

Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for The Military Invasion Of Ukraine

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Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, became the most significant military conflicts in Europe since the Second World War. In fact, the conflict demonstrated the fundamental nature of the existing Russian political regime and its ambitions for reconstructing Russia as an empire in the modern world. The war became the last step after failed attempts to use the tools of soft power to realize in practice the growing ambitions of the Russian Federation. However, the war was just the tip of the Russian political iceberg. The hidden part of that iceberg was a political ideology, which became a background for aggression toward neighboring countries, which was called fraternal people before the aggression. The article makes a humble attempt to analyze the ideological roots of the Russian war in Ukraine as a key and fundamental factor of aggression towards a sovereign country. The article explores the key roots of

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the doctrine of the “Russian world” as one of the essential principles of modern Russian political thinking, which tries to justify the current aggression and, at the same time, works as a marker of particular virtues of the uprising Russian nation. However, this ideology is not something new in Russian national political tradition but a continuation of ideas from the period of the Russian Empire. The article describes the main development trends of Russian national ideology and thinking from the 16th century to modern times and explains the role of this ideology as one of impetus and driving powers while conducting open aggression toward Ukraine in February 2022.

Keywords: Russian Federation, Ukraine, war, ideology

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

3

I. Introduction

The undeclared war by the Russian Federation against Ukraine raised numerous concerns, not only about the security situation in Europe, particularly for countries with a common border with the Russian Federation, but also about global security mechanisms in general. The situation dramatically demonstrates that it is a deep and firm ideological background for some international actors to see power as a critical instrument of foreign policy while seeking excuses in inner political explanations and arguments. The official and primary aim of the so-called Russian “Special Military Operation” calls for the protection of LDNR, separatist para-states in the territory of Ukrainian Lugansk and Donetsk regions. Actually, open military aggression was the last move in the long series of events and preparations that brought the Russian Federation to war with Ukraine. Possible consequences of the war for different regions of the globe are being extensively discussed. However, such a discussion of the current events leaves the motivational part of this aggression out of not only the public eye but also active international discussion, even though it remains one of the crucial aspects to understanding the conflict itself and preventing such hostile actions in the future by using possible preventive global actions toward a potential aggressor. This article explores the concept of Russia’s officially undeclared ideology, a key source of conducting aggression toward Ukraine, annexing the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

and supporting the separatist LDNR in 2014, and declaring a “special military operation” and waging an invasive war against Ukraine.

II. Research Methodology

This research is based on an analysis of Russia’s national policy in the sphere of the creation of a new ideology and partial recreation of the national ideology of the Soviet Union in modern Russia, which became a driving force for aggression toward Ukraine and, in fact, the driving force behind the inner and outer policy of the Russian Federation. Actual practice means providing the research in two interconnected dimensions: theoretical and practical.

The first one is to analyze the theoretical background created by ideologues and philosophers and their argumentation on the historical processes that created the modern Russian mentality and political approaches. The analysis provided in this area allows determination and comprehension of the fundamental methods used as a framework to develop solid inner-country argumentation for the Russian domestic population and the image of a “Great Russia” for the Russian domestic population and audiences abroad. The research in the sphere of theoretical background for explaining Russian aggression facilitates an understanding of the path and methods used by the Russian ideological machine to create such a powerful mindset. In this way, a logical and reasonable explanation for aggressive actions and rhetoric toward

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

5

neighboring countries could be found. This study envisages a partially historiographic analysis as a tool for understanding the early preconditions of the current situation, which is rooted in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of Russia as “the continuator state of the USSR,” not only in the legal aspect of such successorship but also in political and ideological tradition. It is also essential to make a historiographic analysis to underline the historical roots, which Russia, as a national state, tries to take into personal possession to highlight the national uniqueness as a particular civilizational cluster.

The solid theoretical background and factual ideological vacuum in the mid-1990s created conditions for practical amplification of the existing ideological fundament in reality. The particular amplification of ideology, as the object of research, consists of political declarations of Russian high-level political establishment and other valuable political figures, official and unofficial political programs, and general analysis of Russian propaganda and political agenda, which have been created due to the existing particular ideological fundament, and serve as its actual legislative support.

Another critical aspect is deriving a common understanding of the term “ideology.” The term has many very different definitions. However, the task of the writing is to use several that will be most appropriate for the description of this political phenomenon of ideology in Russia. The Encyclopedia Britannica

presents the following definition of ideology: “*Ideology, a form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones. It is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it*”.¹ The most important part of this definition is not only the descriptive function of ideology as a tool of social cognition but also demiurgic, which points to the creation of new forms of existence and interaction with existing realities. To be fair-minded, the second definition will be taken from an article by L.N. Martushov, “The State Ideology of The Russian Federation: What It Be?” the definition is presented the following way: “*National ideology is a system of views, concepts, ideas, which represent interests of a particular society or social community (group)*.”² While following the idea of Martushov, the ideology represents the system of social and political values. However, without clarification of the way of representation, there is still a direction of action. What is more vital is that the efforts are justified by ideas and values existing in a particular society and acted upon according to the moto *exitus acta probat* (lat., the end justifies the means).

Thus, ideology is a driving power of social and political development, no matter whether it has been officially proclaimed or not. In the Russian Federation, the ideology has never been

¹ Maurice Cranston. “Ideology Summary | Britannica,” Britannica, accessed December 26, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/ideology-society>.

² Lev Martushov. “The state ideology of the Russian Federation: What it be?,” *Bulletin of the Ural Institute of Economics, Management and Law* 41, no. 4 (October 2017): 4–18.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

7

formally declared in modern Russian history, generally seen as beginning in 1991. Still, it exists as a modern driving power and social sentiment inside of Russian society. This control, though unofficial, is nevertheless powerful and exceptionally effective, employing media censorship and solid governmental control over the information that society “consumes.” The main idea of this ideology is to bring Russia back to the status of one of the world’s superpowers. According to this point, the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 had high support among the Russian population thanks to the existing way of thinking, and the invasion was just a tangible embodiment of the existing mindset of Russian society.

Thus, the central questions of the research are: *What are the ideological sources and narratives of the Russian invasion of Ukraine? What is the role of the non-proclaimed but strong Russian ideological background of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022?* Answering these questions will help us understand the fundamental driving forces behind the Russian invasion and the attitude toward Ukraine in a conceptual dimension of ideology rather than international relations or international security themselves.

III. Fundamentals of modern Russian ideology

The public discussion about the role and place of ideology in modern Russia started just after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This debate was inevitable due to the change in the

whole political system, which existed before the collapse, and public society needed a beacon of development, which was actually lost when the Soviet Union as a country slipped into nonexistence. Nevertheless, if we follow the definition of ideology, in fact, for any society, it cannot but exist because, otherwise, society loses the goal of its existence as a whole.

