

# Collective Memory of World War II and Legitimacy in Putin's Russia

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What are the sources that bolster the legitimacy of an increasingly authoritarian personalistic regime in today's Russia? What is the key to Putin's success and what is it that has allowed him to stay in power for this long? Scholars of authoritarian regimes have developed a set of various factors that contribute to the ability of authoritarian regimes to maintain stability. Once in power, authoritarian leaders face various threats. Some of the threats come from the members of the elite who desire to trump the dictator and gain greater access to power and resources. Others come from the masses, from the dissatisfied population that also wants to topple the dictator and replace the authoritarian system with a system that would represent their interests. (Svolik, 2012, Greitens 2016). A great number of recent scholarship on authoritarianism has been focusing on the first type, the intra-elite threats and for a good reason: the dictators fall far more frequently from the hands of the intra-elite struggles rather than from an expression of a popular dissatisfaction in the form of popular uprising (Svolik, 2012). While the threats coming from the elites are unquestionably important, this paper looks at the latter dimension and examines the way in which the historical memory is used by the regime in today's Russia to safeguard itself against the popular uprising.

Looking at the regime's strategy to ensure its own survival in respect to the masses is first justified considering the recent history of the so-called Color revolutions of the early 2000s in the region and in particular the so-called failed 'White Revolution' in Russia of 2011-2012, during which an unprecedented number of people went out on the street to protest not only against the fraudulent parliamentary elections but also against the return of Vladimir Putin personally to power. These events have deeply affected and scared the ruling regime especially on the background of the overthrown or threatened governments in the nearby states. Therefore, we can speak of a very targeted and intentional population-oriented strategies by the incumbent

politicians to reinforce their hold on to power. Secondly, at this point it is probably safe to say that Russia is a consolidated autocracy. With Putin having a firm top position in the power structure of the elites, it is the wooing of the population that is likely to become the major concern not only of his, but of everyone who contributes to and benefits from the existing order.

Of course it would be impossible to talk about self-preservation on the part of the regime without mentioning the strategy of coercion. It is essentially impossible to protest against the regime in today's Russia without being fined or arrested. The shadow of the arrests and severe sentences to some of those who went out on the streets in 2011 still hunts those Russians who would have expressed their discontent if it did not inevitably threaten to ruin their lives. Even some of the bravest activists today are leaving the country<sup>1</sup>. One of the crucial dimensions of coercion in today's Russia comes not even from the state itself, but from the radical pro-state actors (for instance, neo-Nazi gangs) who threaten oppositional or simply critical activists, lawyers and journalists either by the order of the officials or with their tacit permission<sup>2</sup>. The case of Nemtsov's murder is indicative, for it is believed that it was committed with the hands of or upon the order of Putin or FSB, but upon the initiative and by the agents of Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Lastly, the finalization of the process of state's monopolization of media (including the online sphere) and the aggressive cracking down on all foreign-funded NGO in the country has certainly contributed to 'pacification' of the public in Russia.

While the factor of coercion is absolutely essential to the understanding the regime's "uprising-proofing," it is certainly not exhaustive. Coercive strategies are always in the spotlight

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, a famous artist and activist Gleb Pavlensky who protested against the regime with his radical performances such a burning the door of FSB quarters, has left the country fearing prosecution and is now seeking asylum in France:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/16/russian-artist-nailed-scrotum-moscows-red-square-seeks-asylum/>

<sup>2</sup> Police does not prosecute, turns the blind eye on...Novaya being threatened.

and a lot has been written on how their particularities and unfortunate consequences for Russian foregone democracy. What is important to understand today and demands deeper analysis is the non-coercive dimension of the regime's strategies that have been directed at bolstering its *legitimacy* and have made Putin's regime justified in the eyes of the majority of Russians,<sup>3</sup> especially after the period of disillusionment of 2011-2012.

To understand the components of legitimacy in Russia, I use the framework set out by Gerschewski who emphasizes the necessity of reincorporating legitimacy as one of the three pillars supporting the stability of authoritarian regimes<sup>4</sup>. Together with Gerschewski, I begin with the assumption that "behind every political order there must be a "legitimacy idea"" (Gerschewski, 2013) and divide legitimation into two broad categories: 'specific support' and 'diffuse support.' Specific support mainly includes performance on the part of the regime, which deals with "socio-economic orientation and physical security." At the same time, "Diffuse support' refers to what the regime "actually is or represents"...[it] is more general and long-term oriented" (Gerschewski, 2013).

A very large chunk of scholarship on legitimacy in Russia has concentrated precisely on the 'specific' type of support, or, in other words, on the performance legitimacy and its effectiveness and more recent failures. There is a consensus among the scholars of Russia in that performance legitimacy, and in particular, its economic, technocratic, and security aspects, were crucial in Putin's rise to power. This is not surprising, for indeed, on the background of the chaotic nineties<sup>5</sup>, characterized by lawlessness, crime, dysfunctional institutions and similarly

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<sup>3</sup> Putin's approval ratings today are around 80%

<sup>4</sup> The three pillars include legitimation, repression and co-optation

<sup>5</sup> Curious parallels can be drawn between Russia and China, explaining the importance of performance legitimacy in both countries. Zhao writes that "Currently, the Chinese regime still enjoys a high level of performance legitimacy because most Chinese still have a clear

dysfunctional leadership<sup>6</sup>, administration under Putin has performed strikingly well and as the result gained a widespread approval. Administrative and economic reforms as well as centralization of power have enhanced the efficiency of the state. Anomalously high oil prices in combination with the heavy taxation of the industry filled up the national coffers and allowed Russia to create a federal reserve, which played a crucial role in weathering the crisis 2008.

While some scholars praise Putin for his reforms during his first term, others claim that the state could have performed much better had it been more democratic (McFaul & Stoner-Weiss, 2008). However, regardless of whether Putin's administration lived up to its potential, tangible improvements in terms of various dimensions of state and economic performance made Putin's rule legitimate in the eyes of many Russians despite the multiple anti-democratic moves that he had undertaken. In fact, scholars note the insignificance of formal procedural aspects of democracy in comparison to various benefits in the eyes of Russians: "although public opinion surveys generally indicate a preference for some form of 'democracy' in the abstract, much more significant are the *substantive* expectations that a state, democratic or not, ought to be able to do a better job in providing such valued public goods as social order, economic stability, guaranteed welfare and a greater measure of distributive justice" (Sil & Chen, 2010). The importance of the economy for Russians was mirrored in public opinion polls and scholars note that the association between country's top leadership and economic performance was indeed extremely strong, especially towards the end of Medvedev's term (Treisman, 2014).

