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AUTOCRACY IN RUSSIA: A FATE, A NECESSITY, OR THE WILL OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE?

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Summary

This paper argues that there is a trend towards authoritarianism in Russia. Some political analysts view this mass authoritarianism as a product of history, while others argue that Russia's turn to authoritarianism is not a cultural phenomenon but rather a result of the economic collapse and political turmoil that Russians faced in the early post-Soviet period. The paper, in an attempt to conceptualize Russian attitudes towards autocracy, briefly examines the foundations of autocracy in Russian history and tries to find the answer to the question of why autocracy has become an integral part of Russian political culture. The paper especially focuses on the periods of Muscovite Russia, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Lenin, and Stalin, during which the foundations of absolutism, despotism, and autocracy were laid and further strengthened. The paper then examines the period of Putin and examines the motives behind Putin's authoritarian turn. Trying to identify the political, economic, and social developments that were instrumental in determining the Russian nation's acceptance of authoritarianism, the paper finally attempts to make predictions for the future.

Key Words: Autocracy, Centralization of Power, Muscovite Absolutism, Petrine Despotism, Enlightened Despotism, Official Nationalism, Collectivization, Mass Terror, Leninism, Bolshevism, Stalinism, Putinism, Neo-Official Nationalism, The Siloviki, Militocracy.

Introduction

During the first two terms of President Putin – and during his tenure as Prime Minister under Dmitry Medvedev – Russia witnessed a slow but steady course towards ever-increasing control by

the central government. The media was brought under the power of the Kremlin; elections became steadily less competitive and opposition circles faced growing oppression. Putin developed what he called a “power vertical” that facilitated central government control over local politics and elections.^[1] Though parts of the political system remain democratic in principle, state practices are becoming increasingly autocratic.

Some Russian public opinion polls seem to confirm the impression that ordinary Russians see little use for “Western-style” democracy. According to polls conducted by the Levada Center, a respected Russian survey organization, only about 20 percent of respondents think Russia needs the kind of democracy found in Europe and America.^[2] Ordinary Russian citizens seem to not be interested in the fairness of Russian elections. They tend to favor “order” and a ruler with a “strong hand”.

Many of Putin’s defenders have abandoned the pretence of characterizing Russia as a “managed” or “sovereign” democracy. Instead, they contend that Russia’s democratic retreat has enhanced the state’s ability to provide for its citizens. The myth of Putinism is that Russians are safer, more secure, and generally living better than in the 1990s – and that Putin himself deserves the credit. Security, the most basic good that a state can provide for its population, is a central element of the myth of Putinism.^[3]

Some political analysts argue that the “re-emergence of Russian autocracy” under Putin has coincided with economic growth but has not caused it. According to these critics, high oil prices and recovery from the transition away from communism deserve most of the credit. Whatever we think of the Russian state, there is no doubt that it has undergone a remarkable recovery under Vladimir Putin’s leadership. Since coming to power in 1999, Putin has purposefully employed Russian imperial nostalgia and ethnocentric thinking for the restoration of Russian national pride. By appealing to Russian nationalism and the past glories of both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, the Putin administration has been very successful in boosting Russian morale.

According to the latest opinion polls, nearly a third of Russians would like to see Putin become president for life. This figure demonstrates the fact that the policies of “centralization of power” and “authoritarianism” of the Putin administration are prevalently supported and valued by Russian citizens.

Some analysts argue that there have been important developments since the collapse of the former Soviet Union that have fueled concerns about security and therefore facilitated the restoration of an autocratic regime in Russia. The war in Chechnya resulting in the deaths of over ten thousand Russian soldiers, the steady eastward advancement of the US-led NATO military alliance along Russia’s brittle western borders, the American military bases in Central Asia, the Orange Revolutions liberating ex-Soviet countries from Moscow’s orbit, Washington’s missile defense shield project that includes some Central and Eastern European countries, the violent terrorist attacks of Chechen radicals in various Russian cities, the war in Georgia, and, most recently, the incidents of December 2010 have all played an important role in the rise of Russian nationalism. These factors, coupled with the loss of prestige and power and a plummeting standard of living in the early post-Soviet days, have invigorated the re-emergence of autocracy in Russia.

Increasing involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in politics is also often referred to as one of the factors that played an important role in the re-emergence of autocratic rule in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church, excluding the Soviet era, has always played a decisive role in supporting authoritarianism in Russian statehood. Following the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, the Orthodox Church claimed Muscovy to be the new center of Orthodoxy and the Russian rulers, with the support of the Church, adopted the term “Tsar”, coming from the Byzantine word “Caesar”. During the century that followed, the rulers of Muscovy declared themselves as the world’s only Orthodox sovereigns. Russia’s rulers were also addressed by another term, “*gosudar*”, commonly translated as “sovereign”, which symbolized the absolute authority of the Tsar over his subjects. Today, the open support of the Orthodox Church for the Putin administration is no doubt considered by ordinary Russians as validation of increasingly autocratic state rule.

Strong nationalist circles inside the Kremlin are often considered as one of the sources of increased authoritarianism in Russia. Putin has a circle of advisers dealing with issues of national security and international affairs that is referred to as the “*siloviki*” (men of power). The *siloviki* are mostly officials with military or KGB background who dominate the country’s security and intelligence ministries and believe in the absolute state control of economic, political, and social life in Russia.

Many Western political analysts report that the broader masses are heavily inclined toward authoritarianism in Russia, while only a small minority of Russians supports democracy. Some view this mass authoritarianism as primarily the product of history, of a political culture with its strongest roots in either the Soviet period or in the many earlier centuries in which Russians knew nothing other than autocracy. The few interludes in this history are seen as exceptions that prove the rule: they have invariably led to sociopolitical turmoil and a return to dictatorship.^[4]

Others argue that Russia’s turn to authoritarianism is not a cultural phenomenon; it is rather a result of the economic collapse and political turmoil that Russians faced in the early post-Soviet period. Many researchers find evidence that Russians are both authoritarian and democratic at the same time. In short, despite the existence of various studies, the key question of whether Russians truly value authoritarianism or have merely become resigned to it as the only legitimate available political path remains difficult to answer.

For a better understanding of the dynamics under the resurgence of authoritarianism in today’s Russia, it would be appropriate to briefly examine the foundations of autocracy in Russian history. This will enable us to make a comparison between the current autocratic statehood and those that prevailed in different forms in the past. Such a brief analysis may give us clues as to how to conceptualize Russian attitudes towards autocracy.

Muscovite Russia – The Center of Autocracy and Absolutism

The political evolution of Russia has progressed in an opposite direction than that of the West due to geographic, political, and cultural reasons. After the conquest of Siberia, the borders of Russia were extended vastly, covering an immense territory and making it the biggest kingdom on earth in the 17th century. This vast territory was exposed to the threats of Mongol and Turkic tribes.