Article 13 of the Constitution of Russia, adopted in December 1993, says that ideological diversity is recognized (accepted) in the Russian Federation, and any ideology cannot be applied to be national or obligatory. This paragraph was included in order to negate the influence of the heritage of the Soviet Union, particularly on the point of communist ideology, and also open the way for possible democratic reformation in post-Soviet Russia. However, the new “second Russian revolution” in terms of a change of political regime did not bring democracy per se. However, following Sakva, the regime transformed into an “authoritarian democracy,” and the society was not ready for such a dramatic transformation, which can be called a “revolution” in terms of the momentous changes in political, social, and economic regimes seen in the Russian Federation.³

This idea was not accepted widely by Russian society for several reasons. First, democracy itself was not an utterly understandable concept for Russian society, and the

³ Richard Sakva. “Regime System and Civil Society in Russia,” *Polis. Political Studies*, no. 1 (1997): 162–84.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

9

vertically-regulated solid social order was still more familiar, predictable, and understandable to most of the population. Second, a weak (and more formal than real) political opposition to the existing political regime during the first part of the 2000s had proposed an alternative political structure for society, but it did not have the tools for the practical realization of the proposed democratic political agenda and was regularly suppressed by the ruling elements of society.

Another problem of the Russian Federation on the way to declaring a liberal and democratic society was the lack of civil society and strong Soviet historical and social traditions. There was no space for an actual idea-amplification process of declared liberalization due to the lack of a thorough reformation process, strong Soviet mental tradition, and political and social leaders who had been “brought up” by the Communist Party.

The issue that the Russian government confronted was the need to keep the country from further territorial erosion. Only strong and centralized power could keep the Russian Federation from feather breaking into smaller republics and falling off the country into systematic inner conflicts, as happened in Chechnya. So, top-down, solid government-proposed policy and ideology at the beginning of the 2000s proved helpful in this goal. One more aspect can be seen in the attitudes of the political elites, who, in general, were not interested in importing the Western concept of democracy.

Richard Sakwa demonstrated that, in the wake of decommunization, Russia became an authoritarian democracy and backed a top-down national management system after becoming independent and claiming its own way of developing a model for democracy in the post-Soviet space. It might be argued that a solid vertical power system of governance was of great significance during the transfer period to stabilize development and create a new social value system, and while this usually evolved into a democratic system of values in many countries, this did not happen with Russia. From the current perspective, the transfer from a totalitarian regime to a democratic one through the authoritarian regime, in this case, does not look like the best and most successful option, especially in the case of deficient alternatives for society— particularly one with a pre-existing set of political and social values.

When Putin came to power in 2000, he did not solve the existing issues of political regime transition. Still, he created a situation in which the firm and particularly charismatic leader used all possible means, including the ideology of the “great state,” to centralize power into one vertical solid system. There was no democratic modernization of society but a strong return to a conservative political regime. Speaking straightforwardly, there

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

11

was a solid administrative system of national governance without economic and political modernization.⁴

Because of the historically familiar experience, most of the population could easily accept a return to the solid centralized national governing system. However, at that time, the Russian citizens still needed further ideas and identity to explain the developmental direction further. Besides, the political elites, who had already come to power, needed mass ideology to give the right direction for social energy, generate ideas, and support the main direction of national development that the existing political elites provided. Society and political establishments needed ideology as a system of views and actions to help the elites to rule, to become an aspiration for the population, and to control the population, as it was during the Soviet era.

The question of Russia's modern national self-identification is deeply rooted in Eurasianism, the geopolitical and ideological concept that defines "Russian" as a distinct identity based on the unique geographical, national, and mental features of Slavic and other nations within the former Russian Empire. This concept not only emphasizes the historical and ideological basis of Russian national identity but also underscores the stark opposition of the Russian/ Slavic civilization to Western civilization.

⁴ Richard Sakwa. "Russia's Identity: Between the "Domestic" and the "International," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 6 (2011): 957–75.

One of the most prominent thinkers of this idea was Nikolay Danilevsky, a thinker and scientist of the Russian Empire who later emigrated to Europe. In addition, he raised the theory of historical-cultural types, which is, in fact, geopolitical. Using this theory, he tried to explain the contradictions between the Russian/Slavic and Western civilizations while grouping all nations of the former Russian Empire as a united notion with common and particular values. In his book, he saw Russia and Europe—in fact, the whole Western World during the 19th and early 20th centuries—as two contradictory forces. Furthermore, Western countries were depicted as countries that wanted to take advantage of Russia and the Eurasian world.⁵

Lidiya I. Chernyshova, in her article “Problem of the Relations between Russia and Europe in N.Ya. Danilevsky’s Works and Realities of the Modern World,” explains Danilevsky’s vision of current realities. “*An attempt to implant liberal ‘universal values’ interpreted by Western civilization as the highest values of humanity, which are a denial of all the traditional values on which humanity was based (the destruction of the institution of the family, same-sex marriage, juvenile justice, the idea of tolerance with the simultaneous persecution of those who do not share these ‘European values’), will inevitably destroy the Russian civilization, and after it the Russian state.*” In making

⁵ Nikolai Danilevskii. *Russia and Europe: The Slavic World’s Political and Cultural Relations with the Germanic-Roman West*. (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2013).

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

13

such a claim, the author levies several allegations. The first one is that Western countries have been continuously conducting acts of hostility toward Russia, or what is more possible, Russia has been taking Western attempts as hostile without considering its pose in those events. The second one is that Russia is the only protector of universal “orthodox” (read: “Biblical”) values. As a result, Chernyshova concludes that dialog between the Russian Federation and the Western world is possible only by using different means of power; in fact, we should understand another word, *force*, from the Russian side.⁶

Suppose the approach of early Eurasianism adepts was based on the cultural and mental differences between Russia and Eurasia. It told about the civilizational gap and contradictions between the two visions. This vision was based on an analysis of historical, cultural, and developmental differences of the populations in particular areas in an extensive scope and the influence of these developmental sites on the behavior of these civilizational clusters. This led author and geopolitician Pyotr Nikolayevich Savitsky to coin the term civilizational “developmental site” (in Russian: месторазвитие), allowing him to advocate it as an explanation

⁶ Lidiya Chernishova. “Problem of the Relations between Russia and Europe in N.Ya. Danilevsky’s Works and Realities of the Modern World,” *Humanities. Bulletin of the University of Finance* 6, no. 2 (June 10, 2016): 68–75, <https://doi.org/10.12737/18152>.

for the particularities of the Russian-Eurasian population and the particular place of this civilization, among others.⁷

However, modern Russian ideology is not just a theoretical construct based on historical Eurasianism. It is also deeply rooted in a powerful religious pillar – Eastern Orthodox Christianity. This faith, centered in the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, plays a significant role in the Russian national identity. The Church sees itself as the only successor of the Christian tradition of Kyivan Rus, and to some extent, Russia claims to be the only successor of the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople, the main center of the spread of Christianity in Eastern Europe during the existence of the Kyivan Rus.