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memory of the chaotic politics and miserable experiences during Mao's era and thus greatly treasure the more regulated politics and much better life they now share" (Zhao, 2009). This situation is almost identical to Russia, where Putin's regime enjoyed performance legitimacy since people still vividly remember how horrible the nineties were.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly represented by a sickly president Boris Yeltsin.

While a lot of attention has been paid to the ‘specific support’ or performance legitimacy, much less attention has been devoted to the phenomenon of ‘diffuse support’ and the shapes it has acquired in Russia. This is not surprising, for the diffuse support is much harder to detect and to measure (Gerschewski, 2013). At the same time, it is precisely now that this type of support has become the most crucial in understanding the stability of Putin’s regime. With the recent deterioration in the country’s economic situation due to the low oil prices and economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the West (as well Russia’s retaliatory sanctions on Western imports), the economic situation today is significantly gloomier than the situation prior to the protest wave in 2011. As the government is reaching the bottom of the federal reserve fund and even deeps its hands into the pension savings to make up for the deficit in the federal budget, it is becoming much more difficult to sustain economic performance. This is the time when the regime’s investment into the ‘diffuse support’ is starting to pay off.

What could be the source of the diffuse legitimacy, what is it that the Russian regime today stands for or represents? In other words, what are its ideological underpinnings? In the past, communism was a major ideological fundament, and in particular, its promise of the ideal future. Communist ideology not only gave a promise of a bright future and ideal society, but provided a justification for the economic hardships of the present. However, the age of utopias came to an end in Russia during perestroika and later with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. So what could the Russian state offer today that could fulfill the functions similar to the communist ideology – that is, offsetting the issue of economic hardship today (negative function) as well as well as simultaneously providing ‘diffuse support’ from the population (positive function)? In this paper, I want to claim that instead of making promises of the utopian future to justify its existence, the

regime redirects people's gazes to the collective memory of past, and in particular, to the collective memory of the WWII, or the Great Patriotic<sup>7</sup> War as Russians refer to it.

In this paper, I will argue that the collective memory of WWII (in combination with the war in Ukraine) has become one of the crucial pillars of the 'diffuse support' of Putin's regime after the Ukrainian war (what it is that the regime stands for or represents). I will show that the collective memory of WWII in Putin's Russia has turned into a geopolitical ideology, which purpose is to provide a moral justification for the existence of the regime. In this paper, I will also show, that as characteristic to the 'diffuse support,' it is very general in kind, aiming at the population as a whole, and that its cultivation has been a long-term, gradual process that started before the war. I will also talk about the role of the war in Ukraine, which marks the culmination of this process and served as a catalyst that made the WWII-rooted geopolitical ideology relevant and salient, and turned it into a powerful source of legitimation of today's regime.

### **Collective Memory of WWII and Legitimacy in Russia and USSR**

In authoritarian USSR and electoral-authoritarian Russia, the collective memory of WWII has always been shaped and mobilized by the state for the purposes of legitimation. The collective memory of WWII has been systematically used in Russia and in the Soviet Union by the incumbents to justify their rule and the existing social order more broadly.

Under Stalin, says Tumarkin, the public memory of war was shaped to suit the purposes of the regime. The real extent of the losses and numbers of the dead were hidden and lied about; war memoirs were prevented from being published, and the achievements of the war heroes were downplayed due to Stalin's fear of political challenge coming from people who returned home

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<sup>7</sup> In this paper, I will be using Great Patriotic War, WWII or simply the War interchangeably.

from the war with a new sense of entitlement. Under Stalin, the purpose of The Great Patriotic War memory was to “serve as stirring, but safely distant, reminder of the success of the socialist system and its Supreme Leader” (Tumarkin, 1994, p. 101). Under Brezhnev – who returned the official status to the Victory day after almost a twenty-year long hiatus – the collective memory of WWII was used in part to offset the negative effects that de-Stalinization initiated by Khrushchev had on social cohesion and the status of the communist party. The Brezhnev years “would turn into a golden age of concrete and hot air, and era of state-sponsored multivolume histories about the war, solemn speeches and commemoration, handouts, new medals and the mass design and construction of memorials” (Merridale, 2006, p. 374)

Everything changed under Gorbachev, who, in order to support his policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, encouraged the truth about the war to come out. As the result, the long-hidden and suppressed facts about the horrors of the WWII, along with destalinization campaign delegitimized the Soviet Union as a political entity, which in combination with economic issues lead to the country’s collapse. The early nineties are often characterized by the scholars of Russia as the period of identity and symbolic *dislocation*<sup>8</sup>. Yeltsin’s administration was mostly interested in economic reforms and attributed no value to symbolism. While attempting to get rid of everything Soviet, Yeltsin hardly offered anything in its place, almost losing to the communist opponents as the result. As Kurilla puts it, “the revolutionary wave that Yeltsin rode destroyed those symbols, crushed monuments, and changed city and street names. Such policies permitted oppositional political and economic forces to rally around a programme of saving Russia’s historical identity” (Kurilla, 2009, p. 270). In such context, the attention that Putin pays to

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<sup>8</sup> “Dislocation assumes that the place for which someone feels attachment is lost, in the sense that one cannot go back there and thus one has become dislodged; in extreme cases the place may no longer exist” (Ziemer, 2009).



symbolism and his implementation of the collective memory of WWII to unify the country, raise people's patriotic spirits and boost his own popularity is the return to the status quo or to the traditional to Russia instrumental approach to the memory of War.

Scholars who study the modern role of the collective memory of WWII in Russia note its two primary political functions. First view, as represented by Elizabeth Wood, is that the elevation of the status of the WWII and its significance for Russians was an image-making strategy on the part of Putin personally, who increasingly associated himself with the War. As Wood effectively puts it, "By making the war a personal event and also a sacred one, Vladimir Putin has created a myth and a ritual that elevates him personally, uniting Russia (at least theoretically) and showing him as the natural hero-leader, the warrior who is personally associated with defending the Motherland" (Wood, 2011).

