

**Freedom to Fracture: Universal Human Rights as a Security Threat to a Multi-ethnic
Russian Federation**

Working Draft- 3/16/2017

Celia Baker

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

At the 10th World Russian People's Council in April 2006, Vladimir Putin gave opening remarks and then ceded the stage to representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, who host the event annually. The theme for discussion that year was human rights. When Metropolitan Kirill addressed the council, he immediately questioned the universality of human rights, wondering whether Western standards of happiness were even applicable other countries and cultures. At the core of his apprehension, it seems, was the West's elevation of the individual and individual self-determination. The West, Kirill explained, believes that if freedom and rights are given to the individual, then he will unfailingly make decisions that benefit him and his well-being. By this logic, external authorities have no place in deciding for the individual what is right or wrong. Yet, Kirill continued, "The population decline, asocial and amoral behavior, i.e. everything that has become a social problem in the West is often explained by excessive individualism."¹

Mistrusting the Western approach, the Russian Orthodox Church proffered an alternative view on the relationship between the people and so-called "external authorities." God granted humans free will and self-determination, Kirill acknowledged. Yet this in no way guarantees that man will choose what is "good"—his vulnerability to sin and deception requires the guidance of an outside authority. "The absolutization of the sovereignty of the individual and his rights without moral responsibility" will destroy civilization, he warned. The council concluded with the Russian Orthodox Church issuing a Russian Declaration of Human Rights, which seemingly

¹ "Human Rights and Moral Responsibility. Paper Read by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, at the X World Russian People's Council," *Interfax*, April 4, 2006, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=documents&div=62>.

contradicted the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.² Human rights are not totally inalienable, the document claims. Instead, the authors “recognize the rights and freedoms of man to the extent that they help the individual to ascend to goodness.” Individual human rights are placed in a hierarchy of values, which are subject to “human responsibility and accountability” and constrained by the preservation of the homeland.

The 2006 Russian Declaration of Human Rights may present an unavoidable and obvious challenge to the UN Declaration, but it stems from a long traditional and philosophical heritage. Petr Preklik argues that since the 1993 UN World Conference in Vienna, acknowledging differing notions of human rights has become “almost heretical,”³ yet Russian and Western thought have long diverged in their understanding of what is “good” for mankind. As expressed by Metropolitan Kirill, this divergence of views rests on a difference in understanding of the optimal relationship between the people and the polity. Or, in other words, in their understanding of self-determination.

As Eric Weitz concludes: “Untangling the diverse meanings of self-determination goes to the heart of the complexities and dilemmas intrinsic to the history and politics of human rights.”⁴ One definition stresses the sovereignty of the individual, while another the sovereignty of the state. In the liberal democratic version of self-determination, the nation is understood as a “group of individuals living under the same rule,” with the right to take part in that rule. In the national version of self-determination, the nation is instead a “cultural community sharing a language, a

² Josh Wilson, trans., “The Russian Declaration of Human Rights from the Russian Orthodox Church,” *School of Russian and Asian Studies*, April 19, 2006, http://www.sras.org/the_russian_declaration_of_human_rights.

³ Petr Preklik, “Culture Re-Introduced: Contestation of Human Rights in Contemporary Russia Special Issue: Russia and European Human-Rights Law: Progress, Tensions and Perspectives,” *Review of Central and East European Law* 37 (2012): 173–232.

⁴ Eric D. Weitz, “Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right,” *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015): 462–496, doi:10.1093/ahr/120.2.462, p. 463.

tradition and a historical-national consciousness,” with the right to protect and preserve that culture.⁵ The liberal view, however, has a tendency to subsume the national view, conflating individual human rights with national self-determination, or human rights with democracy. Thus, the liberal view can justify succession movements and national self-determination movements on the basis of a violation of individual civil and political rights.⁶

Russia leans to the national interpretation of self-determination. Mikhail Antonov explains that “while in the Western legal tradition, the accent in a liberal democracy as a system generally is placed on the protection of individual liberty, references in Russian political debates to ‘genuine’ (antique, medieval) democracy place the emphasis on the well-being of the polity—not of its individual members.”⁷ In Western countries, human rights focuses on protecting the individual from her own government. Yet in Russia conservative, spiritual philosophers have depicted these two things—individual and society, person and state—as functioning together in harmony to protect the “totality from disintegration.”⁸

This philosophical tradition has colored Russian culture from the early Middle Ages through the present, albeit always with influence from Western philosophy. Byzantine concepts that arrived in Russia in the early Middle Ages promoted the concept of what Antonov calls “a religio-mystical unity” of people and polity, which placed “emphasis on the collectivity which

⁵ Yael Tamir, “The Right to National Self-Determination as an Individual Right,” *History of European Ideas*, Special Issue Second International Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, 16, no. 4 (January 1, 1993): 899–905, doi:10.1016/0191-6599(93)90238-L, p. 899. See also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which Article 21 describes as a human right the participation in one’s own government. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *United Nations*, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

⁶ For further explanation of the problems of this logic and its prevalence in scholarship, see Tamir, “The Right to National Self-Determination as an Individual Right” and Weitz, “Self-Determination.”

⁷ M. Antonov, “Conservatism in Russia and Sovereignty in Human Rights,” *Review Of Central And East European Law* 39, no. 1 (2014): 1–40, doi:10.1163/15730352-00000010, p. 4.

⁸ Antonov, “Conservatism in Russia and Sovereignty in Human Rights,” 25.

superposes the individuality.”⁹ The Eurasianists picked up this theme in the 1920s and have carried it into present-day politics, with President Vladimir Putin referencing the theories of the popular Eurasianist Lev Gumilev.¹⁰ Elements can be found in the Communist experiment, which under Stalinist policies in the 1930s and 1940s promoted both cultural autonomy for non-Russian nationalities and an “integrated polyethnic *obshchnost*,” a larger community that combined all Soviet ethnicities into one unit with its own distinct “quasi-ethnic” characteristics.¹¹ Later Soviet assimilationist policies saw visions of a new Soviet man, still loyal to the larger collective but now totally without ethnic sub-identities to rival the collective. The Brezhnev doctrine prioritized the preservation of the Communist bloc over either individual or national sovereignty. In 2006 Vladislav Surkov coined the term “sovereign democracy” in an attempt to reconcile individual human rights with state sovereignty. In Surkov’s mind, although state sovereignty trumps democracy, the individual’s place in the collective ensures that the well-being of the state is also the well-being of the individual.

Although Russia has a history of promoting the collective good over the rights of the individual, modern Russia is still trying to discover what its modern collective identity is. Russia has never been a nation in the modern sense of the term—it has no overarching national identity. Ethnic Russians have never historically identified as ethnically Russian—in pre-Petrine Russia the primary collective identity was Orthodox; during the Romanov Empire people identified with their localities; and during the Soviet era one was either a Communist or perhaps a dissident.¹²

⁹ Antonov, “Conservatism in Russia and Sovereignty in Human Rights,” 24-25.

¹⁰ Vladimir Putin, “Address to the Federal Assembly,” *President of Russia*, December 12, 2012, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17118>.

¹¹ Mark Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique: Biopolitics, Eurasianism, and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia, Culture and Society after Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 307.

¹² Dmitrii Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 60.

Yet ethnic identity is profoundly strong in the republics among non-Russians, especially in Dagestan and among the Tatars, Chechens, and Yakuts.¹³ And with over 200 ethnic groups represented in the Russian Federation today, the Western conception of human rights—founded on the liberal version of self-determination that gives individuals the right to choose and prioritize their own identities—could challenge the state’s fragile internal cohesion.¹⁴

Russia is in the middle of a nation-building effort for its life. The national version of self-determination provides a unifying hedge against the atomizing possibilities of liberal self-determination—if Russia can provide that national identity. In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, many doubted that the 20 autonomous republics of the Russian Federation could maintain cohesion. Indeed, throughout the 1990s many republics challenged the supremacy of the federal government. Komi and Bashkortostan, for example, claimed that their constitutions superseded federal legislation; while Tuva proclaimed the right to declare war and peace; and Tatarstan, Dagestan, and Ingushetia claimed the right to pursue their own foreign policy.¹⁵ The greatest threat to Russian unity in the 1990s was Chechen separatism. Those fears continue today. Russia’s current borders do not perfectly correspond with ethnic and cultural demographics, and economic prosperity of eastern and western neighbors offers an alluring alternative to Russian identity. In 2010, a census revealed that residents of Kaliningrad were claiming “Kaliningrader” as their chosen identity over “Russian.”¹⁶

Although Putin’s centralizing reforms in 2000 quashed some of the internal turmoil, the fragmentation of the federation remains a very real security threat. In this thesis, I argue that the

¹³ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 62.

¹⁴ “The World Factbook — Russia,” Central Intelligence Agency, accessed March 4, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

¹⁵ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 50.

¹⁶ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 64.

Russian Federation perceives the acceptance of the Western, liberal understanding of human rights as “universal” as a threat to its territorial integrity as a multi-ethnic and multi-faith state. The acceptance of such an interpretation constitutes a loss of state sovereignty, which enables foreign interference in Russia’s internal affairs under a Euro-Atlantic security order that increasingly not only justifies but aids and abets separatist movements and regime change on the grounds of human rights.

