legal successor of its pre-1917 self, the world would have viewed it and its people differently. The relationship and interpretation of history would have also been different. A supplementary point is that in other former European Soviet bloc nations, the search for a usable democratic past was easier *and* consensual. Meanwhile, many segments of the past are still fought over in the political space, most recently the legacy of the 1917 revolution and murder of the royal family. The government slowly came to conclude it was a tragedy in order to avoid alienating key segments of the population. Abroad, however, the state has been quite quick to evoke a patriotic past in its responses to gain its support. As such, the past is a channel for its own message and definition.

The post-Soviet Russian state as a product of the past

Russia witnessed a ‘flight from sovereignty’ during the 1990s.¹⁵⁷ State structures had broken down and society was falling apart. One can approach this from two angles. On the one hand, liberal democracy or ‘western ways’ ignored the reality of the Russian situation after the USSR’s collapse, as Allen C. Lynch maintains.¹⁵⁸ On the other, as Lilia Shevtsova argues, Russia did not know how to handle its newfound freedoms.¹⁵⁹ It lacked a democratic legacy to build on which meant transitioning to liberal democracy would be problematic. The rediscovery and popularity of pre-revolutionary Russia in the 1990s was a distraction in the new state construction. Using history as an influential tool in the transition phase further emphasised the absence of liberal democracy in Russian history, and supports the case for rejecting it as a suitable model.¹⁶⁰ The conservative ‘red-brown’ opposition were better placed to make links with the past for legitimisation. Communists claimed ownership of much of the twentieth century, and could rely on nostalgia up to a point. Nationalists, meanwhile, fixated around concepts of pan-Slavism and orthodoxy. Yet, both shared an opposition to the anti-national character of the Yeltsin reform programme, and in this case, history was utilised as ‘proof’ of their superior beliefs.¹⁶¹ Yet the line between myth and fact was often blurred.

What should also be considered is Russian lawmaker Konstantin Kosachev’s proposal, outlined in 2010 on *Ekho Moskvy* radio station. Kosachev focuses on Russia’s legal status as the official successor state to the USSR, as opposed to the Russia of 1917. According to Kosachev, as the USSR’s legal successor, Moscow should elaborate on a ‘historical doctrine of principles’ that would once and for all disclaim financial, legal and moral responsibility for the Soviet authorities’ actions on the former territory of the USSR.¹⁶² In essence, this proposal boils down to two points. Firstly, that Russia should fulfill all international obligations of the USSR as its

¹⁵⁷ This is widely discussed in Stefanie Ortmann, *Re-Imagining Westphalia: identity in IR and the discursive construction of the Russian state*, unpublished thesis, LSE 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Allen C. Lynch, *How Russia is Not Ruled*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.51

¹⁵⁹ Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin’s Russia*, revised and expanded edition (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), p.168

¹⁶⁰ Geoffrey Pridham, ‘Post-Communist Democratization and Historical Legacy Problems’, *Central Europe*, 12:1 2014, p.84

¹⁶¹ Michael Hughes, ‘The Never Ending Story: Russian nationalism, national communism and opposition to reform in the USSR and Russia’, *Journal of Communist Studies*, vol.9 issue 2, 1993, p.41

¹⁶² Konstantin Kosachev, ‘Sovetskaya li Rossiya?’, *Ekho Moskvy*, June 29th 2010, <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/kosachev/691501-echo.phtml> accessed 02/01/2017

successor state, however, still refuses to accept responsibility for any crimes it committed. Secondly, and in addition to this, the state does not accept any claims of violations, international and domestic, from the Soviet authorities.¹⁶³ The Soviet past cannot simply be ignored, and the decision to utilise beneficially was only natural.

Working within this framework, the use of history in regime transition highlights constraints on what is realistically achievable.¹⁶⁴ History is often a passive force driving democratic change, but in the Putin Agenda, it is used to forward the principles of *derzhavnost'* and *gosudarstvennost'* (statehood) which historically required a central figurehead to rule. It also demonstrates how a lack of historical consensus and failure to come to terms with the past are a stiff obstacle in transitioning to democracy. As discussed in Chapter Two, the state defines the national culture. For *istoricheskaya politika* to be successful, it requires reappraisal of the nature of the state in order to reconcile with the past to plausibly refer to it as normal or a 'return to normality'. Although every former communist country underwent a revision of its past post 1991, Russia's governing traditions were of *derzhavnost'* and *gosudarstvennost'*. Although Yeltsin attempted to move Russia as far as he could from the USSR's legacy, an alignment with the West was not so straightforward. Czechia and the Baltic states had a democratic past to consider during state formation, which allowed them to deflect blame for the communist oppression onto Moscow; Russia had to reconcile with the Soviet state's past differently. The October Revolution meant accepting the blame and or an admission that the promise of 1917 were never fulfilled. For the state to be successful in the new political reality, it had to fall back on its past as a global power and strong central organ supported with examples of achievement. The absence of a strong state or leader prevented the conditions for a majority of Russians to feel pride in their country. Instead, the Russian state appeared weak, humiliated and unable to carry out basic functions.

The nationalist opposition to Yeltsin latched onto this idea, proclaiming that such a weak state could not be truly 'Russia', as *derzhavnost'* and *gosudarstvennost'* alike cannot accommodate Yeltsin's shortcomings. For Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and the Liberal Democrat Party (LDPR), this weakness specifically entailed openness to foreign influence as a direct cause of the country's

¹⁶³ Igor Torbakov, 'History, Memory and National Identity: understanding the politics of history and memory wars in post-Soviet lands', *Demokratizatsiya* 2011, p.210

¹⁶⁴ Geoffrey Pridham, *Post-Communist Democratization and Historical Legacy Problems*, Central Europe, 12:1 2014, p.97

ills.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, the lack of any structure delayed the modernisation process that Russia desperately sought. Yeltsin's desired shift towards greater democracy was met with the population harking back to a time where a strong state ruled over a stable prosperous country. This naturally became sentimentalised amidst the growing chaos. As David Lowenthal notes, nostalgia only has to look attractive and part of this attraction is the glorious triumphing over the turbulent.¹⁶⁶ What this demonstrates is that one of Yeltsin's keys to establishing a successful government was to win the history battle. Unfortunately for Yeltsin, there were no successful historical figures or periods he could relate to or rely on for legitimisation. The failure to appease Soviet nostalgia and nationalist sentiments undermined his rule. National symbols were meaningless, and by trying to avoid statism or authoritarian like behaviour, patriotism suffered. As a result, Yeltsin stopped demonising the USSR when it became hugely unpopular to do so.¹⁶⁷ However, the untimeliness of this also had consequences for other 'liberal' political parties; Yeltsin's record discredited Westernism and democracy as a whole. Russia continued descending into chaos without a past of which it could be outwardly proud.

Like any nation, Russia had to choose a history suited to its national interests that reflects the goals of the new state. The Putin Agenda stresses the need for national unity before normality in politics and in turn creates the image of hostile others undermining Russia's special mission. At the same time, it shows that Russia as a whole, the state especially, is still grappling with the Soviet legacy. For this reason, it is unsurprising that one of Medvedev's priorities was to combat the 'falsification of history', with the 2009 commission.¹⁶⁸ It served as a protection of the state's legacy and status, yet it was also introduced after the Georgian War. Here, the international community widely condemned Russia's actions. This can be viewed as both a reaction to the outside world, but also as an attempt to rally the population. As Danu Marin writes, the military is synonymous with historical patriotism in Russia.¹⁶⁹ No patriotic message can work without a

¹⁶⁵ For a broader discussion, please see Stephanie Ortmann, *Reimagining Westphalia*.

¹⁶⁶ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.5-7

¹⁶⁷ Kathleen Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia: politics and memory during the Yeltsin Era*, (London: Cornell, 2002), pp.171-172

¹⁶⁸ The Russian President's decree No. 549, "O Komissiy pri Prezidente Rossiyskoi Federatsiy po protivodeistviyu popytkam fal'sifikatsiy istoriy v ushcherb interesam Rossi", at <http://graph.document.kremlin.ru/page.aspx?1;1013526>. The new "history commission" consists of representatives from various government ministries (including the Defense Ministry, the FSB and its foreign intelligence counterpart, the SVR), the State Duma, the Russian Academy of Sciences, and "public organizations," but includes only three professional historians.

¹⁶⁹ Danu Marin, 'The Russian Foreign Policy Towards its Neighbouring States: the synergy between hard and soft power in the case of Moldova', in Vasile Rotaru and Miruna Troncota (eds.), *Russia and the Former Soviet Space: instrumentalizing security, legitimizing intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), p.77

strong military, as Nicholas II experienced after the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05. As both were somewhat bruised during the aftermath of the USSR's collapse, thus, it could also capitalise on a current situation that concerned an area in Russia's historic areas of special interest. There was also a meticulous focus on the Great Patriotic War that went hand in hand with legitimising its intervention as 'peacekeeping', a term that Putin and his governments have often used to justify interventions in the 'near abroad'.¹⁷⁰

It became clear to many that only a strong state could bring stability. The recent past 'proved' that the state was the only actor who could lead the way since the population was ill equipped after centuries of absolutism and seventy-four years of authoritarian communism. In addition, it pushed the idea that state formation was incomplete (and arguably, is still developing). For democracy to succeed in Russia, the institutions have to function.¹⁷¹ History is a necessary backdrop for this concept as it can provide insights into potential alternatives. It allows us to carefully select specific events, which in the case of contemporary Russian, adhere to the official narrative.¹⁷² Thus, as the state acts and establishes central motifs, it makes casual links to build up the desired account. While this account is not challenging to locate, the concept of *istoricheskaya politika* remains a puzzle. It is not an official policy, nor is it a Soviet-style propaganda replacement. The usable past is cherry picked, so *istoricheskaya politika* lacks any consistency. It cannot be referred to as ideology either; ideology is consistent, narrower and more directly mobilised. Putin has also advised against imposing a particular worldview, stating 'we have already gone through all of this in our history, as you know, and we have no intention of returning to the past'.¹⁷³ The aim of *istoricheskaya politika* is simply to secure legitimacy and essentially serves as a political currency to cash in and defend the governing style. History is above politics and can justify the present situation. In order to secure legitimacy, however, the population must largely be behind the state so its actions go largely uncontested. *Istoricheskaya politika* is not only inseparable from Putinism and its message; it is the soil it stems from. *Istoricheskaya politika* is a careful balancing act and not a blanket term. The Stalinist terror is a

¹⁷⁰ Vasile Rotaru, 'Russia's Post-Crimea Legitimization Discourse and its Challenges for the EaP Countries', *EURINIT Proceedings* 2016, available at http://cse.uaic.ro/eurint/proceedings/index_htm_files/EURINT%202016_ROT.pdf accessed 07/08/2017.

¹⁷¹ Edwin Bacon, Julian Cooper and Bettina Renx, *Securitising Russia: the domestic politics of Putin*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p.4

¹⁷² Edwin Bacon, 'Public Political Narratives: developing a neglected source through the exploratory case of Russia in the Putin-Medvedev era',.

¹⁷³ This was also significant because it subtly condemned the 1917 revolutions. Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, December 2 2016, <http://en.kremlin/events/president/news/53379> accessed 02/12/2016

thorn in the state's side, whilst the Great Patriotic War is vigorously promoted. From a humanitarian perspective, the terror is a black mark on the history of the Russian state that can undermine its authority. Whilst a condemnation of the terror has been unavoidable, Putin quickly realised another constraint would be to deny the achievements of the Stalin period, because certain segments of the population remain rosy eyed over it. Stalinism and the Soviet experience have become embedded into the national identity. Ignoring Stalin's rule is equal to disregarding tradition and undermining loyalty to one's ancestors who endured this experience together.

The Putin Agenda, presidencies and politics of history

The Putin Agenda pushes statehood to preserve Russian history, and with it, Russia as a great political power.¹⁷⁴ Putin's rule is presented as part of a historical continuity, which is keenly emphasised. His style of governance presented as a natural result and inevitability of Russian history. This is depicted in recent school history textbooks and can explain the return of the 'besieged fortress' mentality post 2012. It can also explain why the state acts defensively concerning negative interpretations of the past. Since Russian history often concerns the state's legacy, its reputation is at stake. A level of safeguarding and protection from 'falsification' is required to preserve its image. This takes a substantial amount of effort to push the message as modern and different mediums are needed. Whilst the darker sides are acknowledged, these are kept at arm's length. The justification for 'glossing over' is the need for the federal government to manage affairs more directly. What some believe to be censorship and control is viewed by the majority as an integral part of state culture. For these reasons, the Putin Agenda and use of history is a soft power element of national security. Russian history was noted as a threat in Russia's National Security Doctrine 2009: 'attempts to re-examine views on Russia's history'. The document spelled out that 'social cohesion' would help to combat 'falsifiers of history' by fostering the spiritual unity of the Russian Federation's multi-ethnic people'.¹⁷⁵ This was

¹⁷⁴ Tatiana Shakelina, "Russia in the new distribution of power", in V. Nadkarni, C. Norma and N.C Noonan, (eds.), *Emerging Powers in a Comparative Perspective: the political and economic rise of the BRIC countries*, (London: Bloomsburg, 2013), p.113

¹⁷⁵ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation 2009, Transcript of the beginning of 24 March 2009, Security Council Meeting, available at

timely, as it followed Filippov's textbook, the Foreign Policy Concept 2008 and History Commission 2009. At the very least, history became a priority amongst priorities opposed to a major preoccupation of the Russian state.

A huge part of *istoricheskaya politika* and the agenda is the narrative based around the chaotic Yeltsin years with mounting problems. It is the starting point for securing legitimisation. The past is also used to define the Russia of today equally, by what it is not – chaotic and problematic – as opposed to the stability and success rhetoric of Putin. After Yeltsin resigned, there existed a real desire to catch up with the West, strengthen the state institutions and restore order. Russian history is riddled with examples of this, means to achieve it (strengthening state power) and this continually feeds into the narrative. Since 2012, however, the besieged fortress mentality has returned in response to how its actions abroad were received by the international community. In both cases, this appeals to the nostalgic sentiments of different groups. On the one hand, this made sense as part of restoring Russian pride meant basking in the achievements of its former self, and Crimea was an ideal means. However, an effective middle way had to be found. The ill-defined and lack of a democratic identity was an added burden of state formation, and Yeltsin's mishandling of the past were a supplement. Russia had a centralised unitary state throughout its history, which meant Statism (see below) in some form would inevitably feel more natural; or as Catherine Danks argues, because the expectations of democracy fell short of the reality, a more authoritarian path first may have been auspicious.¹⁷⁶ This is a common view expressed by ordinary Russians and experts alike. As Richard Sakwa writes, the history of the Russian state can easily be interpreted as a history of missed opportunities in reform.¹⁷⁷ Aleksandr III's reaction was a response to his father's reforms, and the 1917 revolutions due to his son's unwillingness to relinquish power. Instead of dwelling on the missed opportunities, invoking memories of struggle and everyday hardship as a point of comparison served as a powerful message to the population who felt the economic downturn of the 1990s and post Crimea. *Istoricheskaya politika* promises a better future when the crisis is over, as does the Putin Agenda. The (preferred) past is a message of hope for a better, tranquil future.

<kremlin.ru/appears/2009/03/24/1541_type63378type82634_214272.shtml> accessed 20/01/2019; see also Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation 2015, approved by President V.Putin 25 December 2015, available at <<https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>> accessed 20/01/2019

¹⁷⁶ Catherine Danks, *Politics Russia*, (London: Longman, 2009), p.75

¹⁷⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th edn. (London: Routledge, 2008), p.445

Initially, the past under Putin was celebrated in ways reminiscent of the Brezhnev era. The tone was about the country's achievements and self-congratulatory.¹⁷⁸ After 2012, it grew increasingly patriotic and as will be analysed in subsequent chapters, now focuses on the need to overcome enemies and hardship. The struggle with foreign powers after the Ukraine Crisis caused a retreat into the besieged fortress mentality and a message of encirclement to flourish. This supported by greater references to the Great Patriotic War, revisions of the Stalin era and admiration for leaders like Aleksandr I.

Despite depictions of strength and power, the Putin Agenda demonstrates that the state is acting from a position of vulnerability. This includes, but is not exclusive to, defending itself from 'hostile' external forces, the possibility of rejection by CIS countries of its soft power strategies and internal unrest in the form of political opposition and Islamic extremism. Further signs of an inconsistent historical narrative are displayed here, meaning the Putin Agenda's narrative follows very straightforward, rigid lines. Primarily centered on continuity and restoration of the great power status, it also requires strong emphasis on stability, unity, social consensus, sovereignty and patriotism. All of these factors play off each other and the absence of one weakens the rest. The main underlying factor in much of this is the use of history as a prop to assert 'great powerness'. Some sort of historical evidence is required for this otherwise consensus cannot be built. Moreover, if continuity is to be successful, then exhibiting 'proof' is essential. The chosen past has to reflect those ideals sought after. The agenda is, therefore, a particular formula dependent upon certain ingredients. The removal of one disrupts the flow of progress and makes the other concepts redundant (see diagram below).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Nina Tumarkin, 'History Matters: the politics of the past in Putin's Russia,' *MPBN morning edition*, podcast <<http://news.net/post/history-matters-politics-past-putins-russia-#stream/0>> accessed 09/06/2016.

¹⁷⁹ This diagram was first published in James C. Pearce, 'History Matters: the use of Russia's official past and the shifts in its post-Soviet Foreign Policy', in Vasile Rotaru and Miruna Troncota (eds.), *Russia and the Former Soviet Space: instrumentalizing security, legitimizing intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), p.30

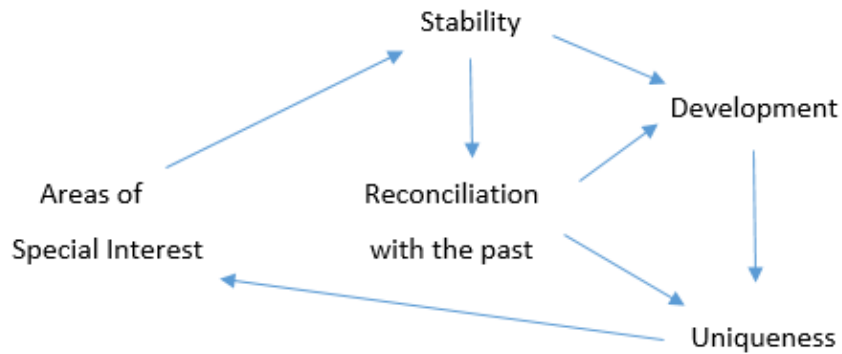


Diagram 1: The Putin Formula (Pearce, 2017)

As Putinism centers on unity, consensus, centralisation, a strong state, sovereignty, patriotism and close attention to Russia's geographical position, according to the underlying narrative as outlined by Edwin Bacon, these areas were ignored during the 1990s causing the flight from sovereignty, and with it a departure from tradition and a disregard for Russia's history. For as long as a reconciliation with the past occurs with Russia's development in a distinct and unique direction, stability is maintained, as it was in the 'rosier' parts of history. When establishing the national interest, the strongman image helps to foster opinions that Putin is capable of going toe-to-toe with foreign leaders and defending national interests.¹⁸⁰ It furthers the notion of how Russia should be ruled placing Putin on the same shelf as previous leaders known for standing up to the West and ruling with authority (Aleksandr I). With regard to this historical narrative, the term 'continuum' can also reflect the state's desire for historical continuity. Thus, for this historical continuity to occur the past must be reconciled with.

As well as *derzhavnost'* and *gosudarsvennost'*, another term surfaced in the mid-2000s to explain Russia's political situation; *samostoyatel'nost'* (sovereign independence). Vladislav Surkov, the Kremlin's chief ideologue, first introduced the term 'sovereign democracy' as an attempt to intertwine the 'Russian idea' deeper into policy and legitimise greater state control, but did so unsuccessfully.¹⁸¹ Putin and Medvedev's use of *samostoyatel'nost'* was a replacement to reflect these ideals adding to the historic myth of the state. The narrative then dictates that if the state cannot act freely and if the institutions do not function, then Russia cannot be a

¹⁸⁰ N. Zlobin, 'Putin's Beseiged Fortress', *The Moscow Times online*, <<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/putins-besieged-fortress/453155.html>> accessed 14/09/2015

¹⁸¹ "Transcript of Speech by Vladislav Surkov at "Delovoi Rossii" Business Forum, 17th May 2005, <www.integrum.ru>: Nasledie Otechestvo, accessed 05/12/2016.

democracy. This does not only refer to the Yeltsin years, but also the Dumas of Nicholas II and Provisional Government. The leaders were weak, so were state institutions. The state as the historical protector of Russia must use its past as a shield since it bears the battle scars as a sign of proof, further highlighting how the state acts from a position of vulnerability. Historically, Russia has seen the top struggle to control below and today's situation is no different. The past now reflects the need for a strong state as a traditional Russian value.

Under Medvedev, this model remained largely intact, however, his foreign policy direction began to focus more on CIS, SCO and BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). The deterioration of Russo-Western relations has seen this trend continue. When analysed closer, this pivot shows Russia began to exploit the civilisational role it has in the post-Soviet space more than previously. To successfully exploit Russia's civilisational role, specific attention must be paid to the past in order to demonstrate why this is an ideal path to follow. This in turn gives ammunition to Eurasianist thinkers and 'fifth columnists' in the Izborskii Club. Putin was concerned about greater 'liberalisation' under Medvedev and the global financial crisis added to this. Deficits became the norm post-2010, which had an effect on local governments and people's personal income. Seventy-seven out of eighty-three regions were running fiscal deficits in 2014.¹⁸² In 2011-12, demonstrations occurred in Moscow, which discredits the Putin Agenda, as national unity behind this message appears absent. From the beginning of Putin's third term, the narrative alone could no longer suffice; the state needed to arouse patriotic emotions to generate popular support.¹⁸³ After the Crimean annexation, Russia's geopolitical position was painted as a struggle to overcome like the Great Patriotic War.¹⁸⁴

The politics of history and the Russian people

In order to show the complexities of implementing *istoricheskaya politika*, this section uses Nataliya Zubarevich's 'Four Russias' model to analyse the domestic situation. According to Zubarevich, the new political reality (post-Soviet Russia) has created 'Four Russias' marked by

¹⁸² Natalia Zubarevich, 'Four Russias: the new political reality'

¹⁸³ 'Dissecting Russia's Winter of Protest Five Years On', *Open Democracy*, December 5th 2016

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/editors-of-opendemocracy-russia/dissecting-russia-s-winter-of-protest-five-years-on> accessed 05/03/2017

¹⁸⁴ Perry Anderson, 'Incommensurate Russia', *New Left Review*, July-August 2015, 5, p.24

persistent economic and social differentiations. These groups are labeled Russia One, Two, Three and Four - the latter two often grouped together.¹⁸⁵ One drawback of this model is that this is largely based on regional differences when taking into account the values and way of life in each group. Ethnicity is not considered and the Russian Federation has over one hundred different ethnic groups. Second, Russia's middle class is small, very diverse and are not wholly confined to Russia One. Finally, the dispersion of the population matters. Out of 147 million people, around 110 million are in European Russia, and the urban population 2010-2017 was 109 million (74% of the total population).¹⁸⁶ The first two groups are much larger, more diverse, and mostly West of the Ural Mountains. This model is useful in the sense that it views 'Russia' not as a single entity. Differences in salary, employment, standard of living and access to resources show what people are likely to value, and by extension, how the past can be utilised nationwide.

When *istoricheskaya politika* is utilised it means different things to each group due to their personal experiences and circumstances. Though the past is not a major preoccupation of the majority, if the past is not plausible, the population may not legitimise the state or accept its explanations for contemporary ills. As politics is limited, public discussions of the past can mask the lack of actual policies that improve ordinary citizens' lives. Whilst the Russian state apparatus could initially rely on their own effectiveness, the situation post 2008 changed. As noted by Vasile Rotaru, the Medvedev interlude and Putin's third term saw the Russian state switch to a 'moral' position of justification as the economy worsened.¹⁸⁷ This largely impacted foreign policy, but certain domestic laws using historical justifications were also enacted.¹⁸⁸ Since education, the media and public celebrations cross the boundaries of state and society, it is unsurprising that some government officials might favour a single school textbook. If all citizens receive the same narrative, it can help to unify the population and establish responsible citizens through a shared history. As Russian society, the state leadership and the West are

¹⁸⁵ N. Zubarevich, 'Four Russias: rethinking the post-Soviet map', in *Regionalism(s): A Variety of Perspectives from Europe and the Americas*. Innsbruck : Institut für Föderalismus, 2014, p. 71-88

¹⁸⁶ Table 5.1 'Population', in *Russia in Figures 2017*, (Rosstat: Moscow, 2017), p.79

¹⁸⁷ Vasile Rotaru, 'Russia's Post-Crimea Legitimization Discourse and its Challenges for the EaP Countries'.

¹⁸⁸ One notable example comes from June 2016 when a lawmaker proposed matching up laws with Russia's historical and national values to prevent anything alien entering the country 'Senate Chair Wants Russian Laws to Match 'historical and national' values, RT, <<https://www.rt.com/politics/355679-top-senator-wants-russian-laws/>> accessed 26/08/2016.

continuously at loggerheads with each other, *istoricheskaya politika* needs to be immensely flexible as well as rigid to suit all parties.

Russia One has a higher economic status and consists primarily of those in the largest cities (*millioniki*¹⁸⁹) where wealth and access to the outside world is most prevalent. Around 30-40% of this group make up the established middle class. Russia Two are those in small cities and large towns. Economic success has varying degrees, but wages and living standards are generally lower. Russia's Three and Four are referred to as 'on the margins, but not marginal'. They are the rural heartland of small towns and villages totaling around one quarter of the population. Like Russia Two, they are experiencing 'depopulation' in search of greater stability. Russia's Two and Three are most likely to possess nostalgic sentiments for the USSR, since the union's shared economic system offered financial stability.¹⁹⁰ These towns and cities retained their industrial specialisations from the USSR and are often one company towns or have a large number of public sector workers. They value stability, employment and wages more than Russia One since their income is lower and livelihood dependent upon limited and specific actors. The government and KPRF are keen to exploit their discontent with inadequate modernisation, as both can rely on connections to the past for their own benefit, as the 'true bearer of people's values'. The KPRF can use the Soviet era support system as its ammunition whereas the ruling United Russia (UR) relies on the Putin narrative. Russia One is a mixed bag particularly the small middle class. During the 2000s, the share of public-sector employees grew rapidly. In their case, modernisation has been limited to higher consumption standards. Their values remain generally statist, illiberal and the demand for institutional modernisation is minimal.

The response of each group to the Crimean annexation was telling of *istoricheskaya politika*'s success, because the economic downturn resulting from sanctions was experienced differently. The economy contracted by 3.7% in 2015, and in January 2016, the ruble hit the ratio of 82 units per US dollar (compared to 35 in January 2014).¹⁹¹ The patriotic past was mostly aimed to win over Russia's Two, Three and Four, who are less educated than Russia One and more easily convinced by the rhetoric. These residents feel as though they are the 'providers' for Russia and

¹⁸⁹ *Millioniki* are Russian cities with populations exceeding one million. As of 2017, there were fifteen in total.

¹⁹⁰ Adam Taylor, 'Why do so many people miss the Soviet Union?' in *The Washington Post Online*, December 21st, www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/12/1/why-do-so-many-people-miss-the-soviet-union/?utm_term=.3a90 accessed 27/12/2016

¹⁹¹ Vasile Rotaru, 'Instrumentalizing the recent past? The 'New Cold War' narrative in Russian public space after 2014', *Post Soviet Affairs*, October 2018, p.9

are more likely to believe their hard work is being undermined by an external force.¹⁹² Diverting people's attention from economic woes to a glorious (stable) past benefitted the government in the short term. Putin's popularity remained high (figures in the next paragraph) and UR won handily in the 2016 Duma elections. Among Russia's Three and Four, the annexation enjoyed massive public support as it reaffirmed their traditionalist and often anti-Western sentiments. The state could also place the blame of current hardships on 'malicious foreign enemies'.¹⁹³ Both groups have a lack of experience with foreigners, lower education and less access to certain resources, thus, were also susceptible to the rhetoric. Russia One was the most affected; the worsening conditions of the labour market and frozen wages in the private sector negatively affected their personal wealth. Boasting the highest levels of education, income and consumption standards meant they had the most to lose.

No rhetoric or patriotic message works without the involvement of the population, meaning those beyond the *millioniki* are a key resource for state security and continuity. When relying on a patriotic past in Russia One, its very mixed ideological and demographic status is helpful in the sense that the more acute groups within it can be ignored. No popular uprising would work without the involvement of Russia Two, who remain behind Putin. Although Putin's popularity declined throughout 2018, his figures were still high (66% in December).¹⁹⁴ Any uprising looks unlikely due to the shared fear of chaos that this would bring.¹⁹⁵ As previously mentioned, the 1917 revolutions, Colour Revolutions and Maidan can all be utilised to exploit fears of instability. However, and as will be explored in Chapter Four, big cities are still top priority and receive the majority of state funds. That is why the interviews in this thesis were conducted in Russia's One and Two, in order to get a broader sense of history's development in education. Russia One's education experience will set the bar for the rest of the country's development. Zubarevich is correct that bigger cities and towns are more likely to oppose the government's direction, and therefore, its interpretation of the past. However, in the service to

¹⁹² Natalia Zubarevich, 'Four Russias: the new political reality'

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ 'Putin's Approval Rating', *Levada Tsentr*, available at <<https://www.levada.ru/en/ratings/>> accessed 27/12/2018.

¹⁹⁵ *Russia Behind the Headlines* interviewed citizens of St. Petersburg at the beginning of 2017 and asked whether they would take part in a revolution today. Most workers in the factory where it began professed no intention of protesting even against low salaries, because Russians equate the word 'revolution' with bloodshed. One worker at St. Isaacs Cathedral, Maria, said 'no idea is worth risking peace for, even the fragile peace we have today. www.rbth.com/longreads/why-no-revolution-russia/ accessed 20/02/2017

policy, history is always a readily available resource to win over key sections of society, most of whom reside outside of Russia One.

History and party politics

Political parties, both ‘opposition’ and those in Russia’s state legislature (‘systematic opposition’¹⁹⁶), often engage in *istoricheskaya politika* to set their agendas. With the KPRF, a large segment of the twentieth century has a direct impact on its credibility. Apart from the ruling UR, the KPRF remains the largest and most established political party. Its association with the Soviet political system makes it quickly goes on the defensive when the USSR is portrayed in a negative light. Invoking past figures and events that represent glorious achievements helps to keeps them relevant and in the public eye. History is a popular topic and although it has no real ideological challenges from the left, its electoral performance has suffered in the past two decades. The use of history is now a question of Russian democracy, meaning that the party who wins the most support can use the past to set the political tone. This combined with the KPRF’s inability to respond to social injustice has seen it lose credibility. For his part, Putin was successfully able to take the wind from its sails upon coming to power by reinstating old Soviet and imperial symbols to public life. The nostalgia surrounding these transformed into credit for Putin’s own initiative to bring sections of the population into public life. As such, the KPRF has been left stranded, clinging onto any leftover nostalgia.

The KPRF named 2016 ‘The Year of Stalin’, and decided to use his image in the 2016 Duma elections.¹⁹⁷ Though he was not a prominent campaign symbol, their electoral chances were looking bleak enough that some polls had them trailing the LDPR. The hope was that Stalin’s image would attract media attention and with it, non-traditional voters to the polls. In that same year, the Communist-led government of Novosibirsk paid for twenty-five billboards with Stalin’s portrait as part of the Victory Day celebrations.¹⁹⁸ By all accounts, this election tactic was a failure, yet it shows the party’s desires to protect Stalin’s reputation and reap the benefits

¹⁹⁶ This term describes parties who are ultimately loyal to the state. Although they compete in elections, they do not challenge the legitimacy of the ruling elites.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Communists to use Stalin image in upcoming parliamentary polls – report’, *RT*, available at <<https://www.rt.com/russia/343410-communists-to-use-stalin-image/>> accessed 09/12/2018.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Novosibirsk installs billboards with Stalin’s portrait across city in preparation for Victory Day’, *Meduza*, available at <<https://meduza.io/en/news/2016/05/04/novosibirsk-installs-billboards-with-stalin-s-portrait-across-city-in-preparation-for-victory-day>> accessed 09/12/2018.

of any nostalgia surrounding the achievements of his rule. Zyuganov has called for the re-Stalinisation of Russian society on the grounds of modernisation and revitalising the support system. This was not necessarily a out of place. As recently as 2017 public polling showed 46% of Russians had a favourable opinion of Stalin.¹⁹⁹ Although Putin and Medvedev have condemned totalitarianism and the terror, it is still the most poverty stricken in Russian society who admire Stalin.²⁰⁰ The reasons likely come down to the crumbling infrastructure after the USSR's collapse, most notably things such as healthcare and welfare (pensions in particular). The 2016 elections saw the KPRF champion these issues as well as education, which as will be discussed in Chapter Four, suffers from a lack of public funds and credibility in contrast with the Soviet model.