Another view, as presented by Gudkov, is the provision of the legitimacy for the existing institutions and the social order in Russia more broadly. They argue that the return of the cult of war under Putin was aimed to legitimize the repressive centralized institutions, the bureaucracy and *siloviki*<sup>9</sup>. Gudkov, for instance, says that similarly to Soviet Union, under Putin, "Memories of war are necessary, first and foremost, for the purposes of legitimation of a centralized and repressive social order; they fit into the general logic of post-totalitarian ... society that could not handle the challenge of westernization and modernization as well as the pressures of the occurring social changes" (Gudkov, 2005). Sherlock similarly asserts that Putin's original support for the positive representation of the WWII serves as a myth that legitimized the armed forces and secret services and their dominant role in decision-making in Russia. Also, according to Sherlock, while any society one way or another legitimizes itself by mobilizing the collective memory in the form

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<sup>9</sup> A Russian word for members of military or security services, in particular, KGB, who came into power.

of the so-called foundation myth (the Founding Fathers in the US or the revolution of 1917 in the Soviet Union), nondemocratic regimes have a greater need for historical memory due to the difficulties they experience with fulfilling people's demands, or, in other words, with maintaining the performance legitimacy mentioned above.

“Modern nondemocratic regimes rely on historical myths more than their democratic counterparts because they face greater challenges in retaining power and securing public support. Nondemocratic regimes continuously violate a wide range of political and socioeconomic interests and therefore propagate myth in order to foster compliance to regime policies” (Sherlock, 2007, p. 10)

The perspective taken in this paper goes in line with this latter assertion of Sherlock but goes beyond understanding the exploitation of memory in Russia solely for justifying repression and the security. After all, the repressiveness of the state is not that obvious for the majority of Russians who not only never challenge the regime but strongly support it, and who do not turn to alternative media that reports such cases. Hence, it offers a third political function that the collective memory of War has served in Putin's Russia, which is that it has come to serve as a geopolitical ideology and has become the *raison d'être* for the existence of the Putin's regime more broadly. Or in Gerschewski's words, it has become a source of “diffuse support” (Gerschewski, 2013).

In a nutshell, the idea of geopolitical ideology, which I will explore in greater detail below, is that Russia has a special historically justified place in the international affairs and a moral entitlement to defend itself and the world against ‘the global evils.’ While in the past, ‘the global evil’ was Hitler and Nazi Germany, today (or in the very recent past) such evil is the unipolar and audacious behavior of the United States under the Obama administration<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Have to clarify due to the recent turn

In the following section, with the help of the method of discourse analysis of the official speeches made by the president Putin and the theory of mnemonic actors by Kubik and Bernhard (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014), I will trace out the gradual development of this diffuse type of support and will show that it was a long-term project on the part of the regime that paid off in the end. By doing so, I will demonstrate that the development of this type of legitimacy was a paced-out, gradually intensifying, step-by-step process that started early on in Putin's career and reached its culmination point recently when the Ukrainian war began in 2014.

### **From Mnemonic Instrumentalist to Mnemonic Warrior**

According to Kubik and Bernhard, mnemonic actors “try to treat history instrumentally, as they tend to construct a vision of the past that they assume will generate the most effective legitimization for their efforts to gain or hold power” (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014, p. 9). Different types of mnemonic actors include mnemonic warriors, mnemonic pluralists, mnemonic abnegators and mnemonic prospectors. Of particular interest for the purposes of this paper are mnemonic warriors, who

“...usually believe that the historical truth is attainable and that once it is attained it needs to become the foundation of social and political life. So, for them the contest in the field of memory politics is between “us” – the guardians of truth – and “them” – the obfuscators of “falsehoods,” or the opportunists who do not know or care about the “proper” shape of collective memory” (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014, p. 13).

Working off of Kubik and Bernhard's theory, I will argue that from 2000 to about 2004, Vladimir Putin was a ‘mnemonic instrumentalist,’ in so far as he used the memory of WWII for the purposes of legitimization without having an explicit vision of what the ‘true’ memory ought to be and how it should become the foundation of political life in the country. I will then show how

during his second and third term, Putin facilitated a particular a vision of War that emphasizes Russia's exceptional role in it. During the second term, Russian exceptionalism is derived from the fact that the country suffered more than anybody else did and withstood the greatest blow of the enemy, or what I will refer to as the negative exceptionalism. During the third term, the commemoration of the positive exceptionalism is facilitated through the emphasis on Russia's decisive and independent role in destroying fascism. Having traced out the transformation of the way in which the memory of war is presented in the Victory Day speeches, I will show that during his presidential career, Vladimir Putin has transformed into a mnemonic warrior and the memory of War has turned into an uncontestable holy truth.

To come to these conclusions, I use the method of discourse-analysis and look at Vladimir Putin's Victory Day parade speeches<sup>11</sup> in the period of 2000-2008 and 2012-2015 and his address on the day of the admission of Crimea into Russian Federation. Victory Day parade speeches serve as the best example of how commemoration of the WWII in Russia has always been explicitly a political process. Moreover, they also provide a sense of the shape of the official memory of WWII propagated by the state. It is specifically this type of memory that is of interest to the scholars of the politics of memory (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, p. 8). Finally, Victory Day parade speeches serve as the best source for tracing out the dynamics of official commemoration of the WWII in Russia. As one of the most important, listened to and brief speeches of the year, every word and every turn of phrase in the Victory Day parade speeches is significant and carries with it enormous political subtext. The methodology of discourse analysis allows to detect such rhetorical shifts and unravel their political significance.

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<sup>11</sup> In this paper, I will only take a look at Putin's speeches. I do this in part because it is Putin and his popularity that is the major concern of this paper, and in part because transformation is much more systematic and obvious if the years of Medvedev's presidency are omitted.

The fact that Vladimir Putin has treated the collective memory of WWII instrumentally from very early on in his presidential career is most evident from the emphasis that he has always made on the relevance of the WWII to today's world. In particular, he has done so by highlighting the importance of *uroki* or *lessons* that the memory of War entails. In fact, out of the fifteen speeches conducted by both him and Medvedev since 2000, ten emphasize the lessons of the war and use the language of *uroki*. The fact that the memory of War should have an educative purpose already suggest the instrumental approach that the presidents have for commemoration. However, the instrumental character of the memory of war is most evident from the fact that from year to year the content of the lessons changed depending on the political agenda of the day.

