

**Reliving the Past. How the Russian Government and
Media Use History to Frame the Present.**



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Short Abstract

In this thesis, I examine political uses of history in Russia during Vladimir Putin's third term (2012-2018). Arguing that domestic politicians and state-aligned media continuously invoked history as a means of political legitimation and discursive (re)construction of Russian identity, I separate my research into two parts: 1) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, conflate specific contemporary issues with historical events? 2) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, use this conflation to promote selective engagement with history as central to Russian identity? I answer these questions through a large-scale discourse analysis of Russian media sources and official government documents, as well as interviews with cultural practitioners. I first examine the government and media's use of historical framing (the detailed conflation of a current event with a historical precedent) in their depictions of the Ukraine Crisis, sanctions, and Russian intervention in Syria. I then use these case studies to provide a framework of historical framing that can be applied beyond the Russian context. Historical framing was also part of a larger government-led 'call to history', whereby politicians and the media centred Russian identity around history and 'correct' historical interpretation. I provide practical examples in the second part of my thesis, when I detail how the Ministry of Culture and Russian Military Historical Society promoted and funded hundreds of thousands of historical organisations, activities, and festivals to propagate a standard cultural historical narrative. Through the enormous scale of these efforts, the government also reinforced its narrative that Russians were experiencing a patriotic upsurge and had attained a heightened consciousness of their own history and cultural heritage (which I term cultural consciousness). In the conclusion, I argue that these processes and narratives are not unique to Russia and that my findings provide a template for exploring similarly politicised treatments of history and identity in other countries.

Long Abstract

In this thesis, I examine political uses of history in Russia during Vladimir Putin's third term (2012-2018). Arguing that domestic politicians and state-aligned media continuously invoked history as a means of political legitimation and discursive (re)construction of Russian identity, I separate my research into two parts: 1) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, conflate specific contemporary issues with historical events? 2) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, use this conflation to promote selective engagement with history as central to Russian identity? I answer these questions through a large-scale discourse analysis of domestic state-aligned Russian media sources and official government documents, as well as interviews with cultural practitioners.

I first examine the government and media's use of historical framing (the detailed conflation of a current event with a historical precedent) in their depictions of the 2014 Ukraine Crisis, the imposition of EU and US sanctions on Russia in late 2014, and Russian military intervention in Syria in 2015. By historically framing these crises, the Russian media and politicians interpreted each event through a cyclical notion of history, turning contemporary issues into a direct reliving of past episodes of patriotic history. This technique of presenting contemporary events through a framework of a supposed historical equivalent was essential to government efforts to replay and make-present a heroic Russian past (e.g. the Great Patriotic War, post-1945 Soviet leadership).

After introducing the topic, relevant literature, and my methodology (Chapters One, Two, and Three), I provide the first case study of historical framing in Chapter Four. I detail how the media and politicians depicted events in Ukraine between 22 February 2014 and 25 May 2014, a period spanning President Yanukovich's departure to Russia and the

burgeoning conflict in the East, as a rerun of the Great Patriotic War. In Chapter Five, over a research period beginning in 17th July 2014 and ending on 27th October 2014, I examine how Russian media and politicians conflated the imposition of third-wave sanctions by the EU and USA with alleged historical precedents of Western attacks on the USSR. In Chapter Six, I detail how, between 16th September and 24th December 2015, Russian politicians and state-aligned media justified Russian military intervention in Syria by explaining it as evidence of Russia reasserting the post-1945 world order and resuming its Soviet-era superpower status.

Across Chapters Four to Six, I demonstrate that a pervasive sense of historical narrative accompanied the case studies, which were defining moments in post-Soviet Russia's relations with the West and understanding of itself. For the media to develop such narratives required time and effort; hence, I conducted framing analysis for each event over a 100-day period. From this extended analysis, I identified the historical schema, that is, the historical event with which the contemporary issue was being conflated. I analysed these confluences and collected references from the following sources: *Argumenty i fakty*, Lenta.ru, kremlin.ru, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, mid.ru, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, *Vesti nedeli*, *Voskresnoe vremya*. I selected the aforementioned sources for their high readership levels and alignment with the government. They also provided some diversity in terms of both publication and audience type, so this selection of sources provided a maximally broad overview of pro-government discourse.

The question of how best to conduct framing analysis has engendered considerable debate, with some extolling the possibilities of Computer Text Analysis tools, while others prefer the subtlety and nuance that close reading allows. To find a compromise, I adopted a manual approach that identified references through the presence of keywords (or certain words or phrases). The flexibility of a manual approach made it easier to identify the

presence of a historical frame in coverage of a news event because I could distinguish between consistent, repeated connotations and one-off comparisons with little depth. Once I had identified the presence of historical framing, I grouped keywords and phrases into thematic clusters, with the more frequent keywords for each group visualised in word clouds. These thematic groups each formed a sub-narrative within the broader historical framing narrative. By way of example, the Ukraine Crisis historical framing narrative comprised four sub-narratives: Stepan Bandera and internal enemies, Nazis and external enemies, war, and victory.

In Chapter Seven, I collate the findings from all three case studies to compare the framing discourses and provide a transferrable framework of what constitutes historical framing. I identified the following key criteria: the sources' detailed conflation of the past and present by an extended inculcation of the framing narrative, judged according to amount of repetition and the use of structure to reinforce the thematic content of the narrative; the sources' misrepresentation or false representation of events and/or history to ensure the historical frame 'fits' the present-day event; the sources' use of specific rhetorical devices, including personalised and conspiratorial tones, to deliver the frame. Having provided a conceptualisation of historical framing, grounded in the examples of the three case study discourses, I then study the considerable intersection between historical framing and other illiberal and/or populist narratives in Russian discourse

While an interesting discursive technique in itself, historical framing was also part of a larger government-led 'call to history', whereby politicians and the media centred Russian identity around history and 'correct' historical interpretation. I provide practical examples of this in the second part of my thesis and in response to my second research question, which seeks to contextualise historical framing within wider government patriotic discourse and uses of history. I employed a range of methods in my research. First, I supplemented the

historical framing analysis from the case studies with critical discourse analysis of major government strategy documents and doctrines released under President Putin between 2012-2018. I used close textual analysis to identify references to identity and patriotism, paying particular attention to occasions where these concepts were connected to history and knowledge thereof. Examining the archives of documents on kremlin.ru and the Ministry of Culture website, I analysed major policy documents published by the government in the research period, comprising presidential addresses, foreign policy concepts, military doctrines, and various strategies. Given that I am presenting a theory of a multifaceted effort by the government to create and project a very specific type of patriotism, I also conducted several interviews with cultural and media practitioners to contextualise my findings. These interviews were supported by a review of the activities of the Russian Military Historical Society, a prominent government-funded cultural organisation working in the sphere of history.

In Chapter Eight, I demonstrate how the government, particularly the Ministry of Culture, and the Russian Military Historical Society, promoted various policies, activities, and organisations to encourage public engagement with a standard cultural historical narrative that celebrated a strong state, stability, tradition, and continuity. Specifically, I detail how the Ministry of Culture and Russian Military Historical Society promoted and funded hundreds of thousands of historical organisations, activities, and festivals to propagate the events that constituted this narrative. Through the enormous scale of these efforts, the government also reinforced its argument that Russians were experiencing a patriotic upsurge and had attained a heightened consciousness of their own history and cultural heritage (which I term cultural consciousness).

In Chapter Nine, I theorise the government's, GONGOs', and media's curation of images of cultural consciousness. I argue that by monopolising images of everyday

nationalism, the constant making-present of patriotic history, and borrowing from Soviet traditions of class consciousness, the media constructed an image of Russia as a ‘culturally conscious’ nation, uniquely in touch with its heritage. This image was promoted by the media and politicians, who frequently depicted ‘ordinary’ people ostensibly gaining greater awareness of their cultural and historical legacy. Using this conflation of history, contemporary politics, patriotism and national identity, the media asserted that loving one’s country, and even belonging to it, were dependent on one’s view of history and participation in state-directed patriotic activities. According to the Russian media and government’s depictions of patriotism, cultural consciousness was attained through reaching an understanding of historical (allegorical) truth. Essentially, this idea can be reduced to the formulation that Russians are defined by (and special because of) their unique understanding of their own history and culture.

Binding the two parts together, I argue throughout the thesis that the media and government’s historical framing and securitisation of historical interpretation were closely connected processes employed for the purposes of political legitimacy and identity construction. In connecting the discourse analysis with research into the government and GONGOs’ activities, and government strategies and doctrines on patriotism, I explore how the government infused both dramatic and banal events with historical significance precisely in this ‘everyday’ sphere, rather than investigating commemorative practice or what is being remembered (although elements of both of these feature in my research), an unusual if not unique approach in this field. Moreover, by focussing on how history is rendered an everyday but highly securitised issue, I am contributing new findings on the political uses of history but also a new theorisation of the construction of Russian identity as one centred around the profession and knowledge of a shifting historical narrative that signifies much more about the present than the past. Unlike many studies, this thesis also extends beyond examining the

content of the historical narratives to investigate process and the promotion of engagement with history in itself; hence, my interest in more popular or ‘everyday’ forms of engaging with history, as opposed to academic or educational forms. In so doing, I advance the argument that the government depicts historical engagement as an end in itself, presenting engagement with (a selective view of) history as a patriotic act.

In my theorisations of historical framing and cultural consciousness, I introduce new concepts that can be applied beyond the Russian context, as I explain in the Conclusion to my thesis (Chapter Ten). In particular, I look at examples of historical framing in countries other than Russia, arguing that the emergence of historical framing not only in Russia but in various, and notably diverse countries, reiterates the importance of studying domestic Russian political discourse, even for those focussed on the international arena. I also argue that narratives similar to that of cultural consciousness have emerged among various national populist actors in Europe and the USA, sometimes encouraged by Russian political institutions and GONGOs. Therefore, in detailing these processes and narratives in the Russian context, I have illuminated shifts that are far from unique to Russia, providing insight into the potential future development of global political trends, some of which Russia ought to be well positioned to exploit in the future.

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Abbreviations

In alphabetical order:

AiF: Argumenty i fakty

ATO: Anti-Terrorist Operation (launched by Ukrainian Army against separatists in East Ukraine)

BP: Bessmertnyi polk

GONGO: Government-organised non-governmental organisation (i.e. an organisation that is set up to appear like an NGO but is funded and overseen by government figures)

GPW: Great Patriotic War

HF: Historical frame

INF Treaty: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

KP: Komsomolskaya pravda

MID: Ministerstvo inostrannykh del (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

MVD: Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del (Ministry of Internal Affairs)

RG: Rossiiskaya gazeta

RVIO: Rossiiskoe voenno-istoricheskoe obshchestvo (Russian Military Historical Society)

UC: Ukraine Crisis (period between 22nd February 2014 and 25th May 2014)

VN: Vesti nedeli

VV: Voskresnoe vremya

WW2: World War Two

Note on transliteration, translation, and citation style

I have used British Standard (BS 2979:1958, as modified in Oxford Slavonic Papers) throughout this thesis, except on occasions where there is already another popular or common way of transliterating the name of the person or thing (e.g. *Komsomolskaya pravda*, rather than *Komsomol'skaya pravda*; Yeltsin rather than El'tsyn). As a rule, I have included Russian words in transliteration rather than Cyrillic. The only exception to this rule is the word clouds used to visualise prominent keywords, where I have kept the words in Cyrillic for aesthetic reasons.

All translations are my own except where indicated. For the translation of Ukrainian names and places, I have used the Ukrainian spelling throughout (e.g. Kyiv rather than Kiev), unless the speaker is deliberately using the Russian name, e.g. to make a political point.

Given the large number of citations in a study of this kind, so heavily reliant on discourse analysis, I have opted to use Chicago Style (name-date) in order to not exceed the word limit.

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Chapter One: Introduction

*If you don't feed your own culture,
you feed somebody else's army*

Vladimir Medinskii, 2015

On August 24th, 2014, local separatist forces paraded dozens of dishevelled Ukrainian POWs through the streets of Donetsk. As the prisoners trundled past the crowds, enraged civilian onlookers screamed abuse at them, throwing objects and rotten food. The Kremlin-backed militiamen in charge of this highly stylised procession were bedecked in St George's Ribbons, a commemorative symbol of the Soviet victory in World War Two. At first glance, the presence of such symbols might have appeared unusual, even random, but it was part of a deliberate attempt to infuse the parade with the semantic denotations of the Great Patriotic War.¹ The parade of captured Ukrainian soldiers had been carefully designed to mirror the Red Army's parade of Nazi POWs through the streets of Moscow in 1944. The Russian media covered it closely, historically framing not only the parade but the entire conflict in East Ukraine as a repeat of the Soviet Union's epic battle against Nazi Germany.

The 2014 spectacle represented a horrifying example of the constant making-present of World War Two and other historical triumphs and tragedies. Horrifying but far from rare: this type of conflation was only one of tens of thousands of historical references (re)produced by Russian media² and political actors between 2012-2018. Taken together, these references comprised a detailed narrative, in which current events were 'historically framed'. Historical framing can be defined as the media's framing of a contemporary event within an historical

¹ The Russian name for World War Two between the years of 1941-1945 as fought on the Eastern Front by the Red Army.

² Unless otherwise indicated, I use the term 'Russian media' to refer to the state-aligned domestic media sources that I used for my discourse analysis (*Rossiiskaya gazeta, Komsomolskaya pravda, Vesti nedeli, Voskresnoe vremya, Lenta.ru, Argumenty i fakty*).

precedent (or *schema*): the media conflated a present-day and past episode. The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. In Russian media coverage of several important events from 2012-2018, that field of meaning was located within selective and emotive narratives of the past.

While an interesting discursive technique in itself, historical framing was also part of a larger government-led effort to centre notions of Russian identity around history: specifically, around certain interpretations of key episodes of Russian and global history. During Vladimir Putin's third presidential term (2012-2018), the government's approach to culture became increasingly politicised, with vague concepts such as history and tradition rendered matters of existential security. This securitisation of culture was also reflected in the quotation at the start of the thesis from Vladimir Medinskii (Minister of Culture, 2012-2019), which adapted a famous Russian saying that if you do not feed your own army then you feed someone else's army.

In line with these efforts, possessing the 'correct' view of history became a – if not *the* – core attribute of Russian identity in politicians' discursive construction of identity. In a 2014 speech, Vladimir Putin argued that 'historical memory is the most important component of our culture and history: our present [...]and our future develop according to these historical experiences' (RT na russkom 2014c). In this interpretation, possessing the correct historical cribsheet provided the master-key to decoding current events but also to ensuring Russia's future. In other government documents, interviews, and media coverage, Russians were presented as uniquely aware of their own history, which ostensibly endowed them with a privileged understanding of the world and a responsibility to help other nations reconnect with their heritage, or, as I term it, acquire their own 'cultural consciousness'.

In this thesis, I understand the media and government's historical framing and securitisation of historical interpretation as closely connected processes employed for the purposes of political legitimacy and identity construction. In choosing to approach my analysis from this perspective, I was influenced by existing studies on the political uses of history in the Russian and East European context. In particular, I have applied Thomas Sherlock's conceptualisation of political discourse as simultaneously existing on two planes: political/pragmatic and symbolic/identity (Sherlock 2007) This binary has proved a useful structuring force in my efforts to connect media portrayals of specific events with the government's efforts to securitise historical interpretation and make history an ever-present concern. It has also helped me to formulate the two research questions of this thesis:

- 1) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, conflate specific contemporary issues with historical events?
- 2) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, use this conflation to promote selective engagement with history as central to Russian identity?

In line with the research questions, in the first part of my thesis I use specific case studies to detail how a pervasive sense of historical narrative accompanied media coverage of three pivotal events: the 2014 Ukraine Crisis, the EU and US imposition of sanctions on Russia in 2014, and Russian military intervention in Syria in 2015. By historically framing these crises, the Russian media interpreted each event through a cyclical notion of history, turning contemporary issues into a direct reliving of past episodes of patriotic history. This technique of presenting contemporary events through a framework of a supposed historical equivalent was essential to government efforts to replay a heroic Russian past (e.g. the Great Patriotic War, post-1945 Soviet leadership) through the present. In the second part, I investigate how such narratives formed part of the government's argument that Russia was witnessing a

patriotic surge, depicted as a sort of coming to ‘cultural consciousness’,³ whereby the nation rediscovered its sense of self by reconnecting with its ‘true’ history. I also examine other policies and practices introduced to support the argument about cultural consciousness and to securitise historical interpretation.

The government’s securitisation of, and preoccupation with, historical interpretation must be considered within the socio-economic and political realities of Vladimir Putin’s third presidential term (2012-2018). This term was mired in controversy, with the legitimacy of the election results contested from the beginning of the mandate. Anger at political corruption and rigged elections triggered mass protests in most Russian cities during the winter of 2011-2012. These were the largest mass demonstrations ever seen against Putin and his United Russia ruling party and they were attended mainly by liberal metropolitans, some of whom had previously formed an important part of Putin’s support base (Denisova 2017). In response to these protests, the Russian government moved towards more conservative and illiberal values-based discourses of legitimacy, appealing to a more populist base of support (Sharafutdinova 2014). Both the protests and the government’s shift towards patriotic and conservative rhetoric can be seen as a response to the undermining of the earlier ‘social contract’ between the Russian people and the ruling elites, in which political freedom was sacrificed for economic growth and stability (Teper 2016).

This shift both contributed to and was exacerbated by increased tensions with the West⁴ relating to the latter’s support for colour revolutions in Europe, regime change in the Middle East, Russia’s introduction of the so-called ‘gay propaganda law’, the increasingly active political role of the church (as in the Pussy Riot affair), the Magnitsky Act, and the

³ Cultural consciousness is a term I use to describe the type of patriotic image disseminated by the media, in which ordinary Russians are depicted arriving at a deeper awareness of their culture as Russians. As explored in Chapter Eight, the presentation of such images is indebted to Soviet templates of class consciousness.

⁴ While I acknowledge the inherent elasticity of the term ‘West’, I use it here in accordance with Aleksei Yurchak’s sense of Russia’s ‘imagined West’, applying it to refer to the EU and the USA (Yurchak 2006, 159) .

tightening of regulations on foreign adoption of Russian orphans (Stent 2013; Healey 2017). It was against this backdrop that Ukraine's Maidan Revolution took place in 2013. Russia reacted angrily to the protests, accusing the USA and EU of directing them and helping to install the interim government that assumed power after President Yanukovich fled the demonstrators. Insisting that the new authorities in Ukraine represented a threat to Russian speakers, Putin ordered special forces into Crimea, annexing the region following a legally dubious referendum. Russia then facilitated the outbreak of full-scale war between Russian-backed rebels (including Russian soldiers and mercenaries) in the East and the Ukrainian army, loyal to the new Kyiv authorities (Wilson 2014). With the downing of MH17 by Russian-backed rebels, and the imposition of sanctions and countersanctions between Russia and the West, relations continued to deteriorate. Domestically, Putin's reputation was buffeted by the wave of patriotism he had unleashed with the 'return' of Crimea, at least for 2014; yet, as the Russian economy faltered and the rouble plummeted, government popularity began to suffer as early as 2015 (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2018).

Faced with the consequences of its own policy failures at home and abroad, the Russian government's decision to intervene in the Syrian Civil War could at least partly be viewed as an attempt to distract people from the consequences of these policies. To bolster support for Russian involvement among an initially sceptical nation, the Russian media and politicians made the Syrian Civil War all about Russia, contending that it gave Russia the opportunity to restore its active and offensive role in world affairs, as opposed to a purely defensive one (which is how the media had portrayed Russian reactions to Ukraine and sanctions). This shift in tone reflected a new-found assertiveness, which could also be seen in the government's discursive construction of Russian identity and the increasingly messianic features of the latter. I contend that these discursive shifts were made possible through the government and media's constant making-present of heroic or tragic episodes from Russian

history, whether through historical framing or the promotion of government-led cultural projects, such as military history clubs.

As such, in this thesis, I demonstrate how the government and media achieved the conflation of the past with the present, and how this fitted into a broader, government-sponsored, (re)vision of the meaning of patriotism and Russianness. I argue that in Putin's third term there arose a discursive preoccupation with history, transmitted from elite circles that transcended the traditional confines for discussing history (on days of commemoration, in history lessons, etc.), rendering it an everyday concern. Many aspects of the government-sponsored preoccupation with history, such as the Great Patriotic War cult or accusations of Western conspiracies to destroy Russia, had been present in Russian political culture prior to 2012; however, the outsize role they played in political discourse during Putin's third term reflected a new significance for these emotive myths, with not only politicians but also the state-aligned media frequently invoking them as historical precedents or parallels.

My focus is therefore on exploring how the government infused both dramatic and banal events with historical significance precisely in this 'everyday' sphere, rather than investigating commemorative practice or what is being remembered (although elements of both of these feature in my research). I delineate the processes by which the media and government used a selective understanding of the past to colour audiences' understanding of contemporary politics and patriotism. By extension, this has entailed focussing on the representation of the past and the creation of opportunities to engage with official historical narratives. In so doing, I concentrate on how the government and media curated images of history and patriotism, rather than the extent to which ordinary people engaged with these images and practices.

My interest in Russian political discourse and uses of history was generated by living in Moscow from 2011 to 2015. Watching state-aligned media, I was often nonplussed by the intensity and selectivity of politicians' and domestic media's references to history. To understand these processes, I decided to research contemporary political uses of history and now, having conducted the data analysis to support my anecdotal evidence, I can cite the figures to support my assertions. Nowhere was this intensity of historical reference more apparent than in the media campaigns that utilised historical framing. By way of example, in just three months and across eight sources, there were over 3,509 instances of the media employing highly emotive connotations of the Great Patriotic War (GPW) with the Ukraine Crisis. The purpose of this historical framing of the Ukraine Crisis within the GPW was to persuade viewers of the righteousness of Russian government policy towards Ukraine but it also functioned as a discourse in and through which media and politicians (re)constructed what it means to be Russian.

Thus, the more I researched historical framing and its uses, the more apparent it became that the media's hyperbolic invocation of history was clearly aimed not only at legitimising government policy but also at constructing and imposing a revised understanding of patriotism and a (re)revised standard cultural historical narrative.⁵ Agreeing with Serguei Oushakine's (2013, 282) finding that in Russia 'affective belonging today is produced through the repetition and/or re-enactment of the past', I decided to explore the government's call to history, whereby it encouraged the population to engage with state-sponsored patriotic narratives of the past as much as possible, and to use these narratives to understand the world around them.

⁵ The 'standard cultural historical narrative' denotes the events, themes, and issues in Russian history, culture, and politics invoked and promoted by politicians and state-aligned media. Together these historical events and arguments formed a government-approved narrative of Russian history and culture. The narrative was highly flexible to political need but was often represented as a patriotic, intrinsically Russian interpretation of history that was immutable and beyond debate.

As befits a government focussed primarily on political legitimisation, this call to history was highly selective. Vladimir Putin and his senior ministers generally avoided divisive issues (e.g. the Stalinist terror, the October Revolution). Naturally enough, they instead preferred to promote those episodes behind which everyone could unite (e.g. Soviet bravery in the Great Patriotic War) but the government and media left little to no room for alternative historiographies in their retellings of these ‘unifying’ moments. There was little narrative divergence among the media sources in their historical framing of the Ukraine Crisis, Sanctions, and Syria, reaffirming that the employment of ‘historical frames’ was not an attempt to impart historical knowledge. Rather it was aimed at creating a coherent Russian identity out of the past in order to derive political legitimacy from it in the present. In the next section, I provide an overview of how I have approached and structured my analysis of the government and media’s use of history for the purposes of identity construction and political legitimisation.

Chapter Overview

In the **Literature Review**, I outline my theoretical framework and provide an overview of relevant literature to both the theoretical concepts and the subject matter. I first examine the context of contemporary Russian political discourse, including an overview of the media scene and how it evolved under Vladimir Putin. I then discuss studies pertaining to the political realities of post-Soviet Russia, including attempts to evaluate political change since 2012. One of the most significant changes has been an increasing preoccupation with memory and history, which is also the third topic of discussion in the Literature Review, where I place my research in dialogue with other studies of Russian politicisation of history and memory (both before and after 2012). Finally, I consider works relating to Russian nationalism and patriotism, particularly those concerned with Putin’s third presidential term, explaining how I contribute to this field.

In the **Methodology** section, I detail the methods I used to answer my two research questions: succinctly, ‘how’ and ‘why’ the government and media constructed narratives that conflated past with present. To answer the first question, I created an innovative approach to framing analysis, repurposing the method of Bruce Etling et al to produce quantitative and qualitative analysis of historical framing references across selected media sources (Etling, Alexanyan, and Kelly 2010). I justify my decision to conduct close textual reading of the research material in order to provide a granular analysis across a range of media. I also provide a comprehensive explanation of the methods used to select sources for analysis and I explain how I identified an appropriate scope within which to work. In outlining my approach to the second research question, I detail the qualitative research methods I used, including interviews, discourse analysis, and analysis of activities by Government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) in the sphere of cultural activities.

Having detailed and justified my methodology, I examine the findings of my first case study in **Chapter Four**: the framing of the Ukraine Crisis as the Great Patriotic War. Collecting Russian media references to the GPW in their coverage of the Ukraine Crisis⁶ between 22nd February 2014 and 25th May 2014, I describe how the discourse evolved in response to external pressures and events. To do so, I explore the four sub-narratives that constituted the framing narrative as it emerged across a number of sources: internal enemies; external enemies; conflict and war; military victory. Then I outline how the media employed certain rhetorical devices to facilitate the conflation of past and present, including innovations, such as chronological mirroring. As I describe these findings, I note differences in approach between sources.

⁶ I am defining the Ukraine Crisis (as opposed to the War in Ukraine) as the period following the Maidan revolution and ousting of President Yanukovich (22nd February 2014) up until the day of the election of Petro Poroshenko on 25th May 2014. This period did overlap with the onset of a full-scale war in East Ukraine by around six weeks.

In **Chapter Five**, I present the findings of my second case study, which concerns the Russian government and media's depictions of Western imposition of sanctions as an attempt by the West to destroy Russia, as it ostensibly destroyed the USSR.⁷ Specifically, I outline how the years 1975-1999 were employed as a historical frame through which to interpret the imposition of third wave sanctions and worsening relations with the West following the tragedy of MH17. After providing evidence of the narrative's existence, I detail the content of the three main sub-narratives: the conflation of Western behaviour with the 1990s; Russian resistance against Western attempts to destroy the state; Russian/Soviet self-sufficiency. Having introduced the narrative, I then consider its complex structure and the mixture of sophisticated and crude methods used by the media to legitimise its arguments.

Building on the evidence of historical framing in the two case studies so far, in **Chapter Six** I consider the media's historical framing of Russian intervention in Syria as akin to the USSR's assumption of superpower status after 1945. This study yet again presented an example of the media and government using history as a template for interpreting current events, albeit with some differences. After exploring the key elements of the discourse, including technical devices of historical framing like television montages, I show how the discourse represented a shift in the media and government's presentation of Russia's role in the world, namely by projecting a more active and assertive role, where previously they underscored that Russian actions (regarding Ukraine and Sanctions) were purely reactive or defensive.

In **Chapter Seven**, I bring together my case study findings to establish a set of criteria by which to identify historical framing as well as to provide a detailed explanation of its

⁷ Third wave sanctions were the third round of sanctions imposed by the West and its allies in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. These followed the downing of passenger jet MH17 by Russian-backed and -armed rebels.

intersection with other prominent discourses in the Russian media. After detailing some important differences between the historical framing of each case study, I note the main similarities in order to provide a workable conceptualisation that can hopefully be applied beyond the Russian context. I identify a range of significant criteria, including the repeated and consistent conflation of a past event with a present one, the use of hyper-representation (a form of montage), personalised language, and a conspiratorial tone. Historical framing often intersected with other, primarily illiberal and populist, discourses and narratives, including on topics such as historical falsification, internal enemies, and Russia's sense of mission.

The findings outlined in Chapters Four through Seven provide evidence of the media and government's conflation of past events with present news stories as well as demonstrating the relationship between historical framing and political discussions of Russian identity in Putin's third term. In **Chapter Eight**, I explore this relationship further, arguing that historical framing is best understood as one part of a broader state-directed attempt to use history to assume control of patriotic discourse. To substantiate my argument, I demonstrate how the government promoted various policies, activities, and organisations to encourage public engagement with their standard cultural historical narrative. I detail the various forms in which organisations like the Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO), presided over by Culture Minister Vladimir Medinskii, propagated the government's historical narratives, making them accessible and ubiquitous. This includes a study of the government's takeover of the *Bessmertnyi polk* (Immortal Regiment) mass movement. Throughout this chapter I rely on interviews with cultural practitioners to provide insight into the government's and GONGOs' political uses of the past.

In **Chapter Nine**, I theorise the government and GONGOs' intensive efforts to encourage the population to engage with history, as well as the media's attempts to curate images of people spontaneously asserting their 'correct' remembering of history (Khrebtan-

Hörhager 2016). I argue that such efforts contributed to creating an image of Russia as a ‘culturally conscious’ nation, uniquely in touch with its heritage. This image was promoted by the media and politicians, who frequently depicted ‘ordinary’ people ostensibly gaining greater awareness of their cultural and historical legacy. Using this conflation of history, contemporary politics, patriotism and national identity, the media asserted that loving one’s country, and even belonging to it, were dependent on one’s view of history and participation in state-directed patriotic activities. To contextualise this discussion, I include further findings from interviews with Russian organisations working in the sphere of memory and history and other forms of qualitative research into major government doctrines and strategies relating to patriotism and culture.

Having demonstrated the importance of historical framing as a media technique and as part of a broader discourse on Russian patriotism, in the **Conclusion** I consider the wider implications of my findings. In particular, I examine the government and media’s paradoxical treatment of historical fact as simultaneously unimportant and sacrosanct, arguing that this reflects the invocation of historical parallel as a type of allegorical truth, more meaningful than objective reality. I then consider how this treatment of history relates to disinformation and fake news in the Russian media sphere. I also explore related topics, such as populism, media techniques of persuasion, and the potential unforeseen consequences of using history as a means of legitimising government policy. Finally, I consider the future for historical framing narratives beyond 2018 and beyond Russia in light of the former’s increasingly assertive role in world affairs and the international media space.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the academic literature relevant to my topic and position my research within various discussions on the political preoccupation with history during Vladimir Putin's third term. My chosen research area combines several elements from different fields (memory studies, history, communication studies, cultural studies, international relations, and politics) and this interdisciplinarity is reflected in the Literature Review, as elsewhere in the thesis. As such, I first outline relevant research on Russian political discourse and the Russian media landscape. I then survey studies of the political reality in which this discourse emerged. Next, I examine the available research on memory studies, identity construction, and patriotism and nationalism in contemporary Russia, demonstrating how these fields have informed my research. More specific literature reviews, for example, of the history of the historical framing schema, or of the analysis of each individual event, are provided in the relevant chapters. A consideration of the literature on framing analysis as a research method is included in the Methodology chapter.

Political Discourse in Russia (2012-2018): Media and Mediation

In this thesis, I outline how politicians and the media employed historical repetition, both generally and in specific cases, as a form of political discourse during President Putin's third term, a period that constituted a shift in the discursive treatment of Russian identity. Thomas Sherlock writes that 'political discourse...contains two dimensions, the pragmatic and the symbolic,' with the pragmatic aimed at objectively assessing problems and formulating solutions, while the symbolic concerns normative perceptions of the social order, that is, representations of the world (Sherlock 2007, 3). The simultaneous focus on symbol and political necessity (legitimacy) was central to Russian media and politicians' use of historical framing narratives.

David Kertzer describes symbols as lying at the base of all political authority, arguing that political culture is best understood as competing discourses trying to articulate a political vision for society (Kertzer 1996). This vision can be defined as a set of value codes that impose order and imbue society with meaning (Tucker 1963). Adopting this interpretation, I understand one purpose of political discourse as the ascription of meaning to, and mobilisation of support for, government policies and actions. In the case of historical framing, this meaning was derived from historical events, whose memory was exploited to engender popular support for contentious policies (e.g. intervention in Syria). However, historical framing also belonged to a larger symbolic discourse on Russia's place in the world and what it means to be Russian: as Laura Roselle argues, actors must 'construct policies with public justifications that enact the identity and moral purpose of the state' (Roselle 2006, 13). Thus, historical framing functioned to legitimise policies as well as construct identity, with these two functions – pragmatic and symbolic - intertwined.

Turning first to political legitimation, it is apparent that when 'the structure of power itself is threatened, elites can either try to protect the status quo or they can accept change', as V.P. Gagnon argues (2004, 8). One way to defend the status quo is to 'reconceptualise political space, thereby fundamentally shifting the focus of political discourse away from issues around which challengers are mobilising the populace' (Ibid). In Russia between 2012-2018, the use of historical analogy was one way in which the government reconceptualised the political space and belonging. The government rendered its view of history and political events the only possible or legitimate opinion, effectively turning a person's view on history into a security issue. Partly this was achieved through the sensational and intensive nature of the comparisons, for example, through the conflation of the post-Maidan interim Ukrainian government with Nazis. However, the media's promotion

of historical triumphs and traumas as frameworks through which to understand current - and less dramatic - news events also contributed to this securitisation of history.

I have chosen to focus on Russian-language domestic media in general as it is important to thoroughly understand how the Russian government and media portrayed politically seismic events to domestic audiences. It is also an area that has been relatively under-researched, especially when compared with studies on information campaigns targeted at foreign audiences.⁸ Clearly, analysing external media, such as RT and Sputnik, will not provide the necessary insights into Russian society; indeed, Russian domestic media's intense historical framing of pivotal issues was a much less dominant feature of Russian external media channels. By paying attention to domestic political discourse, I also seek to increase knowledge of why there is so little agreement and so much mistrust between Russia and the West when it comes to global affairs today, some thirty years after the Cold War.

Despite the comparative lack of research on Russian coverage of specific events (excluding Ukraine), there have been several studies on the role of narrative and argumentation within Russian political discourse, especially at the level of elite political discourse (Urban 2010; Musaoğlu 2018; Pakhalyuk 2018a; Roberts 2017; Teper 2016). Others have explored political narratives in popular media under Putin, providing insights into various aspects of political discourse between 2012-2018, from anti-Westernism to Russian conceptions of geopolitics (Hinck, Kluver, and Cooley 2018; Szostek 2018; Roberts 2017; Seth 2018). Like many of these studies, I have also chosen to analyse elite discourse and federal and state-aligned news outlets due to the continuing powerful influence of both in moulding interpretations and defining Russian identity (Akopov et al. 2017; Burrett 2011). A number of studies have emphasised the centrality of the media in particular to disseminating

⁸ To name just a few sources: Lysenko and Brooks 2018; Eisentraut and de Leon 2018; Rollberg and Laruelle 2018. See also the 'Reframing Russia' project, funded by the AHRC at the University of Manchester.

political discourse effectively and to constructing a sense of nationhood and belonging (Gauntlett 2008; Dijk 1993; Curran and Morley 2006). In Russia in particular, the country-wide reach of federal television has proved especially effective during crises, when Russian audiences watch news programmes more frequently, as occurred during the research period (Poluekhtova 2015).

Given that almost all my primary sources were taken from the Russian media, it is helpful to consider the conditions in which journalists, television executives and broadcasters operated between 2012-2018. When Vladimir Putin first came to presidential power in 2000, he almost immediately began to limit media and press freedoms, launching takeovers (by the state or allies) of unfriendly outlets (Gehlbach 2010). In so doing, he assured that virtually all television stations and almost all major newspapers were owned by the state or government-friendly businessmen. Although he did not change the market basis in which the outlets functioned (which had made media sources highly dependent on advertising), Putin and his governments did curtail media freedoms drastically compared with the freedom of the 1990s (Berlin 2002). Arja Rossenholm et al. provide a range of specific case studies that detail the nuances of the Russian media landscape during Vladimir Putin's earlier years and the interlude of the Medvedev presidency (Rosenholm, Nordenstreng, and Trubina 2010).

After Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, there was further illiberalisation of the media and criminalisation of free speech, including repressive blogging laws, restrictions on ownership, and legislation banning 'extremist' views and/or the rehabilitation of Nazism. Such laws were applied indiscriminately, creating a 'chilling effect' that added to self-censorship in the media (Bogush 2017). Elena Vartanova and Maria Lukina (2017) describe the methods the government used to control the media and direct their coverage, including bribes, preferential treatment, indirect control through ownership, control over advertising and refusal to provide access of information. This effect has been

compounded by the documented impact of state television on the RuNet (Cottiero et al. 2015) and the confluence of new and old media (Gaufman 2015).

For further description of the merging of old and new approaches to media management, *Mass Media in The Post-Soviet World* provides an informed and updated history of the Kremlin's neo-authoritarian approach to media (Rollberg and Laruelle 2018). However, I disagree with the central premise of the book that Kremlin message shaping is less intensive because of the lack of an overt all-encompassing ideology. Self-censorship and agenda-setting as well as the need to keep the audience onside, made it possible, under government pressure, for the state's messages to be amplified just as easily (Koltsova 2006; Rollberg and Laruelle 2018, 213). Additionally, I would argue that, in the given period, the function of ideology was fulfilled by the concept of acquiring cultural consciousness, or the notion that there was one true national history and that familiarity and engagement with this history ensured success and wisdom in the present.⁹

Building on the works listed above, I support the broad academic consensus that the media in Russia has 'helped to re-consolidate elite power rather than empower citizens', as was hoped after the collapse of the USSR (Oates 2008, 1280). As noted, the media has changed dramatically since the raucous and oligarchic 1990s, but recent studies have also contradicted earlier tendencies to view Russian media under Putin as one homogeneous neo-Soviet period, noting, for example, the increase in political shows and themes in the 2010s (Lankina and Watanabe 2017; Koleva 2015; J. Becker 2014). Contemporary media has also had to reckon with the rise of the Internet and social media, which has created content that combines borrowings from Soviet templates with innovations rooted in social media, such as

⁹ I am using 'ideology' here in the Althusserian sense to denote the 'imagined existence of things', whereby the speaker does not need to believe the ideas are true but the ideology needs to produce practices and rituals, which the notion of 'cultural consciousness' certainly does, as I explore later in this thesis.

humour and user-generated content (Mickiewicz 1997; Oates 2008). Historical framing itself can be understood as one such hybrid innovation: the focus on the past and Soviet-era sentimentality were combined with personalised rhetoric and technologically advanced televisual techniques (C. Evans 2015) The combination of feelings and personalisation was a common feature of the historically-focussed political discourse that typified Putin's third term, and the politics of emotion is a rapidly emerging field of research in Russia (Heller, Forsberg, and Wolf 2014; Paul 2017; D. Becker 2018).

Political Realities

Across the three case studies, Russian media sources and politicians were most emotive in discussions and depictions of the Ukraine Crisis. Given this, and the geopolitical impact of those events, it can be tempting to see the Ukraine Crisis as a starting point for historical framing and the government's call to history. It certainly proved a watershed in terms of Russian politics of history (A. Miller 2014); however, the media and government's intensive use of history to construct a xenophobic and revanchist worldview dates back (at least) to President Putin's re-assumption of the presidency in 2012, which has been described as a 'conservative turn' in terms of both discourse and policy (A. Makarychev 2018; Petro 2018; Byzov 2018). In part, this shift can be linked to the 2011/2012 anti-government mass protests, which showed Putin had lost the support of metropolitan liberals and, in response, required that he reinforce his (more conservative) political base in the regions (Denisova 2017). The protests also reflected the failure of Vyacheslav Surkov's notion of 'managed democracy' (Balzer 2003; Pomerantsev 2014; Benyumov 2013), in which Russian citizens accepted the *de facto* dismantling of democratic institutions (e.g. free media) in return for economic growth and stability (Teper 2016; Colton and Hale 2014). Given that the 2011/2012 protests were compounded by a difficult economic outlook for Russia following the 2008 economic crash, the previous political arrangement became untenable. The

conditions were such that the government needed to devise a new means of political legitimation to justify its arbitrary and authoritarian style of governing (Urnov 2014; Mankoff 2012).

Different scholars have presented varying answers to the question of what the Kremlin chose next as its legitimising ideology or worldview. Some have emphasised nationalist ideas and/or populism (Pål Kolstø 2016; Tipaldou and Casula 2019; Laruelle 2018), others Eurasianism (Leighton 2017), while yet others focus on the war cult (Nelson 2014; Zhurzhenko 2015). They are all correct, insofar as the Kremlin has combined a melange of different pro-state ideologies, cohering them around a paranoid and nostalgic worldview. The government constructed the latter through policies and discourse that constantly referenced historical parallels and the value of correct historical knowledge. To justify this shift in approach, the Russian media and politicians suggested that existential threats had forced Russia to reassert its great-power status and reconnect with its traditional values and identity by reclaiming its unique history (Tolz 2017; Tsygankov 2015). This line of argument was a central feature of the Ukraine Crisis and Sanctions historical framing narratives in particular.

By invoking traumatic or heroic historical episodes, the media and politicians relied on provoking the audience's emotional responses to present the government's foreign and domestic policies as instinctual, even organic, responses to world events. This play on emotions appears to have worked, with sociological research showing that even educated metropolitan circles in Moscow said their emotional connection with the Russian government had increased. Those who frequently watched state television reported the highest emotional bond (Robertson and Greene 2017; Greene and Robertson 2017). Although I am not concerned with reception, it is also worth noting that Vladimir Putin's popularity surged after the annexation of Crimea and remained high for the remainder of his third term (Kazun 2016;

Robertson and Greene 2017). While care must be taken when using polling from authoritarian countries like Russia, there is reliable evidence to suggest that the President's standing directly benefitted from his handling of events in Ukraine, abetted by accompanying media campaigns (Frye et al. 2017). Putin's high popularity ratings derived from a range of sources, such as charismatic legitimacy and the use of fear and intimidation by various state institutions (Petersson 2017; Radeljić 2017). However, beyond Putin's personal ratings, there were numerous problems in the political system, as reflected in the unpopularity of the ruling party *Edinaya Rossiya*, which faced continued threats to their legitimacy from opposition groups and from political disengagement.

In light of the socio-political context, I argue that the use of a historically focussed political discourse across 2012-2018 was part of a government effort to re-engage audiences and to demobilise opposition voices. The government and supportive media discredited opposition voices in various ways,¹⁰ opting to alienate and 'other' liberals but choosing to alternately co-opt and shun ethno-nationalist voices, depending on their usefulness (Kolstø 2016). Although there was a significant exclusionist element to politicians' speeches and addresses, the government tried to avoid creating too many enemies, preferring to employ a big-tent (albeit not all-inclusive) approach to patriotic history by finding room for a range of voices within its vague retellings of Russian history. This invocation of a shared, if largely Soviet, history created an ambivalent backdrop with an emphasis on ancestry and togetherness that appealed to diverse voices, provided they engaged to some extent with conservative and/or nostalgic tendencies. As Vladimir Malakhov (2018) has argued, the government's turn to history as a form of political legitimation came partly in response to what they saw as a general public appetite for a narrative that cast Russian identity and

¹⁰ For more detail on Russian media's characterisation of internal and external enemies, please see Chapter Seven, page 142

history as worthy of pride. This notion was also summarised by the political strategist Aleksandr Dugin: ‘you can’t say that Putin forced the war cult on people, but you also can’t say that the people independently demanded it’ (Walker 2017, 32).

History and Mnemonic Politics in Putin’s Third Term.

Given the overt prominence of the war cult in modern Russia, memory studies of post-Soviet Russia has become an increasingly crowded field, with numerous analyses of mnemonic discourse from 2012-2018 on the Great Patriotic War (Horbyk 2015; Walker 2017; Malinova 2017), Stalinist era (Kalashnikov 2018), and, to a lesser extent, Bolshevik Revolution (Ferretti 2017; Subotić 2020, 195–224).¹¹ In many of these studies, the authors have illustrated the prominence of historical tragedies and triumphs, in particular the Great Patriotic War, and their use as reference points – even foundational myths - in Russian culture (Edele 2017; Klymenko 2015; Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016; Reese 2018; Walker 2017). Scholars have noted that the media and politicians evoked these past dramas especially intensely during crises (Siddi 2017; Gaufman 2017a; Marples 2016). I interpret this phenomenon within Bernhard Giesen’s (2004) theory that triumph and tragedy/trauma function as the two extremes against which national identity is discursively constructed.

As noted, the government has tended to source its historical parallels and parables from the Soviet past, although not exclusively, with many studies identifying political nostalgia for the lost Tsarist past (Kuzio 2015; Kushnir 2019; Herpen 2015). More recently, researchers have underscored the eclecticism and selectivity characteristic to the Kremlin’s ‘usable past’ (Malinova 2019; Bækken and Enstad 2020). This selectivity reflected the need to construct a workable post-Soviet identity that in some way responded to the legacy of the USSR. Judging by the arguments and policies pursued in his third term, Putin and his government have chosen to prioritise healing the sense of loss resulting from the Soviet

¹¹ For a thorough study on the politics of history in Russia before 2012, please see: (Miller 2012)

collapse rather than addressing its many injustices (Kalinina 2017b; 2017a). As suggested by Aleksandr Dugin's quotation in the last section, this approach, and Soviet nostalgia more widely, has not been a purely top-down affair. This was reflected in various phenomena, not least the popularity of parahistorical television series and films that often whitewashed the Soviet Union of all crimes (Brooks and Dralyuk 2016).

In her work on nostalgia, which examines the (admittedly earlier) Russian context, Svetlana Boym differentiates restorative and reflective nostalgia, classifying the former as efforts to reconstruct the past and the latter as a sentimental longing that ultimately accepts the impossibility of returning to the past (Boym 2007). The type of nostalgia encouraged by government and media historical framing narratives contained elements of both forms, although tended much more forcefully towards restorative nostalgia. While aspects of restorative nostalgia emerged in government policies on youth organisations, for example, politicians also accepted that the USSR could not be resurrected. More meaningfully, the media sources at times employed irony and ambivalence towards Soviet life, language, and rituals (Lenta 2014a; Arsyukhin 2014b) which existed alongside an apparent longing for a return to what Boym describes as a lost Common Place (Boym 1994). The word plays and puns on Soviet language recall Aleksei Yurchak's concept of *stioob* and Boris Noordenbos' related analysis of 'ironic imperialism' (Yurchak 2006; Noordenbos 2011). Moreover, the sources stopped short of wishing a literal return to the USSR, instead appearing to want to relive certain parts only (Boym 2007; 1994, 287). Exemplified in government policies and media discourse, this rather selective approach to nostalgia developed from what Ilya Kalinin (2011) describes as an (earlier) political discourse of 'nostalgic modernisation'. The government and media argued that the future would be better because it would look more like the past: it would be informed by the glorious episodes of Russian history, including the most celebrated event of all: the Soviet victory over Nazism.

As the successor state to the USSR, it could be argued that Russia's great power status is dependent on the legacy of the Great Victory. Consequently, any challenges to Russia's status as victor and liberator in World War Two could potentially damage Russia's sense of identity and its geopolitical ambitions (Torbakov 2011). This has led to what Elena Rozhdestvenskaya has described as 'the hyper-exploitation of the past Victory' of 1945, which involves 'the constant making-present of the war experience' (Rozhdestvenskaya 2015). While it is very obvious that the GPW plays the most prominent role in Russia's standard cultural historical narrative, I argue that the 'making-present' of historical episodes extended beyond the Great Victory. Depending on the political needs of the moment, the media and politicians also tried to 'make-present' periods from the Cold War, Brezhnev-era, and immediate post-War period. Indeed, the 'making-present' of selected episodes of Russian and world history was an integral part of ensuring the government's own political legitimacy and facilitating the latter's argument that Russians were uniquely conscious of their own historical legacy, or 'culturally conscious'.

The Russian government's excessive invocation of historical precedent and the media's constant 'making-present' of historical episodes appeared to be deliberate and politically informed decisions. Thomas Sherlock has demonstrated that the delegitimisation of the Soviet past under Mikhail Gorbachev had a destabilising effect on Soviet society, even contributing to the USSR's downfall (Sherlock 2007, 93). After Boris Yeltsin struggled to impart a critical approach to Soviet history (Smith 2002; Breslauer and Dale 2013), Putin embraced several aspects of the USSR as a positive legacy, including restoring the Soviet national anthem (Buffet 2013). This tendency gathered strength as the 2010s continued, moving from a rehabilitation of the Soviet views of key episodes, to an inculcation, even legal enforcement of these - or very similar - views.

Scholars have noted the deleterious effects of Russian legislation restricting different historical narratives, as well as harassment of those voicing alternative views of history (Edele 2017; Kopusov 2017, 207-237; Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016). Such laws belonged to the government's efforts to unite most of the population around an ambiguous and presentist interpretation of the past that privileged stability, continuity and thus the maintenance of the political status-quo (Bassin et al. 2017; Ferretti 2017). Oleg Reut has noted the current government's 'zeal' for people identifying with their memory of the war but also for turning this identification into support for the government itself (Reut 2016). However, the Russian government was not unique in its use of populist and nationalist history to cohere and unify cultural memory. There are clear, and somewhat ironic, parallels with other countries in Eastern Europe who have engaged in similar types of memory politics, often while engaging in memory wars with Russia (Ágh 2016; Baranowska and Gliszczyńska-Grabias 2018; Schellenberg 2016; Tomczuk 2016; Đureinović 2018).

Some academics researching the politicisation of the past in Russia and Eastern Europe have focussed on remembrance itself, whether by analysing monuments, the practices of commemoration, or the content of historical narratives (Blacker, Etkind, and Fedor 2013; Bernhard and Kubik 2014; Fedor et al. 2017; Müller 2002; Blacker 2019). There has often been a divide between studies of physical monuments and the discursive realm, which Alexander Etkind differentiates by describing them as the respective hardware and software of memory culture (Etkind 2004, 39). Although Etkind was writing about Russia, this differentiation has also been applied to Eastern Europe beyond Russia, with Milan Subotić (2020, 1–8) documenting the region's focus on the software of memory, writing of post-socialist countries' shared obsession with defining and redefining the past. He argues that this stems from the shared experience of the collapse of communism, which meant that countries had to create a new past, for a new future.

Thus, Russia's use of memory laws and employment of the media and state organisations to conduct memory politics should be contextualised within the memory culture of the wider region. The fraught relations between Russia and many of its neighbours, continuously compounded by disagreements over history, has undoubtedly exacerbated Russian politicians' uses of populist history at home and abroad, as they felt the need to respond to each historical slight. While similar reactions can also be noted in Poland and Serbia, for example, other academics have suggested that memory and history play a particularly important or unusual role in Russian political culture, especially in terms of Russian self-definition and Russian foreign policy (Pakhalyuk 2018c; 2018a; Roberts 2017; Luk'yanov 2016). By way of example, Agnia Grigas has suggested that Russia views the interpretation of history as a natural resource that is limited and must be used efficiently in a zero-sum game with the West and former satellite states (Grigas 2012). Todd Nelson even describes the use of history in Russia in Putin's third term as a form of ideology (Nelson 2014).

I draw on all these studies in my analysis of media discourse and government-provided and promoted opportunities to engage with history. By focussing on how history is rendered an everyday but highly securitised issue, I am contributing new findings on the political uses of history but also a new theorisation of the construction of Russian identity as one centred around the profession of a unifying historical narrative, as opposed to ethnicity, civic values, or ideology. To clarify this contribution, I first examine the role of historical framing, a key element in the government and media's efforts to make history present. While historical framing is a new term, various scholars have studied similar media techniques. By way of example, Katie Stallard-Blanchette draws attention to Russian, Chinese, and North Korean efforts to present current wars in light of past ones, although the lack of detailed discourse analysis makes it impossible to assess whether such examples constitute historical framing (Stallard-Blanchette 2019). In their edited volume, Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik

also describe a concept similar to historical framing: mnemonic layering. This term denotes how one commemoration is combined with another, assuming its overtones (Bernhard and Kubik 2014). However, while sharing structural similarities, historical framing is different because it involves the detailed conflation of current events with historical ones. Moreover, the historical events perform not only a comparative but also a causal function: because the present event is the same as the past event, we know how the present event will develop (exactly like the past event). Put another way, rather than layering the narratives, in historical framing they are amalgamated.

Djouaria Ghilani et al came closest to a study of historical framing in their interdisciplinary research into the use of historical analogies and their effects (Ghilani et al. 2017). Some of the analogies were examples of historical framing in that they were sustained and intensive conflations but, while there is overlap, a historical analogy is frequently a one-off underdeveloped comparison, unlike historical framing. Moreover, as noted, historical framing requires, if not a causal link, then at least a structural similarity that (supposedly) produces similar outcomes: (present event) is happening like this because, and/or just as, (past event) happened like this. This applies whether the link is abstract and speculative, as between the GPW and Maidan, or more concrete as with the more proximate events of the 1990s and Putin era. Despite these divergences, many of the findings of Ghilani et al are relevant for my study. For example, they demonstrated that media narratives become much more impactful when using developed historical analogies. As such, while historical framing is my new term, historical framing itself is not a new occurrence and a perusal of the literature on media and memory studies of countries in conflict is instructive to our understanding of the process and why it is occurring in Russia.

Arguably, the use of historical framing has its roots not only in conflict and division but also in the Communist past, where the authorities would often retell history ‘in a

presentist framework' (Lampe 2003, 4), directly connecting it to the present-day. Communist and Socialist leaders frequently called upon the past to support the legitimacy of the new socialist states by providing historical precedent' (Ibid; see also: Brandenberger 2002). In support of this view, it is worth noting the obvious use of historical framing in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Mark Thompson argues convincingly that the intensity of the war between Serbia and Croatia derived in part from the media's detailed and repetitive depiction of contemporary Croats as reincarnated Ustaše, or Croat wartime Nazi collaborators (Thompson 1999). Other studies of political discourse during the Yugoslav wars, especially in Croatia and Serbia, reveal commonalities with the Russian context; for example, both governments used historical framing as a means of demobilising opposition views, as outlined by Paul Gagnon and Eric Gordy (Gordy 1999; Gagnon 2004).

However, while studying political discourse and media narratives can provide detailed insight into historical narratives of the past, I would certainly not extend its significance so far as Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney who argue that cultural memory is entirely dependent on media and that communality of memory is achieved through the mediation of the past (Erll and Rigney 2012). This undermines the importance of other forms of engagement with historical narratives. In an authoritarian country like Russia, many interesting findings on Russian memorialisation and commemoration can be successfully transferred to analysis of media discourse (Klymenko 2015; Oushakine 2013a; 2013b). By way of example, scholars of Russian commemorative practices noted the importance of performativity in connecting audiences and/or participants with temporally distant events. They have explored the translation of the past into the present in Victory Parades and the capacity of symbols and television to blur temporal lines through mimesis, as seen in the broadcasting of documentary footage from the war during live memorial parades (Beumers, Hutchings, and Rulyova 2009).

These tendencies have also emerged in the television shows' historical framing of news events, as I explore in Chapter Seven (please see pages 172-173 of this thesis).

I am also compelled to extend my study beyond discourse analysis because my main research interest concerns not so much the historical narratives of the past, as the present narratives on politics and identity, and how political and media actors use history to reinforce them. This focus on the present and process can perhaps be better understood as a concern not with memory studies but rather with the political uses of history. Markku Kangaspuro clarifies political uses of history as being the 'use of history as an instrument of political argumentation' and the 'attempts to attain power over history in the sense of hegemony of a particular interpretation' (Kangaspuro 2011, 295). This understanding is especially relevant to my work and is a helpful definition through which to understand the Russian government's approach to history in Putin's third term, when politicians concentrated on facilitating a 'retrospective reconstruction to serve the needs of the present' (Olick 2007, 9). This definition also allows for the clear differentiation of 'political uses of history' from the related notion of 'historical politics', which refers to arguments that may actually concern history, including disagreements over historical interpretation that have little connection to present concerns (Kasianov 2016, 193).