The KPRF moved very quickly a year out from the centenary of the October revolution in an effort to protect Lenin's legacy in modern Russia, as negative interpretations could have harmed their standing during a year of reflection on the KPRF's history. In late 2016, MPs were already calling for banknotes and coins with Lenin's portrait and Aurora as part of the celebration.²⁰¹ Likewise, an alternative communist Party (Communists of Russia) who broke off from the KPRF in 2012, also proposed fines of up to 5,000 rubles and obligatory community service for 'revolution deniers' (those who deny the achievements of the revolution). Its leader, Maksim Suraikin, stated in his letter to Duma house speaker that those making empty statements not only bring chaos and disorient the younger generations, but seek to disrupt stability of Russian society.²⁰² These requests all fell flat, however, as did the KPRF's book to mark the centenary, *Time For Selection, Time For Action!* While these arguments were taking place, in February 2017, Moscow and St. Petersburg still had winter and *maslenitsa*²⁰³ decorations out with no signs they were planning anything major to commemorate the February Revolution. A solemn business-like approach appeared to be the auspicious way to commemorate the revolution.

¹⁹⁹ Adam Taylor, 'Positive views of Stalin among Russians reach a 16 year high' *The Washington Post*, February 15th https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/02/15/positive-views-of-stalin-among-russians-reach-16-year-high-poll-shows/?utm_term=.bac66dd7bac4 accessed 06/03/2017

²⁰⁰ Andrew Osborn, 'Russia's President Medvedev Condemns Stalin', *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/6468199/Russias-President-Dmitry-Medvedev-condemns-Stalin.html> accessed 04/05/2016.

²⁰¹ 'Revolution Ruble: communists want Lenin on Russian money to celebrate October 1917 centenary', *RT*, <https://www.rt.com/politics/365097-communists-want-lenin-on-russian/> accessed 02/11/2016.

²⁰² 'Alternative Communist Party Proposes Punishment for Revolution Deniers', *RT*, www.rt.com/politics/374332-alternative-communist-party-proposes-to/ accessed 21/01/2017.

²⁰³ The Russian equivalent for Pancake Day.

By contrast, the ‘liberal’ parties of Yabloko and Party of People’s freedom (PARNAS) sought a denunciation of the October Revolution, demanding an international declaration be signed denouncing the totalitarian Communist regimes. Yabloko’s leader, Grigory Yavlinsky, was particularly vocal in this regard. Yavlinsky claimed that no legitimate government had existed in Russia since the provisional government and that the Romanovs’ murder should be recognised as an actual political crime.²⁰⁴ What Yavlinsky perhaps failed to realise was that two resolutions condemning communist regimes, from the COE and OSCE respectively, already exist.²⁰⁵ The KPRF has practically ignored both, and the Russian state also does not consider these legitimate. Zyuganov has referred to the USSR a counterweight to the imperialists and globalists and the country would never forget the treacherous behaviour of Mikhail Gorbachev. He also praised Stalin for recognising the need for an alternative world and listing off each achievement, starting with the Great Patriotic War.²⁰⁶ What Communists and liberal parties share is that these demands serve only to keep them relevant. To revisit Kathleen Smith’s argument, ‘democrats’ in Russia have an incapacity to create new symbols and convert past glories into symbolic capital. The original messages have to be subverted, and this would take a cosmic shift to benefit such parties.²⁰⁷ Unlike the countries of Central Eastern European countries, Russia had no unifying or viable pre-1917 legacy for ‘liberals’ to utilise. Despite the intention to pursue democracy, Yeltsin’s governments also did not rush to destroy Soviet monuments. After the 1993 elections, Yeltsin rehabilitated the memory of those executed by Lenin’s orders at Kronstadt, despite no positive historical continuity entailed.²⁰⁸ The narrative of the Civil War as a great tragedy has continued after the revolution’s centenary, which shows patriotism cannot grow out of negative sub plots. It is also another reason the government were very cautious in how they treated the legacy of 1917. The immediate outcome had nothing positive to champion patriotic fervour. For his part, Putin spoke cautiously surrounding the legacy of the revolution leading up to 2017, usually referring to loss:

²⁰⁴ See for instance Grigory Yavlinsky, ‘Bez sroka davnosti: rassmatel sem’i Romanovykh’, *Ekho Moskvy*, https://echo.msk.ru/blog/yavlinsky_g/2242048-echo/ accessed 17/07/2018.

²⁰⁵ See in particular Article 13 of Resolution 1481, January 25th 2006, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which states that the communist parties of all former Soviet Bloc states should reassess their history and seek to distance themselves from it.

²⁰⁶ The video was uploaded to *YouTube* by Ulaghchi. 2014. *20 years without the USSR*, available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=su-EDZLwftU>> accessed 17/08/2016.

²⁰⁷ Kathleen Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia: politics and memory during the Yeltsin Era*, (London: Cornell, 2002), p.160

²⁰⁸ Kathleen Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia*, p.127

This is a good moment for looking back on the causes and nature of these events in Russia. Not just historians and scholars should do this; Russian society in general needs an objective and deep-reaching analysis of these events. This is our common history and we need to treat it with respect.²⁰⁹

Although the memory is still sensitive, the anniversary year was when the Russian government had to have its say on the revolution. This will be explored more in Chapter Six, but it should be noted that Putin's response inevitably met backlash from every other political group. The KPRF accused the government of ignoring the revolution and its achievements, while liberals blasted the 'glossing over' and no condemnation of the revolution's darker sides. Whilst the Great Patriotic War can tell a tale of immense suffering, brutality and hardship overcome by tremendous sacrifice and bravery, the revolutions get contentious due to the aftermath; a minor party taking control, Civil War, the monarchy's execution and the Red Terror. In contemporary Russia, supporting Nicholas II is to denounce faith in the revolution and vice versa. Moreover, although the majority of Russians support Lenin's burial, to bury him would lower his status. Nicholas II and his family were buried canonised as saints in 2000 following their burial in 1996.

All parties use history to argue for different forms of statehood because it can be a powerful vehicle for doing so. The past frequently featured in the presidential debates of 2018, as well. Using history to play on people's nostalgia and deeply rooted sentiments occurs in all parties and at different times in post-Soviet Russia. For now, the ruling UR and Putin personally have become the carriers of Russian history.

The Use of History in Foreign Policy

²⁰⁹ Vladimir Putin Annual Address, December 2016.

The past and foreign policy are both a space for humans to make sense of the world, where its meanings and representations manifest. The use of history in Russian foreign policy has become an explicit and key component during Putin's rule.²¹⁰ In his first term, Russia and the West increasingly became two separate entities after the Iraq War, despite Putin's initial assertion that Russia is, historically, a great European power. At the same time, NATO expansion and the bombing of Kosovo made Russia determined not to allow the West remain as the 'norm maker'; differences over Iraq signaled a greater divide to come in how each would approach its foreign policy goals. References to the past have become the ultimate soft power generator and means to achieve foreign policy goals, particularly in the post-Soviet space after the Colour Revolutions.

According to Tsygankov and Tsygankov, Russian foreign policy is a reflection of its historic development and the needs of the state. Therefore, its foreign policy is a product of the 'Russian Idea' and traditionally assumes one of three variations; Westernism, Statism and Civilisationalism.²¹¹ Westernism sees that Russia's destiny and interests are, as the name suggests, 'in line with other 'Western' European nations. By contrast, Statism values the autocratic model of power but allows for relative accommodation with the West. Based on cultural opposition to the West, Civilisationalism focuses on what is principally different, unique or organic to Russia. As implied, this variation claims that Russia is a separate civilisation in its own right whose mission is to spread its values to the world. This ties in with the inconsistent concept of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World), which usually refers to the post-Soviet space. When Russia's Foreign Policy Concepts of 2008, 2013 and 2016 are analysed and compared to events on the global stage under Putin, Statism most resembles his foreign policy. However, an experimentation with Civilisationalism begun post-2008, with Medvedev declaring that Russia's foreign policy is 'civilisational' for the first time.²¹² The CIS countries are key to Russian national security and extremely important for continuity and stability. Statism is also the ideal channel to achieve the aims of the Putin Agenda, as the state can exert its power in a more 'natural' way. The 2016 concept continued to stress the state's priority of defending sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and consolidating Russia's position as a center

²¹⁰ James C. Pearce, 'History Matters: the use of Russia's official past and the shifts in its post-Soviet Foreign Policy', in Vasile Rotaru and Miruna Troncota (eds.), *Russia and the Former Soviet Space: instrumentalizing security, legitimizing intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), p.22

²¹¹ Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel Tsygankov, 'National Ideology and International Relations Theory: three incarnations of the "Russian Idea"', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 16, 4. 2010, p.669

²¹² Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2008, presented by Dmitry Medvedev.

of influence.²¹³ It too viewed liberal democracy as a weakness and a demoralising experience, as the West gave minimal assistance in supporting democratic institutions. The consequence of this and its own history is that Russia simply understands authoritarian states better.

Yeltsin initially used foreign policy to obtain a separate recognition in the West to the USSR. Russia's interests abroad had to be defended, however, and opting for closer Western ties meant relations with the 'near abroad' were downplayed and damaged. This was a small break with the past, and this move towards the West was a step to secure Russia's prosperity within a new global framework. Russia and the West would be allies during peacetime, but one important difference was for the new alliance to be based on shared democratic values.²¹⁴ Yeltsin's view that Russia had a natural affinity with the West was a betrayal in the eyes of pro-Soviet and nationalist groups because while this alignment with the West intended to secure Russia's position within Europe and serve as a solution to the mounting problems and identity crisis; it had the opposite effect. Yeltsin's justification for this was to negate the USSR's legacy and Soviet experience.²¹⁵ The Communist Party-led government held responsible for the ills of the modern day had operated as a statist entity. Yeltsin wanted to avoid a return to those ways at all costs, essentially rejecting Russian history. Westernism failed in the 1990s due to a conflict between the newly forming system and Russia's political culture. Politicians, who continued to occupy the Russian government after the Soviet collapse, were a part of the Soviet system with no democratic or Western experience. 'Liberals', undermined by nostalgia, still believe Russia should abandon the unrealistic hope of reinstating a lost past and maintaining a strong and continued influence in former Soviet republics.²¹⁶ Many groups among Russia's polarised population saw this as surrendering to Western domination, a flight from sovereignty and even civilisational weakness. The crumbling internal situation also affected Yeltsin's ability to project a great power image abroad. Although he tried to maintain Russia's prestige and great power status, the military campaign in Chechnya, failing economy and ongoing political strife at home badly damaged Russia's role in global affairs.²¹⁷ Furthermore, his inability to prevent NATO expansion created the impression that the former super power was now a downtrodden

²¹³ Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2016, presented by Vladimir Putin.

²¹⁴ *U.S.-Russia Summit*, U.S Department of State Dispatch, June 22nd 1992.

²¹⁵ Oleg Gorbachev, 'The Namedni Project and the evolution of nostalgia in Post-Soviet Russia', *Canadian-Slavonic Papers*, 57:3-4 2015.

²¹⁶ Valentina Feklyunina, 'The Battle for Perceptions: projecting Russia in the West', *Europe-Asia Studies* vol.60,4 June 2008, p.617

²¹⁷ A. Feklay, *Yeltsin's Russia and the West*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Felkay, 2002), p.170

second-rate one, due to embracing the West. *Derzhavnost'* and *gosudarstvennost'* traditionally focus on sovereign autonomy, and the global situation effectively made these redundant. In the face of history, Russia was now a state in retreat unable to project power abroad or control its territory.

The realisation that Russia needed a model better suited to its own political culture directly affected Putin's handling of foreign affairs. Putin secured legitimacy because of his own ability to control current affairs. This would later include control of the past domestically, as history could draw upon recent examples highlighting how openness to the West caused internal fragility. Russo-Western relations had to be mutually beneficial and 'catching up' needed to secure Russian interests, since this legitimised *samostoyatel'nost'*. The relationship was initially pragmatic on Putin's behalf, yet downplayed to show an ability to act independently. Moreover, as a re-evaluation the past occurred, both Putin and Medvedev could make use of references to it as a way to explain the current situation. Stalinism's isolationism, along with the victory in the Great Patriotic War, is the most popular and recent in Russian collective memory that points to how the country overcame the feeling of encirclement and foreign aggression are contributors to this mentality. In addition, the newly forming narrative surrounding the First World War is also usable. It preaches that Russia's imperial nature and status as protector of the Slavs meant that its position could have been compromised without acting. Equally, Russia's global standing today means it too should act or be compromised.

The Statist approach was a natural response to the circumstances facing Russia. The recentralisation of power consolidated order and stability and externally, it was used to achieve the same goals. However, the Colour Revolutions showed a sense of vulnerability, and Putin attributed the revolutions' causes to the structural weakness of those national governments and accumulating social and economic problems.²¹⁸ Strengthening the state to avoid this scenario was preferred, and in this case, the past became a response to Western soft power.²¹⁹ U.S support for the revolutions also heightened the state's sense of vulnerability. Ukraine and Georgia in particular sparked security concerns, as the events unfolding in these two countries had more potential to undermine Russia's internal situation and destabilise the region. In Putin's own

²¹⁸ Press conference on results of U.S.-Russian talks, March 25 2005, www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/22883 accessed 28/11/2016

²¹⁹ Vasile Rotaru, 'Forced Attraction?', *Problems of Post Communism*, DO 1, 2017, p.1

words, ‘the events went beyond current law and the constitution’.²²⁰ In essence, this grouped Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan into a family of nations with Russia based on their shared history. The sudden U.S. interest of establishing an airbase in Kyrgyzstan also contributed to the hysteria. The thought of NATO missiles and soldiers on Russia’s borders or in countries where its citizens lived, especially in Sevastopol, could halt the state’s ability to exert soft power. Moreover, the CIS countries helped aid Russia’s economic recovery and are vital to its security. Expansion of the EU also entailed an extension of its borders closer to Russia and led to the re-appearance of the ‘besieged fortress’ mentality and allowed the state to blame the revolutions on external actors.²²¹

There were early indications that Medvedev’s foreign policy may embrace Civilisationalism. His first trips abroad were to China and Kazakhstan. By 2008, Russia had restored credibility on the international stage and could now enjoy new relations with other nations. Strengthening economic and security ties with CIS and EEU (Eurasia Economic Union) countries is often complimented by emphasising a ‘shared history’. Russia can invoke a special relationship with all former Soviet countries, and in turn apply a restricted degree of sovereignty for these states to promote its own concepts. Along with a shared history, the entire former space shares particular cultural or business links with Russia. Belarus is viewed as part of the core of the Russian World along with Ukraine. Both Belarus and Moldova belong spiritually to the same Russian Orthodox Church and as the Russian Patriarch argues the heart of the Russian World is Russian Orthodox faith and that “spiritually we [Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova] remain one nation”, meaning Moldova is in the same category of ‘special’ status.²²² The three Caucasus and five Central Asian republics also belong to the community of countries who have special relations with Russia, sharing a long history of ‘brotherhood’ with Moscow, as all were a part of the Russian Empire and USSR. The EEU has seen Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan become members, with Tajikistan also seeking membership. As well as ties through the Orthodox Church, Russia guarantees Armenia’s security. Central Asian countries rely heavily on wages earned by migrant workers in Russia. Since economic ties remain robust and appear to be strengthening, it provides Russia the ideal tools to promote its own ideas and

²²⁰ Interview on *Radio Slovensko* and Slovakian television company *STV*, 22 February 2005, www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/22837 accessed 01/11/2016

²²¹ James Sherr, ‘How Russia’s Relationship with Europe has Evolved’, *BBC News online*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35154633>> accessed 08/03/2016.

²²² ‘Vystupleniye Svyateishego Patriarcha Kirilla na torzhestvennom otkrytii III Assamblei ‘Russkogo mira’ 3 November 2009, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/928446.html>, accessed 17/01/2017.

national interests with a great degree of flexibility. In so doing, it stands as a modern day example of their shared history, much of it based around economic ties and Russification. Eurasianism and Civilisationalism are of the same cloth and emphasise that Russia can only rely on the 'Russian world' or historic areas to fulfill its historic mission.

The promotion of a shared history is quite noticeable in Russia's media projects throughout the post-Soviet space. *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* and *Argumenty i Fakty* have special editions in CIS countries and Russian language TV channels, books and films are widely popular, as is history. The memory of the USSR is still quite vivid among the older generations who remain nostalgic for its glory. Film is particularly effective at evoking nostalgia because it only has to be attractive. Two examples would be *Panfilov's 28 Men* (2016) and *White Tiger* (2012). Watched together by Putin and Kazakh president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Panfilov's 28 Men* sparked controversy because the story is in fact a myth that was taught as historical fact in the USSR. Funded by 35,000 individual donations, *Panfilov's 28 Men*, is the story of twenty-eight soldiers in the Red Army's 316th Rifle Division killed in action on 16th November 1941 after destroying eighteen German tanks, many of them Central Asian. Its main purpose is to tell a story of heroism in the defense of Moscow during the Great Patriotic War, and the molding of fact and fiction means both films are a way of keeping the sacred myth of the Great Patriotic War alive, and with it, the historical bonds of the former USSR.

A shared history does not necessarily bring people together. The former Soviet republics can cast Russia in an unfavourable light, making it unable to generate auspicious results. Examples of this are Ukraine's ban on fourteen Russian journalists and TV channels claiming they do not respect equidistance and equilibrium.²²³ Kazakhstan is promoting English far more as a second language and has switched to the Latin alphabet whereas Belarus started paying more attention to the local language in schools after its role in the Minsk talks. Belarus' own history also allows it to dip its toes into Europe and flash its sovereignty. A final example directly linked to a past event comes from Moldova who in 2015 presented medals to its veterans without the hammer and sickle. This disrespected an agreement made at the CIS Summit 2013 where all member states agreed to give similar medals to veterans bearing Soviet symbols.²²⁴ Yet, in 2015, 53% of

²²³ Vasile Rotaru, 'Forced Attraction', p.5

²²⁴ Heads of State Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States 'Agreement on a single commemorative award established for the 70th anniversary of the victory of the soviet people in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-45', Minsk 25/10/2013 <http://www.cis.minsk.by/page.php?id=19171> accessed 06/03/2017

Moldovans claimed to trust Russian media who vigorously promoted the victorious pro-Russian Socialist candidate, Igor Dodon, in the 2016 presidential election.²²⁵ Although rejection is possible, Russia remains attractive in the former Soviet republics and the shared past is essential to this.

Russia's relationship with the West post 2012 saw a profound refusal to not listen to the other's arguments or even admit these can exist.²²⁶ In Russia, anything perceived as slightly 'anti-Russian' is labelled as 'Russophobia'. The Ministry of Culture even set up a commission to counter Russophobic media campaigns. That means anything contradicting moral norms or targeting Russia's history or traditions is to be treated as a threat to national security.²²⁷ The cost funded by the government was around \$30,000 and shows this was perceived as a serious threat to internal stability. History was used as a strong justification after the Crimean annexation and involvement in Syria. After Crimea, the state applied references to the Great Patriotic War as a defence mechanism as its legacy was fought over on the international scene. Putin and many Russians were enraged when he did not receive an invitation to the Auschwitz liberation memorial. This was due to mistrust over the events of the Ukrainian Crisis and wariness of the domestic political implications it might have in Poland.²²⁸ It was particularly insulting because Soviet troops liberated the camp. At the memorial, Poland's leader claimed that a 'Ukrainian effort' helped liberate the camp; a comment Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov called 'sacrilegious'.²²⁹ Later in the year of the seventieth anniversary of the end of the war, a majority of invited world leaders rejected Putin's invitation to attend Moscow's military parade. Russian public opinion followed the line that the West was trying to deny Russia of its victory. Signs of this would be regular wearing of the orange and black ribbons usually worn on Victory Day celebrations. The worsening of Russo-Western relations post-Crimea saw many members of the public start wearing this as a symbol of their patriotism, whilst vulgar memes (Appendix B) with references to the Great Patriotic War also began appearing on social media. Obscenity

²²⁵ IPP, 2015

²²⁶ Mark Galeotti, 'By matching Moscow's paranoia, the west plays into Putin's hands', *The Guardian online*, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/14/russia-paranoia-west-putin-mark-galeotti>> accessed 14/03 2016.

²²⁷ 'Culture Ministry orders major study into Russophobia & means to counter it', *RT*

<<https://www.rt.com/politics/349126-culture-ministry-orders-major-report/>> accessed 01/07/2016

²²⁸ Christian Lowe, 'Putin will not attend Auschwitz Memorial Ceremony due to Tensions in Ukraine', *Haaretz*, <<http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/1.636801>> accessed 15/02/2015

²²⁹ Nina Tumarkin, 'History Matters: the politics of the past in Putin's Russia', *MPBN morning edition*, podcast <<http://news.net/post/history-matters-politics-past-putins-russia-#stream/0>> accessed 09/06/2016.

aside, the connotation is that Russia (led by the state) will once again overcome foreign aggression.

The Western sanctions and Russia's strong sense of military patriotism, which Putin personally appears to possess, triggered an increase in Russia's military budget to \$81 billion in 2015, with some of the new technology displayed at the seventieth anniversary Victory Day parade in Moscow.²³⁰ The message behind this was to show Russia had no intention of backing down from its interests and would defend them if necessary.

Although the ruble plummeted and GDP contracted in 2015, most of the population appeared publically un-phased as patriotic feelings increased. Even in 2018, two-thirds felt 'no impact' of Western sanctions.²³¹ Crimea's annexation shows this as it was presented as a gift from the government. Historic nostalgia surrounding Crimea is rife, particularly as a symbol of military glory; it was no surprise to see national pride drastically increase after the annexation of Crimea. One poll showed that 80% of Russians felt proud to live in Russia.²³² Most of this pride was centered on Russian history (46%) which suggests the government can rely on historical patriotism as a legitimisation tool for its actions abroad. It can also be assumed that the sanctions were largely viewed as a small price to pay. *Rossiia 1* produced the documentary *Krym, put' na rodinu* (Crimea, the way home) which is the ultimate portrayal of the government's view. The premise was that Putin revealed Russia's willingness to defend the peninsula from a military attack.²³³ The title further confirms the nature of Crimea being a gift from Putin who during the film spoke of how he assumed personal charge of the issue. Only three million watched it, however. Following Maidan and the Crimean Annexation, Russian media began to depict Ukraine and the post-Maidan government as 'fascist thugs'. This was an attempt to appeal to nostalgia from the Great Patriotic War against the idea of Ukraine moving closer to the EU and NATO, who 'orchestrated' the events. It is also fair to claim that many Russians feel Ukraine was 'lost' after the Soviet collapse. This is a further reflection of a Russia's concern over

²³⁰ *The Moscow Times*, 2014. Russian Defence Spending to Hit Record \$81 Billion in 2015, <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/russian-defense-budget-to-hit-record-81-billion-in-2015-40468> accessed 17/07/2017. However, figures released by the Treasury suggest the budget was cut by 25% in 2017, the lowest level since the early 1990s.

²³¹ 'Two Thirds of Russians feel 'no impact' of Western sanctions-poll', TASS, <http://tass.com/society/1010277> accessed 21/06/2018.

²³² Nadia Shevchenko, 'Survey: Russians are simultaneously proud of 2 Russias, *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, <http://rbth.com/politics_and_society/2016/07/18/survey-russians-are-simultaneously-proud-of-2-russias_612759> accessed 30/08/2016. This number in 2017 had decreased to 75%, which is still high.

²³³ Sergei Kraus (Dir.), *Krym, put' na rodinu*, Documentary (Russia: VGTRK, 2014).

‘traditional’ and civilisational territory. As previously outlined, Russia has no non imperialist history and sees Ukraine and its affairs within its historical and emotional right to intervene in; the civilisational tone of *Krym put’ na rodinu* is hardly surprising.

Measuring the success of a patriotic past, a profound shift in public opinion occurred, at least in the short term. A *Levada* poll focusing on Russia’s ‘friends and enemies’ listed Russia’s enemies as follows: Ukraine was second highest (58%), then Turkey (29%) after a Russian plane was shot down after briefly entering Turkish airspace, Poland (24%) Latvia and Lithuania (23% respectively) and Germany (19%) also scored highly. This revealed a huge distaste for EU sanctions. Relations with the U.S stood at new lows, with 59% of Russians describing it as ‘hostile’.²³⁴ The figures aid the Civilisationalist stance, showing that Russia’s historical destiny does not allow it to travel a similar path to its European neighbours. This was mirrored in whom Russia considered ‘friends’. The top five countries on this list were Belarus (50%), Kazakhstan (39%), China (34%), India (18%) and Armenia (13%).²³⁵ In the summer 2016, more than two thirds of another *Levada* poll said they were ‘not concerned’ about further isolation from the West.²³⁶ By 2018, the number of Russians who viewed Ukraine as an ‘enemy’ had decreased to 29%. By contrast, 68% now saw the U.S. as an enemy, whereas only 6% said the same of Germany.²³⁷ The surprise election of Donald Trump appears not to have improved U.S.-Russo relations. Furthermore, the Polish government also approved a law calling for the dismantling of Soviet memorials in Poland.

Conclusion

The start of this chapter included a discussion about the legacy of 1917. The fact that no official consensus has formed at a state level shows that *istoricheskaya politika* is an incomplete process, much like state formation. That is why the past is a necessary component of the Putin Agenda.

²³⁴Press release 1770, ‘Russia and USA: past, present and... tomorrow?’, *VTSiOM*, 31/08/2015 <http://www.wcium.com/index.php?id=61&uid=1169> accessed 14/04/2016.

²³⁵ ‘Russia’s Friends and Enemies’, *Levada Centre*, 10/06/2016, , <<http://www.levada.ru/en/2016/06/10/russia-s-friends-and-enemies-2/>> accessed 11/08/2016.

²³⁶ The poll was reported in ‘Less than two thirds of Russians concerned about isolation from the West’, poll shows, *RT*, <<https://www.rt.com/politics/360139-less-than-third-of-russians/>> accessed 26/09/2016.

²³⁷ ‘Vragi Rossii’, *Levada Tsent*, 10/01/2018,

Although Russia has many examples of a usable past, it is with the unusable one the state apparatus struggles to reconcile. The past shows why Russian politics is chaotic and political parties rarely come to an easy agreement on anything. Moreover, stressing a patriotic history masks areas not dealt with, such as welfare, and represents a soft re-politicisation of history to justify the modern situation.

Although history is both a state former and consolidator, and the Putin Agenda has a clear-cut image of what this past is, the 'sales process' is littered with political obstacles. The forming state uses history as a channel for its own message and goals. *Istoricheskaya politika* works because the Russian population can rally around a shared experience and relate to one another via a complex medium. Access to resources poses as a problem and solution for stressing this patriotic past and the state continues to exercise its muscles in this sphere. In one sense, using a single narrative and school textbook means each section of society has access to the same information, as is the case with state run media. On the other hand, while it reaches more of society as a whole it has the potential to alienate the most active parts who could turn against the government (Russia's One and Two). Therefore, its success has so far been modest. By 2017, the patriotic fervour surrounding Crimea was burning out, meaning the government will likely need something new.

Russia uses history to reassess its place in the world and chart an auspicious foreign policy direction. It is better placed to understand authoritarian regimes due to its own past. From a state level, the relationship is more logical and these countries will always be vital to Russia's national interests and security. As witnessed in some former republics, notably Ukraine and the Baltics, a shared history can be rejected, which adds to the vulnerability complex of the state. Yet, what a shared history does highlight is that the situations each former republic faces today means they cannot simply walk away from Russia (and vice versa). The former parts of the Russian Empire and USSR will continue to play a role in shaping Russia's future because of the past created by the Russian State.

Overall, history represents the Russian state's current stage of development as it tries to secure itself. Without a clear cut past, the future is a blip on the map ahead in all spheres of life and government affairs. *Istoricheskaya politika* can be a reliable legitimisation force because it is malleable to suit the state's interests and play on the emotions of the population. Both

complement each other and are an inevitable part of modern Russian political debates. This debate, as will now be examined, is explicit in the education system.

Chapter Four

Russian Education Policy: modified patriotism to a continued system

Since the USSR's collapse, history in schools has led the way in showing the need for reform in the education system, and highlighted how the absence of ideology has been problematic. Despite history being at the forefront of educational reform, it remains only one subject in a long list of priorities for the modernisation process, which the Russian government has to tackle. Moreover, the changes to education are often coupled with general transformations in Russian society and culture since 1991.²³⁸ The rehabilitation of a patriotic education goes hand in hand with post-Soviet events in Russia as a natural response. Like in Soviet times, it also began during a time of crisis.²³⁹ A key part of the Putin narrative is an attempt to reawaken a social memory of a glorious and usable past is the result of an identity crisis and lack of stability stemmed in the 1990s. Education is one practice where the priority of stability, love for one's homeland and superiority of the state can be instilled.²⁴⁰

History is an ideal subject for the message to come through, as readers of the textbooks are addressed as members of a nation.²⁴¹ In general, school is the most important way of any state to interfere in children's individual lives and is precisely why emphasising a useful, positive history of Russia is used as a political tool.²⁴² The past is used worldwide as a unifying force that can help shape identities and foster coalitions among the native population, and Russia is no exception.²⁴³ As in Soviet times, schools play an active role in creating a new identity and there exists, among the Russian population, a great desire to know where the country is heading. It has also become a part of 'upbringing' (*vospitanie*) in contemporary Russia. By rebranding a

²³⁸ Isaac D. Froumin, *Democratising Russian Schools*, in Ben Elkof, Larry E. Holmes and Vera Kaplan (eds.), *Educational reform in post Soviet Russia* (London: Frank Kass, 2005), p.149

²³⁹ Anna Sanina, *Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia: sociological studies in the making of the Post-Soviet citizen*, (Stuggart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2017), p.33

²⁴⁰ Stephen L. Webber, *School, Reform and Society in the New Russia* (London: MacMillan, 2000), p.28

²⁴¹ Eleftherios Klerides, p.42

²⁴² Stephen Ward and Christine Eden, *Key Issues in Education Policy* (London: Suge, 2010), p.1

²⁴³ Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), pp.64-65

system, which the majority of Russians believe had the highest standards in the world, it helps build on the notion that Russia has a bright future awaiting its citizens. While huge steps to improve and modernise the education have been made, their implementation has proved to be tremendously difficult and not entirely successful. Schools, teachers and local authorities alike have not taken warmly to Western reforms. As V.V. Mironov retorts, the reforms themselves are not properly thought out and are, therefore, doomed to backfire.²⁴⁴

While a key area for reform and tool in the modernisation process, education is affected by many external problems. Corruption and a lack of investment have always been a major issue facing the education system, particularly in the countryside, where not unlike the Brezhnev era, regional authorities receive unequal funds and support in comparison to big cities. To make matters more complex, the priorities pushed by both Yeltsin and Putin require much greater funds. The economy and society of today (as opposed to, say, the 1980s), has a different set of needs because it functions differently. The needs of society have changed and so the education system has been rebranded in order to satisfy this. The timing of the Patriotic Programmes is important (oil and gas revenues) as they crystalised Putin's policy of a national revival. The key word, however, is rebranded; the education system itself, its standards and goals of the Patriotic Programmes are not too dissimilar to the 1980s. As previously mentioned, there is little creativity or new innovations surrounding education policies.²⁴⁵ What has changed, particularly with history, is the number of textbooks, their content (and therefore the curricula and examinations) and emphasis on what a patriotic Russian citizen is. This is why having a patriotic focus on history is central to upbringing in Russia today. Gaining a thorough understanding of one's own past and place in the world is central to the Putin Agenda and is used to extract love for the motherland. Putin, like his predecessors, recognises the power of history and has used it to accomplish his and the state's goals, thereby adding to his own legitimacy.²⁴⁶ The bills concerning patriotic upbringing and patriotic education are, as Anna Sanina writes, hollow documents.²⁴⁷ While well intended, with the aim of creating ideal Russian citizens there are no performance indicators, or ways of measuring success. There are also attempts to extend patriotic upbringing outside of schools. Many youth movements now exist, some state funded,

²⁴⁴ V.V Mironov, On the Reform of Russian Education, *Russian education and Society*, vol. 55 no.12, December 2013 p.4

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: operative in the Kremlin*, p.64

²⁴⁷ Anna Sanina, *Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia*, p.42

the most recent of which is the ‘Russia School Children’s Movement’, whose purpose is to socialise children and promote positive values, morals and create good citizens in the new Russia, and bears some resemblance to the Soviet pioneers.²⁴⁸ Another indicator of the lack of creativity and value placed on Soviet institutions. Finally, the new textbooks must also be considered to see the complexities of establishing a single account of the past.