In 2000, when Putin was still pursuing the policies in line with Yeltsin's presidency, the lessons of the War were said to "help our generation to build strong and prosperous country, and to raise up high the banner of Russian democracy and freedom."<sup>12</sup> However, the very next year, the rhetoric of democracy and freedom gave way to the importance of understating the dangers of extremism and the elevation of the status of Russian army. In light of Russia's cooperation with the United States in the anti-terrorist campaign, from 2002 to 2005, WWII became the primary paradigm for global cooperation and resistance to the newly emerged threats of international terrorism – the threat that in Putin's speeches was portrayed as a global evil analogous to fascism. During these years, the lessons of WWII and the final success of the anti-Hitler coalition in defeating the Nazi Germany were meant to emphasize the necessity of global cooperation and the decisive collective action against the modern threats of terrorism:

“We are obliged not to turn the blind eye on the fact that Nazi swastika and the ideas of fascism still walk around the world today. To them has been added an

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<sup>12</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2000, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia. This and the following excerpts are translated from the original by the author. The original can be found in the Appendix A.

equally threatening evil of international terrorism. It also carries with it death and destruction. It should be the goal of the entire global community to resist the terrorists and to cleanse the world of this infection<sup>13</sup>.”

As such, the memory and the rhetoric of WWII were instrumental in portraying Russia as the leader in global fight against terrorism. However, it is important to note the inherent connection between Russia’s anti-terrorist rhetoric and the second Chechen war. After the events of 9/11, in the face of international condemnation of Russia’s actions in Chechnya, Russia heavily exploited the anxiety that emerged after September 11 to legitimize its violent actions in the region and portray the war not as an individual anti-separatist fight, but as a part of a global struggle against the evil of terrorism (Gilligan, 2010).

Even though during his first term Vladimir Putin treated the memory of war instrumentally as an educatory and legitimizing tool, he was not properly a mnemonic actor, for there was no particular vision in which the War should be commemorated that he developed and promoted. However, the motion in the direction of developing a particular vision begins in 2005 and in later years it becomes more and more pronounced.

During Putin’s second term, 2004-2008, one can trace out how a consistent vision of the collective memory of war is shaped in the Victory Day speeches and hence can note the beginning of the transition of the president towards becoming a mnemonic warrior. President Putin makes increasing emphasis on the fact that Russia withstood the largest blows of Nazi Germany and that the most decisive battles happened on the country’s territory. For instance, in his speech from 2005, Putin says that

“61 countries and almost 80 percent of the world population were drawn into the burning orbit of the Second World War. The firestorm swept not only territories of Europe, but also the countries of Asia and Africa; it reached the shores of New

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<sup>13</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2004, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

Zeeland, Alaska, borders of Egypt and Australia. But the most brutal and decisive events that defined the drama and the outcome of this inhuman war were unfolding on the territory of the Soviet Union. Fascists aimed to instantaneously enslave our people, and practically planned to destroy the entire country<sup>14</sup>.”

This speech facilitates a particular vision of history that distinguished Russia from the rest of the participants in the War and asserts that the whole world was essentially at the periphery of the conflict, while the decisive events unfolded on the Russian territory. The same motive arises in his speech from 2006: “Horrible, destructive power was brought down on all European countries. But the main and most ferocious blow was struck at our Motherland<sup>15</sup>.”

Similarly, during Putin’s second term the exceptional extent of suffering and loss that Russia underwent is emphasized. For instance, in 2005, Putin says:

“We will always remember help of the allies...But we also know that the Soviet Union lost tens of millions of its citizens during years of war ...Sorrow entered every person’s home, every family. This is why May 9 is a holy date<sup>16</sup>”.

There is a motive of martyrdom here: the celebration of the 9 May becomes holy for Russians due to the exceptional sufferings that the people of USSR underwent during the war. The discourse conveys the idea that the sufferings the Russians went through distinguish the country from the rest of the members of the anti-Hitler coalition, and entitle Russian victory with the greater, holy significance for the country.

Hence, we can see that during the second term, a particular vision of War emerges that emphasizes Russia’s exceptional position in the War. According to the narrative, Russia was hit the heaviest by the Nazis and suffered most from the enemy in comparison to other countries. In

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<sup>14</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2005, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>15</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2006, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>16</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2005, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

fact, it is in Russia where the epicenter of the War was. This marks the first steps towards the formation of the memory of WWII that supports the exceptionalism of Russia. While during his second term, it were mostly the negative<sup>17</sup> aspects of this exceptionalism that Putin emphasized (the difficulties and the great amount of suffering), during his third term, the emphasis shifts to the positive exceptionalism, or the decisive and independent role of Russia in the liberation of Europe from fascism and the victory over Nazi Germany.

While facilitating a particular vision of memory does not necessarily turn Putin into a mnemonic warrior – having a vision characterizes all types of mnemonic actors -- the speech that he conducted during the last year of his second term contains yet another sign of his gradual transition to becoming one. When describing mnemonic warriors, Kubik and Bernhard contend that these actors are characterized by the fact that “for them the contest in the field of memory politics is between “us” – the guardians of truth – and “them” – the obfuscators of “falsehoods.”” While we have witnessed the formation and facilitation of a particular perspective on the WWII, there has been no assertion that it is the sole acceptable view; nor has there been encouragement to defend this perspective from other ways to understand and remember the war. However, in his speech from 2007, Putin clearly states that there is only one way to remember and value Russia’s participation in the War and that is the way which elevates Russia’s role in it:

“Those who today attempt to diminish this invaluable experience, who defiles the monuments of the war heroes – offends their own nation, disseminates discord and mistrust between countries and people<sup>18</sup>.”

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<sup>17</sup> Speech from 2004 is an outlier in this pattern. However, there only one brief line in it is devoted to the positive role of Russia.

<sup>18</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2007, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.



It is worth noting that in this passage, diminishing the country's experience in war is compared to vandalism. Putin leaves open to interpretation who the "those" are in the passage turning them into the imaginary "other." However, regardless of who these "others" are, in this speech Putin asserts not only their existence but also that they are 'historical vandals,' who need to be condemned and against whom the correct way of understanding the war needs to be defended. Hence this speech marks an almost complete transition of Vladimir Putin from a mnemonic instrumentalist to a mnemonic warrior.