These conditions created a suitable environment for the development and justification of the concept of “autocracy” in Russia.

This feeling of insecurity led Muscovite Russia to the development of a “military dictatorship”. The entire Russian nation consisted of serfs: the development of a privileged aristocracy and a class of self-governing burghers was impeded. The absence of private property led to the complete concentration of power in the hands of Russia’s rulers. Until the 19th century Muscovite cities were mainly made up of rural populations engaged in agriculture and lacking powers of self-government. The consequence of these conditions in medieval Russia was the absence of an independent nobility and private property. Thus, the lack of these two key institutions, which served to limit the authority of kings in the West, helped Russian rulers to consolidate absolute power.^[5]

Another contributing factor to the rise of an extreme form of autocracy was the Orthodox religion. Byzantine dogma represented politics as the responsibility of the rulers and this facilitated the emergence in Russia of a form of monarchy that in its powers exceeded anything known in the West even in the age of absolutism. European travelers to Muscovy perceived its rulers as possessing unlimited authority and disregarding private property rights.

The Russian monarchy emerged as a sovereign power in the second half of the 15th century. Until then, Russian rulers had been vassals of both Byzantium and of the Mongol-Tartar Golden Horde. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 ended Russia’s dependence on Byzantine Empire. Shortly afterward, the Golden Horde fell apart. As a result, by 1480, in the reign of Ivan III, the rulers of Muscovy could claim, at first cautiously and then boldly, the title of “*samoderzhets*”, a translation of the Greek “*autokrates*”, which meant sovereign: that is, a ruler independent of any external power. The term Tsar, an adaptation of Caesar, now also began to gain currency: it was formally adopted in 1547.^[6]

During the century that followed, the rulers of Muscovy came to claim imperial prerogatives on the grounds that they were the world’s only Orthodox sovereigns and, as such, the world’s only true Christian rulers. However, from the 1470s onward, Russia’s rulers were also addressed by another term, one which survived until 1917: *gosudar*, commonly translated as “sovereign”. This terminology provides a clue to the patrimonial nature of emergent Russian absolutism. Once they had shaken off Mongol domination, the rulers of Moscow suddenly became sovereigns. They considered their realm as patrimonial property, property inherited from their fathers, for which Russians used the term “*votchina*”. Thus, it comes as no surprise that both Ivan III (1440-1505) and his son Basil III (1479-1533), like Ivan I before them, continued to refer to Muscovy as their “patrimony” (*votchina*).^[7]

During the reigns of Ivan III, Basil III, and Ivan IV, neither privileged status nor private property were tolerated.^[8] Thus, the kind of aristocracy that was seen in Western Europe could not be created. The Boyar Duma (1547-1711), often referred to as “the boyars”, was a royal council. Its officials were invited by the Tsar. The Duma was not able to take the initiative to convene and it dealt only with matters submitted by the Tsar himself. In sum, the Duma was unable to limit the authority of the Tsars.

The “*Zemskie sobory*”, or the Land Assemblies, considered to have been founded in 1549 or 1550, were also unable to restrain the Muscovite rulers. The majority of their deputies were government officials appointed by the crown. Their sole purpose was to strengthen the government’s control over the provinces. Thus, these assemblies never became politically influential institutions like their European counterparts. In this patrimonial state, the monarchs were free to legislate and were confronted neither with private property nor with established social estates, which, by their very existence, set limits to authority.

The Russian Orthodox Church and Its Support of Autocracy

In the 330s, Emperor Constantine deserted the Tiber for the Bosphorus and built there a “New Rome”, which became the center of the seven ecumenical councils and the home of the Orthodox emperors and patriarchs.^[9] In line with the decision of the Council of Constantinople held in 381, the Byzantines themselves actually regarded their state as the “New Rome”.

For over a thousand years, this “New Rome” dedicated itself to the duty of preserving three great heritages: those of classical Greece, imperial Rome, and the Church fathers. The empire and the church became so inextricably intertwined that the clergy could not imagine Christianity without the emperor. A corollary of this was the belief that the emperor must endure as long as Christianity itself.^[10]

In search of Western military assistance against the Ottoman threat, Byzantium agreed at the Council of Florence-Ferrara in 1439 to rejoin the Catholic Church. Thus, the primacy of the Pope was acknowledged and all doctrinal issues dividing the two churches were conceded by Byzantium. This accord was denied by the Russian Orthodox Church and considered as a betrayal of faith.

In 1453, when the Turks finally conquered the Byzantine Empire, the Russian Orthodox Church became truly theologically independent. In the mid-14th century an early Prince of Moscow, Ivan I “*Kalita*” (“Moneybags”), convinced the Russian Church to move its headquarters from the city of Vladimir to Moscow, and the Russian Orthodox Church was thus centered in Muscovy.

According to Orthodox theology, there could be no Christian church without a secular power to protect it and enforce its teachings; there had to be a “Third Rome” with its own emperor. After Constantinople was conquered in 1453, Russia remained the only rightful claimant of the title of “Third Rome”.^[11]

This notion, in turn, led to the development of the theory of “Moscow - The Third Rome”, formulated apparently sometime in the 1530s by the monk Filofei (Philotheus).^[12] Filofei articulated his theory in one terse sentence: “*Dva Rima padosha, a tretii stoit, a chetvertom ne byti*”: “Two Romes have fallen, the third stands, and a fourth there will not be.”^[13] Implicit in this was the belief that Russia was destined to rule the world and that the Russian Tsar was the ruler of all humanity. The responsibility of preserving the world’s cultural heritage was now on the shoulders of Muscovy. Even into the 19th century, this religious mission remained one of the main springs of Pan-Slavist thinking.

The Russian Orthodox Church, directly benefiting from the kingdom's international standing and historic importance, gave its support to the autocratic rule of Ivan III and his successors. As Muscovy's territories grew, so did the sphere of influence of the Church. In fact, the Russian Orthodox Church helped Ivan III's dynastic successors legitimize their autocracy by propagating the doctrine of the new Muscovite Kingdom being the "Third Rome."

With the preparation of *The Book of Degrees of Royal Genealogy (Stepennaia kniga)* by Metropolitan Macarius^[14] in 1560-1563, Ivan IV was presented as the legitimate heir of the Roman and Byzantine emperors. With the support of the Church, the Russian rulers were now endowed with unrestrained power and the Church itself came under the full authority and control of the Tsars. The rulers of Moscow appointed its highest dignitaries and removed them at will.

This voluntary subordination of the Russian Church to the state led to the bureaucratization of the clergy and spared Russia the kind of struggle between ecclesiastical and secular authorities that had afflicted Catholic Europe through much of the Middle Ages. The highly bureaucratized Russian Church also became hostile to all independent religious thought and condemned all independent thinking.