In recent years, the topic of political uses of history in Russia has become a vibrant area of research to which I hope to contribute with this thesis. In Russia, scholars such as Ol'ga Malinova (2017; 2019), Aleksei Miller (2016; 2018), and Nikolai Kuposov (2015), have all studied various aspects of official political uses of memory in Russia, although they have tended to be more theoretical in their approach. In Serbia, Milan Subotić's recent book on the politics of history contained a detailed chapter on Russia, where he examined the use of invented traditions to cohere Russian national identity (Subotić 2020). However, the book functioned as a collection of studies, rather than providing a theoretical overview. By

contrast, I understand my work as existing between these two planes: I use detailed examinations of media discourse, government policies, history clubs, and forms of engagement with history to develop my theorisation of the purpose and function of Russian political uses of history.

This approach also differentiates my work from James Pearce's recent book, *The Use of History in Putin's Russia*, which eschews substantive analysis of media narratives, although it does examine major political speeches and historical narratives in educational settings and in textbooks (Pearce 2018). However, in my work I extend beyond examining the content of the historical narratives to investigate process and the promotion of engagement with history in itself; hence, my interest in more popular or 'everyday' forms of engaging with history, as opposed to academic or educational forms. In so doing, I advance the argument that the government depicts historical engagement as a means towards patriotic action and national consolidation. The promotion of this idea is as important as the symbolism of the historical narratives themselves in terms of its usefulness in cohering the Russian nation. Moreover, it provides an answer to the question of what makes Russia a great nation: namely, the Russian people's togetherness in history, expressed as an intense connection with, and knowledge of, the past. I explore the intersection between political uses of history and patriotism further in the following section.

Patriotism or Political Legitimacy? Redefining What it Means to Be Russian.

In the literature review so far, I have explained how the discourses and practices that I study are best understood as political uses of history and efforts at political legitimisation. It is likely that Putin chose history as the legitimating device because of the visceral importance that memory politics tends to assume in authoritarian electoral regimes (LeBor 2003). In light of this, the 'history' referred to in this thesis is often better understood as myth, using Ernest Cassirer's definition of myths as collective representations of the social group that, in

authoritarian or democratic societies, can be artificial or fabricated (Cassirer 1946). The use of history as myth is not incidental, given that myths enhance group solidarity and cohesion and preserve dominant institutions (Malinowski 1926). Indeed, in any society, memory plays a central role in the discursive construction of identity at both the individual and collective level (Anderson 2016; Assmann 2011; Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2012; Misztal 2003; Beumers 2012, Nora 1992). As the state, rather than society, is the key source of power in Russia, the government, state-aligned media, and government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) assume an almost unassailable position as the inculcators of authentic ‘official’ historical narratives and the delineators of acceptable discourse on history.

This position as gatekeepers of historical truth was strengthened by the Russian media and politicians’ invocation of historical episodes that enjoyed some degree of consensus among the Russian population at large: the GPW, Cold War, American perfidy, Soviet great power status, the chaos of the 1990s, the difficulties arising from the Soviet collapse. From historical events like these, the media and government constructed a standard cultural historical narrative that had to be interpreted in the ‘correct’ patriotic way due to the events’ cultural significance and continued political relevance. To embrace an incorrect interpretation was to demonstrate a lack of Russian-ness, a conflation made possible by the promotion of ‘single stream history’ or the notion of Russian history as 1,000-years of continued tradition. This can be contrasted with, for example, Lenin’s view of two Russian cultures, pre and post-revolutionary (Yakovlev 1972). In this way, historical continuity provided a means of bringing people together, extending Nikolai Berdyaev’s idea that there was a seamless line between Tsarist Russia and Soviet Russia (Berdyaev 1990; 1922).

This emphasis on history’s potentially unifying characteristics was mirrored in changes to the way the government promoted patriotism during Putin’s third term. Previously, the government sought to demonstrate a ‘visible’ state identity that legitimised

the worldview of *derzhavnost'*, or the importance of a strong state (Sanina 2012). Moreover, studies of patriotism in Putin's first and second term had noted the government was openly assertive about organising patriotic movements, such as *Nashi* (Atwal and Bacon 2012). By contrast, more recent studies of Russian nationalism in Putin's third term, on which there have been numerous works (Laruelle 2018; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2016; Aridici 2018; Roberts 2017; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2018), have noted that the state prefers to outsource its funding for such patriotic groups, namely to so-called GONGOs, allowing them to create the impression that there was an organic upswell in patriotism from the grassroots (McGlynn 2020).

The partial outsourcing of memory politics to GONGOs did entail at least a certain loss of control: this was presumably a sacrifice worth undergoing for creating the impression of a patriotic upswell and given that people would engage with seemingly autonomous organisations in a way they might not with more identifiably official bodies. Konstantin Pakhalyuk works for the most prominent GONGO of this type, the Russian Military Historical Society, and he describes this hybrid situation as follows:

A whole network of state and societal organisations is involved in the process of creating that which, taken together, we can call the politics of memory. It is not right to talk of some centralised system, but rather of a heterogenous process in which each of the actors tends to pursue their own aims, which leads to the emergence of contradictory and nuanced representations of the past. The unity of the government's politics of history is nothing but a discursive effect (Pakhalyuk 2018c, 19).

While the above statement overemphasises the divergence in memory narratives in Russian society, it also raises important points. There are heterogenous bodies; for example, the Yeltsin Centre, partly funded by presidential grant, actively promotes a view of the 1990s that directly contradicts the Kremlin's. Likewise, there are very different views of Stalin within

government circles, without even mentioning Lenin. Therefore, I have opted not to elucidate the Kremlin's clear concrete historical narrative because I do not believe that such a firm narrative really exists; it is constantly adapting, expanding, and constricting depending on the political needs of the moment. With the exception of the GPW, what is more important is the symbolism of the events, which is used to reinforce the importance of the state, the perfidy of the West, the sense of Russian messianism and uniqueness, and a cult of stability, among other things.

The government's post-2012 decision to conceal state involvement in patriotic activity could also be understood as belonging to the media and government's encouragement and depiction of images that appeared to show ordinary people performing unextraordinary everyday patriotic actions.¹² While this did not mean that the 'for-show' (*pokaznoi*) patriotism of Victory Day was abandoned, it did suggest a sophisticated shift whereby the government 'managed' and appropriated grassroots patriotic tendencies. In so doing, the government sought to harness and politicise the legitimacy inherent in 'ordinary' patriotic activities, which have tended to be apolitical in the Russian context (Goode 2016). Studies also suggest a symbiotic relationship between this appropriation of everyday patriotism and the increased commodification of patriotism across the population (Skvirskaja 2017; Efremova 2017; Rann 2017; Kalinina 2017a). The government and media sought to reinforce and realise its depictions of patriotic activities by creating opportunities for citizens to engage with the standard cultural historical narrative, for example, at military-patriotic or military history clubs (Sanina 2017; Dahlin 2017; Le Huérou 2015). In Chapter Eight, I examine how

¹² Please see Chapter Nine, pp183-189, for more detail on the media's depiction of images of cultural consciousness.

such groups used history in their inculcation of patriotism, an issue that has been under-researched in recent years.¹³

The government facilitated a more experiential approach to history, as opposed to the traditional Soviet academic style, by establishing cultural organisations and funds to direct and encourage the development of a standard cultural historical narrative (Vinokurovaya 2014). The Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) was the most prominent actor in this sphere, and thus is the focus of my attention when analysing GONGOs in Chapters Eight and Nine. Set up with the aim of ‘consolidating the efforts of the government and society in studying the military history of Russia’s past ... and patriotic upbringing’ (Bashkova 2017, 9), RVIO’s incredibly wide remit, spanning popular film and television to academia, allowed it to reinforce the government and media’s historical memory narratives and construct an image of blossoming popular and civil society interest in culture and history. However, despite its prominence, particularly between 2014-2016, RVIO has not been the main subject of any major academic study to date.¹⁴ Part of the role of RVIO was to provide facilities and opportunities for citizens to engage with history more frequently, thereby reaffirming the government’s narrative that the Russian nation was undergoing a cultural patriotic awakening (itself dependent on historical awareness). To support this narrative, the media often depicted attendance at well-funded government historical festivals and events as grassroots engagement with Russian history, casting participation as a type of everyday nationalism.

The roots of everyday nationalism as a sub-field can be dated to Michael Billig’s (1995) efforts to shift attention from the ‘traditional concern’ of nationalism studies with the

¹³There have been studies of this topic prior to 2012 (Laruelle 2011), but the situation has changed greatly since then. There has also been a recent study focussed on youth groups that confirmed the importance of military history to the educational content taught by these clubs: (Konkka 2020). There was also a study of RVIO in the media, which claimed it functioned as a type of ‘Ministry of Memory’ under Vladimir Medinskii’s leadership (Us’kova 2020)

¹⁴ Aleksei Miller (2017) studies the variety and importance of NGOs in memory politics and references RVIO but only very briefly

emergence of the phenomena of nations and nationalism to the reproduction of nationalism in everyday life and mass culture (Edensor 2002). Eleanor Knott supplies a thorough overview of the development of everyday nationalism into a sub-field that focuses on ordinary people and their agency in the reproduction of nationalist symbols (Knott 2015). There have been numerous studies of everyday nationalism in the Russian context; however, most of these works have focused on ethnic minorities and/or local identities rather than the Russian (*russkii*) ethnic majority (Kosmarskaya and Savin 2016; Pilkington 2012; 2010; Ruget 2018; Foxall 2014). Paul Goode and David Stroup (2015) discuss how everyday nationalism's overemphasis on ethnic minorities diverted attention from studying nationalism in the Gellnerian sense of 'a doctrine of political legitimacy' (Gellner 2008). Chapters Eight and Nine address this issue by outlining how the Kremlin manipulated images of everyday nationalism to create a sense of national cultural resurgence and congruence between the state and people, which it then used to legitimise its own policies, power, and vision for Russia.

My theorisation of the government's monopolisation of images of patriotism contributes to existing and wide-ranging scholarship on the thematic resurgence of identity in Russian discourse during Vladimir Putin's third presidential term (Teper 2016; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2018; Roberts 2017; Akopov et al. 2017). In 2012, President Putin announced that strengthening national consciousness would be a national priority for his coming term, but he also argued that the definition of Russian identity was vague, and needed refining (Prezident Rossii 2012a). The Russian idea, or what it means and should mean to be Russian, has long been the topic of heated debate and disagreement from the Russian empire through to the present day (Seton-Watson 1961; 2017; Riasanovsky 2005; Billington 2004; Brudny 1998). Throughout all these differing versions, however, historical legacy has almost always played an important role. Ideas of nationality are deeply embedded in Russian understanding of its past (Suny 1993), which functions as the 'special tie' that binds the (ethnic and non-ethnic)

Russian affective community (Bassin and Kelly 2012, 17–20).¹⁵ The collapse of the Russian Empire and USSR has left an imperial consciousness embedded within Russia identity and allowed a - sometimes ambivalent - form of imperial nationalism to develop (Pain 2004; 2012; Verkhovskii and Pain 2012). Balancing Russia’s understanding of itself as a great power has often made it impossible for governments to accede to Russian ethno-nationalist demands and favoured the presentation of Russian culture as a civilisation (Aridici 2018; Laruelle 2016a; Hosking 2006; Akopov et al. 2017). The invocation of history as the basis for national identity has the advantage of not excluding ethnic minorities on the basis of their ethnicity while still celebrating a feature of the dominant ethnic Russian (*russkii*) culture.

This ambivalent approach to identity reflects the diverse ideational influences that emerge from analysis of media and political discourse on Russian identity between 2012-2018. Some academics have focussed on the neo-Eurasianist tendency and Aleksandr Dugin (Shalin 1996, 28; Bassin and Kelly 2012, 32), but this influence can be overstated (Laruelle 2012, 8, 141). Indeed, rather than try to locate the Kremlin’s new ideology or worldview, I argue that in the age of memory (Nikolay Kopolov 2017), the correct interpretation of history fulfils the function of ideology as a marker of belief and belonging. By placing (engagement with) historical legacy at the core of Russian identity, the government has also been able to appeal to people from different political persuasions, or of different ‘ideologies’ in the traditional sense (Malakhov 2018). A selective, moralistic and essentialist interpretation of history, and its application as an interpretative framework to the present, thus filled the ideational vacuum (Malinova 2015a, 70).

The media and government’s use of history is part of what has been described as the ‘cultural/civilisational turn’ in post-Soviet identity building (Scherrer 2013). This civilisational aspect has leant heavily on the notion that Russia had a privileged

¹⁵ See also: (Suny 1993; Hosking and Service 1999)

consciousness of its own identity, history, and culture, and that it ought to help others gain ‘cultural consciousness’. The use of cultural consciousness to legitimise government policy is a technique with roots in Soviet media traditions and templates. This is most obvious in the adaptation of class consciousness to cultural consciousness; for example, one such rhetorical borrowing from class consciousness included the notion of gaining awareness of the past oppression and exploitation of one’s political community and a sense of collective recognition of the community’s value (Halfin 2000). Where (in theory) Soviet ideologues’ obsession with history centred on its role in asserting the truth of the ascendancy of the working classes, under Putin historical episodes have been used to assert the primacy of *russkie* as a people (*narod*). The media’s adaptation of the class consciousness paradigm to create an image of Russians reaching a patriotic awakening, under Putin’s guidance, was the borrowing of an accessible and convenient template, rather than an explicitly pro-Soviet act, although it had inevitable ideological consequences, especially against such a nostalgic backdrop.

The redesigning of Soviet templates of class consciousness to encompass national-cultural, rather than class, identity, was far from perfect and it was not especially innovative. The Soviet state adapted class consciousness paradigms for patriotic ends during the Great Patriotic War and at various stages throughout the USSR (J. Dunlop 1983, 18). Indeed, as Yuri Slezkine demonstrates, the USSR from its earliest days accepted, promoted and reinforced ethnic particularism, even where this went against class interest (Slezkine 1994). Lynne Viola takes this argument further, saying that the USSR ‘upended’ Marx’s dictum that being determined consciousness by making one’s class dependent on one’s attitudes, as seen during dekulakisation (Viola 2013, 16). This tendency became increasingly connected with nationalism, as russification was used ‘to fortify the fading legitimacy of Soviet power based on Communist ideology’ (Billington 2004, 31; see also: Brudny 1998). It is also notable that

the Stalinist media presented Russians as the vanguard of Communism, both as the leading light of class consciousness and as the defenders of the USSR during the GPW (Brandenberger 2002). In this interpretation, the Russian nation assumed the role of both leader and liberator, allowing countries and peoples to become more sovereign through Russia's guidance and (paradoxically) rule over them.

Consequently, the line between class identity and cultural nationalism was blurred in official Soviet discourse as early as the 1930s (Suny 1993), which facilitated and influenced the post-Soviet media's borrowings from class consciousness in their depiction of patriotic awakenings. It also reflected the very practical and flexible nature of class consciousness as a type of discourse encompassing disparate ideas (Brandenberger 2002; Halfin 2000, 3–5). Anna Krylova's (2003) study on the role of class instinct in depictions of class consciousness shows that spontaneity was an important and inalienable trait of the idealised Soviet proletariat. Cultural consciousness follows a similar pattern, with the media combining elements of both instinctual as well as learned behaviour and responses in their depictions of culturally conscious acts.

Cultural consciousness also fed into a tradition of messianism in Russian and Soviet political discourse (Duncan 2002; Kukulin 2018; Kubyshkin and Sergunin 2012; Zorin 2018; Verkhovskii and Pain 2012). This tradition made historical framing a more familiar type of narrative for Russian audiences, as the past has been so frequently politicised for the purposes of inscribing meaning in Russia. Walter Benjamin (1968) defines messianic time as a 'simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present', a definition that also functions as an excellent description of historical framing. Boris Dubin (2012) underscores this connection between messianism and history when he argues that the Russian personality is suited to messianic thinking as a result of historical circumstances. He argues that Russians

view their understanding of their past and their history as the thing that separates them from others.

This recurrence of messianic thinking in Russian political discourse reiterates the importance of exploring ‘the manner in which memories of the past serve particular interests in the present’, including political objectives and the formation of a cohesive culture and national identity (Ferrán 2007, 16). In this thesis, I will elucidate the means by which the Russian government and media distorted the reality of current affairs through historical framing, as well as examining how they manipulated images of patriotism. I am interested in process and purpose, or the how and the why of the government’s call to history. In this, I agree with Patrick Seriot (quoted in Laruelle, 2012, 13) that ‘it is less important to ask whether the Russians are a world unto themselves than to try to explain why they believe they are’. In the following chapter on Methodology, I detail the methods I use to explain this.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In attempting to answer my research questions, which pertain to how and in which context the media and government conflated the past and the present, I have focussed on political discourse and government actions in the cultural sphere. As discussed in the preceding Literature Review, this has required an interdisciplinary and innovative approach to my research methods. I developed my own methodology, drawing from several fields, so as to examine more holistically the government's preoccupation with history while also providing a granular understanding of historical framing as a discursive technique.

Answering Research Question One

How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, conflate specific contemporary issues with historical events?

My hypothesis is that the media utilised historical framing to achieve a temporal conflation, so I first address this by providing evidence of frequent and sustained media presentation of news events through a historical frame. To do this, I employed framing analysis, a form of discourse analysis, to Russian media and government coverage and discussions of the Ukraine Crisis, sanctions, and intervention in Syria. In applying discourse analysis to coverage of three events, my aim was to provide a detailed description, explanation and critique of the textual strategies used to 'naturalise' the historical obsession of the sources making it appear to be a common-sense reaction (Riggins 1997, 2).

As noted previously, I argue that a pervasive sense of historical narrative accompanied the case studies, which were defining moments in post-Soviet Russia's relations with the West and understanding of itself. The Russian media interpreted each event through a cyclical notion of history, turning contemporary issues into a direct reliving of past episodes of patriotic history that required Russia to reassume a mantle of past greatness. For the media

to develop such narratives required time and effort; hence, I conducted framing analysis for each event over a 100-day period, based on the assumption that it was long enough to establish patterns but also short enough for me to be able to conduct close textual analysis. I began the 100-day period from between two weeks and one day before the issue became headline news in order to plot the narrative's emergence.

From this extended analysis, I was able to identify the historical schema, that is, the historical event with which the contemporary issue was being conflated. I analysed these confluences in the following sources: *Argumenty i fakty*, *Lenta.ru*, *kremlin.ru*, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, *mid.ru*, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, *Vesti nedeli*, *Voskresnoe vremya*. From these sources, I collected all references conflating the news event with the historical schema, inputting them into a large spreadsheet to show frequency of reference by source and cumulatively. I selected the aforementioned sources for their high readership levels and alignment with the government. There was also diversity in terms of both publication and audience type, so this selection of sources provided a maximally broad overview of pro-government discourse.

By focussing my analysis on President Putin's third term, I sought to elucidate the processes by which certain cultural and political changes occurred both within and without discourse. As seen in the individual description of sources below, the conservative turn of 2012 was accompanied by increased control over the media, including the abolition of *RIA Novosti* and its replacement by *Rossiia segodnya*, headed by Dmitrii Kiselev. Despite its issues, *RIA Novosti* had previously provided a relatively uncensored atmosphere, with journalists allowed freedom to explore all areas, and shielded from political fallout (Journalist formerly at RIA Novosti [anonymous] 2018). Its takeover was followed by the sacking of Galina Timchenko from *Lenta.ru*. Shortly afterwards, the government attacked the opposition

TV channel *Dozhd* for debating whether the USSR should have surrendered Leningrad to the Nazis during WW2 to avoid unnecessary civilian suffering.

Due to this increased political control, in turn reinforced by well-documented self-censorship (Benyumov 2013), Russian state media – and political discourse more widely – has been increasingly studied with reference to securitisation theory (Gaufman 2015; Kuzio 2015). As such, due to the media's importance in constructing a sense of nationhood and defining who belongs – and who does not - (Postill 2006), I have placed a special emphasis on media discourse in my research. Moreover, according to Levada Centre polling across 2012-2013, the media was trusted by three-quarters of the Russian population with over ninety per cent voicing trust in the television channels' portrayal of events. This contributed to my decision to include federal television news programmes (*Vesti nedeli* and *Voskresnoe vremya*), as did the fact that they broadcast across the country to the whole imagined political community (Burrett 2011), and that their viewing figures grew notably during the research period (Poluekhtova 2015).

Among textual sources, I have opted to include the most popular media sources but to diversify them by tone and audience type within the selected parameters. While many of the textual sources I cite were located online, I have not included social media for several reasons. First, despite the prevalence of internet access, in 2014 over 90 per cent of the Russian population said that they acquired most of their knowledge about events in the world from television (Volkov and Goncharov 2014). Second, I wanted to analyse media that was aligned with or controlled by the state but the RuNet at this time had considerably greater freedom (Rollberg and Laruelle 2018, 330). Third, research suggests that the RuNet is highly impacted by narratives in federal news (Cottiero et al. 2015). Fourth, I was constrained by my decision to use close reading of texts, rather than computer-assisted technology, meaning that I need to restrict myself to a limited corpus.

With that in mind, a detailed consideration of each source follows below:

Argumenty i fakty (AiF): AiF is a weekly Moscow-based newspaper, owned by the Government of Moscow as of 7th March 2014. It has a large circulation of 1.2 million and has been very popular since the Soviet times (Media Landscapes n.d.). It also allows a relatively wide range of voices in its coverage of events, although only within permissible limits. All articles were taken from their site at www.aif.ru.

Komsomolskaya Pravda (KP): The articles are taken from the database EastView Information Services. KP is a pro-government tabloid newspaper available throughout Russia and founded in 1925. The paper is not owned directly by the state but by Media Partner, which in turn is owned by ESN Group, an energy company led by Grigoriy Beryozkin, who has close links to Gazprom and the government. TNS Gallup Media found that KP was the most read newspaper in 2011 and its online version the most visited website in 2008, the last time such data was released before the research period (von Feilitzen and Petrov 2011).

Kremlin.ru: Using the www.kremlin.ru website, I analysed official government statements, interviews, and documents released by the Russian President. This source was included as it represents the President and communicates his statements, rather than for its popularity. I combined *Mid.ru* and *Kremlin.ru* references with government statements and direct quotes by government ministers published in other sources to collect the references that would come under the title 'government' in this thesis.

Lenta.ru: All articles were taken from their site, www.lenta.ru. Lenta is a Moscow-based online newspaper, with over 600,000 daily visitors in 2018 (Alexa Internet n.d.). In 2014, the main editor, Galina Timchenko, and nearly half of the rest of the staff, were sacked for displeasing the government with their coverage of events in Ukraine. The Kremlin installed a

pro-government editor and the newspaper's coverage of events in Ukraine changed drastically.

Mid.ru: I used the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, www.mid.ru to analyse interviews and statements released by the minister, Sergei Lavrov, and his officials and spokesmen, for keywords and themes. This source was included as it represents the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and communicates ministerial statements, rather than for its popularity.

Rossiiskaya gazeta (RG): The articles are taken from the website www.rg.ru. It is the Russian government daily newspaper and it publishes official decrees and statements as well as articles written by their journalists. It has audience reach of almost two per cent of the Russian population, according to the TNS Russia poll 2012, putting it in third place in terms of daily reach (Khvostunova 2013).

Vesti nedeli (VN): A Sunday evening flagship news round-up show for *Rossiia-1*, the state-owned television channel. The broadcasts were available on Russian television and online; many of the shows were also uploaded onto YouTube. In 2005, 2007 and 2015 VN won the prestigious TEFI award for best information analysis programme, and it averaged between fifteen and sixteen per cent of audiences during 2014-2015. *Vesti nedeli* is presented by Dmitrii Kiselev, who was placed on the EU and USA sanctions list for producing anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian propaganda during the Ukraine Crisis and Conflict.

Voskresnoe vremya (VV): This is *Vesti nedeli*'s competitor as the Sunday evening flagship news round-up show. It airs on *Pervyi kanal*, Russia's most watched federal channel. The channel's CEO is Konstantin Ernst, a staunch and influential Kremlin loyalist, it is owned by businesses that use opaque structures based in tax havens. *Voskresnoe vremya* was very popular during the research period, as the fifteenth most watched programme of all genres of 2014, with 8,100,000 viewers on average for each episode, more even than *Vesti nedeli*

(Poluekhtova 2015). The broadcasts were available on Russian television and online; many of the shows were also uploaded onto YouTube.

As well as the sources listed above, I examined additional qualitative analytical evidence for the existence of the framing discourses in best-selling books, popular television series, academic articles, and new film releases during the research period.¹⁶ I did this to avoid unnecessarily restricting my research findings by overlooking other areas of popular culture, which can sometimes be an unfortunate tendency in studies of political culture (Stites 1995). In Chapter Seven, I collate the findings to compare the framing discourses and provide an overview of what constitutes historical framing, using the criteria below:

- Detailed conflation of the past and present by an extended inculcation of the framing narrative (levels of repetition; structure)
- The use of misrepresentation and false representation to ensure the historical frame ‘fits’ the present-day event
- The presence of specific rhetorical devices (conspiracy theory; personalisation) used to deliver the frame

Having provided a conceptualisation of historical framing grounded in the examples of the three case study discourses, I then study the intersection between historical framing and other illiberal and/or populist narratives in Russian discourse, including on internal enemies, Russia’s global mission, and heroism. For both parts of the chapter, I utilise quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to balance the limitations of one type of approach and integrate different ways of detailing the frame’s existence as a significant political and media discourse.

¹⁶ When I refer to an overall frame, this does not imply that the discourse was used in the same way, at the same time, for the same purpose across all sources. Please see page 63 of this thesis for more details.

In the discourse analysis, I only considered pro-government publications as I was analysing official and co-ordinated information campaigns, exploring how narratives were used to endow government actions with meaning and a sense of patriotic duty. As outlined in the Literature Review, journalism in Russia is understood very differently from the West.¹⁷ With all major media outlets directly or indirectly subordinated to the Kremlin, the media's presentation of events can be understood as state-approved and state-supportive on the whole. The fact of indirect ownership should not undermine this, given that the Kremlin is very sophisticated in using media to create a sense of plurality and diversity. Indeed, elements of concealment are crucial to the effective functioning of propaganda in general (Skillen 2017, 93).

That said, I did take into account journalistic agency, accepting that it played a small role, with certain writers, politicians and correspondents more likely to apply historical framing in a given discourse; for example, Tamara Shkel' covering Ukraine for RG and Evgenii Arsyukhin covering Sanctions for KP. Other individuals were prone to employing historical framing frequently across all discourses: Sergei Naryshkin and Vladimir Medinskii for the government; Galina Sapozhnikova and Dar'ya Aslamova for KP; Vitalii Tseplyaev for AiF; Anna Fedyakina and Kira Latukhina at RG. This problematises a simplistic reading of the frame as a one-size-fits-all narrative applied identically across sources in accordance with a pre-existing schedule. The media had to react to real-time events and such developments were also reflected in the journalists' application of the frame, as was (presumably) the writer's level of enthusiasm for government policies.

¹⁷ Although perhaps not everyone would voice or view it as cynically as the then Deputy Minister of Communications, Aleksei Volin, who, to a room of aspiring journalists, defined the purpose of journalism as being to inflate bosses' wallets: (Actual Comment 2013)

Given the sheer volume and range of sources for assessing pro-government media campaigns, scholars have adopted a variety of different approaches to analysing the Russian media's instrumentalisation of history during Putin's third term: including by applying securitisation theory (Gaufman 2017a), using narrative inquiry (Marples 2016), or interpreting the media coverage as a form of strategic global messaging (Hinck, Kluver, and Cooley 2018). Of the available methods, I decided framing analysis was best suited to the analysis of process. A frame functions to define a problem (and its causes), assert the moral dimensions of the problem, and then propose a solution (Kuypers, 2006). In my approach, I have adopted Michael Cacciatore, Dietram Scheufele and Shanto Iyengar's refined approach to framing analysis, which emphasised the need to explore 'equivalence framing', a growing media tendency to produce detailed comparisons and connotations between one event and another (Cacciatore, Scheufele, and Iyengar 2016). In the same article, they also stressed the importance of pre-existing, culturally dependent schema to successful media framing. This proved highly appropriate to my analysis of Russian media discourses given that a familiar, mythologised version of history functioned as the schema.¹⁸ I understand historical framing as a form of 'equivalence framing' in that it provides an allegorical narrative. In describing historical frames as a narrative, I use Somers' and Gibson's (1993) argument that a narrative comprises: 1) relationality of parts, 2) causal emplotment, 3) selective appropriation, and 4) temporality, sequence, and place.

Studies of framing analysis have tended to differentiate the 'framing' of news from efforts to persuade people of this or that argument (D'Angelo and Kuypers 2016; Matthes and Schemer 2012). According to this understanding, framing analysis should examine to what

¹⁸ Myth here is described using Ernst Cassirer's definition of myths: 'We must find in these forms themselves the measure and criterion for their truth and intrinsic meaning. Instead of taking them as mere copies of something else, we must see in each of these spiritual forms a spontaneous law of generation; and original way and tendency of expression which is more than a mere record of something initially given in fixed categories of real existence' (Cassirer 2012, 8)

extent various biases of gatekeepers (journalists, editors, etc.) influence the way information is broadcast. Indeed, Jorg Matthes and Christian Schemer have argued that framing, as opposed to persuasion, does not imply an intention to change beliefs (Matthes and Schemer 2012). Other scholars have argued that framing must be differentiated from persuasion because the former suggests how to arrange narrative elements, while the latter changes beliefs directly by providing new information (Savin, Kashirskikh, and Mavletova 2018). However, propaganda is increasingly sophisticated in the Internet age, when fake news and political polarisation make it less obvious what is true and what is false. As such, successful propaganda now requires the construction of the most compelling narrative, often requiring more sophisticated methods of delivery. As such, I find the differentiation between ‘framing’ and ‘persuasion’ to be somewhat overstated, if not outdated. Instead, I would conceptualise historical framing as an innovative form of propaganda, aimed primarily at achieving political ends.

The question of how best to conduct framing analysis has engendered considerable debate. Zhongdang Pan & Gerald Kosicki showed the advantages of close reading of texts in revealing important elements of the frame that could be missed by Computer Text Analysis tools (Pan and Kosicki 1993). However, a reading this close cannot be applied to large samples, meaning that distribution across media and time periods cannot be tracked. At the other end of the scale, Computer Text Analysis tools can analyse masses of data but often miss subtleties of framing that are key to understanding its application. Mark Miller used a framing analysis approach in which he mapped frames using keyword frequency, basing his method on the idea that frames are constructed through the strategic use or omission of certain words and phrases (M. Miller 1997). I have employed this approach, if not Mark Miller’s exact method, in my framing analysis to first establish the presence of the historical frame and the sub-narratives that comprise it, and second to compare its use across different

sources. I have managed to maintain the detail required by analysing the texts individually, reaching a compromise between the two approaches to framing analysis by limiting the sources I consider. This ensured that more infrequent frame-relevant words could be considered in my analysis.

The flexibility of a manual approach also made it easier to identify the presence of a historical frame in coverage of a news event because I could distinguish between consistent, repeated connotations and one-off comparisons with little depth. Once I had identified the presence of historical framing, I grouped keywords and phrases into thematic clusters, adapting the methodology used by Bruce Etling et al in their analysis of the Russian blogosphere (Etling, Alexanyan, and Kelly 2010). Whereas Etling et al used clusters to identify types of user and blog, I used the same cluster technique to group references by keywords, with the more frequent keywords for each group visualised in word clouds.¹⁹ These thematic groups each formed a sub-narratives within the broader historical framing narrative. I used graphs to show the frequency of use of each sub-narrative and its distribution across the period, taking into consideration the impact of external events on the sequence of the frame.

However, while I am confident that this approach was the best way to answer my research questions, there were some limitations to it, which I was careful to mitigate. First, I was the only researcher and coder. To ensure reliability I implemented a system whereby I checked each article twice for references, collating the findings into a spreadsheet that I could verify. Moreover, while I include the total number of references, I have focussed my findings on the qualitative research, so that any possible small errors in counting references would not

¹⁹ I created the word clouds on www.worditout.com. The size of the words in the clouds is not directly representative of their frequency; rather, the clouds are supposed to provide a visualisation of the number and types of keywords that emerged in each sub-narrative.

impact the findings in any meaningful way.²⁰ Another attendant issue when analysing media and government statements for references to the historical schema was how to decide which references were indeed to the past. I adopted a position that erred on the side of caution; for example, in my analysis of the Ukraine Crisis framing narrative, I omitted the word ‘fascist’, deeming it too nebulous to be considered a definite reference to the GPW (Kryuchkov and Tabachnyk 2008). I made the location of direct, overt references to the past in a news piece that discussed the present as well a pre-condition for including the word, phrase, or image as a historical frame reference.

Although I outlined significant differences between the sources as they emerged in my analysis, I have not detailed minor variations where this would not provide useful insight into the process of historical framing. Throughout this case study, I refer to an overall frame, which could imply that this discourse was used in the same way, at the same time, for the same purpose across all sources. This was not the case. While there was considerable commonality of use, from techniques to keywords, across the sources, it was not sufficient to assume the existence of a collective narrative. There were differences between the sources in the use of sub-narratives, preferences for keywords, and so on. Sometimes these divergences were the result of comparing different mediums, on other occasions variation of use reflected different audience types or journalistic agency.

Nevertheless, the lack of a ‘collective narrative’ did not detract from striking similarity in source use of the historical frame. All sources used the historical schema as an analogy for contemporary events, applying history selectively and similarly but excessively, a feature of restorative nostalgia: ‘the stronger the rhetoric of continuity with the historical past

²⁰ For each case study, I have only been able to include examples of the historical framing narratives from a small percentage of the works referenced; however, in the Bibliography, in Section C, I have included a link or short reference to all the works in which I found historical framing references.

and emphasis on traditional values, the more selectively the past is usually presented' (Boym 2007, 8). Such correlation was unlikely to be coincidental; although modern Russian censorship cannot be compared to the Soviet or Tsarist era, the government's enforced provision of media talking points and prohibitions on negative stories, as well as media self-censorship, are well-documented (Ostrovsky 2015; Pomerantsev 2014). The convergence and copying of stories and frames across the media thus resulted in highly similar but separate historical framing meta-narratives across several sources, which can be analysed as a coherent discourse. The media cohered divergent patriotic pro-government discourses (neo-Soviet, neo-imperialist, Orthodox, pan-Slavist, nationalist) within this wider historically preoccupied discourse. This emphasis on replaying a heroic Russian past through the present facilitated the government's argument that Russia was witnessing a rebirth of patriotism. To place the findings within their proper context, and to deconstruct the government's promotion of active patriotism, historical framing must be viewed as only one stage in the development of a common historical narrative during Putin's third term.

Answering Research Question Two

How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, use this conflation to promote selective engagement with history as central to Russian identity?

To answer the second research question, which seeks to contextualise historical framing within wider government patriotic discourse and uses of history, I employed a range of methods, including critical discourse analysis of key doctrines and strategy documents published between 2012-2018; a review of the activities and literature of the Russian Military-Historical Society (henceforth RVIO); interviews with employees of cultural and media organisations; research via *Rossiiskaya gazeta* and kremlin.ru into Russian legislation on history and memory; and framing analysis of government documents containing

references to patriotism and identity published on kremlin.ru or the Ministry of Culture's website between 2012-2018.

First, I supplemented the historical framing analysis from the discourses with critical discourse analysis of major government strategy documents and doctrines released under President Putin between 2012-2018. I used close textual analysis to identify references to identity and patriotism, paying particular attention to occasions where these concepts were connected to history and knowledge thereof. Examining the archives of documents on kremlin.ru and the Ministry of Culture website, I analysed major policy documents published by the government in the research period, comprising presidential addresses, foreign policy concepts, military doctrines, and various strategies. I also referred to earlier major documents from which they developed and all the annual reviews and promotional materials of the Ministry of Culture's activities.²¹

Given that I am looking to present a theory of a multifaceted effort by the government to create and project a very specific type of patriotism, I also conducted several interviews with cultural and media practitioners to contextualise my findings. Not all the interviewees agreed to be quoted directly, with some preferring to provide their information anonymously. I contacted the potential participants by email, asking to meet them in person or to interview them over Skype (using an account created specifically for this purpose). I selected individuals who had worked in the Russian mass media or for an organisation in the cultural or historical sphere during the research period. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and three hours and I recorded the interview on an encrypted device before transcribing each interview afterwards. I began with structured interview questions before then asking for

²¹ For a full list of the documents, please see Section C of the Bibliography, under the sub-heading 'Government Documents'

further detail, depending on the answers of the participant, making the interviews semi-structured.

Except for one interview in English, all the interviews were in Russian, as was the information and documentation I provided to participants about the project. I have included the questions I used for the structured section of the interview in Appendix One, but they largely addressed the participant's views on the role of history in Russia and what sort of history should be promoted. Participants' answers were used qualitatively to contextualise my research by providing insight into the activities of GONGOs, grassroots organisations, or the media. Before conducting the interviews, which took place in Moscow, Voronezh, London, and over Skype, I underwent an ethics review by the Central University Research Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions, which approved my research.²²

These interviews were supported by a review of the activities of RVIO, a prominent government-funded cultural organisation working in the sphere of history. The Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) was the most prominent actor in the sphere of state-funded cultural organisations, assuming control over different channels and media for communicating history to ensure it corresponded to the state's demands. RVIO was set up in 2012 by Presidential decree No 1710.²³ According to the decree, RVIO exists to encourage and curate the study of Russia's military past, rendering it triumphant rather than tragic (Prezident Rossii 2012b). Thus, I explore their activities and involvement in the creation of historical narratives. To do so, I read all their published literature both in print and online regarding their activities, including limited-availability promotional literature (such as flyers and brochures) obtained during a personal visit to RVIO's headquarters in 2018. I also

²² Research Ethics Approval (CUREC 1A) Ref No: R58646/RE002

²³ It should be noted that RVIO claims continuity with an organisation begun by Nicholas 1st and so describes itself as 110 years old. In this, it reflects the government and President's own obsession with creating a sense of unbroken continuity between old and new organisations.

analysed significant events, films, books, and other outputs with which they were involved, entering them into a spreadsheet to understand the scope and style of their involvement.

The efforts undertaken by the government to control the narrative around history and memory included the passing of legislation that criminalised certain historical interpretations, a growing trend across Central and Eastern Europe (Nikolay Kopolov 2017; Đureinović 2018). I identified new legislation using kremlin.ru and *Rossiiskaya gazeta*'s website, www.rg.ru. My decision to include legislation derived from my contention that such laws were government tools to support the inculcation of a standard cultural historical narrative. This view was supported by the fact that many of the laws were introduced during or immediately following the period of the frame's usage. By introducing restrictive legislation and selectively releasing archives, the government asserted its power over defining legitimate discourse, thereby negatively reinforcing the media messages.²⁴

As is clear from the above, placing historical framing within its proper political and cultural context required a multifaceted approach. There were a number of limitations to the chosen approach: first, I was unable to interview a large number of people, instead focussing on major or 'typical' practitioners, based on my research into the mnemonic sphere; second, by focussing so much on RVIO, I will have inevitably amplified their importance, and that of the Ministry of Culture, in the cultural and historical sphere, a shortcoming I have tried to bear in mind. However, considering my focus is on official efforts, I do not see this as a major flaw.

Moreover, through employing mixed methods, I have been able to analyse a range of spheres, which has confirmed that historical framing was an important but not singular element in the government's attempt to renew their political legitimacy by appropriating and

²⁴ Please see page 30 and page 238 of this thesis for more detail.

promoting a sense of historical and cultural legacy. Specifically, the government, aided by the media, sought to inculcate a certain view of key historical events and of contemporary policies and crises, merging these in the media's presentation thereof. This preoccupation with history and historical interpretation – and its centrality to the government's presentation of its own actions and of patriotism -may have appeared crude but its implementation was often multifaceted and sometimes even nuanced. To understand this process better, it is necessary to address, analyse, and extract as much meaning as possible from the narratives employed by the media and government. I begin with the earliest and most obvious case study, namely the media's historical framing of the Ukraine Crisis within the Great Patriotic War.

Chapter Four: The Ukraine Crisis as the Great Patriotic War

The Maidan protests (also known as Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity) began in November 2013. They were sparked by then President Viktor Yanukovich's decision not to sign a trade association agreement with the EU. This decision followed an offer by Vladimir Putin of major discounts on energy prices and fifteen billion dollars in aid to Ukraine. Seemingly lured by these promises and frightened at the prospect of alienating Russia, Yanukovich's decision came to symbolise a choice about Ukraine's future, which many of the protestors hoped would follow a Western, as opposed to Russian, path. Over the winter of 2013/2014, the Ukrainian police responded violently to the protestors on several occasions. Despite this, the protests continued into February, when, the day after an EU-brokered agreement for early elections, President Yanukovich lost the confidence of the police and fled Kyiv. In the power vacuum that followed, opposition parties represented at the Maidan and in the Rada formed an interim government.

Russia protested the legitimacy of this action, characterising the demonstrators and the interim government as far-right extremists in the vein of Stepan Bandera, a wartime Ukrainian nationalist leader.²⁵ Claiming the need to protect Russians in Crimea from impending genocide, Russia carried out a swift and immaculately executed annexation of the peninsula, later 'legitimised' by a dubiously legal referendum on 16th March 2014. Immediately following this, Russia amassed troops on its border with Ukraine and sent both regular and irregular troops to encourage separatism and violence in East Ukraine. In Russian parlance this was dubbed 'the Russian spring', but the uprising found less support than

²⁵ Stepan Bandera was the leader of one faction of the divided Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) during World War Two. He fought primarily against the Soviets and collaborated with the Nazis in order to declare Ukrainian independence in 1941, an initiative the Nazis did not entertain. Bandera was then imprisoned by the Germans for the rest of the war. The OUN was a radical nationalist organisation with a military partisan wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), formed in 1943. Members of the OUN/UPA collaborated with the Nazi police and Wehrmacht and have been implicated in war crimes against Jews and Poles. Although Stepan Bandera never actually led the UPA, the Soviet media often described all Ukrainian nationalists, including the UPA, as 'banderovtsy' or Banderites. For more information see Rossolinski-Liebe 2014 and Berkhoff 2008.

expected and faced a Ukrainian army who were by now ready to fight back. What began as skirmishes between loyalists and separatists had descended into armed conflict by April 2014. The war continues today and has cost the lives of at least 13,000 people: for more information, please see Andrew Wilson's (2014) or Serhy Yekelchuk's (2015) books on the Ukraine Conflict).

The Russian view of events in Ukraine was very different from that described above. The media depicted events on the Maidan as American-backed protests led by fascists that culminated in an illegal coup against the sitting President. According to this view, Russia was forced to intervene to defend Russian-speakers in Crimea and East Ukraine (Delyagin 2014). The divergent views between Russia and the West on events in Ukraine since 2013 has been the topic of much academic study, some of which has also considered the use of the GPW as a paradigm through which to interpret the conflict as a continuation of the war against fascism (Subotić 2020, 243; Gaufman 2017a; Kuzio 2015; Pasitselska 2017; Siddi 2017). The Ukraine Crisis is rightly considered a milestone in the open information warfare between Russia and the West but there has been less emphasis on exploring the Russian explanation.²⁶ While in no way wishing to present excuses for the Russian state's blatant lies, it is worth analysing state media coverage of such a seismic event so as to understand the framework within which millions of Russians have had the Ukraine Crisis explained to them (regardless of whether all of them believed it or not).²⁷

Among the three case studies provided in this thesis, the Ukraine Crisis as GPW frame gained the most traction in popular culture and outside traditional news sources. By way of example, Nikolai Starikov's *Ukraine. Chaos and Revolution – the Dollar's*

²⁶ As evidence, I would cite the founding of the EU's Disinformation Lab and the citizen journalism organisation, Bellingcat, in response to Russian disinformation over events in Ukraine

²⁷ Andriy Zayarnyuk has criticised the use of 'Ukraine Crisis' for being a euphemistic description that minimises the war. By using the term here, I wish to denote the inter-election period, chaotic political situation and beginning of the war but to differentiate this period from the full-blown conflict: (Zayarnyuk 2015)

Weaponry, which focussed on Western funding of alleged Nazis and *banderovtsy* in Ukraine,²⁸ occupied thirteenth place on the ozon.ru 2014 bestseller list (Starikov 2014). Numerous books were published during the research period that actively and excessively conflated the Ukraine Crisis with the GPW (Kochegarov 2014; S Byshok 2014; Stanislav Byshok and Kochetkov 2014; Ryabchenko 2014; Savitskii 2014a; Mikhail Polikarpov 2014; Savitskii 2014a; 2014b; Vershinin 2014). Such works included fictionalised accounts of the Maidan protests, biographies of the militia leader Igor' Strelkov, school textbooks, and famous bloggers' semi-structured writings on the falsification of Ukrainian history.

Cinema and television series also supported the conflation of present-day Ukraine with Nazi-occupied Ukraine. The condemnatory overtones and Crimean setting of the 2014 series *Getery mayora sokolova* ('Major Sokolov's Hetaeras') drew on many of the key framing devices noted in the media. Aired between the 23rd and 27th March, the series depicted the terroristic anti-Soviet organisation, ROVS, a thinly concealed commentary on the active *banderovtsy* from the 1930s through to the 1950s. Similar themes were explored by a number of films that premiered in May 2014 at the *Pobedili vmeste* ('We were Victorious Together') film festival in Sebastopol, which was dedicated to the Soviet victory in 1945 (RIA Novosti 2014).

During the research period, *Rossiia-1*, the second biggest federal television channel in Russia, showed eight war films with main characters who were Ukrainian Nazi collaborators. There were also numerous documentaries on the Second World War, fifth columns (Krasil'nikov 2012), and Stalin, such as *Chuzhoi v sem'e Stalina*, translated as 'A Stranger in Stalin's Family', a documentary aired on 6th March that focused on Stalin's leadership. Another relevant example included the historical documentary, *Banderovtsy. Palachi ne*

²⁸ A term denoting followers of the controversial Ukrainian Nationalist fighter Stepan Bandera who fought both the Nazi and Soviet forces during World War Two but also collaborated with the former.

byvayut geroyami ('Banderovtsy. Executioners can't be heroes'), which aired on 21st May 2014. Perhaps the most obvious example of the frame emerged on 17th May with the screening of Alena Berezovskaya's documentary *Ukraina.ru*, in which the filmmaker discussed events in Ukraine to the accompaniment of random or lightly contextualised footage of Nazi war crimes and OUN and UPA fighters in World War Two. Although screened on Rossiya-24, the documentary was also featured on VN the week prior to this.

Reinforcing this type of content, the channel's six daily news segments sometimes created a strange montage effect when they interrupted such shows or war films; for example, the Second World War film *Hot Snow* (Yegiazarov 1972) was interrupted half-way through by news on the Ukraine Crisis, in which the correspondent compared events with the GPW, thereby blurring the two stories into the same continuum. As such, interpretations of the Ukraine Crisis that weaponised Russian cultural memories of war and crisis, specifically in relation to the Great Patriotic War, pervaded both popular culture and political discourse. However, in covering the Maidan protests and nascent conflict in Donbas, the pro-Kremlin media appeared to be more disciplined, consistent, and intense in applying historical framing.

What was the Frame?

In total, I identified 536 articles and 25 broadcasts containing references conflating the Ukraine Crisis with the GPW. All news media sources analysed were published between 22nd February and 25th May 2014, that is, starting from President Yanukovich's decision to flee Ukraine and the election of a new President, Petro Poroshenko, on 25th May 2015. As the Maidan protests grew in numbers and intensity, the media (excluding Lenta) embraced the historical frame of the Great Patriotic War to explain events in Kyiv. This technique was therefore established by the time Yanukovich fled Ukraine and the research period began, but it grew from that point.

As noted, pro-government media outlets used the frame to depict events in Ukraine, from the protests through to the burgeoning conflict in the East, as a rerun of the Great Patriotic War. This was a Russified and selective interpretation of the GPW, with no discussion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact or any nuanced description of Ukrainian nationalists, some of whom fought against the Nazis as well as the Soviets (Rossolinski 2014.) The media and politicians also presented Russia's and the West's responses to the Ukraine Crisis within this framework, arguing that Russia was once again standing up to fascism and the West was neglecting to learn the lessons of appeasement. Although the Russian media also used other narratives (e.g. Maidan as a colour revolution) to explain the political crisis in Ukraine, the depiction of the Ukraine Crisis as a rerun of the GPW was a prominent interpretation in state-aligned media coverage. The purpose of the narrative was to delegitimise the Maidan protestors' complaints, especially as these shared much in common with the grievances aired during the 2011-2012 mass protests in Russia.

Repeating the core message of the frame (that the Ukraine Crisis was just like the GPW) was essential to legitimising it as a narrative and to ensuring maximum impact but this had to be adapted depending on events on the ground. Table One shows that there was a large general number of references until the end of the research period, with peaks in the run up to major events, such as the annexation of Crimea, and the Donbas referenda. Given the emotive nature of this narrative, it is perhaps unsurprising that Table Two shows that the two most tabloid sources, KP and VN, used the frame most frequently.

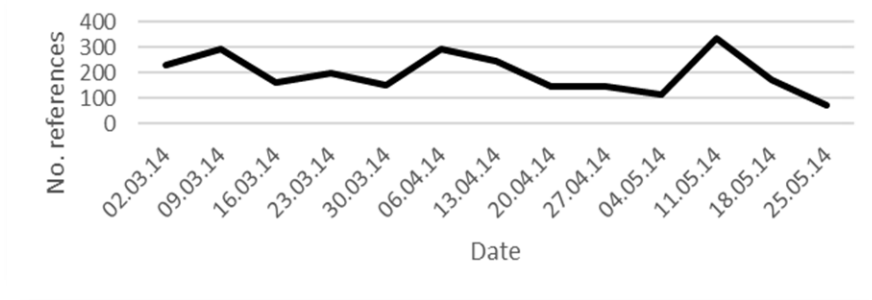


Table One. Total number of references to historical frame in coverage of Ukraine Crisis

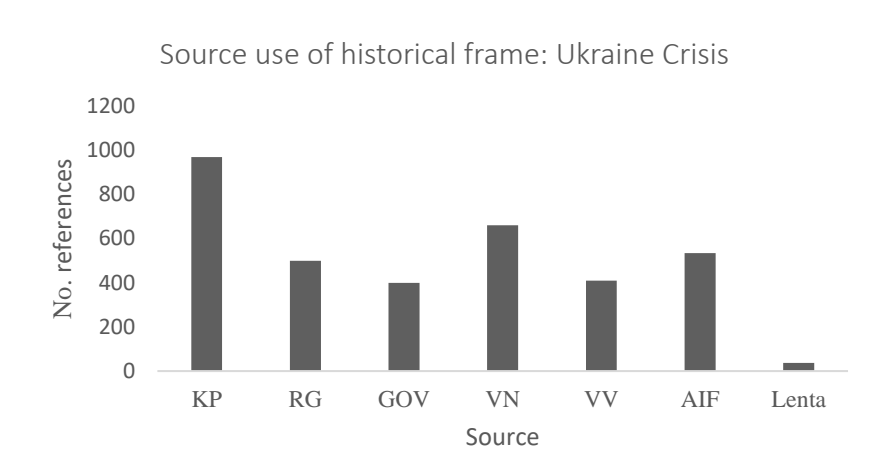


Table Two. Total number of references to historical frame by source in coverage of Ukraine Crisis

The sheer number of repeated references to the GPW in the coverage of the Ukraine Crisis was the most basic technique that attempted to persuade viewers of the legitimacy of the conflation. There were 3509 individual references across six media and two government sources. Tables One and Two show the total references by week ending and the number of references made by each source, respectively. It is important to note that Lenta.ru was editorially independent in February 2014 and provided balanced coverage, even interviewing a far-right Ukrainian politician. This led the Russian government to intervene and insist on the sacking of the editor-in-chief, Galina Timchenko, and most of her staff, during the research period. During my source collection, there were very few articles left on Lenta’s website relating to the research period and those that remained provided conflicting views of

the UC, reflecting both outgoing and incoming journalists' views. As such, Lenta is an outlier for this case study, but I have included it for the sake of consistency and because the sacking of its editor for her stance on the Ukraine Crisis is, in itself, revealing.

For the other sources, once the shock at President Yanukovich's departure had abated, the frequency of GPW references sharply increased and the comparisons became more detailed and complex (Skoibeda 2014a; M. Makarychev 2014). The media's quick assumption of the frame can be linked to precedent: Tatyana Zhurzhenko has noted the conflation of the 2005 Orange Revolution with the GPW in Russian media coverage, albeit on a lesser scale (Zhurzhenko 2015). Further back, Soviet politicians used references to Ukrainian nationalist crimes and collaboration during and after the GPW to undermine Ukrainian claims for independence (Fedor et al. 2017; Marples 2007). Zenon Kohut even argues that in the pro-Soviet/pro-Russian Ukrainian media, 'no historical theme received so much space in 1990 and 1991 as did the OUN-UPA' (Kohut 1994, 136–37).

The narrative in which the Ukraine Crisis was conflated with the GPW was dynamic and reactive to events but still carefully structured. The overall framing narrative can be broken down into four sub-narratives centred on the following confluences: the new Ukrainian government as Banderites; the behaviour of the Ukrainian and West governments as akin to Nazis; the war in the East as a rerun of the Great Patriotic War; and the Russian Spring and the return of Crimea as a new Great Victory. The way in which the media historically framed the Ukraine Crisis changed markedly as it progressed. As such, with different sub-narratives arising at different points, it was difficult to isolate an example where the entire narrative was on display. However, Vladislav Vorob'ev, in an article which also included texts from other RG journalists, provided a summary of recent political events that invoked topics common to all the sub-narratives. This article, entitled 'And does the saved world not remember?' (*Ne*

pomnit mir spasennyi?),²⁹ was supposed to describe Victory Day around the world but actually focussed heavily on events in Ukraine, supported by reporting from Petr Likhomanov, RG's Ukraine correspondent, who was named as co-author (Vorob'ev 2014a).

Vladislav Vorob'ev is a senior journalist at the government's own newspaper, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, where he writes primarily on the government and those in power (*vlast'*) and foreign affairs. Around 2014, he was often given interviews or access to senior members of government, as can be seen from his personal page on RG's website (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* n.d.). As such, it is reasonable to see him as especially sensitive to, and diligent in, reproducing the government's narratives and messaging.

In the historical framing narrative of the UC, the first Bandera sub-narrative, aimed to delegitimise the protestors and new Ukrainian authorities as radical nationalists who could not be trusted to treat Russian speakers humanely. These people were collaborators whose behaviour should be judged according to their actions in the GPW, actions which they continued today. By way of example, in Vorob'ev's article, we read a highly condemnatory piece on how the then Ukrainian Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, placed the UPA, whom Russia sees as Nazi collaborators and traitors,³⁰ on a level with the Red Army:

[Arseniy Yatsenyuk] compared the Red Army with the UPA. In the official statement disseminated by him, he says: 'The Anti-Terrorist Operation is underway in Donetsk oblast and our warriors are demonstrating the same valour as their grandfathers and great-grandfathers did in the Red Army and the UPA'.