In his third term, after the hiatus of Medvedev's presidency, who somehow diverged from the directionality set out by his predecessor, Putin picked up where he left off and continued on the path of transformation into the mnemonic warrior. As I mentioned earlier, while his second term was characterized by facilitation of the 'negative' aspects of Russia's exceptional role, during his third term (2012 - onward) a clear emphasis was made on the country's positive contribution to the Victory and its crucial role in defeating the Nazi Germany. In fact, gradually the Victory in the War is turned in the official speeches into solely Russian victory. For instance, in his speech from 2013, Putin explicitly states that it were precisely the Russians who destroyed Nazi Germany:

"We will always remember that it was *definitively Russia, USSR* that thwarted man-hating, bloody, haughty plans of Nazis, and prevented fascists from conquering the world. *Our soldier* defended freedom and independence while protecting his Motherland. Not sparing himself, *he* liberated Europe and emerged victorious. The greatness of this victory will forever remain in history.<sup>19</sup>"  
[emphasis added]

In a similar manner, the decisive role of Russia in the Victory is stressed in 2014: "It was *definitively our* country that chased the Nazis back to their den, achieved their complete and

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<sup>19</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2013, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

ultimate defeat<sup>20</sup>.” But here, Putin’s rhetoric takes even more decisive turn towards what would be characteristic of a mnemonic warrior. Following the assertion that it was *imenno nasha strana* (definitively our country) that destroyed fascism, Putin says that “we will always remember this holy unfading truth, and will not allow betrayal and oblivion of heroes<sup>21</sup>.”

The fact that it was *imenno* or precisely *Russia, our country, Soviet Union or Red Army* – the same turn of speech is used in all four years with only the ways to refer to Russia changing – establishes Russia’s ‘positive’ exceptionalism in terms of its contribution to the victory. Russia not only suffered most and withstood the greatest blow, as emphasized during Putin’s second term, but was also ultimately responsible for the victory.

Russia’s exceptional experience in the War, the country’s independent and crucial contribution to the Victory and the holy significance of this day together form the particular vision of commemoration of the War facilitated by Putin. Presentation of this vision as a “holy unfading truth” and condemnation of other perspectives (in particular, the ones that diminish Russia’s role in the victory) as historical vandalism and even betrayal suggest Putin’s complete transformation into a mnemonic warrior.

Incidentally, it was in 2014 that president Putin signed<sup>22</sup> the Law against the “Rehabilitation of Nazism,” directed “against the encroachments upon the historical memory of the events of the Second World War,” which made it a criminal offence to deny certain facts of war and express public disrespect of the symbols of Russia’s military glory. Under the law, the rehabilitation of Nazism, whatever it means, is punishable with up to three, and, in cases of state

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<sup>20</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>21</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>22</sup> <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20912>

officials, up to five years in jail. Unlike similar laws in other countries, which were proposed mostly by left-wing politicians, the Russian law is very different in character and “is backed by pro-state right-wing politicians that seek to create a heroic national narrative and legislate away any doubt about the state’s historical righteousness<sup>23</sup>.”

### **Collective Memory as Geopolitical Ideology**

What is the goal of crafting the collective the memory of Russian exceptionalism? If Putin is indeed a mnemonic warrior, what instrumental purpose does such vision of the War serve? Considering the fact that for mnemonic warriors “the distinction between the past, present, and future is sometimes collapsed” (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014, p. 13), in what way does Vladimir Putin intends the spirit of the WWII to permeate Russia’s present?

To answer this question, we can look at the excerpt from the speech at the Victory Day parade in 2007:

“Moreover, in our days such threats do not decrease in number. They simply change their shape and appearance. And these new threats, just like in the times of the Third Reich, are characterized by the disdain to the human life and same claims on global exceptionalism and dictatorship<sup>24</sup>.”

Here, Vladimir Putin has taken his usual rhetoric of the relevance of the War’s lessons to today’s world to a new level. While before, it was the lesson of cooperation that the world needed to derive from the War in order to fight the *new* enemy, such as terrorism, now the world is facing the same *old* enemy masked to appear in a new shape. This rhetorical move creates a perception that the war, which Russia was so successful in fighting, has not truly been over, that it continues

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm331\\_Kurilla\\_August2014\\_0.pdf](http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Pepm331_Kurilla_August2014_0.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2007, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

to this day except in the new shape. By alluding to “claims on global exceptionalism and dictatorship,” the quote suggests that the new enemy – which really is the same old enemy of fascism except in the new form – is the United States.

While the fact that it is the United States that Vladimir Putin is referring to in his speeches is not explicit and the name of the country is never pronounced, the fact that US is implied can be inferred from other statements made by the president. For instance, in the recent op-ed from 2013 published in *The New York Times*, Putin directly challenges Obama’s speech for his mention of the American exceptionalism<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, during the speech after the admission of the Crimea into the Russian Federation, Putin says the following in relation to the United States:

“Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle “If you are not with us, you are against us.””<sup>26</sup>

Hence, the US becomes the major threat to international security and the potential *podzhigatyl’* or the “instigator,” as Medvedev once put it<sup>27</sup>, of the next world war. The United States thus is presented as a country that believes in its superiority and which pursues its audacious foreign politics and interferes with sovereignty of other states (whether the military

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<sup>25</sup> “And I would rather disagree with a case he made on American exceptionalism, stating that the United States’ policy is “what makes America different. It’s what makes us exceptional.” It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy” ([http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?_r=1))

<sup>26</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, March). *Address by the President of Russian Federation*. The Kremlin, Moscow. Accessed in English.

<sup>27</sup> Medvedev, Dmitri (2008, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

intervention as in the case with Iraq or Kosovo or other kind of intervention as in the case with the wave of color revolutions is implied is not clear). As such, this country poses a potential threat to the world similar to that of Nazi Germany -- hence the relevance of the lessons of the War to today's politics so frequently emphasized by Putin. The "the distinction between the past, present, and future is ... collapsed" and the impression is made that the war that is the logical continuation of the WWII is already ongoing or at the very least is imminent if things keep going the way they are with the unchecked power such as the United State existing in the world.