Other works in this genre offer only partial or tangential explanations for Russian intransigence on modern human rights issues. While scholars such as Daniel C. Thomas and Sarah Snyder have claimed that human rights were influential in ending the Cold War and in the collapse of the Soviet Union, these analyses do not continue to explain how what Thomas terms the “Helsinki Effect” continues to haunt Russia today. I do rely on Thomas’s work, especially in his explanation of how human rights norms challenged and undermined the Soviet identity.¹⁷ Likewise, my research rests on Snyder’s explanation of the importance of international human rights networks, NGOs, and Gorbachev’s acceptance of universal human rights in bringing down the Soviet regime.¹⁸ However, I use their work to go beyond the Cold War era and to demonstrate why Russia sees human rights as a current security threat.

The literature on Russia and human rights in the post-Soviet era encompasses a wide swath of disciplines: from international law to history, from security studies to philosophy. Some accounts simplify Russia’s defensive position on human rights as merely Putin’s fear of losing his personal power, beginning their analysis with the separatist movements in the 1990s without

¹⁷ Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*, Human Rights in History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

giving the historical context of the Helsinki Final Act and its lasting impact on international relations. Others, like Petr Prelik, assert that Russia sees Western human rights as part of a Fukuyama-style “end of history” threat, in which Russian identity is assimilated under the onslaught of globalization. Under this line of argument, Russia sees human rights as part of an imperialist American attempt to maintain unipolar domination of the world.¹⁹ Dmitri Trenin recognizes that the “national question,” or lack of a national idea, plagues Russian territorial integrity, and argues that a move towards a more democratic Russia could cause a rise in separatism.²⁰ While Trenin’s argument is most similar to my own, he uses the term “democracy” without mentioning human rights. As I argued previously, these two terms are frequently conflated in the West, and this un-nuanced use glosses over the alternative understandings of self-determination that help the Putin regime justify its denunciation of universal human values.

While all of these works shed useful insight into Russia’s relationship with Western, liberal human rights, I argue that there is a need for an interdisciplinary narrative on events since Helsinki. The Russian human rights approach cannot be explained simply by Putin’s ambition, by exotic new ideologies, by the unfathomable Russian soul, or by pragmatic international relations. I do not intend to argue here that Russia cannot understand or accept Western conceptions of human rights because its culture and history are irreconcilably “other.” Russia has always been in conversation with the West, if not itself a part of the West. Instead, I hope to explain the historical context for Russia’s legitimate fear of human rights as a tool of multi-ethnic state disintegration. At the same time, I hope to show how Russian leaders can draw on

¹⁹ Prelik, “Culture Re-Introduced.”

²⁰ Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium*.

Russia's own philosophical tradition to respond to and resist Western calls to embrace the very thing they fear.

Chapter I explains how the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 first inserted human rights into international relations at a conference on security in Europe. I emphasize that both international support for the human rights movement and support from the Soviet leadership were components of the "Helsinki Effect" that fragmented the Soviet Union. The Helsinki Effect both created a historical precedent for current Russian fears of territorial fragmentation and marked the beginning of a new era in the Euro-Atlantic security order. Chapter II details the further institutionalization of human rights in the Euro-Atlantic security order and documents hardening Russian resolve and resistance to this trend. It is impossible, given the limited scope of this thesis, to provide a comprehensive overview of this process. Instead I focus on certain "mile markers," including the collapse of Yugoslavia and the NATO intervention in Kosovo; the justification of military intervention in Libya under Responsibility to Protect (R2P); and the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Chapter III shows how Russian leaders are drawing on Russia's own philosophical tradition to challenge the notion of universal human rights, in particular using the language of the Eurasianists.

CHAPTER I: LINKING HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY: HELSINKI

INTRODUCTION

It is one of the great ironies of history that the Soviet Union was both constructed and dismantled, repressed and liberated on the same principle. Self-determination became a tool in the skilled hands of Lenin. On one hand pledging the right of self-determination to national minorities, on the other ordering the Red Army to "*first* sovietize Lithuania and *then* give it back

to the Lithuanians,” Lenin’s use of the term proved liberal—or perhaps, illiberal.²¹ Yet this twist of history demonstrates the different ends to which self-determination can be applied—both to build, and to dismantle. Years later, international treaties began to list self-determination as a legal right of all human beings. The United Nations Charter pioneered this move, but the document that would shake the Soviet empire appeared in 1975.

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 shows how Western conceptions of human rights, including self-determination, could be weaponized against the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union began to dissolve in the late 1980s, the union republics used the exit strategy Lenin had crafted for them decades earlier. The West did not give the Soviet republics the concept of self-determination. Instead, you could say they co-opted it. Without moving a single soldier, the West crept behind the iron curtain and into the internal affairs of the Soviet empire. The impact of Helsinki far outlasted the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Its legacy lives on today in the Euro-Atlantic security order, the (waning?) moral authority of the West, and in the security fears of the Russian Federation.

AN UNPRECEDENTED AGREEMENT

The Helsinki Final Act was not the first international agreement to profess Western norms of human rights. Nor were the Final Acts conditions initially complied with. Human rights—or, as many argue, now universal norms—have been codified over the past several decades in agreements such the UN Charter, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International Human Rights Covenants, the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law

²¹ Quoted in Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923 : With a New Preface*, Rev. ed., Russian Research Center Studies ; 13 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.00295>, p. viii.

Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States, the NPT, and more. In the case of the Soviet Union, however, many of these agreements failed to elicit serious commitment to Western norms until the Gorbachev era. Some were simply violated, some went unsigned, and others floundered for years in working groups.

When Gorbachev became General Secretary, he rose to the top of an empire that had for the past several decades been fundamentally opposed to Western norms of human rights. His predecessor's Brezhnev Doctrine placed the preservation of pro-Kremlin Communist regimes in Eastern Europe above the sovereignty of Warsaw Pact states, or the rights of individuals in those states. Rather than allowing political dissent as a right to self-determination, Soviet leaders regarded unrest as an internal threat to the proper government of the state. Dissenters were internal saboteurs, justifying joint military intervention by Warsaw Pact members. Under this logic Hungary was forcibly rejoined to the Warsaw Pact in 1956 and the Prague Spring was suppressed in 1968.

The West, in its turn, had not yet tried to tie human rights with international relations. Doing so would have compromised Western colonial holdings—a moral vulnerability that the Soviets were all too willing to exploit. In addition, dictators had held sway in three Western European countries for decades: Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Francisco Franco died in 1975. António de Oliveira Salazar of Portugal died in 1968, and without him his authoritarian government collapsed during the Carnation Revolution in 1974. In Greece, the military junta that ruled the country collapsed in 1974, giving way to the Third Hellenic Republic. So while human rights declarations were signed *internationally*, prior to the Helsinki Final Act, no document officially linked human rights with international relations. Without the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Western Europe and the gradual loss of colonial empires, a collective Western

identity grounded in individual human rights protection would have been impossible—and a treaty linking such rights with international relations would have been self-defeating.

THE HELSINKI EFFECT IN ACTION

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 epitomizes both Soviet attempts to place the Communist bloc out of reach of Western intervention, while at the same time revealing the power Western norms had on the diverse people of the Soviet bloc. The Act, concluding the 35-state Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, inserted Western norms into relations between states and concepts of security.

The preamble to the Act emphasizes the participants' common history and common elements in their traditions and values.²² Although the Soviet delegation achieved the inclusion of Principle 6—"Non-intervention in internal affairs"—this victory came at the cost of a number of gains for Western norms of human rights and international relations. Principle 7, for example, promised "Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief." Principle 8 defended the right to self-determination of peoples, Principle 1 stressed "Sovereign equality," and Principles 2 and 5 addressed peaceful resolutions to international disputes and denounced the threat of force as a tool of international relations.

These Principles, and the Principles protecting human contacts and information mobility in Basket III, were initially overshadowed by Soviet propaganda campaigns touting the West's agreement to "non-intervention in internal affairs" and the "inviolability of frontiers" as

²² "Helsinki Final Act," Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act>.

recognition of the Communist bloc and the Soviet sphere of interest. Soviet leaders assumed that the elements of human rights and other Western concepts could be circumvented by hiding the details of the agreement from Soviet and Warsaw Pact citizens, as they had in regard to past human rights agreements.²³ As Gromyko allegedly told Brezhnev: “We are masters in our own house.”²⁴ News of Helsinki and the rights afforded under it, however, spread across the bloc. The Final Act linked compliance with these terms to international East–West relations more generally, and, unlike previous human rights agreements, had the ability to hold states that violated human rights accountable. Future and current diplomatic relations in all areas of interest could be jeopardized by a human rights violation. Follow-up meetings to review progress and adherence to the Final Act helped this process.

This accountability worked, in large part, because the Soviet Union and its satellites needed both the economic assistance of Western capitalist wealth and better relations with their Cold War enemies. East bloc countries like Poland had been racking up foreign debt for years, attempting to stave off domestic unrest by placating the population with material goods and higher wages. In so doing, the Polish government backed themselves into a corner as the Polish economy floundered. At the Helsinki summit itself, Poland reached an agreement with West Germany whereby the Polish government would grant exit visas to 125,000 Germans residing in Poland in return for 2.3 million Deutsche marks in credit.²⁵ In the year immediately following the signing of the Final Act, the Soviet economy detoured from its slow decline into a sharp tailspin. By 1986 in Soviet Union, 40 percent of the Soviet budget was allocated for defense

²³ Daniel C. (Daniel Charles) Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 98.

²⁴ Quoted in Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 34.