However, the central concept of the core role of Russia and Moscow as a spiritual successor requires a more detailed explanation. After the fall of Constantinople in the second part of the 15th century, Moscow became the most significant center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the Third Rome, speaking in Russian terms. Then, in the 16th century, a monk, Philotheus (or Filofei), was the first to use the phrase, saying that after Constantinople, Muscovy became the Third Rome. In this formulation, “Rome” is not some particular place but the name of the most influential international power. The idea disappeared in the 17th century but reappeared again in the mid-19th. The

⁷Peter Savitsky. *Geographical features of Russia: Part 1: Vegetation and soils* (Prague, 1927), <https://www.prlib.ru/item/688200>.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

15

doctrine of the Third Rome merged with an imperial doctrine of the Russian Empire justified. It gained more weight for the imperial ambitions of the last one, yet did not work as an independent religious program itself. It was also used in views of Eurasianism for a more detailed explanation of their vision of Russia as a unique mental formation based on Christian values, and it was placed in a world with a unique spiritual atmosphere.⁸

Currently, the doctrine of Moscow as a Third Rome is mainly applied to support the idea of Russian messianism as the only possible model for Slavic countries and Russia as a country of sacred and spiritual traditions, which can contradict universal evil and save universal morals and values.⁹

In general, such an idea served for the following purposes:

a) substantiation of the need for both the “gathering” of lands and peoples as well as the spread of the Orthodox faith;

b) an instrument of sacralization and legitimization of political power and state institutions;

c) directly by the political development program (model), which actually represented an imperative requirement for the

⁸ Marshall Poe. “Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a ‘Pivotal Moment’,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas Neue Folge* 49, no. 3 (January 1, 2001): 412–29.

⁹ Sergey Resnyansky. “Moscow as the Third Rome” as an Archetype of Russian Orthodox Identity,” *Bulletin of the Moscow State Regional University (History and Political Science)*, no. 3 (2019): 41–49, <https://doi.org/10.18384/2310-676X-2019-3-41-49>.

government since the achievement of the universal salvation goal presupposed reliance on the coercive force of the state and a unity of purpose by church and state authorities.¹⁰

In addition, religion also belongs to one more thinking concept, which was created in the 19th century and is still used today. Moreover, it has strong support among Russian adepts of imperialism and neo-imperialism. It started in the 19th century from the report of Duke Sergey Uvarov (Russian name – Сергей Уваров), who proposed the concept of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” as the three pillars of the Russian Empire. However, in his report, the stress from the “Orthodox faith” moves to “Autocracy” that “...saves Russia...”.¹¹ The third pillar, nationality (population), was taken as the glue that could connect Orthodoxy and Autocracy and create the possibility of making the Russian Empire a messiah state through the strong support of the population.¹²

The main difference between the ideological constructs of “Moscow being the Third Rome” and “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” doctrines lay in that the first was more spiritually

¹⁰ Svetlana Aleynikova. “*Russian world*”: the Belarusian look (Minsk: National Institute for Higher Education, 2017).

¹¹ Arsenii Zamostyanovv and Viktor Chumakov. “Duke S.S. Uvarov - Minister of Public Education,” *Public Education*, no. 5 (2013): 47–62.

¹² Victor Dubrovin. “Problems of Formation of the Idea of Messianism of the Russian State in Secular and Ecclesiastical Ideology. Prospects and Patterns of Modernization of Modern Society: New View (Economic, Social, Philosophical, Political, Legal General Scientific Aspects),” *Materials of the International Scientific and Practical Conference*, 2014, 158–61.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

17

oriented and heavily featured the messianic vision. In contrast, the second one was religion-political and pragmatically oriented, focusing on solving tasks for the existence of a powerful and united Russian Empire. More importantly, the common point of both visions was to unite the nation by using a particular idea and preparing a social mindset in advance.

The idea of Uvarov's "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality" was not only a direct contradiction to the ideas of the French Revolution: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* (French for "liberty, equality, fraternity"), but also a direct contradiction to the civilizational views and approaches later underlined by representatives of Eurasianism during the early 20th century as well as representatives of neo-Eurasianism or neo-imperialism in the modern Russian Federation.

The concepts of Eurasianism and neo-Eurasianism are not equal. Eurasianism was a concept that tried to distinguish the difference between Europe and Russia in terms of civilizational differences and claimed the uniqueness of Russia-Eurasia as a territorial and civilizational unit formed by historical factors and saw the great Eurasian state as a combination of Eastern and Western. However, modern neo-Eurasianism works more crudely and aggressively. It considers the Russian national state as the core of Eurasia and other territories as important supplementary fragments of Eurasia with the domination of Russia and Russian as a concept on the whole territory of the former Soviet Union for

completing a special Russian historical mission. At the same time, classical Eurasianism of 1920-1930 claimed the contradictory natures of Russia, Eurasia, and Europe. Modern neo-Eurasianism picked up the basic ideas of Eurasianism but became a militant ideology that speaks not about contradictions but about the open conflict between the West and Russia. Another aspect is that Eurasianism mostly spoke about the unity of Eurasian nations based on a common historical background. In contrast, neo-Eurasianism talks about recovering the mighty Russian state by retaking control over the former Soviet territories by the Russian Federation as a core state.

IV. Modern Russian Ideology: A brief review of the Ideology of the *Russian World*. Russian Ideology as a justification for the war in Ukraine.

It is difficult to speak about the particular domination of specific ideology in the Russian Federation during the last decade of the 20th century after the Soviet system collapsed. The democratic and liberal reformation confronted numerous problems which needed not a democracy but a centralized mechanism of regulation. However, starting from the middle of the first decade of the 21st century and with change in the political leadership, Russian ideology began elaborating on the terms of geopolitical particularity of the Russian state, features of historical development, religious unity, and ideas of nationalistic origin together with a growing and evolving picture of the

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

19

“Russian world” to create a solid background for developing the concept of Russian national rebuilding as one of the world’s superpowers. The overlapping approaches provide the background for forming modern Russian ideology, as we can see it now.