The fact that increasing anti-Americanism and assertion of Russia's exceptional role in WWII go hand in hand is not a coincidence. Russian genuine historical or moral exceptionalism is meant to oppose the dangerous American *pretenzii na isklyuchitel'nost'* (pretensions for exceptionalism). This is most obvious from Putin's speech from 2012, in which Putin proclaims that exceptional role of Russia in the WWII in the past entitles it to a position of distinction and importance (as well as moral high ground) in the global affairs in the present:

"We have a great moral right in our principled and assertive defense of our [policy] positions, since it was our country that withstood the greatest blow of Nazism, that faced it with the heroic resistance, that went through the most difficult ordeals, and determined the outcome of the war, destroyed the enemy and thus brought liberation to people across the world<sup>28</sup>."

This quote is particularly remarkable in so far as it conveys the idea that Russia's past, and in particular, its role in the WWII gives the country certain *moral prerogatives* or as Putin puts it, the *velikoye moral'noye pravo* (the great moral right), in terms of its actions in the world today. This form of Russian exceptionalism, which the country has allegedly earned during its struggle with Nazism, combined with the increasing degree of anti-Americanism prevalent in speeches as

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<sup>28</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2012, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

well as the parallels drawn between the US policy and the pre-WWII expansionist ambitions of Nazi Germany make Russia's opposition to the US historically or ideologically justified. To the dangerous American *pretenzii na isklyuchitel'nost'*<sup>29</sup> (pretensions for exceptionalism), Russia's genuine historical or *moral exceptionalism* is opposed. Thus, opposition to the US in the spirit of WWII becomes the moral right and duty of Russia – its duty to itself, to Europe, and to the whole world (the purpose of which is to prevent another horrible war analogous to WWII) -- and turns into a new geopolitical ideology or *raison d'être* for the Russian state and, as I argue in this paper, one of the crucial pillars of the legitimacy of Putin's regime.

In this situation the United States plays the role of a convenient "Other" working off of which the Russia's national "Self" is shaped (Hansen, 2006). What is important here is not Russia's changing enemies, but the identity that the regime has created for itself with the help of the collective memory of WWII. Geopolitical agenda has become the *raison d'être* of Putin's regime. The rhetoric of WWII is not simply meant to justify Russia's ambitious foreign policy, although, it certainly performs this function too. Putin's regime today is the embodiment of the glorious geopolitical mission of Russia to be the world's just and moral defender. It is the mission to win or to continue winning WWII over and over again with only people capable of doing it being those in power today. While prior to 2014 the war that Putin's regime was fighting was mostly rhetorical, the revolution in the neighboring Ukraine and the ousting of the pro-Russian president Yanukovich gave the regime the opportunity to fight a real one.

### **Geopolitical Ideology and the Ukrainian Crisis**

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<sup>29</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2007, May). *Vystupleniye na voyennom parade...* Speech presented at the Red Square, Moscow, Russia.

It is impossible to talk about the collective memory of WWII as underpinning the legitimacy of Putin's regime without mentioning Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea. While the process of transforming of the memory of WWII into a political tool and a source of legitimacy began very early on in Putin's career, it was the year of 2014 that marked the peak or served as a culmination point of this process.

From the very first days of Euromaidan, the state-controlled channels portrayed the events in Ukraine using WWII-rooted rhetoric and accused the United States of being responsible for instigating the protests and the civil war, hence turning the Ukrainian crisis into a living proof of the validity and relevance of the WWII or geopolitical ideology. In their paper, the *War of Words*, Cottiero et al., by analyzing how Russian state-controlled media portrayed the Ukrainian crisis on television detected two major frames: the WWII and anti-American (or Cold War) frame (Cottiero, Kucharski, Olimpieva, & Orttung, 2015). And indeed, to describe the events in Ukraine, both reporters and politicians have been excessively implementing the words like *fashisty* (fascists), *natsisty* (Nazis), *banderovtsy* (Bandera followers), and *blokada* (siege). The Euromaidan are said to have been organized by the American intelligent services and the new government in Ukraine is referred to as a russophobic 'fascist junta'. The events in Ukraine have been portrayed not merely as the internal struggle within the neighboring country, but instead as the rivalry of the two civilizations – The "Russian Eurasian civilization" versus the "Atlantic civilization led by the USA" (Darczewska, 2014). The war in Ukraine has been presented on Russian television as the round two of the Great Patriotic War, as some business that was unfinished decades ago that was up to the modern Russia – the inheritor of the glory of USSR -- to accomplish.

In his State of the Nation address of 2014, president Putin began his speech by narrating the Ukraine-related events of the year. If we compare this speech to other conducted by the president, we can see that this fact is unprecedented since all of the addresses prior to 2014 were started by the outline of Russia's economic achievements. For instance, in Medvedev's speech from 2008 – the year of Georgian conflict – the economy came prior to war on the agenda. Putin's speech of 2014 dives straight into the Ukrainian war, and in this narration, explicit anti-Americanism comes up very early on:

“I mentioned our American friends on purpose, since they directly or from behind the scenes influence our relationship with our neighbors. Sometimes it is hard to tell whom one should negotiate with: with the governments of some countries or directly with their American patrons and sponsors.<sup>30</sup>”

Then it comes up again, this time in connection with the economic sanctions. The sanctions are presented as a conscious politics on the part of the USA and their allies to hold back the growing potential of Russia, with Ukrainian crisis simply being an excuse to carry out this intent:

“I am confident that if none of this [Ukrainian crisis and inclusion of Crimea] has occurred... they would have come up with another excuse to hold back the growing potentials of Russia, to influence the country, and better yet, to take advantage of it. Politics of holding back was not invented yesterday. It has been carried out in relation to our country for ...decades if not hundreds of years<sup>31</sup>.”

Hence, weakening of Russia becomes a historical intention and a long-desired goal of the United States, and sanctions are simply one of the many manifestations of it. As the logical continuation of this idea, the US is then accused of supporting separatism and terrorists in Chechnya with the implicit conclusion that the United States has always wished the disintegration of Russia for the

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<sup>30</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, December). *Poslaniye presidenta federal'nomu sobraniyu ...* Kremlin, Moscow.