²⁵ Thomas, 167.

expenditures, industrial production was plummeting, and the state was spending approximately 80 billion rubles more than it was taking in.²⁶ The Soviets supported, to varying degrees, some 69 different satellites or regimes around the world.²⁷ Falling oil prices in the late eighties only exacerbated the deficit, prompting Gorbachev to declare despairingly that “the financial crisis ‘has clutched us by the throat.’”²⁸ The Soviets, therefore, needed economic assistance from the West to assuage their populations and shore up domestic support. Continued détente could relieve some of the pressure on military expenses, freeing up the budget to reallocate funds to citizen needs.

Despite attempts by the Soviet leadership to stifle news of Helsinki’s human rights promises, word spread through a growing international network of human rights organizations that connected groups within the Soviet bloc to groups in the US and Western Europe. Helsinki did not create activism in Eastern Europe and the USSR in a vacuum—human rights groups had existed for over a decade. In December of 1965, for example, activists staged a demonstration in Moscow’s Pushkin Square in honor of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²⁹ Organizations such as the Moscow chapter of Amnesty International and the Initiative Group to Defend Human Rights in the USSR predated Helsinki, but were limited in their success. Repression stifled activists’ attempts to disclose abuse—until an international Helsinki movement helped to amplify their voices and provide a modicum of protection.

²⁶ V. M. (Vladislav Martinovich) Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, [Pbk. ed.], New Cold War History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 299.

²⁷ Zubok, 268.

²⁸ Zubok, 299.

²⁹ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 53.

One such group in the international network was the Moscow Helsinki Group, which formed on May 13, 1976. The group was an NGO, whose stated goal was monitoring the implementation of the Final Act and disseminating their findings throughout the Soviet population and the West. The group also called for the creation of similar groups in other countries. Helsinki groups formed in Lithuania, Georgia, Ukraine, and Armenia shortly after, following the Moscow group's model of nonviolence, lawfulness, and government accountability. More groups would spread throughout the bloc in the years to come.

These groups had a symbiotic relationship with Western governments and Western human rights organizations. When the Moscow Group announced its formation, it did so to a Western journalist. Founder Yuri Orlov then immediately went underground until he heard Western news coverage of the group—Western knowledge of activists decreased the chances and severity of Soviet reprisals.³⁰ In Belgrade at the first follow-up meeting to Helsinki, head of the US delegation Arthur J. Goldberg humiliated the Soviet delegation by chronicling in detail Soviet violations of human rights. His strategy relied heavily on NGO research, like the information gathered by the Moscow Group, and led to the creation of Helsinki Watch, a US-based monitoring group.³¹ The US group, in turn, sent medicine and office supplies to activists in the Soviet bloc and translated and redistributed censored reports from groups within the bloc.

Western connections were not always sufficient protection from Soviet authorities. Although the international network focused attention on human rights abuses in the Soviet bloc and energized local groups, the Soviet regime actually escalated its efforts to silence dissident voices after Belgrade.³² In 1978 Orlov was accused of trying to weaken the Soviet regime,

³⁰ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 60.

³¹ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 10.

³² Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 115.

interrogated for 10 months, tried, and sentenced to seven years in a labor camp and five years in exile.³³ Andrei Sakharov, one of the human rights figures most well-known in the West, was arrested in 1980. By 1982 the Moscow Group was forced to disband after intense pressure from the Soviet government.

The Soviet leadership tried to quell dissent and identification with these Western norms, but they did find themselves constrained in the scope of their reprisals by their commitments in the Final Act to respect human rights. When Solidarity threatened the Communist monopoly on political power in Poland in the 1980s, the Soviets did not resort to a joint Warsaw Pact military invasion to restore the regime—but they did order the massing of Warsaw Pact troops on the border of Poland in December 1980. The rise of organized protest in Poland caused Soviet officials to suspect a Western-backed “underground” was directing the movement. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Pope John Paul II were labeled as some of the leaders.³⁴

The Helsinki effect was, in essence, a splintering of competing identities and loyalties. The class/historical-dialectical identity offered by the Soviets did not keep Central and Eastern European citizens faithful to the Party. For many protestors, the norms espoused at Helsinki echoed older European identities rooted in the Enlightenment and the Reformation. The Final Act spoke to individuals, rather than a relatively new Soviet collective class identity. The Moscow group worked on a variety of issues, including national self-determination, emigration, political prisoners, and freedom of belief. One of the founding members of the group, Liūdmila Alekseeva, reported her surprise at the diversity of the Helsinki movement:

there was a result no one had anticipated: unification of the human rights movement with religious and national movements working toward the goal of the Moscow Helsinki

³³ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 74.

³⁴ Zubok, pp. 265-66.

Group—civic liberties enumerated in the humanitarian articles of the Final Act. The national and religious movements that seemed to be based on a common ground, while not united among themselves, were united, in many respects, in the human rights movement.³⁵

Under the umbrella of civil liberties, the Helsinki movement supported and encouraged the separatist movements that would eventually break the Soviet Union apart and the political movements that would overtake Communism.

GORBACHEV ENDORSES WESTERN NORMS

With the advent of the Gorbachev era, the Soviet approach to Western, liberal human rights shifted. Gorbachev accepted certain Western norms of human rights and their supposed universality. As the historian Vladislav Zubok recognizes, part of the Soviet shift to the West in the late 1980s must be attributed to the personality of Gorbachev himself. Individuals who knew him claimed that the General Secretary was more comfortable talking to Westerners than Soviet crowds.³⁶ The young premier “rejected . . . the entire post-Stalin logic of Soviet geopolitical interests, beginning with Central and Eastern Europe.”³⁷ While his predecessors relied on security through coercion, military strength, and balances of power, Gorbachev rejected the authoritarian regimes these efforts created. His reforms sought to revive the corrupted ideology of socialism. In this way he rejected many of the security dogmas that were anathema to Western conceptions of a security order.

Gorbachev’s belief in global interdependence eased the way for important arms control and security treaties, reduced East–West tensions, and ultimately contributed to the end of the

³⁵ Liūdmila Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*, 1st ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.05440>.

³⁶ Zubok, 313

³⁷ Zubok, 310

Cold War. It allowed him to famously declare that Europe was a common home for both the West and the Communist bloc. This belief in global interdependence transformed into a conception of Soviet security that valued common human existence (threatened by nuclear war both physically and economically) over traditional Soviet hyper-secret militarism. At the Reykjavik Summit in 1986, Gorbachev expressed his willingness to commit to on-site inspections and to the elimination of entire categories of nuclear weapons—a major capitulation of state sovereignty.

Reykjavik and the ensuing arms control treaties had, however, another significant effect on the Soviet bloc. By working to remove the threat of war with NATO and the US, Gorbachev effectively removed one of the bonds that held the Communist bloc together. It was certainly not being held together by a shared socialist identity. In allowing on-site inspections, he was sacrificing Soviet military secrets for common European security. He was accepting foreign restraints on internal affairs, something that the Soviets had long resisted, especially in the field of human rights.

At the 1986 Vienna Meeting, another Helsinki follow-up, the Soviet delegation shocked the audience by proposing to host a human rights conference in Moscow. The Soviet Union, under the influence of Gorbachev and the indefatigable work of the international Helsinki movement, had moved from refusing to discuss what it considered its internal affairs to proposing to host its own trial. Because many Western countries viewed the Soviet conference proposal as mere propaganda, they demanded human rights concessions from the Soviets before agreeing to such a conference. To everyone's surprise, the Soviets worked to comply with many of the demands. In 1987, 140 political prisoners were released, Voice of America was allowed to

broadcast, and German and Jewish emigration was allowed to increase.³⁸ By the end of 1988, Gorbachev had announced an end of political imprisonment, an end to religious repression, and the repeal of laws limiting freedom of expression. Human rights had become accepted in US-Soviet relations as a topic that had to be engaged. At the UN in 1988 Gorbachev proclaimed his acceptance of universal individual human rights: “Freedom of choice is a universal principle to which there should be no exceptions.”³⁹

PREPARING FOR A NEW EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY ORDER

The Moscow Conference on the Human Dimension began in September 1991, but by that point the forces unleashed by Helsinki had already overwhelmed the Soviet Union. In 1989, the Communist East bloc trembled. Waves of reform from the top of the system collided with the seismic upheaval of dissent from the bottom, and regimes toppled. With a swiftness (and peacefulness) that surprised almost the entire world, the Soviet empire and Communist rule disintegrated. Images of crowds swarming over the Berlin Wall to reunite East Germans with West Germans seemed to be a microcosm for Europe, perhaps even the world, at large. Francis Fukuyama certainly saw it as such, writing in his essay later that year, followed by a book of the same title in 1992, about “The End of History.” In his article he speculated that “we may be witnessing . . . not just the end of the Cold War . . . but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 192.

³⁹ Bill Keller, “Gorbachev’s Journey; Ideals According to Gorbachev: A Call for Tolerance and the End of Force,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1988, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/09/world/gorbachev-s-journey-ideals-according-gorbachev-call-for-tolerance-end-force.html>.

⁴⁰ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 4.