The structure, aims and problems of the current system

The Ministry of Education and Science claims that the state policy in regard to education is based upon, first and foremost, the priority of human values; life and health; the fostering of civic duties; and a sense of responsibility to society.²⁴⁹ In addition, it stresses the unity of the nation’s cultural and educational dimensions, of both national and regional cultures in the Russian Federation as a multi-national State.²⁵⁰ A usable past is therefore essential, as a part of this Agenda, as education at its most basic form, ‘is to prepare students to live and work under the current state, and to be socialised into its national culture’.²⁵¹

The Russian state guarantees all Russian citizens a “free, basic secondary general education”.²⁵² History is what Margarita Pavlova calls a ‘profile subject’; one that shapes the profile of a student and that is elective after the age of sixteen. Students must therefore make a choice about their future direction, and since most do not take the history Unified State Exam (*YeGE*) at eighteen, it is essential to shape such a citizen early on, so that he or she is prepared for the new Russian world. At least, they are expected to be familiar with the social norms and how to uphold them. In this sense, history is more linked to citizenship education, and the Patriotic Programmes were designed to strengthen those ties.

²⁴⁸ ‘Russia reviving pioneer and komsomol movements?’, *The Moscow Times*, http://www.pravdareport.com/russia/kremlin/29-10-2015/132454-pioneer_komsomol-0/ 04/01/2016

²⁴⁹ *State Policy in Regard to Education*, Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation <http://en.russia.edu.ru/edu/description/sysobr/903/> 04/11/2015

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Margarita Pavlova, ‘The Modernisation of Education in Russia: culture and markets’, in David Johnson (ed.), *Politics, Modernisation and Educational Reform in Russia from past to present* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2010), p.65

²⁵² *State Policy in Regard to Education*, <http://en.russia.edu.ru/edu/description/sysobr/903>

Schools use the same class structure and grading system as in the Soviet model. Children begin primary school at the age of six and spend the first four years of their education with the same teacher and classmates. At eleven, they attend secondary school until age sixteen for a basic (secondary) education. Afterwards, they enter the last two years of secondary school for what is known as a general education. Here, students select either a vocational or an academic education. In 2015, there were 13.4 million children attending 53,500 secondary schools across the Russian Federation.²⁵³ The dropout rate in Russia is one of the lowest worldwide, meaning few miss a full education. The last two years of (general) education are very similar to a U.S high school in format and purpose. In an academic education, some subjects like Russian language and Mathematics, are compulsory. Students must have five subjects in total, and at the end of these two years will sit *YeGE*. Getting a place at university is the main goal and universities have had to respond to the changes, as well. Previously, every university would set its own entrance exams and the potential student would have to attend in person to sit them. *YeGE* was designed to be fairer, less corrupt, enhance efficiencies of the university system and, arguably most importantly, to enhance school leaver's mobility.²⁵⁴ *YeGE* has created a new sense of competitiveness, whereby universities can simply select the best students by looking at their test scores opposed to the potential student's profile. This exam adheres to the unified European standards. On completion of the exam, students receive a grade one-five (lowest to highest). Part of the history exam is conducted orally with a teacher and external examiner. While its 'success' will be assessed in more detail later, it is worth noting at this point that *YeGE*'s biggest problem is cheating. Part C, the oral part, allows the student to cram in information to memorise hours before the exam begins, and the multiple choice section answers have been published on the Russian social networking site, *Vkontakte*, in the past. Corruption also remains a problem, as parents are known to bribe or pay extra fees if their children fail to obtain the necessary grades.²⁵⁵ Without reliable data on bribery in education however, it is hard to speculate the scale of this problem.

²⁵³ Leonid Kalachev, *Education System in Today's Russia: a view on the rule of education in contemporary society*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeA7AUNacOU 28/08/2015

²⁵⁴ Elena Minina, 'Unified national test for student admission to higher education in Russia: a pillar of modernization?', In David Johnson (ed.), *Politics, Modernisation and Educational Reform in Russia from past to present*, pp.121-122

²⁵⁵ Conversation with Ministry of Education and Science worker.

There are three types of secondary school in Russia, which can affect the learning styles and outcomes of a student's education. Besides regular state schools, there are Gymnasium and Lyceum schools. Gymnasiums often receive a lot of external funding, but are designed to study subjects in more depth. They may have a particular subject focus (one school that was visited for this study specialised in history) or their funding source may influence the tilt of the curriculum. For instance, St. Basil's Gymnasium emphasises Christianity and Russian patriotism, and is strongly connected to the Orthodox Church. The students do a lot of scripture reading, have Tsarist like balls and even have prayer and bell ringing sessions.²⁵⁶ The purpose of such activities ties in well with Putin's socialisation and patriotic upbringing since Orthodox Russians may be viewed as more suitable to take care of Russia in the future as 'natural patriots'. Lyceums on the other hand are connected to a particular university and prepare students to enter the institute. Both may prepare students for the skills they need in the wider world, but given their affiliations, do so in very specific ways. Then again, these options may be beyond a student's availability; students may only attend a school in their registered area, meaning there could be only one or two schools. Parents often bribe Gymnasium schools to admit their children, as a way around this.²⁵⁷ Around 1% of Russian children attend private schools, mostly in bigger European Russian cities, or abroad. They have become more popular among wealthier members of the population partly due to the belief in the value of education, but also because of defects in the state school system. Private schools often use experimental teaching methods and go beyond the capabilities of regular state schools. The average price of a private school is 17,000 RUR (approximately £180) per month; while this may seem inexpensive, the average salary in 2017, according to state statistics, was 30,738 RUR (approximately £362) per person.²⁵⁸ Added to this, household income expenditure was 51,227 RUR (£603).²⁵⁹ For most people, private education is too expensive.

While much attention has gone to human development since 1991, the education system itself has had to integrate with the production and economic processes, which graduates will encounter in adult life.²⁶⁰ Modernising the system as a whole means school leavers must possess

²⁵⁶ 'Elite Russian Private School Emphasises Christianity and Patriotism', *Russia Insider*, Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lwj8gxs-QkE> 30/08/2015

²⁵⁷ Conversation with Ministry of Education and Science worker.

²⁵⁸ Federal State Statistic Service, *Russia in figures 2017*, (Moscow: Rosstat, 2017), p.32

²⁵⁹ 'Indicators of Standard of Living of the Population', in *Russia in Figures 2017*, p.117

²⁶⁰ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), *Russia: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO FOR THE Library of Congress, 1996 <http://countrystudies.us/russia/52.htm> 04/11/2015

the knowledge and skills required to meet the needs of the labour market. Skills are an aspect that 70% of employers felt graduates lacked in 2003.²⁶¹ Around 50% in 2006 believed that education levels are not up to standard.²⁶² The situation has changed little. While 55% of Russians currently hold higher education degrees and rank fourth in the world in terms of educational attainment, Russia comes forty-second in terms of applied skills.²⁶³ On top of this, the defects and legacy of the Soviet education system, particularly from the 1980s, crept into the new era and remain to this day. This is one factor arguably not just holding the education system back, but the country itself. The generational issue affects all walks of Russian life as different people were socialised in different regimes. Adults, depending on when they were born, hold different beliefs considered inadequate to the current system, and it is they who make up a large portion of the teaching force. With forcing through a new agenda, comes the big question of whether the population has the ability to re-learn?²⁶⁴ Richard Sakwa writes that such leaps into modernity delay achievements for Russia; there are many historical examples of this, but education is a living case study of this.²⁶⁵ In the 1980s, school facilities were generally inadequate (basic at best), overcrowding was common and schools generally lacked equipment and materials due to short supplies.²⁶⁶ Although Gorbachev's reforms acknowledged this and recognised the need to create a 'new school' that could cope with the global technological advancements, this idea has stayed in development stage since *perestroika*. Moreover, the new openness about history at the end of the USSR contributed to its collapse and the almost total dysfunctioning of the education system. This demonstrates the size of the problem that Yeltsin's government faced in the early 1990s. The task of creating a new system that improved the lives of ordinary Russians was a monumental one that despite huge changes, many of the population believe is now slowly changing. As previously mentioned, a continuation of Russianness is evident, and a fair comparison of the Putin Agenda can be made with Decembrist, P. Petsel, who argued autocratic modernism was more urgent for Russia than democracy or human rights.²⁶⁷ The intention, therefore, is to move forward regardless of any potential drawbacks;

²⁶¹ *All Russia monitoring of the social-and-labour sphere*, Analytical Records based on 2003 results, (Moscow: Sotsionomia), p.152

²⁶² *The Millenium Development Goals and Russia's National Projects: strategic choices*, (Moscow: Institute for Complex Strategic Studies, 2006), p.16

²⁶³ 'Meet the Ministry of Enlightenment', *The Economist*, May 26th, 2018, p.37

²⁶⁴ Richard Rose, Mishler and Neil Munro, *Russia Transformed: developing popular support for a new regime* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.118

²⁶⁵ Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th edn. (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 445-446

²⁶⁶ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), *Russia: A Country Study*, <http://countrystudies.us/russia/52.htm> accessed 4/11/2015

²⁶⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, p.445

education is no exception. Yet as Mira Bergleson argues, it is a cultural trait of Russians to be more focused on the result as opposed to the process.²⁶⁸ The population as a whole is quite suspicious of democratic processes, which can explain why many reforms are often forced through despite the risks. It can also explain why many education reforms simply fail or have no impact. The new Russian system is about irreversibility, and creating change quickly reduces the chances of any opposition forming who could undo the progress. Overall, though, reforms have been slow and few.

In the first years of the Russian Federation, schools had to cope with huge numbers of enrolment on top of needing to repair or restructure the schools. In recent years, demographic trends have seen a decline in the population and school entrants. In 2011, secondary schools had 43% fewer children of school age attending schools than 1996-97.²⁶⁹ This trend of decline is expected to continue until 2025 with no reason to expect immigration or migration to impact this in any significant way. Russia has also seen a huge decline in the number of teachers in the twenty first century.²⁷⁰ Fewer young people are viewing teaching as a credible profession, partly due to the low salaries, standards of training and state support. In 2017, the average salary of education workers was 28,094 RUR.²⁷¹ Although, as will be discussed in the next chapter, many teachers often earn considerably less particularly outside of Moscow. It therefore remains an unprestigious profession with a low social status.²⁷² On top of this, Putin announced plans in 2010 to cut the number of teachers given Russia's demographic crisis, which also means certain schools are facing closure; 30% were shut 2000-2011 and class sizes continue to decrease as some regions experience depopulation.²⁷³

The largest and most immediate problem facing schools, however, is finance and funding. Article 40 of the Law on Education stated that 10% of the country's GDP is to be spent on

²⁶⁸ Mira Bergleson, *Understanding Russia: Contexts of Intercultural Communication*, 6, Coursera.

²⁶⁹ 'Demographics Challenges and the Education System', Chapter 8 in *Russia Facing Demographic Challenges*, p.152

²⁷⁰ Denis Nikolaev and Dmitry Chugunov, *The Education system in the Russian Federation: Education brief* (Washington D.C: The World Bank Publications, 2012), p.22 figure 3.6

²⁷¹ 'Accured Average Monthly Nominal Wages of Employees of Organizations by Sector', in *Russia in Figures 2017, 2017*, p.127 gave this figure. In 2015, government members discussed teacher salaries of around 15,000 RUR, or £160; see 'Teleconference on how well prepared the education system is for 2012-2013 school year', available at <<http://archive.government.ru/steus/20447/>> accessed 5/11/2015

²⁷² 'Euronews: Spotlight on Russia', *Euronews, YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4xrww1CaMY 28/08/2015

²⁷³ Alena Lobzina, 'Russia aims to improve educational standards', *The Daily Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/rbth/society/10340851/russia-education-new-curriculum.html> 28/10/2015

Education, although this was abolished in 2005.²⁷⁴ In 2018, the figure was 3.6% of GDP and 10.9% of total public expenditure for all levels of education combined.²⁷⁵ In 2012-2013, the federal budget contributed 574 million rubles to education with a further 111 million from the regional budget.²⁷⁶ Estimates of education spending in the USSR are hard to verify, though most estimates are approximately 7%.²⁷⁷ While the current figures are almost double what the UK (5.3%) and US (5.5%) spend, the initial target was unsurprisingly never achieved. In addition, the actual money that is spent on education is usually ‘left over money’ (*ostatochniy printsip*) that is often delayed. The economic situation of the 1990s, recession post 2014 and level of corruption makes this hardly surprising. Although state funding has gone up, financial shortages in other sectors face similar and more pressing problems, namely healthcare. Education has often been the last financial priority of any post-Soviet government, which is contradictory given the symbolic importance it is in creating a new Russian identity. Despite the lack of funding, the state has nevertheless been able to meet the needs of schools, though it is becoming much tougher and the rural regions suffer most. This could be another factor in making patriotism the antidote to Russia’s internal problems. The Republic of Dagestan for instance has reported many unsafe buildings and 61.5% of schools across Russia needed new furniture 2012-2013.²⁷⁸ The neglect of some schools and regions is an important factor in understanding why the Soviet pedagogical practices and model is still in place throughout much of Russia. While schools are highly centralised to support the state’s objectives most of the focus appears to lie with European Russia, where around 75% of the population lives. Therefore, schools must make use of what resources they can gather and fallback on methods they believe to have been successful in the past. School autonomy is also a good example of this. In fact, teachers have more freedom than the school as a whole. Around 84% of schools in Novgorod boast full autonomy and responsibility, whereas the figure in Krasnoyarsk, though unknown, is undoubtedly far less. The more financially dependent, the less independent a school is. This extends to universities, as well. Moscow State University (MGU) and St. Petersburg University (SPGU) get larger chunks of state funding due to their international standing and competency

²⁷⁴ Article 40 Law on Education of the Russian Federation, abolished as of January 1st 2005, <http://en.russia.edu.ru/information/npb/fzakon/law/3266-1/index,5/05/01/2015>

²⁷⁵ OECD Education at a glance 2014, country note, Russian Federation, www.oecd.org/eag.htm. 08/10/2015

²⁷⁶ Teleconference on how well prepared the education system is for 2012-2013 school year <http://archive.government.ru/steus/20447/5/11/2015>

²⁷⁷ Stephen L. Webber, *School, Reform and Society in the New Russia*, p. 68

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

in certain areas. This creates another funding issue and one where history (and the humanities) falls victim to sciences in subject priority; education has to meet the shared ‘needs’ of society and the economy or else the state will not survive.²⁷⁹ The reality is that students are more likely to have to pay for a degree in the liberal arts and humanities, which has contributed to the decline in popularity for subjects like history. Teachers and schools still have the right to choose textbooks and the curriculum. In practice, they may be quite restricted due to finances, bureaucratic pressures and even location. In any given Moscow bookshop, it is possible to find around twenty school history textbooks, whereas in provincial towns in Western Siberia, like Nizhniy Tagil, the number is more like two or three. This can benefit the state’s initiative to create ‘unified’ textbook published by its own publishing house, *Prosveshchenie*. Although as the next chapter will show, textbooks are far from guaranteed to work.

New Education Policies and Their ‘Success’

Many of the policies are aimed at strengthening citizenship through modernisation, and history has its own special place in this regard. While Yeltsin attempted to do the same, he did so with limited success as the population had little or no faith in the country. Russia and its population felt bruised and battered by the system change, which meant attempts by the state to generate patriotic feeling were futile. The traditionalist and liberal split is also evident in education, as the former see education as upbringing (*vospitanie*) and the later focus on the teaching process (*obuchenie*). It is a battle that traditionalists are winning. Contemporary patriotic education is influenced by USSR citizen education. Patriotic education was first written about in 1925 by the People’s Commissar, Anatoly Lunarchosky in *Moral’ s Marksistskoi tochki zveniya* (Morality From a Marxist Perspective), which was consequently adopted into the Soviet constitution.²⁸⁰ Here, Lunarchosky encouraged revolutionary patriotism and pride in the fatherland, to help create loyal Soviet citizens in the new regime. Under Stalin, ‘Soviet patriotism’ was necessary to protect socialism. While this stayed important following his death, the meaning varied over time and changed with the different leadership.

²⁷⁹ Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, p.59

²⁸⁰ A. Lunarchosky, *Moral’ s Marksistskoi Tochki Zveniya*, (Sevastopol: Proletarii, 1925).

Schools are now expected to take the lead in promoting good morals to go hand in hand with patriotism and love for the motherland. Of course, this involves some disassociation of native peoples from their lands in Siberia, the Far North and Far East, which can have consequences. The *State Programme for Patriotic Upbringing of the Citizens of the Russian Federation* is the ultimate reflection of promoting the right morals and the Putin Agenda. According to Laruelle, this is one of three elements in Putin's patriotic agenda, the other two being the Orthodox Church and symbols.²⁸¹ Proposed by the Ministry of Defence, this programme reflects the reconciliation between youth and the army and a continuation from the Soviet era. This policy consists of four stages taking place over a period of twenty-one years; 2001-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015 and 2016-2022. Although each has unique goals, the overarching aim of these programmes is to encourage the younger generation to foster greater love for their country and a readiness to fulfill civic (military) and occupational duties.²⁸² In order to achieve this goal, a series of measures have to be implemented under different departmental and regional programmes involved and based on the state programme. In essence, it is an attempt to redefine citizenship and its relationship to nationality, the latter has become much stronger since the breakup of the USSR, and the former lags behind somewhat. It ensures a type of political socialisation which introduces the abstract notion of citizenship. It further shows how institutionalised post-Soviet Russia is, since the state still seeks to embed a wider message within the framework of everyday life. It also aims to counter youthful indifference, cynicism and egoism.²⁸³ As far as each school subject is concerned, patriotic education mostly surrounds history in order to educate children of their native land. Although, each subject now relates something to Russian history. Religious education has already received mention, but another recent example would be in a Novosibirsk fourth class Mathematics contest. Although Mathematics questions often have a militaristic slant to show Russian superiority, one particular question was a clear reaction to Western

²⁸¹ Marlene Laruelle, *Negotiating History: memory wars in the near abroad and pro-kremlin youth movements*, Demokratizatsiya 19.3, Summer 2011, available at <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1551181262?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=8318> accessed 21/09/2015

²⁸² "The following issues are scheduled for the discussion at the Government Presidium Meeting on September 30, 2012" (press release) <http://archive.government.ru/eng/docs/12349/> accessed 14/01/2016

²⁸³ Sergei Golunov, *Patriotic Upbringing in Russia: can it produce good citizens?*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no. 161 September 2011, p.1

sanctions: "A dollar is worth twice as much as a ruble, and a euro is worth three times as much as a dollar. What is better, 17 rubles or 3 euros?"²⁸⁴

The first patriotic programme was hurried, poorly funded (\$6.2 million) and as a result poor in quality. It focused on the military component and used words and phrases such as duty and military patriotic work. However, there were no performance indicators to match the goals, meaning its success is hard to measure at all. There is also little evidence at this point to suggest it has reduced the rise of radical nationalism, which rejects tolerance as harmful. The second did have performance indicators, but the result's definition was so broad and ambiguous that it is practically impossible to measure. Based on civil education, this programme was to ensure the continuation of a free and democratic state, the formation of a high patriotic consciousness and loyalty to the fatherland.²⁸⁵ Its performance indicators included moral and spiritual, increased tolerance, reducing ideological confrontation, unity, friendship among nations, reducing social tensions and development of the economy. As Sanina writes, it was very ill-conceived and unsystematic.²⁸⁶ Sergei Golunov agrees, writing that the aims of such programmes are both ambitious and difficult to measure.²⁸⁷ Something certain, however, is the 'Colour Revolutions' 2003-2005 impacted the course of the second programme, and in response to these, a pro government youth movement, *Nashi* (ours), was created in 2005. *Nashi* is both privileged (well-funded and organised) and loyal to the president and prime minister. Their manifesto celebrates Russia as the 'geopolitical centre of the world economic system encircled by external enemies'.²⁸⁸ This is somewhat Stalinist in rhetoric, although was of course not the intention. It possesses a sacred character of both the Patriotic War 1812 and Great Patriotic War 1941-45, with no other interpretation of either allowed. The third programme was approved by decree, was hereditary in nature and more specific yet more simplified. The fourth barely changed, yet reflected the new threats facing Russia (geographic situation, high security and economic conditions).²⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly the only concrete task was 'military patriotic education' opposed

²⁸⁴ Anna Shamanska, 'Safety in Numbers: Patriotism Trumps Science in Math Contest', *RFERL*, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-math-competition-patriotism/28048232.html> accessed 01/02/2018

²⁸⁵ *O Gosudarstvennoi programme 'Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan RF na 2006-2010 gody Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva RF ot 07/11/2006, no. 422'*, <http://base.garant.ru/188373> accessed 10/10/2015.

²⁸⁶ Anna Sanina, *Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia*, p.43

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p.2

²⁸⁸ 'Nashi Organisation's Manifesto with Commentaries', *La Russophobe*, <http://lrtranslations.blogspot.ru/2007/02/nashi-manifesto-revealed.html> 18/01/2015

²⁸⁹ See the laws on the third and fourth patriotic programmes, *O Gosudarstvennoi programme 'Patrioticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan RF na 2011-2015 gody, Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva RF ot 10/05/2010, no. 79'*,

to civics, which is also not free of an Orthodox influence. One example of how this ties in with history in the curriculum is that schools are now duty bound to have one history lesson concerning the Great Patriotic War dedicated to local history. One school in Novgorod for example takes its ninth class students on digs to nearby forests to find remains and items of soldiers from the Second World War.²⁹⁰ Another in Vladimirskaya Oblast attended by the author invited a local Orthodox priest to speak at the beginning of the school year for the ‘Day of Knowledge’, as well as a local government representative.

Patriotic upbringing reflects the divide between conservatives and liberals as it tries to come between both, promoting anti-Westernism with multiculturalism and sovereign democracy with conservatism.²⁹¹ The contradiction is evident, because promoting tolerance should, in theory, reduce feelings of hatred to other nationalities, yet many other patriotic movements are incredibly hostile towards ethnic minorities. One example of this is ‘St Spyridon the Triumphant Orthodox’ club in St. Petersburg aiming to bring children to the church through sport and military.²⁹² It prepares children as young as five for a career in the army taking them camping and taking part in military exercises. There are also some clubs who offer training in *ratoborchestvo*, an old Slavic fighting tradition, where blind folded participants learn to dodge knives and bullets. These clubs were followed by the U.S State Department issuing travel warnings on its website for certain regions like Rostov Oblast, Krasnodar Krai and Voronezh as large of pro-Russian groups were heading towards the Ukrainian border as well as highlighting which foreigners are most likely to be targeted for attacks.²⁹³ In recent years, it is these regions which have seen some of the biggest surges in nationalistic groups, so again, this comes as no immediate shock. It would seem the policies are somewhat undermined by recent events as the rhetoric gets blown out of proportion to the point where these groups promote and practise dangerous forms of nationalism opposed to modest pride in one’s ancestry and optimism for the future.

<http://base.garant.ru/199483> accessed 10/10/2015; *O Gosudarstvennoi programme ‘Patriotiticheskoe vospitanie grazhdan RF na 2016-2020 gody, Postanovlenie Pravitel’sstva RF ot 10/05/2015, bo.1493’*, <http://base.garant.ru/products/ipo/prim/doc/7196398> accessed 10/10/2015.

²⁹⁰ ‘World War Two: How is it taught in Russia? Grades 6-12’, *The Teaching Channel*, www.teachingchannel.org/videos/teaching-world-war-ii 17/09/2015

²⁹¹ Sergei Golunov, *Patriotic Upbringing in Russia: can it produce good citizens?*, p.3

²⁹² Ilya Rozhdesvensky, ‘Russia’s Littlest Soldiers: how the government teaches kids to love the motherland and fight for it’, *Meduza*, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/07/16/russia-s-littlest-soldiers> accessed 14/01/2015

²⁹³ ‘Russia 2015 Crime and Safety Report’, U.S Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=17069> accessed 31/10/2015

Regarding *YeGE*, the success needs further investigation and the exam itself more time to mature. Thus far, one major criticism is that it tests only a passive knowledge of the chosen subject. Schools, although free to choose their textbooks and curricula, still have to adjust it to the exam papers, making education a challenge to pass an exam. This undermines the need for knowledgeable citizens who gain a greater attachment to their motherland if in practice the exam is a simple stepping-stone to university. Elena Minina also tells of one student who on the multiple choice section simply ticked answers in a zigzag pattern and obtained a '4'.²⁹⁴ Regarding preparation, *YeGE* self-study books for history contain page upon page of information on all periods of Russian history (Appendix C). One for instance, in the section on foreign and domestic politics of the Soviet government, 1917-18, contains a table, which takes up the entire page and has two columns of the 'main direction' (usually a few words) and key events listed.²⁹⁵ Almost every page looks the same and there is rather a lot to absorb. That said, a quick glance through on the morning of the exam allows the student to memorise chunks of information without needing any context or substance to support it, which these books do not provide. This has some reminiscence of communist style education here. Debates were non-existent and less connections made on certain topics, and studying usually meant memorising a lot of information. This has not gone unnoticed by political figures. The LDPR drafted a bill in January 2016 to scrap *YeGE* and re-introduce the old entry exams of universities and institutes. The bill claimed that *YeGE* 'brought no results manifested in quality of graduate's knowledge', reflect the student's knowledge and in actual fact wastes millions of dollars in state funds²⁹⁶. In more brutal fashion, Gennady Zyuganov claimed 'it [*YeGE*] prepares mediocre gray personalities with fragmented thinking, incapable to grasp global problems and form minds capable of answering the challenges of the modern era'.²⁹⁷ This bill never passed, and Putin is supporter of *YeGE*. Another issue is whether *YeGE* clashes with Russian pedagogical traditions. It is not an uncommon view that people were better educated in the past because tests were viewed to be more indicative of a person's actual knowledge. With history in the USSR, this was quite a grey area as will be explored below, but there is never the less a certain disregard

²⁹⁴ Elena Minina, 'Unified national test for student admission to higher education in Russia: a pillar of modernization?', In David Johnson (ed.), *Politics, Modernisation and Educational Reform in Russia from past to present*, p.128

²⁹⁵ P.A. Baranov, S.V. Shevchenko, *Istoriya: noviy polniy spravochnik dlya podgotovki k YeGE*, (Moskva: Astrel, 2015), pp.247-248

²⁹⁶ 'Nationalists blast education reform as failure, urge scrapping of unified state exam in Russia Today', *RT*, <https://www.rt.com/politics/330161-nationalists-blast-education-reform-as/> 27/01/2016

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

for western education policies brought to Russia via the Council of Europe or other organisations. In 1857, Ushinsky claimed that any training or teaching cannot be imitated in Russia because the national character is different.²⁹⁸ There is much to be said for Ushinsky's views as every historic tradition has a rational approach behind every system, and in Russia, it has always been about cultural socialisation. This explains why reintroducing Tsarist and Soviet pedagogy methods and patriotic programmes is desirable to some, including the current minister for education, Olga Vasileva (who is a historian herself). In the West, there is a strong link between school and the market, which Russia has been forced to participate in since 1991. Since history does not provide any great profits for the market, it instead allows Russia to re-engage with itself culturally, sparking the new obsession with history.

An Old School With A New History

Like many humanities subjects, history needed special care when reforming after the Soviet collapse. The previously approved Stalinist textbook (*History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*) was considered outdated and a new history started shaping before the post-Soviet system. A glaringly obvious problem facing the new system, was what history could be used for this new country? Moreover, how can one teach a history that does not exist and has not been written? Law had similar problems, because how could any student study laws that had not yet been created or established? This added to the shock therapy that Russia went through in the 1990s as the country was starting from scratch. Not only the material, but also the teaching of history as a whole became an object of reform. It remains so due to the largely unsuccessful implementation of teaching reforms and new priorities of the Putin governments'.²⁹⁹

Before a new history could be written, the past had to first be liberated from the Soviet ideology. The standard school textbook, which the Soviet government presented as 'entirely correct', ignored events, policies and people that did not fit the ideology. This one textbook used by fifty million children ignored the decline of production and the famine, enthused kulak elimination, but most controversially, mentions Stalin's name only once. After Stalin's death, all of his

²⁹⁸ David Johnson, *Educational Reform in Russia: culture, context and world view*, p.10

²⁹⁹ Vera Kaplan, 'History Teaching in Post Soviet Russia', in Ben Elkof, Larry E. Holmes and Vera Kaplan (eds.), *Educational Reform in Post Soviet Russia*, p.247

successors agreed that he was too sensitive a topic and could divide the party. As a compromise, nothing was to be said about Stalin.³⁰⁰ The only problem with this, as Davies rightly highlights, is that Stalin had such a hold on the people even as his personality cult faded.³⁰¹ In the new Russia, and has been discussed throughout, Stalin is still an issue which pits Russians against one another, and Putin's partial rehabilitation of his image has crept into the general history education. Stalin, however, was not the sole cause of initial reforms to history; it was Gorbachev's reforms. History became more objective due to relaxations on censorship, which in turn increased people's interest for history. Historians began to praise pre-revolutionary aspects of Russian life particularly the peasantry. The Orthodox Church's historical role was reconciled with and made a symbolic return to Russian life. The newfound interest in history meant pupils would turn up to class with additional knowledge not in the standard syllabus and often beyond the teachers own knowledge, which caused a lot of friction. Opinions began to differ between teachers and pupils so much, that in May 1988, the State Commission of Education cancelled final leaving exams for history of the Soviet period, replacing it with an ungraded interview of free conversation.³⁰² Though unintended, freeing up history played on the notion that it creates a free human being and promotes good morals.

Putin's governments have tried to combine the freedom of expression allowed under *glasnost* and the importance placed on fundamental knowledge in the Soviet education system. Moreover, like the Soviet system, it attempts to reinforce a single valid worldview about what it means to be Russian in Russia, although this is still rather fragmented.³⁰³ This can also explain the rehabilitation of Tsarist (and Soviet) teaching practices. The rejection or ignoring of Western educational reforms previously mentioned, reflects the wish of Putin's government to keep all aspects of life nationally orientated in order to achieve national unity. This further shows what the political function of history is, because to legitimise the state, it must also legitimise the national character. As such, the 'return to Europe' as mentioned by Klerides was not abandoned, but matched Putin's pragmatic relationship with the West. Any return to Europe had to benefit Russia as a whole, and no one party could not define the terms. If one analyses a standard history textbook, something rather absent is the role of other republics and nationalities. As Nelli

³⁰⁰ R.W Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, (London: MacMillan, 1989), p.2

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid. p.183

³⁰³ Vera Kaplan, 'History Teaching in Post Soviet Russia', chapter 10 in Ben Elkof, Larry E. Holmes and Vera Kaplan (eds.), *Educational Reform in Post Soviet Russia*, p.256

Piattovea writes, Russia has a longstanding tradition of separating the nation from the state, so by mixing patriotism with human values as the substitute for an ideology not only satisfies the security threat of national disintegration, but also by stressing loyalty and cohesion in a child's upbringing enables the concept of Russia and Russianness to flourish.³⁰⁴ In short, it creates the image of a wider homeland to be more inclusive. This is also, why the textbooks have the lyrics of the national anthem, and the flag is located at the centre of any school environment to help strengthen the link between state and citizen.