²⁹ The title of the article is a play on a line ('and the saved world remembers') from a famous song by the Russian bard Yuri Vizbor. This line was also referenced in the monumental painting by Mai Dantsig, *And the Saved World Remembers*, which he painted in honour of the 40th anniversary of the Soviet victory in World War Two.

³⁰ In fact, the UPA did not exist as an entity during the period of OUN-Nazi collaboration

Despite the positive reference to the Red Army, the journalist focussed on the praise for the UPA, building on the notion that the new Ukrainian legislature are *banderovtsy*.

As the narrative evolved in tandem with events in Ukraine, the author painted supporters of Maidan and the new Ukrainian authorities not only as collaborators but also as Nazis. This was typical of the second, ‘Nazi’, sub-narrative, in which Ukrainians, and sometimes the West, were depicted as putting National Socialist ideas into practice: for example, in the subheading to the article, we read that: ‘Even on Victory Day, Ukrainian Nazis continued to kill’. The ‘Nazis’ referred to are the Ukrainian army and militias, those same ‘warriors’ referenced by Arseniy Yatsenyuk in the earlier quotation. Shortly after the subheading and introduction to the article, which mentioned the UPA twice, the author mentioned Yuriy Odarchenko, the governor of Kherson province, who, allegedly, ‘thanked Hitler’ in a 2014 speech commemorating World War Two.³¹ In this way, various Ukrainian institutions were depicted as akin to Nazis.

The notion that the Ukrainian army and government not only thought but also acted like Nazis was the basis for the third ‘War’ sub-narrative. According to this line, the pro-Maidan Ukrainians were committing Nazi-style atrocities in the east of the country. By contrast, the pro-Russian Ukrainians played a role akin to that of the Red Army. This conflation could at times be quite blatant, however, on other occasions it could be more subtle, as in the case of Vorob'ev's article where the author interspersed descriptions of the ‘exploits’ of the Veterans of World War Two and ‘those who died’ in the GPW with references to the fighting in East Ukraine:

³¹ Some Ukrainian media have denied Odarchenko intended to thank Hitler, but the video of his speech certainly gives the impression that he was praising Hitler. The video of the speech shared on Russian media, as well as StopFake's counter-explanation of what Odarchenko (ostensibly) really meant can be found here: <https://www.stopfake.org/en/fake-the-governor-of-the-kherson-oblast-justified-hitler/>

From the morning of 9th May, Ukrainian armoured vehicles and ‘National Guard’ fighters, who were shooting into the air but also at people’s feet, drove locals from the City Council offices occupied by the Donetsk People’s Republic

This section also contained details of the fighting and Ukrainian ‘punishment battalions’, a term with strong connotations of the GPW.³² Either Vorob’ev or his editor also opted to include an interview with a decorated veteran who complained that the former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko was starting a war with Russia. In this way, the fighting in both conflicts was confused, either by layering references to one within another or by using symbolic figures to associate the two conflicts in the reader’s mind.

The use of symbols to facilitate historical framing was prevalent throughout; however, it was especially notable in the fourth sub-narrative, which focussed on victory and the notion that the separatists had been victorious at repelling the nationalists. The article included ten images of Victory Day celebrations in Ukraine, all of which included numerous Soviet and GPW symbols, as in Figure One. Although ostensibly referring to commemoration, these images become examples of historical framing because of the context in which they emerged. For example, Vorob’ev stated that Russian speakers ‘did not forget about Victory Day’ but used the opportunity to remember not only the GPW veterans but also the victims of the Odesa Trade Union fire and fighting in Ukraine, thereby imbuing the latter with the tragedy and heroism of the former.

³² It is worth pointing out that there were no Ukrainian punishment battalions and Russian media or government claims to the contrary are false.



Figure One. East Ukrainian GPW memorial with flag of Stalin alongside the words 'Holy Rus'.

Photograph: Natal'ya Glebova, Rossiiskaya gazeta

The Victory sub-narrative first emerged during the coverage of the annexation of Crimea, which could have functioned as a natural end point to the narrative if the conflict in East Ukraine had not overshadowed celebrations. As it was, the sub-narrative re-emerged towards the beginning of May, coinciding with Victory Day. There was not much evidence to support its argument that Russia (and pro-Russian Ukrainians) had once again won this new version of the GPW. Certainly, this triumphalism was difficult to marry with events on the ground. However, by invoking this sub-narrative, the media were able to focus on the idea of Russia as victor to complement Victory Day celebrations and re-establish the triumphalism of the post-annexation slogan 'Crimea is Ours' (Hopf 2016).

The media also used the Victory sub-narrative to distract from the (very loud) voices calling on Russia to annex Donbas.³³ Given popular support for the Ukrainian separatists and

³³ Although theirs is a much smaller study, Tomila Lankina and Kohei Watanbe's research into Russian media framing of the Euromaidan also noted a shift in the types of narrative applied around the end of April 2014, as

calls on the government to intervene more forcefully in those territories, Russian media outlets and politicians must have understood the need to discontinue the more engaging but emotive media narratives of the crisis. This is certainly what happened with the historical framing narrative, which dwindled as the May 25th Ukrainian elections drew closer. The marked decrease in comparisons of the Ukraine Crisis with the GPW signalled a departure from the historical frame (see Table One); continued use of the historical frame beyond 25th May would have risked the frame's delegitimisation, given that Ukrainian elections would prove that the country was not in the grip of Nazis or *banderovtsy*. Indeed, to disguise the inevitably poor polling of fascist parties, the pro-Russian group CyberBerkut hacked into Ukraine's electoral system in an effort to discredit the process and make the fascist and nationalist parties appear more popular (Clayton 2014).

After Petro Poroshenko's election victory, the Russian media moved towards a new, more identity-focussed narrative according to which it was defending compatriots in Ukraine. This narrative was less hyperbolic and had already existed alongside the historical frame and was particularly popular in newspapers such as *Zavtra* and *Vzglyad*, which frequently propagated anti-Western and neo-imperialist discourses (Laruelle 2016b). This evolution confirmed the media presentation of East Ukrainians as culturally Russian and followed on from the media's depiction of them as culturally-reawakened Russian patriots worthy of emulation (Kots and Steshin 2014; Tkanchuk 2014; Chigishov 2014b 17.33).³⁴ There were still references to the GPW after 25th May, but they did not approach the frequency or sophistication employed during the research period, except for brief periods during particularly tense moments or anniversaries, like the annexation of Crimea. Having fully

the violence in Donbas began to escalate. I support their argument that this shift 'gives credence to arguments about Putin's strategic, interests-driven foreign policy' (Lankina and Watanabe 2017, 1526)

³⁴ Please note that all the times provided in brackets for VN and VV episodes refer to the programme's running time. That is, they do not account for advert breaks.

developed the frame over the initial stages of the Ukraine Crisis, the government and media could now invoke it for emotional impact without having to fully reproduce the intensity of the original use of the narrative.

During the research period, the media tended to make references to select aspects of the historical frame (i.e. GPW) depending on the topic under examination: for example, media sources would invoke *banderovtsy* if *Pravyi Sektor* held a march, while they would cite Red Army heroism in coverage of separatist armed ‘resistance’ to the Ukrainian Army. The Ukraine coverage appeared to be the most tightly controlled of all three case studies to be examined, at least in term of narrative structure. This may have resulted from the Russian government’s eagerness to ensure the Maidan protests did not spread to Russia. The Maidan protests began less than two years after the large-scale protests across Russian cities against vote-rigging and falsified election results (Judah 2013). In 2013, Vladimir Putin’s approval rating was at fifty-three per cent, a far cry from the eighty-nine per cent he enjoyed after the annexation of Crimea (Ray and Esipova 2014). As such, it is reasonable to argue that the Maidan demonstrations, which shared much in common with the 2011/2012 Bolotnaya protests, would have been perceived by the government as a direct threat to the internal stability of the Russian Federation. This fear would have been reinforced by President Putin’s stated belief that the Euromaidan was organised and financed by the USA, an interpretation that emerged across a wide variety of sources (Argumenty i fakty 2014d; Buzina 2014; Starikov 2014).

The tightly controlled narrative structure of the Ukraine discourse involved almost all media sources referring not only to the events of the GPW but also echoing their structural emplotment. Put another way, most media sources structurally reinforced the historical frame’s key message that the Ukraine Crisis was a repeat of the Ukrainian-Russian

experience of the GPW.³⁵ The media achieved this by applying different comparisons at specific times in an order that mirrored the structure of the Great Patriotic War. I describe this structural ordering of the Ukraine Crisis as *chronological mirroring*. To effectuate chronological mirroring, it was first necessary to divide the historical framing of the Ukraine Crisis into different sub-narratives, which were then employed sequentially.

Sub-narratives

By grouping the collected historical framing references by theme, I identified four themes: Bandera, or internal enemies; Nazis, or external enemies; war; and the Great Victory. These four thematic groups described the state-aligned view of the UC, but they also corresponded in content to different phases of the GPW. When organised by date, the sequence of the four main themes reflected the chronology of the GPW myth; for example, the media used elements from the beginning of the GPW to reference the early stages of the Ukraine Crisis and elements from the Great Victory as the Ukrainian Presidential elections drew closer. I have outlined the four sub-narratives below:

The Bandera Sub-narrative



³⁵ The exceptions to this pattern were Lenta, whose troubles have been documented earlier in this chapter, and the Foreign Ministry, who, due to their external focus, were less engaged in propagating this domestically focussed historical frame

Figure Two. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the Bandera sub-narrative³⁶

- Date of most use: 22nd February to 23rd March 2014
- Most popular keywords: Bandera, *banderovtsy*
- Corresponding current events (comparison of): (Pro-European) Ukrainians and Russian opposition as internal enemies who undermine Russian history and identity.
- Schema (comparison with): The way internal enemies and collaborators weakened Soviet power and facilitated Nazi takeovers of territory during and prior to the GPW. This view is prominent in recent Russian history textbooks (Zagladin 2017).

With 919 references, this sub-narrative was the second most popular theme in the UC historical framing discourse overall and the most popular theme in KP and RG. The main keyword in this sub-narrative was Bandera and words deriving from this root, such as *banderovtsy* (followers of Bandera) and *banderovshchina* (the time of Bandera). This was a reference to Stepan Bandera, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian nationalist and independence movement during WW2. At various points, Bandera's nationalists fought both alongside and against the Nazis and committed atrocities against Jews, Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians. These atrocities were frequently invoked, as in the following example when a MID spokesman described those fighting in the Ukrainian militias as being motivated solely by admiration of 'Bandera, Shukhevych and other facilitators of the German Nazis during the Second World War who fought together with them against their own nation, destroying the ethnic minorities who lived in Ukraine, for example the Volhynia Poles' (MID 2014c). This quotation exemplified the sources' distinction between good and bad Ukrainians, a topic that re-emerged not only in the media and politicians' use of this sub-narrative but throughout the discourse.

³⁶ All words were used at least seven times (across all cases). The larger the word the more times it was used,

54 percent of all references to the Bandera sub-narrative occurred before 23rd March (see Table Five). Given the rather sudden nature of President Yanukovich's decision to flee Ukraine, it may appear somewhat surprising that the Russian media were able to identify and reproduce such a coherent historical frame and for that frame to re-emerge across a range of sources. However, the reason the frame was adopted so quickly and cogently was due to the media's pre-existing familiarity with this frame. They had previously conflated Ukrainian nationalists and pro-Europeans with wartime collaborators, using the comparison to undermine the legitimacy of Ukrainian independence. Drawing on this history, the media set out to demonise large swathes of the Maidan protestors, presenting their criticisms of the political system in Ukraine as being driven by ethno-nationalism and fascist ideology.³⁷ This delegitimisation was integral to the employment of the GPW historical frame as it vilified the protestors through association with the worst possible enemies: Nazis and Nazi collaborators (*banderovtsy*).

The conflation of pro-Maidan Ukrainians with Bandera supporters was not entirely a figment of Moscow's imagination, sadly. Stepan Bandera remains a controversial and divisive figure in Ukraine, where (very broadly speaking) he is demonised in the East as a violent collaborator but honoured in West Ukraine as a man who fought for Ukrainian independence. There were supporters of Bandera on the Maidan in 2013/2014 but to say that the majority of protestors shared Banderite views of Ukraine's future would be absurd (Marples and Mills, 2015), especially in the totalising way that Russian media applied this interpretation; this sub-narrative had the most limited keyword variation of any historical

³⁷ Occasionally politicians and, very infrequently, the media, would suggest that some of the Maidan protestors' views were legitimate, at least initially. Putin voiced similar opinions in his Crimea speech and in a meeting with journalists in that same month of March 2014 (Prezident Rossii 2014e; 2014c). This partial recognition often served the purpose of then contrasting such people with the Maidan protestors who were there at the end or who came into government, who were allegedly *banderovtsy*, and to show that Russia was not condemning all Ukrainians.

framing sub-narrative, across all case studies. The emphasis on Bandera was much more emphatic than comparisons with Nazis, with the sources almost three times more likely to invoke Bandera than Nazis (there were 695 words derived from Bandera and 240 derived from Nazis). Maidan protestors with *banderovtsy* than Nazis. It should be noted that comparisons with Nazis appeared to be more prevalent in foreign-focussed Russian media, such as RT, whereas the domestic media was able to rely on intra-cultural understanding of the term *banderovtsy*.

The Bandera sub-narrative was most frequent at the beginning of the frame, just as Russian retellings of the GPW often begin from an emphasis on internal enemies in the late 1930s. As noted, most references to *banderovtsy* (or associated keywords) occurred before 23rd March, when the threat of the protests spreading to Russia was greatest. To convey their argument, the media utilised imagery associated with wartime Ukrainian nationalists to formulate a simplistic but effective hero-villain structure. The symbols and attributes of the *banderovtsy* provided a counterpoint to the St George Ribbon and war hero statues used to define pro-Russian Ukrainians. Often this was achieved by overemphasising the role and prominence of far-right parties at the Maidan protests: for example, KP concentrates on the nationalist political party *Svoboda* ‘whose flags are so prominent on the Maidan and who glorify Stepan Bandera – a fascist from the war days [...] The revolutionary brigades pulled down Soviet-era monuments and memorials to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War’ (Komsomolskaya Pravda 2014). In this and other articles and broadcasts, the juxtaposition of wartime Ukrainian nationalist flags, slogans, and symbols with Victory flags and St George Ribbons constructed a binary opposition that reflected the Soviet/Fascist opposition of the GPW myth.

As such, the conceit behind this sub-narrative was that *banderovtsy* had once more seized control in Ukraine due to the Maidan protests and ousting of Viktor Yanukovich.

Represented by the new interim government in Kyiv, these *banderovtsy* were proceeding to strip Russian speakers of their rights, pursuing their ideological hatred against Russians and all non-Ukrainian minorities in a bid to ethnically cleanse the territory. The evidence for such assertions was mainly intuited from the behaviour of the *banderovtsy* during the GPW: they did this then, so they will do this now. President Putin developed this line of reasoning in his Federal Address, widely known as his ‘Crimea Speech’, in March 2014 (Prezident Rossii 2014e). Discussing the present situation in Kyiv, Putin affirmed his view of the Euromaidan as the installation of a Banderite regime by shady foreign powers (the USA). He depicted supporters of the interim government as collaborators whose behaviour should be judged according to the actions of *banderovtsy* in the GPW: ‘Everyone can already tell exactly what they will do next, these Ukrainian heirs to the Bandera ideology, to a man who collaborated with Hitler during World War Two [...they will try to create an] ethnically pure Ukrainian state’ (Prezident Rossii 2014e). Putin’s superfluous use of ‘Ukrainian’ reiterated the divide between ‘good’ (Russophone) Ukrainians and ‘bad’ (nationalist/Western) Ukrainians prevalent in Russian media coverage of Maidan and the GPW.

Paradoxically, however, by describing Ukrainian nationalists as collaborators, Vladimir Putin presented them as disloyal to Russia, implying events in Ukraine were an internal affair for Russia. This view also emerged in various media sources:

This isn’t just about destroying a state [Ukraine] that is centred in Moscow. Achieving this historical objective would never solve the problem once and for all. Instead, the issue is more about destroying the Russians as a people, of splitting up the Slavs [...] this is the programme that is currently being implemented in the Ukraine under the direction of the USA (Shablinskaya 2014b).

As well as revealing an outdated and condescending Russian understanding of Ukraine that denied the latter's nationhood, this argument arguably also functioned to legitimise the Duma's approval for sending Russian troops to Ukraine on 1st March 2014 (Klyuchkin and Dmitriev 2014).

Thus, the media constructed the image of 'bad' or Banderite Ukrainians by depicting Maidan protestors as traitors and collaborators. To ensure full comprehension of the term '*banderovtsy*', the sources provided detailed accounts of Ukrainian nationalist crimes and Bandera's ideology in news segments and articles, while the government released wartime archives on the crimes of Nazi collaborators in Ukraine alongside reports on current crimes committed by (alleged) contemporary *banderovtsy*. The most prominent government report was a White Paper on Ukrainian crimes against humanity, released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It contained images of Ukrainian nationalist atrocities from the wartime era, alongside descriptions of (imagined) present-day crimes like the one below:

By now, reports of these Banderite patrols in Dnepropetrovsk have become regular. The city has become inundated with armed youths who patrol the streets and address passers-by with the Banderite slogan 'Glory to Ukraine' If someone answers incorrectly or if the person stays quiet, then they beat him up. It isn't unusual for these crimes to take place right under the noses of the police but the 'guardians of law and order' try not to get involved (MID 2014b).

As evidenced by the specific and localised examples in the White Book, like the one above, media and politicians wielded this sub-narrative and the threat of Bandera to strike fear into the Russophone reader, presenting Ukrainian state structures as utterly complicit with a reign of terror initiated by out-of-control Banderite youths. Using past atrocities to instil fear in

audiences was a recurrent tactic in the media's historical framing, as we shall see in this and other chapters.

The media largely used the terms *Bandera*, *banderite*, and *banderovtsy* on their own as a description or eponym for anti-Yanukovych Ukrainians. As well as Ukrainians, they depicted the Russian opposition as *banderovtsy*, most notably during the March of Peace protest against Russian policy in Ukraine. In KP, Aleksandr Grishin wrote in outrage of one opposition figure who was 'asking for forgiveness - not for himself but for Russia now! And he used the Banderite greeting: "Glory to Ukraine"' (Grishin 2014e). In RG, Tamara Shkel' adopted a similar line:

At public events, which took place in Moscow with the participation of the non-system opposition, there was open demonstration of the symbols of *banderovtsy* and of those Ukrainian nationalist divisions that acted on the side of the fascists as punishment battalions and took part in the mass annihilation of their fellow Soviet citizens and the citizens of other European nations (Shkel' 2014d).

While the wartime collaboration of Ukrainians and other nationalities (Tatars and Chechens) was frequently and openly referenced, there was only one reference to ethnic Russian wartime collaboration, even though their membership of the Vlasovites was numerically considerable (Zadornov 2014; Grishin 2014d). Instead, as above, the Russian opposition was compared to *banderovtsy*. This underlined the privileged position of the ethnic Russian – *ruskii*– nation in such historical discourse as well as the desire to avoid besmirching the historical memory of Russians in the GPW. This privilege was further underscored by the media using the crimes of the *banderovtsy* to justify and contextualise Russian or Soviet crimes. By way of example, Petr Likhomanov wrote in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* that the Great Terror was justified by the need to fight against internal enemies, such as *banderovtsy*, who

would have undermined the Russian/Soviet war effort, describing the Soviet state's mass repressions, incarcerations, and murders of 1937 as the 'preventative arrests of 1937' (Likhomanov 2014c).

Using the crimes of others to minimise problematic areas of Russia's past also bolstered the sources' efforts to depict Russia as a moral authority, with this authority stemming from the Soviet war victory as well as Russia's defence of the memory of the GPW. Russian politicians and journalists appointed themselves the authority on deciding who was or was not a *banderovets*. The accusations were flimsy, with references to people embracing 'Banderite symbols' made without elaboration or evidence (Shkel' 2014b). The sources depicted Ukraine's decision to reject Russia and the two nations' shared legacy, allegedly including the Great Victory, as the spur for so many *banderovtsy* to emerge. In this view, Ukrainianisation and disinformation had led younger generations to emulate the Ukrainian nationalists of the war era; for example, admiration for Bandera was presented as the result of falsified history in Ukrainian textbooks (Zamakhina 2014a).

The next most popular keywords that did not stem from Bandera's name included variations on the OUN/UPA (Ukrainian nationalist army)³⁸ and SS Galichina, with 27 and 22 references, respectively. The latter was a reference to the only Ukrainian SS volunteer-division, which some Western Ukrainians have attempted to rehabilitate. The SS Galichina was, ostensibly, a direct connection between Ukrainian nationalists and the Nazis, which meant that the media used it more frequently as the frame developed into March.³⁹ This

³⁸ Although the Russian media often uses the two names interchangeably or sometimes even combines them, the OUN and UPA were separate organisations representing the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (*Orhanizatsiia ukrains'kykh natsionalistiv*) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (*Ukrains'ka povstans'ka armia*), respectively.

³⁹ The division is often referred to in English as Waffen SS Galicia Division. The Division was formed exclusively to fight on the eastern front against the Soviets but its members were also allowed to remain in Western Europe after the war, with many then sent to Canada, despite Soviet demands to 'repatriate' them. See Olesya Khromeychuk's (2013) book on this division for more detail.

enabled the narrative transition to the second, Nazi, sub-narrative, which emphasised emphasis on external enemies.

The Nazi Sub-narrative



Figure Three. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the Nazi sub-narrative

- Date of most use: 9th March to 6th April 2014
- Most popular keywords: Nazi, Hitler
- Corresponding current events (comparison of): The new Ukrainian authorities' introduction of new legislation on language and the military; the West's support for the new government; attempts by the interim government to restore order in the East of the country.
- Schema (comparison with): The development of Nazi ideology and its consequences for those living under Nazi rule and occupation.

The Nazi-sub-narrative was the least popular thematic group, with 798 references overall; however, this varied by source, and the Nazi sub-narrative was the second most popular theme in KP, whose traditionally more xenophobic tone lent itself more readily to the topic of

military threat, external aggression, and Nazi analogies. The purpose of this sub-narrative was to present the ideology of the new Ukrainian authorities as akin to Nazism, casting the interim government's attempts to restore sovereignty in the East as fuelled by ideological racial chauvinism. Its use epitomised a heightened intensity in the sources' condemnation of the new Ukrainian authorities and the political reality in Ukraine. That said, as has been noted, this analogy was much less prominent than the Banderite comparison in Russian domestic coverage.

The Nazi sub-narrative was most frequent from early to late March (see Table Six). It overlapped with the Bandera sub-narrative, slowly becoming more prominent as the media's focus shifted from internal to external enemies and as the sources sought to further delegitimise the new authorities in Kyiv. The most frequently used term was 'Nazi' with 240 mentions, followed by Hitler with 175 mentions. Other reasonably prominent keywords included 'Goebbels' (often in relation to Ukrainian and Western media outlets), 'swastika', and 'SS', all with between 35 to 40 mentions. To justify their often outlandish claims in relation to the interim Ukrainian government, the media referenced historical documents and archives, presumably to add an element of academic integrity to their arguments (Shestakov 2014a). Journalists would also use deliberate language to suggest that they had thought through their outrageous Nazi comparisons, as with Ul'yana Skoibeda's claim that pro-Maidan Ukrainians were mere extensions of the Nazis:

Fascists are winning in the Ukraine. Let's call a spade a spade: after all people, who proclaim the superiority of one nation over another, those people are fascists. Well, or Nazis, if we are going to be very exact about our terminology (Skoibeda 2014a).

Skoibeda also referenced Hitler, the Abwehr, and Kyiv street walls 'covered in swastikas' and 'destroyed Jewish shops', painting a picture of a city overrun by Nazis.

As in Skoibeda's article, often the comparison with Nazis was presented as Russia(ns) having the wherewithal to tell the truth, ugly as it may be: 'Let's look the truth in the face: a *coup d'état*, supported, and largely directly organised, by the West, has brought to power in Kyiv the most blatant Nazis.' (Delyagin 2014) In a similar vein, other sources expressed surprise at the West's alleged support for Nazis, ironically often while making anti-Semitic comments:

And I am very surprised that despite this [history], the EU has decided on a confrontation with Russia [in Ukraine]. Does this mean then that they are supporting Nazis? There are heaps of super-rich Jews there! (Shablinskaya 2014a)

This type of comment implied that everyone else knew Nazis had come to power in Ukraine, but only Russia was brave enough to say it aloud.

All the sources tended to contextualise Nazi comparisons within specific events from that era, such as the Reichstag Fire (Grishin 2014a), or the Night of the Long Knives (Chigishov 2014a 01.06.34). This may have been part of an effort to lend the Nazi comparisons more credibility, as (seemingly) was the detail used to set the scene. This led to comparatively detailed and contextualised Nazi comparisons that focused on repression and discrimination in Ukraine (Likhomanov 2014b) Many of the events cited were domestic German events occurring before or at the very beginning of the GPW, as seen in Putin's comments on the current and potential future political leadership in Ukraine:

But in these conditions, anyone might emerge [as leader]. You will remember how [Ernst] Röhm's units acted when Hitler charged to power. And then these [SA] units of Röhm were wiped out, liquidated, essentially. But they had played their role in Hitler's rise to power. The most unexpected scenarios can happen (Prezident Rossii 2014c)

As in the example above, sources frequently referenced individual Nazis, in particular Rohm and Goebbels (Rozova 2014; Grishin 2014a; Kholmogorov 2014). It confirmed the impression that the new Ukrainian authorities were creating conditions similar to those installed by the Nazis when they assumed power.

Ukraine's apparently precipitous descent into Nazism was sometimes accompanied by media claims that the EU and USA were facilitating or even embracing Nazi policies and ideologies. Unlike senior members of the Russian government, the media often targeted individual politicians when associating Western governments with Nazis, as in the following comment: 'Mr Obama and Mrs Ashton, that is Napoleon and Hitler' (Filmoshkina 2014). The emphasis here was typical of such references in that it focussed on individual politicians. However, the media were not using these figures as metonymical devices for their nation or organisation, but rather citing them as evidence of the type of power-hungry despots who came to power under Western systems of governance. This depiction reinforced Putin and other politicians' argument that the Ukraine Crisis was an elite Western conspiracy to overthrow the legitimate government of Ukraine (Prezident Rossii 2014c; Shablinskaya 2014b). It is very tempting to view this particular type of reference within the context of the government's harsh response to the Bolotnaya protests, in which they also suspected Western money had played a role.

The narrative focus on external enemies coincided with the EU and USA's imposition of the first round of sanctions on Russia on 17th March 2014 for the annexation of Crimea. Beyond the frame, the government and media drew increasing attention in March to failed or controversial NATO military actions (Korolev 2014g 53.07). To relate this criticism to the GPW, NATO was also presented as being similar to the SS, sometimes in the crudest of terms: 'The NATO helmet style is almost German; it is only lacking two little 'S's and an iron cross' (Snegirev 2014). The importance of uniforms and symbols in the framing

discourse also emerged in RG’s innuendo about NATO soldiers ‘in a black uniform that calls many things to mind’ – namely, the Nazi blackshirts (Fedyakina 2014).

Unlike the third, war, sub-narrative, and similarly to the Bandera sub-narrative, the focus of the Nazi references was primarily ideological; it tended to specify the crimes of the Nazis against their own people and the evil inherent in the ideology. In this way, audiences understood the dangerous ideas and intent of the main actors (Ukraine, EU, USA) and were primed to accept the following sub-narrative, which compared the conflict in East Ukraine to the battles and fighting of the GPW itself.

The War Sub-narrative

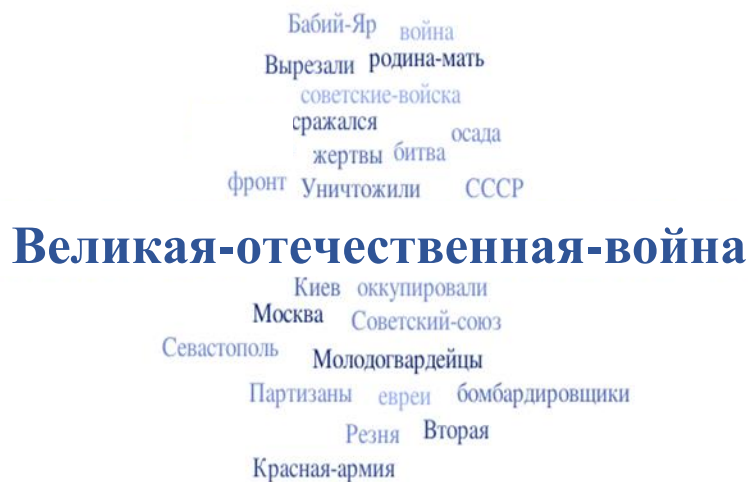


Figure Four. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the War sub-narrative

- Date of most use: 6th April to 4th May 2014
- Most popular keyword: Great Patriotic War
- Corresponding current events (comparison of): The war in East Ukraine between Russian agents and anti-Maidan pro-Russian Ukrainians and the Ukrainian Army.

- Schema (comparison with): The Nazi occupation of the USSR – especially Ukraine - and the battles that ensued to liberate Ukraine.

This War sub-narrative was the most popular theme of the discourse with 1009 references. It owed much of its prominence to the news discussions programmes, VN and VV, both of which liberally conflated the conflict in East Ukraine with the Great Patriotic War in their commentary on footage of fighting in Donbas. The purpose of the War sub-narrative was to delegitimise the Ukrainian army’s decision to fight back against Russian military interference in East Ukraine, including attempts by Russian-backed separatists (including Russian irregulars) to seize control of government buildings. The Ukrainian military’s (and militias’) actions were compared to atrocities committed by the Nazi occupying forces during the Great Patriotic War (Dunaevskii 2014a), whereas the separatists were characterised as plucky ‘partisans’ (Shestakov 2014b; Kagarlitskii 2014a; Varsegov 2014) or heroic defenders of the Great Victory, acting very much in the Red Army tradition (Argumenty i fakty 2014b).

Although references to the third sub-narrative were only sporadic until 30th March, the media employed it very frequently thereafter, and it enjoyed the longest popularity period of the four sub-narratives (see Table Seven). This will have contributed to the high level of keyword variety in this sub-narrative. The most popular keyword was Great Patriotic War, with 301 mentions, followed by World War Two, with 93 mentions.⁴⁰ Other popular keywords included massacre (*reznya*) and Red Army, with 43 references each. To justify the use of such dramatic comparisons, journalists would employ absolutist connotations. This was seen in Evgenii Popov’s comment on 11th May that a memorial was ‘not only to the soldiers of the GPW but also [...] to those who died on 2nd May’ (Chigishov 2014g 20.17). This

⁴⁰ In the word cloud on page 93 of this thesis, Second World War is referenced as *Вторая*, which means ‘second’.

direct blurring of two temporally non-contiguous events by Popov was delivered seamlessly and without explanation, as if the victims had died in the same conflict.

Evgenii Popov's comment referred to the Odesa fire on 2nd May 2014, caused by clashes between pro- and anti-government protestors, in which forty people died. The Russian media frequently referred to the fire as 'Odesa-Khatyn' (Novikova 2014), juxtaposing it with the 1943 massacre in the Belarusian village of Khatyn committed by Ukrainian Nazi collaborators and Hiwis. This juxtaposition, alongside shocking images of dead bodies and burnt out buildings, sought to stoke a genuine fear that history was being repeated. Furthermore, this was a highly familiar history, with Khatyn an important part of the Soviet and now post-Soviet memorial complex of the GPW (Oushakine 2013a).

When referencing the War sub-narrative, the media employed especially dramatic imagery suffused with death, killing and torture. On 4th April, RG issued a detailed description of Nazi killing methods in concentration and death camps, which it equated with Ukrainian army tactics (Petin 2014). This fascination with gore and suffering was mirrored in the footage of fighting and the visual close-ups of dead people found on VV (Korolev 2014b 16.23; 2014d 15.11) This imagined reliving of the GPW was then utilised to discredit any form of communication with the Ukrainian authorities and to undermine the latter's arguments about fighting for territorial integrity, as in this statement from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Unfortunately, it is difficult to talk about trusting the current coalition in Kyiv when the main bloc is essentially controlled by the Svoboda party, whose political platform is based on declarations made by the [Nazi] collaborators in June 1941. According to them, real Ukrainians should have collaborated with Hitler to put in place a new European order. I remind you that the *banderovtsy* collaborators killed not only Jews,

Poles and Soviet soldiers but also Ukrainians, who refused to follow this slogan (MID 2014a).

Although Svoboda, a party that can reasonably be described as Banderites, were briefly in the interim government, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement grossly exaggerates their role and influence, both of which were minimal. Based on such dramatic and untrue depictions of the Ukrainian interim government, there was little scope for the audience to interpret the Ukrainian army and its militias as anything other than villains.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and news discussions programmes were not the only sources to use sensationalist depictions of events in Ukraine. In general, the more tabloid its tone (as with VN and KP), the more likely the source was to focus on violence and conflate supposed Ukrainian army atrocities with those of the GPW. However, extreme examples of the sub-narrative emerged across all sources, as with the following description from RG of one female veteran's memories of the Nazi occupation of Kyiv which she believed was being repeated in 2014:

They [*banderovtsy*] shot one of the sons right in front of her by the house, another they took away and he disappeared without trace, while the third was cut up using a ramrod, his eyes gouged out. She dug him out of a half-buried well with her own hands (Latartsevii 2014)

Through such detail and the emphatic focus on the atrocities of the GPW and potential atrocities of the UC, the media created a sense of terror, fuelling hysteria at home and abroad. Many Russian speakers and former Soviet citizens living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation also read Russian media sources, including in East Ukraine, where these comparisons were likely to have had a dramatic impact on audiences (Dougherty 2014, 4-7; Peisakhin and Rozenas, 2018).

In contrast to the alleged villainy of the Ukrainians, the media depicted pro-Russian East Ukrainians as resisting Nazism just like the Red Army did in 1941-1945. When presenting the separatists as continuing the fight against fascism, the media often used genealogical terminology, casting the pro-Russians as descendants of the Red Army simply by virtue of their political position. Where there was a clear biological heritage, this was underscored by the speaker and/or media, as in the following (sarcastic) quotation from Igor' Strelkov, a key military commander in Donbas:

My grandfather was here in Krasnoarmeisk, fighting to get out of the encirclement for a week in February 1943, defending his country and his people (*narod*). But, of course, I'm the aggressor here (Bas 2014).

The familial and genealogical connotations cemented the ethno-nationalist undertone present in this historical framing narrative's appeal to patriotism among Russian audiences.

The media frequently cited veterans, their relatives, or historians to add authenticity and legitimacy to their comparisons. This belonged to a media technique of frequently using external contributors to affirm the credibility of the framing narrative, an approach I explore in Chapter Seven (p.130) and which I understand as integral to historical framing. In addition to veterans, sources also readily used non-Russian perspectives and statements to support the War sub-narrative, such as German journalists or French politicians (Rose 2014; Korolev 2014g 15.00). There were also sporadic attempts to position *banderovtsy* crimes within the more global narrative of World War Two (as opposed to the Soviet GPW narrative) and within transnational or cosmopolitan memory narratives of the Holocaust, a tactic Jelena Subotic (2019) has noted with reference to Serbian uses of the Holocaust. Such efforts on the Russian media's part included detailed descriptions of massacres carried out by Ukrainian UPA members or Nazi collaborators on Poles and on Jews from 1941-1945 (Chossudovskii

2014). Through such uses, this attempt to internationalise the conflict revealed itself to simply be another attempt to claim ownership over the story of the Great Patriotic War and externalise massacres and killing as something done by other countries but not Russia/the USSR.⁴¹ It was also a handy excuse to criticise Polish and Jewish people who supported the new Ukrainian government or Maidan protests, with politicians characterising them as traitors to their own memories and legacy (Kholmogorov 2014). The Russian government tried especially hard to remind people of these traumatic memories, even disguising a GRU agent as a Polish national with the aim of inflaming tensions and memory wars in Poland by invoking the wartime Volyn massacres of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists (UNIAN 2018). These efforts at internationalising the GPW were not present in the following sub-narrative, in which the Great Victory of 1945 was presented as an exclusively Soviet achievement (Prilepin 2014).

⁴¹ This approach can be found elsewhere in current Russian commemoration of World War Two: for example, in its international Auschwitz exhibition. At this exhibition, Russian efforts to present a more internationalist understanding of the conflict - e.g. by referencing the suffering of the Jews – were clearly aimed at externalising the guilt for the mass murder of Jews onto Ukrainians and other East European countries with which Russia currently has poor relations (Sawkins 2020)

The Victory Sub-narrative



Figure Five. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the Victory sub-narrative

- Date of most use: 4th May to 25th May 2014
- Most popular keywords: Victory, St George Ribbon
- Corresponding current events (comparison of): The East Ukrainians (supposedly) asserting their allegiance with Russia and the ‘Russian World’;⁴² military stalemate and continued conflict in the East.
- Schema (comparison with): The Soviet victory over the Nazis and the end of the GPW.

The Victory sub-narrative was the second least popular sub-narrative overall with 783 references, although it was the most frequently referenced sub-narrative for VN. The ‘Victory’ is capitalised because it refers to the Great Victory of the Allied Forces, and particularly the Soviet Union, over Nazism of 1945. The media referenced this sub-narrative most often towards the end of the research period. The main keywords were Victory, with

⁴² The Russian World is a reference to those places and people who speak Russian and/or were raised under Russian cultural influence. Please see the following for more detail on this admittedly ambiguous term: Patriarch Kirill 2014; Kudors 2010.

261 mentions, and St George Ribbon with 288 mentions. Together these two keywords constituted over seventy percent of references to the fourth sub-narrative; however, other reasonably prominent keywords included the term hero-city (51 mentions).⁴³ Sebastopol's traditionally privileged position even among hero-cities meant that it played an important role in the portrayal of victory (Plokhly 2000). By way of example, in an article on the ostensibly 'humanitarian' aid Russia sent to East Ukraine, an article in RG described how 'trucks adorned with the Russian tricolour and St Andrew's flags and with slogans at the front reading 'Stalingrad to Sebastopol' set off to the Farewell of the Slavic Girl patriotic march' (Aliev 2014). It is fair to say that the trucks would have struggled to emphasise their, and Sebastopol's, Russianness, with greater aplomb. Although images of the patriotic trucks were not provided in this instance, the sources did tend to use images and visual content more readily with this sub-narrative than others; dividing the references according to whether they were textual or visual in format showed that the media delivered 38 per cent of references through footage or photographs, highlighting a trend towards increasingly visual references as the frame progressed.

The sources' increased use of the Victory sub-narrative also coincided with the Victory Day holiday (see Table Eight). The 9th May celebrations undoubtedly influenced this increase in references, but I have mitigated this by not including any references exclusively related to the holiday but lacking any connection to the UC. Moreover, any residual impact after this would not invalidate the findings regarding the Victory sub-narrative so much as show how the media and government politicised commemorations, such as Victory Day (Shkel' 2014c). RG published a particularly emotionally intense example of this politicised

⁴³ The epithet 'Hero City' was an honorary title conferred in Soviet times for outstanding heroism during World War Two. It was awarded to thirteen cities, three of which are *de jure* in Ukraine.

treatment of Victory Day, in which the author detailed the Ukrainian authorities' alleged mistreatment of GPW veterans:

The most egregious example was the attempt to remove the symbol of victory in the Great Patriotic War from this courageous man [...] SBU officers started demanding that Pavel [the veteran] remove the symbol of the Great Victory. In response he announced the following: 'I will not give you my St George Ribbon! Even if you kill me. For me, it is holy' (Vasilev 2014).

Of course, there is no way of knowing whether the incident above took place, although it is worth noting that the Ukrainian authorities did ban the St George Ribbon, which has its origins in the imperial Order of St George but only gained widespread significance as a commemorative symbol in 2005 (Kolstø 2016). Either way, in the case above as in others, the media instrumentalised the occasion to entrench the familiar binary opposition of East versus West Ukraine, depicting pro-Russians celebrating the Great Victory while *banderovtsy* attacked Red Army veterans and decried them as 'occupiers' (Shkel' 2014c).

In applying this sub-narrative, the media's objective was to present Russian involvement in Ukraine as somehow victorious. The implied victory here was that of the hero separatists of the East, who were now free to remember the true history of their grandfathers in the GPW (with whom they were also conflated). This was reflected in the St George Ribbon that adorned the referendum ballot papers in Luhansk and Donetsk (see Figure Six).



Figure Six. Ballot paper for the Donetsk and Luhansk self-determination referenda.
Photo by Dmitrii Sosnovskii. (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2014a)

As such, the right to remember the Victory - in the GPW mark one - represented a victory in contemporary Ukraine in the GPW mark two, or ‘Little Patriotic War’ as it has also been dubbed (Horbyk 2015). The presence of symbols (St George Ribbons) and rituals (attending 9th May parades and, indirectly, anti-Maidan protests) also functioned as examples of how to remember actively and correctly (Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016). The media then presented those who participated in rituals or wore the symbols as being laudably conscious of the heroic legacy of their own Russian culture (Chigishov 2014e 56.06; 2014c 01.06.56). The prominence of the St George Ribbon as a symbol and key word/image in the Victory sub-narrative invited the audience to participate in affirming their awareness of their own history, embellishing its normal signification as a GPW symbol worn on Victory Day.⁴⁴ Its association with Victory Day - and with the key word ‘victory’ - imbued the symbol with positive meanings relating not only to the past but also to the present (Goode 2017). As noted in Rossiya-1’s introduction to an episode of political talk show *Pryamoy Efir*: ‘The St George Ribbon was a symbol of victory over fascism. Today it is a symbol of resistance’ (Mitrosheikov, 2014).

⁴⁴ Please see the following for an examination of the semantic indeterminacy of the ribbons: Subotić 2020, 247; Kolstø 2016

By depicting people wearing St George Ribbons or partaking in commemorations as performing exemplary practices, the media demonstrated to domestic Russian audiences how they could and should affirm their Russian cultural identity and solidarity with the East Ukrainians. This was an invitation to participate metaphorically in the GPW through its 2014 representative: the Ukraine Crisis. As such, wearing the St George Ribbon simultaneously indicated respect for the cultural legacy of the GPW and resistance to the aims of the Maidan:

In Mariupol, the security services [of Ukraine] carried out a special operation using armoured vehicles: Nine people died, 42 were injured. It started with local law enforcement officers being told to shoot peaceful demonstrators on Victory Day. They refused. So, they [the pro-Maidan militia] shot at the police station using heavy artillery and then they burnt it down. On the same day, in Donetsk, the police there were tying and putting on St George Ribbons. Meanwhile, in Kharkov, the police covertly went over to the side of those who were celebrating the Victory: they detained the radicals who were equipped with body armour and batons but they didn't touch any of the supporters of federalisation despite the ban on mass gatherings (Argumenty i fakty 2014b).

As in the example above, the media conflated celebration of the GPW with sympathetic attitudes towards the separatists but also with some rather specific political aims, such as federalisation of Ukraine. Merging these varied and sometimes shifting significations within one visual aid, the St George Ribbon, the media also used this participative element to direct the discourse away from the historical frame and towards an increased focus on 'defending compatriots' and 'Novorossiia'. This narrative drew much more heavily from imperial history, as Novorossiia was the name given to the South-Eastern parts of Ukraine annexed by Catherine the Great in 1764. This imperial nostalgia emerged throughout the Ukraine crisis and was personified by Natalia Poklonskaya's cult of Tsar Nicholas II, or Igor Strelkov's

penchant for re-enacting tsarist-era battles (see Laruelle 2016b; Shamir 2014). The combination of Soviet and imperial history references demonstrates the selective way in which Russian history was instrumentalised.

In this sub-narrative, history was being used to emphasise not only heroism but an especially active form of heroism. emphasis on participation also presented a paradox in that, while the media often portrayed the ‘heroes’ of the narrative as actively choosing to defend the memory of the GPW or fight the *banderovtsy*, the sources also frequently underlined that such decisions were determined by genes and legacy: ‘it is in our blood to stand against fascism’ (Ivashkina 2014a). The Victory sub-narrative partly functioned, therefore, to distract audiences from the lack of a natural ending for the UC, which evolved into a conflict that continues to claim lives today. By increasing references to Victory and cultural affirmation, the media created a semblance of resolution and closure, showing that awareness and celebration of Russian culture and history had prevailed despite the *banderovtsy* and Nazis trying to destroy it. The content of the Victory sub-narrative and its sequential position following on from the War sub-narrative, facilitated and complemented a decrease in the media and politicians’ use of the historical frame. This was convenient as the Ukrainian Presidential election in May would inevitably undermine the claim that *banderovtsy* enjoyed mass support in Ukraine and were implementing Nazism.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the Victory sub-narrative also helped to move discussion on from public upset at the lack of Russian support for the separatists in the form of a direct military intervention or annexation.

⁴⁵ As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there was concern over the potential impact on the media’s credibility when the Ukrainian election results inevitably showed that extreme right-wing parties were not that popular. In response, the Russian government funded an organisation to hack the Ukrainian election results, showing far-right parties with a greater share of the vote. These falsified election results were covered by *Voskresnoe vremya* (who never apologised or admitted their error afterwards) and showed Pravy Sektor’s Dmytro Yarosh as winner of the Ukrainian Presidential elections with 37.13% of the vote, as opposed to the 0.7% he actually received (Korolev 2014a 1.35.00).

As the frame drew towards a close, there were unsubtle reminders of Russia's position as judge and juror after the GPW, including references to the Nuremberg Trials and what Russian media claim was the sentencing of *banderovtsy* there at the Soviet Union's insistence (Akhetzhanova 2014).⁴⁶ Such references evinced a sense of nostalgic anticipation, whereby the authors looked forward to the future (justice being meted out to the Ukrainian nationalists) for its similarities to the past (the justice of the Nuremberg Trials). It epitomised how national pride in the GPW had allowed shared remembrance of this event to become a focal point for affirming one's Russian identity. Arguably it also foreshadowed the premise of the historical framing of the Syria discourse in 2015 by signalling Russia's return to Soviet-era power and greatness (please see pages 149-150 of this thesis); notably the media also referenced the Nuremberg Trials in their framing of the Syrian civil war. In the framing of the Ukraine Crisis, the media's focus on the end of the war also reflected how the overall narrative, as utilised across various sources, functioned on the level of both content and structure: the media's (artificial) ending of the Ukraine Crisis was accompanied by references to the end of the GPW.

⁴⁶ Russian claims that the Nuremberg Trials judges condemned or even sentenced *banderovtsy* are completely unfounded and have been debunked in the Ukrainian media (Odyntsova, 2017).

Structuring the Discourse: Chronological Mirroring

Sub-narrative breakdown

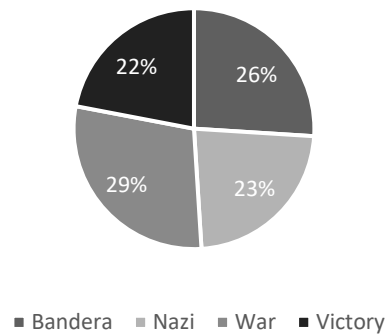


Table Three. Total sub-narrative breakdown

The purpose of a media frame is to suggest a context (schema) within which complex news and information can be understood. The more familiar the schema, the more effective the frame (Iyengar 1990). In this case study, the schema of the frame was the historical event with which Russians were most familiar: The Great Patriotic War. Although the media used the frame to simplify and direct discussion of the UC, it did not follow that the frame was a simplistic device, as reflected in the structure of the GPW historical frame, which was comprised of four sub-narratives. Each of these sub-narratives contained between twenty-two and twenty-eight per cent of all frame references, producing a near even distribution when the sources were considered together (Table Three).

By reminding audiences of historical equivalents and analogies, the media and politicians blurred the temporal distance between events in 2014 and events from 1941-1945. In the media's historical framing of the UC, the merging of two unrelated and temporally distant events was facilitated not only by the frame's content but also by the sequencing of the thematic sub-narratives, which, as we have seen, were emplotted so as to resemble the

chronology of the GPW myth.⁴⁷ That is, the media emplotted the ‘representative’ events ostensibly occurring in Ukraine within a sequence that belonged to the ‘represented’ history of the GPW, as depicted in Figure Seven below:

GPW myth in Russia:

Historical frame:

⁴⁷ In politicians’ statements, interviews, etc. this sequencing element was nowhere near as prominent as it was in media coverage

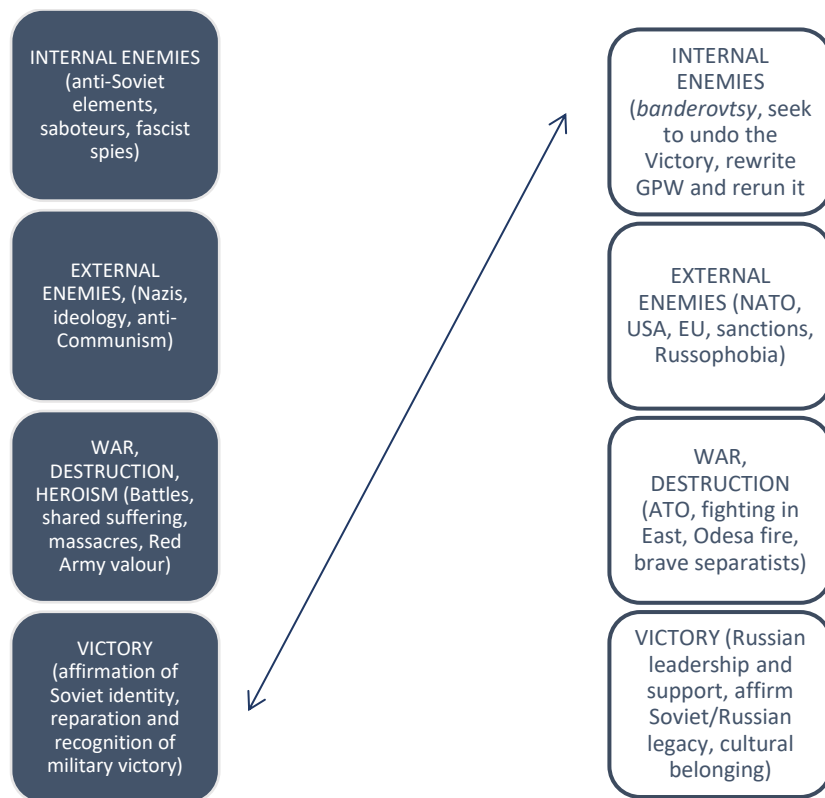


Figure Seven. Outline of GPW (schema) and Ukraine Crisis (news event) sub-narrative themes

As already discussed, the Bandera sub-narrative, which was also chronologically the first part of the GPW myth, was the most prevalent at the beginning of the period. Correspondingly, the second sub-narrative (Nazis) dominated from the early to early/middle period of research (from 9th March). The War sub-narrative (in third place) was most prevalent in the middle of the period until it was replaced by the final Victory sub-narrative as the research period finished and frame use decreased towards the end of May.

To visualise and substantiate my findings in relation to chronological mirroring, I plotted the media use of sub-narratives by date and source. As some sources used the historical frame more frequently than others, I expressed the use of sub-narratives in percentages. Table Four shows the findings considered in their totality across all sources, demonstrating the chronological mirroring of the GPW. However, naturally, the Ukraine

Crisis was a live and ongoing news story, from which the media could not depart completely in pursuit of effective framing. Thus, the sub-narrative sequencing experienced some unexpected anomalies, such as the sharp temporary decline in the use of sub-narrative one (Bandera) in the week ending 16th March, when the media tone switched from victimhood to triumphalism, giddily celebrating Crimea’s annexation. Nevertheless, Table Four depicts the contours of the sub-narratives’ use and the frame’s evolution in a sequence that broadly mirrored the GPW, moving from tales of Bandera, to Nazis, to scenes of war, and then onwards to Victory.

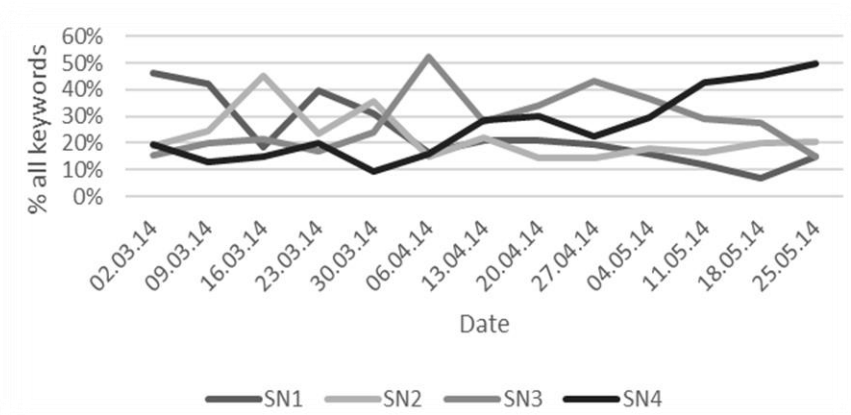


Table Four. Comparative sub-narrative use across all sources during research period (Ukraine Crisis)

This pattern of chronological mirroring became even clearer when I plotted sub-narrative use across the research period in individual graphs (Tables Five through Eight):

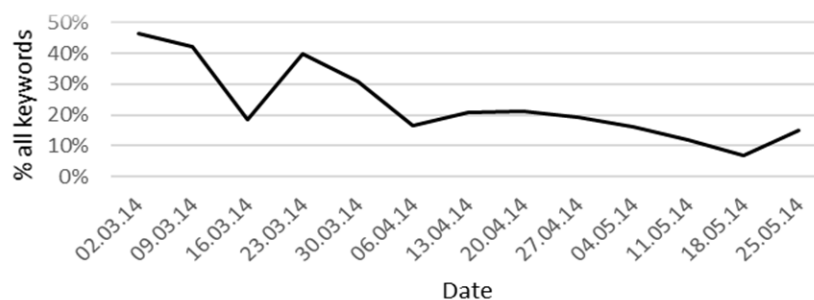


Table Five. Use of Bandera sub-narrative across all sources

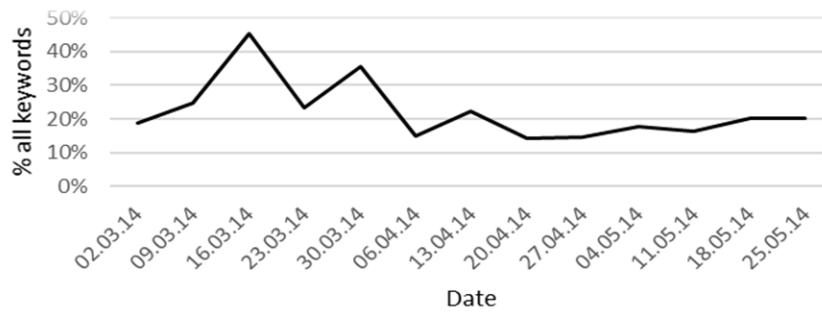


Table Six. Use of Nazi sub-narrative across all sources

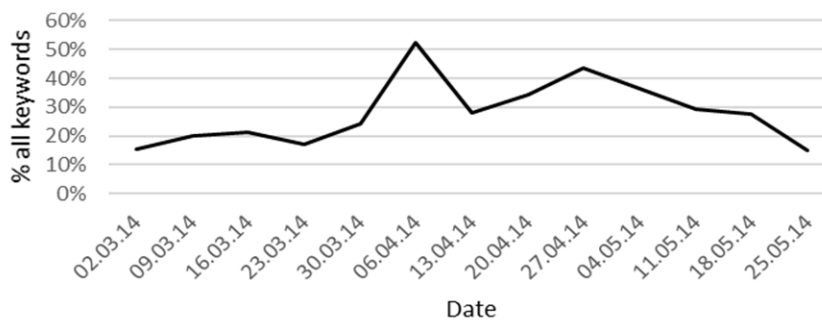


Table Seven. Use of War sub-narrative across all sources

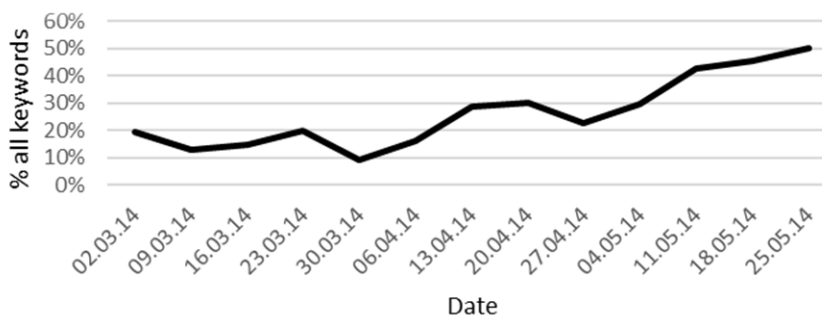


Table Eight. Use of Victory sub-narrative across all sources

By adopting not only the GPW themes and motifs but also the GPW structure, the media reinforced the familiarity of the frame for the audience. After all, if the Ukraine Crisis were a rerun of the GPW, it followed logically that events would develop in a similar order.