Thus, at the beginning of its new autonomous existence, Muscovy was given a sharp thrust towards conservatism and autocracy, along with an admonition to guard warily against perverting influences from outside, especially from West Europe.^[15]

Peter the Great – A Reformist Despot

During the reign of Peter the Great, Russia witnessed such a remarkable transformation process that the Petrine theme in modern Russian history has often been compared to that of the Reformation in Germany. The rise of Peter the Great marked a turning point in Russian history. The great reforms and Westernization processes initiated by Peter the Great are described as "the Petrine revolution"^[16] by Sergei Mihailovic Solov'ev, who was probably the greatest Russian historian of all times. Solov'ev, in his famous work *History of Russia from the Earliest Times*, argued that the transformations (*preobrazovanija*) of the Muscovite state and society undertaken by Peter were both necessary and unavoidable. The Westernization process of Peter liberated Russia from medieval "clannishness" and oriented to the nation towards Europe. The method used to give momentum to this process was authoritarian rule and, to some extent, despotism.

Peter the Great was an absolute ruler both in theory and practice. He certainly considered himself an autocrat, and his view was supported by such political writers as Feofan Prokopovich. Poet Antioch Dmitrievich Kantemir (1708-1744), like Prokopovich, was one of the leading supporters of Petrine despotism; he considered autocracy as the only hope against the stagnant and ignorant upper classes and the conservative clergy. Peter acted like one of the memorable autocrats of history. An uncompromising character and a violent temper further accentuated his decisiveness and the plenitude of his power.^[17]

According to Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, Peter the Great was a true enlightened despot. That

he has not generally been so called is to be explained by the facts that this appellation has usually been reserved for the second half of the eighteenth century, that the Russian history of the period has not been sufficiently studied in the European context, and that the crudity and cruelty of the reformer, as well as the barbarism of his surroundings, have stood in the way of a full recognition of his place among the elect of the age.^[18]

The Decembrists took a generally negative view of Peter I, criticizing him as a tyrant, barbarian, enemy of freedom, and cruel despot. According to the Decembrists, the Russian people had borne the entire cost of Petrine policies but still remained serfs, ignorant, poverty-stricken, and legally unprotected. The reformer, above all, established a total tyranny, destroyed freedom, and brought everything and everyone under his complete control. Nicholas Turgenev and Nicholas Bestuzhev are among the leading literary figures who condemned the tyranny of Peter the Great.

The great Russian poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, in his unforgettable poem “Stances” (Стансы) of 1826, gave perhaps the most celebrated description of the reformer.

Самодержавною рукой
Он смело сеял просвещение,
Не презирал страны родной:
Он знал ее предназначенье.

With an autocratic hand
He daringly sowed enlightenment,
He did not despise the motherland:
He knew her destination.

То академик, то герой,
То мореплаватель, то плотник,
Он всеобъемлющей душой
На троне вечный был работник.^[19]

Now an academician, now a hero,
Now a seafarer, now a carpenter,
He, with an all-encompassing soul
Was an eternal worker on the throne.

In these lines, Pushkin, while admitting Peter’s autocratic rule, cherishes his reforms and implicitly admits that these reforms could only have been achieved through despotic rule. It is also generally believed among scholars that Pushkin, as he studied Peter the Great and his time, became increasingly repelled by the cruelty of the reformer.^[20]

Vasily Osipovich Klyuchevsky, one of the most reputable Russian historians, argued that Peter’s reform was a despotic struggle with the people, with their lethargy. Peter hoped, by his terrible power, to stimulate initiative in an enslaved society, and via a slave-owning nobility to establish European science and public education in Russia as the indispensable conditions of social development; he wished that the slave, while remaining a slave, would act consciously and freely. This combination of despotism and freedom, of enlightenment and slavery – this political squaring of the circle, this riddle, delivered to us from the time of Peter, is still unresolved.^[21]

Catherine the Great and Enlightened Despotism

Catherine II (1729-96) was born in the German city of Stettin. In 1745, at the age of, 16 she was married to the heir to the Russian throne, Grand Duke Peter III, and converted to Russian Orthodox Christianity. With the death of Empress Elizabeth in 1761, Peter was proclaimed Emperor Peter III and Catherine became empress. She forced Peter III to abdicate the throne and declared

herself sovereign ruler of Russia in June 1762, following a coup d'état led by military officials. Peter III was first arrested and then murdered in prison.

Catherine II ruled Russia for 34 years, from 1762 until 1796. The “Catherinian Era” is often considered the Golden Age of the Russian Empire and the Russian nobility.

Catherine II followed the example of Peter the Great and vigorously pursued Westernization policies to foster economic and social development. The instrument that she used to enforce Westernization within an ignorant, conservative, and highly superstitious society was similar to that of Peter the Great: the iron-fisted rule of a despotic absolutist.^[22]

Catherine was deeply influenced by the ideas of the French Enlightenment. She read the works of Montesquieu and Voltaire and accumulated a considerable amount of knowledge on theories of government and politics. Embracing these ideas, she endeavored to rationalize and reform the Russian Empire. As an “enlightened despot”, Catherine believed that a wise and benevolent ruler, acting according to the dictates of reason, could ensure the well-being of her subjects. In this spirit, Catherine initiated a comprehensive reform process within Russian society.

The first major reform was made to Russia’s archaic and inefficient Code of Laws. She formulated a document named the “Instruction”, which called for a progressive legal system. The “Instruction” proposed a system granting equal protection under law to all Russians, abolished torture of criminals, and emphasized prevention of criminal acts rather than the imposition of harsh punishment.

Catherine made important innovations in economic fields, as well. She established the Free Economic Society (1765) to modernize agriculture and industry, encouraging foreign investment in economically underdeveloped areas. She endeavored to expand the country’s educational facilities and proceeded to increase the number of elementary and secondary schools. The arts and sciences received much attention, and St. Petersburg became one of Europe's major cultural centers during her reign. Support for music, theater, and painting increased, and the Russian Academy of Sciences became a world-class institution of scholarship. She relaxed censorship and encouraged the publication of foreign books in Russia.

During Catherine’s reign, Russia also achieved great military success and gained large tracts of land. Following two successful wars against the Ottoman Empire, Russia annexed Crimea, which gave it access to the Black Sea. In addition, Russia’s control over Poland and Lithuania allowed it to annex three separate tracts of land.

Although Catherine liked to use the liberal rhetoric of the Enlightenment, she actually ruled Russia with a heavy hand. Being highly dependent on the nobility to impose her reforms, Catherine closed her eyes to the hopes for abolishment of serfdom. On the contrary, she took steps to strengthen serfdom, leaving the fate of millions of serfs in the hands of the gentry.