Looking at the Euro-Atlantic security order that has prevailed since the end of the Cold War, at first glance it seems that Fukuyama's prediction about the universalization of Western norms has indeed come to pass. International treaties, as well as bilateral US–USSR/Russian Federation security treaties, are rife with references to human rights, sovereignty, renunciations of force and intimidation, self-determination, and rights to states' territorial integrity. The concept of a "Europe whole and free," as President George Bush espoused in 1989, was a denunciation of arms races, of armed aggression, of Socialist rhetoric of world revolution. Territorial conquest was no longer an acceptable avenue to wealth and power; security was not as asset to be attained through violence, but through international diplomacy. The 2015 US National Military Strategy defines "the preservation and extension of universal values" as a US national security interest.⁴¹ The Joint Chiefs label "preventing conflict, respecting sovereignty, and furthering human rights" as "key aspects of the international order."⁴² In NATO's most recent strategic concept, member states define themselves as "a unique community of values, committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law."⁴³

Not everyone celebrated the fall of the Soviet Union—Putin has famously called for acknowledgment that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century," stating that "the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself."⁴⁴ In the post-Cold

⁴¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015," Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 2015, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf, p. 5.

⁴² Joint Chiefs of Staff, p. 2.

⁴³ "Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" (NATO Summit Lisbon: NATO, November 19, 2010), http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation," President of Russia, April 25, 2005, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

War era, as individual human rights began to edge out state sovereignty, the Soviet Union was not the only state infected with that epidemic.

CHAPTER II: DEFINING THE HUMAN RIGHTS THREAT

YUGOSLAVIA

In Yeltsin's memoir, he recalls the domestic turmoil that enveloped Russia in the wake of the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia. Both Communists and nationalists whipped the nation into a frenzy with sensationalist cries of "Today Yugoslavia, tomorrow Russia!" They warned that NATO would have no qualms about attacking Russia next. Yeltsin, who calls them "hysterical," nevertheless also worried about American power left unchecked.⁴⁵

Russia's distrust of NATO is well-known today. The most common narrative wonders why an organization that formed to provide security against the Soviet Union needs to continue to exist past 1991. Yet if we accept the simple explanation that Russia fears NATO because NATO has and continues to see Russia as the enemy, we miss the more complex anxieties underlying the Russia–Yugoslavia parallel.

Communist Yugoslavia was a federation of six republics—Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—and the two autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina, both inside of Serbia. The Federal People's Republic was nationally and religiously diverse. The Croats were Catholic, the Serbs were Orthodox, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had a majority Muslim population. To complicate matters, the borders of the republics did not perfectly align with the nationalities of their residents. In the 1980s, the population of Kosovo was 90 percent Albanian, creating concerns over a potential secessionist

⁴⁵ Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 259.

movement towards Yugoslavia's neighbor. Croatia was 12 percent Serb, while Bosnia-Herzegovina was 31 percent Serb.⁴⁶

Tito and the Communist leadership of Yugoslavia had hoped to avert nationalist separatism by forming an equal federation and focusing on modernization and working-class identities. As Sekulic et al. summarize, while Tito hoped that in time, the Communists could “reduce the political strength of nationalism, leaving it [sic] its place cultural traditions and ethnic pride held in common by all South Slavic people. What actually transpired was increased fragmentation of identities and the development of political rivalries associated with nationalist claims.”⁴⁷ The Yugoslav identity never really caught on. In 1989 only 4.6 percent of people in Serbia, 14.4 percent of people in Bosnia, and 9 percent of people in Croatia self-identified as “Yugoslav.”⁴⁸

The 1974 constitution only exacerbated the identity crisis, by continuing a trend of decreasing federal authority. It shifted responsibilities and rights to the republics and created a collective presidency. Presidential decisions could be vetoed by a republic. Although economics were supposed to unite the republic in unity and equality, in practice wealth became unevenly distributed throughout the republics, encouraging nationalist agendas. Tito's death in 1980 robbed the republic of yet another chance at continued unity. As the economic crisis of the 1980s pushed inflation in Yugoslavia to 2,500 percent, Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe.⁴⁹ As political gridlock gripped Yugoslavia in 1989, Slovene intellectuals called for the establishment

⁴⁶ Carole Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and the War in Bosnia*, Greenwood Press Guides to Historic Events of the Twentieth Century (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 21.

⁴⁷ Dusko Sekulic, Garth Massey, and Randy Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia,” *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 1 (1994): 83–97, p. 88.

⁴⁸ Sekulic, Massey, and Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs?,” 89.

⁴⁹ Sekulic, Massey, and Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs?,” 88.

of a democratic, sovereign Slovenia based on human rights and freedoms. By 1990 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia had joined the rest of the Communist regimes of Europe on the ash heap of history.

Kosovo was the spark that ignited nationalist forces in Yugoslavia, leading to years of war, refugees, human rights violations, and ethnic cleansing. In 1981, students at Pristina University staged demonstrations demanding better living conditions in their dormitories. The federal government overreacted. Troops were brought in, but the crackdown only caused students to radicalize their rhetoric, calling for political and social reform. As the university shut down early, students returned home and spread their discontent across Kosovo, in turn fueling Serbian nationalism. Kosovo came under police rule, half of the adult population would be arrested or detained by the police by 1989, and the region lost its autonomous status. Cut off from public resources, Albanian Kosovars created their own schools, a parallel society within Serbia, and called for independence.

Rising Serbian nationalism, amplified by politicians and the media, supported the resettlement of Kosovo in order to assert Serbian claims on the land. Although Serbians were a minority nationality in Kosovo, Serbia tied Kosovo to its national history and identity: Kosovo, Serbs claimed, was the heart of the first Serbian state in the 1100s and the center of their faith since 1346, when the Serbian Orthodox Church's Patriarchate relocated there.

The details of the conflict in Yugoslavia are far too complex to detail here. For the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to say that Serbian nationalism, under the banner of a Greater Serbia, affected not only Kosovo. A unified Serbian people would also have to include Bosnian Serbs and Serbs in Croatia. The resulting wars represented a turning point for NATO and the link between human rights and international relations. When NATO began bombing

Bosnia in March of 1994, it was the first time in the history of the organization that NATO had performed a military intervention. Carole Rogel claims that “Bosnia became the test of NATO’s relevance,” in the post-Cold War era.⁵⁰ The bombing campaign, which was approved by the UN and justified as a humanitarian intervention, marked the re-creation of NATO as an organization that defended human rights.

Tensions arose between Serbia and Kosovo again when the Dayton peace agreement failed to address Kosovar demands for sovereignty. Russian foreign minister Ivanov told NATO leaders that although Russia would veto a UN intervention, it could only protest against a move by NATO. Facing accounts of ethnic cleansing and massacres, NATO began a war in Kosovo in March 1999, this time without UN Security Council. The decision was contentious—the country under attack was not a NATO member, the traditionally held justification for joint action. In addition, intervention on behalf of Kosovo would constitute interference in Serbia’s internal affairs and a breach of Serbian sovereignty. Helsinki joined individual human rights with relations between states, normalizing the idea that the security of a state’s citizens was a legitimate factor in inter-state relations. Kosovo took this a step further, creating a precedent for the violation of state sovereignty through military intervention on behalf of the human rights.

Ivanov’s response to the NATO intervention in Kosovo was seen as tacit approval of the plan, but the end of the conflict revealed Russia’s deep unease with the changing world order. During NATO’s Bosnian campaign, Russian troops had served under an American commander as a partner in the peacekeeping mission. But when NATO bombing began in the Kosovo War, Russia ended contact with NATO through the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council. At the

⁵⁰ Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and the War in Bosnia*, 66.

end of the Kosovo campaign, Russian troops raced to enter Kosovo's capital before NATO troops. Angela Stent remarks that "it appeared to be more important for Russia to oppose what NATO was doing than to help solve a major humanitarian crisis in Europe."⁵¹ Many Russians called NATO's intervention hypocritical, saying that a "double standard" was in play, in which separatists across the Balkans were rewarded for actions that caused chaos and instability, but supposedly sovereign states were punished for violating individual human rights.⁵²

The wars in Yugoslavia occurred concurrently with Russian attempts at territorial unification. While war ravaged the Balkans, Russia faced Chechen separatism in the Caucasus. There was fear that the "Kosovo model" could be applied to Russia itself.⁵³ At a conference in Moscow on 1 February 2000, acting president Putin concluded that "It is unacceptable to cancel such basic principles of international law as national sovereignty and territorial integrity under the slogan of so-called humanitarian intervention."⁵⁴ Shortly after the Kosovo War ended, Putin began a centralizing campaign in Russia. In 2000, reforms began that transferred authority from the republics to the federal government—the opposite of Yugoslavia's constitutional reforms in the years before its collapse. Local constitutions were reworked to conform to the federal constitution. In 2004, popularly elected governors from the republics were replaced with presidential appointees.

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

⁵¹ Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership : U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 44.

⁵² Vladimir Baranovsky, "Vladimir Baranovsky: Humanitarian Intervention: Russian Perspectives," *Viperson*, May 8, 2001, <http://plugin.viperson.ru/articles/vladimir-baranovsky-humanitarian-intervention-russian-perspectives>.

⁵³ Baranovsky, "Vladimir Baranovsky: Humanitarian Intervention: Russian Perspectives," 14.

⁵⁴ "Newline - February 2, 2000," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 2, 2000, <http://www.rferl.org/a/1142085.html>.