By structurally entrenching the argument that the Ukraine Crisis was a repeat of the GPW, the media revealed their use of historical framing to be a far more sophisticated discursive technique than simply hurling *banderovtsy* insults or easy Hitler comparisons (although these also had a role to play, as we have seen).

Through chronological mirroring, the media may also have been attempting to curate audience reactions by relating not only a familiar story but doing so in a familiar sequence. Interestingly, this structural conflation only featured in the Ukraine Crisis historical framing discourse, with the Sanctions and Syria studies providing a rather different form of narrative development that did not mirror the events of the historical schema as closely. This difference reflected the fact that the historical schemas of the other two discourses were less prominent in popular culture than the Great Patriotic War, an event that is (re)mediated on a daily basis in Russian society and media. By contrast, there is less coverage of the 1990s and collapse of the USSR, two key themes in the next case study on the historical framing of sanctions.

Chapter Five: Western Imposition of Sanctions as the West's Destruction of the USSR

From July to October 2014, Russian media conflated the imposition of third-wave sanctions by the EU and USA with alleged historical precedents of Western attacks on Russia.

Journalistic descriptions of the West's decision to enforce harsher sanctions on Russia were frequently contextualised within the chaotic 1990s and collapse of the USSR.⁴⁸ Journalists and politicians sought to underscore the similarities between alleged Western aggression against Russia and against the USSR, while explaining Russia's countermeasures through analogy with the imagined self-sufficiency and stability of the Brezhnev and Andropov eras, both of which have been idealised in the post-Soviet period (Dubin 2003; Tseplyaev 2014c).

To elaborate the historical framing of sanctions, I collected references that simultaneously referred to the years 1975-1999 and the imposition of sanctions/worsening relations during the period from 17th July 2014 to 27th October 2014. In analysing the techniques that facilitated the media and government's framing of sanctions within a selectively remembered version of the 1975-1999 period, this chapter builds on the previous case study of the Ukraine Crisis. It does this by exploring how historical framing erodes the boundary not only between past and present but also between political and national belonging.

A number of academics have investigated Russian official discourse on the West in 2014 (Rosefielde 2016; Black and Johns 2016; Yablokov 2015; Khaldarova and Pantti 2016); however, most of these works do not separate the sanctions episode from the Ukraine Crisis and Conflict, with the notable exception of Anastasia Kazun (2016). This is understandable, given that first- and second- round sanctions were placed on Russia in March and April 2014 by the EU, USA, and other allies in retaliation for the annexation of Crimea. These first- and

⁴⁸ For the purposes of this study, I am using the term 'the West' as an admittedly imperfect shorthand to denote the USA, EU and its allies who also applied sanctions.

second-round sanctions targeted a small number of individuals and businesses and were limited in scope. However, following the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines passenger jet MH17 by Russian-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine on July 17th, 2014, a harsher sanctions regime followed, banning state-owned banks from raising capital and Russian oil firms from cooperating with Western companies (BBC 2014). These third-wave sanctions accumulated over a period of nearly three months, during which time Russia imposed countersanctions on Western agricultural products, a process also known as import substitution. I have chosen to concentrate on coverage of these third-wave sanctions, distinguishing it from rhetoric on Ukraine to elucidate the specific discourse constructed to discredit and delegitimise the West and its treatment of Russia.⁴⁹

By specifying sanctions and the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the West as the focus of my analysis, I identified distinct characteristics of historical framing in anti-Western discourse beyond the state-aligned media and politicians' statements, including in popular culture. Efforts to depict the West as attempting to dismantle Russia, just as it supposedly destroyed the USSR, were prevalent in a variety of media during the period and functioned as a general reference point through which sanctions and relations with the West could be understood. There were several books that contained the framing narrative in relation to the Soviet collapse and 1990s; for example, Aleksandr Prokhanov's fictional *Krym* set after the annexation of Crimea, but recalling the direct link between sanctions and the war in Ukraine, described a resurgent neo-imperial Russia waging war with the West, while Nikolai Starikov's non-fiction works detailed how sanctions were creating a new Cold War (Prokhanov 2014; Starikov 2015a; 2015b). Topics related to the late USSR and 1990s also emerged frequently in academic journals around the research period or shortly after (Lavrov

⁴⁹ Beyond studies of rhetoric, academics have focussed on sanctions and their impact on international relations, a study of which can be found in: (Skak 2016)

2014; Novaya i noveishaya istoriya 2015; Gerashchenko 2015; Karyakin 2014). Meanwhile, on television, the three most popular soap operas airing at that time were set against backdrops of the Soviet collapse, the 1980s, and Brezhnev period, respectively (Trofimov 1991; Fadeeva 2013; Kubaev 2014). Although these would have been filmed, produced, and perhaps even scheduled before the imposition of sanctions, it is relevant that such programmes provided a backdrop that reinforced the historical framing that accompanied news media coverage of sanctions.

What was the Frame?

The media conflated or contrasted the imposition of third-wave sanctions, Russian countermeasures, and worsening relations between Russian and the West with a framing schema covering the years 1975-1999. The 2014 media and government coverage painted the West as allegedly trying to dismantle Russia, as it did in the 1980s and 1990s. However, while the West's current and past behaviours were conflated, Russia's current response was contrasted to its weakness after the Soviet collapse. According to this interpretation, instead of faltering, this time the Russian state and people resisted Western assaults. In so doing, they were allegedly reasserting the spirit of an era idealised for its stability: 1975 to 1985. The year 1975 was a prominent focus of nostalgia, characterised (in the media) for its mild political climate, stability, and the signing of the Helsinki Agreement (the start of a new phase of the Soviet human rights movement). Such an approach revised the traditional understanding of the Brezhnev era as a retreat from a more humane and less isolationist form of communism (Mlechin 2008; Ward 2009; Fainberg and Kalinovsky 2016; V. Chernykh 2005). This framing rhetorically maximised the threat to Russian sovereignty by *conflating* Western behaviour with that of the late 1980s/1990s, while restoring national pride and trust in the state by *contrasting* Russian actions to those of the late 1980s/1990s.

To elucidate the historical frame, I analysed almost 3000 news items to identify for close analysis 526 articles and twenty-six broadcasts that contained historical framing. Within these selected items, there were 3889 references to the period 1975-1999 made by the media and politicians in their discussions of sanctions and international relations between 17th July and 27th October 2014. These 3889 references constituted a discourse in which the media and politicians sought to combat threats to government popularity by equating current criticisms of Russia with supposed historical patterns of Western aggression, lies and treachery.

The USA and EU's imposition of third-wave sanctions after the downing of the MH17 passenger jet on 17th July 2014 functioned as the chronological start of the frame. Although the Russian government was not in control of sanctions being imposed, they could attempt to control the discourse, and I understand the historical frame detailed in this case study as part of this strategy. This extended and consistent narrative differed substantially from the immediate media coverage of MH17, which promoted various contradictory arguments to distract from inconvenient evidence that strongly suggested separatist responsibility. In this way, the immediate coverage of MH17 was much more similar to the type of disinformation practised by Russian media agencies for foreign audiences (East StratCom Task Force n.d.). In the longer-term coverage of sanctions, by contrast, the government and media framed events within a selectively interpreted mythologised history with the apparent aim of consolidating audiences against Western sanctions and inuring them to outside criticism of the Russian government.

By framing current events within alleged historical precedents, the sources characterised Russian intransigence as intrepid resistance to Western attempts to wreak financial havoc on Russia, replaying the economic troubles of the 1990s and collapse of the USSR. According to these sources, this defiance was facilitating a metaphorical return to the stability of the Brezhnev era. To underscore this process of restoration, the media placed the

frame schema in reverse chronological order. In practice, this involved focussing on the humiliations of the 1990s immediately after the imposition of sanctions in July 2014 and then, as Western criticism increased, moving backwards through history to recall the trauma of Soviet collapse and disintegration under Mikhail Gorbachev. Later, in September/October 2014, the media argued that Russia had successfully defended its sovereignty and was re-entering an imagined era of stability and prestige similar to that (allegedly) enjoyed under Brezhnev and Andropov. Table Nine shows each source's number of references to the historical frame. While this number normally reflected the extent to which each source embraced the frame, in VV's case the lack of references partly stemmed from the cancellation of four episodes in July and August:

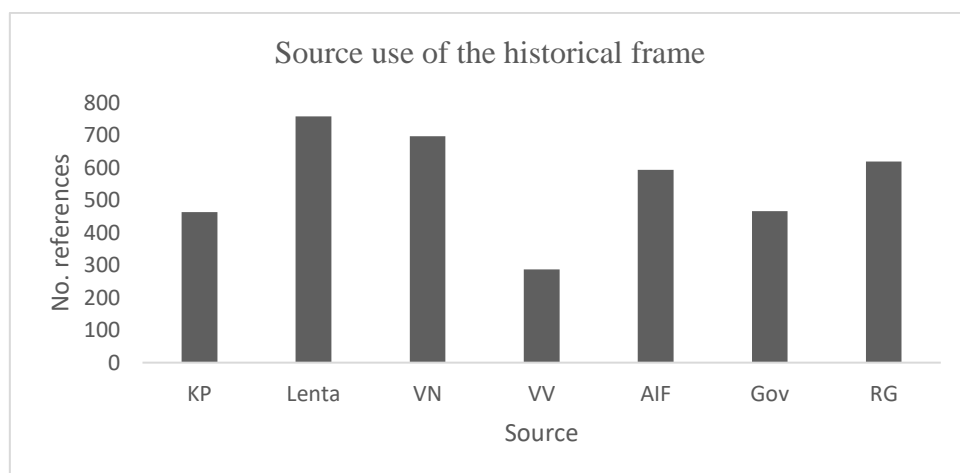


Table Nine. Total number of references to historical frame by source in coverage of Sanctions

The historical frame narrative was developed most fully in several government interviews, most notably by Sergei Lavrov in speeches at the Seliger Youth Forum and *Grazhdanskii universitet*, and by Vladimir Putin at Seliger and Valdai (RT na russkom 2014b; 2014c; Prezident Rossii 2014a; Vpered Novorossiia! 2014). The speech delivered by Putin at the 2014 Valdai Discussion Club, entitled ‘The World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules’, provided an excellent overview of the historical frame’s content and

structure. Valdai is seen by Russian elites as a way to shape opinion in the West, but domestic media also cover it generously and cite the event as evidence of Western affection and respect for Putin (Satter 2016, xii–xiii). The President began by underscoring the relevance of history to our understanding of the present-day. By rendering history central to understanding and solving global issues, he justified and foreshadowed the numerous historical references he would make in his speech:

In analysing today's situation, let's not forget history's lessons.⁵⁰ First, changes in the world order – and what we see today are events on this scale – have usually been accompanied by chains of intensive local-level conflicts, if not global war and conflict.

The President explained how the USA had imperilled global governance by their behaviour after the Cold War. He alluded to the USA's assumption of unearned powers by declaring itself victor in the Cold War. Russia's defeat in the Cold War was implied within this self-promulgated victory. Putin entrenched the 1990s connection by describing the USA as *nouveaux riches*:

The USA, having declared itself winner of the Cold War, saw no need for [...] establishing a new balance of power, essential for maintaining order and stability, instead they took steps that threw the system into sharp and deep imbalance.

The Cold War ended, but not by signing a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the impression that the so-called 'victors' in the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to their needs and interests...

⁵⁰ I have underlined references to the historical frame schema

This is how *nouveaux riches* behave when they suddenly obtain great fortunes, in this case, in the shape of world leadership and domination.

Putin then proceeded to discuss the recent history of American military involvement overseas, after depicting the Soviet collapse as the culmination of Western assaults on Soviet sovereignty. This emphasised not only US global dominance since the USSR's collapse but also American involvement in its downfall. Putin even alluded to Western complicity in the Chechen conflicts:⁵¹

Measures taken against those who refuse to submit are well-known and have been tried and tested many times [...] They once sponsored Islamic extremist movements to fight the Soviet Union. Those groups gained battle experience in Afghanistan and later gave birth to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The West if not supported, at least closed its eyes, and, I would say, gave information, political and financial support to international terrorists in their invasion of Russia (we have not forgotten this).

Putin continued his discursive retrogression, claiming the world was witnessing a return to the Cold War itself, something for which he held the USA responsible. He depicted Russia as a victim of Cold War-era demonisation, feeding into a narrative of Russophobia prevalent in official discourse since 2012 (Darczewska and Żochowski 2015). He also drew attention to Russia's nuclear superpower status, mirroring Cold War rhetoric and undermining his argument that the West bore sole responsibility for reviving tensions:

It does not matter who assumes the role of centre of evil in American propaganda, the USSR's old place as the main adversary. It could be Iran, as a country seeking to

⁵¹ Putin had made similar accusations previously, including during his 2003 'Direct Line' conference: *Prezident Rossii 2003*; See also: Stent 2013, 267

acquire nuclear technology, China, as the world's biggest economy, or Russia, as a nuclear superpower.

Today, we see new efforts to fragment the world, draw new dividing lines, put together coalitions not built for something but directed against someone, anyone, to create the image of an enemy like during the Cold War years, and obtain the right to leadership, or diktat if you will. The situation was presented this way during the Cold War.

Putin then stressed that, despite US efforts to revive the Cold War and 1990s, Russia would prevail. He underlined Russian self-sufficiency, contrasting it to when Russia was 'begging at anyone's door', a veiled reference to the conditions attached to 1990s IMF loans (BBC 1999). In invoking an image of Russian collective resistance in the face of external pressure, he alluded to the besieged fortress myth, which features throughout Russian history and expresses the idea that Russia is besieged by enemies but will withstand their assault (Duncan 2002; Groys 2018; Berdyaev 1990). In this way, he used (semi-)positive myths to counter negative historical analogies (isolation, collapse, and societal degradation) that could potentially be associated with Western sanctions and criticism:

We know how these decisions were taken and who was applying the pressure. But let me stress that Russia will not get worked up or offended or come begging at anyone's door. Russia is self-sufficient. We will work within the foreign economic environment that has taken shape, develop domestic production and technology and act more decisively to carry out transformation. Pressure from outside, as has been the case on past occasions, will only consolidate our society.

Putin reiterated his denial of Russian culpability for the return of Cold War-style tensions, while employing terminology reminiscent of the era, such as 'mutual destruction'. This

externalisation of blame recurred throughout all sources' coverage, accentuating that Russia's actions were self-defence prompted by the West (mis)behaving as if it were the 1990s:

I want to point out that we did not start this. Once again, we are sliding into the times when, instead of the balance of interests and mutual guarantees, fear and the balance of mutual destruction prevent nations from engaging in direct conflict.

Closing, President Putin cited post-1945 and Brezhnev-era agreements, thereby rhetorically elevating Russia to the international position it enjoyed previously, as opposed to its reduced prestige in the 1990s. His employment of history thus performed a redemptive function, allowing Russia to come full circle, avenging the losses of the 1990s and Soviet collapse in order to return to a golden age of prestige and stability:

Building a more stable world order is difficult. We're talking about long and hard work. We were able to develop rules for interaction after World War Two and reach agreement in Helsinki in the 1970s. Our common duty is to resolve this fundamental challenge at this new stage of development.

Valdai's global recognition and reach made the above speech especially pertinent as an example of the historical frame narrative; however, Putin's speech at Seliger covered near-identical ground. He opened with a declaration of the importance of historical memory to Russian culture and condemned Western behaviour in the 1990s, specifying the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and Western responsibility for socio-economic chaos in Russia (RT na russkom 2014c). Expressing nostalgia for the USSR, Vladimir Putin employed Cold War rhetoric, positioning Russia as the world's most powerful nuclear power then (in the 1970s) and now. Sergei Lavrov's speeches at Seliger and Grazhdanskii universitet followed a similar trajectory (RT na russkom 2014b; Vpered Novorossiya! 2014). In both, the Foreign Minister started by listing post-1985 iniquities, including the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, before

recalling the USSR's messianic might and soft power around the globe. Specific references to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's 'Mister No' nickname, the Helsinki Act, and 'the end of history' peppered both politicians' speeches.

These speeches were microcosms of the broader frame. Their allusions to the 1990s, Soviet collapse, and Brezhnev era were compounded by media coverage of events, with other sources also at times reproducing the complete historical parallel in its entirety. For example, Mikhail Timoshenko, a retired colonel and military expert stated in KP that under Leonid Brezhnev the USSR competed with, even outshone, the USA in military matters but this was reversed by state collapse and the 1990s, when Russian expertise was sold to the Americans (Baranets 2014a). The colonel continued by claiming that Russia was now reversing these losses, restoring to itself the prestige associated with Brezhnev's USSR. Ironically, there was little reflection on whether the pursuit of military parity might have led to the much-lamented collapse of the USSR. Despite this lack of introspection, the speakers and sources that provided a general overview of the narrative helpfully highlighted the main themes and arguments of the discourse. They were, however, unusual: most sources referenced only selected elements of the schema at any given time. By emphasising certain sub-narratives, whether the humiliation of the 1990s or the pride of the 1970s, sources drew attention to the most relevant points of comparison between historical and contemporary events.

Sub-narratives

The media's tendency to isolate certain attributes of the 1975-1999 historical frame as instructive historical parallels, rather than reapplying the whole meta-narrative, allowed for identification and differentiation of sub-narratives within the discourse.

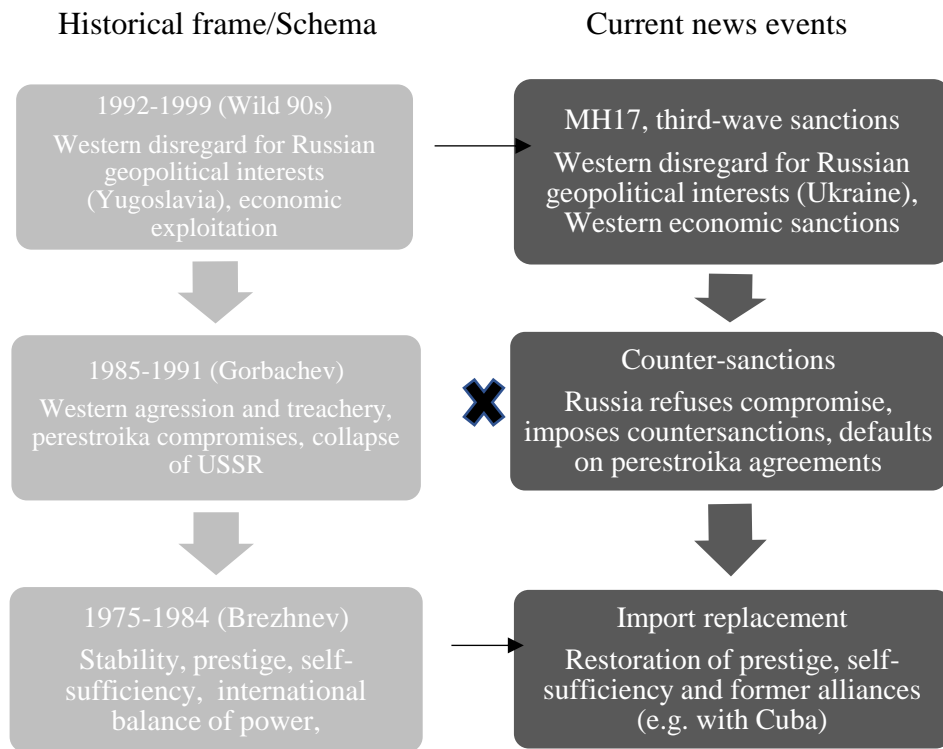


Figure Eight. Comparative flowchart of Sanctions sub-narrative themes and historical schema

As shown in Figure Eight, there were three key sub-narratives within the historical frame. I identified sub-narratives by grouping references to the historical frame made during politicians' comments on and media coverage of sanctions and deteriorating Russia-West relations. All references compared or contextualised contemporary events within one of three topics: the wild nineties (after the collapse of the USSR); the Gorbachev era and Soviet collapse; the Brezhnev (and Andropov) period. It should be noted that, as in the Ukraine discourse, one article frequently contained references to more than one sub-narrative.

The Wild Nineties Sub-narrative



Figure Nine. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the Wild Nineties sub-narrative

- Date of most use: 17th July – 30th August 2014
- Most popular keyword(s): *90s, Yeltsin, Yugoslavia, Crisis*
- Corresponding current events (comparison of): Western condemnation of Russia after MH17; Western financial dominance, including imposing third-wave sanctions.
- Schema (comparison with): Western economic exploitation of Russia from 1992-1999 and disregard for Russian geopolitical interests; privatisation and economic chaos.

The Wild Nineties sub-narrative was the first theme to emerge during the research period. In Russia, the term ‘wild nineties’ (*likhie devyanosti*) refers to the period following the Soviet collapse, when there was considerably more freedom than in the USSR, but the country was beset by organised crime, economic disarray, and political chaos. The sources made 970 references that compared contemporary events with this period. The most popular keyword was ‘90s (430 mentions), followed by Yeltsin (116 mentions), Yugoslavia, or related

words/images (90 mentions), and Crisis, or related words/images (75 mentions). This was the least frequently used of the three sub-narratives across all sources, although it was the most frequently employed by VV. All sources used comparisons between sanctions and the 1990s to delegitimise (pro-)Western arguments. The main argument of this sub-narrative was that the West of 2014 was trying to recreate the conditions of the 1990s when they could disregard Russian interests and sovereignty, due to the latter's weakness. In comparing Western behaviour now and then, the sources characterised the 1990s as a period of brutal economic hardship and political humiliation, caused by Western exploitation of Russia. In so doing, the media built on an existing discourse within Russian politics that has sought to legitimise Putin's reign as an antidote to the chaos and difficulties of the 1990s (Malinova 2020; Kalinina 2017a; Huxtable 2017), despite Boris Yeltsin arranging Putin's accession to the Presidency .

In conflating the West *then* with the West *now*, the sources employed overwhelmingly negative memories of the first post-Soviet decade in Russia and abroad. The media invoked the bombing of Yugoslavia as an example of the USA's first fomentation of 'colour' revolution (Lenta 2014j). Given the prevailing Russian view of its historically close relationship with Serbia (Popović 1994; Nikoforov 2014; Bechev 2017), the NATO bombing also served to illustrate Western disregard for global stability starting from the 1990s:

In the last quarter of a century alone, the Americans have been responsible for wars in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria (Smirnov 2014).

Much has already been said and written about the analogies between today's situation around Ukraine and the process of the breakup of Yugoslavia (Lenta 2014c).

I quote the German Foreign Minister: 'Our European peace order is in the ascendancy'. 'Our' here means the European and American order, implemented after

the fall of the Soviet Union. Steinmeier has in no way accepted the strengthening of Russia's positions, our country's defence of our geopolitical interests in a peaceful way (Shestakov 2014c).

The media complemented their argument that the West presented an existential threat with descriptions of financial hardship suffered by Russians following the Soviet collapse. Oligarchs, pyramid schemes and the Yukos scandal were repeatedly cited to remind readers of the economic and political chaos of the 1990s.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, which took place in 1991 not without US participation, Washington ensured all investments in the Russian economy were confirmed by the IMF. The IMF is controlled by the US Treasury. This allowed American multinationals and Wall Street to steal Russia's wealth under Yeltsin (Engdahl 2014) .

As demonstrated in the quotation above, Western treachery and manipulation, past and present, formed the moral of such stories.

Collapsing the past into the present, government officials and media sources argued that the West was trying to humiliate Russia, just as it had in the 1990s. They burnished their arguments by blaming the West for current relations and for the degradation of Russian society in the 1990s. Any Russians known to share some culpability for the wild nineties, such as Yeltsin, were often depicted as Western stooges and denied agency (Baranets 2014a). This treatment applied to past and contemporary political figures: just as the West was conflated with the alleged destructive behaviour of its leaders in the 1990s, so people who disagreed with the government in 2014 were depicted as '90s politicians. In the words of the leader of Russia's (then) third largest party (A Just Russia), Sergei Mironov:

Today's 'fifth column', working inside Russia in the interests of the USA and other Western countries [...] is a loose conglomeration, comprising different parts. First, from those same bankrupt politicians of the 1990s who made their career precisely in the period of Russia's decline and dream of returning to the earlier status quo (Mironov 2014).

Ironically, by projecting responsibility for the traumatic post-Soviet transition period onto others, Russian media and politicians could reassert discursive control over the country's fate, using it to argue that Russia could now act against Western attempts to recreate the 1990s and regain lost status. Some journalists took this view even further, with Artem Sidorchik arguing in AiF that the West would now have a taste of its own medicine: 'Having simply launched a boomerang at the end of 1980s-1990s against the USSR and the Eastern Bloc, the USA and Western Europe forgot that it is bound to return' (Sidorchik 2014). The image of the boomerang reiterated the idea that Russia was remedying injustices allegedly visited upon it by the West in the 1990s.

Not all sources used the Wild Nineties sub-narrative in the same way. Both Lenta and AiF provided some limited coverage of Russians criticising countersanctions because they might lead to food deficits similar to those of the 1990s. By contrast, RG and the government almost exclusively depicted the 1990s as an era defined by national humiliation and powerlessness, although they rarely mentioned politicians by name (Engdahl 2014; RT na russkom 2014a 13.08). Furthermore, these two sources avoided the highly personalised and crime-focussed narratives that pervaded KP's reminiscences of the 1990s. KP's tone was exemplified by the articles of Evgenii Arsyukhin, as when he claimed that promises offered by the West had turned sour. He began:

I remember the cruel '90s. A wonderful new world in which, it seemed, there was a place for everyone. The kolkhoz worker would become a farmer, the engineer - a high-flying businessman, the journalist - an owner of his own free media organisation. As it turned out somewhat later, in fact the number of places in the wonderful new world was limited (Arsyukhin 2014a).

The author finished by updating the reader on his imagined characters' progression, emphasising that the achievements of the late-USSR were considerably better than those of the 1990s:

What did we end up with? Parents grew stupid in dachas. Engineers operating with 'unique technology from the days of the late Soviet Union. Journalists have long since become PR execs, where they have also grown stupid and been pushed out. The peasant is cursing either the weather or the Belarussians. Wherever you look, they're everywhere hawking products, their land either grown over or sold for dachas (Ibid).

Despite these differences, on the whole, each source characterised the everyday life and politics of the 1990s in extremely depressing terms to underscore the threat posed by Western behaviour towards Russia. Nevertheless, even the starkness of these images proved insufficient during the most heated periods of the Sanctions episode, when media sources instead invoked the memory of the destruction of the Soviet state as a suitable analogy for Western intentions.

The Gorbachev Sub-narrative



Figure 10. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the Gorbachev sub-narrative

- Date of most use: 9th August – 12th September
- Most popular keyword(s): 1980s, collapse (*raspad*), perestroika, Gorbachev.
- Corresponding current events (comparison of): the dissolution of perestroika-era agreements; Russian countersanctions; American criticism of Russia.
- Schema (comparison with): The years 1985-1991, covering the Gorbachev-era from perestroika to the Soviet collapse; the ‘loss’ of the Eastern Bloc; Ronald Reagan’s presidency.

The Gorbachev era and Soviet collapse was the second theme to emerge during my analysis, prevailing from the early to middle part of the research period. The sources made 1440 connotations between contemporary events and 1985-1991. The most popular keyword was 1980s (105 mentions), then collapse (62 mentions), perestroika (51 mentions), and Gorbachev (49 mentions). This sub-narrative was the second most frequently referenced overall and the most popular in KP, Lenta, and RG. The Gorbachev sub-narrative, covering

the decline and collapse of the USSR, evolved from descriptions of the chaotic 1990s. Its use reflected a deterioration in Russia's relations with the West; it no longer sufficed to conflate the West with its exploitative behaviour of the 1990s, and now it was juxtaposed with attempts to destroy the USSR. References to this sub-narrative heightened a sense of existential threat to Russia from external enemies, further stigmatising (pro-)Western arguments. This was offset by the media presenting Russian countersanctions as evidence that the contemporary state could withstand Western assaults on sovereignty.⁵² According to such reasoning, if Gorbachev had compromised and reduced Soviet influence, then the present Russian government had reasserted national sovereignty.

To illustrate their arguments, sources accentuated different attributes of the Gorbachev era and Soviet collapse: the broadcast shows, VN and VV, focussed on the INF treaty⁵³ and Afghanistan, while RG and the government were more concerned with the collapse and outlining Western duplicity in their dealings with Gorbachev, using this to discredit any notion of compromising with the West now (Dunaevskii 2014b). There was considerable variety in the range of keywords, with most sources coalescing around ideas of loss and breakdown, instrumentalising the trauma of the Soviet collapse to foster enmity towards the West. Broadcasters and journalists often cited major events or years associated with these events, dating negative societal trends back to the Soviet disintegration:

Since when has world leadership been the USA's official policy? Probably since 1991, since the fall of Communism. But now the mask has been torn off. As citizens of the world, and not only the USA, we have to come to terms with a new reality: the USA

⁵² Further details and a more balanced account of the multifaceted reasons for the collapse of the USSR can be found in the following: Marples 2004; Bisley 2004

⁵³ The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was an arms control treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union banning nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres

wants world domination and, in pursuit of this, it will not stop in its attempts to destroy Russia (Vorob'ev 2014b).

The basic reason for the USSR's collapse was a serious miscalculation, above all in national politics. Each republic did not just randomly decide to gain sovereignty (Polupanov 2014).

In a similar vein, the Aleksandr Grishin, a popular and prolific columnist for KP, claimed that 'Obama was trying the same tricks as his predecessor Ronald Reagan' to connive with Saudi Arabia to crash the oil price and destroy Russia (Grishin 2014h).

As with the 1990s, the sources attributed almost no blame for the Soviet collapse to Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) or the Communist system. The media and government thereby constructed a line of reasoning in which pressures on Russia and/or the USSR were largely external in origin. This reasoning supported the notion that, by compromising with the West, the Russian state risked existential danger. Sources were, however, careful to confirm that the USSR's weakness in the face of Western pressure would not be repeated now, as underlined by pro-government filmmaker and General Director of Mosfilm, Karen Shakhnazarov, in an interview with AiF: 'In this information war our media has learnt how to hold fire and answer back properly. In the Soviet Union they couldn't do that' (Grachev 2014). Elsewhere, politicians called for Russians to resist Western attempts to 'disturb the socio-political situation', presenting Russian countersanctions and criticisms of the West as defensive measures (Prezident Rossii 2014d).

Although politicians and journalists attributed some 'mistakes' of the perestroika era to Gorbachev, he was not subject to the same level of vilification as Boris Yeltsin, instead the sources tended to infantilise him, depicting him as naïve and foolish in his dealings with the West. All sources presented Gorbachev as manipulated by cynical Western(-influenced)

policymakers (Zubov 2009), with the innocence and naivety of Soviet policy makers frequently underscored. The following interview with Oliver Stone, whose Americanness was used as evidence of objectivity, exemplified this approach:

Then I began to learn what happened in the 1980s and 90s. I saw that the USA abused the spirit of agreements signed between Gorbachev and Bush Sr. on German reunification, NATO expansion, and so on (Dunaevskii 2014b).

The media also cited increased US aggression under Reagan as a contributing factor to Gorbachev's concessions to the West. By invoking Reagan and the heightened Cold War rhetoric that predated perestroika, the sources portrayed Gorbachev's readiness to accommodate the USSR's erstwhile enemies as a sign of weakness (Chigishov 2014l 1.20.01). This presentation further delegitimised the post-Soviet world order, supporting arguments for rewriting the post-1991 consensus.

The INF treaty recurred throughout the coverage as an especially egregious symbol of the loss of strategic balance and parity after 1985. Signed by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987, the sources depicted the INF treaty as benefitting the West at Russia's expense. Although the Americans were blamed for the present-day unravelling of the treaty, sources that covered this topic (Lenta, AiF, RG, Gov, VN) underscored the treaty's iniquity (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2014c). Many other agreements signed during the perestroika era were also presented as unjust restrictions on contemporary Russian sovereignty, and characterised as harbingers then – and relics now- of the humiliations and ignominy decried in the Wild Nineties sub-narrative (Lenta 2014d; 2014f; Diveeva 2014). The media employed such treaties as metonyms for the post-Soviet international order, simultaneously justifying their dissolution and using them to contextualise worsening relations with the West.

Media comparisons with the Gorbachev-era also outlined a specific Russian ‘post-revisionist’ interpretation of the Cold War, in which the conflict was allegedly driven by long-extant Russophobia, as opposed to ideological anti-Communism:

The USA continues to realise its geopolitical doctrine for Russia, which is known by the name ‘Anaconda’. The first snake loop tightened when they destroyed the Warsaw Pact. The second when they destroyed the Soviet Union (Boiko 2014)

Although this interpretation dates to the disappointments of the 1990s (Pechatnov 2017), within the historical frame it emerged as the uncontested view of the Cold War. To support this argument, journalists interviewed external contributors with privileged insight into this time, such as former dissidents and US advisors like Alexander Zinoviev (Chigishov 2014k 1.38.00), and Dmitrii Mikheev, who commented on the period following the Soviet collapse in an interview with KP:

[The Americans] were disappointed at losing an enemy [the USSR]. The global American empire needed an enemy for internal consolidation [...]. The Soviet Union had collapsed and here was Russia, you understand, asking for five billion dollars to survive. They laughed at Russia, mocked her [...] ‘they can’t even handle a few thousand Chechens’. But the enemy had to be big, with hundreds of divisions behind it and so they began demanding that I find evidence of a rebirth of neo-imperialism in Russia (Pankin 2014).

In this same interview, Mikheev claimed that the only difference between then and 2014 was that now Russia would not surrender. Such intransigence, repeated across numerous sources, would supposedly facilitate a symbolic return to the *velikoderzhavnost* (‘great power status’) and stability of the late USSR, as detailed in the next sub-narrative.

the stability and prestige associated with it. This sub-narrative was also prominent in August 2014, when the government introduced countersanctions on Western agricultural produce and the media and politicians argued that import replacement would allow Russia to return to a supposed golden age of self-reliance.

The media's recollections of a bygone age of constancy were accompanied by an increasingly unstable reality: from September 2014, the rouble was devalued, food prices rose, and growth forecasts and credit ratings were significantly downgraded. To distract audiences from the unpleasant consequences of sanctions and tensions with the West, the media presented government policies as facilitating a return to military parity and supposed achievements in diplomacy, science, and space under Brezhnev. These nostalgic overtones made the Brezhnev sub-narrative more positive in outlook as well as more domestic in focus than other themes in the Sanctions discourse.

The government and media's presentation of the Brezhnev era in extremely positive terms was facilitated by their refusal to mention Communist ideology, which might have reminded audiences of the era's negative aspects, such as restrictions on freedom of speech and movement.⁵⁴ Instead, the media emphasised the USSR's alleged stability, high living standards, and international esteem. The sources presented the current disengagement from the West as a process of normalisation, a return to the way things ought to be:

In Soviet times, we had 500 hectares, but we only have 100 left. You can see even those aren't being used. But now [after countersanctions] there's a chance to restore all that (Ovchinnikov 2014)!

⁵⁴ For an exception to this rule, please see (Tseplyaev 2014d)

Nothing bad will happen if we take all the good things from the USSR because there were a lot of good things, more good than bad (Lenta 2014g).

This characterisation was typical of this sub-narrative. Moreover, it was a logical conclusion to take from post-revisionist interpretations of the Cold War: if ideology was irrelevant, then any return to Soviet-era greatness could be limited to geopolitical advantage. In applying such blinkered positivity the media and politicians expanded upon the Putin-era tendency to recode vague memories of the USSR into Russian patriotism as part of a highly selective and ‘broadly conceived legacy’ of the past (Kalinin 2011, 156).

Svetlana Boym describes ‘restorative nostalgia’ as so totalising that it extends beyond the past and into the values and associated notions of family, homeland and truth (Boym 2007, 5). While the nostalgia for the Brezhnev period was not necessarily ‘totalising’ it clearly incorporated elements of restorative nostalgia, not least in its emphasis on restoring the traditions and values associated with this period, as reflected in a discussion of the 1970s published in Lenta:

The Soviet education system’s main objective was to raise patriots, ready to defend their homeland. This was its entire purpose [...] it’s time we stopped following Western standards and returned to the best traditions of Russian and Soviet schooling (Lenta 2014g).

Such comments contained existentialist overtones that formed an integral part of historical framing as a media technique. In the given case, this also supported the media’s questionable premise that, if the Soviet collapse resulted in a grave worsening of conditions for many Russians, it followed that a restoration of certain aspects of the late USSR was desirable (Chigishov 2014k 19.42).

Like the Wild Nineties sub-narrative, the Brezhnev sub-narrative relied on highly personalised rhetoric and images of food, in particular patriotic (non)consumption (Skvirskaja 2017). Accusations of greed and epicureanism functioned to exacerbate the contrast between a simpler, more meaningful way of living in the past and the consumerist values of the present opposition. After the imposition of sanctions, Ul'yana Skoibeda fulminated sarcastically in KP:

I don't actually know how far sanctions will go. But the main thing is that standards of living are not actually equivalent to standards of happiness. My parents, the generation who were young in the 1980s, lived a much more spiritual life than me. They read all the latest literary releases, subscribed to the most fashionable periodicals, gathered in kitchens, discussing it all.

I feel very sorry for people who consider the availability of a wide range of sausages a victory for democracy. What a pity we can't divide society: on the right, those who want the return of the USSR with all its pluses and minuses; on the left, those who want sausages. The only thing to do with that type of democrat is tell them to leave: it's a big world, there are lots of countries with sausages (Skoibeda 2014c).

The derisive tone of such coverage minimised the concerns of the opposition while also building on Soviet tropes that pro-Western sympathies were rooted in greed and consumerism.

In the Brezhnev sub-narrative, sources employed personal reminiscences to create a more engaging depiction of past glories and then juxtaposed these experiences with ideas of statehood. After first individualising the loss of the USSR, reducing it to the personal level in the Wild Nineties sub-narrative, media and politicians now inscribed nostalgia for a lost Soviet homeland into support for the current government's policies. The media and

politicians presented Russian countersanctions and disagreements with the West as an attempt to restore elements lost and lamented during the USSR's collapse. Instead of a nation that had imperilled relations with its nearest Western neighbours, Russia was presented as capable of challenging the global leadership of the USA, if not alone, then with allies and partners (Korolev 2014e 48.44).

Sources frequently emphasised continuity between 2014 and the Brezhnev era through the reestablishment of Soviet-era alliances, which refuted the notion of Russia's isolation from the international community while also contributing to the idea of restoration:

Russia is returning to the Black Continent [Africa] after a more than twenty-year absence [...] The head of the MID has successfully renewed and developed political and economic ties that were *de facto* lost after the Soviet Union's collapse (Lenta 2014h).

The rebuilding of Soviet global standing, as expressed in the Brezhnev sub-narrative, was inextricably linked to Western criticism of Russia. Through its resistance to Western pressure, the media depicted the Russian government and nation as metaphorically revisiting its past, avenging injustices inflicted by others to (re)access a bygone era of Soviet might. This notion of restored power was encapsulated by the Yalta meeting of Duma members organised by President Putin in August 2014. Mirroring the 1945 Yalta Conference, President Putin's speech focussed on the need to rebalance and rearrange the world order, clarifying that his choice of location was deliberate: 'I specially wanted to meet precisely here [...] Already once before the 'map of the world' was defined in Crimea [...] With the unification of Crimea with the Russian Federation, this system has once again changed' (Sadchikov 2014).

The gradual progression of the historical frame from a period of national humiliation (1990s) through to a period of alleged international admiration (the Brezhnev era) endowed the structure of the frame with its own meaning. While the emplotment of events did not function like the chronological mirroring seen in the Ukraine Crisis discourse (p.73), it did involve narrative progression that implied a national journey of redemption, perhaps symbolising the final stages of the metaphorical journey on which Putin had led the nation. The break with the West symbolised by sanctions and countersanctions was the necessary sacrifice to reach the lost promise land and to heal the traumas – real and imagined – of the 1990s. This break would be one of several threads in Russia’s efforts to (re)acquire *velikoderzhavnost’*. Another important element in this process was the military, as epitomised by Vladimir Putin’s comment that other nations respected the USSR because it possessed the world’s largest nuclear arsenal; he then added that these nations should remember that Russia was once more the world’s largest nuclear superpower (RT na russkom 2014c 1.43.31). The redemption of lost status through conflict and weaponry was also arguably an important paradigm through which Russia interpreted its 2015 military intervention in Syria, which is the focus of my next chapter and historical framing case study.

Chapter Six: Russian Intervention in Syria as Regaining Soviet Superpower Status

In this case study, I detail how Russian politicians and domestic media presented Russian military intervention in Syria and the consequences of this intervention on international relations. I consider the way in which this intervention was justified through reference to historical analogy, namely to Russia's reassertion of the post-1945 world order established at Yalta and resumption of its Soviet-era superpower geopolitical status. The stimulus for the discourse was not only Russian military intervention in Syria in autumn 2015 but also attempts to resolve the conflict in the international arena. The sources were less concerned with the Syrian conflict outside these parameters; there was far greater coverage of Russian geopolitical and international diplomatic activities relating to (but outside of) Syria, such as trying to build a military coalition, than of events on the ground. Succinctly, Russian media were more interested in how Syria made them look than how Syria itself looked. This line of thought was encapsulated in the following KP headline: 'if we are successful in Syria, then we will improve our position – whether in Ukraine or Zanzibar' (Gamov 2015b).

Russian media used historical framing to conflate Russian intervention in Syria in 2015 with Soviet involvement in designing the post-1945 order and Cold War status. The research period for this case study began on 16th September 2015, two weeks before military airstrikes officially started. This was the time when the Russian government became more explicit about their intentions for Syria, as symbolised by Putin's call to the West to unite with Russia and fight ISIS during a Collective Security Treaty Organisation summit in Dushanbe on 15th September, covered in the news the following day (Prezident Rossii 2015b). The research period ended on 24th December 2015, one week after Secretary of State John Kerry's meeting with Lavrov and Putin in Moscow, where he publicly stated that the USA had no policy to isolate Russia. Justifiably or not, Russian media heralded this statement

as a recognition of American defeat and Russian success in terms of the latter's efforts to assert its position as a global power.

Russian military intervention was foreshadowed in Russian and international media in the weeks beforehand, including at Putin's UN speech (Prezident Rossii 2015c). Engagement began after an official request by President Assad of Syria to help fight jihadists and, as Hannah Notte notes, Russian military activities inside Syria were framed as a war against ISIS (Notte 2016). During the early stages, military action was not the Russian media's main focus, however, and most news relating to Syria concerned Russian geopolitical might. As such, while the media did cover Russian military successes at first, this soon disappeared from coverage. Public support for intervention was low, perhaps contributing to the nature of the media's coverage of Syria, including the emphasis on restoring to Russia the Soviet power to dictate events on the world stage (Dmitri Trenin 2016; Katz and Casula 2015; Luk'yanov 2016). The media presented Russian diplomacy as breathing new life into the ideals and norms of international law and also as restoring the great power status of the Soviet Union (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2015a).

The Russian media and politicians explained Russian involvement in Syria as facilitating a return to the Yalta world order and Russia's/the USSR's position within it. Relations with the West were therefore an important part of the narrative. As I outline in this chapter, the West's (alleged) acceptance of Russia's renewed political strength was rhetorically presented as a resumption of the Cold War-era strategic balance, while resistance to it was depicted as Western Cold War style aggression and containment of Russia. Within this context, public support for the conflict grew as Russian media presented events as evidence of Russia regaining its status and breaking the alleged containment and isolation policy announced by the West after 2014 (Babayan 2017).

The scholarship on initial Russian intervention in Syria has understandably focussed on discerning the Kremlin's strategic objectives in an effort to explain Russian behaviour. Most have conceded the importance of boosting Russian geopolitical standing as a reason for the intervention (Katz and Casula 2015; Pierini 2015; Babayan 2017), although some have downplayed its significance (Mankoff 2015). Angela Stent (2016) presented Syria as a US-Russian proxy war and part of Russian attempts to restore influence in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Dmitrii Trenin and Stephen Kotkin emphasised the importance of Russian messianic thinking to Russian interpretations of the war and the need to intervene (Kotkin 2016; Dmitrii Trenin 2016). I will build on these findings in my exploration of how Russian politicians and media justified the intervention in Syria; however, my aim is not to explain Russian behaviour but rather to show how the Russian media and leaders explained this behaviour.

There have been few detailed explorations of Russian media discourse on Syria, as compared to discourse on the Ukraine Crisis, for example. James Brown's (2015) analysis of chemical weapons attacks, comparing Western and Russian media, demonstrated that Russia used values-based, normative arguments to justify its decisions rather than the political self-interest (or Realist approach) traditionally seen as the main driver in Russian foreign policy (Allison 2013; Averre and Davies 2015). The historical framing of the Syria intervention within the creation of the post-1945 world order and Soviet prestige in the early Cold War corroborated this notion, given that it allowed Russia to present itself as upholding a world order sanctified by World War Two.

The media's historical framing of events in Syria also entered into dialogue with several aspects of the two previous historical frames. Most explicitly, the Syria discourse included the notion that Russian victory in World War Two gave Russia a moral right to geopolitical influence (a theme shared with the Ukraine discourse) and also featured the idea

that Russia was restoring elements of Soviet greatness (a theme shared with the Sanctions discourse). However, the sources expanded upon (and altered) these themes in their coverage of intervention in Syria; now Russia was independently projecting its (geo)political and military might outside the former borders of the USSR for the first time since Afghanistan. As Marc Pierini argued, Russian intervention in the Syrian conflict finally gave ‘a tangible reality to Moscow’s concept of a new international order’ (Pierini 2015). As such, this discourse, unlike the previous two, applied historical framing in a way that presented Russia as being on the offensive.

Russian media and politicians also used this discourse to look towards the future albeit one full of restorative nostalgia. The media openly acknowledged the advantages and opportunities for restoration afforded to Russia by intervention in Syria. In an article entitled ‘Chance to Return’ (with the USSR implied as the point of return), Dmitrii Estaf’ev of Lenta argued:

This conflict is an important test of Russian statehood’s ability to really play a serious geopolitical role. Objectively speaking, the Crimea situation was really just politically and geopolitically so uncontentious that it only really demanded political will on the whole. In Syria we need a higher level of foreign policy ability and political technologies that can be used ‘in the field’ (Estaf’ev 2015)

These emphases on restoring Soviet greatness on the world stage (as opposed to domestically) contributed to the messianic elements embedded within the historical framing narrative. This messianism was integral to the media’s discursive construction of Russian identity, which accompanied the pragmatic policy messaging.

By the middle of December 2015, references to the frame diminished as the media and politicians could point to the realisation of the goals outlined in the narrative: by

intervening in Syria, Russia did indeed greatly increase its geopolitical standing and influence to a level far from equal but much more comparable to that of the USSR. From the Kremlin's point of view, operations in Syria had been a success on almost every level.⁵⁵ Consequently, by the end of December, the media shifted its emphasis to the present and the respect being afforded Moscow as well as the new (old) world order that it had reinforced. This shift functioned as a conclusion, providing evidence of the arguments inherent within the historical frame: Russia, just like the USSR (because it almost *was* the USSR), had the right to decide world events, ensure strategic balance and be treated as an equal partner to the USA. As 2015 drew to a close, and references to the historical frame diminished, the media decided to end the historical framing narrative by focussing on returning to a future full of conflict and Russian influence rather than emphasising resolution.⁵⁶

What was the Frame?

This historical frame was composed of three sub-narratives. The first sub-narrative (World War Two) emerged the earliest and conflated the contemporary situation in Syria and the right to act against terrorism with World War Two and the necessity of building an international coalition to defeat Nazism. It argued for the reassertion of the world order established at Yalta, which also involved reasserting Russia's moral right, as victor in 1945, to decide events in Europe and the world. The second sub-narrative (Cold War Aggression) presented the US refusal to work with Russia in a revived anti-Hitler/anti-ISIS coalition as Cold War-era aggression on their part. In this second sub-narrative, external enemies were depicted as obsessed with harming the USSR/Russia. The purpose of this narrative, in conflating aggression towards Russia with East-West tension in the Cold War, was not so

⁵⁵ For a more detailed overview of Russian engagement in Syria please see (Kozhanov 2016)

⁵⁶ Unlike in the two other case studies, there was little emergence of the historical frame in other media that could be separated from a broader interest in Soviet themes and topics. This may be linked to the government's shift towards emphasising active engagement with history over discourse, which I explore in Chapters Eight and Nine.

much to highlight the threat of external enemies (as seen in other historical framing discourses) but rather to emphasise the return of Russia to the status of rival to the West. In this respect, it mirrored the third sub-narrative, Cold War Achievements, with which it was almost contiguous both in terms of the chronology of historical events and in terms of when the media used it. The media used this theme to present Russia as reliving Soviet achievements, especially beyond the USSR’s borders. The media and politicians emphasised the enduring nature of Soviet soft power and Soviet alliances as means of underscoring the global appeal of Russian culture, thereby conflating the two.

To delineate the historical frame, I read over 2000 articles and watched around seventy hours of interviews and broadcasts on the conflict in Syria and resultant issues, including relations with the West, the downing of Metrojet Flight 9268 by terrorist in Egypt, and the Turkish downing of a Russian fighter pilot. From these, I isolated twenty-seven broadcasts and 472 articles that contained historical frame references and undertook close textual analysis of these sources. Within the latter group of articles and broadcasts I identified 3410 references to the historical frame. By the middle of December such references to the historical frame were decreasing rapidly in almost all sources (AiF was the exception), as shown in Table 10. There was considerable variation in the sources’ employment of historical framing. Lenta, the government, and RG used the frame most enthusiastically.

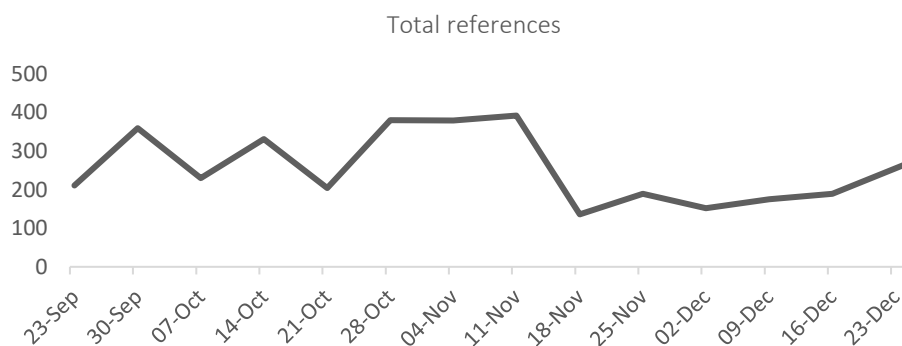


Table 10. Total number of references to the historical schema over the research period

The broadcast shows and KP made much less reference to the frame than was the case in the two other studies, as reflected in Table 11. This may be linked to the fact that the historical framing of Russian intervention in Syria required more careful media and political handling; the topic was far more complex and less suited to the tabloid style than outrage over ‘Nazis’ in Kyiv or the imposition of sanctions.

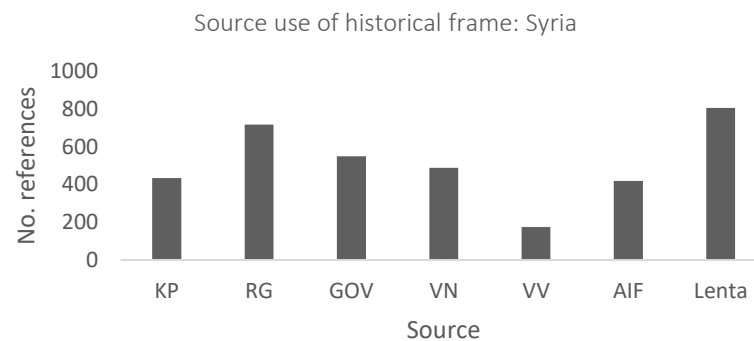


Table 11. Total number of references to historical frame by source in coverage of Syria

In the Syria discourse, the historical framing was more dynamic and vulnerable to external shocks than previous case studies. This was demonstrated in Table 10, where there was a dramatic decline in the use of the historical frame following the downing of the airbus (in Egypt) and a Russian bomber jet in Turkey. There were dramatic decreases in the use of historical framing following the announcement (by the British and Americans) that the crashed airbus jet in Egypt was the result of terrorism (on 4th November)⁵⁷ and following the downing of a Russian fighter pilot in Turkey, on 24th November (BBC 2015c). In the week after the Turkish military downed a Russian bomber, VN contained only three references to the historical frame scheme. Even in the following week there were only seven references, as opposed to an average of thirty-five references per VN broadcast. VV had no references at all on 29th November, a unique case across all three case studies. Other sources employed a

⁵⁷This is a reference to a Russian passenger plane that was brought down by a bomb in Egypt’s Sinai peninsula on 31 October, killing all 224 people on board. For more information please see: (BBC 2015b)

similar pattern of frame usage, as seen in Table 10. This reflected careful media management whereby emphasis was directed away from Syria, in the first case to avoid suggesting that intervention in Syria had led to terrorism,⁵⁸ and, in the second, to devote more energy to denigrating Turkish President Erdogan, who was blamed for all manner of crimes from the lone wolf San Bernardino shootings to oil trade with ISIS (Chigishov 2015h 1.10.00).

The narrative's vulnerability to outside events may have been exacerbated by the relatively low levels of popular support for Russian intervention in Syria, as opposed to standing up to the West or annexing Crimea.⁵⁹ To bolster support for the campaign, the sources needed to apply a historical frame that justified the actions of the Kremlin, presenting them as part of reassuring and coherent narrative whereby Russia was reassuming responsibility for resolving geopolitical crises. As such, it was more common for the historical frame to be adapted to events on the ground rather than dropped. This led to a different structure for the sub-narratives that constituted the historical framing schema of the Syria discourse. If in the two previous studies, the media and politicians used different themes at different points, creating a sense of narrative progression, then this was less marked in the Syria discourse. This was especially the case for sub-narratives two and three, where Russian media and politicians sought to balance notions of Cold War aggression against Soviet achievements in the 1950s and 1960s. As such, the employment of different sub-narratives was more dependent on events on the ground than in the other studies.