The governmental decree of 1767 instructed the serfs and peasants to show “absolute obedience to the landlords in all matters”. All persons who dared “to incite serfs and peasants to disobey their landlords” were threatened to “be arrested and taken to the nearest government office,

there to be punished forthwith as disturbers of the public tranquility, according to the laws and without leniency". The decree further dictated that if "any serfs and peasants should cease to give the proper obedience to their landlords and should make bold to submit unlawful petitions complaining of their landlords, they shall be punished by the knout and forthwith deported to Nerchinsk to penal servitude for life and shall be counted as part of the quota of recruits which their landlords must furnish to the army".^[23]

The Pugachev Rebellion of 1773-1775 presented the greatest challenge to the autocratic and despotic rule of Catherine. It began as an organized insurrection of Yaik Cossacks headed by Yemelyan Pugachev and later turned into a massive revolt against the imperial administration with the support of peasants, serfs, Cossacks, and Old Believers. Following the defeat of Pugachev, Catherine directed her attention once more toward domestic matters. For security reasons, she reorganized provincial administration to favor the nobility.

The "Catherinian Era", like the reign of Peter the Great, constitutes one of the much debated topics in Russian history. It has been the subject of numerous dissertations, articles, books, seminars, and symposiums. One thing, however, on which all the researchers and historians agree is that Catherine was an autocrat and a despot who ruled Russia with an iron fist.

The Doctrine of Official Nationalism and its Connection with Autocracy

In the 1830s and 1840s, during the reign of Nicholas I, the Russian government, for the first and only time until the Bolsheviks seized power, formulated an official ideology. This ideology, later labeled Official Nationalism, was promulgated by an array of conservative scholars and publicists with the support of the crown. It had some points in common with the Slavophile doctrine, except that, while extolling Russia's unique virtues, it was not anti-Western: Peter the Great, anathema to the Slavophiles, was the doctrine's idol.^[24]

The Official Nationality ideology had its origins in a statement made in March 1832 by Count Sergei Uvarov (1786-1855) to Nicholas I. His ideology was based on three concepts: orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. Orthodoxy meant devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church and a return to the spiritual roots of pre-Petrine Russia. The affirmation of the principle of autocracy meant a return to the old Muscovite notion of autocracy as the basic and permanent feature of Russian statehood. Finally, nationality was interpreted by Uvarov as devotion to the Russian national heritage and spiritual make-up of the people, with a refusal to trust Western Europe as a model for Russia or Western European theories as at all relevant for Russia.^[25]

The doctrine of Official Nationality represented not only the views of Nicholas I and his government but also, broadly speaking, the convictions of a large part of the Russian educated public of the time.^[26] The Russian elite, despite having differences on many issues, broadly agreed on one fact: autocracy was the best way to rule the vast Empire, and many leading figures of the era praised the new ideology of the government.

The ideology of Official Nationalism prevailed as the official political doctrine until February 1917. The successor of Nicolas I, Alexander II, was the only Tsar who did not strictly followed this

ideology. However, it was faithfully adhered to by the last two Emperors, Alexander III and Nicholas II.

Leninism: From Tsarist Autocracy to Bolshevik Dictatorship

The February and October Revolutions of 1917 constituted a dramatic turning point not only in Russian history but in world history and politics as a whole. The February Revolution was centered in Petrograd, on Women's Day in March (late February in the Julian calendar).

The masses revolted against the tsarist autocracy with the slogan "bread, peace, and liberty". The revolution broke out spontaneously and the Russian capital fell into a state of chaos, leading to the overthrow of the Tsar Nicholas II. The revolution ended the Russian Empire and the Romanov dynasty. A Russian Provisional Government under Prince Gregory Lvov was established in the form of an alliance between liberals and socialists who wanted political reform. The February Revolution was followed in the same year by the October Revolution, bringing Bolshevik rule and a change in Russia's social structure, and paving the way for the USSR.

The Bolsheviks certainly attempted to transform Russia socially, economically, and politically. They took steps towards the introduction of a centralized state structure imposing ever-growing restrictions and curtailing the freedom of Russian citizens. According to Grigori Petrovich Maximov, the despotic character of state communism converted the country into an immense prison and set Russia back to the times of feudalism and serfdom. He further argued that all that was gained through long centuries of bitter struggle and great sacrifices with church, feudalism, serfdom, absolutism, and state democracy was destroyed by Marxist state communism. Voskresenskaya Square^[27]

The Russian Empire had an autocratic state structure, with the Tsar possessing unlimited power and the authority to make final decisions. After the 1905 Revolution, the Tsar was forced to rule alongside the Duma, although the Duma had very limited power. Likewise, in Soviet Russia a five-man Politburo was established as the central body. In reality, Lenin held supreme power as Chairman of the People's Commissars. Before the October Revolution, Lenin, appealing to the Russian workers and peasants, who were tired of despotism, stated that Soviet democracy was absolutely incompatible with personal dictatorship. Lenin, however, after gaining control of the government, argued that "Soviet socialist democracy is not inconsistent with personal rule and dictatorship, for the will of the class is at times best brought into realization by a dictator, who alone will accomplish more and who is frequently more needed".^[28]

The Bolsheviks, who strongly criticized the restrictions on political freedom during the Tsarist era, introduced a state control mechanism that went far beyond than that of the Tsars. During the Tsarist era, the secret police force, the "*Okhrana*", was used to suppress political opposition. Following the October Revolution, this organization was replaced in December 1917 by its communist counterpart, the "*Cheka*", under the leadership of Felix Dzerzhinsky. During the summer of 1918 the Cheka launched the Red Terror, suppressing political opponents, especially those who represented the highest levels of Russian society under the Tsar. Mercilessly executed with his wife and children in Ekaterinburg in June 1918, Tsar Nicholas II also became a victim of the Red Terror.

In addition to the terror of the Cheka, the Red Army was also mobilized by the Bolsheviks to suppress political opposition. The suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion^[29] constituted one of the bloodiest examples of the intervention of the Red Army. There were thus many similarities between the Tsarist and the Communist states in terms of state control and suppression of political freedoms. Indeed, a police state of unparalleled extensiveness developed under Stalin after Lenin's death.

In the economic field, Bolshevik policy was based on the nationalization of industries, state control on the means of production, and just distribution of wealth. In the first years of the Bolshevik rule, Russia underwent a great economic transition in terms of ownership. However, during the Civil War period, Russia's economy suffered from inflation and food shortages, which prompted the government to introduce the New Economic Policy (NEP). The introduction of the NEP symbolized a step backwards for the Bolsheviks in realizing their dream of collective ownership of the economy. Despite Bolshevik slogans of justice and equality, the just distribution of wealth remained a distant dream.