Shortly after Putin told a conference of history teachers in 2007 that history contained problematic pages and that “[we] cannot let anyone impose guilt on us” the Kremlin backed a new twentieth century (1945-2006) history handbook for teachers written by Aleksandr Filippov.³⁰⁵ While schools and teachers are free to choose their own materials, textbooks and curricula, the intention behind Filippov was to become the de facto ‘standard’ twentieth century history. It directly affirms the state’s stress of patriotism and its new or updated perspective. The facts, quite naturally, have not changed and certainly, Filippov’s teacher’s handbook is not lacking in information. While the textbook sheds light on Russia’s past and future perception, it does so with a slight reappraisal of Stalin, or as David Wedgewood Benn described it ‘glosses over his record’, and furthermore justifies Putin’s governing style.³⁰⁶ Benn further argues that its central purpose is to explain the collapse of the USSR from neither a Soviet nor western stance. Many textbooks published in the 1990s had conflicting narratives of this event. In addition, Filippov’s handbook puts post-Soviet Russia’s position into a global context in order to explain the current position of the country, thereby adding credibility to the Putin Agenda. Though he is cautious about the role of one man possessing too much power, the handbook was cleverly designed to be a product of its time and to link nicely with the laws on Patriotic Upbringing. It does promote a deep sense of understanding ones country, although is designed to be the ‘authoritative’ narrative on Russia after the Great Patriotic War. While within Russian society (and education), history is becoming somewhat mythicised, perspectives that do not fit the official line are increasingly attacked as ‘falsified’ and ‘distorted’ accounts of the past. As a

³⁰⁴ Nelli Piattoeva, ‘Citizenship and nationality in changing Europe: a comparative study of the aims of citizenship education in Russian and Finnish national education policy texts’, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41:6, 2009, pp. 736-737

³⁰⁵ ‘Russia’s Past: the rewriting of history’, *The Economist* www.theeconomist.com/10102921 accessed 17/09/2015

³⁰⁶ David Wedgewood Benn, ‘The teaching of history in Putin’s Russia, review article’, *International Affairs* vol.84, no.2 March 2008, p.365

result, it is an indirect push for teachers to select different aspects, which are more ‘suitable’ for the majority and teach history the ‘correct’ way.

This is particularly true of the period under focus. The role of the Orthodox Church has already been mentioned, but much romanticism has begun to surround Tsar Aleksandr III. Although he is outside of the period for Filippov’s book, the revival of history has been favourable to him, with documentaries such as *Romanov* (a popular resource for history teachers) depicting him as a rough and tumble family man with simple tastes, yet a Tsar who controlled his country with true principles (autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality) and had the physical strength to match. His reign was also shown to be an economic success, with the ruble becoming a stable currency, technologically advancing and militarily competent.³⁰⁷ This resembles some aspirations of the Putin government, in the eventual hope of a democratic Russia emerging with responsible citizens. Finally, such narratives are not just pushing the view that the Russian Federation is the successor state to either the USSR or Russian Empire, but the history is more directly aimed to justify the path Russia is on. This is why history has become so important in the curriculum, however, the textbook debate and patriotic programme, which use history as a channel to promote loyalty to the state, are in many regards a mask for the lack of changes in education.

The 2015 textbook series, analysed in the following chapter, attracted a great deal of attention, too. Firstly, their creation immediately suggests that Filippov’s textbook failed to emerge as the standard narrative for all schools. The nationalist and anti-Western rhetoric attracted great criticism in the wider public domain, and as explicitly highlighted in the next chapter, never caught on.³⁰⁸ Secondly, they are a product of the ‘Filippov backlash’, which was followed by a state sponsored movement to reassess the Soviet past. Putin’s call for a ‘unified textbook’ was coupled with the ‘historical cultural standard’ for writing history textbooks. This ‘unified’ version for teaching history, in Putin’s own words, for “our people feel they are citizens of a single country regardless of their ethnicity and religious beliefs”.³⁰⁹ This speech was delivered in the backdrop of the 2011-12 protests and concerns at local and state level of interethnic

³⁰⁷ Maksim Bespalyi (Dir.), *The Romanovs: the history of the Russian dynasty* - Episode 8. Documentary Film Babich-Design, release date 31/12/2012.

³⁰⁸ Thomas Sherlock, ‘Russian Politics and the Soviet Past: Reassessing Stalin and Stalinism under Vladimir Putin’, *Communist and Post Communist Studies*, 2016, p.49

³⁰⁹ Meeting of the Council for Interethnic Relations, February 19 2013, available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17536> accessed 12/04/2018.

discords and expressions of xenophobia. It was also symbolic, as it was delivered in the newly opened Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre, Moscow, at the Council for Interethnic Relations. These new textbooks have little in common with Filippov. There is no anti-western language (as such), xenophobia or chauvinism. As Sherlock writes, positive treatment of Stalin is infrequent and subdued.³¹⁰ They do fail to provide a moral judgment of the Soviet era, the specifics of which are analysed in the next chapter. This is particularly significant because it suggests that a condemnation of the Soviet era would not just be unpopular, but is still impossible altogether. It could be self-defeating, harm its legitimacy (particularly as the Soviet state's legal successor) and alienate more conservative groups.

Conclusion

History has been an especially complex aspect of the post-Soviet era. The education system is the ultimate reflection of the process of reconciliation and complexities of this process. The narrative of Putin's Russia remains that the country is in transition from a period of weakness, poverty, corruption and crime to a brighter future. One *Levada* poll in 1996 revealed that pride in their country was at an all-time low, 36%. In December 2015, it hovered around 82%.³¹¹ While keeping the humanistic and moral emphasis of history like Yeltsin and Gorbachev, Putin's government also uses it to justify Russia's current position and global status to help create loyal citizens. History's purpose is to provide answers and promote the 'correct' ideals for the Russian people. Whereas in Soviet Times, ideals were focused around the party and class struggle, stressing unity around a patriotic past and connecting it to a child's upbringing makes continuity appear visible at the early stages.

The patriotic programmes have a special status because they are symbolic. In this regard, the poor funding and implementation is irrelevant to the state and teaching force. The money for patriotic projects often gets spent elsewhere, schools falsify reports and the guidelines provided from local authorities are often obsolete and not read by the teachers who in turn are expected

³¹⁰ Thomas Sherlock, *Russian Politics and the Soviet Past*, p.52

³¹¹ 'Russians No Longer Ashamed of Country-poll', *The Moscow Times*

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russians-no-longer-ashamed-of-country--poll/552068.html>
07/12/2015

to 'vote properly'.³¹² The state can claim to be proactive and schools passively participate. The programmes, however, do reflect the growing impact of the government on society and the nature of history in Russia today. Much of the narrative is repeated and repackaged for the same purpose, and done so by the initiative and direction of the state; centralisation is far from dead.

Education shows that the political structure and state institutions are still developing and to a certain extent, remain largely unformed. Putin, as well as trying to correct the damage of the 1990s, is trying to form a strong state and with it a belief in statehood so that Russia can move forward on its own path, liberated not burdened by its past. This is why many education reforms have combined history and patriotism. The task is a mixture of bold, unrealistic, optimistic and complex. The education model currently championed has a different angle to that of Yeltsin, yet still has to function within the political system he created and reforms initiated by Gorbachev. Putin's reforms are limited in what they can achieve and it is far too early to assess their current impact. The patriotic education reforms, thus far, have been widely supported by the Russian public, although the Unified State Exam to a much lesser extent. Consensus favours a move towards a more 'Russian' approach, and history fits in with this nicely, since the country can now tell its own story in a more inclusive way. The new history in schools, however, does contain many paradoxes, which will be assessed in the next chapter. In this regard, it is no wonder why teachers encounter problems on a regular basis. Individual schools implement the reforms differently, and some with much greater state and financial support; others fall victim to demographic trends. Although many problems will not be solved immediately (or maybe at all), establishing the foundations is the most important thing at this stage. A country cannot exist without citizens. Getting schools and the past sorted out while the president is still hugely popular is essential and urgent.

³¹² Anna Sanina, *Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia*, p.88

Chapter Five

Teaching History and Patriotism in Putin's Russia

Q: Do you agree that there should be a single narrative or one single textbook?

*Zhanna: That is a question about democracy in Russia...*³¹³

Governments do not interfere with what is taught in history classrooms unless there is a perceived reason to do so.³¹⁴ Since the mid-2000s, the Russian government's use of history as a consensus builder has seen a more active involvement in the classroom. The main goal is to create a single unifying narrative of history, ideally through one textbook, which promotes patriotism and citizenship. Shaping a person's civic and patriotic consciousness requires education and upbringing as a channel to bring Russian society together and strengthen the unity and friendship of peoples in the federative state.³¹⁵ The aim of developing and consolidating a stable society also requires the maintenance of civic and economic stability. As stated in the previous chapter, education has to meet the needs of a country's economy, yet economic stability alone cannot consolidate a society. This chapter will argue that the principal reason for teaching patriotism through history is that a patriotic citizen is a responsible one. Stressing traditional Russian values encompassed in a glorious past, patriotism is an easier way to establish a civil society and secure state legitimacy in the long term. Patriotism through the lens of history helps to close the gap between the generations inhabiting the Russian Federation, and emphasise historical continuity, as promoted in the Putin Agenda. This is why teachers have become key in establishing a civic identity, as citizens will receive their patriotic duties throughout schooling and upbringing. Teachers are an important contact point in a person's life and help to shape the individual. This is why the focus on upbringing has become closely tied to issues of history as well as power.

³¹³ Interview with Zhanna, school history teacher, Volokolamsk, 14/03/2017.

³¹⁴ Robert Phillips 'Government policies, the state and the teaching of history' in James Arthur and Robert Phillips (eds.), *Issues in History Teaching*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.12

³¹⁵ G.V Zdereva, 'Training Future School teachers to Teach Patriotism to Students', *Russian Education and Society*, vol. 47, November 2005, p.47

This chapter draws upon interviews conducted in the Russian Federation October 2016- April 2017 with secondary school history teachers and trainee teachers. The latter group are the future and a product of the Putin Agenda. Having grown up under Putin, they will have a different and unique perspective, thus offering genuine insight into the effectiveness of patriotic education. These qualitative in-depth interviews were aimed to get a sense of how (and what of) the ‘preferred’ narrative is transferred to students in the classroom on the period under focus. These interviews were also designed to help analyse the extent of the state’s version of history and education reforms, their effect on the teaching force, and therefore the youth, with the aim of demonstrating how far the state can influence the population. The participants were encouraged to express their opinions and perceptions on the state of history in Russia today, particularly in the education system and the period under focus. The qualified teachers were based in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Volokolamsk whereas the trainees were fifth year students from Vladimir. School textbooks, curriculums, reading lists, assignments and *YeGE* materials are also analysed to obtain a clearer picture of history in Russian schools.

While fostering a national spirit has long been a priority for the Russian education system, recent reappraisals of ‘traditional’ pedagogy reflect the concept of an ‘ideal’ teacher and need to create responsible citizens.³¹⁶ Due to recent trends, V.L Matrosov suggests that patriotism is a substitute for real history; the present day strategy of training teachers must include an updated ‘moral, ethical and spiritual’ component outlined in Russia’s ‘Professional Code of the Schoolteacher’.³¹⁷ Furthermore, the emphasis on a ‘positive’ historical experience to combat any falsification serves to heighten a student’s sense of pride in the Motherland in the early stages; arguably with the intention of creating citizens to defend Russia, the Russian state and preserve national unity. While the state has taken clear steps in this direction, (such as introducing lessons on Crimean reunification; Appendix D) the interviews’ findings indicated

³¹⁶ N.A Shaidenko discusses how the traditions of patriotic upbringing date back several centuries and the pedagogical culture which has sprung up around it; Shaidenko further contends how this is also based on historical chronicles, homilies and the lives of saints to promote everything good that brings benefit to one’s native land and enables it to prosper and flourish in ‘The Ideas of Patriotism in the History of Russian Pedagogy’, *Russian Education and Society*, vol.55 no.3, March 2013, p.69

³¹⁷ V.L Matrosov, *The New Schoolteacher for the New Russian School*, *Russian Education and Society*, vol. 53, no.11, November 2011, p.74; *Obraz ...*

that patriotism should not be considered a substitute for history.³¹⁸ Rather, it should stand alongside it where appropriate and be free of any political ideology. The lessons on Crimea and military history meanwhile are not, and instead are a pure reflection of the state's narrative.

What Teaching History Does

The use of history as a vehicle for promoting good citizenship is not specific to Russia or Russian pedagogy. As Andrew Peterson writes, selecting historical material for schools comes down to what values a government wants shared and promoted. History can act as the enforcer of the correct manners and procedures of society, its ethical beliefs, democracy and so on.³¹⁹ The chosen material and selected topics for the classroom must therefore reflect and promote these moral values, and in Russia's case, uphold the myth of the state. While the UK attempted something similar post 2010, in Russia it is much more centralised and openly promoted and supported. The 'battle' against 'falsifications' in Russian history and focus on upbringing and socialising the youth into the national culture demonstrate this. Chris Husbands supports this, writing that history is taught based upon the assumptions of the society we live in, and that by obtaining any historical fact, the student gets the 'socially approved' answer.³²⁰ In the post-Soviet space, the 'new' histories created post-1991 had to be of self-identification, and were applied differently by each state. In Ukraine, history had to promote a national consciousness and loyalty to the Ukrainian state, which were both previously non-existent.³²¹ Kyrgyzstan, which also lacked a history of statehood, adopted the *Epic of Manas* as a means of explaining its heritage and asserting a national culture. After the Soviet collapse, Russia felt compelled to re-assert itself as a great power because of its 1,000-year long past with established traditions and state culture. Yet, this is precisely where the contradiction lies, because it is difficult for the teachers to adapt to new narratives, especially when they continuously change. Those born in

³¹⁸ Copies of the lesson plan and materials for Crimean reunification can be found here <http://mosmetod.ru/metodicheskoe-prostranstvo/klassnyj-chas/metodicheskie-rekomendatsii-po-provedeniyu-uroka-klassnogo-chasa-po-teme-my-vmeste.html> accessed 10/07/2017.

³¹⁹ Andrew Peterson 'Moral Learning in History', in Ian Davies (ed.), *Debates in History Teaching*, (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.165-166

³²⁰ Chris Husbands, *What is History Teaching? Language, ideas and meaning in learning about the past*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003), p.130

³²¹ Peter W. Rodgers, *Compliance or Contradiction? Teaching 'History' in the 'New' Ukraine. A view from Ukraine's Eastern borderlands*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.59, No.3, May 2007, p.505

the USSR who taught in Soviet schools were suddenly surrounded with new diverse textbooks and a new story to tell to students who were born in a different country yet were influenced by the memories of the prior generation. The narrative can be easily manipulated to suit the immediate needs of the state, which came through in the interviews. Under Putin and Medvedev, a more rigid narrative has taken shape, which while inconsistent, is a big change from the 1990s when narratives were either negative or absent.

As history is closely tied to issues of power and cultural transmission, this further demonstrates why the Russian government feels the need to hoist up teachers as role models, instead of transmitters of ideology or information like during the Soviet period. The future professionals require the means to achieve the educational goals of the state. In this respect, there is no difference to the Soviet era, but no official doctrine exists behind the desire to create one narrative. As such, the cherry picked episodes or ‘sub plots’ of the narrative depicting a success story are over relied upon. One major consequence of this is that other episodes are downplayed and do not receive the attention necessary. If a topic is uncomfortable or undermining of the message, the state cannot use it to achieve its goals or create consensus.

Historical Pedagogy

Before analysing the situation in Russia, it is worth looking at pedagogy in Western countries, which, as stated in the previous chapter, is starting to have more of an effect on Russian education system. Since 2000, historical pedagogy in the West has shifted its focus towards the students as recipients of the information, and how to work with the ideals and material put forward. This requires a certain skill set from the teachers including, but not limited to, the correct language to define the history, whether they are ideas, actions or events. Labelling this pedagogical focus can vary, although Christine Counsell suggests ‘active linking’ or ‘finding shapes’.³²² The purpose is to pass on skills to the students themselves, who in turn can try to understand the concept of the past and apply it to the wider framework, which in the case of Russia includes the modern day situation.

³²² Christine Counsell ‘Historical Knowledge and historical skills: a distracting dichotomy’, in James Arthur and Robert Phillips (eds.), *Issues in History Teaching*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.56

Teachers need to blend their pedagogic and content knowledge to successfully create a map of the past for students. Teachers must be intellectually capable and able to handle the history properly. The focus cannot solely be detail and the teacher is required to use analogies, illustrations and so on to engage and enthuse the students.³²³ If, as is often the case, the content is curriculum bound, the teacher may require additional knowledge on unfamiliar topics and with that, supplementary materials. However, the reverse is also true. Teachers can become very textbook bound and simply transmit or relay the information, which in practice means the minimum requirements for the exam or the institution's standards. This is not the ambition of the Russian government because if a student lacks a historical map, they may not feel any connection to the past or patriotic. This will undermine any stress on historical continuity in the present day and hinder a citizen's loyalty to the state. As Phillips states, the history chosen to teach and how it is taught, has a direct impact on how young people will view their own identity and, crucially, their country's identity.³²⁴

Historical pedagogy in Russia today is also student focused but tries to reinforce a more traditional 'Russian' emphasis. This is not unlike the cultural focus analysed in Chapter Two, where tradition is considered inherently better. Russia's history-teaching standard suggest that students should be taught in the spirit of patriotism, citizenship education and interethnic tolerance.³²⁵ Furthermore, it suggests that patriotism is the outcome of history classes, celebrating significant military victories and heroism of the masses. Pedagogical aims usually include knowledge, values and competences. Still instating a strong and 'correct' line of thinking (and preferred narrative), unlike the Soviet era, this is not about indoctrination along strict ideological lines.³²⁶ Unlike the West, skills and analysis appear to be of secondary importance to facts from a textbook or teacher and are more of an accidental by product. This became very clear during the lessons observed for this thesis. With one exception, no other teachers went far beyond the information in the textbook. The teacher in question, from a

³²³ Chris Husbands 'What do History Teachers (need to) know?' in Ian Davies (ed.), *Debates in History Teaching*, pp.85-88

³²⁴ Robert Phillips 'Government policies, the state and the teaching of history' in James Arthur and Robert Phillips (eds.), *Issues in History Teaching*, p.10

³²⁵ *Obrazovatel'nyy standart osnovnogo obshchestvo obrazovaniya istoriya*, p.1

³²⁶ Liudmila Aleksashkina and Joseph Zajda, 'National History Curriculum and Standards for Secondary Schools in the Russian Federation', in Joseph Zajda (ed.), *Nation Building and History Education in a Global Culture*, vol.13 (London: Springer, 2015), pp.175-176

gymnasium school in Southern Moscow, made use of films, PowerPoints and regularly interacted with the students encouraging discussion. Another in Volokolamsk had the class fill out a table on the different components of Soviet culture in the 1930s and set a brief test at the beginning on the prior week's topic. However, she did have the textbook on hand throughout the lesson. The other teachers observed generally lectured the students including the occasional personal story or references to the modern day to maintain interest. The differences in methodology and teaching standards between state, gymnasium and private schools seemed minimal, but this would require extensive research to ascertain. One certainty is that teachers receive a higher salary and this may affect classroom performance. The students did appear more attentive in the private school, however. It is worth stating that during the interviews, almost every teacher and trainee discussed what will be referred to as the 'time vs quantity' factor. That is to say, history's allocation within the curriculum (two forty five minute lessons per week) combined with substantial amounts to teach. This places restrictions on what is attainable in the lessons and anything extra would require extensive amounts of planning. As one teacher from a gymnasium in central Moscow remarked

We have to get all this information across to the kids and it takes a lot of effort. I have two lessons a week-it is not enough. The themes are difficult and get only one lesson each, some things like the Russo-Japanese war get barely fifteen minutes... History is now in an interesting phase and there are many experiments, but *I* have to keep up. The situation now is that we want everything at once. The kids have a lot to learn, which means they also need a lot [of resources]. Take *YeGE* for example. I cannot prepare them for every theme and the amount I can provide is limited.³²⁷

Taking into consideration the 'time vs quantity' factor, history's popularity, lack of economic wealth it generates and the 1990s, it is unsurprising that the Russian government has shifted its focus to patriotism. This is in line with the famous Russian polymath, M.V. Lomonosov who believed that education of the individual as a citizen and patriot should be the chief goal of the

³²⁷ Interview with Svetlana, school history teacher, Moscow, 15/03/2017.

pedagogical process.³²⁸ In other words, patriotism might be the best outcome the state can hope to achieve. If citizens develop additional skills and knowledge, this is merely an added benefit. Yet, the need for patriotism ties in with the official agenda, as it connects Russia to the romanticised nineteenth century and creates a feeling of continuity and uniqueness in education. This is also the case with the Soviet citizen education model as discussed in the previous chapter.

Unpacking the role of a patriotic education in Russia further, the concepts of this can be traced back as far as Peter I, who maintained that it should create the kind of patriot who would lay down his life for the Motherland.³²⁹ This was developed further in the nineteenth century by several figures. A.N. Radishchev contended ‘a true man and son of the fatherland are one and the same’.³³⁰ V.G. Belinskiy’s pedagogical work that stressed ideas of a profound sense of kinship, whereas the Slavophile thinker N.I. Karamzin believed patriotism later arises and develops the upbringing and education of the individual.³³¹ Not only are these prominent intellectual figures from the period under investigation, whose works are situated in the history section at any given book shop in Russia, but this is like tsarist times whereby good values were portrayed through notable individuals.³³² In any case, the longevity of patriotic education as a ‘tradition’ is enough justification for the state to use it; it adheres to continuity, tradition and appears as a cornerstone of Russia’s great power status. The argument would dictate that the population are patriotic because Russia is a great power, and Russia is only a great power because of its historic uniqueness and glories.

Concerning its place in modern day pedagogy, however, it is often associated with K.D. Ushinskiy, who developed the principle of national spirit in the mid-nineteenth century. Ushinskiy believed the components of the Russian national spirit were humanness, industriousness and responsibility, and that a moral category of education was intertwined with Russian culture.³³³ Awareness of national worth and pride in the nation’s heroic past constitute the basis of a patriotic spirit, which educators have to push today. Analysis of the late Soviet era

³²⁸ See M.V Lomonosov, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, translated by T.S Butyrin, (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1991).

³²⁹ G.V Zdereva, ‘Training Future School teachers to Teach Patriotism to Students’, p.70

³³⁰ A.N Radishchev, *Izbrannye pedagogicheskie sochineniya*, (Moscow: 1952), pp.205-206

³³¹ V.G Belinskiy, *Poln. Sobr. Soch. v. 13 t.* Vol.4, Moscow: AN SSSR, pp.488-89 and N.M Karamzin, *Soch. v 2 t.* Vol.2, (Leningrad: 1984), p. 219

³³² Vera Kaplan ‘History teaching in post-Soviet Russia’, p.257

³³³ N.A Shaidenko, ‘The Ideas of Patriotism in the History of Russian Pedagogy’, p.72

by Klass-Goran Karlsson produced the model below, which depicts four methods of Russian historical pedagogy:

1. Classical Method: Based on consensus and national and religious values.
2. Liberal Objectivism: Based on scientific criteria and free perspective. Emphasis on cultural history.
3. Radical/Critical Formalism: Urging students to work analytically.
4. Categorical: Values and analysis.³³⁴

In today's history lessons, method one seems to be the most auspicious, although the fourth is not completely out of place for a patriotic focused upbringing in Putin's Russia. Both make students the receivers of the desired message, which emphasises tradition and the national culture. Urging students to work analytically could have the opposite effect. None of the lessons observed for this thesis followed methods two or three, either. Considering the teacher demographics, this is likely a hangover from the Soviet era where critical thinking was not the desired outcome of history lessons. During the interviews, the trainee teachers indirectly supported those two methods, particularly when reflecting on their own education. Most spoke of schoolteachers who transmitted dense information without much objective assessment or analysis. In their own words, it made for 'boring' lessons. The contents of pedagogical training and patriotic programmes seemingly support this, as well. However, the 'analysis' in method four deserves some scrutiny. N.A. Shaidenko draws attention to the fact that a characteristic of civil society in Russia is patriotism, however this further shows that objectivity can be lost in trying to create patriotic citizens.³³⁵ Actual 'analyses' may be limited in reality. An uncritical analysis of the nation means the preferred patriotism surrounding a cherry picked reconstructed past can be channeled through textbooks. Alas, objectivity falls victim to subjective trends. Olga Vasileva is a supporter of methods one and four, even suggesting that parents should receive punishment for not instilling their children with the correct spiritual and cultural values. Although such a law would be impractical and unenforceable, the threat of punishment would likely have a knock on effect where objectivity and analysis are concerned. This model does

³³⁴ The model was retrieved from Vera Kaplan 'History teaching in post-Soviet Russia', p.248

³³⁵ N.A Shaidenko, 'The Ideas of Patriotism in the History of Russian Pedagogy', p.74

however allude to how history continues to be mythologised, in the sense that a patriotic focus cannot ignore things like folk tales, songs and poetry of the native language. These things can be used to shape a student's personality, train them as a member of the growing civil society, and a good citizen in a democracy (a loyal patriotic citizen).³³⁶ Using patriotism as the umbrella for moral values depicted through a glorious past is considered part of the good pedagogical practice and by definition, is already at loggerheads with methods two and three.

All of the participants were asked '*should history be patriotic*'? in order to ascertain their stance on patriotism and how this links the Putin Agenda with historical education. The answers saw an overall split and no general support for the government's stance on patriotism. Although the majority agreed that it should, they also believe, as four participants specifically remarked, that history also has to be tolerant, apolitical and inclusive of different opinions. Yet, most who said yes also believed that history is naturally patriotic. One teacher at a private school in Southwest Moscow said, "History cannot but be patriotic. Otherwise what is the point of even teaching it?"³³⁷ Of those who said no, their answers were equally explicit. One younger teacher in Volokolamsk said,

Ukraine tried to do this-it is not a good idea. Being patriotic does not mean re-writing history. History should be written in an honest way, not on falsifications or exaggerations. We all made mistakes and we were also aggressors. We should not make history better in our own eyes; we need to use the truth.³³⁸

Another in Moscow highlighted that patriotism is not a universally accepted term: 'Why should history be patriotic? Patriotism is not terms that suit only one point of view. Every country's history has many events and they should be taught properly'.³³⁹ Her colleague's response was more cynical: 'No. Why should it? And Maths?! Should Maths be patriotic as well? [Laughs]

³³⁶ Ibid. p.249

³³⁷ Interview with Igor, school history teacher, Moscow, 25/10/2016.

³³⁸ Interview with Rimma, school history teacher Volokolamsk, 14/03/2017.

³³⁹ Interview with Sabina, school history teacher, Moscow, 28/02/2017.

Our school's discipline is that we do not do this, because it is not right'.³⁴⁰

Most who believed history should be patriotic were Moscow based, whereas the three from St. Petersburg showed more diversity. One said history should only be objective, whereas the other two disclosed yes, but one said that history naturally promotes patriotism, whereas the other discussed the necessity of tolerance and neutrality. The youngest two teachers were against the idea of a patriotic history whereas the oldest two were strongly in favour of it. As stated above, this is likely due to the teaching experience and a patriotic education from the Soviet era, compared to a 'globalised new Russian' living in a Soviet shadow. Regardless, it was clear from the responses that in Russia, patriotism is a very personal thing, which shows one obstacle for the Russian government in establishing a consensual patriotic history. On the other hand, and as came through in the discourse of the responses, it could possible be that teachers feel a more patriotic emphasis on history increases its appeal to young people. The interviews with the trainee teachers suggest this is highly likely, as 90% of this group believed that history should be patriotic. Their answers showed no uniform agreement on what patriotism means, but most believe that patriotism should not be 'blind' or political. Unlike the older and qualified teachers, they also referenced the current political situation in their responses. Three examples are displayed below:

'If history was not patriotic, then we [pause] our government [pause] I am afraid of anarchy. You accept some things, some unpopular reforms and laws because of patriotism'.³⁴¹

'Yes, I suppose it should be patriotic but not extremely so. I do not like radical patriotism, like [that] surrounding the Great Patriotic War. Many patriotic projects that we have now are blind. Talking about things blindly is not just dishonest, it is dangerous'.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Interview with Svetlana, school history teacher, Moscow, 28/02/2017.

³⁴¹ Interview with Uliana, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

³⁴² Interview with Marina, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

‘I think I [pause] I am not patriotic. Not about the state. Of the country, yes, but now we have a strange political situation. Any modern minded person loves their history and their country. Yes, teach history patriotically, just do not get political’.³⁴³

The one trainee teacher who did not explicitly say history should be patriotic remarked ‘For me, patriotism is the ability to accept and understand the good and bad sides of your past. To try to develop your country and make it better. If you accept and understand differing viewpoints, then you are a patriot. But this is not the government’s definition.’³⁴⁴ Whilst these responses show patriotism as a very personal thing in Russia, it also suggests that like a single textbook, patriotism alone is not enough to build a broad consensus in the hope of consolidating civil society. It can be concluded that strong generational trends are apparent, and that patriotism does have the potential to be a useful teaching tool for generating interest among young people, *if* it is utilised creatively. Currently, it seems not to be the case.

What does a Russian History Teacher Look Like?

According to the *All Russia Census 2010*, history teachers made up 8.1% of the teaching force 2009-2010, with a female majority.³⁴⁵ This figure should be treated with some caution and it does not account for those who may have entered ‘teacher’ or ‘secondary school teacher’ as their profession. The profession overall, has aged somewhat; 17.7% of teachers in 2009 were at the retirement age. The sample interviewed reflects this relatively accurately, as the average age was 45.45 years. A gap needs filling and younger teachers coming into the profession are a product of the new Russia and Putin era. This is also true of schoolchildren, all of whom in 2017 were born after Putin became president. The profession has become increasingly female over last decade as well. Two thirds of teachers in training in 2009 were female. A more recent study in 2015 of two hundred teachers from four Russian cities showed that slightly over 80% were

³⁴³ Interview with Evgenya, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

³⁴⁴ Interview with Ekaterina, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

³⁴⁵ *All Russia Census 2010*, Volume 5, ‘Population by age group, gender and livelihood’, pp.6-15. Other figures relating to the teaching workforce in this paragraph can be found here, too.

female.³⁴⁶ The majority have ten-fifteen years of experience and this study replicated these figures.

Compared with data from the Ministry of Education 1898, the gender split among teachers was 56% men 44% women, whereas figures for the Soviet era are hard to come by.³⁴⁷ Women in the Russian Empire were less likely and able to obtain an education, particularly peasants, whereas in Russia today they have far more opportunities. Schools in the Russian empire often benefitted from female teachers as they could be paid less and were often more committed to the profession than males. As mentioned in the last chapter, the profession as a whole is becoming less attractive, despite the importance of teachers consistently talked up. Three factors can explain this: low salaries, the prestige of teachers and things Russians consider ‘important’. According to one *Levada* poll, among the most important things in life for Russian men were a career (52%), a place to live (46%), a car (30%) and to get married and have children (56% and 40%).³⁴⁸ Education was the most important (65%) but most likely as a means to secure a good career, and with it, a decent standard of living. Teacher salaries vary depending on the region or city, yet can only be described as low. One trainee teacher interviewed claimed the teaching position she would enter the following academic year in Vladimir offered 11,000 RUR whilst a local call-centre paid 20,000-25,000 RUR. Another became the manager of a coffee shop in Vladimir, since the salary was more than double for a teacher in the entire region. Regarding prestige, teachers throughout Russian history have never been held in high regard.³⁴⁹ As Scott J. Seregny writes, in the Russian Empire, teachers were viewed as ‘civilised savages’ treated with pity and disdain who were neither peasants nor members of educated society.³⁵⁰ Christine Ruane supports this, stating that teachers were considered ‘boring pedants’.³⁵¹ In other words, teaching cannot fulfil the average Russian male’s ambitions. Analysing what the same poll’s

³⁴⁶The study was conducted in Moscow, Arkhangelsk, Ekaterinburg and Khabarovsk. See Joseph Zajda, ‘Globalisation, Ideology and History School Textbooks: The Russian Federation’, in Joseph Zajda (ed.), *Nation Building and History Education in a Global Culture*, vol.13, p.40

³⁴⁷ The data was reproduced in Scott J. Seregny, *Russian Teachers and Peasant Revolution: the politics of education in 1905* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), p.14

³⁴⁸ Daria Litvinova “Russians Consider Marrying, Giving Birth and Education the most important things”, *The Moscow Times*, August 27th 2015 <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russians-consider-marrying-giving-birth-and-education-most-important-things/528835.html> accessed 21/05/2016

³⁴⁹ Veteran journalist, Vladimir Pozner, speaking to a group of U.S diplomats in Moscow recalled that in Soviet times, people became teachers because they were either ‘born to be’ or simply failed in other professions.

³⁵⁰ Scott J. Seregny, *Russian Teachers and Peasant Revolution*, p.13

³⁵¹ Christine Ruane, *Gender, Class & the Professionalisation of Russian City Teachers*, (London: University of Pittsburgh, 1994), p.21

findings for women, among the top things were getting married (77%), having children (75%), learning to cook (52%) and falling in love (32%).³⁵² Careers and material possessions came further down the list. Based on these figures, women may be more inclined to take a lower paid job, especially if their husbands are better placed to provide economic security, thus not damaging their social standing. The interviews with trainee teachers supported this, with two examples below:

Q: Do you intend to teach in your hometown/region after you graduate?