The Cold War Aggression sub-narrative focussed on the negative aspects of the Cold War, emphasising Western enmity towards the USSR. It was used to delegitimise any present-day Western opposition to Russian actions in Syria. Alongside this, however, the

⁵⁸ Russian politicians' furious denials of terrorism in the weeks following the airbus downing, despite evidence from Western intelligence agencies, supported this premise.

⁵⁹ Before Russian airstrikes in Syria began, Levada Centre polling showed a majority of Russians opposed military intervention, as discussed in this article on Russian views of the war: (Rainsford 2015)

media employed a more positive sub-narrative also pertaining to the Cold War, this time to Soviet alliances and Soviet-Russian achievements. This sub-narrative was used to contextualise Russian involvement in Syria and increasing Russian geopolitical influence. Thus, the media and politicians projected to audiences a sense of Russian power abroad and recreated a notion of Russian leadership on the world stage and cultural appeal to other nations. In this way, Russian language and culture (the latter being narrowly defined as the possession of so-called traditional values and respect for politicised interpretations of history) replaced Soviet ideology as the basis of Russian soft power.

With two of the three key sub-narratives offering almost opposing depictions of the Cold War, this historical framing narrative was rarely outlined in either government speeches or media publications in full. There were however some examples, where all the sub-narrative themes were comprehensively deployed, including Vladimir Putin's 2015 speech at the Valdai discussion club conference. Appropriately titled 'War and Peace in the 21st century: international stability and balance of the new type' (in Valdai's own, rather clunky, translation from the Russian), Putin made it immediately apparent in his speech that 'the new type' of geopolitical balance should be akin to that established in 1945. As RG journalist Igor' Ivanov summarised, Putin used the speech to:

Detail his vision for regulating the Syrian conflict and this vision, as it was presented, reflects more general approaches by Russia toward questions of creating a new world order. History has often borne witness to the fact that this approach is the only one that works (Ivanov 2015a).

Putin began his speech with some comments on the frailty of peace, before clarifying that his vision for restoring order to a world fraught with conflict involved a reversion to the Yalta system:

Periods of peace – in both European and world history - have always been founded on the strengthening and support of the balance of power in place. This was the case [...] seventy years ago, at Yalta, when the victors over Nazism took the decision to create the United Nations and the principles for inter-state cooperation.

Having established Yalta as an ideal for maintaining peace and stability, Putin then invoked positive aspects of the Cold War, which he emphasised by employing terminology associated with the era. This was accompanied by threats in the guise of references to Russian nuclear strength, a popular refrain by Russian politicians and media ever since heightened tensions in 2014 (BBC 2015a):

With the emergence of nuclear weapons, it became clear that in a global conflict there could be no winner. There would only be one ending: mutually assured destruction. It turned out that man, in his attempts to create ever more destructive weaponry, had made a large-scale war unthinkable.

Putin continued in a similar vein, stressing the positive aspects of the behaviour of Cold War leaders:

By the way, the generation of world leaders in the 1950s, 60s, 70s and even 80s genuinely saw the use of military strength as a last resort. In this sense, they behaved responsibly, weighing up all the circumstances and possible consequences.

The President later turned his attention to the relevance of these lessons for the present, and the need to re-establish strategic balance. In support of his argument, Putin referenced concepts familiar from his 2014 Valdai speech, namely the unfair global dominance of the USA following the Soviet collapse ('the disequilibrium of the system'):

The main thing is that such competition [between states] is constructed within the framework of definite political, legal, and moral norms and rules. Otherwise, rivalry

and conflict of interests result in sharp crises and dramatic breakdowns. We have seen this more than once in the past and today, unfortunately, we are once more faced with similar situations.

Elaborating on the ‘similar situations’, Putin described a world riven by blocs and returning to the more dangerous aspects of the Cold War, including the arms race:

What, for example, could such unmanageable competition mean for international security? It means growth in the number of local conflicts, especially in ‘border regions’, where the interests of large powers or blocks collide. It also means the likely demise of the system of containing the spread of weapons of mass destruction [...] and as a result – a new arms race.

Putin then expanded upon his view of these threats to highlight the dangers of abandoning the Yalta system, thereby justifying his insistence on a return to the post-1945 system; it would recreate the positive aspects of the Cold War. By emphasising how Russia was working to restore this system, he conflated Russia with the Soviet Union, placing the Eurasian Union in the context of the USSR and casting Syria as a 20th century proxy war. Putin ended his speech on Russian intervention in Syria, which he presented as the means for re-establishing a multipolar world order:

Despite its dramatic position today, Syria can become a model for partnership in the name of mutual interest, for the resolution of problems that affect everyone and for the working out of an effective system of managing risks [...] Now, it is important to derive the right lessons from what worked in the past and go forward.

As in his 2014 Valdai speech, which I detailed in the previous chapter, Putin drew listeners’ attention to the need to learn from history in order to move forward.

Sergei Lavrov's speech on 1st December 2015 at the unveiling of a commemorative plaque for the MID also provided an example of the historical frame in its entirety (MID 2015h). Lavrov's address ranged from the victory of the allies in World War Two and their successful creation of a new world order, to the Soviet role in successfully establishing arms treaties. Lavrov also listed numerous Soviet achievements, almost all of which related to either 1945 or the Cold War. Similarly, in an interview with Radio Rossiya Moscow on 19th November, the Foreign Minister described Western attempts to contain Russia as part of a continued policy, ostensibly begun by Winston Churchill. He began his interview by citing examples from 1946 and ended it by referencing events in 1954, thereby mirroring the movement of the frame from the post-war years to the height of the Cold War (MID 2015g).

In the media, articles such as AiF's 'Enemies all around? How can Russia escape the spiral of confrontation?' also covered the entire discourse, starting from the Soviet position as victor in World War Two before arguing how the creation of the atom bomb and Soviet allies gave Russia the strength *today* to withstand external pressure. It employed the example of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the threat of 'nuclear apocalypse' to stoke a sense of drama and fear (Tseplyaev 2014a). However, as in other case studies, it was unusual for the media and politicians to reference all aspects of the historical frame within one article or speech. Most frequently, they preferred to focus on one or two aspects, which were most pertinent to their argument at that time, comparing developments with specific elements of the historical frame, rather than applying the frame fully.

Sub-narratives

The historical frame could be separated into three distinct themes that, together, constituted the schema of the historical frame: World War Two; Cold War Aggression; Cold War Achievements. As noted already, two of these sub-narratives, namely Cold War Aggression and Cold War Achievements were close to contiguous temporally and very close in subject

matter, with the difference pertaining to tone and subject. However, I have chosen to consider them as separate sub-narratives because they were employed for different purposes.

Figure 12 broadly represents the narrative structure of the historical frame schema in that the WW2 sub-narrative came first, with the Cold War Aggression sub-narrative emerging later, followed shortly by the Cold War Achievements sub-narrative. The latter two were prominent at roughly the same time, although the theme of aggression emerged earlier and diminished towards the end of research period, whereas achievement was more prominent later in the research period. That said, this difference was quite minor.

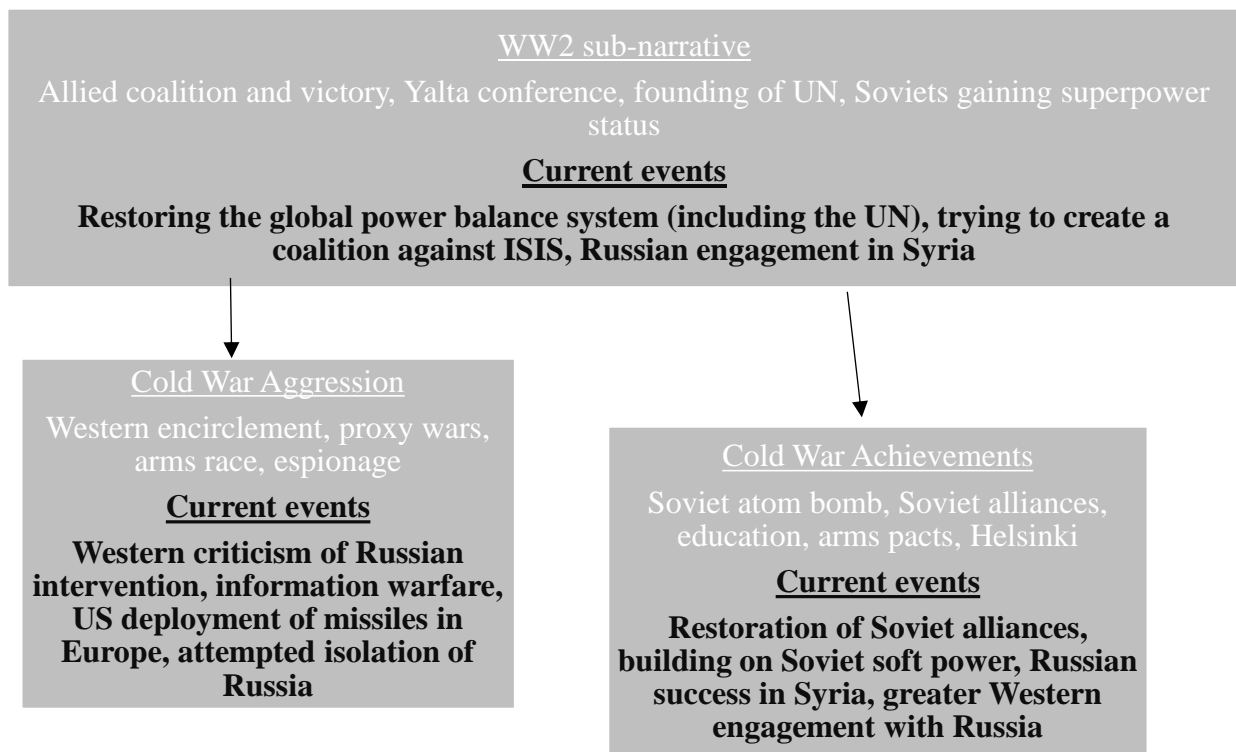


Figure 12. Arrangement of thematic sub-narratives for Syria coverage and its historical frame.

The first theme – the World War Two sub-narrative – emerged earliest and was most prominent at the beginning. This was influenced both by external events, such as the anniversary of the founding of the UN but also by the argument put forth by the sources.

- Corresponding current events (comparison of): Russia trying to form international coalition against terrorism, restoring international legality and respect for the UN
- Schema (comparison with): Victory in 1945, anti-Hitler coalition, Yalta, founding of UN

With 1066 references, this was the least popular sub-narrative in the study but it was the most popular theme by far in government references, where it made up forty-four per cent of all their references to the historical frame: out of 537 references, 236 were to this sub-narrative. The most popular keywords were World War Two (161 mentions), USSR (87), Victory (80), and 70th in reference to the 70th anniversary of the UN and the end of WWII (65). This sub-narrative was most prominent at the beginning of the research period, where it helped to outline Russia's claim to great power status through reference to the world-defining events and decisions taken by the victorious Allied powers following their defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945.

By invoking the Allied powers' coalition, Russian politicians were ostensibly trying to encourage the West to join an anti-ISIS coalition to defeat terrorism in Syria. Given western hostility towards Bashar Al-Assad, the Russian government must have grasped the unlikelihood of this happening. However, it was a useful means of linking the historical framing narrative to the main argument of the discourse for domestic audiences: Russia has inherited a right to sit at the table of major world powers due to the USSR's victory in 1945 and it has every intention of claiming that right, which it will do through military intervention in Syria. Media use of the WW2 sub-narrative decreased immediately following the shooting down of a Russian bomber over Turkey but the volume of references soon recovered as Russia sought to emphasise it was willing to work with others (just not Turkey) and allay fears of isolation.

President Putin’s UN speech and the press coverage beforehand meant that he was particularly active in spreading this sub-narrative, sometimes seeming to even linguistically conflate Russia and the Soviet Union himself, as during his interview with American journalist Charlie Rose:

The decision to create the UN was taken precisely in our country, at the Yalta conference. This decision was taken in the Soviet Union. Russia... the Soviet Union, that is, Russia, as the legal successor state to the Soviet Union, is a founding member of the UN and permanent member of the Security Council (Prezident Rossii 2015d).

The media and politicians dismissed the idea that Yalta was no longer relevant: ‘The Yalta-Potsdam system, founded on the acceptance of international law, is not yet a thing of the past’ (Ermolaeva 2015). This belief in Yalta’s significance was facilitated by the ubiquitous presence of WW2 in Russian daily life and rituals (Walker 2017). It was also reflected in the new statue erected to the ‘Big Three’ (Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin) in Yalta in February 2015. At the opening of the monument (see Figure 14), Sergei Naryshkin, chairman of the State Duma and Russian Historical Society, declared the statue a warning to those who ‘distort history’ (BBC Russia, 2015).



Figure 14. Sergei Naryshkin delivering a speech at the formal opening of the statue of the ‘Big Three’ in Yalta.

Photo: Getty

Having established the continued relevance of the Yalta system (of which the UN was a part), politicians and media stressed the continuity between the USSR and Russia to assert Russia's right to world power status and to decide major global governance issues. In his UN speech, Putin stressed the need for countries to work together through reference to the anti-Hitler coalition:

Relying on international law, we must join efforts to address the problems that all of us are facing and create a genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism. Similar to the anti-Hitler coalition, it could unite a broad range of parties willing to stand firm against those who, just like the Nazis, sow evil and hatred of humankind (Latukhina, 2015d).

Throughout the discourse, the importance of protecting the UN as 'a fruit of the great Victory' was underscored (MID 2015a). In this way, politicians and the media sacralised the UN and the Yalta system, describing efforts to undermine them as part of a wider effort to pervert the memory of WW2, as if the former were abstract versions of the desecrated Soviet war memorials so frequently referenced in Maria Zakharova's briefings (MID 2015f; 2015i; 2015m). It was also used to confer legitimacy on Russian involvement in Syria, which Putin described as Russia 'working from the Charter of the United Nations, that is on the founding principles of modern international law' (Latukhina 2015a). This UN speech was referred to as 'Putin's doctrine' and its significance would have been hard to miss due to the blanket media coverage (Ivanov 2015b), which included a five-hour 'tele-marathon' of the twenty-five-minute speech, hosted by the bellicose Vladimir Solv'ev on *Rossiya-1*.

Many publications and speakers elaborated on Putin's theme that the West must overcome its dislike of Russia in order to save the world from ISIS, who were described as 'Nazis' and 'the dead head SS brigade' (Georgii Zotov 2015):

In essence, he [Putin] drew a parallel with the period of creating the anti-Hitler coalition. From the West's point of view, the USSR was evil but once fascism and Hitler, with his new order, had emerged, then ideological differences between communism and capitalism no longer mattered (MID 2015c).

Even though no coalition emerged, there was *de facto* coordination between Russian and Western powers fighting in Syria, in the interests of avoiding accidental conflagration. This allowed for the concept of joint action against ISIS as an anti-Hitler coalition to gain new life, as Grigorii Bovt wrote in KP: 'Confronted with ISIS, the USA and Europe's only hope, just like during World War Two, is an alliance with the Russians' (Bovt 2015). However, it also led to the reliving of less positive myths from the wartime alliance, such as the Western Allies' reluctance to open a second front (MID 2015k). This contributed to conflationary statements like 'in recent times, since World War Two, the world has begun to change dramatically' (Naranovich 2015). This phrasing was typical of the media and politicians' efforts to behave as if WW2 had just ended, collapsing the seventy years that had passed since then.

The main keyword in this sub-narratives was 'World War Two'; however, although both this sub-narrative and the Ukraine case study may at first appear to invoke the same historical event (what in the West is called World War Two), the content of both was actually quite different. The most obvious difference was the terminology, with World War Two used three times more frequently in the Syria discourse than Great Patriotic War. This is significant given that 'Great Patriotic War' is the term generally used to refer to the

Russian/Soviet experience of World War Two. The media readily made comparisons between the war in Syria and Russian battles: ‘there is still a long way to victory, roughly the same as from Stalingrad to Berlin’ (Steshin 2015). However, the emphasis remained on the status the 1945 Victory ought to afford Russia, rather than any other aspect.

The media’s use of the term ‘World War Two’, which refers to the broader international conflict of 1939-1945, as opposed to the Soviet term ‘Great Patriotic War’, was reinforced by other keywords such as Yalta, creation of the UN, the seventieth anniversary (referring to Yalta and/or UN) and anti-Hitler (coalition). This focus also helped the media in its efforts to present Russia as an international player, restoring order to a chaotic world. In the sources’ coverage of Syria, this denoted the restoration of the UN and the Yalta system. Not restoring them threatened world chaos, thereby adding a messianic bent to the Russian presentation of their position (a thread that emerged throughout the frame): ‘if we do not now understand that there are general rules of existence designed 70 years ago, then in a few years it shouldn’t be any surprise if the world is plunged into chaos’ (Smirnov 2015a).

Other politicians, such as Valentina Matvienko, invoked the example of Nuremberg, reminding listeners of Russian moral superiority deriving from WW2: ‘It must be a trial similar to Nuremberg because the ideology and politics of IS are a type of Nazism’ (Argumenty i fakty 2015c). Any problems resulting from Syria or ISIS were thenceforth blamed on the West’s unwillingness to form an alliance similar to the anti-Hitler coalition; for example, Dmitrii Kiselev, presenter of VN, blamed terror attacks in Paris on the USA banning Europe from joining Russia’s ‘anti-Hitler’ coalition (Chigishov 2015g 16.04). In this way, the media underscored not only the positive aspects of following the example of Yalta, but also the perils of not adhering to it.

This sub-narrative presented Russia as actively trying to restore legality to world order, create alliances, enhance strategic parity, and reassert the international order that emanated from the defeat of Nazism. Media and politicians presented the post-1945 system as the only tenable world order. They also stressed that to achieve its restoration, there would need to be a rejection of the outcome of the Cold War (specifically the demise of Russian influence). This sub-narrative therefore set the scene for the following sub-narrative, attributing Russia’s right to superpower status to victory in WW2, both seventy years prior, and in 2015.

The Cold War Aggression Sub-narrative



Figure 15. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in the Cold War Aggression sub-narrative

- Date of most use: 21st October to 25th November
- Most popular keywords: Cold War, USSR, USA

- Corresponding current events (comparison of): US attempts to isolate Russia; the introduction of laws labelling NGOs and media ‘foreign agents’; NATO exercises; Western and Russian engagement in Syria and their divergent aims there.
- Schema (comparison with): 1950s through to early 1970s with a focus on USA-USSR conflicts and crises in 1950s and 1960s, including the arms race, nuclear weapons and attacks, espionage, and containment.

This was the most popular sub-narrative overall, with 1132 references. The most popular keywords were Cold War (119 mentions), USSR (95 mentions), and USA (57 mentions). It was also the most popular sub-narrative in RG, Lenta, VN, and VV. This sub-narrative was most prominent towards the middle of the research period, when the media needed to explain the West’s continued application of sanctions and measures aimed at isolating Russia in a way that reflected badly on the West and not Russian politicians or policies. To do so, the media contextualised Russia’s failure to influence the West’s sanctions policy within memories of US aggression during the Cold War. The purpose of the sub-narrative was to explain Western disagreement with Russia over Syria as part of a continued Cold War plan to contain and isolate the Soviet Union. To support this notion, the media frequently referenced Syria as a proxy war, using comparisons from the Cold War. Predictably, sources tended to mention the less salubrious Western allies when drawing such comparisons, as seen with Putin’s reference to events in Nicaragua several decades earlier in order to explain the contemporary US approach to ISIS: ‘Reagan once said about Somoza [US-backed Nicaraguan dictator]: Somoza, of course, is a bastard, but he is our bastard. [Now it is] we are Islamists, but we are your Islamists’ (Prezident Rossii 2015a).

The main keyword was ‘Cold War’, followed by USSR; however, unlike the Sanctions case study, this sub-narrative was largely concerned with the earlier period of the

Cold War (1948-1962). A Valdai contributor summarised this by saying: ‘As a result [of Syria] the fundamental nature of relations between the USA and Russia now can be compared with the first years of the Cold War – not the later period, but the beginning’ (Prezident Rossii 2015e). Given this early focus, the arms race and atom bomb played a prominent role in the rhetoric. Nuclear war and the threat thereof were a consistent presence, functioning as a justification for Russian hyper-vigilance. This existential threat, so prominent in all three discourses, lurked in the background of the coverage, with the media signalling the potential dangers of Russia seeming weak. Confusingly, given that it was arguably the event that led the world closest to nuclear war, the Cuban Missile Crisis was referenced by AiF and Lenta as a good example of cooperation but also as indicative of the need for the USA to listen to Russia/the USSR:

Surely the military men of both countries can agree to avoid unpleasant incidents, like they did after the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the military of the USSR and USA opened a special ‘red line’ to prevent nuclear war (Argumenty i fakty 2015b).

The above quotation was delivered by a military expert, in an article explaining why the USA would not join the anti-ISIS coalition. It argued that, if the Cuban Missile Crisis was solved by the decision to communicate and cooperate, then the USA’s decision not to cooperate in Syria made them culpable for any breakdown in relations or future crises.

To reinforce this point, the government and media vilified the USA for reprising the conflicts of the Cold War was embellished by the media’s constant reminders about the American atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Mel’nikova and Kupriyanov 2015; Grishin 2015; MID 2015g). The media often accompanied these references with denunciations of contemporary placements of US nuclear weapons in Europe. Such criticisms were often replete with Cold War rhetoric:

American plans may end up disturbing the strategic balance in Europe (I. Petrov 2015).

The military measures taken by the United States are directed at the so-called containment of Russia [...] the USA stated that it had no intention of returning to the Cold War times but when US nuclear rockets and hundreds of thousands of American soldiers are situated in Europe then these actions initiated by the Americans *de facto* lead right in that direction (MID 2015d).

The specific causes of concern in this case were the stationing of weapons in Romania and Germany. The media sources presented this in both cases as a continuation of Cold War era aggression and attempted containment of Russia. For example, an article describing the stationing of US atom bombs in Germany and other European countries began: ‘the non-peaceful American atom appeared in Europe fifteen years after the end of World War Two’ making the link between then and now explicit (Mel’nikova and Kupriyanov 2015). To heighten the threat, there were at least twenty-four articles and segments about occasions when the USA had been on the brink of launching a nuclear attack on USSR or about its protocol for doing so.

The vilification of the USA took on many characteristics that may, to Western audiences at least, appear more applicable to the USSR. As an example, while vehemently denying there was ever a Soviet occupation of the Baltic States after 1945, Russian media (and VN with special gusto) presented the USA as still occupying Germany and Japan in 2015: ‘In essence, there are still occupation troops of US, who appeared in 1945 after the defeat of fascist Germany and as a result of Yalta agreements’ (Chigishov 2015b 1.47.30). Dmitrii Kiselev also accused the USA of destroying the German and Japanese awareness of their own culture and heritage (Chigishov 2015d 01.18.33). This fed into a wider narrative

that countries were only allied to the USA because they were under threat of invasion by them, thereby turning a narrative used against the Soviet Union onto the USA.

The above example was not unique in its partial acceptance of a Western interpretation of the Cold War, according to which the West stood for freedom and the Soviet Union for oppression. On several occasions, Russian media, again led by VN, attributed characteristics of Cold War-era USSR to the USA. This led to a bizarre role reversal in which, it was claimed, Russia had become the West and the West had become the bad guys, a trend noted as early as 2005 by Julie Elkner: ‘the use of the Cold War “totalitarian” label in order to justify what amount to totalitarian policies is one of the paradoxes of the post-Soviet scene’ (Elkner 2005). By way of example, the Russian Ministry of Defence accused the West of engaging in Bolshevik style propaganda, namely creating *agitki*, to spread disinformation about Russian planes targeting (or not targeting) ISIS (MID 2015f).

Dmitrii Kiselev, in a segment entitled ‘We are changing places with the West’, offered perhaps the most flagrant example of this argument, stating that Russia was now much freer than the West, which had become like the USSR, again referring to a Western image of the USSR as oppressive (Chigishov 2015e 01.08.47). Clearly, certain elements were tongue-in-cheek, and there was a humorous tone, as with the following excerpt that follows on just seconds from the above: ‘It recalls the Soviet slogans “if you enjoy jazz, you’ll sell your country out” [...] soon the West will be trying to secretly listen in to Russian pop songs’. Either way though, the message was clear: now Russia was the country with something to offer the world, with a positive message, and soft power. This notion will be explored further in the next sub-narrative, which detailed Russia’s repositioning of its role in the world and affirmation of its global mission.

contributed to the media's argument that intervention in Syria had led the USA to halt its policy of isolating Russia in the Cold War style. This Cold War Achievements sub-narrative was prevalent around the same time as the Cold War Aggression sub-narrative and covered a similar time frame, in this case from the 1950s to 1970. While the media applied the Cold War Aggression sub-narrative to distract from other countries' criticisms of Russia, they used the Cold War Achievements sub-narrative to build on Russian military or diplomatic successes. This provided an example of how media historical framing of the Syria discourse was much more malleable and dynamic than in the Ukraine and Sanctions discourses.

The main purpose of this sub-narrative was to demonstrate that Russia in 2015 was able to exert a Soviet-style level of soft power, now redefined as the global appeal of Russian culture, which ignored the importance of Communist ideology and anti-imperialism in the USSR's construction of international alliances. This soft power often had quite hard connotations; for example, the media invoked the 'peaceful' Soviet atom bomb, developed ostensibly to prevent nuclear war by creating nuclear parity, as an example of Soviet soft power (Mel'nikova and Kupriyanov 2015). Unsurprisingly, the Soviet atom bomb was directly opposed to the non-peaceful US atom bomb referenced in the Cold War Aggression sub-narrative (see page 159 of this thesis). Although this emphasis on atom bombs may seem incongruous with the soft power focus, this confusion between aggression and soft power (albeit only in relation to Russia/the USSR's actions) was prevalent in all three discourses. This twisted logic explained how the media were able to present the Cuban Missile Crisis as a success and the Cold War as primarily a mechanism for maintaining peace (Dunaevskii 2015).

On a similar note, weapons and militarism played an important role in emphasising Russian successes that built on the Soviet legacy. From October and Russia's accelerating military presence in Syria, television shows and media outlets began to focus on new Russian

weapons in considerable detail, as was immediately apparent from even a brief perusal of the newly created section on RG's website titled *Russkoe oruzhie* (Russian weaponry). The choice of the adjective *russkoe*, which denotes ethnic Russian, over the more inclusive and imperial *rossiiskoe* reflected the media and, somewhat less insistently, politicians' association of military prowess and victory with ethnic Russians in particular.

In this discourse, the heroes depicted by the media were almost exclusively culturally Russian. This emphasis was partly inherited from the Soviet Union, most obviously from the retelling of the Great Patriotic War as a primarily Russian victory (Brandenberger 2002, 118–19; 144–45). Although the media stressed the Soviet legacy at all times, this was portrayed as an inheritance that belonged to, and was being claimed by, Russia:

The tu160 [...] has been upsetting the West for many years now (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2015b).

'Kalibry' are once more a cause for concern for the military strategists of NATO countries (Kolesnichenko 2015).

During the operation, the Russian BDK, PROJECT 775, originally built in Poland on the order of the VMF USSR [...] demonstrated its eminent reliability. The ships from the 1171 project of Soviet construction in the 1960s didn't lag too far behind them either (Kramnik 2015).

Americans in panic: Russia demonstrated its new underwater 'Kuzma's mother' (Baranets 2015).⁶⁰

Most often, such examples were subtler; for example, the media would introduce a weapon as a new modification of a Soviet creation (Ptichkin 2015b; 2015a; Gamov 2015a). As such,

⁶⁰ To show someone Kuzma's mother is part of an idiomatic Russian expression meaning to teach them a lesson. It is widely associated with Khrushchev's speech at the UN in 1960.

even if the source's language was not overtly dramatic, it contributed to the sense of continuity between Soviet and Russian weapons and soldiers. By way of example, Lenta described how Russian soldiers, in their leisure time in Syria, sang patriotic songs just like in Soviet times (Lenta 2015g; 2015g).

The Russian media were also happy to emphasise non-military continuities and achievements, such as space exploration, which played an important role in the Cold War Achievements sub-narrative. One such example was Dmitrii Medvedev's Sputnik analogy, in which he compared western shock at Russia's demonstration of strength in Syria and on the world stage with their surprise following the launch of Sputnik:

The Americans are experiencing a trauma that has only one precedent: the launch of the first man-made satellite (Sputnik) from Earth in October 1957. Then America thought that it was wrong about everything. But this self-recrimination resulted in the first man on the moon. Now we're not talking about the moon but about diplomats and intelligence services taking decisions in a situation where a military machine, never before seen in action, has emerged with new types of weapons, whose creation Vladimir Putin insisted upon despite the destructive [economic] crisis from the fall of oil prices (Kuz'min 2015).

The final line of the above quotation betrayed a concern with domestic policy in this otherwise very outward-focussed discourse. It contained a justification of Vladimir Putin's handling of the economy, recalling an idea also articulated by Nikolai Starikov elsewhere during the research period: namely, that Russians will sacrifice a full stomach for great power status (Sapozhnikova 2015a).

This sub-narrative had the strongest tones of messianism of all three themes. In this, it continued the logic of the Sanctions discourse, according to which many of the bad things

that had happened since 1991 had occurred precisely because the USSR collapsed, although this discourse stressed the end of the Cold War as much as the end of the USSR. Russia's return to the world stage and resumption of Soviet rights and, it was argued, would rebalance the world; for example, Anna Fedyakina of RG claimed that Russian intervention in Syria 'somewhat recalls what happened in the Cold War when a balance existed between the USSR and USA on which it was possible to act' (Fedyakina 2015a).

Politicians and media sources emphasised how the Soviet education system and children's movements were being restored, as with the founding of the Russian Schoolchildren's Movement in 2015, which was presented as a revival of the Soviet pioneers (Konyukhova 2015). The connection between these educational endeavours and events in Syria was two-fold: first, these initiatives would form patriotic well-educated children ready and willing to serve their homeland militarily; second, the two topics connected within a broader discourse of Soviet/Russian soft power (especially in the Middle East) in which the Soviet/Russian education system played a crucial role in creating pro-Russian people around the world.

For example, pro-Assad Syrians were presented as Russian allies formed in the Soviet Union:

The assistant to Syria's economy minister, Hayan Suleiman, in excellent Russian offers us '100 grams for victory' [...] We ask him if he studied in Russia. [He replied] 'in the USSR, in Kiev [...] More than 200 relatives of mine have died at the front. But we don't cry. We learnt this in your country, from Russians (*russkie*). Your attitude to those who have fallen in your land: Leningrad, Stalingrad. I know very well what sort of cities they are' (Kots and Steshin 2015).

The people of Syria were often quoted to support claims of Russian and Soviet soft power reach, defined here as the ability to attract, influence, and build networks with foreign populations through cultural and other non-military attributes. For example, the media and government cited the importance of the Soviet legacy to improving Russia's standing:

I will mention yet another effective weapon that we have in our arsenal. That's 'the Russian [*russkii*] potential'. The USSR in its day prepared almost 600,000 international specialists, very many of whom were from Syria, Iraq [...] therefore we have quite a few supporters (Korotchenko 2015).

The teenagers constantly wanted to take selfies with Russian journalists and ceaselessly shouted 'Shukran Russi! Shukran Putin!'. Disentangling oneself from them was difficult but necessary, especially as we heard Russian nearby... Arus Mohammad, who almost forty years ago finished Kharkov polytechnic.⁶¹ Now he is a Doctor of Philosophy, he heads the association of graduates of Soviet universities. By the way, there are more than 7,000 such people in Syria (Gavrilov 2015) .

This invocation of Russian speakers built on the Sanctions discourse, when the idea of Russianness became more inclusive, opened up to those with a shared experience of Soviet culture and education (even if it was in Ukraine, not Russia, as above), or the Russian language.

Long-standing alliances were also used to justify Russian military intervention; for example, in an article entitled 'Why is Russia in Syria?', AiF quoted political scientist Sergei Grinyaev as saying: 'This country has been our ally since the times of the USSR' (Argumenty i fakty 2015d). The pro-Russian alliances emphasised by the media were almost always remnants of Soviet alliances and ideological sympathies, eclectically spanning Jeremy

⁶¹ Russian spelling reflects the speaker's choice of language.

Corbyn, Jordan, and Vietnam (Lenta 2015e; Zamakhina 2015; Zubkov 2015). The central aspect of this sub-narrative was its insistence that Russia was enjoying the benefits of Soviet-era alliances constructed through Soviet soft power. The media emphasised the longevity of diplomatic links, placing particular emphasis on well-known allies of the USSR, such as Cuba, said to be ‘once more by our side’ (Borisov 2015). However, naturally the sources mainly emphasised the longevity and durability of the Russian alliance with Syria (Lenta 2015f), depicting Russia as continuing the USSR’s role of protector of Syria (Alekhina 2015a). This messianic interpretation of Russia’s role was a much more pronounced element of the media’s discursive construction of identity through historical framing by 2015. The coming chapter provides a detailed analysis of how this and other features developed across the case studies.

Chapter Seven: Defining and Positioning Historical Framing

Across the historical framing case studies analysed in Chapters Four through Six, the media and politicians applied similar discursive practices to conflate contemporary events with a highly selective interpretation of history. I have described this practice as historical framing because it involved the media overtly and repetitively invoking an historical episode as the schema (point of comparison) through which to interpret a contemporary event. Rather than employ history as a brief analogy, users of historical framing focussed on demonstrating, in a detailed and intense way, both the repetition (*povtorenie*) and repeatability (*povtoryaemost'*) of the historical event in the present. There was also a causal element: they argued that a present event was evolving in a certain way *because* that was how a past event (functioning as a precedent) developed.

My definition of historical framing derived from a holistic examination of all three historical framing case studies. In this chapter, I elaborate upon this definition by outlining the features common to all three discourses. I argue that the recurrence of certain key features makes it possible to talk of a broader overarching historical framing technique, or set of techniques, used by Russian politicians and the media. Although not unique to historical framing, these features all contribute to the temporal conflation that is the ultimate purpose of historical framing.

I first address the manner in which the media inculcated the narrative by examining the incessant repetition of the historical framing schema before considering tone and personalisation of language. I then investigate more sophisticated devices, such as hyper-representation, the use of fake experts, and historical falsification. The media employed these and other techniques to blur the line between real and fake, often using false narratives and evidence to legitimise the Russian government's view. By compiling a list of historical framing 'features', I intend to provide a workable definition that can be used in, and applied

to, other circumstances to identify historical framing. Then, in the latter half of this chapter, I shift my focus from technique to content as I examine how historical framing intersects and overlaps with other prominent narratives in Russian political discourse during Putin's third term. By examining the most significant points of intersection with other key narratives, I hope to support my argument that historical framing belongs and contributes to a wider official narrative on Russian politics, the state, geopolitics, and Russian identity.

The Key Features of Historical Framing

Inculcating the Historical Framing Narratives

When applying historical framing, the media and politicians frequently borrowed from the language of the late Soviet period in their use of repetition and set phrases, including the near-precise recitation of whole chunks of language or 'templates' (Gorham 2016; Yurchak 2006, 63). In the USSR, this replication reflected the Soviet media's alienation from constative reality; however, its use in RG or KP in 2014-2015 was an attempt to alienate audiences from interpretations of the Euromaidan, Syria or Sanctions that opposed the Russian government's view. The media's repetitive and restricted field of historical reference also built on more recent trends identified by academics working on Russian media, where coverage of limited subjects with recurrent motifs has been described as a defining characteristic of the news agenda (Stent 2013, 112).

Frequently repeated conflation of the past (schema) with the present (news event) constituted the main, and most basic, technique necessary to identify historical framing. In all three case studies, a high level of repetition of historical comparison continued for at least two months, with all sources consistently detailing the supposed replaying of history. Beyond repeating the same keywords, sources - particularly the government, RG and KP - reiterated near-identical phrases, as in the examples from the Sanctions discourse below:

Having pronounced their victory in the ‘Cold War’ (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2014d).

The so-called ‘victors’ in the Cold War had decided to pressure events (Prezident Rossii 2014a).

The victors, in quotation marks, in the Cold War (Chigishov 2014n 34.17).

A more frequent media technique, especially in KP, was to contextualise new articles by including lengthy extracts from earlier pieces (Mazur 2014). In a similar vein, RG inserted whole sections of related earlier articles into coverage (Zabrodina 2014a; 2014b; Domcheva 2014; Zubkov 2014; Vorob’ev 2014c; 2014b). This embrace of wholesale repetition occurred across all three case studies but was especially notable in the Syria case study. By way of example, KP would reprint entire articles unchanged, as with Yuliya Alekhina’s panegyric to the wife of Bashar Assad, repeated in the newspaper on the 21st and 30th September issues, which presented the Assads and Syrians as pro-Russian, even Soviet, people (Alekhina 2015a; 2015b).

The sources adapted their repetition to the development of events. As noted in the case study analysis, the media and politicians’ references to the schema were often more frequent and more dramatic at those times when events on the ground or objective reality threatened to delegitimise the Russian version of events. By contrast, analysis of the media’s use of historical framing references, tracked by date, show that they reduced their use of historical framing when events were going the government’s way. The media and politicians often accompanied such shifts with a change in tone so that the increased volume of references was accompanied by more heated and militaristic rhetoric. For example, in the Ukraine discourse, the week ending 23rd March 2014 (following the annexation of Crimea) saw a sustained decrease in overall references in most sources, where it was also mirrored by a less hortatory style of rhetoric (Chigishov 2014d 03.54).

In the media's coverage of Sanctions, a less heated tone accompanied a decrease in references in early September, when the government appeared to expect the removal of sanctions. Conversely, the media would often escalate the historical narrative when events took an unfavourable turn. When the West did not remove sanctions in September 2014, as some sources had anticipated, the media and politicians reprised the frame and only the most dramatic comparisons to the Cold War now sufficed, as expressed by Sergei Lavrov:

Question: Is it possible to compare this situation with the 1980s?

Lavrov: There wasn't any of this then.

Question: So, the situation now is worse?

Lavrov: Perhaps. There has only been anything like it once before – when the USA decided to boycott the USSR Olympics (MID 2014d).

The hyperbole of this claim was typical of politicians' statements when they were reprising the historical framing narrative in reaction to external events.

The narrative structure of each of the case studies also performed, to varying degrees, a reiterative purpose, whereby the media emplotted events in such a way as to reinforce the historical frame's main argument. Although the structural sequencing of the frames varied, in each case it reiterated the content, showing the importance of not only rhetoric and content, but also plot, to conveying meaning (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997). The resulting structural reinforcement of the narrative assumed different forms in each discourse, however. In the Sanctions case study, all sources arranged the sub-narratives in an approximate reverse chronological order: thus, the first point of comparison was the 1990s, followed by the Soviet collapse, and then the Brezhnev era. This inversion reinforced the underlying argument of the overall historical frame, namely that Russia was undoing the legacy of the humiliating 1990s and symbolically returning to an era of greater geopolitical might.

The media's structuring of events also needed to take into consideration developments in the real world. In the Syria discourse, the chaotic and unpredictable nature of events in Syria and on the world stage meant that two sub-narratives competed simultaneously, whereas in the other two case studies each sub-narrative had a distinct period in which the media referenced it more than the other themes. The two sub-narratives were points of comparison from a similar chronological period (the early to middle part of the Cold War) and were selected depending on whether events went Russia's way or not. If the former, then sources would present Russia as a world leader, like the USSR; if the latter, then it would paint the USA in its Cold War enemy image, thwarting Russia at every turn. Naturally, the two sub-narratives complemented one another.

Consequently, the structuring of the schema was integral to historical framing in that the media used it to reinforce the broader moral of the narrative; however, it was only in the Ukraine discourse that chronological mirroring was used. I have created this term to reflect the fact that contemporary events in Ukraine were compared with the GPW in chronological order. Most sources (but not the government or Lenta) emulated events in such a way as to repeat and heighten the conflation achieved by the content of the historical frame. Consequently, as detailed in Chapter Four, the media's description of both the schema and news event had the following structure: first there were internal enemies, then the development of Nazism, then fighting and war, followed by eventual victory. In this way, the schema evolved along the same narrative template as the Great Patriotic War, making the comparison and conflation appear more logical and credible to the audience.

Blurring reality: Hyper-, Mis-, and False Representation

The use of structural repetition to reinforce verbal repetition reflected the multi-faceted and innovative nature of the media's use of historical framing. Although my research into historical framing takes the form of a discourse analysis of narrative construction,

performance and visual culture were also key to the functioning of historical framing. Thus, the media and politicians' use of symbols and rituals were an important feature, with sources adapting elements from commemorative practice in their use of historical framing, most evidently in their simultaneous emphasis on the symbolic meaning of history and its application to contemporary events.

Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova have identified how Russian television mimicked the past through cumulative rather than subtractive editing of their 2005 Victory Day coverage, into which historical interludes were continually inserted (Hutchings and Rulyova 2009). A similar editing approach was reprised during all three case studies, resulting in what I term *hyper-representation*. This was the insertion of 'real' historical footage into media coverage that already contained a historical framing reference. This was primarily a televisual technique, in which direct comparisons were buttressed with montages of past and present to blur the two in the audience's mind.

Hyper-representation created a false image of reality, making it difficult to disentangle the real or current event from the comparison. This technique built on the practice of collapsing of the past, whereby past events are emphasised as part of a perpetual present (Hoskins 2004). However, in historical framing, the objective of conflating the past, or schema, with the present news event was not aimed at immersing the viewer in the past so much as at making the past relevant to current events. Given that it was a means of repeating the same message in two formats, hyper-representation was one of a number of examples in which the media employed remediation techniques by combining features from Soviet-era media, such as repetitive phrasing and template text, with innovative forms of montage, drawing on the opportunities provided by technological developments (Erll and Rigney 2012, 4–5).

Hyper-representation facilitated the identification of the ‘representing screen’, or the schema, with its ‘represented double’, the current event (Hutchings and Rulyova 2009). By way of example, on 30th March 2014, VN merged footage of Pravyi Sektor occupying factories in Zaporizhzhia into historical footage of the GPW, with the accompanying commentary explaining that ‘Zaporozhye was occupied by fascists’ during the GPW (Chigishov 2014f 59.16). The oral and the visual reference thus reinforced one another. The dominance of television⁶² in this attempt to persuade viewers of the historical frame was not coincidental, given that visual images are ‘excellent in creating a sense of mythic reality and verisimilitude [...] hard to check against other experiences’ (Schöpflin 2000, 85). Television also allowed for the use of montage, which encouraged the audience to reach the correct interpretation by supplying a series of associative images (Bordwell 1972).

The televisual media used editing, montage, and image association to collapse the temporal distance between the present and the past, thereby actualising the past and bringing modern audiences closer to it as a reality. This editing of images reinforced even more explicit historical framing messages, such as the insertion of a nostalgic Soviet war film into footage of protesters in Slovyansk who were bedecked in St George Ribbons (Chigishov 2014c 38.40). Elsewhere, *Voskresnoe vremya* and *Vesti nedeli* would follow stories on ATO⁶³ or pro-Russian protests with segments on, for example, the Volhynian massacre, or the Soviet liberation of Nazi-occupied Crimea (Korolev 2014b 56.30).

While hyper-representation was most prominent in the Ukraine episode, it was found in all three case studies. On 17th August 2014, footage taken from the late Cold War era accompanied Evgenii Popov’s explanation of how Sanctions were merely a repeat of

⁶² Although hyper-representation can occur in textual form it would only be in reference to an activity – as opposed to mere description. Moreover, the examples I encountered were less striking than television, hence only the latter is discussed here

⁶³ A reminder that ATO stands for anti-terrorist operations led by the Ukrainian army and militias against Russian-backed separatists, Russian regular forces, and Russian mercenaries/volunteers.

American attempts to destroy the USSR (Chigishov 2014k 1.32.51). The historical footage then merged into coverage of contemporary disagreements between Russia and the West. Another example, this time from VV coverage of Syria, illustrated the oft-cited argument that Russian intervention in Syria enabled a return to the more equal global balance during the Cold War. While the correspondent explained that the USA's position on Syria was symptomatic of its Cold War enmity towards the USSR, the camera then also cut to footage from this historical period, including of the Iranian Revolution, which they explained as a failure of US foreign policy against the USSR. VV then equally unexpectedly moved to footage of a contemporary German television show, which mocked American ignorance of Middle East affairs and blamed this for the creation of ISIS (Korolev 2015 55.00). The dizzying shift between time spans and arguments made it hard for the viewer to focus on the logic (or lack of it) in the argument; instead the overriding impression was one of historical continuity between the USA's past and present foreign policy mistakes.

At its core, hyper-representation bombarded the viewer with images that confused their sense of time and their appreciation of the subject matter. The visual intensity of the quick succession of images would have enhanced the impact of the message; hence, the importance of the audio-visual to nationalist mythmaking. The intensity also distracted viewers from the lack of any real connection between the images, to encourage unfounded associations between events regardless of whether they were similar or related. The media's efforts to present unrelated events as part of a pattern of historical behaviour, and to justify the concept of history as a cycle, was a means of legitimising the specific historical frame but also the use of historical framing more generally. Hyper-representation was often a form of misrepresentation, sometimes minor and sometimes major.

The media's frequent use of external contributors also often resulted in misrepresentation, largely because the expertise or objectivity of the contributors was

misconstrued. Most sources made liberal use of external contributors, understood here to mean commentators or documents originating outside the source. External contributors were used as a legitimising device to enhance the authority behind the frame and demonstrate support for the comparisons and lessons invoked by the frame. Almost all external contributors could be placed into one of four groups: locals/contemporaries, experts, westerners, polls/archives.

Locals and contemporaries included people whose location or age gave them privileged insight into the content of the frame; for example, Syrian military men who had studied in the Soviet Union or local inhabitants of separatist areas in East Ukraine. Local inhabitants were frequently anonymised, especially in the case of the ‘Ukrainian’ separatist militias (Ivashkina 2014a). External contributors’ interpretation of events was often more dramatic and conspiratorial than that of the general Russian media, making the latter seem comparatively calm, as when local inhabitants told a VN correspondent that Maidan supporters had planned the Odesa fire and were now using violent means to cover up their crimes, including gassing the survivors.⁶⁴ The media cited locals/contemporaries in all studies but they were most prevalent in coverage of Ukraine, perhaps in reaction to accusations of fake news against Russia and the latter’s engagement in information warfare with Ukraine and the West.

This group also included veterans or their families, a valuable resource in the Ukraine case study in particular. Given the time that had passed since the GPW, there was a scarcity of veterans from that conflict; hence, children and grandchildren of veterans were used to express outrage at the dismantling and rewriting of the victory won by their ‘fathers’, ‘grandfathers’ or ‘great-grandfathers’ (Chinkova 2014). In the Sanctions case study, this

⁶⁴ This unsubstantiated claim recalls the media and politicians’ frequent references throughout to the Ukrainian falsification and destruction of memory.

personal aspect was delivered by journalists, who confided their own stories of the turbulent 1990s. This inclusivity encouraged a personal response from the audience in recognition of their shared historical and cultural legacy with the residents of Eastern Ukraine, the author, or even with potential former classmates, like the Soviet educated Syrians who featured prominently in coverage of the 2015 intervention. Such personalisation was an implicit recognition of the need to present the government as being in tune with a patriotic *narodnyi* (popular) spirit, also seen in the confected use of ‘voices from the street’ (Darczewska 2014). Anyone who was well-dressed or conventional expressed pro-government views while the few dissenting voices tended to belong to unkempt and unusual people.

The second type of external contributor included what I loosely term ‘experts’, here defined as people the media presented as experts rather than actual authorities in their field. Many of the experts’ credentials were questionable especially in the field they were discussing (primarily history). There were some genuine academics, members of think tanks, politicians, and historians; for example, Evgenii Satanovskii and Fedor Luk’yanov were frequent contributors to numerous sources (Fedyakina 2015b; Luk’yanov 2015a; 2015b). The media employed such figures to provide evidence for theories and privileged insight through their expertise. They invariably agreed with the government position and were typified by a haughty tone that cast alternative views as absurdities (Dynkin and Burrows 2015). Although referenced throughout, experts were far more prominent than any other type of external contributor in the Syria case study, most likely in connection with the complexity of the political and military situation in that country.

The use of (mostly) unknowledgeable experts reflected a broader political embrace of – and arguably preference for – amateurism in relation to history. This phenomenon emerged not only in the case studies but also in museums and exhibitions (see pages 225-229 of this thesis). Nowhere was this more apparent for external contributors than in the almost complete

lack of historians (that is, trained academics) offering their views on the historical analogies. Instead this role was assumed by people without an academic background in history but with very convenient political views. By way of example, one of the two most quoted ‘experts’ on history, conservative think tank leader, Natalie Narochnitskaya, was not a historian by education. The other, Vladimir Medinskii, has dubious credentials in terms of his academic credibility as a historian, including a plagiarised dissertation (Meduza 2016). The lack of expertise among selected ‘experts’ reflected the fact that the media and government were not interested in increasing the audience’s impartial or objective historical knowledge but rather in encouraging them to interpret and contextualise government actions through an amalgamation of heroic and traumatic historical episodes. The few actual professional historians who spoke to the media did little to burnish their professional reputation, often distorting or ignoring facts (Markedonov 2014).

The media frequently used anti-Western commentators from Western countries, sometimes journalists or celebrities but also unknown people, who had no particular insight to add: for example, a random Canadian student (Azaeva 2014). Other examples included tax-refugee Gerard Depardieu’s criticisms of US nuclear policy (Pleshakova 2015). The name recognition of Western commentators was much higher in the Syria episode than in the 2014 case studies, with contributions from Frederick Forsyth, Roger Stone, Oliver Stone, and political figures, such as Congressman Brad Sherman and PR specialist Ronn Torossian. As such, the media agencies had less need to resort to misrepresentation of these people’s status. Those Westerners (famous or not) cited by the media were almost always undermining their own country’s opposition to Russia, helping the media to create a skewed impression of levels of support for the Kremlin among Western populations (Chigishov 2014e 24.55).

The sources especially liked quoting foreigners who admired Vladimir Putin’s or Russia’s knowledge of history. RG interviewed Ivan Bleu, a French political scientist, who

argued that ‘Vladimir Putin knows history well, something, alas, that few state actors in the West can boast’ (Prokof’ev 2015). This was part of a broader attempt to present President Putin and Russia as the subject of admiration and envy in the West for their awareness of historical truth, which also enabled Russia(ns) to understand political events in the present (see pages 242-260 of this thesis for more details on this topic). Many sources - the government, KP, RG, VN, VV - also attempted to find convenient allies among peoples who shared Russia’s current or historical rivalries. This met with varying levels of success; for example, there were numerous unsuccessful attempts to set Poles against Ukrainians by re-igniting historical grievances (Gamov 2014a; E. Chernykh 2014). The media also frequently interviewed Jewish Ukrainians and Rabbis willing to draw parallels between the Nazis and the new Ukrainian government (Ivashkina 2014b).

Journalists and politicians also used archives and polls conducted by Russian media and survey organisations, as well as speakers. The media included historical documents and footage as supposedly objective evidence to support the narratives. By way of example, VV compared a Nazi propaganda sheet to Ukrainian instructions for frontline territories, going through each line to detail similarities and placing the two images next to each other to imply similarity when actually the two documents shared very little in common (Korolev 2014c 10.00). The media also referenced archival documents, many of which were newly released by the government and concerned Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian collaborators, and the Nazi occupation of Ukraine (Nikitin 2014). The carefully timed releases of archival evidence by the government merged historical fact with present propaganda. This type of evidence was much more popular in coverage of the Ukraine Crisis, with the media making very few such references in the Sanctions or Syria case studies.

The sources varied in their preference for, and use of, external contributors. All the print/internet media sources used external contributors and/or contributions in thirty to forty

percent of their references (calculated by noting the source or communicator of each keyword or phrase that referenced the historical frame). Interestingly, this figure is similar regardless of the ‘tone’ of the source, with the use of external contributors an important means of invoking authority and legitimacy for KP and AiF alike. The television broadcast shows, however, used external contributors for between five and ten per cent of references with presenters delivering most of the historical frame references personally, using their position of authority and reflecting the more personality-centric nature of the format. The government’s near avoidance of external contributors (fewer than five per cent of references) reflected its position as ultimate authority in Russia. The government only referred to external contributors in the Syrian discourse, where it almost exclusively invoked foreigners. Specifically, they mentioned locals (Syrians) citing their experience or people in the West who now supported Russia. Across all sources, except for the government, the most popular external contributor or contribution type was experts, followed by westerners, locals, and then polls.

The main purpose of such a pronounced use of external contributors was to provide a diversity of voices to camouflage the lack of a diversity of views in such a controlled media environment as Russia. Instead of providing both for and *against*, there was a range of different voices presenting the same argument, creating an illusion of the polyphony of democratic discussion, without the disagreement. External contributors thus reflect a further tightening of authoritarianism from the ‘managed pluralism’ more typical of Putin’s earlier presidential terms (Balzer 2003). The reduced space for alternative views was also reflected in the deceptive use of language around external contributors, who were implied to be offering alternative views to the media source, even when clearly this was not the case.

The media also applied more prosaic techniques to blur the line between fact and fiction, such as turning traditional media devices on their head: for example, in their use of

‘distance markers’ (Fairclough 1995, 42). Traditionally used in discourse analysis to describe the act of distancing oneself from the claims to truth advanced by others, these are quotation marks and phrases such as ‘allegedly’, ‘according to’, etc. which underscore the difference between the newsreader’s view and the view they quote. In Russian media, distance markers were used for people who were expressing highly similar if not identical views to the newsreader. In this way, they applied a technique from Western media (where it is ironically often used to discredit those with alternative views) and inverted it to give the impression of difference and variety of opinion, when in fact there was no such diversity (Riggins 1997, 11).

As such, the media’s use of external contributors and contributions often involved a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts, whether through ‘distance markers’ or exaggerating the prestige of a contributor. On other occasions, the media’s use of historical framing involved more overtly false representations, including outright lies. Falsified materials or lies were often voiced by external contributors or cited from documents. The media used documents and archives in particular to divert attention from the media and government’s consistent falsification of history and of current events. Despite their constant criticism of other countries’ ignorance or even revisionism of history, Russian media was very prone to historical falsification itself. Distorting historical fact was frequently a means for the media or politicians to achieve the conflationary objective of historical framing. Noteworthy and/or especially bemusing historical distortions or falsifications included the following claims:

- The ingrate Baltic States greatly benefitted from the USSR at Russia’s expense (Polupanov 2014).
- The USSR’s ‘radically anti-war’ stance and pacifism had a nefarious effect on the Soviet military (Lenta 08.092014).

- Yeltsin and the USA expelled Ukraine from the USSR against its wishes (Gamov 2014c).
- The USA calls World War Two ‘the American-Romanian victory over fascism’ (Chigishov 2015i 1.18.13)
- Poland did not care about their soldiers or civilians who were killed by the Nazis; they only cared about the officers shot at Katyn (Starikov 2015c).

This was just a small selection of the dozens of historical falsifications and exaggerations that contributed to a narrative of kindly Russia/USSR being continuously manipulated, exploited and undervalued.⁶⁵ Through their readiness to distort history, the sources’ disinformation reinvigorated unifying national myths – and old resentments – to facilitate the construction of a usable past and coherent national identity (Nesbitt-Larking and McAuley 2017).