<sup>31</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, December). *Poslaniye presidenta federal'nomu sobraniyu ...* Kremlin, Moscow.



purposes of weakening the country. As a force desiring to weaken Russia and diminish its vast geographical expanse, the United States is compared to the Nazi Germany:

“They did not succeed [in disintegration of Russia as they did with Yugoslavia]. We did not allow it. Similarly, Hitler did not succeed, who intended to destroy Russia and push it behind Ural [mountains] with his man-hating ideas<sup>32</sup>,”

Following closely the mention of Hitler, Putin notes that next year, the country will be celebrating 70-year anniversary of the Victory Day. And here, in the State of the Nation address, Putin turns to the idea of *uroki* or lessons of War, so characteristic to the Day of Victory speeches. And similarly, the main lesson of War is that the United States, and in particular, the American antimissile system:

“Presents a threat to not only security of Russia, but to the entire world due to the potential disturbance of the strategic balance of powers...I think that it is harmful for the US itself, since it creates a dangerous illusion of invulnerability, and strengthens the tendencies for unilateral, and frequently, as we see, unreasoned decisions and additional risks<sup>33</sup>”

Thus, the State of the Nation address features very explicitly the WWII ideology detected in our analysis of Putin’s Victory Day speeches. Moreover, the degree of radicalization of this ideology is significantly higher than it has ever been before: The United States is explicitly called out by its name and is accused of being the cause of Ukrainian crisis and the threat to the world security. At the same time, Russia is presented as the direct object of the US aggression with explicit parallels between Hitler’s and alleged American attempts to destroy the country.

While in the case of the Victory Day parade speeches, the appeal to the collective memory of the WWII is natural due to the occasion for the speech – the celebration of the victory in WWII

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<sup>32</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, December). *Poslaniye presidenta federal’nomu sobraniyu ...* Kremlin, Moscow.

<sup>33</sup> Putin, Vladimir (2014, December). *Poslaniye presidenta federal’nomu sobraniyu ...* Kremlin, Moscow.

– the fact that very explicit WWII rhetoric is used in the State of the Nation address is staggering and has a deep political significance. On the one hand, the ideology that had been developed in previous years came in as a convenient tool to justify Russia’s actions in Ukraine. On the other, the unfolding events breathed life into this ideology and made the particular type of memory of WWII developed by Putin a highly relevant prism for the perception of the modern political reality by Russians (for instance, Russia’s foreign policy conflicts with the US). While geopolitical ideology justified Russia’s position in the conflict, the conflict itself made the historically rooted ideology more relevant to today’s reality and more powerful in terms of buttressing the legitimacy of Putin’s regime.

### **Geopolitical Ideology and Legitimacy of Putin’s Regime**

The major issue with studying the ‘diffuse support’ legitimacy is that it is very hard to measure and make assertions about causal claims. In this paper, I concentrated my analysis on the official speeches of Putin and in doing so followed one of the paths of studying this type of legitimacy suggested by Gerschewski.<sup>34</sup> However, there is still a question of how can we be sure that geopolitical ideology has been an important factor in contributing to the legitimacy of Putin’s regime.

While it is impossible to answer this question with certainty, the public opinion polls conducted by Levada Center suggest that certain elements of WWII ideology, such as anti-Americanism and the perception of Russia’s growing status as a world’s great power, have indeed found reflection in the minds of Russians. In March 2015, for instance, 81% of Russians said that

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<sup>34</sup> “official legitimacy claims by the ruling elite can be taken more seriously and can be classified by using content analysis techniques” (Gerschewski, 2013)

they felt “generally badly” about the USA<sup>35</sup> – marking the record high levels of anti-Americanism since 1990s. At the same time, 80% of Russians in 2015 believe<sup>36</sup> that Russia is a “great power,” in comparison<sup>37</sup> to 68% in 2014 and 48% in 2012. When it comes to the Ukrainian crisis, the research conducted by Cottiero et al. on the influence of state-controlled television on the Internet in Russia, discovered that Internet users have generally accepted the WWII and anti-American media framings of the conflict (Cottiero et al., 2015). These facts suggest that there is strong ground to believe that geopolitical ideology is a powerful source of legitimation of Putin’s regime.

Finally, the process of empowering and and bringing of the “diffuse support” in the form of WWII ideology to the front, the regime has managed to solve or at least postpone some of its issues with the provision of “specific support” or performance legitimacy. The framework of geopolitical ideology has turned economic and material sufferings into sacrifices for an important cause of having an influence in the world affairs. The analysis<sup>38</sup> titled *The Worse, the Better* of the opinion polls and Internet discussions conducted by Borusyak and Levinson supports this observation:

“Analysis of discussions in the Internet clearly shows the ... paradoxical combination of the assuredness [among Russians] that the country is going in the right direction with the [observations] of individual hardships. This combination is based on the assuredness that since Russia is becoming strong and independent, it is necessary to accept temporary difficulties. Celebrations that remind us what our predecessors went through are very important to us. If they won, so will we.”

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.levada.ru/29-07-2015/monitoring-otnosheniya-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam-iyul>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.levada.ru/21-07-2015/kart-blansh-vneshnyaya-politika-zamenila-rossiyanam-realnye-problemy-gosudarstva>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.levada.ru/11-12-2014/68-rossiyan-schitayut-rossiyu-velikoi-derzhavoi>

<sup>38</sup> <http://daily.rbc.ru/opinions/society/23/06/2015/5582d1219a79470d5f7d7ac6>

In addition to making its poor economic performance look like martyrdom, there is the second mechanism in which WWII ideology could affect performance legitimacy: by providing Russians with the positive identity benefits, such as a sense of being the citizens of one of the world's great powers. Moreover, as we have seen from the official discourse above, Putin's geopolitical ideology provides Russians with the sense that not only Russia is a great power, but it is a power that has *velikoye moral'noye pravo* (a great moral right) to be great and to have an influence in the world. Thus, it is not only the great power that Russians feel themselves a part of, but a power that is characterized by a moral high ground. Hence, one could say that the issues that the Russian state is experiencing with the provision of 'specific support' or performance legitimacy have been offset by the new 'diffuse support' and the identity benefits that the Russians receive thanks to it, which also could be perceived as a type of 'performance' on part of the state (Petrov, Lipman, & Hale, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