Fyodor: I want to be a teacher but it is not easy. The salary is not enough for a young man to live on, but I want to do it anyway.³⁵³

Evgeniya: I do not know, because I am getting married soon and my main goal in life is to have a good family.³⁵⁴

The paradox here is that teachers are held in such low regard while education is considered of utmost importance within Russian society. The government is, as discussed, trying to increase teacher's status, but it appears that schools are increasingly viewed like a service industry. History serves to create politically and socially responsible citizens, and other subjects like science and maths, a prosperous economy. History teachers, therefore, must be regarded by the state as 'politically reliable' and as models for society. One might question teachers' ability to be patriotic considering their salary and social status. It may be another reason the government wants to increase their social standing.

Tatiana Tsyrlina-Spady and Michael Lovorn suggest in their research that there is a pattern of

³⁵²Daria Litvinova "Russians Consider Marrying, Giving Birth and Education the most important things", *The Moscow Times*, August 27th 2015 <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russians-consider-marrying-giving-birth-and-education-most-important-things/528835.html> accessed 21/05/2016

³⁵³ Interview with Fyodor, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

³⁵⁴ Interview with Evgeniya, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

adherence among teachers towards the new unilateral patriotic narrative of Russian history in the classroom.³⁵⁵ At face value, one could argue this is a direct result of older teachers, trained in the Soviet era with one textbook, preferring this way while also having the means to use additional sources. Meanwhile, the younger generation coming into the profession, who have been more exposed to the Putin narrative, are more susceptible and adherent to current agenda, thus it will feature more increasingly in classrooms. However, the interviews with trainee teachers did not suggest this, and there was limited support among the qualified teachers as well for a single narrative, as analysed below.

The Curriculum

It is possible that the emphasis on patriotism, particularly surrounding certain events, comes because of history's lack of classroom time. Therefore, the students must leave with the 'necessary knowledge' in order to pass exams and gain a positive connection to their past. Most of the teachers interviewed agreed that the students should make up their own minds when drawing conclusions about certain events and leaders. The teacher's views were quite noticeable whilst teaching, however. For instance, those who expressed a more balanced or positive view of Stalin's leadership made it clear in the lessons his successes as a manager and his role in the Great Patriotic War.

Asides from the 'time vs quantity' factor, the teachers also mentioned the bureaucratic pressures and ability to generate interest among students. As one teacher in Southwest Moscow stated "They are teenagers and ask 'why should I do it?' The problem is that these are old facts and they cannot connect with them easily".³⁵⁶ This comment also falls in line with the overwhelming need for additional and more interesting materials. Another from St. Petersburg said she uses Stalin's short course as a way of showing her students how society used to think and what their parents did at school – and may be helped by using the USSR citizen education model. The personalisation of history is more effective for students to gain a connection with the past and

³⁵⁵ Tatiana Tsyrlina-Spady and Michael Lovorn, 'Patriotism, History Teaching and History Textbooks in Russia: what was old is new again', in Joseph Zajda (ed.), *Globalisation, Ideology and the Politics of Education Reform*, vol.14 (Switzerland: Springer, 2015), p.47

³⁵⁶ Interview with Irina, school history teacher, Moscow, 14/02/2017.

feel patriotic. Concerning the bureaucracy, most of this focused on *YeGE*, although the patriotic upbringing came up briefly, as did the nature of current textbooks. There was a common feeling that the patriotic programmes concept is well intended but ultimately flawed. Schools lack funds to take the students on excursions and are often unsure of what exactly encompasses a patriotic programme. One Moscow school director stated that she and her staff simply had no idea what to do. Two from St. Petersburg also talked about history as ‘policy’:

The most difficult thing is that history is often presented as a policy aimed at the past. Therefore, objective assessments often give way to opportunistic and subjective trends. Such fluctuations affect the place and role of history and knowledge in society. It means knowledge gives way to a prevalence of stereotypes.³⁵⁷

The state is constantly changing the concepts of teaching. One law contradicts another. Today for example, I was asked what textbooks we need to buy for next year and I did not answer. Do you know why? Because I will say [which one], the school will buy it and then suddenly a new law will be issued meaning that we should not have!³⁵⁸

The Moscow based teachers did acknowledge policy issues, but seemed less concerned with it compared to the large volume of information and *YeGE*. Regarding *YeGE*, most teachers preferred the old school exams but claimed it has not affected their teaching significantly. As implied in the previous chapter, most of the criticisms were about *YeGE*’s layout and suitability to history as a discipline. The consensus was that this exam does not teach skills, is too subjective and easy. Most want the multiple-choice section taken out for this reason. Some examples of the multiple-choice questions ask the students to match an event to the year it occurred, select the event that was a turning point in the Great Patriotic War in 1944 or even

³⁵⁷ Interview with Evgeniy, school history teacher, St. Petersburg, 31/01/2017.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Kseniya, school history teacher, St. Petersburg, 01/02/2017.

complete a half filled out table of state leaders, their position and successors.³⁵⁹ Different periods that are not connected whatsoever often blend in the same question without much logic.

The views of both groups concerning the textbooks' quality and other available materials were mixed. Most strikingly, however, none of the qualified teachers were familiar with Filippov's teacher handbook or textbook and it was not even listed on the trainee teachers' recommended reading list. In fact, when specifically asked and informed about Filippov's books, the participants in both groups appeared confused. This is significant because it reveals the government's view is rejectable and despite all of the hysteria and uproar following its publication, Filippov appears to have had little impact in Russia's two capitals and suburbs. Schools may not have the funds to purchase it and those who use Dannilov do so because it is the most recommended and has in essence, become the norm. Not every school visited used Dannilov's textbook, and a selection of those that are will be explored below, however, all were familiar with it. None of the participants believed it is perfect but the quality of existing textbooks also did not guarantee their support for one single textbook or narrative to be used by all schools. On this subject, just two believed a single textbook or narrative would be a good thing and only to help with examinations. The rest thought it would be impossible, as did all most of the trainee teachers. The most common reason cited was that any hypothetical textbook would have to be so large and include all of the different opinions, historiographical trends and facts that it would be infeasible. Another factor to consider is that many of the trainees used Dannilov's textbook at school in the recent past, and will go onto use it in their professional careers. Many described a negative history education with poor teaching in the interviews. Changes from below to the history classroom overall are highly likely. At least on the principles of history education, the interviews showed that there is a clear gap between the state and population. Therefore, history remains a negotiating space for democracy in Russia.

³⁵⁹ Question 11 in Variant 18 of a self-study book containing example papers for *YeGE* asks students to fill out the table with the answers below. This particular example has Trotsky as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR requiring his successor be completed, whereas the row below has Henrik IV, his position missing and Ludvik XIII as his successor. I.A. Artasov, O.N. Mel'nikova, *Istoriya Gosudarstvenniya Itogovaya Attestatsiya YeGE-2017: 30 trenirovochnykh variantov ekzamenatsionnykh rabot dlya podgotovki k edinomu gosudarstvennomu ekzamenu*, (Moskva: AST, 2017), p.179; See also Appendix H for another sample *YeGE* question/

The following analysis will present a section on each textbook comparing the treatment of key issues and period. This will allow for a more systematic examination of the narrative and comparing different trends. Textbooks are often known by the authorship instead of the titles (these are usually the same). The textbooks analysed for this study will be referred to as Dannilov, Kiselev, Lyashenko and Volobuev. These four textbooks were used by the teachers interviewed in this study for the ninth, tenth and eleventh classes (ages fourteen-eighteen). The actual authors' background seems of little consequence, as a glimpse through *Prosveshchenie* and *Drofa's* websites provide no bibliographies. Whether they are professional historians or not was also not a concern for teachers in selecting the ideal textbook, either. Nevertheless, it ought to be taken into consideration that Dannilov was once in charge of the history department at MGU and has been criticised by some as a 'neo-Stalinist' for Stalinism's portrayal in his ninth class textbook.³⁶⁰ O.V. Volobuev, meanwhile, is a historian of populism at Moscow State Pedagogical University (MGPU), so was perhaps viewed as a natural fit for writing school history textbooks. Dannilov was first published in the 1990s, is widely used and has been updated several times including 2012-13 along with Kiselev. This was a period of some internal unrest, meaning if handled properly, could go hand in hand with an anti-revolution message. Volobuev and Lyashenko, meanwhile, are part of the 2015 textbook series published during an economic downturn following Crimea's annexation. Their statist slant is also complimentary to the rhetoric which customised the years leading up to Putin's 2018 re-election.

The layout does not differ drastically between textbooks, however, some are easier to follow. All textbooks include maps, photos, portraits, diagrams, timelines, documents and extra tasks for the students to complete. These usually require short answers, tables to fill out or are group projects. Most of the teachers interviewed set these for homework, as these are straight forward and do not require much from the students (Appendix G). There is also a short bibliography and the lyrics to the Russian national anthem at the end.

Before examining the textbooks individually, it must be highlighted that each has a different

³⁶⁰ V. Lavrov & I. Kurlyandsky, 'Teper budet komu zanyatsya falsifikatyei istorii', *Novaya Gazeta*, available at <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2010/12/13/280-teper-budet-komu-zanyatsya-falsifikatsiey-istorii> accessed 10/08/2017.

slant. Kiselev's book places a greater emphasis on economic factors throughout, whereas Dannilov focuses more on the political and social. Volobuev and Lyashenko (who wrote these textbooks on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the same series) stand out due to a clearer layout and the fact they are in colour. However, Lyashenko's textbook is also noticeably anti-liberal and anti-revolutionary. This alone demonstrates that Russian children are learning history from a minimum of four different standpoints. The narratives differ on some key issues, with the two exceptions being both world wars. For this reason, the world wars will receive a separate section. The level of detail on any particular topic also varies and for no obvious reasons. The divisions of each period are more consistent and follow these lines: The reign of Aleksandr III, Russia at the turn of the century, the Revolutions, the 1920s and 1930s (not separated) and the Great Patriotic War. For this reason, the analysis of each textbook will also be divided up as such. Other events (or sub plots) fall under these chapters, also with differing subheadings. For example, culture and science are important and receive great focus for each period, with a subsection in each chapter in every textbook. Meanwhile, the Red Terror and Stalin's purges are sections within a section. In Volobuev, for instance, Stalin's purges are found under 'internal politics' and 'Stalin's revolution from above' in Kiselev. In any case, the students will leave the classroom learning the importance of culture in Russian life and the purges as part of Stalinism. This is befitting to the preferred narrative, which also champions the superiority of Russian culture and downplays the terror and gulag.

A.A. Dannilov's Ninth Class Textbook for the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries

This textbook begins the period in a rather sentimental and nostalgic tone. Russia at this time was in a state-led but late moderisation and industrialisation process. Despite the social problems, people lived relatively harmoniously. Moreover, the modernisation was in line with the 'special' role of an imperial power³⁶¹. This echoes the Putin Agenda, however it would be wrong to interpret this as imperialist ambitions of the government. As mentioned in the introduction, Russia's desire to be accepted as a great power because of its imperial past is the

³⁶¹ A.A. Dannilov, L.G. Kosulina and M.Y. Brandt, *Istoriya Rossii XX nachalo XXI veka*, (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2013), p.6

origin of the message. By contrast, most British school textbooks refer to Russia as a 'backward' nation instead of one that is modernising.

The overall narrative is that this period was turbulent and could only be saved by a strong figurehead or centralisation of power. Despite being a good man, Nicholas offered neither according to the author(s). The Russo-Japanese War to this end is portrayed as initially well intended but a series of failures nevertheless. Whilst Kiselev places the blame on Nicholas for conceding too much, Dannilov states Russia was not prepared for war and refers to the soldiers who died as heroes who fought bravely for their motherland. The Dumas have no special section, but there is an agreement among all textbooks that post 1907 witnessed some progression with agrarian reforms and economic activity. This is a nice set up to portray the First World War and revolutions as an unwelcomed disruption.

On the topic of the First World War, Dannilov is very patriotic and projects the besieged fortress mentality, stating that Germany were the best prepared for war and planned to 'smash' France and then Russia, expecting to walk into the Baltics and Poland. Moreover, it chooses 'patriotic facts' to focus on, such as how the initial declaration of war caused an explosion of patriotic feeling, pro-war demonstrations and a 96% increase in mobilisation on the first day.³⁶² This tone continues as the war unfolds, writing that the allies cared more about the Western Front despite the fact most of the fighting was in the East and "not once was Russia saved by allied armies from defeat". It takes this further by stating that Germany wanted Russia out of the war quickly. Blame for not having a victory is generally placed on other European countries opposed to the internal struggles. The internal struggles are connected to the revolution and treated as a separate matter altogether.

All textbooks treat 1917 as process of two phases (February to October; October to the Civil War). In the chapter on the 'Great Russian Revoltuion', Dannilov writes that Nicholas 'missed his last chance to transform the revolution which started from below into a less painful [one] for the country revolution from above'.³⁶³ Also that his politics 'disappointed society'.³⁶⁴ This continues throughout the revolution and compliments the narrative of the Putin Agenda. The

³⁶² Ibid., p. 62

³⁶³ Ibid., p.19

³⁶⁴ Ibid. p.25

revolutions' causes are noted as the weakening of state power, where only a strong state could secure stability and unity for the country as a whole. The 'Great Russian Revolution' happened as the country's situation was 'explosively dangerous' and the fall of the monarchy then became inevitable. The events of February are written like a timeline to then briefly mention Nicholas' abdication and that the situation after was immensely difficult because the state failed to secure stability, security, uphold the citizens' rights and control its borders.³⁶⁵ This does not stray too far from the Putin narrative. The arrival of the Bolsheviks is set out clearly and emphasises that their slogans won over the population who were tired of the unsolved power problems and ever-critical situation. It then embarks down a very long list of each event leading up to the Civil War. No real narrative emerges until Lenin gains full control of the Soviets and the Civil War begins, which is depicted as a great tragedy that occurred because of the continual changes to Russian life, and where losses of life occurred and the minority party came to power with little support from the masses. The Red Terror, meanwhile, gets barely half a page. The stated reasons for the Bolshevik's victory in the Civil War is their sense of a strong statehood and centralisation of management, which allowed for a more effective allocation of resources. Meanwhile, the Whites made a series of miscalculations, including the peasantry being 'forced' to put up with the military and economic program of the Bolsheviks, but makes clear that the peasantry did not wish to return to the old order.

The Stalin era begins with his purge of the politburo, writing that Trotsky and his followers were accused of never believing in socialism. Stalin was able to 'work the party apparatus' and make socialism in one country look more attractive than a world revolution as it would see faster results.³⁶⁶ The period is generally covered in far more depth than Kiselev, however the narrative does not differ too drastically. Dannilov stresses the need of the USSR to industrialise and modernise, yet does make clear that the results came on the backs of the population. Collectivisation is painted as a disaster but for whom is questionable. For example, collectivisation is depicted as 'hard on the regions and hungry populations of Ukraine and Central Asia', but two pages later claims that 'despite the difficult results, the peasants were largely indifferent to it all'.³⁶⁷ The criticism of this book largely surrounds the terror. It is covered

³⁶⁵ Ibid. pp.76-78

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p.156

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p.177

in two pages as ‘security for the state and cooperation of society’, whilst the gulag gets only one sentence. Kirov’s murder was said to ‘simplify the introduced procedures’ and accelerated the pace of it, and it is written that the terror masked any political and economic errors.

A.F. Kiselev’s Eleventh Class Textbook for the Twentieth-Twenty First Centuries

Kiselev gives the political process far less attention than the state of the economy and modernisation process. The Dumas are barely covered or even painted as significant. Kiselev also mentions much of the same issues on the First World War and in remarkably similar language. The main difference is the level of detail it goes into. Kiselev’s is unique in this regard, and is a consistent pattern throughout most of the textbook.

Kiselev too argues that after 1915 and when Nicholas assumed control of the army, the economy was not able to cope and moral of the soldiers declined with the situation at home. Kiselev continues this economic focus into the revolutionary period. The causes are considered to be the long standing socio-economic problems. Post 1905, it focuses on specific features of the economy leading up to 1917. Piotr Stolypin’s reforms get two pages of praise for generating the highest production output in the world (at that time), and for his appearance and demeanour of a true Russian statesman.³⁶⁸ Kiselev also suggests the economic success came down to Russia’s unique geographic position: “[Russia] had to borrow from the west to create dynamic development... production exports went to four fifths of the globe thanks to Russia’s connections with the East”.³⁶⁹ To revisit Russia’s Foreign Policy Concepts around the time this textbook was published, shows how they go hand in hand with the government’s message. February begins with the abdication of Nicholas II and then proceeds with a day-by-day account of events. Everything happens rather quickly until the Provisional Government is established, and comments on how poorly the new power organs were functioning: ‘The situation was breaking down, no civil peace and the war was a huge burden’.³⁷⁰ The section on October is sub headed ‘The Bolsheviks become dictators’, and unsurprisingly goes onto to document how the USSR became a one party state under Lenin’s personal control of the party organs. This follows

³⁶⁸ A.F. Kiselev, V.P. Popov, *Istoriya Rossii XX nachalo XXI veka*, (Moskva: Drofa, 2012), p.13

³⁶⁹ Ibid.p10

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p.57

the textbook's claim that Lenin seized upon the people's energy to force a new socialist coalition as 'the country was heading for a catastrophe'.³⁷¹ The authors' reasons are that the Bolsheviks were preparing to assume full power and therefore saw no need for the Constituent Assembly. It also stresses that War Communism broke with Lenin's doctrine and the party's official ideology, but was deemed necessary to aid the transition from capitalism to socialism. Taking into consideration the time of its publication, following large popular protests, this is unsurprising.

Stalin then suddenly comes to the forefront finding the party at his hands after Lenin's briefly mentioned death. Kiselev writes that the USSR needed the ability to increase production and that Witte's reforms combined with the effects of war showed the need to take Industrialisation further.³⁷² With this, Stalin felt the terror was the most necessary element in securitising the industrialisation process: 'Stalin wanted to increase production so much and develop the means of doing so... needed people on board'.³⁷³ The phrase 'state safety' is also used in the half a paragraph dedicated to the terror, and purging the politburo members gets one page. Kiselev also maintains that Stalin believed collectivisation would keep in line those million mass peasants below. Although Kiselev admits that whilst industrialisation helped the USSR to prepare for war, collectivisation did not solve the economic problems. In getting the population on board, Kiselev also highlights how the persecution of the church was necessary to 'break down the concrete worldview in order to establish a new one and secure legitimacy'.³⁷⁴ It is also written that the Soviet government used education and a new school textbook to 'connect to the people through epochs and false history'.³⁷⁵ Economic focus aside, this section makes it clear that state survival was crucial to the country's existence at almost any cost.

L.M. Lyashenko's Tenth Class Textbook for the Nineteenth-Twentieth Centuries

According to Lyashenko, pre-1900 was a golden age for Russian culture (post-1900 was silver). Aleksandr III is described as 'between a liberal and conservative', but just as 'conservative' in

³⁷¹ Ibid., p.57

³⁷² Ibid., p.98

³⁷³ Ibid., p.101

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p.121

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p.123

the others. This is rather contradictory as Lyashenko then spends a great deal of time analysing the strengthening of state power and the crackdown on dissent. Lyashenko even states that the *zemsky sobor*'s purpose was to 'combat liberal society'.³⁷⁶ Also as a Slavophile idea used by liberals to spread their ideas.³⁷⁷ There is a large usage of 'autocracy' throughout the text and even in subheadings, with strong connotations that the only way to secure the state and for it to function was through autocratic conservatism (at least during this period). Lyashenko's depiction of Sergei Witte and his reforms demonstrates this: "In the interests of the monarchy, Witte used all the states might and administrative bodies to conduct industrialisation for the conditions of the monarchy".³⁷⁸ Lyashenko is also quite effective in covering a range of different topics broken down into concise subheadings, particularly focusing on how ideologies developed around Russia's socio-economic position. Each political group receives equal details and is in age appropriate language. Although Lenin is highlighted as an important figure, the information about him is quite basic until the October Revolution.

Like Dannilov, the turn of the century begins by listing a number of statistics, particularly concerning demography in order to paint a harmonious picture of a unified Russian society. Despite an initial rosy tone, from 1900 onward it switches to one of social difficulties, particularly the rural question, leading to the events of 1905. Lyashenko states that societal progress had notably slowed down and that Witte's reforms had unfortunately not touched every person.³⁷⁹ Although described as a patriotic uprising, 1905 lacks a narrative. A copy of Nicholas' manifesto is provided but is hardly mentioned or analysed otherwise.

Unlike Dannilov and Kiselev, Lyashenko covers each Duma in sufficient detail and is clear as to why each was successful or not. The first Duma known as the 'wrath of the people', was 'full of liberal publicists', the second marked the end of the first revolution with limited success whereas the third and fourth saw more co-operation between the parties, a stronger voice of the masses and far reaching reforms. This is where the lengthy praise of Stolypin comes in, who like Witte, is held up as an ideal Russian statesman; translation, 'efficient manager'. Stolypin is portrayed as a good manager who implemented necessary reforms and whose successes were

³⁷⁶ L.M. Lyashenko, O.V. Volobuev and Ye.V. Simonova, *Istoriya Rossii XIX- nachalo XX veka*, (Moscow: Drofa, 2016), p.177

³⁷⁷ Ibid. p.188

³⁷⁸ Ibid. p.217

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p.270

not fully realised until after his death. Lyashenko poses the question to the reader ‘for what did the people overthrow the state in a difficult period and choose a different path for society to develop down?’ Its own answer is Nicholas’ wish to secure his own privileges and belief in autocracy and orthodoxy to protect the historic path of his ancestors, which also had an effect on the outcomes of the Russo-Japanese and First World War.³⁸⁰

O.V. Volobuev’s Eleventh Class Textbook for the Twentieth Century

Picking up where Lyashenko left off, Volobuev’s twentieth century textbook begins with the First World War in a chapter titled ‘Russia in the years of great turmoil’. In other words, despite 1905, Russia was embarking down an auspicious path that was disrupted by the war. The war gets eight pages and unlike the other two, barely considers military history or pays much attention to the battles fought. Volobuev claims that the reforms after 1905 put Russia in a stronger position to fight and indirectly disputes claims in British textbooks that their army was poorly equipped for war.³⁸¹ Moreover, it blames much of its failures, like those on the East-Prussian Front, on the allies’ failings elsewhere. Volobuev is much better at connecting the events at home with those abroad, linking the war to the causes of the revolutions.

The period is outlined clearly and broken down into concise issue based sections. The revolution arrives within twenty-three pages but just three cover February and another four the establishment of the Provisional Government.³⁸² Volobuev states that the increasing social crisis and political polarisation was the government’s ultimate failures along with the unneeded distraction of war. As such, the Bolsheviks were preparing for an armed insurrection to seize the moment. Volobuev explores October and its aftermath in much greater depth than Kisilev and Dannilov. The Civil War and War Communism get eighteen pages. Volobuev also puts the Bolshevik’s popularity down to its slogans amidst the mounting social problems.³⁸³ Volobuev appears to stress that built up institutions are necessary for security and development. This is

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p.274

³⁸¹ Ibid., p.8

³⁸² O.V. Volobuev, S.P. Karpachev, P.N. Romanov, *Istoriya Rossii nachalo XX-XXI veka*, (Moscow: Drofa, 2015), p.35

³⁸³ Ibid., p.43

supported by asserting that the Bolsheviks were not the most popular political force of the day, and therefore needed a way of securing their own legitimacy. Volobuev writes ‘to protect the new powers from internal enemies, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commissions (VChK) was created to prevent counter revolutionaries and sabotage’.³⁸⁴ It is not implied the Cheka was a good thing, rather necessary for the Bolshevik’s consolidation of power. Moreover, Volobuev states that dictatorship is all that came from the revolution: ‘the Soviet state was initially the most democratic in the world because it gave power to the masses... only to be taken away and placed in the hands of one political party’.³⁸⁵

When outlining how the state apparatus formed in November, Volobuev makes clear that a part of this was identifying ‘enemies of the people’: “In this time it meant the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SR’s), closing down their newspapers and arrests and later extended to churches”.³⁸⁶ The relationship between the new Soviet government and the Russian Orthodox Church gets equal time in each textbook with a largely neutral tone. The first paragraph of the Civil War chapter ends calling it ‘one of the most tragic pages of Russian history’ yet, the causes are not really outlined and the Red’s victory occurs rather casually.³⁸⁷ Also like Dannilov, Volobuev attributes the Reds victory due to their better organisation and the White’s miscalculations. Volobuev also dedicates a lot of focus to the ideological differences of political groups, which allows the teacher to explore topical issues in greater depth and transmit more than a timeline of events Volobuev gives culture, science and the political situation equal attention. There is more linking and connecting of the main aspects of this period to one another, creating a stronger historical map. Volobuev is more concise in breaking down the period as a whole, but the tone is much the same as far as industrialisation is deemed a success, collectivisation a failure and the terror is just over a page long. There is a good use of graphs, tables and propaganda posters, which brings it to life far more than the others do, though. Yet, it also does not venture far from the Putin narrative, it merely seeks to present it another way.

Teachers’ Opinions of the Period 1881-1945 and its Russian Leaders

³⁸⁴ Ibid. p.49

³⁸⁵ Ibid. p.62

³⁸⁶ Ibid. p.51

³⁸⁷ Ibid. p.61

In the interviews, there was a consensual and balanced attitude shown towards Nicholas and Aleksandr. Aleksandr was widely praised by all as someone who created stability, upheld Russian culture and maintained peace with other countries. His conservative nature was considered a positive thing and as precisely the component, which quelled revolutionary strife and anarchy in Russia. However, most referred to Nicholas II as weak, indecisive but a good family man nevertheless. Some of the participants even pointed out that his sainthood is questionable because of his record:

‘Great leader, but the problem with him was that he could not make the state work; it was just a headquarters. He was not a professional tsar and he needed Stolypin. Any good decisions had to be made by other people. He was irrational and at that time, a rational politics was necessary. Read Solzhenitsyn’.³⁸⁸

‘What wicked irony. In such a difficult and decisive moment of history, the head of the Russian Empire was a worthless king. An infantile, weak-willed and short-sighted person. I have only contempt for this man. He killed himself, his family, millions of Russian citizens and a whole country that was created over centuries. Idiot!’³⁸⁹

‘There is a wave of patriotism surrounding Nicholas II. He was a good man, but this patriotism dictates that nobody should criticise him. This is nonsense because he was just an ordinary person. Why is he even a saint? But you know, the government needs a leader from the empire to look up to and he is suitable because he was the last tsar, and as a saint is connected to the church’.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ Interview with Pavel, school director and history teacher, Moscow, 14/02/2017.

³⁸⁹ Interview with Natalya, school history teacher, Moscow, 20/02/2017.

³⁹⁰ Interview with Ekaterina, fifth year history student, Vladimir, 18/02/2017.

While his ‘martyr’ status, leadership style and personal qualities are accepted, declaring him a great leader is not welcomed by all sections of Russian society, neither is trashing his reputation. To follow on from the last interview above, there was an uproar from Russian Orthodox Church and many in the government over the film *Matilda* (2017), about a ballerina with whom Nicholas had a love affair. This will be explored more in the next chapter, but the overarching reason is that for all his mistakes, Nicholas is a saint and therefore untouchable. Like the revolution, any criticisms must come through the academic and education sphere, and the textbooks and interviews show this does occur. Also noticeable was how most focused on the gradual break down and the role of the leadership, opposed to specific events, which is complimentary to the ‘preferred’ version of history.

Each participant interviewed referred to the revolution as a tragedy followed by a difficult period, which should be taught with care and understood properly. A common phrase was ‘because of what followed the revolution’. Memory of the revolution for most Russians’ centres on the violence of the Civil War. There is no distinction and there appeared a lack of desire to discuss the 1920s across the spectrum. There was little respect for Lenin and his leadership expressed by any of the participants because his big dreams of a new Russia ultimately failed and destroyed the country. The one teacher who did praise him referred to him as a ‘genius of the moment’ who led a great movement and seized the day.³⁹¹ In St. Petersburg, one remarked that he “saw our country as some sort of guinea pig” and another after calling talented proceeded to call him ‘*zubrila*’ (a ‘muz’) for destroying the country. The trainee teachers all spoke negatively of the revolution as well, but their answers focussed more around how it changed Russia. As such, most used this to argue for teaching history in a non-ideological way so that students can understand Russia properly. This is, unknowingly, supportive of the Council of Europe’s ‘new history’ pedagogy, where history can become a creative practice through inquiry methods and the use of sources and evidence.³⁹² This is most auspicious when teaching a complex topic, like the 1917 revolutions, as it allows students to have empathy, learn defining concepts and how to form their own hypothesis.

³⁹¹ Interview with Irina, school history teacher, Moscow, 14/02/2017.

³⁹² Eleftherios Klerides, ‘Educational Transfer as a Strategy for Remaking Subjectivities: transnational and national articulations of “New History” in Europe’, p.14

The First World War hardly came up in the interviews. This is likely the result of no discussion in the Soviet era, but another reason could be its importance within the curriculum. The war is surrounded by so many other important events in this period. The self-study books for exam preparation are stacked with facts and information not in the textbooks, which the average student would find overwhelming to read and their teachers to fit into the lesson. This combined with the absence of a victory makes it fair to acknowledge the war either gets lost in history or is less worthy of attention, because where patriotism is concerned there is nothing to gain.

Opinions of Stalin were divided, but not dismissive of opposing viewpoints. The teachers from St. Petersburg, whilst largely negative, also acknowledged his achievements and ruling style as typical for Russia. As one of them remarked “He is very contradictory. Yes, he was a tyrant and a murderer, but you cannot liberalise our country or our people *ever*! Although it was tragic, he did get some positive results”.³⁹³ This viewpoint was not uncommon, but what differed was whether they began with positive or negative factors. The teachers from Moscow were equally split on Stalin, whereas both teachers in Volokolamsk were more balanced in their assessments. Compared to previously mentioned data, the interviews more or less correlate, yet explaining the attitudes is more difficult. In his autobiography, Vladimir Pozner, in writing about Khrushchev’s rise and fall from power, noted that whilst intellectuals were his biggest supporters due to the secret speech and rehabilitation for millions of innocent people, ‘the people’ (non-intelligentsia) had a different view. Most Soviet citizens found it difficult to accept Stalin as a criminal not because the facts were disputable, but because it meant *they* had been mistaken. Agreeing with Khrushchev meant accepting the responsibility for Stalin, and most Soviets did not want to, nor did they like what Khrushchev said.³⁹⁴ In the modern day, Stalin is associated with authority, order and power. Admitting that Stalin’s regime was criminal is, in some respects, akin to denying the achievements and advancements of the period. For unity to be upheld and patriotism to flourish, this period and the victory in the Great Patriotic War cannot have been for nothing, and is most likely why Putin and Medvedev in their condemnations of the terror walk a careful line regarding the Stalin era. In the classroom and at home with their families, presumably, the participants also do not want to open up old wounds. Their opinions can be something more resembling an ambivalent acceptance. It may also be the reason that

³⁹³ Interview with Natalya, school history teacher, St. Petersburg, 20/02/2017.

³⁹⁴ Vladimir Pozner, *Parting with Illusions*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), p.208

Stalin's character is largely glossed over in all of the textbooks.

The First World War and Great Patriotic War

The textbooks are consensual and in line with the official narrative. For this reason, this separate section will draw attention to the more contentious aspects of the Great Patriotic War and two popular trends concerning the First World War. These require a lot of intellectual manoeuvring, albeit for different reasons. Certain sub plots from the Great Patriotic War especially have the potential to tarnish the victory. By contrast, the First World War is still competing for a bigger shelf space in contemporary Russia. Simply put, something needs to stand out for consumption purposes. Two subtleties worth mentioning are the 'airtime' of General Brusilov and Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in all of the textbooks. These were significant turning points and important for twentieth century Russian history. One represents a great victory (at least by First World War standards) and national hero, and the other a crushing defeat for the Russian state. One symbolises flashes of greatness from the empire and its last hero basking in glory. The other sub plot is a final crumbling of the Imperial state before the storm that was the Civil War. This further alludes to 'proof' that Russia's victory was stolen, by a combination of foreign powers and ideas (Marxism).