Some academics and practitioners have argued that Russia’s sharp reaction to the emergence of competing versions of the past was merely a response to the intense nationalisation of history seen in Eastern Europe (Kryuchkov and Tabachnyk 2008; Pakhalyuk 2018c; Luk’yanov 2016). Alternatively, it could be argued that by presenting historical falsification as a significant cause of the Ukraine Crisis/sanctions/ Syria, Russian media and politicians distracted the population from underlying reasons for various crises, many of which were also present in Russian politics and society (Zamakhina 2014b; Prezident Rossii 2014h; 2014b). Either way, true historical awareness was not the purpose of historical framing, which aimed not to inform audiences but to excite their emotions.

Tone and Styles of Rhetoric

One of the most obvious ways in which the media and politicians used history to appeal to emotions was by employing emotive language. In this section, I first provide a general

⁶⁵ For a more detailed outline of this point of view, please see: (Mettan 2017; Tsygankov 2009)

typology of the main variants of tone employed in the historical framing case studies. All the sources used a dramatic and hyperbolic tone and language in employing the historical frame; however, there were important distinctions in the extent and frequency with which they did so. After comparing the levels of hyperbole between sources, I examine rhetorical commonalities between sources; namely, the use of personalised and affective language and the conspiratorial tone of many news items.

It was difficult to delineate differences in approach between Russian state media when they were all attempting to inculcate a version of news and history largely divorced from reality. To achieve a meaningful distinction, I analysed the tone and style of rhetoric employed by each source in each discourse using F.G. Bailey’s typology (1981). This categorisation divides mnemonic discussions into logical reasoning, deliberative rhetoric and hortatory rhetoric. I adapted the terms to Russian state media so as to emphasise the differences in approach between sources. I define hortatory as hysterical, aggressive, and entirely one-sided coverage. Deliberative rhetoric entailed providing some evidence and was less heated, albeit one-sided; for example, in the Syria discourse, VN and the government employed multiple claims, counter-claims and examples to distract audiences from Western accusations.⁶⁶ Ostensibly logical reasoning provided more balance, was calmer and offered an alternative view (without completely deriding it). Table 12 summarises the differences in source tone across each case study:

| Discourse | Overall | Hortatory | Deliberative | Logical |
|------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| UC ⁶⁷ | Hortatory | KP, VN, (RG, GOV) ⁶⁸ | (RG, GOV) VV | VV, AIF |
| Sanctions | Hortatory | KP, VN, RG, Gov | VV | AIF, Lenta |
| Syria | Deliberative | VN, RG, Gov | VV, KP | AIF, Lenta |

⁶⁶ This technique is prevalent in Russian-funded disinformation campaigns abroad: see <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>

⁶⁷ Lenta is not included because the editorial board were sacked for providing balanced coverage of the UC.

⁶⁸ RG and the government were relatively evenly split between these two types

Table 12. Table demonstrating tone and style of rhetoric by case study and source

As demonstrated above, it was unusual for sources to change rhetorical approach and most retained their style across all three case study discourses. However, the slight differentiations in newspaper tone could also contribute to a false sense of variety. For example, overall, VN was relatively aggressive while Lenta was circumspect; however, the findings show that Lenta made more references to the historical frame than VN, it simply described them in a more restrained tone.

Beyond F.G. Bailey's typology, it is important to note that the tone employed depended on the purpose of the discourse itself: in the Syria episode the media and politicians replaced the highly defensive tone, typical of the UC and Sanctions coverage, with self-congratulatory gloating as they sought to present Russia asserting rather than defending itself (Kazun 2016). The 'counter-rhetoric of hysteria', or the hysterical justifications of Russian actions exclusively within terms of self-defence, was part of the media's presentation of Russia as a victim, unfairly attacked by revived Nazis and the cruel West (Pasitselska 2017). In 2014 this tone helped to shift blame from the government for events in Ukraine, Russia's isolated global position, and the economic shocks associated with sanctions. However, by 2015 a new approach was needed: one that characterised Russia as assertive. As such, the transfer from a highly emotive, conspiratorial tone in 2014 to one of bombast and messianism in 2015 mirrored a change in how the media positioned the government's actions as well as an evolution in Russia's role on the world stage. The increasingly messianic depiction of Russian identity was a clear link between historical framing and the government's strategy to intensify the significance of history to national identity

While these are significant differentiations, more often than not the sources employed incredibly similar tones and techniques to underscore the relevance of historical narrative to

national and individual identity. For example, in each case study, the sources often used a highly personalised tone during their discussions of history. This was an important technique for underscoring the relevance of history not only to present-day events but also to the viewer themselves. The personalisation of language ('we', 'our') in the narratives frequently extended into the familial ('our fathers', 'our grandfathers') and the primordial. The latter could even include graveyard visits and talk of 'our ancestors', 'heirs to' (villains or heroes as appropriate), 'offspring of veterans' (Filmoshkina 2014; Mironov 2014; Korolev 2014d 22.54). Through this rhetorical device, the media sought to foster a sense of national cohesion against the Maidan/Sanctions/the West by emphasising the personal and the familial: 'our memory has been given to us by our parents, grandmothers and grandfathers. So, we know what really happened in the Great Patriotic War' (Grishin 2014f). As demonstrated in the quotation above, the media achieved this with particular effect in the UC, where the media presented the Euromaidan protests as an assault on the truth of – and people's personal connection to – the GPW.⁶⁹

By engaging with a more personal, or communicative,⁷⁰ form of memory, there was a recognition by the Russian media and government that memory and patriotism were not exclusively top-down. They also sought to demonstrate that ordinary people supported the media's argument that history was being replayed (Poklonskaya 2014; Vorob'ev 2014a). The purpose of such emotivity also served as a constant reiteration that there was a 'them' and an 'us'. It asked the audience to take sides between two clear binary opposites: the villains of today (merged with past incarnations) and the heroic Russians merged with past legends.

⁶⁹ The topic of the GPW has inevitably always been an emotional one and this emotivity has been embraced and exacerbated since the Brezhnev era. In recent years it has frequently been referred to as 'the holiday with tears in its eyes'

⁷⁰ Jan Assman contrasts 'communicative' memory, which is shared and conveyed within a social group, to 'cultural' memory, which is detached from personal experience of the event being remembered (Assman 2011)

Personalised rhetoric was especially prominent in KP, VN, VV and AIF and in the Ukraine Crisis and Sanctions case studies. In coverage of the latter episode, many journalists offered unusually personal insights into their troubled experiences of the 1990s, with food assuming a prominent and emotive role:

I remember how for weeks I ate pearl barley fried in the crackling of old yellow lard, hard like a paraffin candle (Steshin 2014). We remembered with sadness 1990 and the hamburger as a mark of achieving western civilisation.... finally, that same Soviet ice cream -made to state standards - was killed (Skoibeda 2014b).

As well as bringing the author and/or publication closer to the reader by emphasising (presumed) shared experiences for certain generations, highly personalised stories delineated the divide between those who suffered and those who profited during the 1990s (Arsyukhin 2014a). This pain was exacerbated by invoking memories of Soviet food privatised following the collapse, as in the AIF infographic in Figure 17 below:⁷¹

⁷¹ The headline asks 'Soviet taste. What happened to the famous products from our childhood?' before outlining a brief history of the products and how they had been privatised or modified.



Figure 17. Infographic by Anna Karitonovaya for AiF

Some of the techniques employed to elicit an emotional response could also be extremely insensitive. By way of example, VV used dramatic music and highly distressing images, including close-ups of dead bodies, to accentuate the message of their historical framing narrative (Korolev 2014c 08.28; 2014d 15.11).

Politicians especially liked to combine crass or simplistic references directly with personalised language. In the Syria study, Putin explained his foreign policy approach was based on a principle he had learnt fifty years earlier, when the Leningrad streets had taught him to hit before someone hit him (Smirnov 2015b). Such language created an image of the President as tough and of the people, reiterating his authenticity and sincerity (Zhurzhenko 2018). Personalised rhetorical flourishes were also a means for the government and media to inspire and guide street-level patriotism by encouraging nostalgia and emphasising the personal consequences of state collapse, thereby blurring the boundaries between the state and the individual.

In conflating the state and the individual, the sources rendered politicians symbols of the people. This was one of several devices used by media and politicians to expedite control of cultural memory. The sources' other techniques included trying to present their interventions as in harmony with a wider societal move to reclaim historical memory. Thus, by depicting President Putin's historical memory policies as a defence of the individual experiences of the Russian people and of Russian identity, the media contributed to a sense of Russia's memory boom being a 'bottom up' phenomenon. It also created a populist sense of the leader's unity with his people, increasing Putin's charismatic legitimacy (Weber 1958). This legitimacy was further facilitated by the conspiratorial tone of Russian political discourse, which contrasted the 'people' or 'majority' to shadowy external enemies, and those they allegedly fund in Russia. Ilya Yablokov shows how such depictions, and Russian conspiratorial news in general, were aimed at cohering the nation behind its leader (Yablokov 2017).

Domestic Russian media and, to a lesser extent, the government, offered numerous conspiracies as explanations for events not going the Kremlin's way. This included the claim that *Pravyi Sektor* wore St George Ribbons to start provocations that would then be blamed on separatists, as well as the notion that Ukraine had downed MH17 believing it was Putin's private jet (Grishin 2014c; Pokrovskii 2019). Within the specific context of historical framing, the media sometimes gave such conspiracies a subtext of amnesia, as with the claim that Ukrainian nationalists used a gas on the Trade Union protestors to destroy their memory (Chigishov 2014h 57.00). This theory evoked interesting parallels with the media's argument that the Ukrainians were intent on destroying the memory of the GPW (Gamov 2014b; Likhomanov 2014a; Novoselova 2014a): in both arguments, the Ukrainian authorities are trying to destroy the memory of the East Ukrainians, whether literally as in Odesa, or figuratively, through the imposition of a new memory culture. In the Syria case study, the

media coverage also abounded in outlandish conspiracies, from the idea that the USA dictated Europe's every move to the bizarre idea that ISIS were Jewish-backed (Lenta 2015i).

In addition to deflecting attention from an unfortunate turn of events, or from Russian culpability for crimes, these conspiracies contributed to the mobilisational force of historical framing. Such conspiracies were part of the media and politicians' broader attempt to depict Russia and Putin as victims of an unfair global order, dominated by the USA and West. This fed a populist narrative in which Putin represented the people (*narod*) of his own country and, in doing so, appealed to the people of other nations; hence, foreign governments felt the need to fight against him. This particular aspect of media coverage served as a reminder of the dual purpose of historical framing as a type of political discourse. This dual purpose encompassed both political persuasion and identity construction.

Historical Framing and Overlapping Narratives

Describing his attendance at the parade to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Victory Day, the writer Aleksandr Prokhanov remarked:

I felt happy that in celebrating the Victory of 1945, we are also celebrating the Victory over the dark and seemingly hopeless days of the 1990s. The Russian state has prevailed over the defeat [symbolised by] perestroika and the powerlessness of the 1990s. It has once more raised itself up to its full size and irrepressible height (Prokhanov 2015).

In just a few lines, Prokhanov referenced the three main symbols of each of the historical framing narratives: the legitimacy and importance of the GPW victory, the chaos caused by the lack of a strong state in the 1990s, and the resurgence of the Russian state into a great power. Although I have outlined these case studies separately, there was, of course, considerable overlap between them, with key elements from all three mingling in political

and media discourse. Historical framing also intersected with and drew upon other narratives and motifs in Russian political discourse on similar or related topics, such as historical falsification, internal and external enemies, heroism, and Russian messianism. In this section, I explore how historical framing referenced and utilised some of these narratives, including themes of historical revisionism, othering, everyday heroism, and messianism.

Projecting Historical Falsification

Russian media's increasing proclivity towards conspiracy and falsifying history was ironically accompanied by a growing obsession with the notion that other countries were attacking (the one true Russian) historical memory. As early as 2008, Russia began to pay considerable attention to historical falsification by others, establishing a historical falsification commission and increasing funding in 2009 for historical organisations and commissions to defend 'historical truth' (Rodgers 2009). These actions took place within an Eastern European context that was increasingly concerned with asserting nationalist histories and criminalising alternative memories, including in Poland, Croatia, Ukraine, the Baltic States, Hungary, Slovakia and others.⁷² By the end of 2014, like several of its neighbours, Russia had implemented so-called memory laws (Koposov 2017, 207-212), and a more robust government system for supporting and funding organisations dedicated to defending a certain type of historical memory, including the establishment of a 'military division' to tackle historical distortion (Lenta 2015c).

The intense focus on other countries' alleged or real historical falsification formed an important meta-narrative that the media embedded within their use of historical framing. This meta-narrative legitimised Russia's obsessive invocation of historical parallels by creating the

⁷² There is a very wide literature on the politics of history in each country but some of the more relevant studies to my argument here include the following: (Baranowska and Gliszczyńska-Grabias 2018; Budrytė 2018; Rohdewald 2008; Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2012; Schellenberg 2016; Heideman 2016; Ágh 2016; Bernhard and Kubik 2014; Tomczuk 2016)

impression that Russian historical truth - and by extension Russian national identity - was under threat. When referencing historical falsification, the media most frequently employed the following keywords: ‘rewriting history’, ‘falsification of history’, (learning the) ‘lessons of history’, ‘historical memory’, and ‘rehabilitation of Nazism’. Figure 18 visualises the phrases that appeared a minimum of fourteen times across all three case studies:



Figure 18. Word cloud showing frequent keywords in discussions of historical falsification

There were a range of accusations, with the media mostly directing the harsher allegations against Ukraine and the Baltic nations. Ukrainians were depicted as constantly ‘destroying monuments’ (Shkel’ 2014a) or ‘defiling memorials’ (Chigishov 2015j 14.05), while the Baltic States wanted to ‘roll back history’ completely (Yur’ev 2015).

Claims of historical falsification occupied considerable space, albeit far less than historical framing, with historical falsification only mentioned once for every ten historical framing references. Not all sources embraced this narrative as fully as others, with AiF and Lenta tending to avoid it. The MID certainly engaged with it, especially in 2015, with weekly fulminations against other countries’ alleged mistreatment of the memory of Soviet soldiers

(MID 2015m; 2015i; 2015b; 2015f). The media sources' accusations of historical revisionism supported their use of historical framing; in this way, the accusations functioned as an ancillary device, focussed on the present treatment of history,

Through its present-day focus, the ancillary narrative of historical falsification connected the use of historical analogy to events on the ground, reinforcing its pertinence without overshadowing it, for the most part. By projecting, accurately or otherwise, their own obsession with history and manipulation of historical events onto other countries, Russian media and politicians also sought to demonstrate the necessity of defending 'historical truth' against the alleged obsessive historical falsification of others. This obsession was (ostensibly) fuelled by Russophobia – another key media and political narrative with which historical framing intersected (Darczewska and Żochowski 2015; Sapozhnikova 2015a; Lenta 2015j). Politicians, journalists and public figures presented themselves as defenders of historical justice and truth, repeating variations on the following phrases: 'we will restore historical truth' (Prezident Rossii 2014g), and 'the time has come to revive historical justice' (Chigishov 2014i 17.57). It was not enough for the Kremlin to have a diplomatic or political dispute with someone; the opponent had to be characterised as a Russophobic heir to Russia's historical enemies, seeking to rewrite history to justify their ancestors' past crimes (Prezident Rossii 2014b; Mironov 2014).

In arguing that lack of historical knowledge and disrespect for historical truth had created the problems under discussion, the media and politicians created an entirely different frame of reference for the audience. Thus, they once more diverted audience attention from more relevant and logical explanations for the conflicts: for example, the argument that the Maidan protests mainly targeted nepotism, corruption, human rights violations, and barriers to the rights to free speech and assembly, problems experienced on a similar mass scale in Russia. Likewise, in the Sanctions discourse, the audience was distracted from the reasons for

the EU and USA's introduction of harsher economic measures – the shooting down of a passenger jet by Russian backed militia- thus preventing awkward questions being asked of Kremlin policy in Ukraine. This distraction technique fulfilled an obvious political role of maintaining government legitimacy in the face of policy failure.

Yet, this type of justification covered more than just policy; the notion that history was under attack by Russia's enemies also functioned as a point of intersection for the political and identity objectives embedded within the wider historical framing narrative. As well as proclaiming their superior understanding of history, the media and politicians used it to support the idea that Russian identity was under threat. Given that criticising government policy was already interpreted as a challenge to history, this resulted in the following conflations:

1. Opposing Russian policy (on Ukraine/sanctions/Syria) = challenging Russian memory or 'history' (of the GPW/Soviet collapse and 1990s/post-1945 and CW achievements)
2. Challenging Russian memory of history = rejecting Russian identity

Historical framing reduced current events and Russian identity to little more than an idiosyncratic interpretation of history. By extension, to challenge this history was to reject, and directly threaten, Russian identity. The conversion of an understanding of history into a definition of belonging reiterated that historical framing was a narrative aimed at securitisation, whereby one's position on sanctions, Ukraine or Syria (and their respective historical analogies) became an issue of existential security for the Russian state. This transformation stigmatised the opposition, whose failure to understand history in the correct way was instrumental to their demonisation.

Vilifying the Other

Although the media and politicians sought to cohere Russian audiences around the historical framing narratives (or the historical myths within them), they also relied on an exclusionary element, mobilising audiences against enemies abroad and at home. In this, they could borrow from existing prominent discourses aimed at delegitimising those who opposed the government. The persecution of Memorial and other NGOs as ‘foreign agents’ following the strengthening of the 2012 law had reinforced a wider discourse that presented anyone opposed to the Russian government as a type of ‘enemy in history’. Such people remembered differently to real, patriotic Russians because they had taken the side of the historical enemy (the West/Ukraine/Fascists, etc). So-called oppositionists were frequently castigated for being too negative about Russian history, as when Vladimir Medinskii emphasised the importance of history, and historical consciousness, to the Russian people and contrasted this with oppositionists’ approach to Russian history: ‘that then is why “oppositionists” who criticise our History, statehood or spirituality and so on will never have WIDESPREAD success’ (Radzikhovsky 2015). The capitalisation of the word ‘history’ suggested Medinskii understood there to be only one true version of history, namely his rigid interpretation of the past, which he employed as a signifier of Russian-ness.

The media and politicians used the opposition’s failure to recognise ‘History’, to borrow Medinskii’s punctuation, as evidence against them. Thus, the wrong interpretation of history came to be even more readily identified with foreignness, especially Westerners, as this discourse overlapped significantly with anti-Western rhetoric (Malinova 2015b). The sources supported this argument with language heavily indebted to the Soviet period, with politicians and officials from the Duma to the Russian army describing opposition voices as *provokatory*, a fifth column and speculators (Baranets 2014b; Mironov 2014). In this way, historical framing intersected with prominent narratives of Russia as a nation plagued by

internal enemies and besieged by external ones. These images, which carried strong overtones of the traditional myth of Russia as a ‘besieged fortress’, emerged across media coverage on a range of topics, from LGBT rights to NATO military exercises (Skvirskaja 2017; Tseplyaev 2014a; Riabov and Riabova 2014a; Darczewska 2014).

Media and politicians around the world use enemy images to delegitimise a certain group for a political purpose (Bahador 2012). This normally involves one group or organisation conflating the target ‘enemy’ group with characteristics of untrustworthiness and otherness, using this as a distinction to generalise and stereotype people into ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Merskin 2004; Keen 1988). However, using such images to mobilise audiences requires a more dramatic approach: studies suggest that mobilising one group against the other requires the media to present the enemy as a direct threat to their security or existence (Lasswell 1971; Mandelzis 2003, 2; Jervis 1976). Russian media and politicians constantly securitised the issue of internal and external ‘enemies’ across the three case studies. In Russia’s case, this emphasis on enmity has been an important component of reaffirming a populist domestic discourse of the people versus the elites, in which the ‘elites’ were cast as those who criticised the government (Tipaldou and Casula 2019).

As such, beyond emphasising the existential threat posed by all types of enemies, the media usually described internal and external opponents using different techniques. Vilification of others, like historical framing more generally, not only relied on old media styles but combined these with new technologies and approaches. Many of the sources reproduced memes from social media and embedded tweets within their content to support or complement their use of the frame (Alekseev 2014; Skoibeda 2014a). While most of these tweets, photographs and GIFs were staid statements of support for the government, there were other, more interesting, examples of post-Soviet *stiob* (Edenborg 2017). As Figure 19 demonstrates, post-Soviet *stiob* is somewhat ambiguous in terms of the target of its satire. It

can best be defined as an over-identification with government discourse, including the historical frame, that is neither salutary nor condemnatory.

Heading: “That’s it! Perestroika is finally over! McDonalds on Pushkin (Street) is closed!”



Figure 19. Image and accompanying comment from Lenta (2014a)

The media’s treatment of external enemies could also be inventive, albeit with an almost unremittingly mocking tone. In a less ambivalent form of innovation, Lenta used their article URL addresses to satirise the West, as in the following example where they mocked Australia for being excluded from talks on Syria:

<https://lenta.ru/news/2015/11/16/crykoalacrymore/>. By comparison, VN created its own montage videos, including one that ridiculed the then American President for his lack of historical knowledge of the Cold War era, while a sarcastic exercise video of President Obama played to the Rocky theme tune and an explanatory voiceover mocked:

If previously he was confused about which city he was in at the time, then now, concerning himself with foreign policy, he is confused by the continents and the century (Chigishov 2014m 1.12.38).

As in the example above, such derision contributed to an impression of superiority, even historical omniscience, on the part of broadcasters and journalists, reiterating the notion that, through its correct remembering of history, Russia could penetrate and expose the West's lies. Journalists reinforced this impression with frequently employed phrases like 'so they say' (*mol*) and 'allegedly' (*yakoby*). Representing yet another feature borrowed from Soviet news reporting, these phrases further undermined (pro)Western figures as untrustworthy and/or uninformed (P. Petrov and Ryazanova-Clarke 2015).

The sarcastic tone was also facilitated by the media's dehumanising depiction of external enemies as faceless villains lacking motivation beyond Russophobia. The politicians and media directed most accusations of Russophobia at the Baltic States, USA, and Poland, reserving milder criticism for the EU (Lenta 2014e; Baranets 2014b). Although these nations were considered external enemies across all three case studies, politicians in particular directed much more invective against them in the Syria coverage. In this way it foreshadowed the more prominent role that narratives of Russophobia would play in Russian political responses to a number of later disagreements with the West, from the Salisbury Novichok poisonings to accusations of interference in the US elections, as well as in Russian culture more broadly (Borenstein 2019, 99–132).

During the research period for the Syria study, a number of well-publicised disputes between Russia and its neighbours spilled over into the sphere of memory wars (MID 2015l; 2015i; 2015b; 2015e; 2015f). The MID spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, created a narrative in which Poland and the Baltics were ingrates who continually destroyed Soviet war memorials (Smirnov 2015a; MID 2015f; 2015l). Little background was provided as to why Poles may not have been grateful to Soviet troops for their liberation or why the Baltic States may have perceived 1940-1991 as an occupation. Instead, the sources depicted citizens of these countries as zombified by nationalist propaganda that falsified history, as characterised

by Galina Sapozhnikova's rather personal lament about her ban from Lithuania for spreading Russian propaganda (Sapozhnikova 2015b). In the article, which was accompanied by a picture of Sapozhnikova at around age 12, dressed in Lithuanian national costume for a school project, she wrote sentimentally:

To this day I remember the poetry of the Lithuanian poetess Salomen Neris off by heart: 'My little country, like a golden droplet of solid amber...' How I longed then to see this country, Lithuania! Now, stood on a road in Lithuania, for some reason I start thinking about [me as] that little girl, just as they tell me that I am an undesirable person to the Lithuanian Republic and read me the protocol banning me from entering for five years.

It was typical of the discourse that the media did not simply present these countries as critical of Russia; they also converted them into historical falsifiers and negationists.

The media depicted opponents as shadowy forces, whose one-dimensional Russophobia was unworthy of further scrutiny, in direct contrast to their portrayal of the Russian people. The former's greed, villainy and self-interest were opposed to Russian self-sacrifice and collective identity, attributes much emphasised by the government, VN and KP in particular (Tukhanina 2014). These contrasts and condemnations were (again) conspiratorial and built on pre-existing Soviet tropes:

Soviet propaganda said that Europe bends to the will of the USA. Soviet ideologues turned out to be right (Gladilin 2014).⁷³

[Nikolai Patrushev, Head of the Security Council of Russia] also gave an evaluation of the role of the USA and NATO in events in East Ukraine. He explained how these

⁷³ The title of this article was 'Are idiots in power in Europe?'

events are a continuation of Zbigniew Brzezinski's plan to destroy the USSR and Russia (Egorov 2014).

In the first quotation, and elsewhere, the EU assumed the role of Western Europe in the Cold War, bullied by the USA and unable to assert its own sovereignty. The sources strengthened their representations of a subordinate EU with reference to those European countries and citizens who protested imposing sanctions (Grishin 2014g), as when Aleksei Pushkov, Head of the Duma Committee for International Affairs, stated that sanctions were 'a very bad sign of the state of international relations. I have spoken to many European deputies and they themselves are categorically opposed to such practices' (Tsepilyaev 2014b).

Some sources were more likely to focus on internal over external enemies, with KP and VN accentuating the role of perceived collaborators, while the government and RG stressed the villainy of external actors, preferring to present Russians as unified in patriotic support behind the government. Yet, across all sources, the vilification of internal enemies was an integral part of securitising the political and historical space, reflecting Bo Petersson's findings that Russian discourse often reflects the state's strength as being more dependent on winning the battle against internal enemies than against external enemies (Petersson 2017, 242). The sources also employed the image of internal enemies as a negative, exclusionary element against which 'patriots' and 'heroes' could define themselves, creating a frontier between 'us' and 'them'. This was exemplified by the exclusionary discourse in the following quotation from Vladimir Putin's 2014 address to the Federal Assembly:

Some Western politicians are already threatening us with not just sanctions but also the prospect of increasingly serious problems on the domestic front. I would like to know what it is they have in mind exactly: action by a fifth column, this disparate

bunch of ‘national traitors’, or are they hoping to put us in a worsening social and economic situation so as to provoke public discontent? (Prezident Rossii 2014e)

Putin’s words depicted disagreement with government policy as the result of treachery, or at least of foreign interference. He strengthened his delegitimisation of alternative views by employing aggressive and highly Soviet rhetoric, such as ‘fifth column’ and ‘national-traitors’, both of which carried Stalinist overtones. Neutrality and ambivalence were thus excluded as legitimate positions on government policy or historiography.

Those who nevertheless persisted in disagreeing with government policy were depicted as a one-dimensional, insignificant minority. Such internal enemies were largely characterised as the pro-Western, liberal opposition in Russia, with wider or narrower definitions employed by different sources - many more things were ‘liberal’ to KP than to Lenta - but all incorporated the following characteristics and attitudes:

- Rich people/elites (Kagarlitskii 2014b)
- Cosmopolitan, well-travelled (Steshin 2014)
- Profited from the 1990s (Mironov 2014)
- Are not nostalgic for the USSR (Skoibeda 2014c)

The media argued that these internal enemies were on the West’s side because they were failing to adapt to the appropriate patriotic mood by problematising Russian policy on sanctions (which should be seen as an opportunity), Ukraine, or Syria. As Evgenii Arsyukhin stated in KP: ‘representatives of the middle class are rushing to publish images of empty shelves from the time of the late USSR’ (Arsyukhin 2014c).

The emphasis on the liberal and metropolitan sections of society to some extent mirrored the age-old Russian opposition of the intelligentsia versus the people (Berdyayev 1990). Ellen Rutten argues that treating the intelligentsia as children draws on a long

tradition, citing as evidence the 19th century metaphor of *intelligenty* as boys in Russian literature and beyond (Rutten 2010, 104). Such infantilisation of internal enemies, now combined with vilification, was observable across all case studies (Grishin 2014c; Mironov 2014). It created a somewhat contradictory logic, whereby internal enemies presented a threat but were unable to realise it (except with external help) due to their lack of connection with the *narod*, real-life experience, or maturity.

The media of 2014-2015 not only reproduced, but it also updated, the trope of intelligentsia versus *narod*. The target of Russian media's ire was not necessarily only educated metropolitans but also so-called new Russians, a merging facilitated in the Sanctions discourse especially frequently. Popular derision towards the tastelessness and materialism of the latter drew on the traditional negative connotations of *meshchane* (roughly translatable as lower-class townsfolk) and the association of westernising traditions with *poshlost'*, or being *gauche* (Boym 1994, 42). Interestingly, such people were normally contrasted with the intelligentsia, or even contrasted in some articles on sanctions (Arsyukhin 2014a; 2014b). Therefore, the admittedly imperfect and inconsistent amalgamation of intelligentsia with 'new Russians' into one group of internal enemies appeared as a new, hybrid form of othering in Russian historical framing discourse.

In the eighteen months that elapsed between the Ukraine Crisis and Russian intervention in Syria, the othering of domestic Russian internal enemies became more dramatic. Although the Ukraine coverage was by far the most emotive, in their coverage of Syria the media also presented internal enemies through technical, even pathologising, language: 'There exists a sort of moral-intellectual "condition". I would call it 'Party-phobia' or, if you prefer, "devouring the nation" (*otchiznoedstvo*)' (Grachev 2015). This shift was presumably related to the government's passing and strengthening of laws on the activities of

so-called foreign agents and foreign media ownership.⁷⁴ Politicians and the media openly connected those whom they deemed internal enemies with the NGO laws and amendments as well as with the conflict in Syria; for example, Vladimir Putin blamed ‘foreign agents’ for spreading fake news about civilian deaths in Syria even before Russian planes had taken off (Brusnev 2015b).

Although there was very little engagement with the opinions of ‘internal enemies’, many sources did provide some rather glib psychological and sociological analysis of what led people to (allegedly) betray their own country (Chigishov 2014j 34.00; Arsyukhin 2014b). Typifying, analysing and identifying the source of the internal enemy’s malaise is a traditional feature in Russian literature, from hagiographical writings⁷⁵ through to Socialist Realism (Clark 1981; Robin 1992). The media’s treatment of internal enemies as curiosities deserving of considered study (to isolate their atypicality) contrasted with the more collective depiction of external enemies and of heroes, or those who supported Russian government policy (Chigishov 2014b 17.33; Tkanchuk 2014).

Everyday heroism and exemplary practices

If presenting Russia’s enemies as an existential threat was one method the sources used to mobilise audiences, then depicting ‘exemplary practices’ to emulate was another method. As such, the media and government sought to reward those who shared their views while also encouraging them to demonstrate their allegiance. One way to achieve this was to depict other people as ‘heroes’ because they professed the right standard cultural historical narrative

⁷⁴ The Russian ‘foreign agent’ law is officially titled ‘On Amendments to Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Non-profit Organisations Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent’. It was passed in 2012 and required non-profit organizations that receive foreign donations and engage in ‘political activity’ to register and declare themselves as foreign agents. The law was tightened in 2014 and 2015 (when *Memorial* were added to the list of foreign agents). In September 2014, the Duma also passed a law barring foreign investors from holding more than a 20% stake in Russian media outlets as a more general attempt to prevent so-called foreign interference in Russia.

⁷⁵ For more details on the exploitation of hagiography for literary purposes in Russia please see (Ziolkowski 2014)

and responded patriotically to external threats to this narrative. Such images built on the performative characteristics of historical framing noted earlier in this chapter, but they also intersected with populist narratives of *narodnost* ' (being of the people) and masculinity in political discourse, not least surrounding President Putin himself (Moss 2017; Sperling 2014). Importantly, they also shared with these narratives a clear characterisation of the heroes as ordinary, everyday, people called upon to defend their home from attack, thus reinforcing the sense of existential crisis that underpins so much of Russian political discourse.

In this way, the conflation of the political opposition (or the threat of potential opposition) with historical collaborators was contrasted to images of those 'resisting' such threats: alongside delegitimisation of 'their' activities was legitimisation of 'our' activities (Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016). Although the characterisation of heroes was less well-defined, playing into their everyday or unextraordinary heroism, they played a highly significant role in that they provided audiences with examples of how to demonstrate shared remembering as a means of resisting those attempting to recreate the Great Patriotic War, Cold War or collapse of the state. Table 13 demonstrates the broad grouping provided by the media:

| Discourse | Internal enemies | | Heroes | |
|-------------------|--|---|---|-------------|
| | <i>Present</i> | <i>Past</i> | <i>Present</i> | <i>Past</i> |
| Ukraine Crisis | Right-wing Ukrainians Pro-Maidan Ukrainians Russian opposition | <i>Banderovtsy</i> Other GPW collaborators | Pro-Russian separatists Russian government Russian (<i>ruskii</i>) people/descendants of GPW veterans | Red Army |

| | | | | |
|-----------|--|---|---|--|
| | Tatars, Chechens | | | |
| Sanctions | <i>Present</i> Pro-Western opposition Members of Yeltsin's government not associated with Putin Oligarchs | <i>Past</i> Gorbachev Yeltsin and the reformers Oligarchs | <i>Present</i> New generation of young patriots ('Generation P')(Lenta 2014i) Ordinary Russians Pro-Russian westerners | <i>Past</i> n/a Those opposed to 1990s mores Soviet allies abroad |
| Syria | <i>Present</i> NGOS Intellectuals Those who remember 'negative' domestic history | <i>Past</i> Foreign Agents and Fifth Column of USSR (applies to all) | <i>Present</i> Russian army Syrian army and pro-Assad Syrians | <i>Past</i> Red Army Soviet allies, educated in USSR |

Table 13. Images of collaboration and resistance/heroism across the three case studies

Although there was considerable conflation and comparison of the (pro-)Russian fighters in east Ukraine and in Syria with the Red Army (M Polikarpov 2017), incidences of heroism were primarily rooted in the present when they pertained to anyone other than the military. Defending the 'real' (Kremlin-aligned) memory and history of the USSR, 1990s, and GPW was depicted as a form of military resistance (Chigishov 2014i 17.57). In this way, the media released the representation of heroes from the specific temporal limitations of the historical frame period, instead presenting their heroism as part of a cycle, whereby Russia must consistently defend itself and others from attack. The heroes fulfilled this role by performing their shared 'correct' remembering of past heroes and of past victims and the

crimes committed against them. This type of ‘active remembering’ brought the frame to life, leading to further ‘re-enchantment’ of the historical myths that comprised the schema, all of which were already of great significance to Russian identity (Nesbitt-Larking and McAuley 2017; Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016).

The presentation of contemporary heroes and resisters was even more ritualised than that of alleged collaborators. In the Ukraine case study, through the wearing of the St George Ribbon, defence of Soviet memorials, or attendance of the Victory Day Parade, heroic inhabitants of East Ukraine were presented as spontaneously reacting to events by affirming their cultural and historical legacy in the face of the Ukrainian government’s attempts to rewrite history (Ul’yanova 2014; Argumenty i fakty 2014a; Vitalii Tseplyaev 2014c). In the Sanctions study, there was frequent coverage of performed ‘resistance’ to Western pressure, much of which also linked to the historical frame: the boycotting, or patriotic non-consumption (Skvirskaja 2017; Rann 2017), of Western food, particularly McDonalds, with its memories of the 1990s (Lenta 2014b; Zubkov 2014); holidaying in Russia, especially Artek (Kostenko-Popova 2014); and wearing t-shirts depicting Vladimir Putin or Iskander missiles (Khozhaleteva 2014a). Support for Russian intervention in Syria could also take the form of attending special military-patriotic clubs or wearing special *Voentorg* t-shirts (Ovchinnikov 2015).



Figure 20. Performing resistance. A lady shows a t-shirt to a Russian army colonel. The t-shirt says 'Sanctions? Don't make my Iskander missiles laugh'. Photo: Evgenia Guseva. (Khozhaletova 2014)

Audiences were thus encouraged to affirm their shared remembering and political positioning by copying these heroes and wearing the same symbols or performing the same rituals. The ritualised methods of resistance repeated across the media were presented as emphatically grassroots phenomena, organised by individual citizens, and supported by the state. Despite the praise for the actions of the heroes and resisters, and the consistent message of repeated existential threats, it was the state who assumed the role of real hero (Grachev 2014), given that, essentially, the role of the resisters was to show allegiance to the Russian government in their interpretations of both political and historical questions. Research suggests that using emotional and inclusive approaches like these has been successful: even highly educated Russian metropolitans cited greater emotional engagement with the state during this period (Robertson and Greene 2017; Greene and Robertson 2017). I explore this topic, including the media's curation and the state's monopolisation of practices of everyday nationalism, in more detail in Chapter Eight (page 182).

Messianism

Following the securitised and militaristic understanding of history being disseminated by the Russian media and politicians (and reaffirmed by constant engagement in memory wars), the heroes detailed in the previous sub-chapters became the (largely) figurative infantrymen of the Kremlin's battle for history. Intertwined within this 'battle' were various features of messianic thinking, as the media enhanced the mobilisational and unifying force of the narratives by inscribing a greater sense of mission into Russian policies. Russia's political rhetoric and understanding of itself has long embraced elements of messianism, from its self-promulgation as the Third Rome after the fall of Constantinople to the Soviet Union's universalist identity as the first international workers state (Duncan 2002; Kukulín 2018; Berdiaev 1990; Berdyaev 1922; Rabow-Edling, 2006). Boris Dubin has even argued that the Russian personality is especially well-suited to messianic thinking (Dubin 2012). It could be argued that messianic thinking was particularly complementary to historical framing as a discourse, given Walter Benjamin's definition of messianism as a 'simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present' (Benjamin 1968, 265).

In each case study the media and government portrayed a sense of messianism through its language. Although it could take different forms, this messianic tone relied on a self-assurance, buoyed by a chauvinistic understanding of history that depicted Russia as saviour of, if not the world, then definitely of Europe. The example below from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was typical of all three case studies:

It has turned out on many occasions that Russia, which civilised Europe sees as something alien and dangerous, has saved Europe from existential threat. Both those that have emerge from European soil and external ones... Today history provides us with yet another chance to put to one side our disagreements and unite for a decisive struggle against a common threat – the threat of terrorism (MID 2015j).

This quotation conveyed a recurring argument that Russian greatness stemmed from its historical achievements, especially its actions to defend or liberate Europe. Following this logic, Russia's return to great-power status needed to be steeped in references to history and presented as a repetition of these same historical achievements. Historical framing provided the narrative template within which to present such repetitions.

Although frequent throughout each discourse, messianic attitudes peaked in the Syria coverage, where they expanded upon the notion of Putin as a world leader and the true voice of the people of Europe. This notion of genuine versus fake Europe intersected with other discourses, especially conservative ones opposing liberalism to traditional values (Riabov and Riabova 2014a; 2014b; Stroude 2013; Sapozhnikova 2015a; Verkhovskii and Pain 2012; Tolz 2017) The argument clearly borrowed elements of Soviet and imperialist thinking, as in the quotation below from KP, with its echoes of Churchill's famous Iron Curtain speech and frequent mentions of religion:

Russia has a real chance of becoming the Christian leader of Eurasia. There will be a new evangelisation of Europe – from the Adriatic to the Baltic. Western Europe will be finished, it has no spiritual might [...] Russia now is the most important country in the world. Everything depends on what happens in Syria (Aslamova 2015).

The writer Nikolai Starikov, normally associated with more imperialist or Eurasianist worldviews, employed a similar technique outlining his almost identical argument:

There are two Europes. One on the pages of the absolutely pro-American western European media. I mean that all the media – German, French and others - belong either to Americans themselves or to the USA through an affiliated person. There is really just pure Russophobia there (Sapozhnikova 2015a).

This quotation amply demonstrated how historical framing was able to intersect with a wide variety of (pro-government positions), intertwining imperialist views with neo-Soviet arguments.

Historical framing's clear engagement with other, primarily illiberal, narratives in Russian discourse was reflected in shared concerns, symbolism, and techniques. By delineating historical framing as a general technique, beyond specific case studies, and outlining its similarities with other illiberal discourses, we better understand how history was made relevant and how the argument of historical framing – that the past was repeating itself – was rendered credible, even persuasive. However, it is also important to question why historical framing was used and how it fitted into a broader government policy of placing knowledge of, and engagement with, history at the centre of Russian identity. Therefore, the next chapter considers how the messages of historical framing were reinforced by other government-organised and funded activities, contextualising historical framing within the government's much wider effort to ensure as many people as possible were frequently engaging with the Kremlin's standard cultural historical narrative.

Chapter Eight. A Call to History: Managing Russian Patriotism in Putin's Third Term

In the previous chapters, I outlined the specific use of historical framing as well as providing general remarks on its usage. In this chapter, I move beyond historical framing by analysing other government methods for asserting the centrality of selected historical narratives to contemporary Russian society and identity. In so doing, I position historical framing as an important technique within a wider cultural and political ‘call to history’ (*obrashchenie k istorii*).⁷⁶ I date this call to the beginning of Putin’s third term in 2012. This was also the year in which the Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) was founded under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, which began to direct considerable sums of money to cultural and historical (*kul’turno-istoricheskie*) activities among Russians. These activities included history festivals, military history clubs, immersive museum exhibitions, and public lectures (Minkul’tury 2013; Reiter and Golunov 2015).

The selective episodes of history promoted by these events formed part of a vague and flexible standard cultural historical narrative. As well as the events that functioned as the ‘schema’, or point of comparison, in the historical framing case studies, some of the events constantly included were The Time of Troubles, 1917, and the Baptism of Kyiv.⁷⁷ Moreover, the list of events continued to grow and now includes idiosyncratic interpretations of the Chernobyl’ disaster and the Soviet war in Afghanistan (BBC 2019b; Rosenberg 2018). The media and government invoked this standard cultural historical narrative as Russian historical memory, positing it as a unifying idea to connect often inchoate notions of Russianness.

⁷⁶ This phrase was used by an RVIO employee during my interview with him (RVIO employee: Konstantin Pakhalyuk 2018). In the interview, Konstantin Pakhalyuk made it clear that he was not speaking to ‘represent’ RVIO but just in his personal capacity as an academic and as an employee there. He invited me to RVIO’s headquarters to conduct the interview, where I was also able to speak to other employees, informally.

⁷⁷ To name just a few, these include Russian involvement in conflicts in the Balkans from the 1880s to 1990s, and Polish invasions of Russia.

Contextualising the Call to History

Numerous authors have studied the centrality and pervasiveness of historical tragedies and triumphs, especially the Great Patriotic War, in Russian culture (Walker 2017; Edele 2017; Rozhdestvenskaya 2015; Fedor et al. 2017; A. Miller 2014; Reese 2018; Pearce 2018; Khrebtan-Hörhager 2016, Tumarkin 1994). These studies have also noted that such historical allusions become even more intense during crises, of which there were many in Putin's third presidential term (Gaufman 2017a; Torbakov 2016; Lankina and Watanabe 2017). The government has encouraged this well-documented nostalgia for a lost Soviet and/or Russian past, which came to pervade popular culture (Beumers 2012; Boele, Noordenbos, and Robbe 2019), often in the form of parahistory, including non-professional, alternative and even pseudo-history (Kalinina 2017b; Brooks and Dralyuk 2016).

These tendencies and efforts developed from what Ilya Kalinin has described as the Russian government's discourse of 'nostalgic modernisation', in which people were encouraged to escape from the present into selected episodes from the past (Kalinin 2011). The selected episodes formed part of a standard cultural historical narrative with the GPW as its core. Given that the Soviet victory over Nazism legitimised Russian claims to great power status, any challenges to this interpretation could be potentially dangerous to Russian identity and geopolitical ambitions (Torbakov 2011).

It was not only the memory of the GPW that was beyond challenge, however. Through their political discourse, the Russian government underscored 'correct' understanding of history in general as an essential component of national identity. While scholars have observed this tendency throughout Eastern Europe (Ágh 2016; Schellenberg 2016; Đureinović 2019; Tomczuk 2016; Bernhard and Kubik 2014), the importance of memory to Russian foreign policy - and to its sense of self - arguably enhanced its emergence there (Pakhalyuk 2018a; Roberts 2017; Luk'yanov 2016). Todd Nelson even described the

use of history in Russia during Putin's third term as a form of ideology (Nelson 2014). However, Nikolai Kaposov (2017) has argued that the current political culture in Russia, as in the rest of Europe, has shifted from the age of ideology to the age of memory. In this chapter, my work is informed by both theories, as I detail the processes by which the Russian government utilised history and historical interpretation in the same way that governments might have used ideology in a previous age. Specifically, it used historical interpretation to denote a rigid set of beliefs that symbolised key values. A person had to adhere to a given historical interpretation in order to demonstrate their identity and belonging to the group; for example, to demonstrate one's Russian identity one had to adhere to the government's standard historical narrative.

The Kremlin's vision of patriotism could essentially be reduced to agreement with their policies and their (sometimes contradictory) interpretations of history. The media supported this by depicting people performing their allegiance with the government and presenting this as a performance of patriotism. In so doing, the government sought to harness and politicise the legitimacy inherent in 'ordinary' patriotic activities, or everyday nationalism, which have tended to be apolitical in the Russian context (Goode 2016; 2018b; Knott 2015). In these performances of everyday nationalism, the media frequently depicted 'ordinary' people demonstrating their political and historical awareness. The government encouraged these demonstrations of patriotic and historical awareness (or 'cultural consciousness') by funding and taking over organisations, lectures, festivals, and clubs to spread patriotic history. In recent scholarship, authors have emphasised the indebtedness of such groups to Soviet templates (Hemment 2012; Le Huérou 2015). Those creating the clubs and groups tended to replicate the Soviet traditions they had experienced, regardless of government involvement. However, from 2014 onwards, the Ministry of Culture, then under the leadership of Vladimir

Medinskii, assumed increasing control over historical and patriotic clubs and organisations. Medinskii was a driving force behind the call to history, pushing through many key cultural policies, such as *kinofikatsiya* (the promotion of cinema and building of cinemas) in Russian towns and funding to promote and support domestic cinema, cartoons, and television. Indeed, he was also behind the 2014 Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation on Culture, although the Presidential Administration did override some of his more nationalistic and/or draconian ideas (Pravitel'stvo RF 2014). However, to date, there has been very little academic secondary literature on Medinskii, with studies tending to focus on the role of Vladimir Putin instead (Nagatsuna 2016). Consequently, this chapter largely relies on interviews and statements by Medinskii and hundreds of pages of activity reports from the Ministry of Culture, which are available on its website (Minkul'tury 2019).

Discussing the types of activities depicted by the media and promoted by the Ministry of Culture (and wider government) as 'patriotism', Il'ya Kukulin describes them as a form of active conformism, which 'functions as a performative example of correct public behaviour' (Kukulin 2018, 228). The media accompanied these depictions of patriotism with the narrative that Russians were becoming increasingly patriotic as they gained ever greater 'cultural consciousness' (i.e. awareness of their culture and history). This built on a performative political culture that had grown markedly under Putin, as compared to the 1990s, particularly in the sphere of memory (Beumers, Hutchings, and Rulyova 2009; Oushakine 2013b; Wood 2011).

It also borrowed from Soviet media traditions in two important ways. First, it depicted collective loyalty to the state by matching media representations of social unity with 'a manifest reality' of participation (J. B. Platt 2016, 3; See also: Petrone 1994; Brandenberger 2002). Second, the conceptualisation of this awareness of culture and history,

which I term ‘cultural consciousness’, built on the paradigm of class consciousness as represented in the Soviet media. In translating class into cultural consciousness (arguably unknowingly), the media also appeared to borrow some of its messianic overtones, a rhetorical fixture in discussions of Soviet identity, given the USSR’s role as the world’s first communist state and as the liberator of many European states from Nazi tyranny (Duncan 2002). In its modern form, the media and politicians presented Russia as a special country, with privileged access to truth, and a mission to bring ‘cultural consciousness’ (back) to the nations of the world.

Re-presenting the Past

The government attempted to make historical references and analogies close to ubiquitous by claiming that correct historical interpretation was an issue pertinent to all spheres of everyday life. Politicians presented people agreeing with their selective interpretation of history (the standard cultural historical narrative) as evidence of national strength and a pre-requisite for success. By way of example, in promotional materials for a history festival, Vladimir Putin was quoted as arguing that such events were ‘important because they make our country stronger...and our success both economically and in the humanitarian sphere, and elsewhere, depends to a considerable degree on them’ (Zheltov 2018a). Declarations like these formed part of a call to history transmitted in the political and cultural sphere to the Russian population. The Ministry of Culture and the Russian Military Historical Society (RVIO) GONGO were responsible for broadcasting this call through a variety of guises.

One tactic saw the Ministry of Culture organise three sequential special cultural years dedicated to the ‘humanities’ and arranged by Medinskii between 2014 and 2016: The Year of Culture, Year of Literature, and Year of Cinema, respectively. Although the focus of each year appeared different, in fact they were united by a strong emphasis on historical themes, especially the Great Patriotic War (GPW), drawn from the Russian standard cultural

historical narrative. Reporting to Putin on the success of these measures, Medinskii explained that ‘Together with the television channels, we decided to support those series which it is not profitable for the television channels to make [...] expensive historical series’ (Prezident Rossii 2016c). He then moved to discussing why the Ministry of Culture were supporting television channels and cinemas to show old Soviet films:

These films are a great way to learn about history and literature. We had the idea to show these films in cinemas, that is, you could bring the kids there for free and this way the cinemas are fulfilling their social function. On top of this they devised short lectures, ten or fifteen minutes apiece, about how the Soviet film was made (Prezident Rossii 2016c).

Such comments made it clear that the constant invocation of history was a deliberate part of the Ministry of Culture’s approach to ensuring the prominence of history (as a topic) in everyday life. Figure 21 shows a train released in honour of the Year of Film. It also illustrates the way that such events were often subordinated to historical concerns, especially the GPW. Figure 21 thus underscores efforts to engage people with history not only in traditional cultural spaces, such as museums or lecture halls, but also in the everyday sphere, such as on transport or in the park.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Public parks are often the sites for history festivals; for example, Europe’s largest history festival, *Vremena i epokhi*, which was launched during Putin’s third term.



Figure 21. A Moscow metro carriage dating from 2016. The carriage is decorated inside and outside with film stills, photographs, poetry, and other references to the GPW. (Photo: Jade McGlynn)

However, even when they were micromanaged by the Ministry of Culture, it was important that patriotic history clubs and activities were depicted as authentic or grassroots. Despite their muscular approach to independent forms of commemoration, the government often masked its involvement so that the organisations they directed appeared to be led by ordinary people or civil society. Between 2011 and 2016, the new budget for the SPPE (State Programme for Patriotic Education) more than doubled, reaching 1.67 billion roubles. Spending on events that required public engagement, such as ‘mobilisation’ and ‘competitions’, more than tripled in this time period (Goode 2018a). Interestingly, the budget for the Ministry of Culture itself did not increase significantly, especially between 2012-2016, going from 90 billion roubles in 2012 to just over 94.3 billion roubles in 2016, after a drop to 89.3 billion roubles in the economically challenging year of 2015. Presumably any shortfall was offset by the private funding provided to RVIO, which undertook many of the Ministry of Culture’s main initiatives (Minkul’tury 2020).

Whereas earlier budgets had privileged commemorations and monuments, the 2016 plan allocated more than a third of its budget (628,200,000 roubles) for ‘youth military preparation’, reflecting a broader shift towards mobilisational activities in which the state’s

role was less prominent (Goode 2018b). This lack of transparency was a recurring theme, with the state preferring to ‘outsource’ the implementation of an all-Russian standard cultural historical narrative to organisations, GONGOs, and ‘funds’ such as the Fund for Developing Civil Society (Vinokurovaya 2014), while reducing funding for state programmes related to state symbols and state history (Goode 2018b).

Clearly not all organisations were exclusively top-down affairs. Julie Hemment’s (2012) research shows that, even before 2012, children’s activities and clubs were often organised around military and historical themes. Such content reflected the cultural legacy of the Soviet Union, with many teachers simply establishing clubs along the same lines as those they attended as (Soviet) youth. Olga Konkka’s (2020) report on the militarisation of children’s extra-curricular educational activities demonstrates that many of Hemment’s findings remain relevant and that the military historical content has only become more prominent. The other key difference after 2012 was that the government tried much more energetically to exert control over such clubs and subordinate their visions of Russian patriotism and Russian history to the government’s political needs.⁷⁹

The government tried to co-opt organisations through providing funding or simply establishing their own versions to direct the development of a standard cultural historical narrative. Sometimes these organisations tended to be largely academic, as with the Russian Historical Society established by Sergei Naryshkin in 2012. However, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, the government sought to engage in historical outreach with a much wider variety of formats, from university historical discussion clubs to children’s war

⁷⁹ This is reflected in the state programme for the ‘Patriotic Formation of Citizens of the Russia Federation 2016-2018’ (Pravitel’stvo Rossiiskoi Federatsii 2015), as well as in the detailed reports produced by the Ministry of Culture. The reports describe the Ministry of Culture’s efforts to control and curate these activities, including through the production of training manuals for military history clubs, outsourced to RVIO. You can find the reports for 2014-2018 here as well as information on the earlier years of President Putin’s third term: (Minkul’tury 2019).

tourism. A 280-page report on the Ministry's activities in 2015 listed hundreds of similar groups that they established and/or financially supported in that year alone (Minkul'tury 2016). It also provided information on the vast scale of these undertakings, as in this claim from their website that: 'The number of informational and educational events (we organised) in 2015 increased, totalling 986,278 (in 2014 it was 950,489)' (ibid).

RVIO, which was established in 2012 by Presidential decree No 1710 (Prezident Rossii 2012b), was another prominent actor in the inculcation of the standard cultural historical narrative.⁸⁰ Between 2013 and 2017, RVIO intruded into a dizzying array of cultural spheres, both low- and high-brow. It contributed to over 500 documentaries and thirty-five television series and feature films in just four short years. Its website became the leading history portal in Russia. It organised over forty history-themed festivals and even launched a stationery range.

According to President Putin, RVIO's purpose lay in 'consolidating the efforts of the government and society in studying the military history of Russia's past ... and patriotic upbringing' (Bashkova 2017, 9). The Society assumed control over different channels and media for communicating history to ensure it corresponded to the state's demands. In an interview with me, Konstantin Pakhalyuk, an academic who also works for RVIO, argued that the organisation was central to the propagation of the standard cultural historical narrative as a unifying national idea (RVIO employee: Konstantin Pakhalyuk). He also underscored that such efforts were linked to a conservative political idea: 'it was linked first and foremost with an interest in history that itself began with the conservative turn in Russian politics' (ibid).

⁸⁰ RVIO claims continuity with an organisation begun by Nicholas 1st and so describes itself as 110 years old. In this, it reflects the government and President's own obsession with creating a sense of unbroken continuity between old and new organisations.

While the political faction responsible for its growth may be a matter of opinion, RVIO was clearly a central element of a cultural strategy decided at the top of government. The proximity and subordination of RVIO to the government was underscored by the number of government ministers made honourable members of the Society alongside Medinskii, such as the Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitrii Rogozin, and the Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu. As President, Medinskii played a particularly active role, frequently visiting RVIO headquarters.⁸¹ Even after being dismissed as Minister for Culture in 2020, Medinskii still retained the Presidency of RVIO and he was also appointed as an advisor on historical matters to the President. RVIO has even been seen by some as Medinskii's personal fiefdom, given the important roles he has secured for his father, Rostislav Medinskii; for example, in the design and erection of POW memorials (Reiter and Golunov 2015; Amos 2019). Other members of the council overseeing the work of RVIO include Kremlin-friendly oligarchs who have donated generously to the organisation. It has also received increasingly lucrative funding from the Ministry of Culture, where Medinskii is responsible for approving its budget (Bashkova 2017, 15).

