

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

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Abstract

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This paper explores universal human rights as a security threat, as identified by the Russian Federation in security doctrines created during Putin's third presidential term. Unlike other analyses of Russian security concerns, it draws attention to the relationship between Euro-Atlantic values of liberal democracy and institutionalized norms of universal human rights. By placing human rights concerns in the historical context of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, it points to Russian fears that a more democratic, decentralized, and free Russia will also fracture. Paralleling these fears is a Euro-Atlantic security order that increasingly defends human rights at the expense of traditional state sovereignty. Cases such as Yugoslavia and Libya show how the line between interfering in a sovereign state's political structure and intervening for human rights has blurred.

Introduction

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

Mistrusting the Western approach, the Russian Orthodox Church proffered an alternative view on the relationship between the people and so-called "external authorities." God granted humans free will, Kirill acknowledged. Yet this in no way guarantees that man will choose what is "good"—his vulnerability to sin and deception requires the guidance of an outside authority. "The absolutization of the sovereignty of the individual and his rights without moral responsibility" will destroy civilization, he warned. The council concluded with the Russian Orthodox Church issuing a Russian Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes "the rights and freedoms of man to the extent that they help the individual to ascend to goodness."²

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

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

Individual human rights are placed in a hierarchy of values, which are subject to “human responsibility and accountability” and constrained by the preservation of the homeland.

Petr Preclik argues that since the 1993 UN World Conference in Vienna, acknowledging differing notions of human rights has become “almost heretical,”³ yet the 2006 Russian Declaration of Human Rights presents an unavoidable and obvious challenge to the UN Declaration. While the UN Declaration presents individual human rights as inalienable and human dignity as inherent, under the Russian Declaration, humans receive dignity only through “good” choices. This challenge to the interpretation of human rights enshrined in the UN Declaration (and subsequent UN Covenants and Resolutions) is not limited to the sphere of the Russian Orthodox Church. Analysis of official Putin-era security documents of the Russian Federation reveals a trend towards identifying universal human rights as a national security threat.

How does a norm like human rights become a security threat? What exactly is the nature of the perceived threat to the Russian Federation? Who or what is at stake? This paper seeks to answer the aforementioned questions, acknowledging that international human rights agreements have long reflected Euro-Atlantic identities and values. Although states may challenge the dominant Euro-Atlantic interpretation of human rights in institutions like the UN, foundational documents are built around democratic values and the protection of individual liberties: for example, Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has since 1948 proclaimed that “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and

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

shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.” Thus, when we speak of a Russian rejection of “universal” human rights in this paper, we can take this rejection to mean a Euro-Atlantic interpretation of human rights.

Based on the above assumption, this paper hypothesizes that Russian elites see human rights as a threat to the territorial integrity of Russia because they challenge a strong, centralized government that holds together a diverse set of republics that otherwise lack a unifying national identity. This would only pose an internal threat, if not for a trend in international human rights agreements towards an erosion of traditional state sovereignty. Although it is illegal under international law to interfere with the political system of another sovereign state, state sovereignty can now be breached in defense of human rights. A Euro-Atlantic concept of human rights that is interdependent with liberal democracy then poses both an internal and external dilemma for Russia: democratization may encourage separatism and intra-state violence (internal threat), while defining democratization as human rights justifies international interference in Russian affairs in support of democratization (external threat).

The literature at the intersection of human rights and security encompasses a wide swath of disciplines: from international law to history, from security studies to philosophy. While each of these disciplinary approaches raises necessary perspectives, in isolation they fail to address the questions posed in this paper. Crucially, much of the area studies and security studies literature uses the terms “democracy” and “human rights” seemingly interchangeably, or uses one without recognizing its connection with the other.⁴ Dmitri Trenin, for example, acknowledges that the “national question,” or lack of a national idea, plagues Russian territorial integrity, arguing that

⁴ Sarah Mendelson, “The Putin Path,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 47, no. 5 (October 2000): 3–10.