In the Great Patriotic War sections, Kiselev justifies the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact as Russia (not the USSR) protecting its spheres of influence without any mention of the Baltic States or Romania (modern day Moldova). Only Ukraine, Poland and Belarus are mentioned. Dannilov agrees, but also claims the USSR was 'forced' to join in because Europe would not accommodate the USSR in its collective security. Moreover, that Hitler divided the spheres of influence and treated the Baltic States as within the USSR's. There was also no 'invasion' of the Baltics, rather the USSR 'entered' with a mutual understanding. Volobuev by contrast has coloured maps showing the students in detail who gained which territories. The pact is also portrayed as an unfavourable situation and the last available option to guarantee the country's security, to which Hitler has quickly and decided the results. The textbooks also do not acknowledge or mention any atrocities committed by the Red Army during the war or even allude to any. The most negative aspects that arise are Stalin's refusal to accept the severity of

the situation and a lack of preparedness for the Germany invasion. The USSR's ultimate victory is most likely the reason for this omission. Success is undermined if the soldiers are anything less than courageous heroes. Both groups interviewed also agree with the official narrative of the government, although there was acknowledgement of the darker episodes of the war. This is encouraging to see as it does filter through into the lessons, yet teachers are silenced out in the media and public celebrations. Even if these episodes do sift through, they stay of minor importance, as those in power prefer.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there are many complexities, contestations and contradictions with history in Russian schools. The role of teachers is extremely important, yet the interviews showed the changes are often slow to manifest and rejected. Sometimes, this is the teacher's initiative, other times it is due to external constraints. The interviews discovered subtleties and nuances within the wider process of learning, teaching and constructing history in Russia today which quantitative methodology would have missed. The teachers often hold opinions that are different to the state and 'official' narrative, the direction of history education and certain historical events and figures. As well as contestations of the official narrative, this chapter has also shown that teachers and schools are responsive where it suits either individuals or schools, meaning the gap between the state and schools can be closed, but requires further negotiation. The interviews with trainee teachers also showed the generational issues as well and the need for greater negotiation with the Russian teaching force and population as a whole. A younger, more dynamic, technologically minded and largely female workforce can be expected to emerge in the coming years. The interviews show it is also not a forgone conclusion that the next generation will legitimise the Putin narrative or fully embrace the current administration's idea of a patriotic history. As such, the negotiation process continues and history education is far from a settled issue.

This chapter has also shown that textbooks are used as a guide but are not necessarily the final word or basis of students' opinions. For the most part, the textbooks are accurate and not damaging of the state's image. The teacher can make up for any shortcomings, as well. The more difficult and uncomfortable topics will be the space to negotiate, however, a state

sponsored textbook is not intended to profit teachers and this should be acknowledged. The biggest concern is whether facts are compromised for the sake of knowledge, passing exams or creating patriotic citizens in the state's image. This chapter demonstrates that this is both easily done and avoidable. For liberal groups, the lack of a moral stance on the Soviet era is concerning, but arguably favourable so as not to alienate conservative groups who can directly hold the elites to account.

As will be developed further in the next chapter, the nature of history in Russian schools demonstrates just how limited history is as a resource. History is open and thus far, so is the Russian school curriculum. Although the state can intervene in schools to have its say by sanctioning new textbooks, these can be rejected. Moreover, no state can create a history that memory does not allow for or that has no academic justification. A socially (or politically) correct textbook content and reliable teacher are the extent to which any democratic state can intervene in history classrooms. In a democracy, it is never guaranteed that either will have any impact as rejection is a part of the democratic process, as well as *derzhavnost'*. Furthermore, as Russian civil society becomes more sophisticated and educated, the greater its demands will become. That means history's effectiveness will decline. Thus, it is important to win this battle now while the population is still largely incapable of reconciliation and other political actors have little influence. The interviews also correspond with polling and surveys conducted in Russia in the sense the personalities are important. Besides from a difficult period to grapple with, the state is using it to justify the present so that the emerging generations are loyal citizens who are prepared for the world and position Russia finds itself in.

Chapter Six

The Uses of Anniversaries and Memorabilia in Putin's Russia

*'If we recall those events more often, then maybe some government officials will stop calling Stalin an 'effective manager' ...'*³⁹⁵ – Kseniya Sobchak.

As Andrew Glencross contends, history is an idea in the present, and the state and political climate form an essential part of reconstructed histories.³⁹⁶ Anniversaries and memorabilia are the most evident ways in which a country constructs its own image. Moscow has countless statues of Pushkin, a handful of Stalin busts and monuments of the Tsars dispersed. There are streets and metro stations bearing the names of prominent Soviet generals, but also notable cultural figures of the Russian Empire like Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. These were not chosen by coincidence, nor have those from the Soviet era remained accidentally. Representing oneself through historical figures and events due to the lasting significance these had for that particular country means the images must fulfil a social function.³⁹⁷ Building an all-inclusive new narrative that justifies Russia's current position must include and exclude Stalin, who for better or worse, had a profound impact on the country as a whole. The collective memories of Russia's past must be rehabilitated in order to legitimise the narrative; this explains the nature of both the imperial and Soviet presence in contemporary history. The generic yet inconsistent narrative must suit the majority to create a social harmony, but as already demonstrated the problem lies with the diverse nature of Russia's history.

To an outside observer, placing busts of Lenin and Stalin next to Aleksandr and Nicholas on the Alley of Leaders might seem strange. The past requires greater knowledge and sensitivity when it comes to public remembrance, and the battle for public taste shows the difficulty Russia has coming to terms with its past, and furthermore the fight for exclusivity. Putin's governments

³⁹⁵ Ksenia Sobchak at the Memorial Complex to the Victims of Repression, Ingushetia, *Vesti News*, 'And Now the Hard Part... Time for Presidential Candidates to Approach the People For Blessing', *Youtube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLz858Xorak accessed 31/01/2018.

³⁹⁶ Andrew Glencross, *From 'doing history' to Thinking Historically: historical consciousness and international relations*, *International Relations* December 2015, vol. 29 issue 4, p.414

³⁹⁷ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: mythologies of everyday life in Russia*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) p.37

have had to cater to and pick up the pieces of nostalgia after the Yeltsin years, and re-emphasise patriotism through traditional values and a great power status to build on an existing pride. Channeling this narrative through anniversaries and memorabilia (old and new) is tricky, because no nation can be optimistic for the future without some level of admiration for the past. Monuments, celebrations, exhibitions and the like help to create this admiration, and act out the relationship with the past from a particular point in the present.³⁹⁸ It is a matter of preserving the memory so that stories do not become obsolete. Moreover, in order to generate hope for a brighter future, reconciliation must occur; nostalgia is not enough on its own. This includes sub plots, which were blocked out of public memory, such as the First World War and Civil War). In this respect, there is no difference between certain events and figures, since what matters is that modernisation is not disrupted. This continues to cause controversy both in Russia and the West, particularly anything relating to Stalin. In recent years, many museums and cultural centers have been opened which either are dedicated to him or ‘airbrush his legacy’.³⁹⁹

Reconciliation and remembering, while inevitable and necessary, can bring unwanted distractions. The centenary of the 1917 revolutions proved to be a real headache for the Russian state in this regard, as it had the potential to destabilise the fragile social harmony. Unlike school textbooks, a monument or anniversary is something that can permanently reinforce the past and its ‘officialness’, because they are usually everlasting. They are also constantly evolving in reaction to new technologies for recording information and other mediums available, which can be used as ‘sense making’.⁴⁰⁰ It is important to consider here the concept of ‘remediation’, to avoid comparing apples with oranges. Mediation is pertinent to cultural memory but there is no mediation without remediation, as Erll and Rigney assert. All representations of the past draw on the available media technologies, existent media products and are unthinkable without earlier acts of mediation.⁴⁰¹ The goal is to provide some form of window to the past and make us forget the medium in which it is viewed. This is also a visible form of recycling the past, as previously discussed. Exhibitions may include letters, photos and films, thus combining many different media to provide access to the past. The same is true of a monument; the symbols, figures and

³⁹⁸ Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, ‘Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics’, in Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (eds.), *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), p.2

³⁹⁹ Katherine Jacobsen, ‘New Museums in Russia are airbrushing Stalin’s legacy’, *The Business Insider* <http://www.businessinsider.com/mew-museums-in-russia-are-airbrushing-stalins-legacy-2015-12> Accessed December 18th, 2015.

⁴⁰⁰ Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, ‘Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics’, p.3

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. p.4

designs are recycled so that the commemoration is familial and, therefore, accessible. Considering mediation and remediation, anniversaries and their commemoration events are widely participated in (most are public holidays) whereas a school textbook needs constant maintenance, updating and fades away with time. Memorabilia is more accessible to the public and intended for mass consumption. Textbooks meanwhile have both a more specific audience and purpose (to educate). Anniversaries and memorabilia are transitory and pass on the story of Russia's collective memory, purposely designed to prevent anyone forgetting.⁴⁰² Thus, a multimedia exhibition, art show or monument share the same purpose.

Although in the West anniversaries, in particular memorials, are often linked to painful issues (such as the Battle of the Somme), Russia commonly reflects upon triumphalism to unify the population. The Great Patriotic War and Victory Day remains the biggest and most important holiday, and is a lavish celebration of an immense victory against foreign aggression. Speeches by government officials are reflective of this, and it is also unsurprising, therefore, that the Victory Park and its museum to the Great Patriotic War is situated on the westward highway at Poklonnaya Gora. This was the sight of many fateful moments, western assaults and the place where those on pilgrimage would turn and bow down in reverence to Holy Moscow and its saints.⁴⁰³ Victory Park (Park Pobedy) shows the new narrative is used to connect distinct, unique and positive parts of Russian history, which long made up parts of the national pride and historical nostalgia. Above all else, these are omnipresent in the collective memory making them easier to exploit. As a result, the idea of a unique kinship can shine through. The heroism, triumphs or even catastrophes, which receive a special place in Russia's historical commemorations are largely state sponsored. Yet, it is the moral authority and meanings behind the spectacle adding to the collective consciousness that do justice to the labelled 'positive' past.

This final chapter will explore the public crystallisation of a 'positive' history and public handling of the uncomfortable past in Putin's Russia. A key issue to highlight is that the mythologising of Russia's history would never be successful if the public deemed it 'unrealistic'. As Elizabeth Anderson et al highlight, any historical representation, be it a

⁴⁰² Jay Winter, *Remembering War: the great war between memory and history in the twentieth century*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006), pp.138-139

⁴⁰³ Nurit Schleifman, 'Moscow's Victory Park: a monumental change', *History and Memory*, 2001, vol 13 issue 2, p.5

museum or otherwise, must be recognisable.⁴⁰⁴ If certain facts are left out or not fully considered, it is compensated by satisfying other pre-existing assumptions held by the population. This chapter will also consider how the chosen past reflects the country Russia is trying to become and links in with the other themes discussed in this thesis. Finally, it also examines how the Russian Federation is now retelling the stories of pre-revolutionary Russia after it was almost obliterated from public memory as it conflicted with the Soviet ideology.

Issues Commemorating the Past

Culture is central to the Russian identity, as is the state's role in shaping it. Many of the anniversaries and memorabilia concerning the past are commissioned or financially supported by the Russian state who are often the sole author. National triumphalism is by default an achievement of the state, since it can claim to be the instigator of national unity and orchestrator of the victories, supported by loyal citizens. Since the reality of the past is gone and beyond our ability to recreate, the best an anniversary or memorabilia can do is provide us with a practical understanding of the past. A state constructed narrative via this medium is a work of its imagination to preserve a historical dimension. Gunn also draws attention to the key purpose of any anniversary or memorabilia. Any story, fact or fiction, consists of a series of events. These can be long-term developments such as the Industrial Revolution or a very sudden event like an assassination. 'Sub-plots' are not just a link to the narrative. They often form a huge part of our historical map and understanding.⁴⁰⁵ The Stalin period cannot be understood without any knowledge of the terror or Great Patriotic War. The same is true for Aleksandr III and his attempts to restore Grand Muscovy and Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality into Russian political life. For this reason., it is the sub (or quasi) plot, which works on the limits of our understanding and potential to grasp the past. All too often, these receive the majority of attention and focus, and this can undermine a practical understanding of the bigger picture. This is why Stalin and the USSR as a whole are overshadowed by the terror and purges, and the Putin Agenda must combat this. When a sub plot, however big or small, comes into contact with the

⁴⁰⁴ Elizabeth Anderson, Avril Maddrell, Kate MchLoughlin and Alan Vincent, *Memory, Mourning and Landscape*, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2010), p.1

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. p.40

memories of a society (as a whole or an individual level) it starts to reveal more about the identity of a group. Thence, constituencies are created, divided and allow the historian to judge.

Though any state relies on popular sovereignty, Russian states in particular have always fabricated the idea of ‘the nation’ co-existing with territory, ethnicity and culturally homogenous peoples.⁴⁰⁶ In one period of Russian history, the idea of a ‘Third Rome’ and *narodbogosets* was the dominant narrative, and in another it was the ‘Stakhanovites’ or ‘new Soviet man’. The monuments and festivities during these periods were the ultimate depiction of this, and eventually found their way into the mentality. By contrast, the Russian Federation uses the Day of National Unity in an attempt to paint the picture of a wider Russian homeland defined by historic peculiarities. Putin’s speech in 2017 for instance spoke of how there is no other multi-cultural nation on earth quite like Russia, and that this day “rooted in the past” has many examples of invincible unity.⁴⁰⁷ He said this while completely ignoring the October revolution’s centenary, as it would have undermined the message (more on this below). Monuments and anniversaries merely compliment or reinforce who ‘we’ are and affirm the boundaries and features of kinship. As Ludmilla Jordanova contests, however, a further problem lies in the nature of how these are carried out. These displays of public history are to educate as much as to remind, since they define the terms of the past to the public.⁴⁰⁸ The fact that the state lies at the heart of public history means the representations indicate alliances and affiliations, and cannot therefore be neutral. The celebration or commemoration would not be legitimate otherwise, so ‘dressing it up’ strengthens the moral authority of one’s past.

Selection is an essential historical skill, meaning producing a dominant evaluation, especially of more painful topics, is extremely difficult. The historian, in this case the Russian state, must carefully choose how to present the past to legitimise itself and represent the country as a whole. This is precisely why a state led effort to ‘fill in the blank pages’ is a central theme to the Putin Agenda. By dealing with painful topics and taking into certain sub plots into consideration, the state can develop an inclusive public history which reduces the risk of internal conflicts. This supports the justification of erecting a memorial to the victims of the Stalinist terror in 2017, while a year earlier a statue of Grand Prince Vladimir was unveiled outside of the Moscow Kremlin and the year prior to this, Europe’s largest mosque was opened. This selection fits

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. p.136

⁴⁰⁷ Reception to mark National Unity Day, November 4th 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56002>

⁴⁰⁸ Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), pp. 17-19

Kremlin's belief that non-Slavic or non-Orthodox Russians make up the wider Russian identity.⁴⁰⁹ It is also a political statement to satisfy the view that Russia does not condone intolerance and discrimination, nor the darker episodes of its past. While the memory is important, dwelling on this is *not*; it undermines progression and the nation's ability to move forward. A certain measure of sympathy is necessary to allow the population to deal with their public grievances, as well as embrace (not necessarily accept) an ethnically diverse nation. This supports Jay Winter's assertion that public history represents the space between state and society; these memorials enable the population to join in the wider collective notion of 'the nation'.⁴¹⁰ This can serve as a political statement, and when analysing Putin's speeches at such events, many commentators hold the view that he tries to assert Russian power and authority. For instance, when unveiling a monument to the Russian soldiers who gave their lives in the First World War, the main purpose, as he explicitly remarked, was to explain why Russia had no victory. In so doing, Putin made references to Russia's military glory and heroic values, which defended Russia's independence and dignity.⁴¹¹ In other words, it was not Russia's loss, the victory was stolen from them. As the military makes up a key component of Russian patriotism, the grand victories such as the Great Patriotic Wars receive more attention to foster the much sought after unity in the modern day.⁴¹²

History and patriotism in the public space are completely inseparable in the Putin Agenda. This also highlights another key function of public history. The size of a monument or building alone reveals the intentions and message behind it; a reflection of power and status, and the two Russian capitals have numerous examples.

Places, Spaces, Statues, Monuments and Anniversaries

⁴⁰⁹ Vladimir Putin's speech at a reception marking 'Russia Day', following the National Awards Presentation ceremony, a reception was held on the Kremlin's Ivanovskaya Square to mark the Russia Day holiday, June 12th 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49699> accessed 15/03/2016

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. p.150

⁴¹¹ Vladimir Putin's speech at a ceremony unveiling a monument on Poklonnaya Gora to the heroes who gave their lives in World War I. The ceremony was one of the main events marking the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I, <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/81/events/46385> accessed 15/03/2016

⁴¹² Catherine Merridale, 'Redesigning History in Contemporary Russia', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, 1, Sage Publications: London, 2003, p.17

This section will consider different segments, figures and events of the period 1881-1945 and the nature of their commemoration in contemporary Russia. Agata Pyzik states that Soviet era monuments fixate on four particular things: the past informing our present, outright political statements, power and sacrifice.⁴¹³ However, Pyzik admits that while such monuments can explain part of the current situation, many other [unspecified] things do as well. Nevertheless, a monument can help either justify the current situation or serve as a source of nostalgia for ‘better days’. This conflict does justice to the Putin Agenda as it sheds light on the need to still assess the problems of today through the lens of the past. The next problem comes with nostalgia being imbedded within a political statement. Though a monument reflects a common heritage, there has to be some consensus on what a group or nation is nostalgic about. The ‘better days’ in public memory might differ to the state as priorities vary.

The vast majority of contemporary monuments across Russia reveal that it is a country fixated on remembering three things. First is immense sacrifice, regardless of whether it is the Red Army or Nicholas II’s abdication, simply because Russia has seen great trauma and drama throughout its existence. Symbols of the strength of the people who overcame great hardships and struggles are used in commemoration. It is both fitting and timely that the patriotic education programmes continued through the recession that followed Maidan. Second, it is about status, and Russia as a de facto great power. This often goes hand in hand with the military, although it is not limited to this sphere. Technological achievements like the space race continue to receive special commemorations. Religion also draws an equal share of attention. The controversial statue of Grand Prince Vladimir serves no other purpose than to display Russia’s continued adherence and reverence of Byzantine Christianity country. It was funded by the Ministry of Culture, Russian Orthodox Church and a Putin acquaintance, Vladimir Yakunin.⁴¹⁴ Its location and date of unveiling, (Aleksandr Gardens on National Unity Day) was also carefully thought out. Third, and as already stated, they serve as a reminder about the journey from its founding roots to the modern day (continuity). The trouble is that simply by looking at all the monuments, exhibitions and so on, it is impossible to guess what the ‘glory days’ of Russia were, as historical commemoration is so diverse and Russian history is so rich. Soviet

⁴¹³ Agata Pyzik, Why Soviet Monuments Should be Protected, *The Guardian* September 29th, 2014 <http://theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/soviet-ussr-why-monuments-should-be-protected> accessed 11/02/2016

⁴¹⁴ Tom Balmforth, ‘In Moscow, Plans for Statue Kyiv Prince Vladimir Face Opposition’, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, June 6th, 2015 <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-prince-vladimir-statue-moscow-kyiv/27056982.html> accessed 23/03/2016

monuments are counterbalanced by nostalgia for the nineteenth century, yet, they all share a purpose, whether it is a monuments, exhibitions or museums, of bridging the divide of opinion in Russian society. Since the chosen past is for the public and to secure national unity, everyone must feel able to access it, and any ‘falsifications’ would be widely rejected.

a. Pre-Revolutionary Russia

Positive commemoration to the Romanovs is commonplace in contemporary Russia. The Aleksandr Gardens holds a reconstruction of the Romanov Obelisk, which initially stood at the garden’s entrance after construction in 1914. During Soviet times, it was remade as a monument to Soviet thinkers.⁴¹⁵ Almost a hundred years later, the same monument was dismantled, rebranded and reopened in 2013 on National unity Day ‘in honour of the three hundredth anniversary’. The Ministry of Culture called its restoration ‘necessary’, and the links to state continuation are apparant.⁴¹⁶ A golden leaf Romanov coat of arms sits on top, with the names of every Tsar, emperor and empress descending the monument in chronological order. The cubic base depicts St. George and smaller coats of arms of all the regions and oblasts of Russia on either side. Pictures from 1914 reveal the monument to be identical, not unlike other reconstructions of historical and or cultural buildings, such as Christ the Saviour Cathedral and Tsaritsyno Palace, which was completely rebuilt in 2007. Reconstructing exact replicas adds to this idea of continuity of state power and the past informing our present. After seven decades of omitting the Romanovs from public memory and denying their role in shaping the Russian state and national culture, the marble obelisk honours the former ‘fathers of the people’. In the case of Aleksandr III and Nicholas II, it can inadvertently remind Russians of the moral values they embodied and sacrifices of Nicholas and his family.

This perspective is reinstated at a permanent exhibition at VDNKh’s Friendship Park (*VVTs*) in Moscow, *Moya Istoriya* (Appendix I). The history park’s success in Moscow has seen others opened in sixteen Russian cities.⁴¹⁷ Located at Pavillion 57, it hosts two exhibitions; one to the

⁴¹⁵ ‘Romanov Obelisk in Alexander Garden’, <http://en.travel2moscow.com/where/visit/monuments/object4712.html> accessed 28/03/2016

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ *Vesti News*, ‘From Rurik to Putin - New Exhibition Centres Showcasing Russian History Take Country By Storm’, *YouTube*,

Rurikovichy and another to the Romanov dynasty which ends with a film about the Russian army during the First World War. Walking around with an audio guide, the narrator informs the visitor that ‘all [of the] Romanovs governed our country well through their own abilities and turned our country into a great one’.⁴¹⁸ Regarding Aleksandr III, the visitor is informed that stability was his first priority in safeguarding Russia’s wellbeing. This justified his toughened conservative methods, which ‘many around him thought would fail but produced positive results’. The ‘Tsar peacemaker’ is portrayed as a firm defender of Russia’s interests. His infamous quote that ‘Russia has two reliable allies; the army and the navy’ is visible across the exhibition and ties in nicely with Putin’s rebuilding of the Russian military in recent years and the solid link between Russian patriotism and the army. It continues that Russia began to modernise tremendously; the economy improved, sport took off, Russia witnessed rapid progress in the sciences, particularly with the railway, described as the backbone of Russia. With regards to his son, Nicholas is very much the victim of circumstance, which is in fact the first sentence on the interactive touch screen information and audio guide; ‘This period saw the most rapid advancement in all sectors, however fell victim to itself’. Statistics are presented to support this, and the beginning of Nicholas’ section is depicted as entirely positive. A budget revenue of four million rubles without new taxes, the largest oil production in the world, literacy grew by 70% as well as the blossoming arts and culture. According to the exhibition, Nicholas fell victim to the social tensions (which caused the events of 1905) and also to Europe. Terror had now become an official form of political opposition in Russia and by the time Nicholas assumed the throne, he would always be in the face of public opinion. Figures given here suggest eighteen people a day were dying due to political and social unrest. The line concerning the First World War and later the revolution is that a ‘peacefully minded’ Russia was drawn in by Europe and that the war completely exhausted the country as a whole. In addition, that the Tsar, not feeling the support from his contemporaries, was betrayed by the ‘traitorous elite’ and army at home. Also worth noting at this point is that the exhibition referred to Nicholas’ brother, Grand Duke Mikhail as the last Tsar of Russia, despite his refusal and this never being confirmed. The exhibition can fairly claim to ‘fill in the blank pages’ in the sense that it finally provides a say on pre-revolutionary Russia. It appears that Putin while publically acknowledging the greater

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpA7oTojxh0&list=FLtrjuWEkPCHKsjWTjcq0Pcw&index=1> accessed 02/01/2017

⁴¹⁸ *Moya Istoriya*, VDNKh, pavilion 57, vystavka *Romanovy*.

parts of the period, is keen not to make the mistakes of such a nostalgic period. Upon unveiling a monument to the Russian soldiers who fought and died in the First World War, Putin stated:

This was a generation that was fated to go through not just the difficult trials of the first global world war, but also the revolutionary upheaval and fratricidal civil war that split our country and changed its destiny. But their feats and sacrifices in Russia's name were forgotten for long years.⁴¹⁹

Asides from this victory being 'stolen from our country', Putin also made a jab at the revolutionaries, saying that those who sewed divisions betrayed the nation's interests. As discussed in Chapter Three, this anti revolution message serves a political purposes as negative links can be made to opposition figures. The lesson for today being that such actions from selfish individuals bring chaos and instability. The monument to the soldiers who fought in the First World War also salutes the idea of 'filling in the blank pages'. As Winter writes, the men of the Eastern Front are the most unknown in the entire war and on top of this, it was practically deleted from history during Soviet times.⁴²⁰ In the same speech, Putin further supported the need to restore the links in time, serious archival research to help us learn more about the causes of the war and give the heroes the proper place they deserve now that justice is finally triumphing in books, textbooks and on cinema screens.⁴²¹ By immortalising and canonising these soldiers in the context of learning more, it enables Putin's government to finally create an official Russian history of its First World War via a nostalgic record of the previously erased truth. The two revolutions were deemed as more important, and as a result, the war become something of a non-event.⁴²²

Something that made international headlines in 2017 was the release of the controversial film *Matilda*. The plot focuses on the affair Nicholas had with Polish ballet dancer, Matilda

⁴¹⁹ Vladimir Putin's speech at a ceremony unveiling a monument on Poklonnaya Gora to the heroes who gave their lives in World War I.

⁴²⁰ Jay Winter, *Remembering War*, p.80

⁴²¹ Vladimir Putin's speech at a ceremony unveiling a monument on Poklonnaya Gora to the heroes who gave their lives in World War I.

⁴²² Keith Neilson, 'Russia', in Keith Wilson (ed.), *Decisions for War*, (London: London UCL Press, 1995), p.102

Kschesinskaya. In particular, it upset the group Christian State-Holy Russia, as well as Crimean MP, Natalia Poklonskaya, who started a campaign to ban the film. Their reasoning, in line with the Russian Orthodox Church, is that as a saint, Nicholas is untouchable. There is a link to the newly forming narrative here, as many in power would prefer he be remembered as a martyr and good family man. This film had the potential to tarnish his image. The director Aleksei Uchitel's car was set on fire outside of his office. Meanwhile several arrests were made at the film's premier in Moscow. Russia's leadership took a different route. The Minister for Culture, Vladimir Medinskiy and Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov both publically stated that any attempts to exert pressure on cinemas over the screenings of *Matilda* would amount to censorship and lawlessness. Medinsky explained that the Ministry of Culture allows the screenings at cinemas in line with legal procedures; "The law strictly lays out the grounds for any refusal. There are none of them in case with *Matilda*. We are guided by the law, not personal preferences."⁴²³ Concerning the film itself, there were many historical inaccuracies, fabrications of the affair and a few soft sex scenes, which likely upset hardline Christians. Two common themes were his parents' dislike of Alexandra and Nicholas' journey to the throne, something he was not ready for nor wanted.⁴²⁴ On the opening weekend, *Matilda* made \$3.9 million at the box office, showing that the Russian public were enthusiastic to see the film and perhaps are mature enough to handle 'difficult' material. *The Death of Stalin* (2017) was banned later that year for a disrespectful portrayal of Zhukov, showing where the line is drawn. Although Putin has explicitly said that no film or publication should be banned unless it is criminal.⁴²⁵

b. The 1917 Revolutions and Civil War

Unlike in Soviet times, the revolution receives no specific annual commemoration or promotion. Although, during Putin's first presidency, he created the 'Day of National Unity' (November 4) to replace the Soviet holiday marked for the revolution on November 7. In pre-revolutionary Russia, November 7 celebrated a day of liberation from Polish invaders. Today, its significance has re-appeared, particularly as this narrative fits the concept of being surrounded by hostile

⁴²³ 'Controversial *Matilda* rakes in \$3.9million at Russian box office during its first weekend', *TASS*, <http://tass.com/society/973152> accessed 30/10/2017

⁴²⁴ Aleksei Uchitel (Dir.), *Matilda*, (Russia: TPO Rok, 2017).

⁴²⁵ President V.V. Putin meeting with young academics and history teachers, November 5 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46951> accessed 18/07/2018.

others. Its messaging is overall confused, but the change of label was not accidental. The move upset communists, but it shows the priorities of the new Russian state and is an attempt to establish unity through reconciliation of its past.

It is also worth stressing that public celebrations are not designed to educate, but to remind. Whilst the textbooks analysed in the previous chapter were fact heavy and mostly all-inclusive of the revolution's events, the minimum requirement for any public commemoration is a meagre acknowledgement – not a proper understanding. That is why 2017 had barely any commemoration; the Russian government could not afford to ignore 2017, yet too hard a line in either direction might have received a backlash. Early predictions assumed that any events would be aimed at reconciliation. Naturally, discussions of a proper reburial for Lenin re-emerged, as did calls for one of the Russian emperor's children.⁴²⁶ Handing over St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg back to the Russian Orthodox Church in 2017 had a sense of reconciliation at its core, yet the protests that it ignited showed that while no obvious antagonisms existed, they could easily be exposed. Even though the public's sympathies were no longer with the Bolsheviks, this did not necessarily place it with the other side. Commentators waited eagerly to see what kinds of intellectual somersaults Putin would perform to square with the revolution.⁴²⁷ The year prior to the centenary, Putin had already made some of his feelings clear, claiming that Lenin's nationalities policy had placed a 'time bomb' under the USSR.⁴²⁸ As an act of reconciliation, he attended the burial of White Army General A.I. Denikin in 2005, and granted his daughter in France a Russian citizenship.⁴²⁹ In February 2017, it became clear that the Russian government would leave revisions and analysis of the revolutions' outcomes to the academic community. Indeed, Putin's 2016 address to the Federal Assembly did stress the need for scholars to take part in this discussion, so there is some unintended consistency here. Overall, it appears that the Russian government simply did not know how exactly to remember the February Revolution, let alone possess the appropriate choice of words or actions to satisfy

⁴²⁶ 'Romanov Descendants Seek Proper Burial of Last Russian Emperor's Children', *TASS*, www.tass.com/society/935354 accessed 15/03/2017

⁴²⁷ Arkady Ostrovsky 'Lenin's Revenge', *The Economist: the world in 2017*, (London: The Wyndeham Group, 2016) p.43

⁴²⁸ Karthick Avrinth, 'Russia: Putin blames Lenin for Soviet Union failure', *International Business Times*, January 26th, 2016 <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/vladimir-putin-blames-lenin-soviet-union-failure-1540046> accessed 26/01/2016

⁴²⁹ Claire Bigg, 'White Army General Reburied in Moscow', *RFERL Online*, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1061851.html> accessed 21/02/2017.

the population. For instance, a reburial of Lenin lowers his status and importance, but this elevated Nicholas II and his family to sainthood.

In February 2017, *Kommersant* reported that the Russian foundation for basic research, History of the Fatherland and the Knowledge Society would provide funds of fifty million rubles for projects across Russia.⁴³⁰ A cycle of online lectures called 'On the Events of 1917' began, and were prepared for by the Historical Perspective Foundation, which is headed by Duma Deputy Natalia Narochnitskaya. Some of the profits would go to organising other activities related to the anniversary of the revolution. More interestingly, Elena Ruda, the newspaper's head of educational and cultural programs, stated that participants would be able to 'figure out' that 1917 was the year Russian statehood collapsed.⁴³¹ This matches the over-arching narrative of the government whilst simultaneously detaching itself from it. It also suggests that the revolution was not about the Russian people, but the state. Guiding the population to this conclusion is in the spirit of 'managed democracy', and shows the inclusion of the past as a necessary consolidation tool. It shows an underlying fear of letting the population dictate the narrative and the unforeseen consequences this might bring.

One large exhibition that did receive official backing from the state and Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI) was *Kod Revolyutsii* (Code of the Revolution). Attended by Medinsky, it was the first full-scale project, timed to the centenary revolution. Personal belongings of those who participated, the notes of the Lenin, the porthole from the legendary cruiser Aurora, the telephone apparatus from the headquarters of revolutionaries, weapons from the Ipatiev House where the royal family were executed as well as works of art were on display - some of which for the first time.⁴³² It gave a timeline-like narrative of Russia from the beginning of the twentieth century until January 1918, when the Bolsheviks seized power. The idea of a tragedy was present, but not explicit. Likely, the hope was for the visitor to be guided to this conclusion in awe of the history. The chosen artefacts and interactive nature of them brought it to life somewhat, especially since no other exhibition on the revolution like this had ever taken place.

⁴³⁰ Lisa Miller and Sophie Samokhina, 'Yest' stoimost' dlya revolyutsii', *Kommersant*, no.26 (6020), p.1

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² A link to the exhibitions' official site can be found here <https://www.sovrhstory.ru/events/exhibition/58becc2aa0e5981d9da515c4> accessed 09/07/2018.