Geopolitics. Aleksandr Dugin, a Russian philosopher and sociologist, was one of the first to speak about the lack of ideology in Russian society that should be based on a geopolitical approach. He claimed that in the early 2000s, the Russian Federation did not have any meaningful ideology for the national development of the state, and that was true for that moment. Neo-Eurasianism was called by Dugin the best choice for Russia as a continuation of ideas of Eurasianism of the early 20th century as a geopolitical concept. First of all, it was an idea of contradiction between Eurasia (Russian Federation) as a civilization and Western civilization, the confrontation of the “Sea” (most of the Western countries) and “Land” (represented by Russia-Eurasian) powers.¹³ In addition, the prophets of neo-Eurasianism did not accept the classification of civilizations made by Samuel Huntington, who defined civilizations primarily through religion. Still, they put Russian-Eurasian civilization aside as a specific representative due to the presence of representatives of other faiths in Eurasian-Russian civilization.

¹³ Alexander Dugin. “Overview of Eurasian Ideology (Basic Concepts, Brief History),” in *Fundamentals of Eurasianism* (Moscow: Arctogea Center, 2002), 77–102.

Another critical aspect of proclaimed neo-Eurasianism is *ideocracy* – the presence of a strong and officially declared ideology that influences social, political, economic, and other spheres of life. The doctrine should become everything, as it was during the period of existence of the Soviet Union (an empire). Given this fact, the idea of the proposed ideocracy should bring the Russian Federation back to the status of an empire with a firm hold on vertical power. This is what Vladimir Putin actually did when he came to power as president of the Russian Federation and reconstructed Russian imperial conservatism. As for the early apologists of neo-Eurasian ideas, their importance should be underlined. Specifically, they draw to the Gathering of the Lands, indicating that returning all lands in all possible means going back under control of Great Russia (Velikorossiya, in Russian - Великороссия) as a spiritual center of Eurasian Orthodox civilization. Otherwise, the “Great Russia” project will not be able to exist as an idea, and Russia as a national state will have no future. It can have a future only if it shows its power to the West and declares its solid geopolitical project. Furthermore, this act of power can be realized only by creating one's own sphere of influence.

Ukraine's importance to the Russian Federation cannot be underestimated for cultural and historical reasons, previously existing productive chains, and ideological and geopolitical reasons. The Revolution in 2013-2014 and the change of political orientation in Ukraine also changed political relations with the

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

21

Russian Federation and the perception of Ukraine in Russia. Moreover, the revolution of 2014 became “...a threat to the unity of the Russian World.”¹⁴ That is to say, political and ideological changes within Ukrainian society caused a real threat to the concept of Russian ideology, which was aimed at creating Russia’s subordinated order utilizing soft power tools like language and culture.

Apparently, Russian philosopher Dugin was one of the key personalities who created modern Russian political ideology. In his seminal work, *The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia* (first published in 1997), the term “Russian world” was not mentioned directly. Instead, through the cultural and religious similarity with the Serbian population, he mentioned Great Eurasia (Russia) as a geopolitical construct, which is not limited by the factual borders of the Russian Federation that pretended on the whole post-Soviet space and even South-Eastern Europe (Balkans).

Ukraine has a unique place in the book mentioned above by Dugin. The word “Ukraine” was directly mentioned in his book 85 times. In comparison, Belarus was mentioned 18 times and Kazakhstan 27 times. According to Dugin's philosophy, Ukraine and Ukrainian territories are vital for the successful existence and

¹⁴ Andrej Koshkin and Valerij Cherdantsev. “Ukrainian problem in the context of the modern Russian ethnic politology,” *Russian Journal of Economics and Law* 1, no. 33 (2015): 32–38.

glory of the Russian Federation. Otherwise, Russia could not exist as a great national state. Indeed, Dugin denied the existence of Ukraine as a sovereign country and saw a direct threat to the existence of Ukraine for Russia. At the same time, he denied the existence of Ukrainian national characteristics and cultural uniqueness. In 1997, Dugin described Ukraine like this: “*The Ukrainian problem is the main and most serious problem facing Moscow.*” Another role that was foreseen for Ukraine was the role of sanitary cordon. This refers to the deconstruction of Ukraine as a state, with Russian control over the regions of Ukraine deemed crucial for the Russian Federation. First is the Black Sea littoral zone the East of Ukraine.¹⁵ Current active Russian propaganda, in fact, just conducts a more detailed and comprehensive vision of that process, but in a more particular way.

As the leading proponent of modern Russian ideology, Dugin has consistently argued that Ukraine is a crucial part of the Russian Eurasian project. His narrative, which predates the annexation of Crimea, is not a new concept. It echoes the observations of Zbigniew Brzezinski, who stated, “*Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire.*” This historical context underscores the weight of

¹⁵ Aleksandr Dugin. *Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia*, Big Space (Moscow: Arktogeta, 1997): 110-112.
<https://www.maieutiek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Foundations-of-Geopolitics.pdf>.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

23

Dugin's arguments and the long-standing significance of Ukraine in Russian geopolitics.¹⁶

Religion is a fundamental pillar of modern Russian geopolitical expansion and ideology. Eastern Orthodox Christianity, in particular, is a significant source of inspiration for neo-Eurasianism. It is not just a religious belief but a key value that shapes the mental and spiritual life of the Russian people, providing a solid foundation for the new Russian state. Despite Russia being a multi-religious state, the importance of other religions, such as Islam, does not diminish the critical role of Eastern Orthodox Christianity and the Moscow Patriarchate in preserving Russia's identity as a state.¹⁷

Dugin proposes the idea that while Eastern Orthodox Christianity is not the only religion in Russia, they put it at the core of Russian civilizational existence and claimed that Christianity was a key to the survival of Russia as a nation.

“The Church will actively interact with the State and the community, participate in the most important state decisions, and nurture the authorities not only spiritually but also conceptually, based on the system of values that forms the basis of the Orthodox

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Updated with a new epilogue (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 46.

¹⁷ Taglad Tadzhuiddin. “The Russians were not building an empire, but Eurasia, our common home,” in *Fundamentals of Eurasianism*, ed. Nikolai Agamaljan, (Moscow: Arktogeta Centr, 2002), 610–15.

worldview.” This citation shows which role neo-Eurasian prophets foresaw for the Church in 2001. Moreover, Dugin returns to the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome, only increasing the contradiction to the geopolitical West and Western cultural and geopolitical tradition.¹⁸

According to Russian legislation, religious institutions are independent of secular authorities. However, in reality, the situation is completely different. As we can see from historical examples, religion was a strong tool used by Russian officials to govern and expand national interests.