“[d]emocratization will put pressure on both internal and external borders. If the pressure is too high, and these borders start moving, this will be a major threat to security along a vast area.”⁵

But he makes no reference to why democratization might be a threat coming from the international community, instead explaining that the impetus for destabilizing democratization stems from a domestic necessity for Russia to modernize.

This confusion of terminology is integral to understanding the nature of the threat identified by Russia. In the Russian Declaration of Human Rights, the authors specifically reject “the use of double standards in the sphere of human rights, and also attempts to use human rights to . . . impose a particular governmental or social order.”⁶ The law studies and philosophy literature attends to the nuance between democracy and human rights, specifically understanding that current discussions assume “democracy” to mean “liberal democracy.” Yael Tamir and Eric D. Weitz both recognize the prevalence in scholarship of conflation of liberal democracy and human rights.⁷ Same Varayudej has discussed the emergence in post-Cold War era of arguments for liberal democratic governance as a right under international law in international institutions like the UN: “The concept of democracy as a universal entitlement has increasingly received acceptance in the United Nations.”⁸ Yet these studies do not engage with Russian security

⁵ Dmitrii Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), p. 65.

⁶ Wilson, “The Russian Declaration of Human Rights from the Russian Orthodox Church.”

⁷ Yael Tamir, “The Right to National Self-Determination as an Individual Right,” *History of European Ideas*, Special Issue Second International Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, 16, no. 4 (January 1, 1993): 899–905, doi:10.1016/0191-6599(93)90238-L; Eric D. Weitz, “Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right,” *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015): 462–496, doi:10.1093/ahr/120.2.462.

⁸ Same Varayudej, “A Right to Democracy in International Law: Its Implications for Asia,” *Annual Survey of International & Comparative Law* 12, no. 1 (2006), <http://digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1099&context=annlsurvey>, p. 16.

doctrines or current security threats in order to identify the effects of the trend towards institutionalization of liberal democracy as a legal human right.

Others accounts simplify Russia's defensive position on human rights as merely Russian elites' fear of losing personal power. This narrative of corruption is particularly prominent in a 2013 hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Former US Ambassador for the Soviet Union Stephen Sestanovich attributes the crackdown on human rights in Putin's third presidential term to popular protests, while Boris Nemtsov elaborates "he is very much afraid to be in jail, and he is ready to use every opportunity to keep his power."⁹ Ariel Cohen explains that Putin's loss of popularity and control over elites is directly tied to human rights violations in Russia.¹⁰ Yet all of this is framed as domestic political struggle; Sestanovich even proposes that Putin's response to the protests would have been the same "no matter" the Russian-American relationship.¹¹

Getting to the bottom of Russian fears about human rights is obviously a concern for the US government. Senator Christopher Murphy stressed the need for Russia as a US ally, but identified human rights violations as a barrier towards such a relationship. Frank Jannuzi, of Amnesty International, declared "Moscow's lack of respect for basic human rights speaks volumes about its reliability as an international partner on vital national security issues."¹² But if the US continues to define the reliability of its partners through shared human rights values, then

⁹ "A Dangerous Slide Backwards: Russia's Deteriorating Human Rights," § Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues and the Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations (2013), p. 28, 30.

¹⁰ A Dangerous Slide Backwards: Russia's Deteriorating Human Rights, p. 31.

¹¹ A Dangerous Slide Backwards: Russia's Deteriorating Human Rights, p. 28.

¹² A Dangerous Slide Backwards: Russia's Deteriorating Human Rights, p. 5.

it will have to acknowledge its own role in a Euro-Atlantic human rights order that exacerbates Russian security anxieties.

In order to argue this hypothesis, this paper begins with a brief analysis of the security documents that prompted this research question. The next section, Human Rights and the Fall of the Soviet Bloc, sets current Russian fears within a larger historical context. It covers the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and its role in the dissolution of the Communist bloc—a traumatic event in the living memory of current Russian leaders. This section shows how the strong, centralized Soviet government lost control over the diverse people of the bloc as it gradually accepted human rights. It also shows how Euro-Atlantic states could infringe on traditional state sovereignty by linking human rights with economic cooperation and security issues. As such, it provides the Putin regime with a historic precedent for linking human rights with political chaos, separatism, and Euro-Atlantic intervention in internal affairs.