RVIO's incredibly wide remit, spanning popular film and television to academia, allowed it to reinforce the government and media's historical memory narratives and construct an image of blossoming popular and civil society interest in culture and history across myriad public spheres. Thus, it simultaneously increased the visibility of the standard cultural historical narrative and its saturation of the public sphere. Through RVIO, the government found ways to insert its approved historical narratives (alongside contemporary

⁸¹ By coincidence, I also saw the Minister arrive at RVIO as I was leaving following my interview with Konstantin Pakhalyuk on 24th August 2018.

parallels) into more and more spheres of the everyday lives of a large section of the population.

Through the intense and comprehensive nature of RVIO's activities, the government could also ensure a certain level of constancy for its standard cultural historical narrative even as it was delivered across different time zones and types of cultural setting (e.g. from cinemas to lecture halls). This way, historical exhibitions, events, and activities were designed to suit the government's objectives. These objectives encompassed both short-term political aims, as with the release of well-timed history books to support government policy, such as *The History of Crimea* and *The History of Novorossiia*, and longer-term considerations relating to identity-formation (RVIO 2014a; 2014b; 2016a). It also functioned to present an overarching narrative of history that could ostensibly, through sheer multiplicity, override the disparate historical narratives produced by non-state mnemonic actors and cultural practitioners.

To achieve such aims, the government and GONGOs had to increase knowledge of government-approved history among the population, utilising a range of methods to attract visitors. One such example was RVIO's project, together with the Federal Tourism Agency, to popularise military historical tours for the purposes of uncovering the 'heroism of our grandparents and great-grandparents' (R. Medinskii 2016). This project encompassed hundreds of sites across the country and RVIO organised themed buses to take people across different routes. While most events related to the GPW, other wars were referenced, including the Napoleonic and Polish-Lithuanian invasions, but there was no history that reflected negatively on the USSR or Russian Empire.

A book detailing all these available tours was released and it also contained references to the seventy-one commemorative days in honour of the military, further justifying the constant ceremonial treatment of the military in everyday life (R. Medinskii 2016). Such

activities inverted and reinforced the media's emphasis on presenting mundane activities, such as wearing t-shirts with images of Soviet weaponry (Khozhaletva 2014b), as worthy of heroic forebears. While media depictions of patriotism turned the everyday into the heroic, patriotic tourism and commemorative holidays rendered the heroic everyday through sheer frequency. This invitation to imagine oneself as a hero of the past was further encouraged by the inclusion of re-enactment activities as part of these tours; for example, after learning about a battle, people could then watch it being staged in front of them, or even sometimes take part (Zheltoev 2018b). While such activities are not unique to Russia, the militaristic nature and centralising function of the state differentiates them from similar events in Europe or the USA.

RVIO also conducted activities in the academic sphere, releasing a military history textbook provided to all Russian schoolchildren, and hosting 42 conferences and 300 lectures between 2013 and 2017 (Bashkova 2017). Even these events had an outreach element, such as 'historical Saturdays', which aimed to teach interested citizens patriotic history and built on the Soviet tradition of *subbotniki*. This apparent interest in social history was reflected in their publications; for example, *Istoriya, raskazannaya narodom*, translated as 'History, as Told by the People', collected short biographies of ordinary people swept up in the Great Patriotic War and bemoaned the Soviet focus on the 'great men of history' (Zolotarev 2016). However, this popular approach appeared somewhat superficial given the top-down organisation of RVIO and the expansive 'Alley of Rulers'. The latter comprises three rows of statues of Russian heads of state, symbolically reflecting the 'great man' theory of history and physically occupying most of the outside space around the public entrance to the RVIO headquarters.



Figure 22. First row of the Alley of Leaders at the RVIO headquarters in Moscow. (Photo: Jade McGlynn).



Figure 23. Khrushchev, Stalin, Lenin, Kerensky, and Nicholas II in the Alley of Rulers. (Photo: Jade McGlynn).

RVIO also launched the *Heroes of the Great Victory* all-Russian literature competitions for children and adults, with the winners' works published and distributed widely (RVIO 2016a; 2016b). In many of the winning works, the authors imagined themselves as participants or told personal private stories of their families' experiences of the GPW, merging government initiatives with private memory. This facilitated and enabled government efforts to blur the state and the private spheres, showing that public engagement was essential to its success. Konstantin Pakhalyuk asserted that such efforts were part of

government attempts at ‘creating a Russian idea’, thus underscoring the top-down nature of the process (RVIO employee: Pakhalyuk 2018d).

As such, much of RVIO’s work consolidated the demonstrative definitions of patriotism that emerged in the government’s discourse around memory, in attempts to realise Putin’s call for ‘living forms’ of patriotism (Prezident Rossii 2012c). This was especially evident in reconstruction and re-enactment activities, which formed an important part of children-focussed military history clubs as well as the aforementioned ‘patriotic historical tours’, such as the *Dorogi Pobedy* (Paths of Victory) tours around GPW (and other) battlefields and museums. Similar to late Soviet Komsomol and Pioneer war-related activities, such clubs sought to ‘raise patriots...to tell the truth about Russian history’, alongside military instruction (Zabelina 2017, 2). RVIO assisted in the establishment of 110 military history clubs and camps between 2013 and 2017, as well as publishing a manual for the correct running of them (RVIO 2016c). The manual instructed that clubs only teach positive versions of Russian history and encourage the students to imagine themselves as fighters from the past. One of the most famous examples of such camps was the *Platsdarm 2015* reconstruction and memory march, where children restaged World War Two battles around Leningrad Oblast’ (Zabelina 2017).

The efforts of RVIO to establish military history clubs with an historical focus were particularly productive after Vladimir Putin signed a new decree for the creation of the Russian Schoolchildren’s Movement (RSM) on 29th October 2015, known in the USSR as Day of the Komsomol. Dubbed the ‘new pioneers’, several media sources emphasised the new movement’s continuity with Soviet youth organisations.⁸² Writing about the signing of the decree in AiF, Kirill Khlomov argued that it was the ‘analogue to the Soviet pioneer

⁸² For more detail on Soviet youth organisations, please see: (Dunlop 2017)

organisation' (KhloMOV 2015). In KP, Kseniya Konyukhova wrote: 'Russia can look forward to pioneers once again! True, this time they will have a different name' (Konyukhova 2015). The Minister of Education, Dmitry Livanov, summarised the nature of the new movement thus: 'it will recreate the traditions of extracurricular education of children in the Soviet Union' (Lenta 2015h). Although there are no exact figures, the RSM website refers to the involvement of 'millions of schoolchildren. Unlike Yunarmiya and the Ministry of Defence's programmes and initiatives, the RSM is more similar to the Ministry of Culture's youth initiative, given RSM's emphasis on patriotic formation rather than military preparation (Rossiiskoe dvizhenie shkol'nikov, 2020).

The Ministry of Culture's 2015 report referred frequently to activities designed to engender 'historical patriotic formation' and 'respect for one's historical heritage' among the young (Minkul'tury 2016). In keeping with the above, Vladimir Medinskii has directly differentiated the role of military history clubs, which sit under the Ministry of Culture, from that of military-patriotic clubs, which sit under the Ministry of Defence. At the opening of the *Nevskii Pyatachok* military history camp in 2015, he said the most important aspect of a military history camp was that: 'it hardens the spirit. The aim of the camp is not to prepare soldiers, there are special educational establishments for that sort of thing. Rather, it is to raise citizens and genuine patriots to tell the truth about the history of Russia (Zabelina 2015, 2).' However, although military preparation is not a key objective of the clubs, they still contribute to a cultural militarism.

In my interview with them, the leader of one RVIO-funded military historical club readily conflated historical knowledge with issues of politics and defence, especially disinformation, describing the purpose of their youth project as teaching children: 'accurate (*pravdivuyu*) history, regardless of whatever is going on in the world' (Historical Club Organiser [anonymous] 2018). Anzhela Barmushkina, organiser of *Rassvet v rossoshkakh*

(Dawn in Rossoshka),⁸³ a Volgograd youth movement that holds various camps and a year-round club aimed at educating children about the GPW, saw her organisation's purpose in similar terms:

You need to be proud of your country, but this is impossible if you don't know the history of your Fatherland. Everything that people [in foreign countries] are doing with regard to the memory of those who gave their lives for them is wrong [...] But we must do everything so that children and the youth know the real history'

In the quotations above and elsewhere in her answers, Anzhela Barmushkina readily linked issues of defence and global problems to patriotism and (lack of) knowledge about history, reflecting government discourse on such issues, albeit sometimes in a more localised way (Barmushkina 2018).

Although the government did not directly manage or mandate these clubs, the organisers openly discussed how they benefitted from the government's efforts to promote historical knowledge or the funding it provided. The funding often took the form of presidential grants, which supported new historical festivals and clubs throughout Russia. I interviewed one such recipient, Pavel Zheltov, an organiser of several historical re-enactment and education clubs, and numerous historical festivals, including the *Zabytyi podvig* (Forgotten Feat) re-enactment festival in Novgorod (Zheltov 2018a). He explained that the third presidential term saw considerable growth in interest in such clubs, something he viewed as partly government-directed and partly organic: 'it started from the growth of a wave of patriotic feeling and a quite large number of government-ordered projects in the country' (Zheltov 2018b). Continuing this line, Zheltov explained that his club and festivals,

⁸³ Rossoshka is a military memorial cemetery for the Battle of Stalingrad

and many others, were founded to discover ‘roots’ and to meet ‘a demand for stories about people’s own history’ that had emerged in society (ibid).

A History of Emotions

The government appealed to existing societal, popular, and/or biographical interests in history by promoting an accessible and pathos-riven version of history. As noted in the historical framing case studies, much of the history invoked played on emotion and personalisation; for example, the calls to honour the memory of people’s grandfathers in East Ukraine.⁸⁴ The government and media frequently encouraged people to explore, learn about, and even relive Russian history, albeit within carefully set parameters. Within those limits, the emphasis was on abstract concepts, such as heroism, feats (*podvigi*), historical ‘truth’, and patriotism, rather than examining the detail (with the exception of biographical issues, although even these had to be subjugated to the broader narrative). To reinforce the sense of lived personal experience, organisations like RVIO focussed on providing opportunities for people to ‘relive’ their ancestors’ experience. So too did numerous festivals and museum exhibitions between 2012-2017 privilege simulating the ‘experience’ of historical achievement, as opposed to promoting knowledge of history.⁸⁵

Instead of expanding historical knowledge, the government and GONGOs tried to turn history into a form of entertainment that reinforced prejudices and placed emotion as the most authentic means of knowing the past (Edenborg 2017). When questioned on the emergence of this preference towards ‘reliving’ history, Pavel Zheltov, the aforementioned organiser of several historical festivals, explained that emotion was essential to his approach to teaching the wider public about history:

⁸⁴ Please see pages 182-187 in this thesis for more detail on the personalisation of history.

⁸⁵ It is worth noting that such tendencies were also present in museums and exhibitions created at this time, but which were not pro-government, or government-funded, such as the Yeltsin Centre and the 2015 exhibition on the 1990s at Muzeon in Moscow.

We understand that it is through emotions, through visualisation, that a person will grasp the historical information first, much more than through a school textbook. This process began slowly at first, then it gathered speed and now it is becoming ever greater [...] When you form an emotional link with a historical topic [...] it brings history to life and you begin to think, what would I have done for my country if I had lived then (Zheltoy 2018b).

As such, although Zheltoy emphasised that he sought to achieve this historical reliving through close attention to detail, he also underscored the importance of emotion for encouraging people to take an interest in history.

This focus on uncovering history and bringing it to life is central to historical re-enactment but it also emerged prominently in other spheres of engagement with history. The Russian government and media sponsored an emotional, rather than intellectual, engagement with history, an approach Jeffrey Brooks and Boris Dralyuk refer to as ‘parahistory’ (Brooks and Dralyuk 2016). The concept of parahistory can be understood as the sort of semi-fictionalised history found in Hollywood films, video games, or historical novels such as *Wolf Hall* (Kapell and Elliott 2013). The objective is entertainment and engagement; yet, while it is not historical scholarship, the content is based on real events. More importantly, televised or film versions of parahistory are also the form of history most familiar to non-historians, making it influential in terms of popular conceptions of history.

Parahistory has often tended towards the counterfactual and conspiratorial, not only in Russia (R. J. Evans 2014). The Russian versions of parahistorical entertainment did stand out for their investigation of ‘contemporary cultural phenomena that draw on history but are at the same time fully wedded to the present’ (Brooks and Dralyuk 2016, 82). This was

reflected in the plethora of historical films, series and activities (e.g. re-enactment).⁸⁶ Perhaps most interesting are the numerous television programmes that are presented as documentaries but are in fact a peculiarly counterfactual and conspiratorial take on history.⁸⁷ The conspiracies often fuelled longstanding prejudices against the West. This subjugation of history to political purposes necessarily involved a departure from purely academic concerns.

One noteworthy example of these tendencies, at least within writings on history, is provided by the rather prolific Medinskii's seventeen 'non-fiction' works, all of which explore the topic of Russian history. The works are highly repetitive, with content often copied or paraphrased from book to book.⁸⁸ Several of the books were published as part of a series on (negative) myths about Russia, against which Medinskii argues with some passion. The overriding message within the works is that Russia's history and national character have been unfairly slandered due to malevolence on the part of Russia's enemies but also Russian people's ignorance of their almost uniformly positive history. The books have close to zero citations in support of their very bold arguments: for example, that ethnic minorities within the Russian Empire were incredibly grateful to live there, were very happy with their treatment (or ought to have been), and those that lived outside its borders streamed into the Russian Empire because it was treated its minorities so fairly, with the possible exception, sometimes, of the Jews, as Medinskii graciously concedes. No evidence for any of these points is forthcoming, despite the confident tone of the author's assertions (V. Medinskii 2015a).

⁸⁶ See the front page of kamaraden.ru for a list and map of all historical re-enactment events. A list of the (para)historical films and books funded by RVIO can be found here: <https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/filmy-knigi/item-1600>

⁸⁷ See for example, *Pervyi kanal's 2017 Poddlinaya istoriya Rossiiskoi revolyutsii*, a documentary in eight parts, or most of the content of the satellite television channel *Sovershenno sekretno*.

⁸⁸ For example, much of the 2015 book *O Rossii – tyur'me narodov*, is taken from a 2009 work titled *O russkom rabstve, gryazi i tyur'me narodov* (V. Medinskii, 2015a).

RVIO's work with museums followed a similarly unscholarly, albeit arguably more engaging, approach. Opening four museums and organising twenty exhibitions between 2013 and 2017, RVIO oversaw a move away from traditional academic approaches, focussing on 'multimedia' and the experiential aspect to the neglect of almost any educational element, as in the multimedia exhibition 'Remember.... the Soviet Soldier saved the world', which ran from 2015-2016 across Russia. This exhibition showed artefacts and images that reflected the heroism of Red Army soldiers in liberating European nations. The accompanying text presented these nations as ungrateful and dismissive of these sacrifices.

This emphasis on emotional connection above objective learning was a broader pattern among state-funded or promoted exhibitions and museums. The Soviet Nuremberg exhibition in 2016, for example, contained very few artefacts and instead just attempted to bring history to life through multimedia and installations (RVIO 2015). To a certain extent, this mirrored developments across Western museums as well, which are increasingly interactive and focussed on bringing events 'to life' (Hawkey 2004; Reading 2003). That said, the politicisation of the narrative, with its constant references to Ukraine, and the focus on rhetoric over evidence, distinguished this and other Russian exhibitions. It also seems improbable that there would be such militaristic activities in most Western museums; for example, visitors can storm the Reichstag at the end of the main exhibition of the Great Patriotic War museum in Moscow.

Museums play an important role as the public interface with history and memory; it was therefore unsurprising that the government tried to assume greater ideological control over them from 2012-2017. In one of the most successful examples of the government's efforts, the series of 'Russia - My History' exhibitions, this experiential emphasis combined with a personalised narrative and everyday focus. Originally located on Manezh Square in 2015, the exhibition was so successful that it was permanently relocated to a VDNKh

pavilion. It contained no artefacts at all, a key reason that it has since been reproduced across a further twenty locations. In the words of a former senior employee of the Museum of Modern History:

It was interesting that this form of multimedia entertainment exhibition-show, located outside the museum, was now playing the role of alibi, to construct an anti-academic narrative. The museum, however conservative it may be, must respect the facts and documents but at this exhibition there were almost no documents at all (Budraitskis 2015).

The former museum official also described the emergence of this exhibition as a sign of societal degradation, whereby people preferred to see Russian history as a multimedia project. The Russian Ministry of Education also preferred this, having included a visit to one of the ‘Russia- My History’ museums as a recommended activity for all schoolchildren (Binder 2020).

This approach upset historical enthusiasts who otherwise appeared to be supportive of the government. Pavel Zheltov commented that although he had many more attendees to his re-enactment clubs after the government began to promote its call to history, few cared to understand the facts of the historical events. These newcomers were ‘more interested in entertainment than in learning history’. He also described them as ‘fellow-travellers’ (*poputchiki*), who lacked the commitment required to become amateur historians and were just looking for a ‘pleasant way to spend their time’ (Zheltov 2018b).⁸⁹ However, as discussed, the government’s aim appeared to be not historical enlightenment but rather creating the sense that ‘all of us, businessmen and employees, cultural practitioners and

⁸⁹ Given the sudden popularity of re-enactment clubs during and following the Ukraine Crisis, it is perhaps also relevant that numerous key commanders in the Ukraine conflict, and later the Syrian intervention, were also re-enactors of Soviet and Tsarist history, including, famously Igor’ Strelkov.

security officers, city dwellers and villagers, Russians and ethnic minorities have something in common, something that for all of us is very important. At this moment anything that makes us different or sometimes divides us is not important' (Lanovoi 2015). Let us now turn to consider a movement that has done much to inspire these emotions and has become one of the most significant newly invented traditions of Russian memory politics.

Taking over Non-government Movements: The Case Study of *Bessmertnyi polk*

The government not only funded its own organisations in this way, but also appeared to stage takeovers of those organisations in the mnemonic sphere that were operating outside state control. The case study of *Bessmertnyi polk* (Immortal Regiment) is instructive here.

Established by three independent journalists from Tomsk, *Bessmertnyi polk* (BP) is a Victory Day mass movement march in which participants walk alongside portraits of relatives who witnessed World War Two. According to Sergei Lapenkov, one of the three founders and their chosen spokesman, the march was envisaged as a means of remembering family members who contributed to the Great Patriotic War effort, even where they did not fit official narratives: for example, family members who had been taken prisoner by the Germans (Amos 2019). The idea was very popular, growing from one city in Russia in 2012 to 1200 cities across twenty countries by 2015 (Lapenkov 2018). The march's ability to unify people around their shared memory also drew the attention of the authorities, especially as the 70th anniversary of the Soviet victory over fascism approached in 2015 (Lazebnaya, Pokrovskii, and Kozlovoi 2016).

In Lapenkov's version of events, the original organisers were keen to avoid political and corporate involvement with their grassroots movement; however, as the movement grew, it inevitably attracted the attention of politicians, and government officials based in Moscow began a takeover of the movement. This was led by now Duma (and United Russia) member Nikolai Zemtsov, who had originally contacted BP in 2013 to become a coordinator for

organising the march in his city of Moscow. Relations between the founders and Zemtsov soured over their differing approaches, with Zemtsov leaving to establish a parallel organisation by the identical name of *Bessmertnyi polk* in 2015 (Lapenkov 2018).

According to Lapenkov, the purpose of Zemtsov's organisation was to 'swallow whole' the original BP movement and this decision was taken in the Presidential administration (Ibid). Unsurprisingly, the existence of two parallel marches operating under the same name led to considerable confusion. The 'new' Moscow-based *Bessmertnyi polk* worked hard to lure coordinators to their side; Lapenkov claimed that some were bribed with new roles and that several *budzhethniki* (people whose salaries are paid from the government budget) were blackmailed into joining the new organisation or at least into leaving the original one (Ibid).

Meanwhile, the original organisers' refusal to give way to the 'new' BP led to politicians making conspiratorial accusations about funding from the State Department (Ibid). Such accusations drew on the connection between the founders and an independent news channel in Tomsk, for which they all worked or had worked. According to Sergei Lapenkov, the channel was forcibly shut down as a result of its support for BP, with the local FSB calling for its closure due to its support for 'BP and the fact that we had (allegedly) specially created this in order to reformat historical memory' (ibid).

During our interview, Sergei Lapenkov constantly reiterated his original desire to make Victory Day a more personal affair and to avoid politicisation at all costs, although he himself contrasted the government's triumphalist treatment of history with the more understated approach of veterans. Arguing that 'for us BP was, is, and will remain a personal story of each person, not a history of the masses', Lapenkov emphasised the difference in approach between the two BPs by describing his BP as a movement, while the Moscow

directed one was an ‘organisation’ (Ibid). This difference is immediately obvious in the approach to (or arguably type of) politicisation: in her study of BP, Julie Fedor argued that the new iteration of BP presented the movement as the height of *narodnost*, directly contrasting it to colour revolutions and casting it as the ultimate anti-Maidan (Fedor 2017, 326).

As of 2019, the latter now has control over most marches, although the former still has a considerable online presence and database of information on members of the war generation. On the original BP website, there is evidence to support Lapenkov’s version of events relating to the takeover, while the site of the alternative Moscow-based BP provides a confusing and contradictory history of the origins of the organisation (Bessmertnyi polk 2018). The alternative Moscow-based BP site is available at polkrf.ru. Its homepage opens with an exhortation to ‘Find People Who Think Like You’, an interesting contrast to the invitations to find the remains of one’s ancestors on the original website (www.moypolk.ru).

From the information available, it would appear that the Ministry of Culture and Moscow City Government, through the figure of Nikolai Zemtsov, appropriated the legitimacy of a popular grassroots movement. This strongly suggested that local commemorative activities organised without the state were to be perceived as suspicious and even threatening to the government’s management of history (Lapenkov 2018). The government’s approach to BP reflected the importance that they accorded to carefully managing and curating emotive images of wartime heroism: they made every effort to ensure it was not left to chance in the hands of non-state actors. This required being in control of the dissemination of narratives and ensuring there was an appropriate narrative to disseminate. In the following chapter, I analyse how the government approached this task.

Chapter Nine: History at the Centre of Russian Identity

In this chapter, I argue that the Russian government promoted a preoccupation with history to legitimise not only its policies but also its vision of Russian patriotism. To support my argument, I first demonstrate how the government and media linked these historical issues to the concept of Russian identity. Second, I explore how the government and media attempted to reinforce their message by depicting Russians as gaining a greater awareness of their own history and culture ('cultural consciousness'). Finally, I examine how the Russian media presented the promotion of cultural consciousness as the mission of the Russian people.

The government's interference in the mnemonic sphere showed the importance it placed on history, something that was also reflected in government strategies and political interviews released during Putin's third term. Politicians placed great importance on the role of a shared history in maintaining a healthy society. By emphasising the pivotal role of historical memory in building Russian society, politicians, including Vladimir Putin and Vladimir Medinskii, placed historical memory at the centre of Russian society, as shown in their respective comments:

Historical memory is the most important component of our culture, history, our present [...] and our future will be made with reference to these historical experiences (RT na russkom 2014c 1.42.00).

A clear position has been formulated with respect to the identity of Russian (*rossiiskogo*) society, in which respect for the heroic past [...] has played the part of a unifying strength (Minkul'tury 2016).

Such claims were typical, arguing that Russian society could not progress without recourse to history's lessons. A political preoccupation with the past was presented as crucial for

securing the future, thus expanding upon historical framing's inherent argument that knowledge of the past is crucial for understanding the present.

Although Putin had presented culture as a means of achieving unity to cohere dissonant elite voices and discourses as early as 1999 (Putin 1999), by his third presidential term, the meaning of culture in official discourse was frequently limited to historical memory. The Russian National Security Strategy to 2020, in both the original 2009 and renewed 2015 versions, emphasised the assertion of Russian interpretations of history as a means of cohering society against perceived existential threats, listing the following as key beliefs:

Confrontations in the global information space caused by some countries trying to use information and communications technology to achieve their geopolitical aims, including the manipulation of social consciousness and the falsification of history.

The basis of the general Russian identity of the nations of the Russian Federation is the system, established through history, of united spiritual, moral and cultural and historical values.

These values were defined in terms that grounded them very firmly in history, which was itself stressed as the source of unity: 'the historical unity of the nations of Russia is the continuity of the history of our Motherland'. All the aforementioned quotations can be found in both the 2009 and 2015 versions of the National Security Strategy to 2020 (Prezident Rossii 2009; 2015c)

This notion of Russian multinational 'historical unity' is easily debunked: first, Russian territory had seen three state collapses in the century prior to this statement; second, many Russian national minorities, such as the Kalmyks and Chechens, would have very different interpretations of Russian history to ethnic Russians. Yet, these points

disproving Russian ‘historical unity’ also suggest why the government promoted it so fervently: to provide a unifying national idea and to delegitimise and demobilise voices that reflected the potential and existing national, ethnic, and political divisions within Russian society.

The government and media encouraged and promoted a set ‘correct’ view of history (and of history’s relevance to current events). A ‘correct’ version of history already implied a tacit disapproval of ‘incorrect’ (non-government aligned) views of history but there were also more explicit, moralistic condemnations, as in the words of the Minister for Culture:

[If your son tells you he read a different version of history to the Russian one] you need to explain to him that there is good, and there is evil, ideally through your own example (V. Medinskii 2015b).

The quasi-religious tone of the language contributed to de-legitimising the idea that a ‘good’ Russian could interpret Russian history differently from the government’s set historical standard narrative.

This sense of not fully knowing or understanding (*nedoponimanie*) history also emerged frequently in my interviews with cultural practitioners. It often accompanied the notion that the concealment of the ‘real’ truth of history was causing problems today. For Sergei Lapenkov, revealing historical truth meant telling the history of the GPW as the ‘history of people - not just front-line soldiers but the history of that generation, that generation of our grandparents, who were in the rear, who were imprisoned by the state for stealing a loaf of bread, who lived through the Blockade’ (Lapenkov 2018). Expressing a similar sentiment, Pavel Zheltov explained how he started his historical festivals and clubs out of a desire to address historical injustices, specifically the notion that all soldiers in General Vlasov’s 2nd Shock Army had been traitors (Zheltov 2018b). Other practitioners saw

their role as refocussing popular local interest on ‘forgotten’ history (Historical Club Organiser [anonymous] 2018). Interestingly, all of them voiced a sense of responsibility for addressing these issues, a responsibility to reveal the ‘real’ history. In this way, the practitioners mirrored the government rhetoric around history, with its sense of mission and purpose in combatting historical falsehood. This was the case even where they did not agree or fully correspond to the government’s understanding of this task (or of which history should be promoted), as with Sergei Lapenkov.

Politicians had harsh words for those who challenged state-approved versions of politics and history too openly, however. They were accused of the worst form of treachery. Vladimir Medinskii’s commentary on those who identified factual inaccuracies in Russian historical myths exemplified this divisive approach:

In fact, they are not very different from the Nazi collaborator Sviridov, who betrayed (Zoya) Kosmodemyanskaya to the Germans.⁹⁰ As everyone knows, the Germans saved their thirty pieces of silver because they rewarded him with a bottle of moonshine for that. I hope he burns in hell! Just like those who spread doubt about or dig around and try to disprove the achievements of our ancestors will burn in hell (BBC Russian 2016).

By extension, one’s understanding of current events and one’s understanding of history reverberated onto one’s patriotism and right to belong (Brusnev 2015a; Grachev 2015). In addition to attacks focussed on individuals, Russian media and politicians also presented disagreements over history as geopolitical struggles, much as they presented geopolitical struggles as the replaying of historical episodes. Journalists and politicians employed

⁹⁰ Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya was a teenage partisan in German-occupied Soviet Union who was tortured and murdered for her bravery, at least in the Soviet legend, although some scholars have questioned this version. More information on the mythical partisan fighter is available in (Harris 2012).

militaristic language, with talk of ‘brigades’, to describe Russia’s struggle against alleged falsifiers of history:

At the beginning of 2016, Russia will establish an academic brigade to uncover falsifications of military history. Above all it will study the history of World War Two and issues related to the falsification of the victory of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War (Lenta 2015c).

The notion that people were trying to falsify Russian or Soviet history contributed to the preoccupation with preserving ‘correct’ memories.

This militarisation of historical interpretation also featured in the Russian information warfare doctrine released at the end of December 2016. The doctrine explicitly connected supposed historical falsifications of Russian military history with current defence policy, describing as its main aim:

The neutralisation of hostile activities in the information and psychological realms, including those aimed at tearing apart the historical foundations and patriotic traditions linked to defending the Fatherland (Lenta 2015a).

The text implied that an assault on history was an assault on the very foundations of the nation, once again justifying the shrill and intensive invocation of history in political discourse. Thus, Russian politicians converted dissent from the official historical line into an existential threat. In his 2015 address to the Federal Assembly, Vladimir Putin cited Russian citizens’ willingness to defend their ‘national interests, their history’, as if they were the same thing (Prezident Rossii 2015h).

Yet, while the government sought to promote a preoccupation with history, they were always careful to restrict the parameters of acceptable historical discourse. Their endeavours to inculcate a ‘correct’ interpretation of Russian history extended beyond the discursive realm

to outright prohibitions on speech, namely legislation relating to patriotism and the dangers of historical falsification and legislation concerning media freedom, which sought to curtail opposition voices. The most prominent law belonging to the first group was the introduction of Article 354 against the rehabilitation of Nazism. At first glance, this law does not appear especially controversial; however, in addition to making it illegal to justify or attempt to rehabilitate Nazism, it also prohibited showing disrespect to symbols of Russian military glory, spreading information disrespecting public holidays related to the country's defence, or knowingly disseminating false information on the activities of the USSR during the Second World War (Kurilla 2014).

Incurring hefty fines for its violation, the passing of Article 354 reduced the space for discussing history, rendering illegitimate even minor deviations from the government's standard cultural historical narrative. An illustrative example of those targeted by the law included the case of a schoolboy in Perm' who was convicted under this law in June 2016 for 'falsifying history'. His crime was to write that the USSR shared responsibility for World War Two because it attacked Poland with Germany. The boy's high marks in History lessons at school were cited as evidence that he was suitably informed about historical matters and thus knowingly spread 'false' information (HRW 2017). There have been other prosecutions for social media posts although, as the Yury Dmitriev case shows, historians researching unwelcome topics can be targeted for prosecution even without the existence of laws against the falsification of history.⁹¹

In addition to the above legislation, the Russian Duma passed laws, and government agencies acted, to repress alternative views on history and politics using draconian legislation on anti-extremism, blogs, and NGOs (Shadrina 2014; Putin 2013). A journalist working for

⁹¹ For more details on the prosecution of Yury Dmitriev, a historian of the Gulag, please see this dedicated website: <https://dmitrievaffair.com/>

state media at the time, who wished to remain anonymous, said that events leading to Ukraine proved a turning point with regard to state control (Journalist [anonymous] 2018). After the annexation of Crimea, the media stressed the unity of the Russian people behind the President, and those who diverged were deemed to be a ‘fifth column’ (Putin 2014b).

Equivocation and the ‘Russian’ Question

While the government found it easy to clearly designate ‘enemies’ there was more ambiguity in their description of what constituted a patriot, even though the concept of patriotism was so frequently invoked. The dramatic events occurring across Putin’s third term saw Russian identity or the ‘Russian question’ enter the domestic headlines in a way previously rare (Vinokurovaya 2014). Although the Ukraine Crisis in 2014 had a dramatic impact on the increase in nationalistic and patriotic rhetoric, the government had begun its rhetorical shift towards issues of identity somewhat earlier; for example, President Putin began his third term by presenting Russian identity as under threat from internal and external enemies (Prezident Rossii 2013b; 2012a; Romanov and Stepanov 2014). He also clarified that strengthening national consciousness would be a national priority but acknowledged that Russian identity was in need of further definition (Prezident Rossii 2012a).

The ‘Russian idea’, or what it means and should mean to be Russian, has been the topic of heated debate and disagreement from the Russian empire through the Soviet Union, to the 1990s and up until the present-day (Seton-Watson 2017; Gratioux 1953; 1953; Riasanovsky 2005; Billington 2004; J. Dunlop 1993; Brudny 1998; Beissinger 2009; Breslauer and Dale 2013). Conceptualisations of Russian identity between 2012-2017 borrowed from several of these traditions simultaneously and contradictorily; for example, the Russian media, especially VN, readily combined references to Catherine the Great, Stalinism, and the Great Patriotic War in single episodes covering events in East Ukraine (Chigishov 2014f; 2014c; 2014a; 2014g). Amidst this flurry of references, the actual concrete

meaning of Russianness was difficult to elucidate beyond its connection to Russia's historical roots, a recurring finding in my analysis of government speeches, interviews, and documents.

In other words, the government took advantage of the fact there has long been debate and confusion as to the precise meaning of the term *ruskii*, which is often used to denote the ethnically Russian (as opposed to the civic, more inclusive *rossiiskii*). Despite these ethnic connotations, the term *ruskii* can also refer to people who are not Slavic Russians but identify with Russian culture or are sympathetic to it. By way of example, in January 2012, Putin spoke about how *ruskost*' contains within it 'Russian Armenians (*russkie armyane*), Russian Azerbaijanis (*russkie azerbaidzhantsy*), Russian Germans (*russkie nemtsy*), and Russian Tatars (*russkie tatory*)' (Putin 2012). This inclusivity should be contextualised within the history of the Russian and Soviet empires, which left an imperial and messianic consciousness embedded within Russian identity (Pain 2004; 2012; Verkhovskii and Pain 2012). The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of Russian diasporas and Russified minorities across Eurasia, who 'offer a path to Russian imperial ambitions' and contribute to this self-perception (Grigas 2016). Consequently, to balance Russia's understanding of itself as a great power, governments have often had to disappoint the demands of Russian ethno-nationalists and promote Russian culture as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural civilisation (Aridici 2018; Laruelle 2016a; Moss 2017).

Accordingly, *ruskost*' in the political discourse of Putin's third term can be best understood as denoting culture or civic identity as opposed to ethnicity but definitions were deliberately vague, especially in 2014.⁹² The fact that *ruskii* can be interpreted in an ethno-centric way has proved convenient for keeping nationalists on side (Al'perovich 2014). Managing ethno-nationalism had been a political priority between 2006-2012 and continued

⁹² This 'blurred' approach is analysed in detail in Part III, Chapter III („Ruski svet“ – između nacionalnog i civilizacijskog diskursa) in (Subotić 2020).

to be a prominent concern at the beginning of Putin's third term, when there were still fresh memories of the 11th December 2010 Manezh Square riot by Russian nationalists (Verkhovskii, Kozhevnikova, and Sibireva 2010; Popescu 2012; Horvath 2014). The government most embraced ethnocentrism during the Ukraine Crisis and in early 2014 when, in his direct line phone-in, Putin lauded the 'Russian (*ruskii*) cultural code', calling it a 'powerful genetic code' (Prezident Rossii 2014f).

Despite these flirtations with ethno-centrism, outright ethno-nationalism was largely limited to the Ukraine Crisis in (major) media and government discourse during Putin's third term. Beyond the Ukraine Crisis, Vladimir Putin and government figures promoted an ethnically inclusive image of *ruskost*'. In an article for *Nezavisimaya gazeta* on 23rd January 2012, Putin used the idea of the civilisation state, arguing that 'the Great Russian mission was to unite and bind civilisation. In this type of civilisation-state there are no national minorities' (Putin 2012). However, he went on to reiterate the Russian role as *primus inter pares*: 'This civilisational identity is based on the preservation of the Russian cultural dominance, the carriers of which are not only ethnic Russian, but all carriers of such identity regardless of nationality' (Ibid). Thus, in their definitions of Russian identity, the government did not allow the ethno-nationalist appeal of the term *ruskii* to jeopardise the imperial vision of *ruskost*'.

This sometimes-contradictory approach reflected the politicised nature of the discourse on *ruskost*', with its dual requirements of encouraging ethnic Russian chauvinism while presenting Russians as the vanguard of a messianic mission. This rhetorical volatility had worked well for the Kremlin when faced with ethno-nationalist sentiment in Putin's second term and in 2010 (Shevel 2011). It was especially useful in Putin's third term, when depictions of Russian identity were presented as encompassing a range of features, including being defined by language and its messianic duty to the world. By way of example, various

sources defined Russian culture as derived from ethnic Russians but open to everyone (Chigishov 2015f 33.04; Aslamova 2015; Putin 2014a).

The government's ability to downplay the divergence inherent in debates on national identity depended on its propagation of a 'single stream' view of history, which promoted the idea of a 1,000-year-old Russian (*russkii*) history, unbroken from Prince Vladimir (Volodymyr) to Vladimir Putin (Pakhalyuk 2018a; 2018b). The 2014 Russian Military Strategy contained similar claims. In this document, the government described culture (including history) as an integral part of national security, placing it on the same level as domestic threats from terrorism (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2014b). Both Strategies, combined with Putin's earliest Federal Assembly Addresses during the third term, suggested that projecting a vision of patriotism as a sort of everyday consciousness of one's cultural legacy was a deliberate alternative to ideology, rather than simply a failure to devise a workable ideational framework (Prezident Rossii 2012a; 2013b). By focussing on historical events as a shared all-Russian legacy the government avoided having to limit itself to promoting only one definition of patriotism, which might risk alienating large sections of society. Instead, the government adopted a melange of ideas, cohered by a patriotic standard cultural historical narrative that appealed to as many ideologies and political persuasions as possible: imperialists, Communist nostalgists, supporters of a strong state, ethno-nationalists (Government.ru 2013).

Cultural Consciousness

The government was able to appeal to diverse audiences because it presented knowledge and awareness of certain narratives around patriotic history as the key feature of patriotism. It also depicted this ostensible knowledge of history (in practice simply agreement with the government standard cultural historical narrative) as evidence of 'cultural consciousness'. As noted earlier in the thesis, cultural consciousness can be defined as an awareness of one's

historical and cultural heritage. In media depictions, attaining this awareness also provided people with an understanding of greater truths about one's own country and indeed the world. Cultural consciousness, characterised by 'correct' understanding of history, was central to the notion of patriotism promoted by the Russian government and media. By defining patriotism largely through the media-concocted notion of cultural consciousness (and agreement with the government), there was no need for a more coherent or detailed set of ideational principles.

The argument was that a new cultural consciousness had emerged alongside the political shifts that accompanied President Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. This was articulated by Vladimir Medinskii in an interview with Russian magazine, *Snob*. In the interview, Medinskii describes how, over the course of Putin's third presidential term and thanks to his own efforts, culture has come to play a much more prominent role in political discourse. He explicitly invokes the concept of consciousness to describe this process, arguing that consciousness determines existence (*bytie*) and not the other way around. Significantly, this view reinforces my earlier findings that, according to the media and government, a person's identity was as dependent on their interpretation of history (i.e. to be Russian, you had to espouse the 'Russian' view of history). He then described how Russia has finally passed through the confused 'Adam Smith' views of the 1990s and Russians had finally become conscious (*osoznali*) of how much depends on the way history is told, including how society is constructed, the level of culture in society, and on what is being used to educate children. Speaking on behalf of the Russian nation, Medinskii expressed the notion that Russia has reached a new level of understanding of itself but also of the world, and the laws that govern it and its history (Uskov 2013).

By now, it should go without saying that not all Russians could attain this cultural consciousness. Indeed the effort, contained within the call to history, to not 'simply remember

but to actually repeat the victory led to the quick formation of not only practices of solidarity and identification with those who fought but also with a symbolic aggression' against those who do not engaged in these practices (Arkhipova et al. 2017). As Il'ya Kalinin has noted, no matter how large the party table, there could never be space for everyone at the party (Kalinin 2015). At the head of this party table sat President Putin, who epitomised cultural consciousness. In media and government depictions, demonstrating cultural consciousness equated to demonstratively recognising Russia's cultural worth, as supported by its historical achievements, as well as her exploitation by others.

The media presented Putin's policies as being informed by the Russian historical experience and as parallels of historical precedents. This was evidenced by the historical framing of events in Ukraine, sanctions, and Syria. The media and politicians supported this interpretation through the (unoriginal) argument that Putin was finally defending Russian dignity after many years of humiliation by its enemies. The Russian president exploited such sentiments in his 2015 Valdai speech when he reminded Western representatives of concrete episodes of alleged humiliation in the 1990s (Politika segodnya 2017). To avenge this humiliation, it was crucial that the government, supported by the Russian people, defend Russian historical memory from perceived attacks by the West.⁹³

The various calls to remember and defend 'our' history by ordinary civilians and government ministers alike implied an equality of agency that depicted politicians as ordinary participants rather than puppet masters in this ostensible wave of patriotism (Grishin 2014e; Novoselova 2014b). This technique cleverly suggested a more organic emergence of patriotic feeling, with the government in harmony with, rather than in control of, this phenomenon. Yet, there is little evidence that cultural consciousness is or was a genuine phenomenon, in

⁹³ Please see pages 190-192 for further detail on the projection of historical falsification.

which ordinary Russians performed acts of patriotic engagement with history *en masse* in order to show their allegiance with the government. Research in fact suggests the opposite (Goode 2016; 2018b). Instead, I argue that the Russian state appropriated and curated images of engagement with Russian history for the services of legitimising the government and its policies. The purpose was seemingly to suggest that Vladimir Putin had enabled an incredible historical awakening in Russia. This awakening had led people to realise that historical memory was central to Russian identity, a realisation that had strengthened the nation internally and on the world stage.

How Did the Media and Government Depict Cultural Consciousness?

The government and media's depiction of patriotic activities during President Putin's third term contrasted somewhat to their approach before 2012. If previously the government encouraged people to demonstrate their national identity in a way that legitimised the *derzhavnost'* (importance of a strong state) world-view (Sanina 2012), then in Putin's third term the state and pro-government media placed increasing emphasis on how citizens were developing this 'historically aware' patriotic instinct from the grassroots. While this did not mean that the 'for-show' (*pokaznoi*) patriotism of Victory Day was abandoned, it did suggest that the government and media were managing and appropriating grassroots patriotic tendencies. In so doing, the government sought to harness and politicise the legitimacy inherent in 'ordinary' patriotic activities, which have tended to be apolitical in the Russian context (Goode 2016).

In their coverage of the Ukraine Crisis, sanctions and Syria, the media included images and descriptions of ordinary people expressing their support for the government. 40 per cent of articles and broadcasts referencing the historical schema also included evidence of active demonstrations of patriotism/government allegiance. However, this was much higher for the Ukraine study (62 per cent) and Sanctions (49 per cent), than for Syria (just 11 per

cent). Through this presentation, the media not only provided a template of how to perform patriotism, it also led audiences to believe that their fellow citizens were becoming more patriotic in their daily lives (Robertson and Greene 2017; Greene and Robertson 2017). As such, the coverage itself was one way the media encouraged demonstrations of patriotism, seeking to make the audience feel less comfortable with not participating (lest they stand out as unpatriotic).

| Event | Patriotic activity | Patriotic actor |
|-----------|--|------------------------------------|
| Ukraine | Speaking Russian | Pro-Russian (Ukrainians) |
| Crisis | Raising money for East Ukraine | Russians |
| | Commemorating Victory Day | Pro-Russians, Russians, Government |
| | Wearing St George ribbons | Pro-Russians, Russians, Government |
| | Waving victory flags | Pro-Russians, Russians |
| | Defending Soviet memorials | Pro-Russians |
| | Fighting <i>banderovtsy</i> | Pro-Russians, Russian “volunteers” |
| Sanctions | Boycotting Western food | Russians |
| | Holidaying in Russia | Russians, Government |
| | Wearing missile/Putin t-shirts | Russians, some Westerners |
| | De-offshorisation | Patriotic oligarchs |
| Syria | Attending military-patriotic or military history clubs | Russian children |

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Wearing <i>Voentorg</i> Syria t-shirts | Russians |
| Celebrating Russian history and culture (by attending exhibitions, festivals, etc.) | Russians, NGOs, politicians |

Table 14. Positive patriotic performance in coverage of the Ukraine Crisis, Sanctions, and Syria.

Table 14 shows various, primarily everyday, activities that media sources repeatedly presented as evidence of patriotism and support for government policy within the historical framing studies. It is far from an exhaustive list as the media were presenting such images of patriotism as examples of individual responses, rather than mass identical actions. However, the examples included in Table 14 represented patriotic activities reproduced across at least ten news pieces in two or more sources. In the case of some activities, such as boycotting Western food or wearing a St George Ribbon, they were reproduced across dozens, even hundreds, of news articles and/or broadcasts. In the case of the Ukraine Crisis, these practices were often closely linked to the Great Patriotic War, the event within which Russian media framed the Ukraine Crisis. This had the effect of conflating one's respect for veterans with one's position on Ukraine, thus appropriating commemorative practice for political ends (Grishin 2014b).

Alongside the repurposing of symbols such as the St George Ribbon, there were more dramatic examples of demonstrating one's patriotism, including the media's glorification of those fighting in Ukraine (Aslamova 2014; Chigishov 2014b 17.33; Bas 2014). These more dramatic examples of performing patriotism, while not limited to the Ukraine Crisis, proved the exception rather than the rule. Instead, there tended to be a projected congruence between ordinary people's everyday nationalism and the state's own policies, as was notable in coverage of responses to sanctions. Sources covered patriotic boycotts of Western products, presenting the embrace of domestic products as the antidote to the decadent 1990s and wild

capitalism (Saltykova, 2014; Lenta 2014a). The media and government also accentuated the involvement of Russian citizens in reporting Western restaurants to the authorities and the support of ordinary people for the Russian countersanctions on Western produce: ‘80 per cent of respondents are confident that the Russian embargo [on Western produce] will work in the country’s favour’ (Domcheva 2014). Thus, methods of resistance to Western symbols reoccurred across the media and were emphasised as grassroots phenomena, creating a sense of camaraderie, as with claims that government officials were replacing foreign cars with Russian ones (Argumenty i fakty 2014).

Such depictions overtly positioned Western (or indeed any) criticism of the Russian government as an attack on Russia and called for people to demonstrate their patriotism as a defensive response. These demonstrations were sometimes violent, inspired by the aggressive and militaristic tone of the media and the need to demonstrate that you were not ‘one of them’. One such example was the way that employees at the Turkish-owned Efes drinks factory in Ul’yanovsk threw eggs at the Turkish flag, thus demonstrating their support for the Russian government’s reaction to the downing of a fighter pilot in Turkey (Lenta 2015d).

As in the previous example, the activities did not have to reference history but many of them did. Some of these were obvious, such as with the wearing of St George Ribbons, while others were more subtle, such as the boycotting of Western food for its symbolism of the 1990s. For other activities included in the table, there was no explicit historical connection. However, even if there was no explicit reference (for example, wearing *Voentorg* t-shirts to show support of government policy in Syria), historical framing had turned any act of support for the government into a symbolic assertion of support for its political uses of history, and vice versa, by conflating current events so fully with past episodes.

Whether explicitly or implicitly referencing historical awareness, most of the activities in which patriotic actors engaged were mundane and accessible to ordinary people, from holidaying at home to watching Soviet cartoons (Argumenty i fakty 2015a). Significantly, the media often invoked Soviet history when extolling the virtues of such patriotic activities, thereby further fusing the concepts of views on history and patriotic feeling (Skoibeda 2014c; Kostenko-Popova 2014). Indeed, it was only through media framing that some of the so-called patriotic activities were signposted as such. Most Russians holiday at home and eat domestic produce; by turning the latter into patriotic acts of allegiance with government policy, the media could politicise the apolitical. This was partly facilitated by the historical framing of current events within heroic past deeds, given that, for example, in openly supporting Russian countersanctions, you also demonstrated your anger at the West's ostensible humiliation of Russia in the 1990s.

This politicisation of the everyday had assumed a more comprehensive character by 2015, reflecting a shift in government discourse from a defensive presentation of Russian identity to a more confident, offensive one. This shift towards a more messianic and organised understanding of patriotism focused on how military-patriotic and military history clubs and camps, for good or for bad, were forming the Russian fighters of the future (Granina 2015; Fedotova 2015). Despite being forward-looking in its orientation towards children, these activities still centred on the past by privileging the teaching of military history and emulation of earlier fighter heroes, as in the following claim:

The Soviet education system's main objective was to raise patriots, ready to defend their homeland. This was its entire purpose [...] it's time we stopped following Western standards and returned to the best traditions of Russian and Soviet schooling (Lenta 2014g).

The quotation above shows how the media also emphasised the military patriotic element required if Russia were to reassume Soviet greatness.

As noted by Vera Skvirskaja, many of the patriotic demonstrations through 2014-2015 were highly commodified and commercialised, creating patriotic branding that modern citizens could embrace, such as attending exhibitions, wearing *vatniki* (padded jackets associated with patriotism inflected with Soviet nostalgia), and even consuming salads (Strukov et al 2017). The best-publicised patriotic branding exercise was the marketing stunt-cum-protest by two young entrepreneurs selling pro-Putin t-shirts bedecked with Iskander missiles and mocking the West in 2014 (Khozhaletva 2014a). In this way, the media encouraged audiences to affirm a certain interpretation of the Soviet Union, 1990s, or the Great Patriotic War by wearing brands and copying heroes held up for emulation. Once successful, these stunts, or *aktsii*, tended to be repeated across events: for example, the wearing and designing of political statement t-shirts re-emerged after intervention in Syria (Ovchinnikov 2015). The performative elements apparent in the ‘patriotic’ activities covered by the media were simultaneously encouraged by government-funded organisations, such as, for example, the All-Russian National Front and the ‘Community’ (*Soobshchestvo*) GONGOs. Both bodies were concerned with building patriotic activities and Vladimir Putin attended events for both organisations, where they were presented as non-state actors (Prezident Rossii 2016a).

The government did not want to only portray people demonstrating their patriotism, it presumably also wanted to encourage them to interact with this historically informed patriotism. Thus, the discursive shift was also reflected in an increase in the number and type of patriotic activities being promoted by the government, especially those targeted at the young. By way of example, RVIO launched not only military history clubs but also, together with *Rostourism*, a suite of military historical tours called *Dorogi Pobedy* (Pathways of

Victory). These tours, aimed at 12-17-year-olds, lasted from one-and-a-half hours to two days and encompassed important military historical sites (Dorogi Pobedy n.d.). The marketing materials of both the tours and several of RVIO's camps (*Platsdarm, Strana Geroev, Borodino*) show that the activities were largely interactive, focussed on fulfilling RVIO's aim of promoting only patriotic history and in such a way that encouraged young participants to imagine themselves as the fighters of the past (RVIO 2016c; Strana Geroev n.d.; RVIO n.d.). While modernised, the clubs in particular represented, at least in part, a revival of Soviet style organisations, an action that functions as a kind of performative memory in itself. Moreover, by providing such ample opportunities for children to re-enact or 're-perform' the past, the organisers have provided the young generation with memories centred around the past: shared childhood memories of engaging with history. This reflected not only the interconnectedness of patriotism and historical reference in Russian political discourse, but also the efforts undertaken to bring history to life, to take it from a received memory into a performed one, echoing the ritualistic nature of Soviet commemorations of the Great Patriotic War and, in form but not content, even of the October Revolution.

From Class to Cultural Consciousness

The borrowing from Soviet templates was also evident in the media's depictions of cultural consciousness: the media showed individuals demonstrating their cultural sense of Russianness (*russkost'*) and an awareness of Russian history in a way that was indebted to Soviet, especially Socialist Realist, traditions of depicting class consciousness. The overlap between cultural and class consciousness is best understood as the convenient adaptation of a Soviet type of thinking about belonging and identity (class consciousness) that has left remnants in Russian culture and discourse. It is relevant that other scholars have noted the imposition of Socialist Realist narratives, deliberate or not, in citizens' and institutions' retellings of the Chernobyl disaster and the Leningrad blockade (Kirschenbaum 2006). In the case of

Chernobyl, the use of Socialist Realist tropes was associated with efforts to recast and revise the truth about Chernobyl into a narrative of heroic triumph rather than condemnation of everything wrong with late Soviet society. In other words, it also related to a political use of history and historical distortion (Johnson 2019).

Soviet depictions of class consciousness emerged in literary, political, and journalistic writings soon after the revolution, as Soviet authors looked to depict new heroes. In analysing Soviet depictions of class consciousness, scholars have argued that the structuring force in the early Socialist Realist tradition was the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic (Clark 1981). This dialectic showed how the hero, with the help of the Party, moved from spontaneity to consciousness, as typified by a 1919 Pravda article which delineated the two types of Soviet heroes: the conscious (Krychkov) and the spontaneous (Chapaev) (Ibid, 85). These two types of heroes then spread to film and literature, with Chapaev becoming the ultimate early Socialist Realist hero after the eponymous novel and then film.

If spontaneity, as personified by Chapaev, was unguided, anarchic actions or actions led by historical force, then consciousness normally denoted activities guided by political forces. Anna Krylova refined this idea, arguing that the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic was not exhaustive by showing that spontaneity did not obstruct the attainment of class consciousness (Krylova 2003). Instead, she argued, class instinct was a necessary precondition to the achievement of class consciousness. Igal Halfin expanded upon this argument, demonstrating the importance of a combination of the cerebral and the instinctual (or affective) in depictions of the ideal Soviet New Man of the 1920s and 1930s (Halfin 2003). The Socialist Realist emphasis on *narodnost*, in terms of being of and for the people, also accentuated the role of the instinctual in depictions of class consciousness.

Beyond the 1930s, studies have demonstrated that the Soviet state, journalists, and writers adapted class consciousness paradigms for patriotic ends during the Great Patriotic War and at various stages of the USSR's history. Yuri Slezkine showed that from its earliest days the USSR accepted, promoted and reinforced ethnic particularism using rhetoric normally reserved for discussing issues of class, even where this opposed class interests (Slezkine 1994). Such traditions would have made rhetorical borrowings from the Soviet class consciousness paradigm even more natural for journalists, who may well have reproduced this adapted paradigm unconsciously.

My comparison of Soviet class consciousness with the depiction of Russia(ns) as a nation gaining greater cultural consciousness relates exclusively to rhetoric. I am concerned with examining how both paradigms were used as figures of discourse and as a way of characterising people. Just as class consciousness sought to depict a proletarian awakening regardless of the evidence for this, so too did media depictions of cultural consciousness seek to promote an idea of an upsurge in patriotism and government support, regardless of whether this accorded with reality or not.

Such rhetorical convergence was most apparent in how projections of cultural consciousness reflected understandings of history within 'the Soviet didactic tradition, where the emphasis is on history as scientific truth (restricting room for interpretation or debate) and on associated patriotic or moral lessons' (J. Brown 2015, 215). Importantly, both notions depended on a 'true' understanding of history, or the 'laws thereof', to function (Halfin 2000). Where Soviet ideologues' obsession with history centred on its role in asserting the truth of the ascendancy of the working classes, under Putin, historical episodes were used to assert the revived primacy of *russkie* as a people (*narod*). During the third term, (despite the previously discussed malleability of the narrative) history was depicted as a firm and credible framework through which to interpret political events, although evidently this was no longer

indebted to Marxist-Leninist theories. If the latter viewed history as dialectical and eschatological, then in its current guise, history was now a cyclical process doomed to repeat itself because others forgot its essentialist lessons.⁹⁴

As noted earlier, the line between class identity and cultural nationalism was already blurred, which would have facilitated and influenced the media's borrowings from class consciousness in their depiction of patriotic awakenings (Suny 1993). It also reflected the very practical and flexible nature of class consciousness, which could be applied in different ways to suit the needs of the state (Halfin 2000, 3–5; Brandenberger 2002). The post-Soviet audience's familiarity with the class consciousness discourse would also have clarified the state's expectations of them, i.e. they would have understood the need to assert – or at least assent to – the Kremlin's narrative in order to show their culturally conscious credentials. Ideally these assertions would involve visible but seemingly spontaneous displays of loyalty. This would have been clear from the mobilisational use of class consciousness in the Soviet context, where visible displays of loyalty and belonging often took the form of repeating formulaic language, and performance and mass demonstration (Priestland 2007; Lenoë 1998).