According to Danilevsky, it is essential to fulfilling three main tasks in the existence of the Russian-Eurasian state religion:

- a) The sacralizing principle (the Baptism of Russia), which not only determines the “otherness” and uniqueness of a particular community (civilization) but also acts as a legitimizing basis;
- b) mobilizing the foundations in the form of the image of the “enemy” (“essentially hostile” Europe), consolidating society, and building a tough opposition “friend-foe” (“friend-enemy”); and
- c) the prospect of a bright future (of an all-Slavic Union),

The struggle is a prerequisite for its achievement and existence, which is also elevated to the rank of sacredness since it

¹⁸ Alexandr Dugin. “Orthodoxy and Geopolitics. Speech (thesis) at the section “Church, State, Nation” of the VI World Russian People’s Council,” in *Foundations of Eurasianism*, ed. N. Agamalian, National Idea (Moscow: Arctogea Center, 2002): 711–15, <http://med.org.ru/FTP/bumaga.pdf>.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

25

involves "...building the common good on the principles of Good and opposition to Evil."¹⁹

Patriarch Alexey II proposed a remarkably similar idea during his visit to the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2001. In his speech, several issues were considered, including help for Russian compatriots abroad, religious rights, the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in peacekeeping missions, and a principle multi-polar world order.²⁰

The "Russian world." In 2004, it was proclaimed during the 7th Ecumenical Russian National Council that the "*Gathering of Lands of Russian World is a common work of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian State.*"²¹ Such a claim or verbal declaration clearly demonstrates the existence of the concept of the so-called "Russian World," which first appeared officially in 2001 during Vladimir Putin's speech at the Congress of Compatriots. "*The concept of "Russian World" has always gone*

¹⁹ Sergey Emelyanov. *How Much Is the Russian Idea Worth? Practical Aspects of the Problem of Ideal and National* (Sankt-Peterburg: Алетейя, 2012), 47.

²⁰ Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. "Religion and diplomacy. Interaction of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Report at the conference 'Religion and Diplomacy'," Magazine of the Moscow Patriarchy, July 2001, http://www-old.srcc.msu.ru/bib_roc/jmp/01/07-01/07.htm.

²¹ Sergei Ivanov. "Speech by the minister of foreign affairs of Russia I.S. Ivanov at the VIII World Russian People's council," Sergiev Posad, February 3, 2004', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, April 2, 2004, https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/humanitarian_cooperation/1687631/.

far beyond the geographical borders of Russia and even far beyond the borders of the Russian ethnic group."²² The main stress was placed on the Russian international diaspora, and the impact of the diaspora could be made for the development of the Russian Federation into the international community. However, the citation tells us much about Russia's global ambitions from as far back as 2001.

For this point, according to the monograph "*Russian World: view from Belarus*," the Russian world can be defined as a geopolitical and cultural concept. This is a unique civilization (community of people and peoples), the main signs of belonging to which are:

- a) Common values, traditions, and customs
- b) Russian language and culture
- c) Common ideas about the common or shared historical memory.²³

The political core of this civilization, as well as the spiritual center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, is in Russia.²⁴ However,

²² Vladimir Putin. "Speech at the opening of the Congress of Compatriots," President of Russian Federation official website, October 17, 2001, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21359>.

²³ Svetlana Aleynikova. "*Russian world*": *the Belarusian look* (Minsk: National Institute for Higher Education, 2017), 159. https://istmat.org/files/uploads/58775/russkiy_mir_tekst.pdf.

²⁴ Vladimir Putin. "Russia: A National Question," New Newspaper, January 23, 2012, https://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

27

some sources also claimed that countries like Ukraine and Belarus, along with Russia, are part of this core.²⁵

The ideology of the “Russian World” is a concept that satisfies inner and outer demands. In terms of the inner political and ideological demand, the idea of the “Russian World” works as a mechanism of social consolidation by proclaiming ideas of unity for protecting the “right” values and the concept of national messianism in the face of the Western “wrong values.” The “right” values mean the system of traditional and conservative values that contradict the developing system of new values in Western societies, especially same-sex relations and Western juvenile judiciary systems. Such social modernization and democratization ideas were mostly declined by conservators and the Russian Orthodox Church, one of the pillars of views of the “Russian world.”

In terms of the outer market, this idea tried to work as an integration magnet by using soft-power tools, such as religion, education, and media, to create a background for loyalty toward Russian ideas promoted by Russian officials and legitimize particular political projects.²⁶ In addition, the idea of the Russian

²⁵ Svetlana Aleynikova. “Image of the Republic of Belarus in Reports US State Department on the State of Religious Freedom: Dynamics and Priorities,” *Herald of Grodno State Yanki Kupala University* 1, no. 2 (2013): 150–54.

²⁶ Andrey Bobylo. “Soft Power in International Politics: Features of National Strategies,” *Bulletin of the Buryat State University*, no. 14 (2013): 129–35.

world works as an open declaration and a plan of political ambitions for expansion.

More specifically, the ideas, concepts, and ideologies of the Russian World were initially designed to contradict the ideas of Westernization and globalization, to spread the sphere of interest and influence further, and to gather the lands (a symbol of each successful empire), in fact, to create ideological justification for such contradiction. In Russian society, it also worked as an impulse for national mobilization and taking control over political opponents by using religious institutions, media, and tools of administrative control.²⁷

Language and culture. Russian language and culture were the most efficient tools adopted for Russian manipulations. The efficiency of this set of tools decreased after the events of the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the support of separatists in the Donbas. Starting from early 2014, the attitude towards the Russian language and cultural products also changed as a natural reaction to hostile actions of aggression. Nevertheless, in the analysis provided in the article “*The Russian world of Ukraine. Realities and prospects of the post-Soviet period*”, we can see the qualitative and quantitative indicators of changes in the usage of Russian media products and the Russian language in Ukraine. In the article, these changes are shown as such, which

²⁷ Vladimir Ksenofontov. “Russian World and Globalization,” *Century of Globalization* 4, no. 2 (2009): 172–77.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

29

were mostly inoculated by the Ukrainian government that came to power after the Ukrainian revolution in 2014. However, those means were aimed at protecting Ukrainian national interests from the influence of Russian soft-power tools, including the Russian language as one of them, but not to oppress the population. Interestingly, although most of the population in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine are Russian speaking, they do not welcome Russia as an occupier, especially after Russia's hostile behavior toward Ukraine. The conclusion of the article is even more interesting in terms of interpretation. On the one hand, it tells the reader about the questionable attractiveness of the European Union for Ukraine as a national and geopolitical project. On the other hand, it describes the incapability of Ukraine to survive in the international community after the events of 2014 in Ukraine. Moreover, Ukrainian civilizational choice would decide not only on the future of the Russian world in Ukraine (mentioned in the article) but also on the future of the Russian World as a non-cultural but geopolitical project itself.²⁸ Briefly speaking, the article turns out to be a brilliant example of ideological manipulation to show Ukraine's importance at the forefront of the Russian world.