NATO actions in Yugoslavia created a precedent for intervention in a state's internal affairs in order to protect human rights, but the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) institutionalized intervention. In 1999, reflecting on the humanitarian tragedies in Kosovo, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proclaimed the end of traditional state sovereignty:

States are now widely understood to be instruments at the service of their peoples, and not vice versa. At the same time individual sovereignty—by which I mean the fundamental freedom of each individual, enshrined in the charter of the UN and subsequent international treaties—has been enhanced by a renewed and spreading consciousness of individual rights. When we read the charter today, we are more than ever conscious that its aim is to protect individual human beings, not to protect those who abuse them.⁵⁵

His statements on the necessity of intervention urged UN debate over humanitarian intervention and eventually led to the R2P doctrine. Unanimously adopted at the 2005 UN World Summit, R2P rests on three “pillars”: First, the concept that the state is primarily responsible for protecting the population from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Second, that the international community has a responsibility to assist. And third, the community has a responsibility to use diplomatic, humanitarian, and “other means” to protect populations. R2P proclaimed that “sovereignty no longer exclusively protects states from foreign interference; it is a charge of responsibility where states are accountable for the welfare of their people.”⁵⁶ Collective action, however, must be approved through the UN Security Council—giving Russia veto power.

The UN Security Council authorized military intervention under R2P for the first time on 17 March 2011, as Libya's Arab Spring turned into a bloody civil war. What began as anti-

⁵⁵ Kofi Annan, “Two Concepts of Sovereignty,” *The Economist*, September 16, 1999, <http://www.economist.com/node/324795>.

⁵⁶ “Peace and Security,” *United Nations*, accessed March 6, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/index.html>.

government protests turned into armed revolt seeking to depose Muammar Gaddafi. The UN's decision responded to "acts of violence and intimidation committed by Libyan authorities against journalists"; "arbitrary detentions"; and "systematic violation of human rights."⁵⁷ Russia abstained from the vote, with Representative Vitaly Churkin concerned that military intervention could have a destabilizing effect on the region. NATO air strikes supported rebel forces united under the National Transitional Council, which promised that a liberated Libya would become a pluralist, democratic state. Instead, democratic institutions failed to take root before rival militias plunged the state into civil war a second time.

When Syria followed a similar path from peaceful protest to civil war, Russia vetoed UN attempts to apply R2P, citing "alarm that compliance with Security Council resolutions on the situation in Libya had been considered a model for future actions" by NATO, and warning that removing Assad from power could destabilize the entire region.⁵⁸ The 2013 Russian Foreign Policy Concept explicitly denounces R2P, claiming that the principle is a "pretext" for interference in state sovereignty, upon which international law rests. Far from accepting Annan's conclusion that the UN charter and international law protects individual sovereignty, the 2013 Concept says that Russia seeks to counter the attempts of countries or certain groups of countries to revise international law encoded in documents such as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.⁵⁹ The Russian document agrees with Annan that universal values are needed to protect

⁵⁷ "Security Council Approves 'No-Fly Zone' over Libya, Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions: Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," *United Nations*, March 17, 2011, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.

⁵⁸ "Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution Condemning Syria's Crackdown on Anti-Government Protestors, Owing to Veto by Russian Federation, China: Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," *United Nations*, October 4, 2011, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10403.doc.htm>.

⁵⁹ "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation," *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, February 12, 2013, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/122186, Section 31b.

against “global turbulences,” but cites “equal and indivisible security” as the solution—not individual rights. The 2013 Concept also condemns “imposing one’s own hierarchy of values” can only lead to “chaos in world affairs,” citing “recent events in the Middle East and North Africa.” Attempts to overthrow legitimate governments in sovereign states “under the pretext of protecting civilian population” are labeled a “risk to world peace.”⁶⁰

The language of the 2013 Concept is a harsher denunciation of an international world order built on individual sovereignty and human rights than the previous document. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept claims that Russia aims to promote human rights without imposing “barrowed value systems on anyone” or invoking “double standards.”⁶¹ In the aftermath of the Libyan intervention, however, the 2013 Concept asserts that there is a risk that human rights concepts can be used unlawfully to turn stable, if illiberal, states into volatile war zones.

THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

The ongoing crisis in Ukraine is reminiscent of the other cases we have examined in this work—cases that featured Western, humanitarian intervention in the internal affairs of other states, whether militarily, diplomatically, or through NGOs and human rights organizations. In the cases of Yugoslavia and Libya, peaceful dissent turned violent confrontation precipitated these humanitarian interventions. Yet in Ukraine, the end result was not Western intervention, but Russian.

To a lesser extent than Yugoslavia, Ukraine has its own problem of split identities: While western Ukraine looks to Central Europe, regions in the south and the east of the country are

⁶⁰ “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,” Section 14, 15.

⁶¹ “The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, 2008, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>, Section 5.

culturally closer to Russia. At the time of its annexation, Crimea was an autonomous region in Ukraine with a majority ethnically Russian population and a history of succession and independence claims. In 1994, pro-Russian separatists won the presidency of the Republic of Crimea, but the crisis was diffused by lackluster Russian support, and Crimea was reduced from a republic to an autonomy. Other separatist movements surfaced in 2008, when the prospect of NATO membership was briefly extended to Ukraine.

These fault lines in Ukrainian identity and territorial integrity come to the surface whenever the government seems to sweep too far either towards Russia or towards the West. During the Orange Revolution, a number of Western NGOs backed protestors who decried a rigged election that gave the presidency to the Russia-backed candidate, Yanukovich. After the 2004 Orange Revolution, regional and local authorities in eastern and southern Ukraine formed a coordinating body to oppose the Yushchenko presidency and to consider separatism. These authorities had supported the pro-Russian candidate, and viewed Yushchenko as a “representative of Western Ukraine.”⁶²

In 2013 unrest broke out again in Ukraine after President Yanukovich decided not to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. Students who had favored closer ties with Europe staged non-violent protests against the government. As in the Pristina protests in Kosovo, the government responded with force, galvanizing resistance and spreading it beyond the original students. Euromaidan, the movement that coalesced around those first protests, resulted in the ousting of President Yanukovich. Without a pro-Russia president in office, Crimea organized a referendum on succession on 16 March 2014. The Russian forces already stationed in Russia

⁶² Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 45.

multiplied with additional reinforcements, and troops began to block the peninsula off from the rest of Ukraine. While some Russian troops are allowed in Crimea at approved military installations, Russian troops deployed outside of these mutually agreed upon locations without Ukrainian consent. The referendum passed, and days later Russia formally annexed Crimea. This prompted armed insurrection in the east of Ukraine, as rebels in the Donbas region tried to seize control of the government and promoted their own referendums of succession.

The fighting in the Donbass region smolders on unresolved, as Russia appears reluctant to give full support to the rebel movement. While Russia denies official military involvement, reports indicate that several thousand Russians are in fact fighting in the region, and that Russia is sending the rebels military equipment and weapons. NATO has called the presence of Russian troops in the region an invasion.⁶³ What Russia will officially admit to, is humanitarian aid. A 260-truck convoy crossed the border from Russia into Ukraine without permission from the Ukrainian government in August 2014.⁶⁴ In a meeting with reporters, President Putin suggested that Russia could deploy the Armed Forces in Ukraine under international law in a humanitarian mission. Protecting “people with whom we have close historical, cultural and economic ties” from persecution Putin said, was in Russia’s “national interest.”⁶⁵

The annexation of Crimea has several similarities with Kosovo, and the Russian response to the crisis in Ukraine has tried to stress these similarities as much as possible. When Kosovo

⁶³ Carlotta Gall, “Ukraine Town Bears Scars of Russian Offensive That Turned Tide in Conflict,” *The New York Times*, September 9, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/10/world/europe/ukraine-town-bears-scars-of-russian-offensive-that-turned-tide-in-conflict.html>.

⁶⁴ Alec Luhn and Dan Roberts, “Ukraine Condemns ‘Direct Invasion’ as Russian Aid Convoy Crosses Border,” *The Guardian*, August 23, 2014, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/22/russian-convoy-crosses-border-ukraine-without-permission>.

⁶⁵ “Transcript: Putin Defends Russian Intervention in Ukraine,” *Washington Post*, accessed March 8, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-defends-russian-intervention-in-ukraine/2014/03/04/9caded1a-a3a9-11e3-a5fa-55f0c77bf39c_story.html.

lost its autonomous status in 1989, Kosovar Albanians were denied education in their own language.⁶⁶ Putin claims that Russians in Crimea and southeast Ukraine were denied their rights to their own history and language and subjected to “forced assimilation.”⁶⁷ Yet, even if we take Putin’s claims at face value, Crimea and Kosovo still have some serious differences. The NATO forces that intervened in Kosovo did so to protect individuals from Serbian nationalists who claimed that Kosovo was the spiritual and historical heart of Serbia. Putin cites Prince Vladimir’s 10th-century baptism in Crimea as justification for the annexation of Crimea. Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Crimea joined Russia in 2014. NATO bombed Serbia after years of human rights violations, thousands of refugees, and ethnic cleansing campaigns. Russian troops cut Crimea off from Ukraine after several months of heated anti-government protest in Kiev.

Putin noted that if Albanians in Kosovo were given the “right of nations to self-determination,” then the people of Crimean also deserve this right.⁶⁸ But given the hastiness of Russian actions, I would argue that the Crimea annexation had more to do with Russian fear of Western humanitarian intervention in a country on Russia’s borders, and deep inside Russia’s traditional sphere of influence. Not only are Western human rights becoming institutionalized in international affairs, but humanitarian interventions are coming closer to Russia’s borders.

CONCLUSION

Shortly after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian Federation revised its military doctrine, its foreign policy, and its national security strategy. The Russian identity

⁶⁶ Agon Demjaha, “The Kosovo Conflict: A Perspective from Inside,” in *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship*, ed. Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Chandra Thakur (Tokyo ; New York: United Nations University Press, 2000).