The Bolsheviks also transformed the social structure of Imperial Russia to a great extent. Nobles, landowners, and businessmen were either forced to go into exile or were murdered. In line with the target of creating a more equal society, wealthy landowners had their property confiscated and "communal houses" were introduced, in which many families were forced to live in small spaces, denied of even the most basic human need of privacy.

Despite their slogans of social justice and equality, the Bolsheviks created a new class of wealthy bureaucrats and commissars who grew used to luxuries while the majority of the population lived in poor conditions. The peasantry suffered to a great extent as a result of the Russian Civil War and the policies of Lenin's government. The forcible requisitioning of grain from peasants caused one of the most devastating famines in the history of Russia in 1921-22, during which millions of Russians starved to death.

To summarize, the Bolsheviks had transformed Russia to a great extent by Lenin's death in 1924. Politically, Russia remained an autocracy, with a Communist dictator replacing an imperialist Tsar. In the field of security, the Bolsheviks created their own secret police, the tyranny of which went far beyond the imperial *Okhrana*. On the economic front, most industry was nationalized, lands were confiscated, and private ownership and businesses were destroyed. In social policy, the Bolsheviks created a new ruling class of party bureaucrats who enjoyed privileges, luxury, and wealth while the peasantry and the working masses suffered in inhumane conditions. What Lenin created in 1924 was certainly very far from Marx's theory of a Communist state.

Stalinism: Tyranny and Mass Terror

The brutality and terror of the Stalinist system derived principally from Stalin himself. As an omnipotent but paranoid leader, Stalin arrested and executed millions of innocent people, including many of his fellow Communist Party members. Through this exercise of mass terror, he ensured that no one opposed his policies or challenged his personal dictatorship.^[30]

Stalin was one of the least likely candidates for a charismatic hero. Short in stature, reticent

in meetings and on public occasions, neither a talented orator like Trotsky or Zinoviev nor an attractive and engaging personality like Lenin or Bukharin, Stalin did not himself project the image of a leader – until it was created for him through a cult. First the promotion of a cult of Lenin, which Stalin actively encouraged, then Stalin’s identification as a loyal Leninist, and eventually his merger with and substitution for the image of Lenin were important props for Stalin’s authority both within the party and in society.^[31]

Stalin, after taking control of the Party, became increasingly paranoid and power-mad, firmly believing that the country needed his “guidance and leadership”. He drastically departed from Lenin’s policies and practices and put his personal imprint on the system that bears his name. Stalin believed in the need for rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. Soviet heavy industry was weak and in decline, obviously lacking the capacity to produce enough metal and heavy machinery for the imminent war. Stalinist industrialization and collectivization policies generated devastating consequences, especially for the peasantry and the working masses.

Stalin's “Apparatus of Terror” relied mostly on the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, better known as the NKVD.^[32] During the second half of the 1920s, Joseph Stalin employed NKVD repression against opposition elements within the Communist Party. The first victims were Politburo members Leon Trotskii, Grigorii Zinovev, and Lev Kamenev, who were expelled from the party in late 1927. By late 1934, Stalin had eliminated all likely potential opposition to his leadership and was the unchallenged leader of both party and state. Nevertheless, he proceeded to purge the party ranks and to terrorize the entire country with widespread arrests and executions.

The murder of Sergei Kirov on 1 December 1934 set off a chain of events that culminated in the Great Terror of the 1930s. Kirov was a skillful orator who had considerable popularity in the Party and in public opinion. As a member of the ruling Politburo, leader of the Leningrad party apparatus, and an influential member of the ruling elite, he was considered as a candidate for leadership by some party members. Doubtful of the loyalty of Kirov and the Leningrad apparatus, Stalin began to search for a pretext for launching a broad purge and decided that murdering Kirov would be expedient. The murder was carried out by a young assassin named Leonid Nikolaev. Recent evidence has indicated that Stalin and the NKVD planned the crime.

Stalin then used the murder as an excuse for introducing a witch-hunt for alleged conspirators. In the following four-and-a-half years, Stalin’s political opponents, such as Zinovyev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Tomsky, and Rykov, were put on “show trials”, where they were declared guilty of charges of treason. Kirov’s murder was arguably the crime of the century as it paved the way for the Great Terror that claimed the lives of millions of innocent people. Stalin never visited Leningrad again and directed one of his most vicious post-war purges against the city.

In 1937, the Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army and 7 leading generals were shot. In 1938-39, all of the admirals and half the Army’s officers were executed or imprisoned. In the same period of time, thousands of religious leaders were imprisoned while churches were closed.

With the start of the Second World War, Stalin's terror transformed into the extermination of war prisoners and “traitors”. Out of several simultaneous executions of prisoners of war, the most tragic was perhaps the “Katyn massacre”, which took place in April and May of 1940 in the

Smolensk region. With the proposal of Lavrenty Beria to execute all members of the Polish Officer Corps, 22,000 Polish citizens^[33] were shot. The execution order was approved and signed by the Soviet Politburo, including its leader, Joseph Stalin.

Given the lack of complete data, it is difficult to establish the total loss of life brought about by the Stalinist terror. An average estimate is that in the Soviet Union as a whole, about 500,000 were executed in 1937-39 and somewhere between 3 and 12 million were sent to labor camps (The Gulag), where nearly half of them died.

Putinism: A New Combination of Managed Democracy, Centralization of Power, Neo-Official Nationalism, and Authoritarianism

Putin, in his third term as the President of the Russian Federation, preserves his sound position of significant power. During Putin's tenure, the state systematically recovered firm control of politics and the key sectors of the economy. Democracy advocates in Russia and the West often voice criticism of Putin, accusing him of creating a regime that closely corresponds to the traditional definitions of authoritarianism as described by political scientist Samuel Huntington.

Despite concerns about an increasingly authoritarian regime, Putin still enjoys the support of the vast majority of the Russian population as his leadership is considered by ordinary Russians as a guarantee for order, stability, and economic growth. The support of the Russian population for Putinism is often explained by scholars by the tendency of the Russian people to show obedience to a charismatic and strong leader who has the capacity to mobilize the masses under a common objective. Looking at the history of Russia, this definition does not seem to be entirely accurate, since the obedience of ordinary Russians to strong historical figures such as Peter the Great, Lenin, and Stalin was mostly motivated by "fear" rather than by "faith".

In the case of Putin, however, the authoritarian turn of the Russian State seems to reflect the free will and faith of the Russian people. In order to better understand the main motives behind the support given by the Russian people to the Putin administration and Putin's policies towards strong central state control and authoritarianism, it would be useful to take a careful look at the recent history of Russia and to examine the founding principles of Putinism.