The next two sections illustrate two cases in the post-Cold War era in which movements towards democratization resulted in intra-state violence. In both cases, the UN and NATO intervened to protect human rights, ultimately at the expense of the state's territorial integrity or the political regime. Section 3 explores the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It shows how NATO became a human rights enforcer, moving the consequences of human rights abuses from diplomatic pressure to military intervention. Section 4 briefly introduces the Responsibility to Protect and its use in Arab Spring conflicts, displaying how the UN further undermined traditional state sovereignty in favor of individual human rights.

Section 5 discusses the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, demonstrating Russian intolerance for a Soviet-era repeat in which it loses a state considered to be within its sphere of interest—and therefore its control—to human rights, democracy, and the Euro-Atlantic.

Analysis of Security Doctrines

The security doctrines of Putin's third term identify what this paper argues to be three interrelated concerns: 1) a denunciation of Euro-Atlantic values as universal human rights; 2) a need to foster a sense of common national identity among Russian citizens; and 3) concerns over Russian territorial integrity.

1) The denunciation of Euro-Atlantic human rights takes several forms. One theme is the impossibility of cultural transfer—Euro-Atlantic values are not universal. The 2013 Russian Foreign Policy Concept concedes that universal values are needed to protect against “global turbulences,” but cites “equal and indivisible security” as the solution—not individual rights. The 2014 Russian Military Doctrine states that a “rivalry of proclaimed values and models of development” characterizes the international situation.¹³ There is also a marked move away from recognizing the sovereignty of the individual. In 2008, the Concept mentions “individuals” four times, listing “protection of the interests of the individual” as the priority of national security. The 2013 Concept keeps the protection of the individual as a priority of national security, but never mentions individuals again. The 2016 concept makes no mention of protecting the individual. The single reference to the “individual” in the document is in the context of apprehending terrorists. In references to events in Libya, the 2013 Concept also claims that “imposing one's own hierarchy of values” on others can only lead to “chaos in world affairs,” citing “recent events in the Middle East and North Africa.”

¹³ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” *Посольство России В Великобритании*, December 25, 2014, <http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>. Section II, n. 9.

Another theme is the threat human rights pose to state sovereignty. The 2013 Concept says that Russia seeks to counter the attempts of countries or certain groups of countries to revise international law encoded in documents such as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.¹⁴ The 2013 Concept explicitly denounces the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), claiming that the principle is a “pretext” for interference in state sovereignty, upon which international law rests. Attempts to overthrow legitimate governments in sovereign states “under the pretext of protecting civilian population” are labeled a “risk to world peace.”¹⁵ The 2013 Concept asserts that there is a risk that human rights concepts can be used unlawfully to turn stabile, if illiberal, states into volatile war zones.

The 2014 Military Doctrine, released shortly after the annexation of Crimea, is rife with references to foreign inference in Russia’s internal affairs—language that harkens back to Soviet days of fifth columnists.¹⁶ Rather than recognizing citizen demands, dissent can be denounced as stemming from agents of the West who have infiltrated the Russian people. It labels as characteristic of current military conflicts the use of the “protest potential” of the populace.¹⁷ Others threats are “political forces and public associations financed from abroad”—a clear reference to Russian interpretations of the Color Revolutions and the Euromaidan protest as Western backed.¹⁸

2) The Russian identity features prominently in all of these documents. The 2014 Military Doctrine describes as an internal threat: young citizens being targeted through the undermining

¹⁴ “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,” *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, February 12, 2013, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/122186, Section 31b.

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

¹⁶ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 12e.

¹⁷ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 15a.