⁶⁷ Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” *President of Russia*, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

⁶⁸ “Transcript.”

features prominently in all of these documents, underscoring the fear of a connection between Western values and political unrest and regime change. The 2014 Military Doctrine is rife with references to Russian values and internal threats—language that harkens back to Soviet days of fifth columnists and Brezhnev-doctrine commitments to regime integrity. Rather than recognize the dissent of citizens, it can be denounced as stemming from agents of the West who have infiltrated the Russian people. The doctrine describes an internal threat: young citizens being targeted through the undermining of “historical, spiritual and patriotic traditions related to defense of the Motherland.”⁶⁹ It labels as characteristic of current military conflicts the use of the “protest potential” of the population.⁷⁰ Other threats are “political forces and public associations financed from abroad”—a clear reference to Russian interpretations of the Color Revolutions and the Euromaidan protest as Western backed.⁷¹

The expansion of NATO is listed as a main external threat to the Russian Federation, especially the trend of “vesting NATO with global functions.”⁷² Other threats include “territorial claims against the Russian Federation and its allies and interference in their internal affairs.”⁷³ Far from recognizing and embracing the universal values proclaimed in the US 2015 National Military Strategy, the Russian Military Doctrine states that a “rivalry of proclaimed values and models of development” characterizes the international situation.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the “existing international security architecture (system) does not ensure equal equality for all states.”⁷⁵ Separatist groups are labeled as terrorist organizations in Section I, and threats to the Russian

⁶⁹ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Посольство России В Великобритании, December 25, 2014, <http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>, Section II, n. 13c.

⁷⁰ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 15a.

⁷¹ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 15j.

⁷² “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 12a.

⁷³ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 12e.

⁷⁴ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 9.

⁷⁵ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 10.

Federation explicitly include intra-state violence (a threat completely absent from US security doctrines, though the US is also a diverse federation).

The 2015 Russian National Security Strategy emphasizes the common values of Russian statehood, reinforcing the identity of a unified Russia. The Security Strategy reports that progress is being made in important areas: “Traditional Russian spiritual and moral values are being revived. A proper attitude toward Russia’s history is being shaped in the rising generation.”⁷⁶

The 2016 Russian Foreign Policy Concept drops all previous references to a shared European identity. In the 2008 Concept, Russia is the “biggest European State,” and hopes to, in this role, work towards a truly unified Europe. The 2013 Concept calls “Russia as an integral and inseparable part of European civilization,” and says that the Euro-Atlantic states share geography, economy and history, and have “common deep-rooted civilizational ties with Russia.”⁷⁷ There is also a marked move away from recognizing Western values, such as the sovereignty of the individual. In 2008, the Concept mentions “individuals” four times, listing “protection of the interests of the individual” as the priority of national security. The 2013 Concept keeps the protection of the individual as a priority of national security, but never mentions individuals again. The 2016 concept makes no mention of protecting the individual. The single reference to the “individual” in the document is in the context of apprehending terrorists.

CHAPTER III: RESPONDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS THREAT: A COUNTER-NARRATIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

⁷⁶ “Russian National Security Strategy,” Part II, n. 11.

⁷⁷ “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,” Section 54, 56.

INTRODUCTION

In a 2013 speech at the Valdai Discussion Club, Putin announced the need for a new Russian national identity, saying that Russia had “left behind Soviet ideology, and there will be no return.” In the next breath he also denounced “extreme, western-style liberalism.”⁷⁸ Identity crisis has long been a trope of Russian history; its tsars, Party leaders, and presidents see-sawing through the centuries between East and West. Putin has tried to find some equilibrium—most observers have concluded that he is a pragmatist, tacking between liberal and conservative forces within his country, attempting to balance varied interests against each other. Yet with the announcement of Putin’s decision to run for reelection in 2011, the Russian government has become progressively more classically conservative.⁷⁹

Charles Clover suggests that Putin’s unexpected reelection bid ostracized his liberal allies, upsetting the delicate balance he had previously maintained.⁸⁰ The public reaction—street protests and boos—likely also played a role, given Putin’s sensitivity to the role of public dissent in the recent Color Revolutions and Arab Spring revolts. He has, in fact, accused the West of intervention and provocation in all of these cases, including the protests against his election campaign. I would also argue, that as Western, liberal human rights became increasingly institutionalized in the Euro-Atlantic security order, Putin has moved farther from those so-called universal values.

⁷⁸ Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club,” President of Russia, September 19, 2013, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>.

⁷⁹ Marlène Laruelle, ed., *Eurasianism and the European Far Right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 23–25; Charles Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia’s New Nationalism* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁸⁰ Charles Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow*.

This conservative shift has led Putin to espouse a Russian national identity that, while still inchoate and amorphous, is distinctly collective when it comes to human rights. In promoting an alternative conception of human rights, the Putin regime can reject so-called universal human values from a position of moral authority. While Western human rights focus on the shared rights and values of all individuals, tying human rights to relations between states, Russia is attempting to challenge this model. Staying within the language of international human rights agreements, Russia is advancing a human rights narrative based on a hierarchical responsibility to higher entities. Paralleling this is an emphasis on the impossibility of transferring one culture's values onto another, an argument that protects Russia from what it perceives as threats to its sovereignty. In so doing, the Putin regime can rely on a wealth of research done by Russian Eurasianists to buttress their arguments with (pseudo)scientific theories. While Western human rights have led to the splintering of multiethnic states in recent decades, Russia attempts to unify multiethnic states through the defense of unique cultural values and collective identities.

As noted in the Introduction, Eurasianism is but one strain of thought in the tradition of Russian spiritual, collective philosophy. It is, however, a strain that has become increasingly prominent in official discourse in recent years, especially with the promotion and creation of the Eurasian Economic Union. It is also uniquely useful as a tool of the Russian government—other collective identities, such as Communism, have been overwhelmingly discredited. In addition, Eurasianism is vague and complex enough that it can be broadly interpreted and applied, allowing wide audiences to see what they want in it. Finally, some interpretations of Eurasianist thought can be threatening to the Russian Federation. The popularity of Eurasianism in former Soviet states empowers elites to challenge Russian dominance in the region and to argue for

more egalitarian relationships. Amidst rising xenophobia in Russia, distortions of Gumilev's work can be used to justify racism and discrimination against non-ethnic Russians.⁸¹ Russia tends to want to commandeer threats so as to contain and control them.

This chapter begins with an overview of Russian Eurasianist thought and its impact on Russia today. It then compares the language of the Eurasianists with Russian government denunciations of European multiculturalism and glorification of unified but diverse Russian culture. It ends by connecting the official language of the government with actions both domestic and abroad, which advance the collective identity over that of the individual.

SOURCING AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE

There is no pure strain of Eurasianism, no single founder, no original doctrine that is not colored by parent or sibling ideologies. It is riddled with contradictions, hypocrisy, and its proponents represent a disjointed legacy. It can refer to the first Eurasianists' Romantic philosophy of unified Russian empire; Lev Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis; Aleksandr Dugin's theory of geopolitics strongly influenced by fascism; Aleksandr Panarin's argument for global multipolarity; a Kazakh literary movement; or a number of other movements. If this sounds too confusing, it may be helpful to refer to Marlène Laruelle's mercifully concise definition: "Ideologically, Eurasianism is the Russian version of the European far right."⁸² Although Eurasianist movements exist and thrive outside of Russia, for the sake of this study we will focus on the Russian Eurasianists who are most well-known and influential in the country today.

⁸¹ Mark Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique: Biopolitics, Eurasianism, and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia, Culture and Society after Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 312.

⁸² Marlène Laruelle, *Eurasianism and the European Far Right*, xi.

The first Eurasianists were Russian emigres fleeing the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the subsequent civil war. This group coalesced in Sofia during the 1920s and 1930s, united in their anxiety over Russia's loss of empire but divided by their professions, ambitions, and fields of study. These founders contributed to a diverse, complex, and messy ideology that subsumed their myriad interests: linguistics, Orthodox theology, poetry, history, literary criticism, and music theory, to name but a few. Within the movement academics and political activists coexisted in varying degrees of harmony. Although these academics and activists viewed the West as a destructive force for Russia with its liberalism, they admired the German Conservative Revolution's recognition of the need for a "Third Way" between capitalism and communism. This, for the Germans, turned out to be fascism. The Eurasianists denounced fascism for its racism, but the legacy of Eurasianist ideology has consistently drawn inspiration from the Third Way.

In one of the early Eurasianists' most famous works, "Europe and Mankind," Prince Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi depicts a war of survival between the European Romano-Germans and the rest of the world. Believing that Romano-Germanic culture seeks to "dominate the world," Trubetskoi denounces claims that European cosmopolitanism represents a universal human culture.⁸³ "World progress," is a myth. There is no universal evolutionary theory of mankind. Human history is not following a linear progression towards an ever-superior future (with Europe as the vanguard), which all peoples must strive towards. In the essay, he argues that Romano-Germanic culture is not superior to other cultures; that one nation cannot adopt the culture of another; and that any attempt to Europeanize by a non-European nation is not only

⁸³ kniāz' Nikolaï Sergeevich Trubet'skoï, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, Michigan Slavic Materials ; No. 33 (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), 5.

impossible, but seriously harmful. “A most grievous consequence of Europeanization,” he writes, “is the destruction of national unity, the dismemberment of a people’s national body,” as cultural rifts widen between generations and tradition is lost.⁸⁴ Without tradition and national pride, nations cannot compete with the Romano-Germanic world. Nations must not be distracted by nationalism, but unify all their strength in order to resist “the spiritual enslavement of the entire world.”