A) The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Following Years of Political and Economic Turmoil

The Yeltsin regime, formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, had passed through three important stages by the time power was handed over to Putin. The first stage ended in 1993 as the former parliament was terminated and a new constitution was adopted. During that period of reconstructing the old political institutions and forming a new Russian state, Yeltsin's regime could be described as a "delegative democracy", a term first proposed by Argentine political scholar Guillermo O'Donnell. Regimes that emerge during a transition from one system to another are characterized by the presence of a charismatic leader, as well as extremely weak political institutions with no ability for mobilization. There is a lack of feedback between the people, who legitimize a charismatic leader's authority through popular elections, and the leader himself after the elections.

At the initial stage, a charismatic leader, while being extremely popular, can promise many changes, but he will not be able to achieve his goals. As a result, the leader's charisma is impaired, leading to a loss of support from the population. In this situation, such a regime may develop according to the following two scenarios: if democratic reforms are successful and civil institutions are strengthened, it moves toward consolidated democracy; on the other hand, if serious problems block economic and social reforms, the regime may experience a deep crisis, chaos, and even inability to properly govern. At this point, the country may evolve toward consolidated authoritarianism. The main feature of a delegative democracy is that this regime is not consolidated in principle. Such a regime is incapable of putting forth sensible objectives; it fails to mobilize – via various institutions – the financial, institutional, human, and information resources that are necessary for resolving the problems facing the country.^[34]

In the case of Russia, a struggle was witnessed between charismatic leader Boris Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies, which resolutely opposed Yeltsin's course. Under these conditions, Yeltsin was forced to make very serious concessions to political and business elites in order to stand against his opponents.

After President Yeltsin crushed the Supreme Soviet, his regime entered the second stage in the confrontation. This was characterized by the president's loss of charisma and mobilization potential. As the opposition was defeated, a regime of delegative democracy drifted toward a rather moderate military-bureaucratic consolidation of power. During that period, the officials in the top echelons of power began a large-scale process of transferring state property into select private hands. This sweeping property redistribution, together with the formation of new segments in the bureaucratic and business structures with a view toward supporting the existing regime, was accomplished through the absolute decentralization of government authorities. However, this decentralization of power, together with state's loss of central authority, created an illusion of democracy. Under these conditions, high-ranking officials and business people that had connections within the government were able to turn into multimillionaires overnight. By the 1996 presidential election, when Yeltsin ran for his second term, Russia still had decentralized power, weak institutions, and a leader who had totally lost the support of the public.^[35]

The third stage of Yeltsin's regime started after he won the 1996 election. The regime was then totally degraded and the Russian state completely lost its central authority. There occurred the privatization of state institutions by oligarchs, as well as the privatization of the Cabinet, the president's administration, and the president himself – or rather the president's family. To retain his personal power under such a regime, the president used his powers to redistribute property and prevent a transfer of power to the Cabinet. The president constantly instigated conflicts inside the Cabinet and the parliament, thus effectively paralyzing their activities. This was the only way for him to retain his personal power and prevent its transfer to the prime minister and the government.^[36]

B) Putin's Ascent to Power and Steps toward Political and Economic Restoration

Putin, ending his 16-year career as an officer in the KGB, retired to enter politics in his native St. Petersburg in 1991. After moving to Moscow in 1996, he joined President Boris Yeltsin's administration, where he became Acting President on 31 December 1999 following the unexpected

resignation of President Yeltsin. Putin started his first term in office as president after he won the presidential elections in the year 2000.

The regime inherited by Putin was totally decentralized; the state had lost central authority, while oligarchs robbed the country and controlled its power institutions. In order to mend this situation, Putin began to build a hierarchy of power. He destroyed the political influence of oligarchs and oligopolies in the federal center. He also ended the omnipotence of the regional elites. During his first two years as president, Putin succeeded in restoring vertical governance in general. As a result, the Russian political and economic actors who had sought to privatize the state were weakened.^[37] Putin, by stripping several actors of their financial and media resources, such as Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Gusinsky, and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, barred them from decision-making on key political issues.

Putin's attempts to restore central authority by taking control of the financial, administrative, and media resources of the state faced fierce resistance from the oligopolies. These efforts were interpreted as the strengthening of authoritarian and totalitarian trends. Toward the end of his first term, Putin was able to consolidate his political regime, restoring the effectiveness and control of the state over its resources. Under Putin, the Russian state became the largest "corporation", which defined the rules of the game.

C) Putin and the Ideology of Neo-Official Nationalism

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian academics, policy-makers, philosophers, and bureaucracy have struggled to develop a new concept that could play a guiding role in building a new and powerful Russia reminiscent of the imperial past. "Official Nationalism", which was introduced by Nicholas I in the 1830s as an official ideology, has surprisingly common features with Putin's state nationalism. The ideology of Official Nationalism was based on three concepts: orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. The repercussions of these three concepts are visible in Putin's interpretation of state nationalism.

The Putin administration has the open support of the Orthodox Church and there has been an apparent revival of orthodoxy in politics since the beginning of Putin's presidency. Autocracy is another undeniable aspect of Putin's government. Russia has witnessed a sharp autocratic turn with Putin's immense centralization of power. His policies to neuter the Russian Duma, intimidate the press, and manipulate the levers of the Russian economy have gained the support of the Russian nation as his popularity among Russians has never declined. Nationality, albeit not in a discriminative character, is another concept of state nationalism under Putin.

The nationalist ideology of the Putin administration can be defined as a "neo-Official Nationalism", reminiscent of the days of Nicholas I, who tried to develop a new ideology of nationalism to dominate the domestic and foreign affairs of Imperial Russia. This neo-Official Nationalism is based on Orthodoxy, autocracy, and national pride and is strengthened by a Eurasianist and, to a certain extent, Slavophile influence. Putin's neo-Official Nationalism seems to be deprived of irredentist and expansionist policies or territorial claims. However, it can adopt an aggressive tone and hostility when the question comes to the ethnic Russians living in the periphery of Russia. The issue of the "protection" of this Russian diaspora is used as a strong policy tool to

manipulate domestic politics as well as foreign relations with those countries who are hosting ethnic Russians. The latest example of this was seen during the crisis with Georgia. The new feeling of having the protection of the state and being citizens of a “great power” has no doubt boosted morale and national pride among the Russian people, which, in return, has increased the support for Putin and his policies toward increased authoritarianism.

D) Putin’s Militocracy: The *Siloviki*

According to some democracy advocates, a new section of the elite, the *siloviki*, has an important share in the trend towards authoritarianism in Russia. The word is derived from the Russian “*silovye struktury - силовые структуры*”, which means “force structure”. *Silovik* (СИЛОВИК) is the singular and *siloviki* (СИЛОВИКИ) is the plural.