Yet, one of the first exhibitions that took place (also with state backing) was far more telling. ‘Constructivism for Children’, held at a discreet museum in an Avant-garde residential area of Moscow (Appendix L). Visitors could view a selection of children’s books designed to show how children were socialised into the new Soviet regime. The museum’s contents were taken from the Russian State Children’s Library and private collections. Many of the books from this era were to get Russian children used to city life, to know about the necessities of constructing socialism and its important figures. There were books on the new kitchen, flats and how to cross a busy street. Whereas pre-revolutionary children’s books focused on romantic fairy tales, the 1920s brought in a new era of explainer books. The subjects became more complicated: stories about factories, gold mines and oil refineries. For the first time, children were treated as “little human beings” who, if taught properly, could be able to make anything.⁴³³ The exhibition also held a series of talks and special master classes adding to its intellectual credentials. Apart from its small size (three rooms), the exhibition gave no narrative of the revolution, nor did it focus much on the books’ authorship. Instead, it showed how the new society began to shape after revolution, and what the winners did in power. It attempted to play on the visitor’s nostalgia with colourful images of childhood and avoiding a discussion of the darker sides of the revolution and 1920s. This worked especially well because the language in the books is funny and poetic, yet, its appeal was primarily to students and academics, meaning its outreach, perhaps intentionally, was limited.

Project 1917 attracted a lot of international attention.⁴³⁴ Created by a team of experts, journalists, designers, animators and illustrators, the website enabled viewers to access a day-by-day account of the revolution from those who lived it. The site consists entirely of primary sources, including speeches, diaries, weather reports, newspapers and government memorandums. Each entry had a link to the original document, making it invaluable for researchers, students and academics. A particularly clever aspect was the viewer’s inability to ‘fast forward’. It ‘reported’ the revolution in real-time. By the website’s own admission, ‘not a trace of intervention’ is included.⁴³⁵ There is no assessment of the events and the reader must reach their own conclusions based on the archives, meaning the concept of ‘tragedy’ is missing.

⁴³³ Ola Cichowlas, ‘How a Group of Writers and Illustrators Revolutionized Children’s Books in Early Soviet Russia’ *The Moscow Times* <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/how-a-group-of-writers-and-illustrators-revolutionized-childrens-books-in-early-soviet-russia-56960>

⁴³⁴ *Project 1917* <http://project1917.com> accessed 15/05/2017

⁴³⁵ ‘About’ *Project 1917* <https://project1917.com/about> accessed 15/05/2017

It was mostly aimed at a younger audience for entertainment purposes, as well. While *Project 1917* was essentially a wonderful archive, it was not an initiative of the Russian government, although *RT* did create its own version, *1917 Live* - essentially the same chronicle in a different format also without an assessment.⁴³⁶ The lack of narrative from non-state actors, many of whom at *Project 1917* are openly critical of Putin's government, is equally telling. It seemed few possessed meaningful words to properly assess the legacy of the revolution. In addition, the Yekaterinburg diocese of the Orthodox Church created a similar portal, *Tsarskaya Sem'ya* (The Tsarist Family).⁴³⁷ This documented the royal family's exile in Tobolsk and Yekaterinburg up until their deaths. The website published excerpts from their diaries, letters and photographs, also without providing judgment. It was easier not to provide a narrative and allow public discussions to form their own conclusions. This creates the appearance of more honesty in order to discourage unnecessary discords. The interest in Russian history that these sparked can only be a positive thing, too.

The monuments erected received little public or international attention. One in Novocherkassk did reflect the idea of unity and reconciliation, and was named to reflect this (Monument to Reconciliation and Consent). It is covered with symbolism, including an Orthodox crucifix that towers over a humble woman with hand on heart, a soldier and the headgear of both armies.⁴³⁸ It was also decided at the fifth Congress of Compatriots, which Medinsky is a member of, to erect a Monument to Reconciliation in Crimea by 2017. Although controversial, this move was also to combine reconciliation with patriotism surrounding the peninsula, which was burning out in 2017. It also sent a message in the backdrop of Maidan and the Orange Revolution, which implies revolution and 'coups' are terrible things. This is a full projection of the state's narrative and its attempts to create a broad coalition of support. By the time November arrived, the government had either delayed or abandoned the idea altogether.

Besides the monument in Crimea, no 'official' plans for October's commemoration manifested, nor was any official statement given by a government official. Its commemoration was even more low key, not attached to the state and under promoted. Examples would be a scarlet fashion

⁴³⁶ 1917Live, *RT* Online, <https://1917.rt.com/> accessed 15/05/2017

⁴³⁷ Proekt *Otkrytaya Shkola*, "Tsarskaya Sem'ya", available at <http://xn----7sbavwpxid7bx5af.xn--p1ai/> accessed 18/02/2018.

⁴³⁸ 'Monument to Reconciliation to be erected in Crimea in 2017', *Vestnik Kavkaza*, <http://vestnikkavkaza.net/articles/Monument-to-Reconciliation-to-be-erected-in-Crimea-in-2017.html> accessed 30/06/2017

show ('In Red Tones') at the Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Petersburg, the exhibition 'History was made here: The Hermitage and Winter Palace 1917' and in Moscow a gunpowder painting exhibition of Cai Go Qiang.⁴³⁹ The KPRF were unsurprisingly the only group to announce anything early. With 150 other left wing groups including 'loyal delegations' from Donbas and Crimea, the KPRF planned two three daylong celebrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg situated at different landmarks connected to the revolution. This included a gala meeting at the Oktyabrsky Concert Hall, St. Petersburg.⁴⁴⁰ As mentioned, however, this was for a specific audience. Although the anniversary year was not absent of commemoration, it was controlled, managed and essentially a private discussion in the public sphere. 'Success' as key to public celebrations securing a broad coalition of consensus, and the revolution's lack of this is reflected in the state's low-key approach.

c. Stalin and the Great Terror

There has been a rise of physical and metaphysical memorabilia to Stalin since Putin became president. Greater reflection on the period, its successes and the idea of Stalin as a historical necessity has become a popular trend in recent years. The reappearance of Stalinist symbols is, as it was in 2001, to restore a sense of lost pride after the Soviet collapse and a different way of filling in the 'blank pages'. Yet, any positive assessment of Stalin and his rule are considered to be objective. From *Perestroika* and the release of more documents and archives, new stories could be told and a new process of historical memory could take place. The purges, which hang over Stalin's legacy, took centre stage. Most interpretations were naturally negative. The new trend is refocusing on Stalin's rule and its achievements. Building on the argument of Stalin as a historical necessity, he may also be considered a 'unity' necessity. To completely erase him from the public memory could be viewed as potentially dangerous, and this certainly did not end his cult during the USSR. To keep his achievements alive in physical form is another agent of pride and patriotic reinforcement of Russia's great powerness. Didier Maleuvre supports this claim, stating that any museum has to display a long lost life and show the desires for this; if it

⁴³⁹ Galina Stolyarova, 'St Petersburg Marks Its Revolutionary Centenary with Caviar and Circuses', *The Moscow Times*, themoscowtimes.com/articles/st-petersburg-marks-its-revolutionary-centenary-with-caviar-and-circuses-59503 accessed 8/11/2017

⁴⁴⁰ President V.V. Putin meeting with Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, June 28 2017, The Kremlin, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54896> accessed 30/06/2017.

is weak, then the museum is a failure.⁴⁴¹ In order to remain objective about Stalin, the museums and statues of him must reinforce a previous nostalgia and admiration for the leader to be authentic. Since his personality cult did not end with the USSR, Stalin will continue to undergo historical revisions reassessments for many generations to come.

The terror is not ignored and in Moscow alone, there are numerous sites to commemorate its victims. However, most are ‘off the trail’, even those in the city centre. Moscow hosts a Gulag museum just outside of the city centre, which was redesigned as recently as 2015. This museum is located on a back street in a particularly quiet and non-touristic part of the city centre. The museum’s rich range of historical records documents decades of Soviet repression in meticulous detail. It is interactive, including touch screens and video clips that precede historical archives and artefacts. Also worth mentioning are Moscow’s field of mass graves in Butovo and the House on the Embankment opposite the Kremlin which used to house members of the NKVD. Both are tucked away and tell a story of horror, although fail to capture the extent of cruelty faced by the prisoners. The same is true of *Camp 36* in the city of Perm, which only closed its doors in 1988. While *Camp 36* is the only former site open in the form of a museum commemorating the terror, it fails to create an atmosphere that enables the visitor to empathise with the harsh conditions faced by the terror’s victims. Its purpose is simply to symbolise the terror in an almost commercial manner, painting just enough of an inhumane image that is not damaging.

On the eightieth anniversary of the order to initiate the Great Purges, the Russian president spoke at a lavish celebration for Naval Day. Putin stood at a podium in St. Petersburg and spoke of the high morals and professional qualities of Russia’s navy, its great victories in battle and importance the motherland. Meanwhile, **#помнимбольшойтеррор** (*pomnim bolshoi terror/we remember the great terror*) circulated social media.⁴⁴² Relatives of the Great Terror’s victims told of their ancestors’ decrimination in sufficient detail, often publishing photos and archives which had been personally obtained. This is arguably the clearest instance of the state acting on its version of a usable and unifying past. The government ignored this anniversary to focus on the unifying force of Russia’s military during a time of frosty relations with the West. However, President Putin’s 2015 decree of creating a monument to the gulag’s victim still had

⁴⁴¹ Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: history, technology, art*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.21

⁴⁴² A link to its *Twitter* hashtag and content is available at <https://bit.ly/2KZhLZe> accessed 17/11/2017

to be fulfilled. On October 30 2017, a few days before the revolution's centenary, the monument was unveiled in Moscow. One hundred and seventy natural stones from fifty-eight regions connected with the Soviet era repressions were handed over to sculptor and author of the 'Wall of Sorrows', Georgy Frongulyan, for its construction. Most of the population, however, were quite unaware of it. As president Putin spoke of how this monument appeals to our sentiments, dealt a harsh blow to our people's roots and was completely indefensible, Muscovites carried on with their daily routine, perhaps seeing a clip on the evening news. There was also a subtle hint to the October Revolution and political opposition in Putin's speech as he ended 'we remember, but this does not mean settling scores. We cannot push society to a dangerous conflict yet again'.⁴⁴³

The recent refurbishment of *VVTs* is also worth considering. Still a popular leisure destination and tourist attraction, the restoration keeps alive the image of the Stalinist dream it was intended to represent. Although Russian citizens no longer view the way it was intended. A grand and impressive area, *VVTs* was designed to show the Soviet state's ambitions, astonish the world and be a representation of the Soviet (socialist) future. This was to demonstrate the reward for working hard and that a paradise on earth was possible.⁴⁴⁴ Historians' interviewed by *RT* spoke of how this is a commemoration of a unique state and social experiment, and that today, one must appreciate it as something the Soviet people paid a high price for, without the evil of Stalinism. It is, after all, a monument to them as well as Stalinism. The Hellenistic style like buildings remind the visitor these were to show the power of the state. Only now, however, when looking at the friendship fountain, the Russian sees a marvelous work of architecture, not a symbol of worker solidarity or friendship of peoples. It freezes in time a mindset and life many still have nostalgia for and, more importantly, one that can never return. This is partly why many still find it so attractive, yet the renovation became so important, as it remains a popular public space for events and leisure activities. It also made instant headlines when a ten metre high bronze monument in the main hall was rediscovered depicting a triumphant Soviet people parading. Moscow Mayor, Sergei Sobyenin, stated, 'It is a unique monument, showing the main objective of *VVTs*, if the park is not worth restoring, nothing is'.⁴⁴⁵ The fact is, if Russians still

⁴⁴³ Opening of Wall of Sorrows memorial to the victims of political repression, October 30 2017, en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55948 accessed 31/10/2017

⁴⁴⁴ 'Soviet Paradise: refurbishing treasures of Stalin's architecture' *RT Documentary*

⁴⁴⁵ "Vesti Moskva" *Rossiya 1*, 10/03/2015 https://russia.tv/video/show/brand_id/5403/episode_id/1278350/ accessed 10/03/2015

viewed Stalin and Stalinism in such an abhorrent way, their relationship to VVTs would not be so positive and sentimental.

To mark the seventieth anniversary of the meeting, a monument was erected in Yalta of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, resembling the famous photograph of the three.⁴⁴⁶ This was controversial not only due to the annexation of the peninsula but also because of Stalin's forced deportation of the Crimean Tatars who protested the monument opened by Duma chairman, Sergei Naryshkin. It is another commemoration of the war with the intention of reflecting power and influence. Stalin towering over Roosevelt and Churchill and going head to head with the west can be used to foster patriotic notions left behind. In comparison, one museum and Stalin bust in Khoroshevo is a part of the path to victory tour, including various other monuments, but this particular also chooses to focus on Stalin's economic and military achievements. While it is now a crime to talk ill of the Great Patriotic War, the museum curator stresses that Stalin looked after the safety of Soviet citizens. There have also been protests to the increase of memorabilia to Stalin personally. A recent case would be in the Siberian city of Surgut, where a new bust of Stalin was drenched in red paint to show he had 'blood on his hands'. A few metres away from it is a memorial to victims of the terror. More paradoxically, the Stalin bust was funded by donations from the local community collected by the group *Russkiy Dukh* (Russian Spirit); 60% of Surgut are believed to support honouring Stalin.⁴⁴⁷

d. The Great Patriotic War

Before conducting a full biopsy of this, it is worth stressing that the emphasis on the Great Patriotic War is the result of Soviet politics forging an identity. This event became the first unifying force and painful memory in the USSR because it involved a mass mobilisation of the population to defeat another foreign invader. This sentiment remains and is relayed by government officials. As one Russian diplomat wrote 'the Red Army saw what the Germans had done on their soil... almost every soldier had personal accounts to settle'.⁴⁴⁸ The

⁴⁴⁶ "Russia unveils controversial Yalta statue, *SKY News* February 5th 2015
<http://news.sky.com/story/1422018/russia-unveils-controversial-yalta-statue> accessed 10/04/2016.

⁴⁴⁷ Mark Krutov and Robert Coalson, 'Stalin Bust Opens Old Wounds in Siberian City', *RFERL*,
<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-surgut-stalin-bust/28004817.html> accessed 17/11/2017

⁴⁴⁸ Comments of Minsiter-Counsellor of the Russian Embassy, A. Kramarenko on some issues of World War II to *The Independent*, 14/08/2015

government recognises that this event still has a hold over the population and reflects a common trait in Russia's historical identity with a moral message of perseverance. That in one of Russia's darkest periods, they overcame the greatest challenge and liberated themselves. The Great Patriotic War reflects Putin's belief in Russia being a sovereign independent country who is a leader on the world stage and whose traditional values are key in securing this. The same diplomat, Aleksandr Kramarenko, used similar language a year earlier when laying a wreath at the Soviet war memorial in London. Kramarenko stated that

the enormity of that sacrifice, suffering and war effort made World War II a defining event in forging our national identity, a victory of the highest moral value order, which explains our positions on many issues of today...⁴⁴⁹

Although numerous and large memorials exist throughout Russia, Moscow's Park Pobedy has an interesting back-story that shows the complexity of handling Russian history in the post-communist world. Though no public events took place commemorating the Great Patriotic War until 1965, the Soviet government decided on creating a memorial in 1947 at Poklonnaya Gora because it had the same juxtaposition for the Patriotic War of 1812 - a foreign aggressor attacking a peaceful minded Russia. Furthermore, the suddenness caused the population to become instantly mobilised and adds to the idea of a universal historic victory for the Soviet people.⁴⁵⁰ Nurit Schleifman compiled a detailed account surrounding the significance of the park and museum. There are two points to dissect in this regard. Before any such memorial or monuments could be erected, the Soviet population had to be educated of this glorious victory (as do the new Russians). As Schleifman notes, there was an instant struggle for interpretation of possession of memory.⁴⁵¹ The involvement of the public and memory embedded in the Great Patriotic War meant the concept of 'universal' had to be just that. There is, therefore, a section at the museum on the second floor dedicated to the non-Russian nationalities. The USSR was not a wholly monolithic state so great care had to be taken in interpreting the contribution of the nationalities as equal. The same is also true of the allies and Stalin, both with their own sections.

⁴⁴⁹ Speech by Aleksandr Kramarenko, Russia's Charge d'Affaires, a.i. at a wreath laying ceremony at the Soviet War Memorial, 9th May 2014, on the IWM grounds.

⁴⁵⁰ Nurit Schleifman, *Moscow's Victory Park*, pp.8-9

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. p.17

This makes Park Pobedy a comprehensive monument to the war as a whole, opposed to individual battles, although, this comes with certain contractions, which will be discussed shortly. Secondly, and somewhat ironically, the monument was not completed until 1995, meaning the Soviet Union never told its own story of the Great Patriotic War; it would be told in a new language by a new country suffering from an identity crisis and culture shock.⁴⁵² It should also be noted is that the architects and designs changed on a number of occasions, meaning so too did the interpretations of the war.⁴⁵³ Stalin's title of 'Brilliant Marshall' also had to be changed to fit the times. Although the park is largely based on the 1978 designs, a Synagogue and Mosque were later added 'democratically' to fit this universal idea. With that being said, these are not in plain sight and the visitor has search for them beyond the museum deep into the park. The Orthodox Church, meanwhile, is off to the left at the forefront of the park, stressing the idea that whilst other groups make up a wider part of the Russian identity, to ignore its ancient symbol and identity enforcer is foolish.

Although the Park was largely constructed outside the Putin era and cannot be considered as 'Putinist history', it is certainly a useful marketing tool for the new narrative. At the end of 'the hall of sorrow' is a statue of a mourning woman on her knees with her dead son. The woman represents Mother Russia in a concrete personification with her son to serve as a representation of a soldier. Such a powerful image acts as a symbol of Russia's great past and arguably, the Great Patriotic War is the greatest moment in recent history that embodies this. As Kramarenko stated, 'as long as Russia exists, [we'll] stand by that memory and the ideals our fathers and grandfathers fought for'.⁴⁵⁴

In recent years, different forms of memorabilia have come out at incredible pace. Worthy of mention are the statue of Kalashnikov and the films *White Tiger* (2012), *Panfilov's 28 Men* (2015) and *Rubyozh* (2018). The rifle named after its creator was labelled by Medinsky a 'cultural brand of Russia' and embodiment of the best features of the Russian people.⁴⁵⁵ It is

⁴⁵² Ibid. p.6

⁴⁵³ Anthony D. Smith writes about how myths of national identity change their symbolic forms and content over time in relation to different perceptions of significant events as there are varying degrees of conflict. See Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.57

⁴⁵⁴ Speech by Aleksandr Kramarenko, Russia's Charge d'Affaires, a.i. at a wreath laying ceremony at the Soviet War Memorial (9th May 2014, on the IWM grounds)

⁴⁵⁵ Maria Petkova, 'In Praise of the AK-47: Russia unveils a stature of Mikhail Kalashnikov', *Al Jazeera*, <http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2017/09/praise-ak-47-russia-unveils-statue-mikhail-kalashnikov-170920173753166.html> accessed 19/11/2017

also a symbol of the victory in the war and proof of the results of patriotic modernisation, which saved Russia from foreign threats. It also contributes to the mythological heroism surrounding the war. This is despite the fact Kalashnikov himself felt nothing but guilt for the deaths caused by his invention, as outlined in a letter to Patriarch Kirill.⁴⁵⁶ The films meanwhile are nothing but pure mythologising and fantasy. Asides from a scene of Hitler talking to Satan, the main character in *White Tiger*, an injured tank commander Naydyonov, has the power to communicate with tanks as if they are human. *Panfilov's 28 Men*, on the other hand is based purely on a Soviet myth of guardsmen from the 316th rifle division (mostly Kazakh and Kyrgyz), killed by the Germans who outnumbered them after a valiant defense. Although pure myth, it shows solidarity and unity of Russian and Kazakh soldiers fighting together, with Medinsky calling those who interfere 'filthy scum'.⁴⁵⁷ In other words, pointing out the inaccuracies, inconsistencies or the fact it is pure myth makes one unpatriotic and irresponsible. *Rubyozh* also follows similar lines; a young cynical businessman hindered by evacuation on Nevskiy Pyatachok, ends up going back in time and finding himself in the middle of combat where he meets his grandfather. The fantasy element aside, the moral of this film is about loyalty to one's ancestors. All of these films, however, show a lack of real creativity as the message must be adhered to be considered successful.

The last word has yet to be said on the Great Patriotic War in Russia, yet Park Pobedy continues to be used as the defining symbol of the narrative. It shows the sacredness and attempts to be all inclusive. It is not just a demonstration of the Soviet military and its power. The panoramas, artefacts and recreations of battles and Berlin after the Soviet offensive seeks to make the visitor feel a sense of triumph after misery and complete destruction of their motherland. Putin as Russia's long serving leader is now what Anthony D. Smith refers to as the 'bearer of myths'. Myths of a nation and its descendants can divide or unite a community whose identity and consciousness have different modes of myth making.⁴⁵⁸ Putin appears to be in pursuit of a mode of cultural nationalism which demands a special identity, and in Russia's case, one of social solidarity and its links to the state. The Great Patriotic War therefore gives him legitimacy in an apparent quest to kindle what Smith calls the myth of regeneration (restoring the golden age).⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ 'Pered smertil Kalashnikov napisal' pokkayanoe pismo patriarkhu', *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/news/563827> accessed 19/11/2017

⁴⁵⁷ 'Putin backs WW2 myth in new Russian film' *BBC News*, bbc.com/news/world-europe-37595972 accessed 11/10/2016

⁴⁵⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, p.58

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid. p.67

This is in line with Kalinin's argument of 'reinventing the wheel' or 'nostalgic modernisation'. Park Pobedy opened during the Yeltsin era and is linked to the 'myth of decline'; a glorious past faded, its heroes oppressed and old virtues forgotten whereas nowadays, this glory is being restored through older, arguably, more effective means.

Anniversaries as National Holidays

As the subheading implies, many national holidays are linked to historical or artificially constructed 'patriotic' events. Though anniversaries go hand in hand with the historical narrative, most have become rather commercialised. A closer look at November 4 shows this. National Unity Day initially commemorated 1613 when the Romanov Monarchy came to power and overthrew the Polish 'occupation' of Russia. Today, the openness to history makes this impossible to ignore, and the monument outside St. Basil's Cathedral often makes it onto the official posters. Yet, the monarchy no longer rules Russia so it cannot be main purpose for celebration. It also marked the October revolution's anniversary, and must be carefully tailored to towards the modern situation. Constructing this narrative is much harder; it has to be all inclusive and posters for this holiday are confused and generic. Some simply use the phrase, '*s dnyom narodnogo edinstvo*' (with the Day of National Unity) and the tricolour flag. Others have females in the many national dresses of all the Russian peoples. According to a *Levada* poll in 2015, 55% planned to celebrate *neither* National Unity Day nor the October Revolution anniversary. National Unity Day's popularity rose from 12% in 2006 to 22% in 2015, suggesting patriotic fervour had risen.⁴⁶⁰ However, it cannot be claimed that historical patriotism was a factor. A combination of historical events under one holiday can create the appearance of continuation opposed to highlighting the disruptions, which occurred. This came up in Putin's 2014 speech at victory day: "The unbroken link between our generations is our immense national treasure and it is here that Russia's strength and dignity lies."⁴⁶¹ There is a great deal

⁴⁶⁰ "Unity Day" survey, *Levada Centre* 11/06/2015. The most recent survey was conducted throughout all of Russia in both urban and rural settings, and carried out among 1600/800 people over the age of 18 in 134 localities, 46 of the country's regions. *The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the number of participants along with data from previous surveys. The statistical error of these studies does not exceed 3.4%.* <http://www.levada.ru/eng/unity-day> accessed 10/04/2016

⁴⁶¹ President V.V. Putin's speech at the Victory Day Parade on Red Square, 9th May 2014 11.00am, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20989> accessed 10/04/2016

of consistency in this, too. When speaking at the National Unity Day itself, Putin in 2015 implied Russia is an omnipresent or spiritual being:

Russia is our homeland. She is in our hearts, our acts and deeds. Our parents and children, our hopes our dreams... We are inseparable from our homeland and its ancient old spiritual roots... Our multi-ethnic nation has never been stopped by difficulties ahead... Based on our past experience, we can map our future horizons more clearly.⁴⁶²

Despite this attempt, the fact that ordinary Russians do not consider this holiday of any real importance suggests the messaging behind it is hollow.

The New Year's Eve holiday, which was reinstated by Stalin in 1935, tends to play on the national culture and its 'modern' aspects. It is very common for the TV channels to invite Cossack choirs to perform or even have celebrities singing traditional folk songs.⁴⁶³ The show itself often gets political, such as in 2014 when three Russian celebrities sanctioned by the EU performed 'song of the sanctions'.⁴⁶⁴ These types of performances reflect the attitude of a desire to see a strong Russia returned, one who can stand up in the world for its own interests, as championed in the Putin narrative. Naturally, the motives can be bought into question when celebrities perform or express such opinions on state owned channels watched by the majority of Russians.⁴⁶⁵ Not only is viewership high, polls show the majority of Russians tend to stay at home relaxing during the New Year period relaxing since 2005.⁴⁶⁶ Thus, the television channels have a huge opportunity to be 'entertaining' in their politicisation of the holidays.

⁴⁶² Vladimir Putin's speech at a reception marking 'Russia Day', following the National Awards Presentation ceremony, a reception was held on the Kremlin's Ivanovskaya Square to mark the Russia Day holiday, June 12th 2015, 14.00pm, The Kremlin, Moscow

⁴⁶³ "Noviy god 2012" *Rossiia I* 31/12/2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQQpfYYvzj0> accessed 10/04/2016

⁴⁶⁴ "Noviy God 2014" *Rossiia I* 31/12/2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiBF-9cknRw> accessed 10/04/2016

⁴⁶⁵ "Perviy Kanal' stal glavnym istochnikom telenostei dlya molodikh rossiyan", *Dozhd'*, https://tvrain.ru/news/pervyj_kanal_stal_glavnym_istochnikom_novostej_dlja_molodyh_rossijan-440658/ accessed 18/01/2017

⁴⁶⁶ The poll 'Russians celebrating the New Year' *Levada Centre* was conducted over a ten year period 2005-2015 showed consistently that 70%+ prefer to welcome the New Year at home with close friends and family and a

Russia's most important holiday after New Year's Eve remains Victory Day (or May 9), further showing how over relied upon it is. The fact this is a state holiday (and not a public one) shows that this government is the heir to the victory. The irony is that this day is also associated with one of Russia's most brutal leaders. Volgograd is renamed Stalingrad in six official celebrations⁴⁶⁷, but Stalin's picture was banned from public celebrations in 2010 by Medvedev, who also confirmed Russian guilt over Katyn the same year. Analysing Putin's speeches on Victory Day, no mention of Stalin is ever made. It would simply be too polarising and get unwanted attention from the Western media. It is also unsurprising that the two most important holidays are also the better orchestrated and planned as well as the most nationally solidifying. These are the two occasions where the president and Russian state has access to its possible widest audience. The year 2015 saw Putin's speeches at the Victory Day Parade and New Year's Eve stress the idea of tradition, security and benefitting the Motherland. In his speech on New Year's Eve, Putin made remarks concerning the armed and labour forces whom the country depend upon and stressed that unity through times of trouble, like the Great Patriotic War, help the nation to meet such challenges and will always serve as examples.⁴⁶⁸ New Year's Eve is less interfered with by the state, but the president's speech is symbolic, as it become a tradition in the USSR – it is a part of this continuity factor. Victory Day gets equal international and domestic attention, and therefore serves as the ultimate showdown of historical patriotism, which can promote unity and security. The Soviet symbols, lavish military parades and Putin's patriotic speeches are the tip of this iceberg.

Non-official anniversaries are also important, but usually very small scale and essentially private. The deaths of Lenin and Stalin are participated in annually by communists, and happens right at the heart of the Russian capital. Wreaths and flowers (usually red carnations) are laid at the mausoleum and on Stalin's grave (see below).

consistent 50%+ stay in the homes (possibly dachas). *The most recent survey took place between 18 and 21 December 2015.* <http://www.levada.ru/eng/russians-celebrating-new-year> accessed 10/04/2016

⁴⁶⁷ The six official celebrations when Volgograd is renamed Stalingrad are: The Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad (February 2); Victory Day (May 9); The Day of Remembrance and Mourning marking the German invasion (June 22); Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Nazi Bombing in Stalingrad (August 23); Anniversary of the end of the Second World War (September 2); The day marking the beginning of the Nazi defeat in Stalingrad (November 19).

⁴⁶⁸ President V.V. Putin's New Year Address to the Nation, December 31, 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/speeches/51128> accessed 10/04/2016



Figure 2: Anniversary of Stalin's death, Moscow 2013

These are only reported on due to some international interest. The local population are usually at work oblivious to it all. Likewise, a festive liturgy on Peter and Paul's day is a tradition, where the Patriarch leads a liturgy in the familial burial vault of the Romanov dynasty in St. Peter and Paul's cathedral, St. Petersburg.⁴⁶⁹ As if by fate, this day also coincides with 'Russia Day' (June 12), the national holiday for the Russian Federation commemorating the day the modern state was established. As polling shows, however, most Russians are indifferent towards Russia Day, with even fewer Russians taking the day off work.⁴⁷⁰ Russia was the only former Soviet republic to not gain independence from the USSR, as it is the successor state. It, therefore, lacks any real meaning to most people. Lawmakers, including Putin, have also pondered protection for 'unofficial symbols of Russia', ordering fines for any insulting or defacing.⁴⁷¹ This could be extended to monuments of leaders, as well as emblems, replicas and so on. The enforcement of such a law, however impractical, would indicate that history is completely untouchable. In other

⁴⁶⁹ 'Moscow Patriarch to lead liturgy in Romanov's burial vault in St. Petersburg', *TASS*, tass.ru/en/society/887655 accessed 12/07/2017.

⁴⁷⁰ Andrei Sinitsyn, 'Rossiyane priznali Den' Rossii prazdnikom', *Vedomosti*, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2015/06/11/596096-rossiyane-priznali-den-rossii-prazdnikom> accessed 01/11/2017

⁴⁷¹ Defend your Kalashnikov: Lawmakers ponder protection for unofficial symbols of Russia', *RT*, rt.com/politics/340857-kalashnikov-t-34-and-tsar accessed 25/04/2016

words, while there could be more public celebrations and national holidays of a historical nature, civil society are likely to reject them, and organising this would take an immense effort.

Conclusion

In response to Sobchak's statement at the beginning of this chapter, the Russian government believes it still needs 'effective managers' to legitimise the young state with a thousand year history. Recalling the terror too much undermines this. This chapter has shown that anniversaries and memorabilia come with a great deal of constraints, are focused around unity, sovereignty, security, patriotism, and play on nostalgia for an unexperienced glorious past. These are the ultimate reinforcement of the narrative and rarely fail to stray far from it, despite the complexities that arise in their construction and existence. While it may be too early to call such attempts as 'successful', in creating a new sense of pride among the population, the impact is undeniable and noticeable. Protests to remove controversial memorabilia are rare; in fact, Muscovites are more upset with the giant statue of Peter the Great on the Moscow River because it looks 'ugly'. Festivals say a lot about a nation's identity, but the nature in which they unfold is far more telling. For instance, no referendum on statues of Stalin's were issued and there is little public say over the timing or features during anniversaries. They are laid on or established by the government, and civil society's participation or lack thereof, is also evident. While parts of the narrative are accepted, many have still not trickled through and are sometimes viewed as mediocre. The mythologising is on occasion troubling, yet there is little to suggest that a majority of the population are confusing this for historical fact. There is evidence to show the state is willing to engage with the difficult sub plots of history in a lukewarm fashion, however.

The anniversaries are used as a way of promoting the state's narrative to form a new kind of identity, which the president hopes will create a secure, independent and sovereign nation full of loyal citizens. Civil society does participate in the funding and construction of monuments, and simultaneously, these come with equal criticism and indifference. While neither Putin nor any member of the cabinet take part in non-official events, these are not prohibited either. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that the state and society recognise these are important figures who cannot be written out of history. Then again, civil society shows the writing process is still on going. The imperial and Soviet past has been reignited in the public space to also

justify the present. Its leaders and controversial episodes are therefore presented as a historical necessity for Russia, and one which must still be come to terms with. It can also explain why the creative process involves reproducing and repackaging instead of originality.