Eurasianism experienced a gradual revival decades later in the figure of Lev Gumilëv, after a Soviet proclamation in the 1960s galvanized nationalist fears of threats to Russian ethnic identity. Officials celebrated the near achievement of a single “Soviet people,” in which ethnographic differences were successfully replaced by a universal socialist culture.⁸⁵ What the original Eurasianists studied with the humanities and social sciences, Gumilëv subjected to the hard sciences. His theories of ethnogenesis gave ethnic groups the qualities of biological organisms, leading to a biological determinism that stripped human individuals of agency in human history. The mixing of different ethnic groups would lead to their destruction. His theory of passionarity can be described as the opposite of the survival instinct—a spiritual energy that accounts for all human actions that exceed basic human needs.⁸⁶ Although individuals can possess passionarity in varying degrees, they are not independent actors, but rather express the designs of a natural collective that transcends them. Passionarity is a genetic trait that can be

⁸⁴ Nikolaï Sergeevich Trubetškoï, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia’s Identity*, 49.

⁸⁵ Mark Bassin, “Narrative Kulikovo,” in *Between Europe & Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*, ed. Mark Bassin, Sergeï Glebov, and Marlène Laruelle, Series in Russian and East European Studies (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 165–86.

⁸⁶ Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, D.C. : Baltimore, Md.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

passed on through generations, but Gumilev paradoxically linked the source of Russian passionarity with Orthodoxy.

Gumilev marked a shift in Eurasianist thought away from an emphasis on the East, and towards a Russocentric conception that appealed to some Russian nationalists. Neo-Eurasianism experienced a surge in popularity after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as a way to unify the post-Soviet space. This Neo-Eurasianism is a field currently dominated by Aleksandr Dugin, who can be classified as a nationalist although he opposes xenophobia and ethnocentrism. As the early Eurasianists were inspired by European theories such as conservative revolution and the German geopolitics of the 1920s, Dugin incorporates ideas from the Western New Right and René Guénon in his attempts to achieve a revised “Third Way,” or revised fascism. Dugin promotes a vision of differential pluralism, in which it is necessary to allow different ethnic groups within Russia cultural autonomy, but not sovereignty.

Dugin has consistently and vocally rejected Western conceptions of human rights as universal norms, claiming that “Each society . . . understands the human differently.” In an interview with Vladimir Posner aired on Russia’s Channel One in 2014, Dugin defined Western human rights as “the rights of the individual, as opposed to the collective.”⁸⁷ He then explained that Western human rights are based on a Protestant model of theology and a Protestant political system, which is not appropriate for Catholics, Orthodox Christians, or any other religious people. Dugin believes that feminism and homosexuality are part of a Western attempt at totalitarianism through the dissemination of universal human rights. These particular human

⁸⁷ “Vladimir Posner Interviews Alexander Dugin,” *The Fourth Political Theory*, April 23, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/vladimir-posner-interviews-alexander-dugin>. Channel One is also known as First Channel. Charles Clover describes the TV station as “the great beacon of state propaganda.” Charles Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow*, 269.

rights movements, he claims, disrupt the natural social hierarchy in Russia by depriving the state of its own rights—that is, the right to a strong, growing population through citizen procreation.⁸⁸

Amidst this cacophony of ideas, several critical points of unity exist: the centrality of Orthodoxy to a revival of Russia; the elevation of Asian aspects of national identity; Eurasia as a unique civilization that is a natural unified entity; and Eurasian’s destined opposition to the expansion of the liberal West. Organicism underpins Eurasianism, although it manifests differently across the movement’s history, oscillating between a cultural and biological interpretation. Regardless, the end result is a belief in a unifying, transcendental totality that places meaning solely in the superstructure. Eurasianism also consistently relies on differential racism, which pursues the racial or cultural purity of groups under the conviction that cultures are impermeable. This belief, as Marlène Laruelle points out, “has significant political consequences, because it rejects the logic of human rights in favor of the rights of peoples.”⁸⁹ Finally, a narrative of Western sabotage runs through Eurasianist thought, extolling the “fifth columnists” and traitors who have attempted to divide their Eurasian enemy.

Eurasianism is not the official ideology of the Putin regime. Yet its beliefs overlap with what the Putin administration had identified as a security threat to the Russian Federation. In addition, a superficial understanding of Eurasianist thought has seeped into the Russian population—the pseudo-scientific work of Gumilev, once derided as mystical science fiction, is now taught as the scientific norm in schools and universities.⁹⁰ His ideas are so common that terms such as “passionarity” no longer carry an immediate connection with their creator.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 134.

⁸⁹ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 214.

⁹⁰ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 14.

⁹¹ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 10.

According to Antonov, the spiritual nature of the collective, which justifies a prioritization of the collective over the individual, has been internalized “at the very basic levels of culture,” and influence the way that law students are taught.⁹² In their desire to both simultaneously reject Western rationalism and bolster their theories with hard evidence, Eurasianists have created new scientific disciplines. These sciences can now lend credibility and moral authority to the goals of the Putin administration. In addition to its scientific foundation, Eurasianism can appeal to Soviet-era nostalgia with its talk of great power destiny, as well as a discomfort with Western liberalism that predates the Soviet era.⁹³

THE EVILS OF CULTURAL ASSIMILATION AND THE REWARDS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENTIALISM

The Russian government’s official account of the crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea stays right within the lines of the Eurasianist narrative. By blaming far-right nationalists for what he terms a “coup” in Ukraine, Putin is able to decry nationalist trends as dangerous and divisive, discrediting rising nationalist voices in his own country. In an address to the State Duma, he justifies the Crimean annexation by claiming that Russians in Crimea and southeast Ukraine were denied their rights to their own history and language and subjected to “forced assimilation.”⁹⁴ From a cultural standpoint, the annexation was just. Citing Prince Vladimir’s 10th-century baptism in Crimea, Putin argues that the Prince’s adoption of Orthodoxy has united the peoples of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine in a common culture, civilization, and understanding of human values ever since. He then compares the ethnic diversity of Crimea (Russian,

⁹² Antonov, “Conservatism in Russia and Sovereignty in Human Rights,” pp. 23, 25.

⁹³ See Dmitrii Trenin, *Post-Imperium* for an explanation of how many Russians view the Communist era as one of paternalism, rather than repression. Mark Bassin, Sergeĭ Glebov, and Marlène Laruelle, *Between Europe & Asia*, 7. For example, after the French Revolution, Russian assertions of its European identity began to clash with European ideals of liberty and citizenship. Russian, an absolute monarchy, shifted its identity to embrace the East.

⁹⁴ Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” *President of Russia*, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

Ukrainian, Tatar) to the diversity of the Russia Federation, where he claims “not a single ethnic group has been lost over the centuries.” In this way, Putin defends the Crimean annexation by extolling the natural unity of the Crimean and Russian people, while emphasizing the necessity of protecting and preserving different ethnic groups—something he says the Russian state excels at. His reference to Prince Vladimir echoes the Eurasianists in its placement of Orthodoxy at the heart of a unified civilization with shared values. The myth of Prince Vladimir’s baptism has at its core the decision to choose the Byzantine rite over Germanic Christianity—a decision that supposedly helped Kievan Rus resist German interference in its internal affairs.

Putin then uses the language of international human rights agreements to defend the annexation, saying that Crimea used its right to self-determination protected under the UN Charter, and noting that this was the same right that Ukraine exercised when leaving the USSR. In response to claims that the annexation violated Ukrainian law, the Putin administration points to a US statement from April 17, 2009, defending the right of Kosovo to declare independence from Serbia. The statement asserts that a declaration of independence may violate domestic law while still being legal under international law.

Furthermore, Putin blames Western attempts to prevent “Eurasian integration” as a source of Ukrainian unrest in both the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan. He contrasts this with what he sees as the results of Western attempts to force liberal values onto Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the countries of the Color Revolutions and Arab Spring uprisings. Standards foreign to these countries’ traditions and cultures created chaos, he argues. This is a common argument from the Russian government. In 2017, Foreign Minister Lavrov reiterated that the West is to blame for the Arab Spring and the Ukrainian crisis due to attempts to export

their values abroad.⁹⁵ He chastised Western Europe for promoting “post-Christian” values that do not reflect Europe’s own traditional cultural heritage, suggesting that the imposition of outside, liberal values is inhuman and to blame for Christian suffering in the Middle East.

But it is not just only foreign states that are vulnerable to the chaos of Western values. Russia, too, must be protected. In a report titled “Foundations of State Cultural Politics, the Russian Ministry of Culture disavowed the “principles of multiculturalism and tolerance,” instead proclaiming that “the preservation of a single cultural code requires the rejection of state support for cultural projects imposing alien values upon society.”⁹⁶ Speaking at the Valdai Club in 2013 on the need for a new Russian national identity, Putin warned against attempts to copy identities from abroad, saying “the time when ready-made lifestyle models could be installed in foreign states like computer programmes has passed.”⁹⁷ Nor can it simply be imposed on Russia’s population by its own leaders, he argued, acknowledging the “vulnerability” of the Soviet collective identity. Instead, echoing the organicism and cultural differentialism of the Eurasianists, Putin declared that the new Russian national identity must be a “living organism.” Addressing Russian nationalists, the president cautioned them to remember that Russia has been a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country from the beginning. Challenging that multi-ethnic character with appeals to Russian, Tatar, Caucasian, or Siberian separatism will destroy the country. In Putin’s words, nationalist and separatist movements in Russia will “destroy our genetic code.” Lauding early Soviet nationality policies that worked to preserve the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, Putin concluded that “One must respect every minority’s right

⁹⁵ “Western ‘messiahship’ Bred Ukrainian Crisis, Arab Spring, & Refugee Flood – Lavrov,” *RT International*, January 17, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/373993-lavrov-speech-messianism-values/>.