Siloviki are defined as anyone with a background as an official in Russia’s armed services, law enforcement bodies, or intelligent agencies. As a percentage of the elite, *siloviki* representation has significantly increased following Putin’s election victory in the year 2000 and throughout his terms in office. Putin himself served in the KGB for 16 years.^[38]

Sociologist Olga Kryshtanovskaya and political scientist Stephen White define the *siloviki* as a “militocracy” that is committed to the ideals of authoritarian institutions and centralization of power.^[39] Kryshtanovskaya estimates that 26 percent of Russia’s senior political and commercial leadership are *siloviki*. If one tries to account for everyone connected to the security organs in one way or another, Kryshtanovskaya’s estimate rises to 78 percent of the elite.

As was seen above, the Cheka (*чрезвычайная комиссия*), or the State Committee for the Emergency Situation, was established in 1917 under Lenin in order to consolidate Bolshevik control following the October Revolution. The successor of the Cheka was the KGB (*Комитет государственной безопасности*), or Committee for State Security, which preserved its strong position until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Although the KGB was dismantled more than two decades ago, its successor, the Federal Security Service (FSB), still keeps its image visible in Russian politics. Many of the *siloviki* brought into power have personal connections to Putin either from his past in the KGB and later as the Director of the FSB or from his term of office as deputy to former Mayor Sobchak^[40] in St. Petersburg.

Robert Coalson argues that the *siloviki*, due to their shared experiences in the security services, are devoted to the “Chekist ideology” and see themselves nearly as messiahs, the saviors of Russia from a raft of internal and external enemies. The *siloviki* feel that they know how to protect Russia and make it great again; consequently, any actions they take are justified for this greater good.^[41] The common goal of the *siloviki* is to restore the international prestige and power of Russia. A new sort of state-sponsored nationalism is the method adopted to achieve this goal. Their strict control of the most powerful institutions has also enabled them to initiate a nationalization process in the key sectors of the Russian economy.

Conclusion

Russia has a long history of strong leadership by a single charismatic figure, as seen in the examples of Peter the Great, Lenin, Stalin, and, lastly, Putin. During the years of Imperial Russia, Tsars were the head of the entire Empire. Following the October Revolution, Tsarist autocracy was replaced by the dictatorial rule of the Bolsheviks, introduced by Lenin. The dictatorship of the proletariat turned into mass terror during the rule of Joseph Stalin. Following the collapse of the USSR, hopes for democratization soon faded away. Yeltsin, despite his frequent use of slogans about democracy, freedom, and liberty, took no concrete steps to lessen executive authority during his term of office. As a result of the centuries-old state tradition of despotism and autocracy, Russian society was unable to have a meaningful democratic experience. This authoritarian tradition created a feeling of respect in the Russian people for a leader whose charisma and guidance were believed to keep the country in order.

The deep-rooted authoritarian tradition and feeling of obedience of the Russian people remained unchanged in post-Soviet Russia. In fact, new steps were taken to preserve this political structure. The Russian constitution of 1993, by charging the president with guaranteeing the constitution and taking measures to ensure the independence and integrity of the state, placed deep responsibility and significant power in the president's hands. The president has also been equipped with broad legislative powers, including the power of submission of draft laws to parliament, issuing of decrees and directives not subject to approval by parliament, and authority of initiating referendums on the modification of the constitution.

When Putin was elected as the new president, he found an already well-established legal basis and tradition. He further improved the existing system, placing himself at the focal point of politics in the Russian Federation. By using his significant powers of appointment, he established a new network of ruling elites that is completely dependent on him. His power of decree also enabled Putin to penetrate his influence deep into regional structures. One may argue that the presidents of many democratic countries also have extensive powers to appoint close associates to high posts. What makes the Russian president unique is that he is able to use these powers with little accountability due to severely weakened legislative and judicial branches.

Another important feature of the Russian political system is the secondary role of the Prime Minister as a subordinate to the presidency. The Russian president has the power to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister. This extends presidential influence deep into the government.

In addition to the deep-rooted tradition of strong and authoritarian leadership and to the legally established framework to preserve this political structure, some political, economic, and social developments also played an important role in determining the preference of the Russian nation towards authoritarianism. The initial attempt at democracy during the 1990s was characterized by political instability, poverty, and corruption. In August 1999, Chechen separatist invaded the neighboring province of Dagestan, and Chechen terrorists initiated bloody attacks in Moscow and other Russian cities. Putin took the post of President as the war in Chechnya was beginning and Russian politics and economy were swept into an atmosphere of turmoil.

In these circumstances, the popularity of Putin steadily increased, and his steps towards a

strong centralized state and authoritarianism were considered as steps towards stability. High energy prices played a vital role in the fast recovery of the Russian economy, causing a gradual rise in salaries, decrease in unemployment, and stabilization of the inflation rate. During Putin's first and second terms, many of the hated oligarchs were stripped of their political and economic powers and wealth. Lastly, the gradual restoration of the weakened role of the Russian Federation in international politics fueled national pride and the feeling of being a member of a great power. These developments strengthened the already existing support and confidence that Putin held among Russian society.

Looking into the future, it should not be difficult to predict that Russia will continue to walk its current path. Putin, already in his third term as president, will rule the country until the presidential elections of 2018. He has already hinted that he will use his constitutional right to run in the presidential elections in 2018 for the second time. It is very unlikely to see a strong candidate to compete with Putin, given his immense power, authority, and popularity. Taking into consideration the weakness of democratic institutions and the lack of social pressure, it is easy to foresee that democratic reforms can only be initiated from the top in Russia. There are claims that the Kremlin's real strategy is to bring democracy in the long term once political and economic stability is ensured. However, with autocratic institutions becoming deeply embedded into Russian political system, the creation of a fully democratic system in Russia is unlikely to happen in the coming decades.

^[1]Ellen Carnaghan, Popular Support for Democracy and Autocracy in Russia, Russian Analytical Digest No.117, Saint Louis, 19 September 2012, p.2.

^[2]Carnaghan, Popular Support for Democracy and Autocracy in Russia, p.2.

^[3]Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, The Myth of the Authoritarian Model, Foreign Affairs, Volume 87, No.1, January/February 2008, p.74.

^[4]Henry E. Hale, The Myth of Mass Authoritarianism in Russia: Public Opinion Foundations of a Hybrid Regime, George Washington University, The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Seattle, 2009, p.1.

^[5]See Ronald G. Charbonneau. The Origins of Muscovite Autocracy, Master Thesis, Department of History of McGill University, Montreal, 1967.

^[6]Richard Pipes, Russian Conservatism and Its Critics A Study in Political Culture, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005, p.13.

^[7]Pipes, Russian Conservatism and Its Critics A Study in Political Culture, p.14.

^[8]See Cherie Woodworth, The Birth of the Captive Autocracy: Moscow, 1432, Journal of Early Modern History, 13, 2009, pp. 49-69.