Russian representatives used to claim that the national building process in Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity in

²⁸ Sergey Suschij, "Russian World of Ukraine. Realities and Prospects of the Post-Soviet Period," *Free Thought*, no. 2 (2020): 137–60, <https://doi.org/10.24411/0869-4435-2020-00011>.

2013-2014 was considered a process of “*deconstruction of the Russian world in Ukraine*.” This brings us to the point that even if the construction process had not been finished, it at least took place in a specific period in Ukraine through soft power. Ukraine is called a part of the core of the Russian world because Ukraine was the source of Christianity in Eastern Europe, and Russia associates Kyiv as a part of Russian historical heritage as well as the Russian world, which not only overcomes the national borders of the Russian Federation but also includes territories together with Kyiv and Ukraine. However, Ukrainian national independence and pro-European orientation led to the failure of this project, leaving imperial geopolitical ambitions unsatisfied.²⁹

The “Russian World” project is a complex notion and requires a complex analysis. However, this does not change the fact that it harmoniously fits into the Russian neo-imperialistic political and geopolitical approach, as well as the project of rebuilding the “Great” modern Russia by using technologies of soft and hard power, tools of diplomacy, and hybrid and open aggressive warfare.

The events of 2014 in Ukraine became the first turning point in modern history in the relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The Russian regime’s annexation of Crimea

²⁹ Victor Avksentiev and Boris Aksyumov. “Technologies of Deconstruction of the Russian World in Post-Maidan Ukraine,” *Scientific Thought of the Caucasus* 87, no. 3 (2016): 47–55, <https://doi.org/10.18522/2072-0181-2016-87-3-47-55>.

and support for separatist movements in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions mobilized Ukrainian patriotic and nationalistic movements. Though the official line from Moscow was that the regime in Ukraine was a Nazi one, and events during the Revolution in Ukraine from 2013 to 2014 amounted to an illegal change of power, it still acknowledged the legality of parliamentary and presidential elections in Ukraine in the following years.

The figure below demonstrates the buildup and results of the ideological background of Russian ideology in the particular case of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

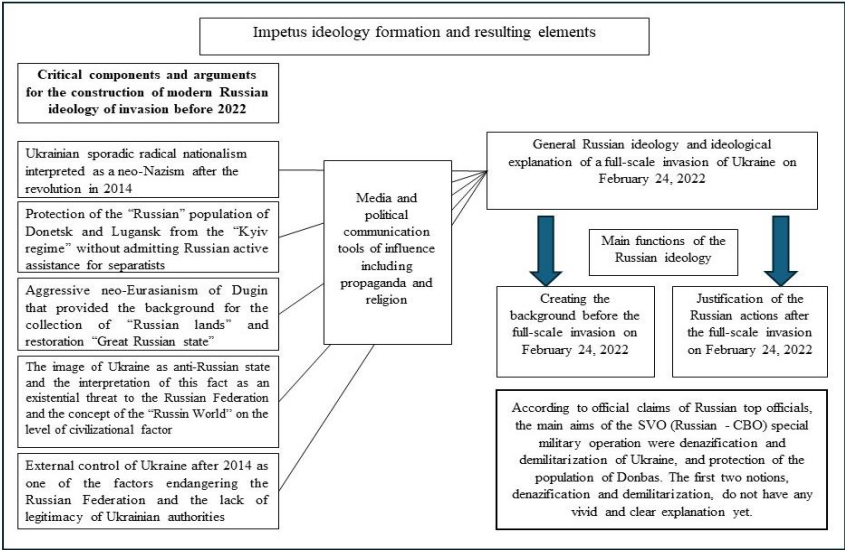


Figure 1: Impetus ideology formation and resulting elements.
Source: Author’s illustration

V. The official and media interpretations and explanations of the invasion

Official interpretation. Russian officials estimated the events of 2013-2014 in Ukraine as a nationalistic and illegal coup. The idea of a coup in Ukraine was a key argument Putin made during his speech in 2014 during his Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly. During the speech, Ukraine was already estimated to be within the sphere of direct Russian influence, especially from the strategic perspective of Crimea, which was claimed as a “...*place with a civilizational and sacral meaning for Russia...*” and “...*readiness of Russia to protect its interests unilaterally...*”.³⁰ This claim was not singular but one in a long line of such messages that are essential for understanding the place of Ukraine in the Russian system of values, ideology, and approach to conducting the geopolitical game.

Another significant message from the Russian president published on the official presidential website is the article “*On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*” on July 12, 2021. The article claims the unity of the Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian nations. It also makes claims about input made by Russia on the formation of modern Ukraine in the current borders delineated in 1991. One of the more interesting facts is that it was

³⁰ Vladimir Putin. “Address of the President to the Federal Assembly,” President of Russia, December 8, 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173>.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

33

published in the Russian and Ukrainian languages to show the closeness of the nations and, at the same time, point to discrimination of the Russian language in Ukraine for Russian readers who were not familiar with the present situation with the usage of the Russian language in Ukraine, and, perhaps, to get more sympathy from Ukrainian readers. The article includes numerous historical manipulations and, according to analysis, served several purposes:

1. Shows how closely modern Russia clings to old imperial tradition.
2. Point on willingness to keep Ukraine in the Russian orbit.
3. Showing the Russian population's readiness for actions and determination in foreign policy while simultaneously creating the negative image of Ukraine as "an anti-Russian state."³¹

All of these points have deep ideological connections with Dugin's thinking. Even though the message is not as radical in direct wording as Dugin's rhetoric, it still contains the same narratives and core thoughts about Ukraine's place as part of the greater Russian state. It is also important to mention that it was

³¹ Vladimir Putin. "Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," President of Russia, July 12, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

mainly delivered to Russian “consumers” and, to a lesser extent, to Ukrainians.

Another example of a deeply ideologically based material is the Message from the President of the Russian Federation on February 21, 2022, which is almost one hour long and directly says: “*Ukraine for us is not just a neighboring country. It is an integral part of our own history, culture, spiritual space*”. This statement confirms the Russian perception of Ukraine as a part of the Russian World. The message was made just before the invasion of Ukraine. The message tries to use separate facts to justify the right of Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union on all Ukrainian territories as a historical heritage and criticize national transformations in Ukraine, especially during the revolutionary events of 2013-2014.

According to the claims of Russian officials, the key points of the Russian invasion were:

- Denazification;
- Demilitarization;
- Protection of the population of Ukrainian Donbas;
- Protection of the Russian Federation;
- Stop the dominance of the United States.

Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for The Military Invasion Of Ukraine

35

- Destruction of Ukrainian radical nationalistic groups (despite tolerating the existence of the same groups in Russian society).³²

On April 22, Russian military officials claimed that the second stage of the so-called “military operation” was to control the south of Ukraine and create a passage to Moldova and Transnistria. In reality, that means realizing Dugin's ideas about the necessity of maintaining Russian control over the whole north coast of the Black Sea under Russian control.³³

During the ceremony of signing agreements on the admission of the DPR, LPR, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions to Russia, Putin directly claimed that Russia disagrees with the existing world order and wants to challenge and change it: *“All we hear from all sides is that the West stands for the order based on rules. Where did they come from? Who even saw these rules? Who agreed?... Russia is a great millennial power, a country-civilization, and will not live by such rigged false rules”*.³⁴ Such a direct and unmasked claim proves that protecting

³² Vladimir Putin. “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, February 22, 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>.

³³ Sergey Bobylev. “The Ministry of Defense called the tasks of the second stage of the special operation in Ukraine,” TASS, April 22, 2022, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/14446141>.

³⁴ Vladimir Putin. “Speech during the signing of agreements on the admission of the DPR, LPR, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions to Russia,” Website of the President of Russia, October 30, 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465>.

the Russian-speaking population was just an excuse and a part of the plan to challenge an existing international world order.

Based on the general ideas and messages in these official speeches, Putin is one of the leading carriers of Russian ideology, even though his position in the early 2000s was much more liberal, at least in the official claims about cooperation with the USA and European countries and also building social order in Russia.

Another publicly prominent person who made a lot of notable remarks about the nature of the special military operation, SVO (Russian – СВО, специальная военная операция), is Vyacheslav Volodin, the chairman of the Russian parliament, or Duma. His remarks and claims can also be considered as a part of the ideological justification for war as long as they bring up the issues of the ideology of Ukraine, as seen by official Moscow. All following citations were taken from the official Telegram account of Volodin, which is one of the official communication channels for the above-mentioned official. Among them are the following:

1. *“...The United States had eight years to make Ukraine democratic, independent, sovereign and prosperous, when, after the coup, American advisers and instructors actually led the Kyiv regime. However, Ukraine, which has great potential, was plundered instead of being developed. Objectionable media outlets were shut down, independent journalists were killed, and political parties were banned.*

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

37

And no one from the corrupt government thought about the Ukrainian people...”³⁵

2. *“Last week, a delegation of the DPR parliament paid an official visit to the State Duma. The issues of harmonization of our states' legislation were discussed. However, there is a norm in the DPR that it would be right to preserve. This is especially true in wartime conditions. We are talking about the death penalty. Every day we see crimes against humanity committed by the Kyiv neo-Nazi regime, shelling residential areas, hospitals, maternity hospitals, kindergartens, and schools. Old people, women, and children are dying.”³⁶*

3. *“The White House said it condemns Russia's airstrikes on critical infrastructure in Ukraine. And what has Washington done to stop the shelling of civilians in Donbas, where people have been living in fear, without water and light for more than eight years? What is Washington doing now to stop attacks on the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant by Ukrainian formations that threaten a nuclear catastrophe? It only continues to militarize the Nazi Kyiv regime, pushing it to commit more and more crimes. It must be understood that all the goals of the special military*

³⁵ Vyacheslav Volodin. “Telegram Channel of Volodin Vyacheslav,” Telegram, June 2, 2022, https://t.me/vv_volodin/474.

³⁶ Vyacheslav Volodin. “Telegram Channel of Volodin Vyacheslav,” Telegram, June 15, 2022, https://t.me/vv_volodin/485.

*operation will be achieved in any case. The Kyiv regime will be denazified, and Western military aid will be destroyed. And if Washington, continuing the war to the last Ukrainian, thinks that it will not affect him, then he is very mistaken.”*³⁷

As we can see from the above-mentioned citations from a source that can be considered official, the claims are deeply ideologically colored and are in tune with Dugin’s and Putin’s ideological messages. They do, in fact, attempt to justify the aggression as the only possible way for the Russian Federation to behave in order to resist and stand-up to this modern Ukraine, which is an anti-Russian creation of the united geopolitical West.

It is also important to stress two articles, which can be counted as pure and concentrated statements of Russian ideological descriptions of the war because the Russian government-controlled media resource RIA Novosti published both. The first one is called *The (Advance) Arrival of Russia in a New World* (in Russian: *Наступление России и нового мира*). Notably, the word “*наступление*” also means “the attack or assault.” In this context, the title comes across as particularly hostile. The article was deleted soon after publication from the website of one of the biggest Russian informational agencies due

³⁷ Vyacheslav Volodin. “Telegram Channel of Volodin Vyacheslav,” Telegram, September 13, 2022, https://t.me/vv_volodin/542.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

39

to the failure of the Russian assault on Kyiv.³⁸ To be specific, the central message of the article can be summarized in several statements: The purpose of the Russian military campaign in Ukraine is to unify the Russian World in a format suitable for Moscow, lay down the gauntlet to Western powers in the new geopolitical confrontation, build a new world order, and reinforce the inner Russian pillars of the current regime. The claim is not perceived as being irregular from a revenge-seeking state.³⁹

Another article issued by the same informational agency is “*What should Russia do with Ukraine?*” The article itself talks about the necessity of conducting ethnic cleansing on Ukrainian national territories under the cover of the so-called Russian “denazification of Ukraine.”

Some parts of the article can be directly cited to understand the deepness of thinking and ideological approach or the source which published such material:

1. “...*However, besides the highest ranks, a significant number of common people are also guilty of being passive*

³⁸ The article was deleted from official website of news agency several hours later, but still can be accessed by using tools, which archive all online publications.

³⁹ Petr Akopov. “The arrival of Russia in a new world,” RIA NEWS. Internet Archive Wayback Machine, February 26, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220226051154/https://ria.ru/20220226/rossiya-1775162336.html>.

Nazis and Nazi accomplices. They supported the Nazi authorities and pandered to them...”;

2. *“...The further denazification of this bulk of the population will take the form of re-education through ideological repressions (suppression) of Nazi paradigms and harsh censorship not only in the political sphere but also in the spheres of culture and education.”.*

The author suggested destroying even the slightest idea of possible Ukrainian national sovereignty together with the entire population, which is discordant with the impending Russian world. From this standpoint, it is not only an idea of deconstruction of the national state but also an idea of national genocide proclaimed in the government-controlled media.⁴⁰ Dugin articulated very similar ideas in his numerous works before 2022.