Conclusion

Wet Cement in a New Wine Bottle

Observing the bigger picture of history in Russia today, this thesis has shown that the glory days of Russian history can come from both the Imperial and Soviet period so long as they speak to the message of continuity, a strong state and the flourishing of Russian culture. Usually, this series of achievements assumes the form of state and military leaders, although it is not a requirement. The period under investigation has usable examples, which are exploited routinely and cautiously. A concrete narrative is beginning to form, but for now, it remains wet cement. The most usable periods are the end of the nineteenth century and Great Patriotic War, where most of the population can reach an agreement with the state. Unlike the Soviet era, whatever is conveyed in the public sphere, whether it is in the form of a textbook or monument, does not become the sole authority or unquestioned truth. Two things are apparent, however; history is a ready source for patriotism and the attitudes and narratives surrounding the period are inconsistent. The population are also aware of this. The country as a whole wants to feel good about itself after the fall of the USSR and the disappointments of democracy. Pride in a history that champions positive stories of strong leaders, a unique way of life, progression and military victories is a good starting point and reliable fallback. At least it can be when objectivity is not required to retell the story. The interviews conducted for this thesis found that teachers are prone to rejecting the message, particularly the younger generations who did not experience the Soviet system. While they are more malleable in the sense that all they know is the Russian Federation led by Vladimir Putin, this in itself is why rejection is possible. Unlike the Soviet era, the message is not strictly controlled or forced onto the population and contesting it is possible. The past has become extremely symbolic and led to the problem of over-mythologising. When nuance and inferred meanings become more important than historical fact, this could later be its own death sentence. Russia today is, after all, an open society with active social media users.

Another paradox of the past in contemporary Russia is the lack of creativity in the creative process. There are plenty of new exhibitions, monuments, films, museums and restorations of old buildings that all utilise up to date technology and resources. In most cases, these represent a repackaged and recycled past rather than something brand new. Keeping the past familial credits the idea of continuity. The narrative is new in the sense that the Russian Federation now

has one, however, it is not original; pieces of the puzzle are collected and placed onto a canvas in a way the suits the government's message. The phrase old wine in a new bottle does not exactly fit this scenario. The bottle is new, but the recipe has been adapted. The title of 'Great Patriotic War', for instance, portrayed Soviet exceptionalism during the victory effort. It is not the same as the Second World War, which began in 1939. Today, the continued sacralisation has the same goal but is Russia-centered. Also similar to the Soviet period, history is serving the state's immediate needs.⁴⁷² In only seeking to achieve national unity and a stable path to modernisation, the uncertain past makes the future seem even less so. 'Sovereign democracy' which is the 'unique' modern path, is fragile, imprecisely defined but is based on a particular formula.⁴⁷³ This formula, it is argued, is to reinterpret modernity from perspectives of the past. The often non-specificity surrounding it also provides some flexibility.

This thesis has shown that the past is the most desirable resource to play on the identity of modern Russian citizens. The very idea of Russianness is strengthening ties to the myths that make up 'Russia' and support the past glories. Reasserting the founding myths and historic traditions that have continued and even flourished in a period of troubles in the twenty first century is utilised as proof of Russia's greatness and unique place in the world. When Putin spoke of how Russia can have no other national idea but patriotism, he may as well have said that Russia cannot conceive of another. This is why rebranding and restoring cultural traditions has become the norm, and nostalgia is so important. To understand how Russia operates today, it is essential to understand it as a historic entity, who besides a former authoritarian communist state was once the 'Third Rome' and straddles Europe, Asia and the Middle East. That the many peoples of Russia have endured tremendous hardship and now live in a world where it has yet to find its place as it attempts to re-emerge as a great power. As the West becomes an increasingly less attractive alternative with the disillusionment of the EU and presidency of Donald Trump, history serves as a reminder of two things. First, that the two sides have never found a settlement, and second, it sells the idea to Russians that its place in the world is exceptional and incompatible with other systems.

⁴⁷² Yan Mann, *Contested Memory: Writing the Great Patriotic War's Official History in Khrushchev's Thaw*, PhD thesis Arizona State University, August 2016, p.386

⁴⁷³ Donald R. Kelly, *Russian Politics and Presidential Power: transformational leadership from Gorbachev to Putin*, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2017), pp.130-131

To follow on from this, a recurrent question of this research is whether Russia is exceptional in its use of history for legitimisation purposes, nation building or consolidation. To claim this would be absurd, but more importantly, it misses the point. While Russia and Putin personally are not exceptional in this, the emphasis on historical continuity is to show the country's exceptionality and uniqueness. This is, furthermore, in spite of its history being marred by discontinuities. The fact that this narrative remains wet cement shows Russia is still a nation in transition. Something else that set Russia apart from the West in reinterpreting its past is the question of morality. Whilst in Britain, for example, the imperial past is viewed from a moral position, in Russia it is not. Neither is the Soviet period. Looking at the past from a moral perspective further opens uncomfortable questions that could cause harm. Individuals or groups who drift from the 'consensus' are often labelled 'unpatriotic' or treacherous'.⁴⁷⁴ Selecting a historical period to draw moral lessons from is to hold it in higher regards than others. Whilst the heroism, sacrifice and immense bravery of the Great Patriotic War fits this, little else specific does. As such, 'tradition' as a blanket term is the basis for morality. The philosopher and Soviet critic, Aleksandr Zinoviev, whilst in exile 1978 perhaps best wrote about viewing the past through a moral lens:

I became an anti-Stalinist when I was sixteen. *Now*, of course, everyone is an anti-Stalinist. But, I, adhering to the rule that the dead cannot be my enemies, changed the orientation of my critique of reality. I began to study the Stalinist period as a scientist. And came to the conclusion that no matter what, it was a great period. It was horrible, tragic. Countless crimes were committed at that time. But the period as a whole was not criminal. If one judges history from the criterium of morality and law, then it must all be conceived as a crime. I do not justify the horrors of the Stalin period, I only defend its objective assessment. And I despise those today who make their fortunes criticizing a past that that neither threatens them, nor can defend itself. As they say, even a donkey can kick a dead lion.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ James Ryan, *The Politics of National History; Russia's Ruling Elite and the Centenary of 1917*, Revolutionary Russia, June 2018, p.15

⁴⁷⁵ A. Zinoviev quoted in Vladimir Pozner, *Parting With Illusions*, p.308

Viewing the past through morality opens up too many inconsistencies to bear. Zinoviev's mother and her six sons, who lived and worked on the kolkhoz, would almost certainly have had a better life if not for Stalin. Instead, this illiterate woman's sons became a colonel in the army, another the director of an industrial factory and three engineers. Morality is often irrelevant when the very existence of so many people was transformed. In the West, this statement would be hard for most to accept because our historical experience of struggling for greater freedoms is simply different to what most of the Russian population has endured.

The education system's priorities reveal that history is more symbolic than anything else, and says a lot about the stage of Russia's political development. The system has merely been rebranded, and continues to stress patriotism. Likewise, the stress on patriotism as well as Putin's presidencies began during a period of crisis. It has a way of hinting that the path to modernity and normalcy is not complete. The Soviet model of education is still viewed in a positive light and its practices continue to this day. This is in part, down to where education comes on the government's list of priorities, but also nostalgia. The Soviet education system was one of the best in the world, with the exception that it did not allow the teaching of freethinking. Yet, this shows the priorities of education in Russia; freethinking is not discouraged, but neither is it the main goal, in the same way that objectivity is not the purpose of history; instead, it is cultivating love and respect to past glories of a great and unique country. Thus, the teachers are trained in this way. Rebranding the Soviet model also keeps a Russian character of education, and further attests to the patriotic programmes being purely symbolic. The population is supportive of the patriotic emphasis, as viewed with the growing importance of national holidays like May 9. Yet, schools and teachers seem largely unsure of what a patriotic project entails. The need for greater clarity adds to the notion of a past that is wet cement and the projects themselves are a recycled wine bottle.

Teachers show that there will likely be another great transformation of Russian history, as those who lived in the USSR become fewer. The priorities of Russian society are changing, and the willingness to have a more open discussion about the past is growing. It will then be up to the state to either join the discussion or guide it in a more auspicious direction where it continues to maintain the upper hand. The interviews conducted and analysis of textbooks, exams and homework show that many complications still exist in relaying the past. While the aim is for textbooks to eventually become the 'final say' of the government, they tend to be used as a guideline and are not considered the sole authority – nor should they. The issue of textbooks

persists in political discussions showing that the battle is not yet over. These can still play a role in shaping the population's historical consciousness. In some respects, shifting the focus from facts to historical patriotism changes the aim of history education to citizen building. The black and white binary of the past is unhelpful in this regard, as well, since 'wrong' or 'falsified' accounts of the past are unpatriotic. This is regardless of how historically accurate they are, or even if like the film *My Good Hans* (2015), they merely touch upon uncomfortable facts in an attempt to deal with them.⁴⁷⁶ This is also why teachers will continue to be trained to instill moral and ethical codes in the students. This is not unlike history in other nations, but as previously stated, the clear distinctions of wrong and right, true and false are designed to make Russia stand out from other European countries.

There are clear splits in society which can undermine not only the historical narrative, but also the myth of a stable state in contemporary times. The state and population have still not fully reconciled with the more complex and darker sides of Russian history. Despite a government ordered monument to the victims of the terror finally being installed, as long as busts of Stalin continue to surface at the demand of civil society, the reconciliation process will never be complete. As this thesis was submitted, it was reported that gulag prisoner documents had been destroyed at the state's order (something it denied).⁴⁷⁷ This aside, loyalty to the state (loyalty according to its own definition) will not come through negative depictions of the Soviet era, and the 1990s are repeatedly held up as proof of this. The growing nostalgia towards the USSR may prove another obstacle here.⁴⁷⁸ As previously outlined, repackaging the troublesome past in a less negative light is limiting Russians' ability to identify with a democratic state, and stagnates the democratisation process. However, the elite, and Putin in particular, use history as their justification for governing a certain way. Putin wants democracy to work for Russia, and both he and his spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, have stated publically that they fear the population has not yet matured enough. Hence, a patriotic person is a responsible one and, therefore, will vote

⁴⁷⁶ *My Good Hans* tells the story of Russians and Germans cooperating during the Second World War, with the main hero, Hans, later returning to Russia as an invader. He eventually remembers that he was once in Russia before as a friend. Like *Matilda*, the film was not banned but it still attracted a lot of criticism and controversy in certain circles, and needed certain approvals from the War Historical Society; Alexander Mindadze (Dir.), *My Good Hans*, (Russia: Passenger Film Studio, 2015).

⁴⁷⁷ 'Terror snimayut s arkhivogo ucheta', *Kommersant*, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3652040> accessed 08/06/2017.

⁴⁷⁸ A *Levada* poll ('nostal'gia po SSSR') in December 2017 revealed 58% of Russians still regret the collapse of the USSR and that nostalgia among all age groups remains high. The poll is available at <https://www.levada.ru/2017/12/25/nostalgiya-po-sssr/> accessed 29/12/2017

‘correctly’. In other words, history shows that democracy cannot work in Russia with the wrong leaders. It is also important to stress that modernisation does not require democracy, and this period has two examples from which to draw from as ‘proof’ of this. Additionally, Russian history has several examples of when democracy has proven regressive, disruptive and chaotic. As mentioned, however, the shelf life of the current government’s stance is currently unknown and the upcoming generation will test this. Signs of change are apparent, too. At the time of writing, six of Russia’s eighty-five governors were under forty, as was a key economic minister.⁴⁷⁹ Their worldviews and experience of Russia’s past will shape it over the next few generations.

Although anniversaries and memorabilia are the ultimate reinforcement and symbol of the narrative and designed for everyone, these usually represent the state or something about its legacy. Taking into consideration monuments and exhibitions to the Stalinist terror, there are few dedicated to the actual population. The ‘House on the Embankment’ and ‘Wall of Sorrows’ in Moscow both attest to the role of the NKVD, an organ of state power. What is more, both of these are in the city centre. By contrast, plaques with the names of its victims sit on Moscow’s outskirts. The Civil War monument is in a small town (Novocherkassk) that is relatively unknown and was not an obvious choice. By contrast the most recent monument to a Russian leader from the period under focus (Aleksandr III) was unveiled in Crimea. Although heroes of the Great Patriotic War are given their dues, many have been critical of how the state uses them. At the Victory Day parade on Red Square 2012, an elderly female veteran dressed as a general had previously been spotted wearing another uniform with a different rank and medals.⁴⁸⁰ The director of the state archives, Sergei Mironenko, also warned that while falsifications are inevitable, historical events should not be confused with ‘political considerations’.⁴⁸¹ Recently, the ‘immortal regiment’ has become a widely popular and participated in event where Russians march through the main streets of their local towns carrying portraits of their relatives who fought in the war. The leadership, including Putin, also take part. A political consideration, this also adds to the sacralisation of those who fought for the motherland, yet equally highlights how over relied on the Great Patriotic War is as a unifier.

⁴⁷⁹ ‘The Struggle For Russia’, *The Economist*, March 24th, 2018, p.14

⁴⁸⁰ Evgeniy Aryukhin, ‘U Mazvoley zaskli fal’shlivogo veterana’, *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, <https://www.kp.ru/daily/25881.5/2844529/> accessed 02/01/2017

⁴⁸¹ ‘Razoblachenie fal’sofaktora i izgotovlennoi im fal’shivki neizbezno’, *Kommersant*, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2712788> accessed 02/01/2017

While this thesis has concentrated on history in Russia, the cross-disciplinary approach has shed light on other problems in the country as a whole. Russia's place in the world has not been fully decided, and the nineteenth century traditions of querying this have returned. The geopolitical situation will determine much of how the historical narrative continues to develop and morph to the state's immediate interests. Yet, this adds to the quasi-messianic mission of Russia, which has existed throughout the centuries. Russians are increasingly seeing themselves as separate from other civilisations, and are emphasising their 'otherness' as a viable alternative.⁴⁸² Secondly, this thesis has given some exposure to the socio-economic position of Russian citizens and how a patriotic past is used to soften their woes. This study suggests that these cannot be explained away by any past because this vast society is so diverse and split. Also, the past indicates that the state building process is not wholly complete, since while it is the new unifying force, it is all too often the replacement for the taboo. The construction and maintenance of democratic institutions must continue and should receive support from the international community. Although Russia has a democratic framework in place, it is quite dysfunctional and history plays a key role in explaining the reasons why. However, this is a double-edged sword. If Russia does not transition from 'explaining' its current situation to viable and popular solutions, democratisation and modernisation will not be realised. Likewise, the West must also have patience regarding this process and not keep rushing to criticise any setbacks as this often alienates Russians. The image of the West in Russia today is often as aggressive, hypocritical, triumphalist and condescending.⁴⁸³ Such an image plays into the hands of those who are inward looking and desire a socially and politically convenient history.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this study does imply that the vulnerability of the state is not unfounded. As long as teachers are teaching to an exam specification, this has the ability to overshadow the patriotic message. If for no other reason, this is because students will be focused on passing *YeGE* with the right score and not taking much else into consideration. Another contributing factor is not including more teachers and professional historians in updating the school materials. Feeling left out of the modernisation process could alienate a key demographic who are expected to 'vote properly' and transmit the message. The polarisation of society combined with the fragility of institutions also means that the situation is not as stable as the

⁴⁸² Edwin Bacon, *Inside Russian Politics*, (London: Biteback Publishing, 2017), p.39

⁴⁸³ Michael Kimmage, 'How Russian Society Created Putin', *Foreign Affairs*, available at <http://foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2018-06-14/peoples-authoritarian?cid=soc-fb> accessed 01/07/2018

state would like. A message that does not champion unity far enough or is polarising could expose this fragility and inflict self-harm further down the line. In addition, while criticisms of domestic policy from the international community are largely shrugged off, these are perceived as unhelpful and sometimes threatening.

This thesis has several openings for further research, with three especially worth highlighting. As this study focused on a particular period, it was naturally unable to determine how much other periods impact the Russian identity and Putin Agenda. Other case studies to consider would be the Khrushchev Thaw and Brezhnev era. Two reasons in particular make this an interesting point of study. Firstly, both Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's leadership saw dramatic transformations in how the past is constructed. Stalin's legacy had to be completely re-evaluated both times and the Great Patriotic War became increasingly used as the grounds for supporting much needed myths. The presence of both in the modern day and ways of approaching them began in the post-Stalin period and deserve greater study. Secondly, the period has been consistently ranked as an era of positive development by the majority of Russians under Putin.⁴⁸⁴ This is likely down to economic support system and nostalgia for the quality of life, also supported in recent polls.⁴⁸⁵ This may be useful in deciphering what Russians expect from a future state and certain chapters of this thesis allude as to why. For instance, if wages remain low, the economy stays fixated around oil and gas, property prices continue to rise, the healthcare system deteriorate and less funding is provided for development in the regions it could lead to social unrest amongst a mobile population. There is less of an economic safety net in place, and should another economic catastrophe occur or the standard of living drop significantly, the fear of chaos could become a reality. These were not of concern for citizens in the 1960s and 70s, and Putin's most recent presidential campaign focused on some of these issues, including increasing the minimum wage.⁴⁸⁶ Perhaps Putin is mindful of the upcoming generation whose experience mean it may demand more from their elected officials. As *Perestroika* shows, the message cannot be disjointed from reality and so a patriotic past is not an impenetrable mask for a lack of change.

⁴⁸⁴ 'The Role of Personality in Russian History', *Levada*, 26/01/2015 <https://www.levada.ru/en/2015/01/26/the-role-of-personality-in-russia-s-history/> accessed 31/12/2017

⁴⁸⁵ 54% responded to the question 'what do you regret most about the collapse of the USSR?' the destruction of the united economic system, 'Nostal'gia po SSSR', *Levada*, 25/12/2017, <https://www.levada.ru/en/2017/12/25/nostalgia-for-the-ussr/> accessed 27/12/2017

⁴⁸⁶ 'Everything you need to know about the monthly minimum wage in Russia', *TASS*, <http://tass.com/economy/983714> accessed 02/01/2017

Although this thesis assessed the homework tasks of schoolchildren, it is worth exploring what is absorbed in the classroom and actually gained in the learning process. The primary focus was on the projection of the message from above and how the narrative compliments the state's agenda. The apparent lack of interest in taking history at school is worth further investigation and may provide additional indications as to whether the narrative is succeeding in convincing the population. One method worth considering is conducting diary studies of schoolchildren taking Russian history in the ninth and tenth classes. This is when they must decide whether to continue their history education and when the twentieth century enters the curriculum. Such a study would not only chart their progress, but also provide a more thorough understanding of how history lessons are conducted and what is actually learned. Limitations of such a study are the control factor, as it rests entirely on the participants' shoulders. In this case, they would be schoolchildren, which in itself has limitations due to their age. Most importantly though, a diary study is just one person's perspective, meaning the scale and recruitment of participants would require careful consideration.

Russian history in former Soviet space has become prominent topic in recent years, particularly following the Colour Revolutions and events of Maidan 2013-2014. Most of the attention is centered on the Baltic States, Georgia and Ukraine, since their new national histories are based around casting Russia in a negative way. To increase Russia's attractiveness in the former Soviet space, memory is heavily relied on, in particular the Great Patriotic War and Soviet economic support system. Russia is not the only former republic with bitter memories of aftermath of the Soviet collapse. Millions of people across the former Soviet space have left over nostalgia for the USSR because it provided them with more economic stability. Much of Central Asia now relies on wages earned in Russia by their citizens, whereas many Ukrainians and Moldovans also send money home from Europe and Russia alike. In addition, these countries were too once a part of a nuclear superpower, and are now considered second or third world countries. Maintaining attraction in the former Soviet space requires the continued importance of the Russian language, meaning it cannot lose its influence in the region. Ukraine recently passed a law requiring all school lessons be conducted in Ukrainian, despite three sizeable minority populations who operate numerous schools in their native language, including 621 in Russian.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ Alessandra Pretince, 'Criticism of Ukraine's Language Law Justified: rights body', *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-language/criticism-of-ukraines-language-law-justified-rights-body-idUSKBN1E227K> accessed 30/12/2017

This is another area where history can be a negotiating space in geopolitics, and to Russia's benefit via the promotion of a 'shared history'. Then again, the Ukrainian government would argue this is precisely the reason to prohibit Russian language schools to avoid 'indoctrination' and attempting to disassociate children with the Ukrainian state. While Russia has been accused of attempting this with 'compatriots', there is also an underlying fear from the state that the West is attempting to do the same to its citizens.

Many motors are driving the use of history in Russia today and it has not gone unnoticed. This has become an important component of Putin's presidency for affirming the state and social order. The past is therefore a state policy aimed at establishing a national identity. For this reason, many areas have to be examined in order to grasp the scale of its importance and how it is often misrepresented. Continuity means not only the life of the state and its power, but also Russian culture, traditions and their attractiveness. Above all, what this thesis has demonstrated is that Russia has still not come to terms with this period. The available polling on the 1917 revolutions and Stalin era supports this. Whether it is the lack of commemoration for the revolution's centenary, the film *Matilda* or Stalin's legacy, all suggest that the scars have not completely healed, and there is a great risk of reopening the wounds and causing great frictions among society. Most of the past's reinterpretation is done at the state's initiative and there is little outcry from civil society for investigations into crimes committed by the Soviet regime or to even restore the monarchy. This provides it with some breathing space and more flexibility in pushing the narrative it prefers. The period under focus and the last one hundred years of Russian history also compliment the Putin narrative. After a century which saw the fall of the monarchy, revolution, Stalin's terror, the fall of the USSR, democracy's disappointment, economic crises and almost total corruption, Putin was able to usher in a period of stability and use the glories of Russia's past to weather any bad storms, as he did in the early 2000s and aftermath of Crimea. These references were also aided by the strengthening of the economy and restoration of order in the early to mid-2000s. As Andrei Kolesnikov wrote, the period Russians value the most is the present.⁴⁸⁸ Putin and his 'new' state after the disintegration of the 1990s have become the inheritors of all that is best about Russian history.

⁴⁸⁸ Andrei Kolesnikov, A Past That Divides Us, *Carnegie Centre Moscow*, available at www.carnegie.ru/2017/10/05/past-that-divides-russia-s-new-official-pub-73304 accessed 09/07/2018.

The Russian filmmaker, Andron Konchalovsky, perhaps put it best when he said that politics alone cannot change a mentality, citing the example of Stalin. Konchalovsky believes that Stalin ultimately failed to ‘modernise’ Russia (make it catch up with the West in ten years) because he believed that politics could change a mentality.⁴⁸⁹ At least, politics cannot immediately achieve this, and is arguably the best description of contemporary Russia. History in Russia today is the best indication of where Russia is as a nation; it continues to define itself by the past. However, this raises two important questions that are appropriate to end on. Can a country modernise successfully if it is solely defined and bound by a rigid interpretation of its history? Secondly, is the end goal merely morphing into an updated version of itself? Modernisation and reconciliation does not simply mean moving on without a discussion, nor is this possible. This period will not be forgotten or lost in the pages of history, and neither should it. As with many things in Russian life, the past is adapted to, which auspiciously sums up the answer to this thesis. History is used in Putin’s Russia for adapting to modernity.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with Andron Konchalovsky, *BBC Hardtalk*, August 4 2014.

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APPENDIX

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These photographs and scans were all taken by the author 2014-2018 in the Russian Federation.

Appendix A



Пирс Д.

Уважаемый Джеймс!

Департамент государственной политики в сфере общего образования Минобрнауки России рассмотрел Ваше обращение и в части своей компетенции сообщает.

Запись на прием к Министру образования и науки Российской Федерации осуществляется сотрудниками Аппарата Правительства Российской Федерации.

График приема граждан, утверждаемый Руководителем Аппарата Правительства Российской Федерации, доступен на официальном Интернет-портале Правительства Российской Федерации: <http://www.government.gov.ru/> в подразделе «Информационные материалы» раздела главного меню «Работа с обращениями граждан».

Для подготовки содержательного ответа Вы также можете направить свои вопросы в адрес Минобрнауки России в письменном виде.

Заместитель директора Департамента

Пирс Д.

Уважаемый Джеймс!

Департамент государственной политики в сфере общего образования Минобрнауки России рассмотрел Ваше обращение и в части своей компетенции сообщает.

Вопросы об изучении истории Российской Федерации требуют дополнительной проработки, в связи с чем срок рассмотрения Вашего обращения продлен на 30 дней (часть 2 статьи 12 Федерального закона от 2 мая 2006 г. № 59-ФЗ «О порядке рассмотрения обращений граждан Российской Федерации»).

О результатах рассмотрения представленной информации Вам будет сообщено дополнительно.

Заместитель директора Департамента

Letters from the Ministry of Education asking for an additional thirty days to respond to the author's request for interview and to send in the interview questions.


Appendix B




Mozhem Povtorit' (We can repeat).

This vulgar meme appeared on social media following the Annexation of Crimea. Many Russians even bought it in the form of car stickers, see at <http://xn--2-8sbpmeecfp.xn--p1ai/%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BC-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%8C-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F-2.html>


Какое из зданий, представленных ниже, было построено в годы руководства страной того же государственного деятеля, при котором был создан данный монумент? В ответе запишите цифру, которой обозначено это здание.




1)



3)



2)



4)

Ответ: _____

Не забудьте перенести все ответы в бланк ответов № 1.

Часть 2

Для записи ответов на задания этой части (35–40) используйте бланк ответов № 2. Запишите сначала номер задания (35, 36 и т.д.), а затем развёрнутый ответ на него. Ответы записывайте чётко и разборчиво.

Прочтите отрывок из исторического источника и кратко ответьте на вопросы 35–37. Ответы предполагают использование информации из источника, а также применение исторических знаний по курсу истории соответствующего периода.

Из петиции рабочих и жителей Петербурга

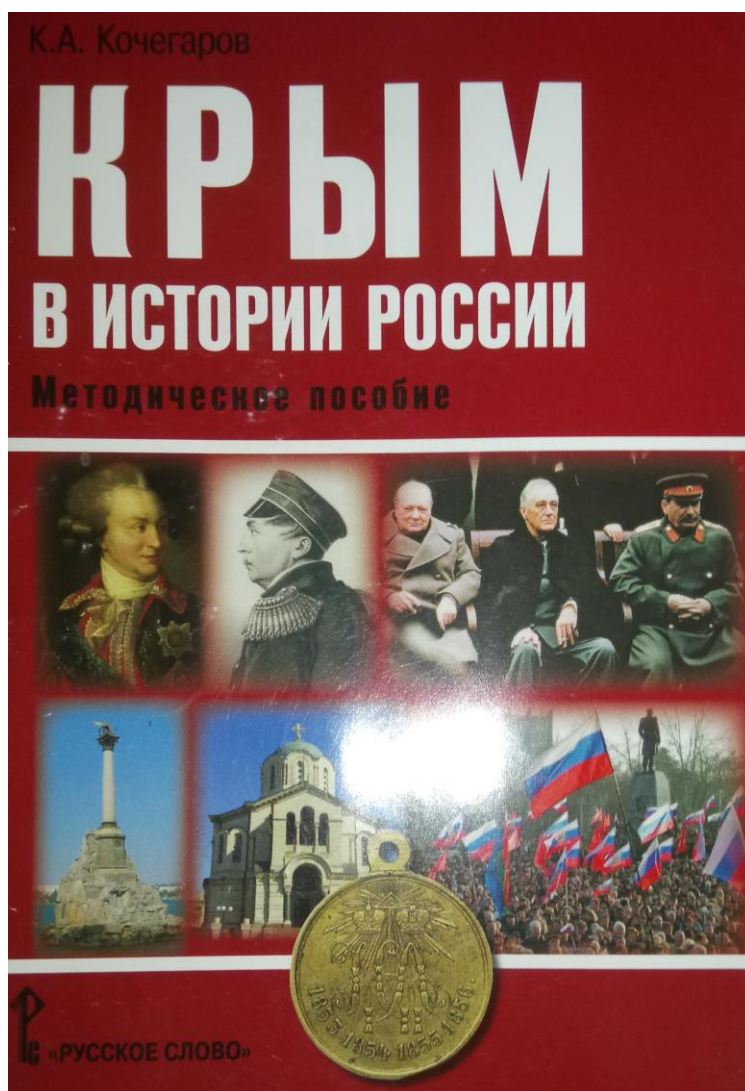
«Государь!

Мы обвиняли, нас угнетают, обременяют непосильным трудом, над нами надругаются, в нас не признают людей, к нам относятся как к рабам, которые должны терпеть свою горькую участь и молчать. Мы терпели, но нас толкают всё дальше в омут нищеты, бесправия и невежества, нас душат деспотизм и произвол, мы задыхаемся. Нет больше сил терпеть, государь. Настал предел терпению. Для нас пришел тот страшный момент, когда лучше смерть, чем продолжение невыносимых мук.

Необходимо народное представительство, необходимо, чтобы сам народ помогал себе и управлял собой. Ведь ему только и известны истинные его нужды. Не отталкивай его помощь, прими её. повели немедленно, сейчас же призвать представителей земли русской от всех классов, от всех сословий, представителей и от рабочих. Пусть каждый

17

A sample YeGE paper in a self study book, this question asks students to name which of the monuments were built during the reign of the same leader. This is followed by part two, where students must read a historical extract and then complete short answer questions.



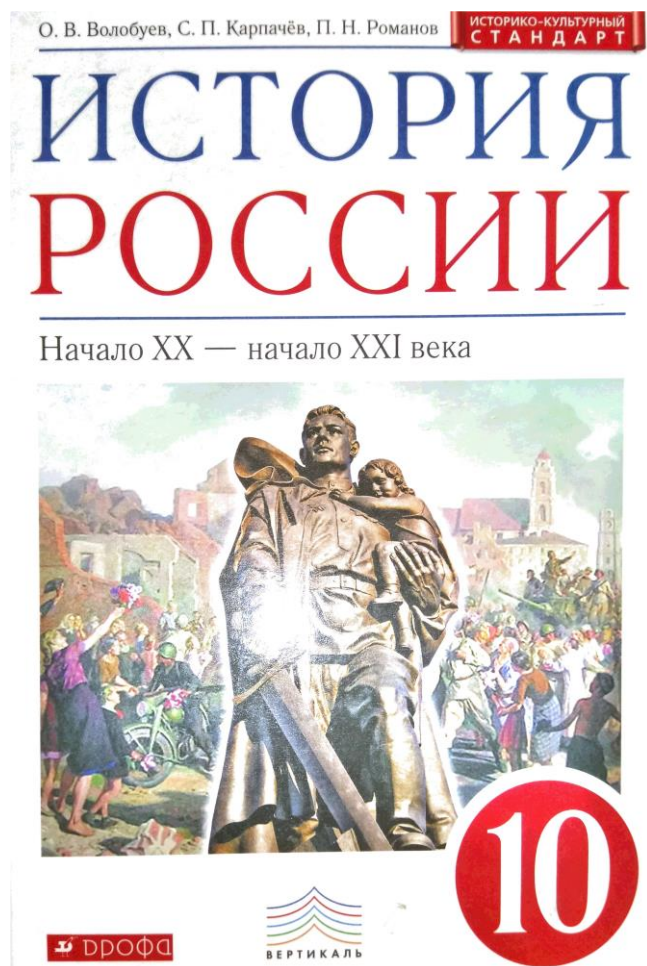
Krym v istorii Rossii (Crimea in the History of Russia)

A textbook on the history of Crimea published following the annexation. The textbook itself is actually very slim.

Appendix E



Front cover of Dannilov's ninth class textbook



O.V. Volubuev's tenth class textbook.

НОУ Владимирская. Тра-
 вославная гимназия
 ханбабаева Дарина, 10 класс.
 Сравнение Николая II, как и
 сама личность последнего русского
 императора, - тема очень проти-
 воречивая, не имеющая каких-то
 определенных и точных взглядов.
 Много для меня императоре-
 ская семья всегда была идеалом,
 примером настоящей любви, иск-
 ренности, самых нежных и непод-
 делных чувств и, если можно так
 сказать, особенной простоты и
 близости к народу. Дети носили
 самую обычную одежду, спали без
 перин и подушек на жестких мат-
 рацах, ели без изысков. (любимой
 едой цесаревича были простые сое-
 датские хлеб, щи, каша, которые

The front page of a tenth class student's written essay from NOU Vladimir Orthodox Gynasium. The theme is on Nicholas II and was awarded a '5' by the teacher.

Appendix H



From the exhibition 'Constructivism For Children'. Here are two of the flyers and a book (title unknown) on how to cross a busy street.

Appendix I



Moya Istoriya at VDNKh. In the window of the entrance (left) is a billboard with Aleskandr III and his famous quote ‘Russia has only two allies: the army and navy’. At the end of the exhibition is one of President Putin (right). The quote reads: ‘too often in our national history, instead of opposing power, we are confronted by opposition to Russia itself. And we know how it ended: the demolition of the state as we knew it’.