^[9]According to the Apollinarian doctrine taught by Bishop Apollinaris the Younger, bishop of

Laodicea in Syria during the 4th century, Jesus was not a man but the “word of God dwelling in the human body”. This transgression caused the capital of true Christianity to shift to Constantinople, where it made its home for the next nine centuries. This doctrine was condemned as heresy by Roman councils in 377 and in 381 and also by the Council of Constantinople in 381. In spite of its repeated condemnation, Apollinarianism persisted into the 5th century. At that time its remaining adherents merged with the Monophysites, who held that Christ had a divine nature but no human nature, as articulated in the second half of the 4th century by Bishop Apollinaris.

[10]Thornton Anderson, *Russian Political Thought An Introduction*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1967, p.72.

[11]The first to claim their capital as the heir of Byzantium were the Bulgarians, who as early as the 14th century designated the capital of their empire, Търново (Tirnova), as the “New Rome.” This claim lapsed in 1393 when Търново fell to the Turks.

[12]Старец Филофей Иван Забелин, *Москва - Третий Рим и Семь Московских Холмов 1500-е годы в Марина Федотова, Кирил Королев, Москва- История Города От Участников и Очевидцев, Автобиография, Москва 2010, p.88.*

[13]Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics A Study in Political Culture*, p.39.

[14]Macarius served as the Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia from 1542 until 1563.

[15]Anderson, *Russian Political Thought An Introduction*, p.74.

[16]See Сергей Михайлович Соловьев, *История России с древнейших времен*, Publisher: Oleg E. Kolesnikov (Русская история в Библиотеке Магистра, <http://www.lib.ru/HISTORY/SOLOVIEV/solv01.txt>).

[17]Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985, p.8.

[18]Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*, p.18.

[19]А. С. Пушкин. *Собрание сочинений в 10 томах, Стансы*, http://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/01versus/0423_36/1826/0426.htm.

[20]Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*, p.91.

[21]James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London, 2004, p.5.

[22]See Robert K. Massie, *Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman*, Random House, Canada, 2011.

[23]George Vernadsky and S. G. Pushkarev, *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972, pp.453-454.

[24] Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics A Study in Political Culture*, p.98.

[25] Sergei Vasilievich Utechin, *Russian Political Thought*, London, 1963, p.72.

[26] Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*, p.121.

[27] Grigori Petrovitch Maximov, *Bolshevism: Promises and Reality*, Chicago, 2011, p.10.

[28] Maximov, *Bolshevism: Promises and Reality*, pp.11-18.

[29] Kronstadt rebellion (Кронштадтское восстание) was a major unsuccessful uprising against the Bolsheviks in the later years of the Russian Civil War, which was led by Stepan Petrichenko and consisted of Russian sailors, soldiers, and civilians. The rebellion originated in Kronstadt, a naval fortress on Kotlin Island in the Gulf of Finland that served as the base of the Russian Baltic Fleet. On March 17, the Bolshevik forces entered the city of Kronstadt. Historians estimate that from 1,200 to 2,168 were executed in the days following the revolt and a similar number were jailed, many in the Solovki prison camp. Official Soviet figures claim that approximately 1,000 rebels were killed, 2,000 were wounded, and between 2,300 to 6,528 were captured, with 6,000 to 8,000 defecting to Finland, while the Red Army lost 527 killed and 3,285 wounded.

[30] Ronald Grigor Suny, “Stalin and his Stalinism: Power and Authority in the Soviet Union, 1930-1953”, in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, eds., *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997, p.13.

[31] Suny, “Stalin and his Stalinism: Power and Authority in the Soviet Union, p.20.

[32] The first secret police force, called the Cheka, was established in December 1917 by the Bolsheviks as a temporary institution to be abolished once Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks had consolidated their power. The Cheka was empowered only to investigate “counter-revolutionary” crimes. Nevertheless, it soon began a campaign of terror against the propertied classes and enemies of Bolshevism. Once the Civil War (1918-21) ended and the threat of domestic and foreign opposition had receded, the Cheka was disbanded. Its functions were transferred in 1922 to the State Political Directorate, or GPU, which was initially less powerful than its predecessor. Following the rise of Joseph Stalin to Party leadership, the secret police again acquired vast punitive powers and in 1934 was renamed the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, or the NKVD. No longer subject to party control or restricted by law, the NKVD became a direct instrument of Stalin for use against the party and the country during the Great Terror of the 1930s. The secret police remained the most powerful and feared Soviet institution throughout the Stalinist period. Although the post-Stalin secret police, the KGB, no longer inflicted such large-scale purges, terror, and forced depopulations on the peoples of the Soviet Union, it continued to be used by the Kremlin leadership to suppress political and religious dissent. The head of the KGB was a key figure in resisting the democratization of the late 1980s and in organizing the attempted putsch of August 1991.

[33] Of the total killed, about 8,000 were officers taken prisoner during the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland, another 6,000 were police officers, and the rest were Polish intelligentsia arrested for allegedly being “intelligence agents, gendarmes, landowners, saboteurs, factory owners, lawyers, and

priests”.

[34]Andranik Migranyan, What is “Putinism”?, *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol. 2, April-June, 2004, pp.29-30.

[35]Migranyan, What is “Putinism”?, pp.30-33.

[36]Migranyan, What is “Putinism”?, p.33.

[37]Migranyan, What is “Putinism”?, p.35.

[38]Brian J. Turnbull, *The Siloviki and Autocracy in Russia: Are They the Source?*, Master Thesis, Georgetown University, Washington, 2011, p.2.

[39]Olga Kryshtanovskaya and Stephen White, *Putin’s Militocracy*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Volume 19, Issue 4, 2003, p.297.

[40]Anatoly Aleksandrevich Sobchak was the first democratically elected mayor of Saint Petersburg. He served as Mayor of Saint Petersburg from 1991 until 1996. Vladimir Putin was one of the two deputies of Sobchak. In 1997 a criminal investigation was started against Sobchak. On 7 November 1997 he flew to Paris on a private plane without passport processing on the Russian side. There are allegations that Putin, as director of the FSB, helped Sobchak secretly escape to Paris and avoid trial on charges of corruption and abuse of power. Between 1997 and 1999 he lived in Paris as a political immigrant. By June 1999 his friend Putin had become much stronger politically and was able to make the prosecutors drop the charges against Sobchak. On 12 June 1999, Sobchak returned to Russia. He died suddenly on 20 February 2000 in the town of Svetlogorsk, Kaliningrad Oblast, during a trip to support Putin’s election, shortly after a meeting with Putin on 16 February.

[41]Robert Coalson, *Russia: Why The Chekist Mind-Set Matters*, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, October 15, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078954.html>.

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