As seen in the earlier discussion of RVIO's activities, cultural consciousness was both an emotional, instinctive response *and* a learned one. Just as the ideal Soviet man was depicted as resulting from the move from spontaneity to consciousness (Krylova 2003), so too did the media's cultural consciousness depictions encompass, often ambiguously, both features (Shablinskaya 2015). Anna Krylova's emphasis on the role of class instinct as evidence that spontaneity was an important and inalienable trait of the idealised Soviet

⁹⁴ The term 'essentialist' is used here in the philosophical sense to denote the belief that things have a defined set of immutable characteristics that make them what they are and the purpose of studying these things is to identify the characteristics.

proletariat is instructive here, although in place of class instinct there is instead a national/cultural instinct in the Putin era.⁹⁵

This emphasis on the instinctual and the affective reflected a broader assertion of historical authenticity or *pravdivost'* (veracity) as something to be felt rather than achievable through scientific examination. As Paul Goode argues, 'insofar as patriotism involves loving the motherland, its authenticity or sincerity is determined by way of emotional connection' (Goode 2016). Such attitudes emerged in the media's mockery of pro-Western intellectuals and in the government and media's discursive pivot towards ordinary people (the *narod*), whom they depicted as the bearers of a common-sense Russian wisdom and resistance to Western infiltration (Khozhaletova 2014b; Chernyak 2014; Kagarlitskii 2014b). As noted, this folksy emphasis on *narodnye* values was also a feature of many Soviet literary and media depictions of class consciousness (Halfin 2000; Clark 1981).

At its core, the spectacle of cultural consciousness involved patriotic Russians coming together to (ostensibly) celebrate and experience history in a way that also demonstrated allegiance with government policy (either directly or indirectly by affirming the government standard cultural historical narrative). By identifying the active remembering of a shared interpretation of history and allegiance with government policy as evidence of a patriotic awakening, the government could pander to different, sometimes irreconcilable, positions, albeit within a limited range. This naturally required a selective focus on carefully curated patriotic retellings and a preference for pathos over objective knowledge of history, emphasising the latter as a lived experience. History was thus reduced to a circle of pre-determined scenarios, which provide a blueprint for the present and future.

⁹⁵ As Julie Fedor has also noted, the importance of an instinctual understanding of Russianness has also bled into notions of (the Eurasianist idea of) *passionarnost'*, whereby those cultures fated to survive are those with the greatest natural drive to action: (Fedor et al. 2017, 333)

In Search of a Mission

Within the historical framing case studies, the media promoted cultural consciousness as evidence that there was something special about Russia(ns); they were uniquely aware of their own history, culture, and heritage. Across the entire third term, the government contributed to and expanded upon such understandings by presenting this culture as an attribute that would help Russia assume a global leadership role. This is detailed in the opening passages of the Foundations of State Cultural Policy (*Osnovy gosudarstvennoi kul'turnoi politiki – OGKP*), released in 2014:

Throughout the entirety of our history it is culture that has preserved, enhanced, and conveyed to new generations the nation's experience. It is culture that has been the basis of unity for the multinational people of Russia, inculcating feelings of patriotism and national pride. It is culture that has strengthened Russia's standing on the world stage (Minkul'tury 2014).

Similar language was found across the annual reports released by the Ministry of Culture, as in the report on activities in 2016, where it stated that: 'Russian culture has historically occupied a leading role in the world and is a powerful strategic resource for strengthening the country's influence on the world stage' (Minkul'tury 2017, 51). However, it was important that Russians recognised this cultural strength and historical identity for its power to be realised. Vladimir Putin expanded upon this idea in his 2015 address to the Federal Assembly, when he quoted Nikolai Karamzin's words that 'A Russian (russkii) should know his worth' (Prezident Rossii 2015f). Vladimir Medinskii, as ever, took this further in a PR event for his book, *War. Myths about the USSR 1939-1945*, when he claimed that problems in other countries, including Ukraine, were caused by their ignorance of historical reality. He argued forcefully that Western culture had caused Russians to forget their own historical value and that this process, under Putin's 'historical renaissance (*vozhrozhdenii*)', was being

undone but still had to be fought (Sochnev 2015). In this way, by preserving its historical truth and identity, Russia was standing strong against the imposition of a liberal – or Western – ideational hegemony.

This interpretation fed into a more self-confident representation of government policies that was especially evident in media coverage of military intervention in Syria, as noted in Chapter Seven. However, the shift in tone in fact dated to the 2015 Migrant Crisis in Europe, as I discovered when conducting initial framing analysis of media coverage of the crisis (for the purposes of, unsuccessfully, trying to identify the presence of historical framing in Russian media coverage of the crisis). Much of the coverage of the crisis gloated over Europe's inability to handle it and some sources promoted the narrative that the USA (with the UK) were deliberately orchestrating the crisis to destroy European identity (G Zotov 2014; Larina and Chernykh 2015).

As such, the media and politicians' self-assurance appeared partly to stem from the growth of crisis and division in Europe: Russia's confidence in its identity was openly contrasted to Europe's crisis of identity. According to the head of *Rosstrudnichestvo*, Konstantin Kosachev, a majority of 'ordinary' Europeans were now supportive of Russian actions around the world, including in Ukraine, and were disenchanted with their own governments (Fedyakina 2014). Domestic media presented Russia as on a mission to lead others to embrace their 'cultural consciousness':

The traditional culture of our people, the historical and cultural heritage of the nations of Russia, is one of the country's powerful resources, a reliable foundation for creating a healthy and rich social and cultural environment, and the basis of historically patriotic (*istoriko-patrioticheskoe*) formation (Minkul'tury 2016).

Any union has the right to function according to their own ideas and principles in line with their cultural, historical, and geographic characteristics [...] Like Russia, there are lots of countries that can draw on a 1000-year history; we have learnt to value our identity, freedom and independence (Prezident Rossii 2017).

This notion represented a new form of Russian messianic thinking, in which Russia acted as a beacon of cultural consciousness, showing other countries how to reconnect with and be true to their history and heritage. Once again, ‘history’ lay at the base of Russia’s strength and its new messianic role, although it often overlapped with the idea of traditional and religious values, especially prior to 2014.⁹⁶

Given this strength, Russia must now assist those countries who had lost their way or lost ‘cultural’ consciousness. During coverage of intervention in Syria, the media promoted the argument that now Putin had restored Russia’s sense of worth, Russians were duty-bound to help others regain theirs (Chigishov 2015c 58.06; Starikov 2015b; Sapozhnikova 2015a; Aslamova 2015). Sometimes sources would explicitly place the USA as the enemy of cultural consciousness, creating a sort of Cold War of historical memory, in which ‘recognising one’s true history’ replaced the role of realising class interest/agreeing to ally with Communism and the USSR. By way of example, one *RG* article cited Russian military commentators explaining to Germans that they were still occupied by the USA, placing the latter as an impediment to national sovereignty while also adding Cold War overtones (Latukhina 2015c).

The media justified such depictions by arguing that ordinary Europeans supported Putin, despite what their governments and media told them. The media used interviews and Western external contributors to validate their characterisation of Putin as a universal folk

⁹⁶ See, for example, Putin’s discussion of how the West has cut itself off from its own values and culture by eschewing traditional values and religion at Valdai 2013 (President of Russia 2013)

hero, presenting an internationalised variant of his leadership cult for domestic audiences (Barabash 2015; Gladilin 2014; Grishin 2014g; Khovanskaya 2014). Although many of the examples emerged in relation to Syria (Gavrilov 2015), Putin's popularity was also often linked directly to the crises in Europe, as in the following excerpt from a KP article, which was typical of the broader narrative:

How attitudes to our country among Europeans are changing against the backdrop of the war in Syria and the influx of refugees:

‘Are you from Russia? Oh, thank you for Putin!’

My friend and I are standing in a jewellery shop in Vienna...there was nothing to prepare us for the way the young shop assistant threw himself on us in raptures:

‘Only Putin can stand up to America! And Turkey! And the EU! They want to destroy our Europe! And he alone won't allow them... Do let Putin know that Europe has all its hopes on him’ (Barabash 2015).

The article also included information on how Europeans no longer trusted the media and television, arguing that such fondness for Russia and Putin was widespread among ordinary Europeans, despite the media propaganda to which they were subjected.

This alleged mass popularity of Putin among Europeans ostensibly derived from his courage to stand against hegemonic Western powers, thereby asserting his confidence in, and faithfulness to, his country's identity and history.⁹⁷ Similar to earlier iterations, the media and government discourse during Putin's third term contributed to creating a ‘media-wide universal norm of belonging to the majority’, which Ilya Kukulkin has identified as an

⁹⁷ While there may be some anecdotal evidence that Putin is popular with right- and left-wing groups for his illiberalism and anti-Americanism, respectively, overall polls show that Putin has an unfavourable image in the West: (Pew Global Research 2018)

important part of patriotic propaganda in Putin's third term (Kukulin 2018, 223). Sergei Markov, an academic close to the Kremlin confirmed this emphasis on the majority, describing this third-term focus on the *narod* as a transition to 'democracy by the majority', whereby the rights of the majority are defended against a supposedly aggressive and hostile minority (N. Petrov 2013).

The media depicted President Putin as being in harmony with, even the embodiment of, the majority's common-sense authenticity, demonstrating his proximity to ordinary Russians though his flaws and his transgression of norms: for example, his use of slang or, more significantly, the decision to send Russian troops to annex Crimea (Izvestiya 2014).⁹⁸ In this way, Putin became a symbol of the ultimate historically-informed patriot whose imbibing of historical memory had enabled him to strengthen Russia's position and even re-establish its leadership role by helping other nations to regain cultural consciousness. His centrality to this vision underscored the origins of the 'call to history' in a search for renewed political legitimacy following the Bolotnaya protests at the beginning of his third term.

The citizens of other countries allegedly wanted their leaders to do the same; as such, Russia's mission was to help or encourage other countries to develop their own cultural consciousness. This often took the form of encouraging other countries to remember events in a way that contradicted the European memory narrative, or supporting those sections of society that did so; for example, Russia frequently uses its media presence and cultural organisations in Serbia to recall the NATO bombings and Russian support for Serbia in the Kosovo conflict,⁹⁹ or spreading revisionist interpretations of the GDR, encouraging *Ostalgie*

⁹⁸ Tatiana Zhurzhenko also examined the role of sincerity and authenticity in political legitimacy: (Zhurzhenko 2018)

⁹⁹ See, for example, the Srbija Pamti section, which, in 2018, was the first tab on the Serbian outlet of the Sputnik news agency: (Sputnik Srbija n.d.)

among East Germans.¹⁰⁰ Although these views certainly exist without Russian encouragement, Russian diplomatic and media actors are choosing to exploit these narratives.

While the topic of Russian interference in the mnemonic politics of other nations lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it is relevant that domestic media presented Russia as the object of envy for other nations due to its cultural consciousness and patriotism (Chigishov 2015a 11.00). Often these sentiments were voiced in domestic media by pro-Kremlin foreigners,¹⁰¹ as with Oliver Stone's well-publicised comments that he admired Russia because Russians (especially Putin) knew history, unlike America (Korolev 2014f, 1.27.30). This alleged extensive knowledge of history was the cornerstone of Russia's mission because it was Russian cultural consciousness that allowed it to see the world and its events differently (that is, correctly).

To support this messianic interpretation of Russian cultural consciousness, from 2015 the media increasingly depicted Russianness in inclusive, even global, terms, often placing it in opposition to nationalism. For example, a VN correspondent explained that 'Russian (*ruskii*) is a concept without borders stretching to all corners of the planet' (Chigishov 2015f 24.01). In rejecting a purely ethnic understanding of Russianness (*ruskost'*) the emphasis was placed on Russian culture as something open to everyone, regardless of nationality. By contrast, ethnicity played an unimportant role in most sources, with political identity, as dictated by historical interpretation, superseding any ethnic heritage when it came to questions of Russianness. This extreme politicisation of *ruskost'* meant that Russian identity was not necessarily open to ethnic Russians with political opinions opposed to those of the Kremlin, as reflected in the quotations below:

¹⁰⁰ By way of example, see the content of Sputnik's portal on the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall: (Sputnik Deutschland n.d.).

¹⁰¹ See also pp. 169-170 of this thesis.

Saying the word *russkii*, I pronounce it not in the narrow ethnic sense of the word, god forbid, and not in the nationalist sense of the word but in the sense that our philosophers and thinkers always attributed to this word, in the cultural and civilisational sense.¹⁰²

Those people [who disagree with government policy on Syria] are no longer Russian. Those people are torn from their roots, from the history of their people. This concept of justice (which they lack) is truly lodged in the Russian genetic code (Vitalii Tseplyaev 2014a).

Such descriptions demonstrated that *russkost'*, despite its ethnic connotations, was now an identity defined by belonging to a civilisation and one's political views.

The civilisational aspect of *russkost'* spoke once more to the increasingly messianic terms in which Russia's post-2015 global prominence was being discussed. Tabloids such as *KP* were especially active in their promotion of Russia's historic mission to save the world. The most instructive example of this approach was *KP* journalist Vladimir Vorsobin's personification of the historically aware, culturally conscious Russian as a thousand-year-old Russian peasant/simple man (*muzhik*):

It was as if a thousand-year-old ordinary Russian man was alive and got up one morning to be told: 'it's the Turks again'. 'What's all this', the Russian would say, understanding through his genes that although he hasn't fought with them for a long time...and here the ordinary man gets to thinking, what's more, thinking in the way only he can [...]. And every hundred years (the GPW and the Patriotic War of 1812, as holy wars, don't figure in this), this ordinary man goes to die for an idea delivered

¹⁰² These ideas shared much in common with Slavophile cultural nationalism, for more details on the latter, please see: (Rabow-Edling, 2006)

to him from on high [...] and then it falls to him to put the broken disfigured mother Russia back on its feet, when in another fifty years it will again be surrounded by enemies (*vorogami*).¹⁰³ And then again there will be a decree from the Tsar and a television, as if Russia couldn't go fifty years without spilling blood. As if she were bored without war. Of course, the man asks me: 'what's the other option – to surrender?' And I, as a Russian person, have no answer to this question and nor can I ever have an answer to this question (Vorsobin 2015).

Vorsobin first externalised the man before recognising himself in that archetypal *muzhik*. This personification of Putin's notion of Russia as a country with a thousand years of unbroken history also emerged in AiF for similar purposes (Shablinskaya 2015). Putin himself later reiterated the centrality of this concept to Russian identity, claiming that through intervention in Syria Russia had shown itself to be 'a strong independent state with a thousand-year history and great traditions' (Latukhina 2015b).

As such, by 2015 Putin and the media had replaced the more ethnic interpretations of *russkost*' seen during the Ukraine Crisis with a more political and civic interpretation, as the latter better suited their argument that Russia ought to assume an assertive global role. In 2015, discussions of Russianness were much more likely to invoke the world stage, where Russia was now playing an active leadership role, at times presented as equal to that of the USA (Prezident Rossii 2016b). Predictably, politicians and the media grounded the reason for Russia's newfound global prominence and return to great power status within a sense of historical destiny:

¹⁰³ The Old Russian word for 'enemies' is used here instead of modern Russian '*vragami*', thereby underscoring the long history of these cyclical patterns of repeating the past.

First and foremost, we need to learn the lessons of history to make peace, to strengthen the societal, political and civil harmony that we have managed to attain (Prezident Rossii 2016d).

And Russia is taking on itself this mission to overcome darkness in the world. Be it Napoleon, Hitler or ISIS (Gamov 2015a).

Despite the shift from the more defensive discourse of 2014 to the assertiveness of 2015, the media and government continued to connect the concept of Russian identity to that of (correct) historical memory.

Notwithstanding the efforts to position Russia as a keeper and disseminator of historical (and contemporary) truth, it was very easy to prove the inaccuracy of events central to the government's standard cultural historical narrative. The myth of the *28 Panfilovtsy*, a multi-ethnic group of soldiers who allegedly died heroically defending Moscow from German tanks in World War Two, was a case in point. The dismantling of the myth began as early as the 1960s, when Vladimir Kardin researched and wrote an article exposing the numerous falsehoods of the legend. The opening of the archives at the end of the 1980s then led to the final public dismantling of the myth. However, in 2013 Sergei Mironenko was dismissed as the Head of the Russian Archives for stating that the *28 Panfilovtsy* were a Soviet fabrication and never existed. Vladimir Medinskii was vocal in his criticism of Mironenko and boasted of his decision to dismiss him (Kommersant 2016; Hobson 2016).

Although the mythical episode had been publicly disproven, Medinskii continued to focus energy, money, and attention on the *Panfilovtsy* myth. In 2016 he funded a film on the topic of, and entitled, *28 Panfilovtsy* through RVIO. In an article justifying his decisions with regard to this affair, he argued his case by claiming that absolute objectivity did not exist, that myths were also facts, and that there were no definite events, only interpretations of history:

‘There are no historical conceptions that are the “one and only truth” or “genuinely objective”’ (V. Medinskii 2017). The Minister for Culture continued by arguing that history should be seen from the point of view of national interests. His confused interpretation of truth and history was encapsulated in the following quotation: ‘This legend became a material force – more terrible and more wonderful than any fact from any real battle’ (Ibid). The film’s director, Andrei Shal’opa, who worked closely with the RVIO, expressed similar sentiments: ‘The feat of Panfilov’s 28 is part of our national culture, a myth that is so powerful it does not make any sense to argue about it. The historical dispute over Panfilov is senseless and immoral’ (Kostomarova 2014). Thus, although the government and its favoured cultural practitioners frequently decried the risk of historical falsification, they seemingly cared little for historical objectivity.

Indeed, it is possible to go further: given the comments above, the government’s accusations of historical falsification appear hypocritical in the extreme. Yet, there was a perverse logic to their insistence on the ‘truth’ of their versions of history. The government’s dismissive attitude towards historical objectivity did not necessarily contradict their simultaneous invocation of history as truth or evidence. Instead, characters such as Medinskii appeared to reference history as a higher form of truth, as an event that, even if it did not take place, should have done because it revealed something important and true about the Russian nation. The government presented the ability to see this ‘something’ as the purpose of studying history: ‘if you can’t see fact in the myth then that means you cease to be a historian’ (V. Medinskii 2017).

The understanding of history as a type of higher truth both informed and was informed by, historical framing, which familiarised audiences with the use of history as allegory. The crux of the matter resided not in the concrete facts of what took place in the past but in whether the historical episode being invoked revealed a (politically convenient)

truth about the heroism of the Russian people, their sacrifices, and their messianic global role to spread this truth. Following such logic, to deny the veracity of a historical episode on the basis of specific documents, or lack of proof, was akin to denying the whole wider truth attached to it, an act that would be perceived as unpatriotic, as seen in the government's reaction to the case of Sergei Mironenko's dismissal as Head of Archives (BBC Russian 2016).

As such, the government and media's intertwining of Russian identity and history, fuelled by a messianic tradition of Russian self-perception, resulted in the conflation of truth with the government's cultural-historical standard narrative in media coverage and political discourse. This was achieved through several techniques, including the confusion of pathos and feeling with authenticity, which the media and politicians privileged over knowledge and objectivity. Prioritising feeling over fact left the concept of 'history as truth' (*pravda*) heavily reliant on a highly emotive notion of history, which required the simultaneous trivialisation of historical education by cultural organisations, as seen above. In Russian, there are two words for truth: *istina* and *pravda*. While *istina* has connotations of essential religious or spiritual truth, *pravda* has 'connotations of justice and "rightness" at least as much as of truth' (Lovell 2018). The conceptualisation of truth being discussed here, in relation to 'history as truth', would certainly be translated as *pravda*.

In the conclusion, I will attempt to situate this confused interpretation, even redefinition, of truth through history within a broader recent emergence of post-truth in Russian and world politics. I will also discuss how this more outward-looking form of cultural consciousness emerged and whether it has/had a future. I will then look at how certain aspects of Russia's call to history, including historical framing, have become features of populist or anti-establishment movements outside Russia.

Chapter Ten: Where Next for Russian History?

Summary of Findings

In opting to research the political use of history in the late Putin era, my initial aim was to understand how the media and government conflated the past with the present. This procedural emphasis stemmed from my interest in examining Russian politicians' and the media's arguments. Despite the hyperbole, bombast, and sometimes blatant disregard for fact, I wanted to take their arguments seriously. In this conclusion, I hope to justify this decision by showing that it has produced findings that clarify political processes underway in Russia and even beyond its borders. I do this by summarising how I have answered the initial two research questions, before exploring some of the more surprising or paradoxical elements of my findings. I then compare these findings with global trends, considering how this study of Russia's political preoccupation with history and the meaning of patriotic identity accords with, and illuminates, trends outside the borders of the Russian Federation.

The Russian media and politicians' frequent invocation of historical analogies was partly an attempt to promote government policies and support the Kremlin's view of current events. However, these historical analogies also contributed to the broader government treatment of history; hence, the formulation of my two research questions:

- 1) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, conflate specific contemporary issues with historical events?
- 2) How did the Russian government, supported by state-aligned media, use this conflation to promote selective engagement with history as central to Russian identity?

From the start, I acknowledged the hypothesis that the two issues were connected and that a relationship existed between historical framing and a (supposed) wider historical

preoccupation in political discourse and government policies. The findings outlined in the preceding chapter justified this hypothesis, showing that historical framing was just one part of a government-directed campaign to place historical interpretation at the centre of Russian identity.

In analysing the use of historical framing through the case study discourses in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I ascertained how politicians and the media achieved the conflation of the past (schema) with the present (news event), namely through the use of narratives that described these events as the revisiting of past triumphs (intervention in Syria) and the remedying of past traumas (Sanctions), or even a combination of the two (Ukraine Crisis). In my analysis of the first case study, the Ukraine Crisis (Chapter Four), I had initially assumed that the confluences were especially exaggerated, and the invective especially vitriolic, due to Russia's historic relationship with Ukraine and the fear of 'colour' revolution that has been a mainstay in Russian discourse since at least the 2007 Munich Speech (Prezident Rossii 2007). However, the media and politicians employed a similar level of hyperbole across the other case studies, even in some of the less tabloid publications (Lenta, Argumenty i fakty), suggesting that this exaggeration was more broadly typical of historical framing. Other characteristics that were less typical of 'standard' media coverage, such as hyper-representation, excessive reference to external contributors, and representations of performed patriotism, also emerged across all three case studies, making it possible to talk of historical framing as a media technique and form of attempted political legitimisation that could be applied and adapted to different news stories (as explored in Chapter Seven).

Nevertheless, differences and distinctions can be drawn: the media's use of historical framing evolved in tune with the government's shifting priorities, as seen in the move from a defensive to an aggressive tone between 2014 and 2015. This change was somewhat unexpected given the Russian media's frequent emphasis on Russian victimhood in their

coverage of Western foreign policy. The shift in tone demonstrated the close connection between historical framing and the wider political project of defining what it means to be a good Russian, as well as reflecting an increased (geo)political self-confidence, as shown in Chapter Eight. Due to the media's tendency to adapt to the government's political (especially foreign policy) objectives, I initially envisaged historical framing as performing a purely time-limited, specific, and pragmatic function: that of convincing the audience that the Russian government's policy response to a given crisis was the correct one, as well as distracting viewers from any negative consequences. However, by contextualising historical framing within the government's wider treatment of history, it became clear that historical framing was also contributing to, and even facilitating, a discussion on a more symbolic level of what it means to be a good Russian, what makes Russia a nation, and even the existential topic of why the Russian Federation should exist.¹⁰⁴

As well as uncovering new angles to the Russian government and media's political use of history, I also had numerous occasions where I did not find what I was expecting: that is, historical episodes that seemed germane to the episode were not invoked. These moments of 'absence' afforded useful insight into which historical episodes the government deemed appropriate as a point of comparison or contrast with the present situation. When conducting my initial analysis to locate case studies in which the media frequently and consistently employed historical analogies, I analysed two weeks' coverage of various discourses and topics. I had assumed that the government's designation of numerous NGOs as foreign agents in 2013 would provide examples of historical framing, in which extreme rhetoric, indebted to the early Soviet era, would conflate Putin with an image of Stalin as a strong defender against foreign interference. In fact, such comparisons were few and far between. I also encountered

¹⁰⁴ This reflects Sherlock's understanding of political discourse as comprising the pragmatic and the symbolic: (Sherlock 2007, 3)

surprisingly few references to late imperial history on a sustained level. Instead, the history invoked as a template for the present reflected a very specific and very Soviet-focussed retelling of history.

In the media sources I analysed, there was little coverage of potentially divisive figures, such as Stalin. This is not to say that the sources were condemnatory (rather the opposite) but that they tended to avoid potentially divisive historical topics. This media strategy was also reflected in the interviews and statements of major politicians. It reinforced my finding, outlined in Chapter Seven, as well as Chapters Four through Six, that the media and politicians invoked deliberately vague or uncontroversial historical analogies in order to co-opt as large a constituency as possible in support of the government's policies. In this sense, analysis of media historical framing is of interest not only for the historical episodes invoked but also for those that were ignored.

More generally, the attempt to provide a template of historical framing should prove useful outside my three case studies, assisting in the analysis of other political uses of history, which is focussed on using history to influence understandings of the present (Kangaspuro 2011). By placing historical framing in its larger context of a government effort to effectuate a 'call to history', I have built on recent studies that have stressed the securitisation of issues of identity and the tendency to present (geo)political challenges as existential threats to Russia.(Gaufman 2017b). This obsession with securitising historical understanding, through depicting performed patriotism, othering of enemies, or accusations of historical falsification, aptly recalls the opening quote to this thesis, in which Vladimir Medinskii militarised the entire concept of culture.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ In case the reader is no longer able to discern one Medinskii quotation from another, the comment was as follows: 'If you don't feed your own culture, you feed somebody else's army'. This is a spin on the well-known Russian proverb: If you don't feed your own army, you feed somebody else's army'.

The Role of Allegorical Truth in Historical and Political Interpretation

This militarisation of abstract concepts, such as culture and historical truth, formed part of a trend that transcended the politicisation of history and extended beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. Specifically, historical framing and the call to history fuelled, and were fuelled by, an embrace of post-truth politics. The Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinskii, encapsulated this approach with his often-contradictory statements and his blatant lack of respect for historical evidence. His moralising on the nature of historical truth and justice was embedded within a supportive media environment, in which there could only be one correct view of history: that which aligned with the interests of the state. Any other interpretations were falsifications, or denigrations of historical justice, funded and propagated by Russia's geopolitical rivals.

Politicians such as Vladimir Medinskii and Vladimir Putin frequently undermined their own rhetorical obsession with historical falsification, which moved beyond the discursive realm into legislation and the formation of an academic 'brigade' to fight alleged falsehoods. Ironically, some of the versions of history being promoted as examples of historical justice and truth were widely known to be untrue. What is more, Vladimir Medinskii plagiarised his own dissertation and uses few, if any, references or evidence in his innumerable books on history. On occasion, these same politicians even admit that the versions of history they are funding are untrue and that this does not matter, as seen in Vladimir Medinskii's discussions on the myth of the 28 Panfilovtsy. None of the above prevents them from continuing to rally against the 'historical falsification', even 'perversions', of others. This creates an unusual paradox, which could be interpreted as the speakers' arrogance towards their audience, stupidity, or an inability to remember their own lies. Yet none of these interpretations provides a convincing answer.

Instead, I would argue that this paradox is central to understanding an important aspect of the post-truth political and media environment in Russia: It was truth for the post-truth age. The aforementioned approach to truth reflected the political realities in which it emerged, which is to say that it was not concerned with objectivity, facts, or logic. The Oxford English Dictionary defines post-truth as ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’. In addition to this focus on emotions overriding fact, post-truth has also been widely interpreted as a type of anti-truth; however, understanding post-truth as exclusively fake news or lies (although it inevitably includes these), precludes understanding of its persuasive function and how it frequently convinces people in spite of objective facts to the contrary.

I would argue, citing the research in this dissertation as evidence, that it may be more fruitful to understand the post-2012 ‘post-truth’ environment in Russia not as an outright rejection of truth and evidence but rather as an embrace of an allegorical understanding of (or approach to) truth. By way of example, the myth of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya or the feat of the 28 Panfilovtsy are presented, and at least partially accepted, as true not because people are certain these events took place (that does not matter) but because they are symbols of the greater truth of Russian/Soviet bravery in the Great Patriotic War. In upholding the symbol, one upholds the truth that it represents. By contrast, in challenging the symbol, one also challenges the truth that it represents. Historical framing helped to facilitate this allegorical approach by its framing of events as continuations of other events, encouraging audiences to view history as cyclical, a common characteristic in other populist regimes and governments, including that of Donald Trump.¹⁰⁶ This cyclical understanding of history lends itself to the notion that history has an essence that can be extracted by studying its development. This

¹⁰⁶ A work arguing history repeats in 80-100-year cycles has been especially popular with Trump associates, such as Steve Bannon: Strauss and Howe 1997

ironically rather Marxist approach appears to argue that this ‘essence of history’ contains a sort of ‘historical truth’, which, if correctly applied, can afford a new, correct (truer), perspective on current and future events.

Clearly, historical framing is not the only reason that allegorical truth flourished as a means of discussing history and current events. The legacy of ideological thinking, with its understanding of the world using reasoning based not on fact but on ideology, or an axiomatic premise, may also have facilitated the government and media’s framing of lies and half-truths as types of ‘allegorical’ truth. If there is a tradition of deferring to, or at least not openly ridiculing or challenging, interpretations from authority that directly contradict objective fact and reality, this makes such patterns of discourse easier to accept when they re-emerge. Arguably, the media and politicians also added to the familiarity of such patterns by employing Soviet templates, such as the repurposing of class consciousness templates for cultural consciousness. This is without even considering the traumatic political legacies of the Soviet Union, which would include a greater reluctance to diverge from the perceived ‘established’ view or to openly criticise the government (Dobrenko and Shcherbenok 2011).

There are limits to the impact of such legacies, however. It is not only pride in Soviet achievements but also the experience of its collapse that plays a role in facilitating and perpetuating such a paradoxical interpretation of truth. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, everyday life for many Russian citizens involved adapting to immense changes amidst extraordinary economic and political instability, all of which contributed to a sense of deep disorientation and alienation (Boyer 2010). The reference points of the past, including the sense of a master-narrative, were dramatically dismantled, leaving many disinclined to trust or believe anything.¹⁰⁷ The post-modernist attitudes that underpinned the first twenty years

¹⁰⁷ This is reflected in the Edelman Trust Barometer, where Russia is often among the lowest, or even the lowest, in terms of the population’s trust in institutions and other people.

following the Soviet collapse, with their popular embrace of the idea that ‘nothing was true’, has been well documented elsewhere.(Pomerantsev 2014; Satter 2003) Such studies note the nihilistic attitude towards objectivity that has since come to be seen as typical of Russian media’s disinformation techniques, especially in those outlets targeted at foreign audiences, such as RT and Sputnik. However, the findings in this thesis suggest that this view of domestic Russian media as repudiating the entire concept of truth is only of limited value, at least since 2012. With the assistance of historical framing techniques, media and politicians have used the concepts of historical truth and cultural consciousness to fulfil this function. In this way, the media and politicians have sought to construct a politically legitimising narrative that is also coherent and relevant to discussions of Russian identity.

Under the Soviet Union, the authorities expended considerable energy on making the ‘evidence’ match their story. Taking the 28 Panfilovtsy feat once more as an example, an examination of how the Soviet authorities reacted to efforts to demythologise the story reveals interesting contrasts to the approach of the current Russian authorities. The Soviet authorities suppressed reports, such as the Afanas’ev Report, which concluded the feat was pure fantasy, and Leonid Brezhnev himself contributed to discrediting reports that the feat did not occur. Such efforts would obviously have been more effective in the highly restrictive and restricted information space of the USSR, but they also reflected a concern with making objective truth appear to align with what the government was depicting as true. By contrast, the current Russian government is less concerned with aligning its version with that of objective fact. Although Sergei Mironenko was sacked as Head of State Archives for publishing and promoting evidence that the feat was untrue, the Culture Minister then went on to admit the story was objectively false. In his view, though, it was not important whether the event happened: what was important was that it represents truth, that it functions as

allegorical truth. In other words, the Russian media, and politicians appealed above objective fact, to a higher sense of truth.

The move towards prioritising ‘allegorical’ truth over objective fact must also be seen within the context of the information overload heralded by the advent of the internet. While Russian state media is tightly controlled, the RuNet has been, at least until the changes of 2019, largely free (if not, of course, unmonitored). There is a vibrant political debate occurring on apps such as Telegram and blogs such as Live Journal, for example. Given the abundance of information, much of it contradictory, it is reasonable that anyone, let alone those raised in a one-party state, might feel overwhelmed and unsure of which account of events is true. In this way, the abundance of information, coupled with the dominance of pro-government interpretations, increases the appeal of viewing current and historical events through the prism of allegorical truth as a way of making sense of an increasingly complex world.

The Future of Cultural Consciousness

According to the Russian media and government’s depictions of patriotism, cultural consciousness is attained through a true understanding of historical (allegorical) truth. Essentially, this idea can be reduced to the tautological formulation that Russians are defined by (and special because of) their unique understanding of their own history and culture. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that cultural consciousness offers a conceptualisation of Russianness that lacks any concrete vision for Russia’s future. Despite the media’s depictions of a mass coming-to-cultural-consciousness and the politicians’ heated orations equating Russianness with an embrace of historical justice, this is a discourse of political legitimacy first and foremost. As Igor’ Zevelev argues, it is about keeping the elites in power:

In the end, from the broad assortment of ideas that appeared in intellectual discourse about Russia's post-Soviet identity over the last twenty years, were chosen those (strands) which seemed the most suited to legitimising the government and strengthening the independence, strength and influence of the Russian state (Zevelev 2014).

The lack of a vision for the future reflects the cynicism inherent in the government's efforts to subjugate discussions of Russian identity to their own immediate political requirements: Russian history, politics, and identity are all instruments through which to legitimise the government and its rule. In place of ambitious plans or hopes for the future, there is a sense of nostalgic anticipation: looking forward to the future only for its similarities to the past. This also helps to deflect from the lack of any future alternative to Vladimir Putin. Yet, given the well-documented appeal of nostalgia, the opportunity to present Russia as restoring at least some of a lost and idealised past will likely encourage politicians to continue to return to the emotive and symbolical potential of historical framing. Indeed, this appears to have already happened over the winter of 2019/2020, when Putin has responded to his flagging popularity ratings by engaging in a memory war over the causes of WW2 with various Polish politicians (BBC 2019a) and by promising to inscribe into the new constitution the sanctity of the 'true' memory of the GPW and Russia's role in the Victory (Sokolov 2020).

The narratives of historical framing and the call to history, with its invocation of allegorical truth, appeal to a sense of injustice and humiliation, deserved or otherwise, that is continuously stoked in Russian political discourse. Many of the elements seen in historical framing are also features of other illiberal discourses and processes of securitisation underway in Russian politics. This is especially true of the more symbolic elements, such as the efforts to use historical truth as a unifying idea or type of ideology. By way of example, the notion of Russia as a last resort, or bastion of truth and morality, has figured prominently

in post-2012 discourses on gender identity, feminism, and LGBT issues, reflecting the importance of messianism to Russian conceptualisations of their role (Healey 2017; Temkina 2019). Othering is also a common feature, especially in the form of everyday anti-western and anti-American discourse, showing that historical framing shares many attributes with other illiberal discourses in Russia. This crossover recalls my interview with Konstantin Pakhalyuk from RVIO, in which he connected the emergence of the call to history with the broader conservative political turn (RVIO employee: Pakhalyuk 2018d).

However, to identify Russian political discourse on history too closely with conservative values would involve overlooking many aspects that intersect with left-wing populist discourses. In their study of anti-Americanism, Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane (2006) identified four major types: liberal, social, sovereign-nationalist, and radical. Despite normally belonging to different political orientations, each of these types emerge in my analysis of the historical framing case studies, often alongside each other. Moreover, nestled alongside the denunciations of ‘Gayropa’ and the demise of the family, there were also references to neo-liberalism and virulent capitalism that would have been at home in *The Canary* (Arsyukhin 2014a; Argumenty i fakty 2014c). Most obviously, the claiming of the anti-fascist mantle against Ukraine resonated with numerous European left-wing politicians and parties (Györi 2016; Lenta 2015b). There is also considerable scope for Russia to build on this appeal beyond their borders in the future by placing increased emphasis on political meanings associated with, but transcending, the Soviet Union, such as internationalism, anti-imperialism, and egalitarianism.

This interdiscursivity with populist illiberal (economic or social) discourses across the political spectrum and across the globe helps to entrench and normalise the often-conspiratorial messages contained within the narratives. Such discourses feed off one another: for example, research has shown considerable confluence and admiration between

Russian narratives and the American and European far and alt-right (Laruelle 2015; Shekhovtsov 2018; Klapsis 2015). In this way, understanding the Russian narrative also helps us to understand how such narratives are functioning in the West. The preoccupation with history may have been especially pronounced in Russia during Putin's third term but it is far from a uniquely Russian phenomenon or pathology.¹⁰⁸ Much like nostalgia, it can be seen as what Kevin Platt has described as a 'local variation on the global trend of post-ideological political culture predicated on the backwards glance at history' (K. Platt 2019, 232). This also recalls Nikolai Kaposov's argument that we are moving from the age of ideology to the age of memory (Nikolay Kaposov 2017). I would reiterate, however, that the role of memory has accrued many of the functions of ideology, at least in Russia's case.

Historical framing, as we have seen from the discourse analysis in this thesis, creates and thrives on conflict and binary opposition. It is unsurprising then, that it should also feature in European and American media coverage of polarising issues. By way of example, certain sections of the British media and politicians (namely those belonging to the European Research Group) have repeatedly invoked a (heavily mythologised) cultural memory of the Blitz and the Battle of Britain as evidence of Britain's ability to succeed outside the EU and a reason to pursue a so-called 'hard' Brexit. They have both conflated the periods and used the past to explain why something is happening or will happen in the future, thereby meeting the basic definition of historical framing. Clearly, the presence of a free and democratic media undermines the potency and potential of such narratives, but it is interesting to note that democratic countries are not immune to the appeal of historical framing.

Indeed, most of the obvious examples of historical framing outside Russia do tend to be from non-democratic countries and to be taken from wartime periods; for example, Katie

¹⁰⁸ For more on the debate as to whether Russia's (ab)use of history is a unique case, please see: (Torbakov 2016)

Stallard-Blanchette has studied the way that China and North Korea explain wars through reference to other wars (Stallard-Blanchette 2019). The Yugoslav wars also provided numerous examples of historical framing. Most prominently, Serbian media relentlessly instrumentalised the memory of Croat World War Two atrocities to depict the 1990s' Croat army as 1940s' *Ustaše* fighters reopening Jasenovac and resuming Ante Pavelic's genocide of Serbs. As with references to *banderovtsy* and pro-Maidan Ukrainians in the Ukraine Crisis discourse, the terms *Ustaše* and Croat became interchangeable (Thompson 1999).

While the above examples, like my research findings, present a bleak picture of historical framing's uses, there is nonetheless evidence that its inherent mobilisational and emotional appeal could be repurposed to positive ends. A recent study of documentaries in Sweden and Germany on migration showed that they made considerable use of historical parallels to justify a pro-migrant stance following the 2015 migrant and refugee crisis (Wagner and Seufferling 2019). Invoking history, therefore, is not an inherently negative act or impulse. In fact, perhaps it is only by counterposing different historical narratives, or different interpretations of history, to those invoked by populists, that it is possible to counter the emotional appeal of the more negative types of historical framing described in this thesis as well as the attendant claims to authenticity and a higher sense of truth. Exploring how to neutralise media narratives that instrumentalise powerful cultural memories will be of increased relevance in an age marred by political unpredictability and so-called national populism (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018).

The emergence of historical framing not only in Russia but in various, and notably diverse countries, supports my argument that it is worth paying attention to political processes and discourse in Russia. The latter is an extreme example, due to its Soviet legacy, of the undermining (and redefining) of truth in political discourse; this makes it easier to identify patterns there that may be present but more understated in other societies. Moreover,

Russia is concerned with influencing politics in other countries, where these techniques could be redeployed to fuel the antagonistic politics that has developed (organically) in many Western countries. Russian media and cultural organisations are attempting to encourage a securitised and conspiratorial approach to politics whereby every challenge, from the mundane to the imagined, is presented as an existential threat to national identity and culture.

While I do not wish to contribute to the exaggerated accusations of Russia's ability to destroy Western liberal democracy by stealth, my research did reveal numerous examples of Russia trying to promote its versions of history abroad, to encourage internal memory wars in other states, and to export its concept of cultural consciousness. This included activities that could be described as forging 'memory alliances', or even memory diplomacy: the Russian government has funded numerous organisations (including *Rosstrudnichestvo*, *RVIO*, *Russkii mir*, to name just a few), to promote Russian history films, documentaries, exhibitions, commemorative events, and practices of remembering. In so doing, they are creating a new and innovative form of soft power, defined here as the ability to attract, influence, and build networks with foreign populations through cultural and other non-military attributes (Herpen 2016; Slobodchikoff and Davis 2017; Osipova 2014). This new form of soft power involves intervening in other countries', or global, historical discussions to promote narratives of history that depict Russia(ns) positively (as opposed to starting memory wars by using history to criticise foreign countries or populations). If previously such activities were mainly targeted at the 'Russian World', forming part of compatriot policy, then from 2015 onwards these efforts were directed increasingly at people and countries that had never been part of the USSR.

In addition to promoting a positive view of Russia through its history, they also encourage marginalised interpretations of history, recent and otherwise, in order to build political alliances with other nations or sections thereof. In the most obvious example, Russia

frequently uses its media presence and cultural organisations in Serbia to recall the NATO bombings and Russian support for Serbia in the Kosovo conflict (Sputnik Srbija n.d.; Ruski dom 2019). This more divisive element to memory diplomacy is often focussed on exploiting memories that do not fit the EU's interpretation of history, reflecting Russia's goal of undermining EU influence in accession states in Eastern Europe and its popularity in member states. In so doing, these same Russian organisations and media deploy a variation on the cultural consciousness narrative, whereby they are supporting the target country and its people to reconnect with their historical roots in the face of efforts by global elites to distort and falsify historical truth. This attitude can be seen in Russian efforts to forge memory alliances in the Eastern part of Germany, where Russian organisations and media in Germany have encouraged *Ostalgie* and revisionist interpretations of the GDR, all while promoting a narrative that NATO and the USA are acting against German interests (Sputnik Deutschland n.d.).

Such activities are not limited to the former Eastern bloc, however. *Rossotrudnichestvo* is actively promoting engagement with highly selective and patriotic versions of Russian history through film showings, events, commemorative days, and historical festivals across Western Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The broad scope of Russia's efforts to forge memory alliances suggests that Russia is politicising history in increasingly innovative ways, perhaps in a reflection of its successful instrumentalisation at home. Memory alliances and the export of cultural consciousness are therefore topics worthy of further research and one that I hope to pursue in post-doctoral study. Through the analysis contained in this dissertation, pertaining to how Russia has sought to capture the emotive power of the past to colour understandings of the present, I will be well-placed to understand how the Russian government applies such techniques abroad. The exportation and adaptation of the concept of cultural consciousness as the quintessence of national identity, located in historical truth, will

be a particularly interesting area of research. As such, in this thesis, I have not only connected historical framing with a broader political preoccupation with history in Russia; I have also provided insight into the potential future development of global political trends, some of which Russia ought to be well positioned to exploit in the future.

Appendix One: Questions asked in semi-structured interviews

Please see below the questions I used as the basis or starting point for the interviews I conducted with journalists and cultural practitioners. While these questions are in English, I translated these questions into Russian for all but one of the participants.

1. Why did you decide to found/work for/volunteer for this organisation? What was the aim of the organisation and did you achieve it?
2. How many other employees/volunteers/participants were there? Who was the target audience?
3. Describe the activities involved at your job/club/festival and how they linked to promoting cultural and historical activities?
4. How did you/your organisation promote knowledge of history among the population? What is the best way to interest the general population in history?
5. Can you build a healthy patriotic society without knowledge of history? Can we understand today's events without knowledge of the past?
6. Do you worry about the falsification of history or the denigration of memory inside or outside Russia?

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I have divided this bibliography into three sections: a) a list of the primary sources directly cited in my thesis; b) a list of the secondary sources directly cited in my thesis c) a list of all the primary sources consulted during my research analysis. Please note that some sources may occur in more than one section, notably Sections A and C.

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Section C: Works consulted but not cited in thesis

Government documents

In this section, I am providing a full list of the documents I consulted in my research into official discourse on patriotism (explored in Chapters 8 and 9). Please note that these documents, and indeed all documents in Section C, do not refer back to in-text citations. I have grouped the documents together where possible for the ease of reference.

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Chapter Four: Ukraine Crisis Case Study

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 2 March 2014. Zakhar Radov. 'Chitateli zapadnykh SMI podderzhali deistviya Rossii v otnoshenii Ukrainy'.
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 2 March 2014. Aleksandr Grishin. 'Im stydno? Im strashno!'.
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 4 March 2014. Asya Khovanskaya. 'Postpred Rossii pri OON Vitalii Churkin: Yanukovich prosil Putina vvesti voiska!'.
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25 March 2014. Israel' Shamir. 'Pogib kheroi'.

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28 March 2014. N/A. 'Viktor Yanukovich: "Trebuie referendumu ob opredelenii status kazhdogo regiona!"'.

28 March 2014. Vladimir Medinskii. 'Vladimir Medinskii: Nasha Rodina – strana, gde Rossiya i Ukraina druzhby i ediny'.

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30 March 2014. N/A. 'Iosif Kobzon: Kak ubedili tekh, kto vyros na mannoi kashe v SSSR, v geroistve Bandery?'.

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30 March 2014. Elena Supricheva. 'Ukrainskoe selo "sbezhalo" v Rossiyu ot Maidana'.

31 March 2014. Anastasiya Novikova. 'Press-sekretar' partii UDAR sozhgla georgievskie lentochki v Vechnom ogne v Odesse'.

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1 April 2014. Galina Sapozhnikova. 'Maidan prevrashchaetsya v Zaporozhskuyu Sech': Shli na Evrobal, popali na Evroshabash'.

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8 April 2014. Nigina Beroeva. 'Donetsk otkazalsya priznavat' kievskuyu vlast''.

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10 April 2014. N/A. 'Biografiya Vitaliya Klichko: Ot bratka do soyuznika neonatsistov'.

10 April 2014. Elena Krivyakina. 'Mozhet li Donbass voiti v sostav Rossii?'

10 April 2014. Frantishek Yanoukh. 'Moya Ukraina'.

10 April 2014. Dar'ya Ivashkina. 'Pravyi sektor okruzhil gostinitsu kandidata v prezidenty Ukrainy Olega Tsareva i ugrozhaet emu raspravoi'.

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10 April 2014. Vladimir Demchenko. 'Esli militsiya budet s narodom, my voz'mem Khar'kov'.

10 April 2014. N/A. 'Yurii Polyakov: Zapad na Ukraine povtoryaet oshibku Chamberlena, zaigryvavshego s Gitlerom'.

10 April 2014. N/A. 'Shakhtery Donbassa deistvuyut po retseptam Evromaidana'.

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11 April 2014. N/A. 'Zachem Kiev opravdyvaet natsionalistov'.

11 April 2014. Alyona Sanina. 'Revolutsiyu na Ukraine sdelalo "poteryanno pokolenie"'.

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12 April 2014. Evelina Azaeva. 'Torontskii student, ukrainets po otsu: "Pochemu ya podderzhivayu Rossiyu"'.

13 April 2014. Nigina Beroeva. 'Imenem Donbasskoi revolyutsii!'

13 April 2014. Vladimir Dmechenko. "'Esli poshlyut na shturm, ustroim sabotazh, a Pravomu sektoru dadim otpor ognem na porazhenie"'

13 April 2014. Aleksandr Grishin. 'Gosdepartament b'et rekordy za rekordom po neobrazovannosti'.

14 April 2014. N/A. 'Zhiteli donetskoj derevni: "Ne meshajte nam sdavat'sya Rossii!"'

14 April 2014. Andrei Gorelov. 'Ne suite nosa k nam syuda, vragi. V Amerike, Obama, chisti sapogi!'

14 April 2014. Nigina Beroeva. 'Grazhdanskaya voina dvukh Ukrain'.

14 April 2014. Vladimir Dmechenko. 'Podpolkovnik ukrainskoj militsii Andrei Chuikov: "Ne khochu voevat' so svoim narodom."'

14 April 2014. Boris Kagalitskii. 'K partizanskoj voine gotovilis' zapadentsy, a ona razrazilas' na Vostoke'.

14 April 2014. Michael Chossudovskii. 'Kanadskii professor schitaet kievskii rezhim neonatsistskim'.

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14 April 2014. Aleksandr Kots, Dmitry Steshin. 'Ukrainskie voennye: My ne budem strelyat' v svoi narod'.

15 April 2014. Maria Gorelova. 'Olega Tsareva zhestoko izbili v Kieve'.

17 April 2014. Aleksandr Kots, Dmitry Steshin. 'V Donetske "evroradikaly" prizvali voevat'.

17 April 2014. Dar'ya Ivashkina. 'Ukrainskii politik predlozhit \$10 tisyach za kazhdogo "zelenogo chelovechka."'

17 April 2014. Aleksandr Grishin. 'Kievskaya khunta b'etsya v agonii, ubivaya sebya svoim sobstvennym strakhom'.

18 April 2014. N/A. 'Devushka iz Nizhnego Tagila spasla parnya, brosivshego vyzov Pravomu sektoru. I pozvala v Rossiyu'.

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25 April 2014. Aleksandr Kots, Dmitry Steshin. 'Na aerodrome Kramatorska vzorvalis' vertolet i samolet'.

27 April 2014. Viktor Baranets. 'Iz kosmosa zasnyali, kak ukrainskaya armiya gotovitsya voevat' so svoim narodom'.

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28 April 2014. Aleksandr Grishin. 'Ukraina: khronika smutnogo vremeni'.

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28 April 2014. N/A. 'Voyny Rumynii s Ukrainoi ne budet, no kamnya na kamne vse ravno ne ostanetsya'.

28 April 2014. Galina Sapozhnikova. 'Pisatel' Dmitrii Galkovskii: Eshehe nedavno stsenarii tret'ei mirovoi byl tol'ko v igrakh'.

29 April 2014. Aleksandr Grishin. 'V boi za Donbass idet gospodin rekonstruktor!'

30 April 2014. Dar'ya Ivashkina, Aleksandra Lyabina, Marina Chernyak, Nadezhda Bas. 'Denis Pushilin v press-tsentre "Komsomolki": U nas v krovi - protivostoyat' fashizmu'.

30 April 2014. Aleksandr Grishin. 'U nas v krovi protivostoyat' fashizmu'.

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1 May 2014. Aleksandr Stepanov. 'Ukrainskie pogranichniki izbili turistov iz Rossii i Belarusi, zapodozriv v nikh diversantov'.

1 May 2014. Nadezhda Bas. 'Korrespondent "KP" iz Slavyanska: Sily samooborony privedeny v povyshennuyu boegotovnost'.

1 May 2014. Elena Chinkova. 'Khar'kovu ugrozhayut "chernye chelovechki."'

3 May 2014. Aleksandr Gamov. 'V kommentariyakh Kieva - tsinizm natsistov'.

3 May 2014. Ul'yana Skoibeda. 'Predav Rossiyu, ukrainsy predali chto-to v sebe'.

3 May 2014. Galina Sapozhnikova. 'Pisatel' Nikolai Starikov: "Esli vy khotite sdelat' revolyutsiyu – vyberite stranu, kotoruyu vam ne zhalko."'

3 May 2014. Dar'ya Ivashkina. 'V Kramatorske idut ulichnye boi: est' zhertvy'.

3 May 2014. Egor' Kholmogorov. 'Odesskaya Khatyn'.

4 May 2014. Dmitrii Steshin, Nadezhda Bas. 'Korrespondent "KP": Taktika ukrainskikh silovikov izmenilas', Slavyansk reshili ostavit' "na sladkoe."'

4 May 2014. Anton Araslanov. 'Slushateli Radio "KP": Rossiya dolzhna otpravit' Yanukovicha v Ukrainu i sobrat' otryady pomoshchi yugo-vostoku'.

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Vesti nedeli

All the episodes aired on the dates listed below:

23 February 2014; 2 March 2014; 9 March 2014; 16 March 2014; 23 March 2014; 30 March 2014; 6 April 2014; 13 April 2014; 20 April 2014; 27 April 2014; 11 May 2014; 18 May 2014; 25 May 2014

Voskresnoe vremya

All the episodes aired on the dates listed below:

2 March 2014; 9 March 2014; 16 March 2014; 23 March 2014; 30 March 2014; 6 April 2014; 13 April 2014; 20 April 2014; 27 April 2014; 4 May 2014; 18 May 2014; 25 May 2014

Chapter Five: Sanctions Case Study

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30 July 2014. Yulia Diveeva. 'Rossiya priostanavlivaet deistvie soglasheniyao svobodnoi trgovle s Gruziei'.
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Vesti nedeli

All the episodes aired on the dates listed below:

20 July 2014; 27 July 2014; 3 August 2014; 10 August 2014; 17 August 2014; 24 August 2014; 31 August 2014; 7 September 2014; 14 September 2014; 21 September 2014; 28 September 2014; 5 October 2014; 12 October 2014; 19 October 2014; 26 October 2014.

Voskresnoe vremya

All the episodes aired on the dates listed below:

20 July 2014; 24 August 2014; 31 August 2014; 7 September 2014; 14 September 2014; 21 September 2014; 28 September 2014; 5 October 2014; 12 October 2014; 19 October 2014; 26 October 2014.

Chapter Six: Syria Case Study

Argumenty i fakty

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<https://rg.ru/2015/12/16/opasnost.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/17/putin-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/18/pruzhina.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/18/razvedchik.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/20/putin-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/19/putin-terakty-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/22/radzihevky.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/22/patrushev-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/23/pomosh.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/24/stavki.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/23/shoygu-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/24/bomba.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/10/08/rar.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/10/08/bomba.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/09/28/interview-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/09/28/glava-site.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/09/29/vyzovy.html>
<https://rg.ru/2015/12/02/ankara.html>

Vesti nedeli

All the episodes aired on the dates listed below:

19 September 2015; 26 September 2015; 3 October 2015; 10 October 2015; 17 October 2015; 24 October 2015; 31 October 2015; 7 November 2015; 14 November 2015; 21 November 2015; 29 November 2015; 5 December 2015; 12 December 2015; 19 December 2015

Voskresnoe vremya

All the episodes aired on the dates listed below:

19 September 2015; 26 September 2015; 3 October 2015; 10 October 2015; 17 October 2015; 24 October 2015; 31 October 2015; 7 November 2015; 14 November 2015; 21 November 2015; 5 December 2015; 12 December 2015; 19 December 2015