¹⁸ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 15j.

of “historical, spiritual and patriotic traditions related to defense of the Motherland.”¹⁹ The 2015 Russian National Security Strategy reports that progress is being made in important areas: “Traditional Russian spiritual and moral values are being revived. A proper attitude toward Russia’s history is being shaped in the rising generation.”²⁰

What defines the Russian identity is unclear, yet there seems to be a shift away from identifying as European. In the 2008 Concept, Russia is the “biggest European State,” and hopes to, in this role, work towards a truly unified Europe. The 2013 Concept sees “Russia as an integral and inseparable part of European civilization,” and says that the Euro-Atlantic states share geography, economy and history, and have “common deep-rooted civilizational ties with Russia.”²¹ Yet the 2016 Russian Foreign Policy Concept drops all previous references to a shared European identity.

3) The 2014 Military Doctrine labels separatist groups as terrorist organizations, and threats to the Russian Federation explicitly include intra-state violence.

Human Rights and the Fall of the Soviet Bloc

Soviet leadership had been fundamentally opposed to human rights for decades. The Brezhnev Doctrine placed the preservation of pro-Kremlin Communist regimes in Eastern Europe above the sovereignty of Warsaw Pact states, or the rights of individuals in those states. Rather than allowing political dissent as a right to self-determination, Soviet leaders regarded unrest as an internal threat to the proper government of the state and the larger Communist bloc.

¹⁹ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 13c.

²⁰ “Russian National Security Strategy,” December 31, 2015, <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>, Part II, n. 11.

²¹ “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,” Section 54, 56.

Dissenters were internal saboteurs, justifying joint military intervention by Warsaw Pact members. Under this logic Hungary was forcibly rejoined to the Warsaw Pact in 1956 and the Prague Spring was suppressed in 1968.

The West, in its turn, had not tried to tie human rights with inter-state relations. Doing so would have compromised Western colonial holdings—a moral vulnerability that the Soviets were all too willing to exploit. In addition, for decades, dictators with poor human rights records had held sway in Spain, Portugal, and Greece—countries that were part of Euro-Atlantic security alliances. Francisco Franco died in 1975. António de Oliveira Salazar of Portugal died in 1968, and without him his authoritarian government collapsed during the Carnation Revolution in 1974. In Greece, the military junta that ruled the country collapsed in 1974, giving way to the Third Hellenic Republic. Without the overthrow of these authoritarian regimes and the gradual loss of colonial empires, attempting to enforce a concept of human rights tied to democracy and individual liberty would have been self-defeating—and a treaty linking such rights with international relations could have jeopardized the West’s own security alliances.

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 was therefore unprecedented in that it linked human rights with inter-state security issues and economic concerns.²² Although the Soviet delegation achieved the inclusion of Principles 6 and 7—“Non-intervention in internal affairs” and “Sovereign equality”—this victory came at the cost of a number of gains for human rights.²³ Despite Soviet efforts, “Non-intervention” was not given precedence over Principles that protected human rights. Among these were Principle 7, which promised “Respect for human

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

²³ “Sovereign equality,” requires that participating states must “respect each other's right freely to choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems as well as its right to determine its laws and regulations.”

rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.” Principle 8 defended the right to self-determination of peoples, and Principles 2 and 5 addressed peaceful resolutions to international disputes and denounced the threat of force as a tool of international relations.

These Principles, and the Principles protecting human contacts and information mobility in Basket III, were initially overshadowed by Soviet propaganda campaigns touting the West’s agreement to “non-intervention in internal affairs” and the “inviolability of frontiers” as recognition of the Communist bloc and the Soviet sphere of interest. Soviet leaders assumed that issues of human rights could be circumvented by hiding the details of the agreement from Soviet and Warsaw Pact citizens, as they had in regard to past human rights agreements.²⁴ As Gromyko allegedly told Brezhnev: “We are masters in our own house.”²⁵

News of Helsinki and the rights afforded under it, however, spread across the bloc. The Final Act linked compliance with these terms to international East–West relations more generally, and, unlike previous human rights agreements, had the ability to hold states that violated human rights accountable. Future and current diplomatic relations in all areas of interest could be jeopardized by a human rights violation. Follow-up meetings to review progress and adherence to the Final Act helped this process. Accountability also worked, in large part, because the Soviet Union and its satellites needed the economic assistance of wealthy Western countries.

²⁴ Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 98.

²⁵ Quoted in Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*, Human Rights in History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 34.