⁹⁶ D. Garrison Golubock, “Culture Ministry Affirms ‘Russia Is Not Europe,’” *The Moscow Times*, April 7, 2014, <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/culture-ministry-affirms-russia-is-not-europe-33701>.

⁹⁷ Russia, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

to be different, but the rights of the majority must not be put into question.” Although people should keep in touch with their ethnic and religious roots, Russian citizens need a larger, unifying identity. The most important guarantee of national success, Putin explained, is whether citizens identify as a nation. Citizens must be united in common responsibility before society.

ADVANCING THE COLLECTIVE OVER THE INDIVIDUAL

Russian officials aren't simply talking about the necessity of promoting a unified collective identity over a universal human identity. This rhetoric is mirrored in actions both domestic and abroad. In the State Duma, laws on women's reproductive rights, NGOs, domestic violence, and myriad other topics show a clear preference for traditional values and collective good at the expense of the individual. Sponsors of a bill that proposes restrictions on the morning-after pill and abortions say they view abortion as a “major threat to national security,” presumably referencing Russia's demographic crisis.⁹⁸ Apparently some agree with Dugin, that a responsibility to populate the state supersedes an individual's personal choices.

In 2016, the Duma decriminalized battery, but it exempted domestic abuse from that legislation, allowing harsher sentencing to continue in cases of domestic abuse. The Russian Orthodox Church opposed this decision, defending “the reasonable use of physical punishment as an essential part of the rights given to parents by God himself,” which is based in scripture

⁹⁸ “Russian Lawmakers Move to Tighten Law on Abortions, Restrict Morning-after Pills,” *RT International*, May 19, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/politics/260037-abortion-russia-new-bill/>. Russian population growth turned negative in 1992, adding to concerns over a loss of human capital resulting from the breakup of the USSR. As of 2011, the Russian birthrate was 60 percent less than the rate necessary for replacement of the existing population, and the death rate remains higher than the world average. The decline in population growth is a trend seen throughout Europe, which contributes to Russian accusations of European norms and values as immoral. Dmitrii. Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 175–177.

and Russian tradition.⁹⁹ A new 2017 bill will reflect the Church's line of argument, decriminalizing first-time domestic violence offenses and placing the onus of prosecution on the victim by making it a "private prosecution," in which the victim must collect the evidence. Speaker of the Duma Vyacheslav Volodin said that the bill would help create "strong families," while a sponsor of the bill explained her goal of returning Russia to "the values that European civilization held in the 19th and 20th centuries." Again we see the emphasis on a larger collective unit, this time the family, over the individual.

In the aftermath of Putin's protest-marred 2012 inauguration—during which 26 protestors demonstrating in Bolotnoye Square were arrested and charged with provoking "mass disorder"—the United Russia Party introduced a series of contentious bills. The Duma hastily passed legislation to re-categorize libel as a criminal offense and to levy fines on participants in unauthorized meetings. In 2013, separatist propaganda became a criminal offense liable to up to three years in prison.¹⁰⁰ The most controversial law, however, required NGOs to register as "foreign agents" if they received foreign funding and engaged in political activity. Vladimir Lukin, Human Rights Commissioner of the Russian Federation from 2004-2014, pointed out that "the extremely wide interpretation of 'political activity' threatens to embrace almost all the human rights organizations in the country."¹⁰¹ By 2014 no single NGO had registered itself

⁹⁹ "Why Russia Is about to Decriminalise Wife-Beating," *The Economist*, January 28, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21715726-it-fits-traditional-values-lawmakers-say-why-russia-about-decriminalise-wife-beating>.

¹⁰⁰ I. Antonov, "Conservatism in Russia and Sovereignty in Human Rights," p. 26.

¹⁰¹ Mary McAuley, *Human Rights in Russia: Citizens and the State from Perestroika to Putin*, LMRH ; 1 (London ; New York: IBTauris, 2015), 299. Indeed, a regional prosecutor even targeted the Stork Park in the Amur region as a foreign agent after it accepted funds from the International Fund to Protect Storks. The Park responded in bewilderment that they did not consider themselves foreign agents, but rather "agents of nature, or at least of our storks"; McAuley, *Human Rights in Russia*, 301.

under the new law—instead, the law had been amended to allow the Ministry of Justice to register groups instead. By the end of 2014, 20 NGOs were on the list.¹⁰²

At first glance this response could be taken solely as the insecurity of the Putin administration—an authoritarian crackdown in light of the regime-changing Arab Spring movements. Yet I would argue that taking a slightly longer historic perspective provides a fuller explanation. Remembering the role of the international Helsinki network in the dissolution of the Soviet Union contextualizes the threat of the modern NGO in Russia. While human rights organizations and dissent groups existed in the Soviet Union before the Helsinki Final Act and the creation of an international Helsinki movement, these groups only saw government-level change after two developments: 1) US and international engagement and 2) an acceptance of universal human values at the top of the Soviet leadership. The organizations now on the “foreign agents” list—including the Committee Against Torture and the Freedom of Information Foundation—advocate for universal rights in dialogue with an international community. In so doing, they are reminiscent of the Helsinki groups that promoted an individual’s right to choose her own identity—and in the end helped to dissolve the fraying bonds of common class identity holding the Soviet Union together.

Abroad, Russian representatives to the UN have worked to introduce resolutions countering the placement of protection of human rights over state rights to sovereignty. In 2011, Vladimir Kartashkin, a Russian nominated member of the UN Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council, submitted a study to the Committee with the following advice: “Promotion of and respect for human rights must accord not only with individual dignity and

¹⁰² McAuley, *Human Rights in Russia*, 306.

freedom but also with responsible behavior in respect of the State, society and other people.”¹⁰³ References to an individual’s responsibility before society are reminiscent of Putin’s Valdai speech, in which he identified a “deficit . . . of responsibility before society and the law” as “a root cause” of modern Russia’s problems.¹⁰⁴ In 2012, a Russian-sponsored UN resolution was passed based on Kartashkin’s report titled: “Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind.”¹⁰⁵ In 2014 Russia opposed a UN Human Rights Council resolution called “The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests.” Russia supported an amendment to the resolution that “protests should not constitute threats to national security and the stability of the state.”¹⁰⁶

CONCLUSION

Mark Bassin notes that early Soviets struggled to organize Soviet society as a balance between two principles of identity: ethno-national individualism and polyethnic collectivism. When Soviet leadership upset this balance by championing the new Soviet identity at the expense of ethno-national identities, rising nationalist movements helped tear the USSR apart.¹⁰⁷ When Gorbachev proclaimed Europe a “common home,” he was trying to hold together a diverse Communist bloc. There were members of this coalition that had a closer cultural heritage with Western Europe than the East. Yet his acceptance of the supremacy of individual choice further

¹⁰³ Vladimir Kartashkin, “Preliminary Study on Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind” (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee of the United Nations, February 20, 2012), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/173/22/PDF/G1117322.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹⁰⁴ Russia, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

¹⁰⁵ “Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind: Best Practices” (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee of the United Nations, September 21, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ “Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development” (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee of the United Nations, March 24, 2014), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G14/123/34/PDF/G1412334.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique*, 306.

encouraged the undermining of Soviet hegemony. The people of the bloc coalesced around myriad separate identities, whether religious, national, or political. One by one, the defections fragmented the Soviet Empire, aided by a network of international human rights organizations.

Some similarities can be drawn between the challenges faced by the Russian Federation today and the Communist bloc of the 1980s. Like Gorbachev, the Putin administration is struggling with a diverse population, economic woes, and the fear of Western military superiority. The Russian Federation is smaller in scale than the USSR, but fears of splintering and succession are strong. Putin is not taking a Gorbachev approach to solving these crises—indeed, he seems determined not to make Gorbachev’s mistakes. Instead, Russian policy of recent years seems to be drawing inspiration from an earlier era of Soviet history. In response to Western sanctions after the annexation of Crimea, Putin’s response has been one of isolationism—the Russian Federation would be better off producing its own goods than giving the West economic power over it. The new military doctrines of the Putin era denounce domestic dissent as foreign influence—a hallmark of Stalinist policy. And the language of official documents in regards to Russian culture espouse one proper, unifying culture for all—but with similarities to Stalinist-era nationalities policies, rather than the assimilationist concept of the “new Soviet man” vision.

This is not a return to a Soviet identity, merely a collective one. As the Euro-Atlantic states increasingly define universal human rights and individual sovereignty as security, Russia is moving in the opposite direction, defining universal human rights as a threat and state sovereignty as security. Putin is heading a cultural movement in Russia today that seeks to define Russian identity and promotes a single narrative of what it means to be Russian. This narrative, however, is informed by a Russian philosophical tradition that promotes a hierarchy of collective

identities, rather than a single all-subsuming one. Gumilëv, whose ideas Putin seems to be borrowing to some degree, developed his theories in response to Soviet attempts to dismiss diversity under a single collective identity. A new Russian national identity must accommodate ethnic diversity and champion a unified collective identity that supersedes the ethnic. Western universal values led to the fragmentation of the Soviet empire—the Russian Federation will be preserved through “Russian” values. It simply has to determine what exactly those are.