The main ideologist of the Russian Federation has his own perspectives on the war in Ukraine. This point of view openly declares that the Russian Federation needs total control of modern Ukraine in order to prevent the expansion of Western ideology and enforcement by the West. Ukraine is also called anti-Russia in his book *The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia*, which was published in 1997 before Putin was elected president. Several chapter citations related to Ukraine

⁴⁰ Timofei Sergeitsev. “What should Russia do with Ukraine,” RIA News, April 3, 2022, <https://ria.ru/20220403/ukraina-1781469605.html>.

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

41

better emphasize Dugin's ideological position and explain the full-scale invasion of 2022. *"The sovereignty of Ukraine is such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that, in principle, it can easily provoke an armed conflict. Without the Black Sea coast from Izmail to Kerch, Russia gets such an extended coastal strip, really controlled by no one knows who, that its very existence as a normal and independent state is questioned..."* and *"...Ukraine, as an independent state with some territorial ambitions, poses a considerable danger to the whole of Eurasia, and without solving the Ukrainian problem, it is pointless to talk about continental geopolitics at all. This does not mean that Ukraine's cultural, linguistic, or economic autonomy should be limited and that it should become a purely administrative sector of the Russian centralized state (as, to some extent, things were in the Tsarist Empire or under the USSR). But strategically, Ukraine should be strictly a projection of Moscow in the south and west..."*.⁴¹

According to these words, if Ukraine ceases to be a sovereign state, demilitarization alone will prove unfruitful.⁴² This idea does not need a further detailed explanation, though its appearance and successful existence depend upon a strong,

⁴¹ Dugin, *Foundations of Geopolitics*.

⁴² Aleksandr Dugin. "What Is the Essence and Meaning of the Russian Armed Forces' Special Operation in Ukraine," Geopolitika.RU, April 4, 2022, <https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/article/what-essence-and-meaning-russian-armed-forces-special-operation-ukraine>.

reliable, government-supported ideological and propagandistic background.

Other evidence of existing and profound ideology is the support of the invasion by society. Russian society strongly supported the Russian invasion on the level of regular citizens and the circulation of key narratives in society. This can be seen from the research conducted by the Russia Public Opinion Center (Russian ВЦИОМ - VCIOM) in 2022. The following citation was taken from the website of this organization:

“The level of support by the Russian society for a special military operation has remained at a consistently high level for three months of monitoring — 72% of citizens support the decision to conduct a special military operation by Russia in Ukraine, 18% do not support it. It was difficult to answer — 10%.

The understanding of its goals does not change either: in the first place — to protect Russia, disarm Ukraine and prevent the deployment of NATO military bases on its territory (40%), one in five believes that the goal is to change the political course of Ukraine and clear it of the Nazis (20%), 18% name protection as the goals of the special operation of the population of Donbas (DPR and LPR), 7% believe that the goal is to occupy Ukraine and annex it to Russia.”⁴³

⁴³ VCIOM. “Special military operation: monitoring,” Official website, Russian Public Opinion Research Center, May 30, 2022,

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

43

VI. Conclusions

Russia's aggression against Ukraine would not have been successful, in part because of Russian citizens' perception of it, without long and detailed preparations from the side of Russian national top management and national ideologists. The idea of the “Russian World” as the concept of social integrational formation for one of the great international powers does not seem to have been unsuccessful from an ideological perspective. However, its practical implementation was catastrophic and led to a long, drawn-out war in Ukraine, which has already lasted more than two years.

However, it is vital to admit several essential points of Russian ideology. The modern ideology of the Russian Federation has been created from several parts, which were finalized into unprovoked open aggression and hostility towards Ukraine. An excuse for this was the protection of the population of Donbas from Ukraine and the expansion of NATO. That is very similar to Hitler's claims before the annexation of Sudetenland.

The first part is revenge-seeking ambitions for losing the Cold War. It might look a bit far into history. However, the nationalistic powers turned political and intellectual elites did not accept the loss of their might and influence that existed during the

Soviet Union era. They were lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The second is the Russian ideology, which is based on the cult of national sanctitude and deep religious belief in one's own country, as well as a last stronghold of *right* (conservative Orthodox Christianity) universal values rather than Western end-of-empire decadence. In fact, it is an attempt to exploit the conservative values of orthodox Christianity “written in the Bible” as the only right ones compared to developing modern liberal values as seen in Western societies. The Russian religious intuitions of different confessions are national ideology promotion and creation tools while being officially separated from the national government structures. On the one hand, they protect conservative social values, which are, in fact, one of the pillars of Russian ideology itself.

The third is the idea of modern Russian neo-imperialism. Russian ambitions are based on the principal idea of the great and mighty Russia as one of the centers of global power with revenge-seeking dreams. Though the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the imperial ideology was not within the circles of politicians and social activists. The idea of re-gathering lands of the ex-Soviet Union under Russian control went through several stages after the collapse of the Soviet Union by creating different integration structures, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Union, and Collective Security Treaty

**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

45

Organization. Indeed, none of these were as successful as expected. Among all Russian-centered integration initiatives, “The Union State of Russia and Belarus” can be counted as the most successful because of Belarus’s total support of Russian aggression in Ukraine.

The fourth is that the decade of the unipolar world was over a long time ago, at the beginning of 2000, and the Russian Federation became a respectful country, albeit far from the power that the Soviet Union used to be. Currently, the Russian Federation in Ukraine is seeking to revise the current international order employing force, to which the articles and speeches cited herein can attest. The Russian Federation uses a non-official ideology to develop its promotion vision of the international order and the place of Russia in it.

The fifth one is the double negation of Ukraine. The first factor of dissolution is the solid national and Europe-oriented forces in Ukraine (called Nazis by official Russian propaganda), the existence of which did not allow the Russian Federation to use soft power tools and created the background for regime change in Ukraine in 2014 from pro-Russian to pro-European. That also includes seeking ways of adapting Western democratic values to Ukrainian society. The combination of these two notions (Western values and Russian opposition to the West) brought about a perilous, explosive situation.

Thus, the strong support for the war among the Russian population and the continuous high-scale war and violence in Ukraine proves the Kremlin's high efficiency in creating particular national ideological thinking. The existing ideology of the Russian World not only supports and legitimates the Russian aggression against Ukraine but also creates a background for further hostility conducted by the Russian Federation. The ideology of hostile contradiction for the West and reconstruction of the "Great Russian State" as a way of thinking spread and popularized among the Russian population, then found its practical realization in the invasion of Ukraine.

Also, the idea of building the "Russian world" as a sphere of Russian influence became one of the key tools for spreading Russian influence on Ukraine, and Ukraine's unwillingness to follow Russian narratives and ideology became one of the real reasons for the invasion. The proofs can be seen in different original Russian sources mentioned and cited in this article.

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The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

49

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**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

51

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**Russian National Ideology as An Impetus for
The Military Invasion Of Ukraine**

53

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