In previous two sections, by looking at the Victory Day parade and State of the Nation speeches, I have shown that during the years of his presidency, Vladimir Putin had gradually turned into a mnemonic warrior who shaped and facilitated a very particular uncontested type of collective memory. I have also shown that this type of memory of WWII has turned into a geopolitical ideology, which provides a moral justification for the existence of Russia's regime. By looking at the president's State of the Nation address of 2014, I have shown that the war in Ukraine was instrumental in strengthening this ideology and making it more relevant than ever for the perception of today's reality by Russians. The fact that with each year Putin increasingly acted more as a mnemonic warrior, suggests that the geopolitical ideology was not invented over night,

but has been gradually and intentionally developed by the top leadership. Investing into shaping the collective memory was a long-term project aimed at a general public that yielded a very high pay-off and has been one of the factors that have greatly contributed to the stability of Putin's regime. These findings suggest that collective memory is one of the important sources or tools of dictators that, despite requiring long and careful cultivation, can become a very powerful and useful weapon at times when a regime struggles with legitimacy crisis.

## Appendix A

Page 25:

“Еще не раз она выручит в мирной жизни, поможет нашему поколению выстроить сильную, процветающую страну, высоко поднимет российское знамя демократии и свободы.”

Page 25:

“Но и сегодня мы не вправе закрывать глаза на то, что еще гуляют по миру и нацистская свастика, и идеи фашизма. И что к ним прибавилось не менее страшное зло – международный терроризм. Он тоже несет смерть и разрушение. Задача всего мирового сообщества – дать террористам достойный отпор, избавить мир от этой заразы.”

Page 27:

“В пламенную орбиту Второй мировой было вовлечено 61 государство и практически 80 процентов населения земли. Огненный смерч пронесся не только над Европой, но и над странами Азии и Африки, достиг берегов Новой Земли и Аляски, границ Египта и Австралии. Но самые жестокие и решающие события, определившие и драму, и исход этой бесчеловечной войны, разворачивались на территории Советского Союза. Фашисты рассчитывали молниеносно поработить наш народ, фактически рассчитывали на уничтожение страны.”

“Страшная, испепеляющая сила обрушилась тогда почти на все страны Европы. Но самый главный и самый лютый удар был нанесен нашей Родине.”

“Мы ... всегда будем помнить помощь союзников: ...Но мы также знаем, что Советский Союз потерял за эти годы войны десятки миллионов своих граждан, а среди воинов, погибших на полях сражений были люди всех национальностей бывшего СССР. Все народы и все республики Советского Союза понесли тогда свои невосполнимые потери. Горе пришло в каждый дом, в каждую семью. И потому 9 Мая – священная дата для всех стран Содружества Независимых Государств.”

Page 29:

“А те, кто пытается сегодня принизить этот бесценный опыт, кто оскверняет памятники героям войны, оскорбляет собственный народ, сеет рознь и новое недоверие между государствами и людьми.”

“Мы всегда будем помнить, что именно Россия, Советский Союз сорвали челоноконенавистнические, кровавые, надменные планы нацистов, не позволили фашистам завладеть миром. Наш солдат отстоял свободу и независимость, защищая

свою Родину, не жалея себя, освободил Европу и одержал победу, величие которой навеки останется в истории.”

Page 30:

“Именно наша страна гнала нацистов до их логова, добила их полного и окончательного разгрома, победила ценой миллионов жертв и страшных испытаний.”

“Мы всегда будем беречь эту священную, немеркнущую правду, не допустим предательства и забвения героев”

Page31:

“Тем более что и в наши дни таких угроз не становится меньше. Они лишь трансформируются, меняют свое обличье. И в этих новых угрозах, как и во времена «третьего рейха», все то же презрение к человеческой жизни, те же претензии на мировую исключительность и диктат.”

Page 32:

“И сегодня хочу подчеркнуть: строгое соблюдение международных норм, уважение государственного суверенитета и самостоятельного выбора каждого народа – это одна из безусловных гарантий того, что трагедия прошедшей войны никогда больше не повторится.”

“История мировых войн предупреждает: вооруженные конфликты не рождаются сами по себе. Их «поджигают» те, чьи безответственные амбиции берут верх над интересами стран и целых континентов, над интересами миллионов людей.”

Page 34:

“И у нас есть великое моральное право – принципиально и настойчиво отстаивать свои позиции, потому что именно наша страна приняла на себя главный удар нацизма, встретила его героическим сопротивлением, прошла через тяжелейшие испытания, определила сам исход той войны, сокрушила врага и принесла освобождение народам всего мира.”

Page 38:

“Не случайно упомянул наших американских друзей, так как они напрямую или изза кулис всегда влияют на наши отношения с соседями. Иногда даже не знаешь, с кем лучше разговаривать: с правительствами некоторых государств или напрямую с их американскими покровителями и спонсорами.”

Page 39:

“Уверен, что если бы всего этого не было, – хочу это подчеркнуть, уважаемые коллеги, особенно для вас, для политиков, для тех, кто сегодня сидит в зале, – если бы всего этого не было, то придумали бы какойнибудь другой повод для того, чтобы сдерживать растущие возможности России, повлиять на неё, а ещё лучше – использовать в своих интересах. Политика сдерживания придумана не вчера. Она проводится в отношении нашей страны многие многие годы – всегда, можно сказать, десятилетиями, если не столетиями.”

“Не вышло. Мы не позволили. Так же как не вышло у Гитлера, который со своими человеконенавистническими идеями собирался уничтожить Россию и отбросить нас за Урал. Надо бы всем помнить, чем это заканчивается.”

Page 40:

“Это представляет собой не только угрозу безопасности России, но и для всего мира – как раз в силу возможного нарушения этого самого стратегического баланса сил... Думаю, что это вредно и для самих США, поскольку создаёт опасную иллюзию неуязвимости, усиливает стремление к односторонним, часто, как мы видим, непродуманным решениям и дополнительным рискам”

Page 45:

“Анализ дискуссий в интернете четко показывает уже отмеченное выше парадоксальное сочетание уверенности, что страна идет в правильном направлении, с тем, что каждому в отдельности не очень хорошо, а то и плохо. Эта комбинация держится на уверенности, что раз Россия становится сильной и независимой, стоит смириться с временными трудностями. И нам очень важны праздники, которые напоминают, что пережили наши великие предки. Они победили, победим и мы.”

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