Reduced tensions and arms reduction agreements also took pressure off of the straining Soviet economy.²⁶

Despite attempts by the Soviet leadership to stifle news of Helsinki's human rights promises, word spread through a growing international network of human rights organizations that connected groups within the Soviet bloc to groups in the US and Western Europe. Helsinki did not create activism in Eastern Europe and the USSR in a vacuum—human rights groups had existed for over a decade. In December of 1965, for example, activists staged a demonstration in Moscow's Pushkin Square in honor of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²⁷ Organizations such as the Moscow chapter of Amnesty International and the Initiative Group to Defend Human Rights in the USSR predated Helsinki, but were limited in their success. Repression stifled activists' attempts to disclose abuse—until an international Helsinki movement helped to amplify their voices and provide a modicum of protection.

Activists had a symbiotic relationship with Western governments and Western human rights organizations. When the Moscow Group announced its formation, it did so to a Western journalist. Founder Yuri Orlov then immediately went underground until he heard Western news coverage of the group—Western knowledge of activists decreased the chances and severity of Soviet reprisals.²⁸ In Belgrade at the first follow-up meeting to Helsinki, head of the US delegation Arthur J. Goldberg humiliated the Soviet delegation by chronicling in detail Soviet

²⁶ East bloc countries like Poland had been racking up foreign debt for years, attempting to stave off domestic unrest by placating the population with material goods and higher wages. In so doing, the Polish government backed themselves into a corner as the Polish economy floundered. At the Helsinki summit itself, Poland reached an agreement with West Germany whereby the Polish government would grant exit visas to 125,000 Germans residing in Poland in return for 2.3 million Deutsche marks in credit; Thomas, 167. For a discussion of the economic crisis of the late Communist bloc, see V. M. (Vladislav Martinovich) Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, [Pbk. ed.], New Cold War History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 299.

²⁷ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 53.

²⁸ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 60.

violations of human rights. His strategy relied heavily on NGO research, like the information gathered by the Moscow Group, and led to the creation of Helsinki Watch, a US-based monitoring group.²⁹ The US group, in turn, sent medicine and office supplies to activists in the Soviet bloc and translated and redistributed censored reports from groups within the bloc.

The Soviet leadership tried to quell dissent, but they did find themselves constrained in the scope of their reprisals by their commitments in the Final Act to respect human rights. When Solidarity threatened the Communist monopoly on political power in Poland in the 1980s, the Soviets ordered the massing of Warsaw Pact troops on the border of Poland—but they did not resort to a joint Warsaw Pact military invasion to restore the regime. The rise of organized protest in Poland caused Soviet officials to suspect a Western-backed “underground” was directing the movement. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Pope John Paul II were labeled as some of the leaders.³⁰

Helsinki supported, in essence, an expression of and organization around competing identities and loyalties. The relatively new collective class identity offered by the Soviets did not keep citizens faithful to the autocratic Communist Party. One of the founding members of the Moscow group, Liudmila Alekseeva, reported her surprise at the diversity of the Helsinki movement:

there was a result no one had anticipated: unification of the human rights movement with religious and national movements working toward the goal of the Moscow Helsinki Group—civic liberties enumerated in the humanitarian articles of the Final Act. The national and religious movements that seemed to be based on a common ground, while

²⁹ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, p. 10.

³⁰ Zubok, pp. 265-66.

not united among themselves, were united, in many respects, in the human rights movement.³¹

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

With the advent of the Gorbachev era, the Soviet approach to human rights shifted. Gorbachev accepted certain Euro-Atlantic norms of human rights and their supposed universality. The young general secretary “rejected . . . the entire post-Stalin logic of Soviet geopolitical interests, beginning with Central and Eastern Europe.”³² While his predecessors relied on security through coercion, military strength, and balances of power, Gorbachev rejected the authoritarian regimes these efforts created. His reforms allowed freedom of assembly and speech, and undermined the Soviet political structure by introducing multicandidate elections.

At the 1986 Vienna Meeting, a Helsinki follow-up, the Soviet delegation shocked the audience by proposing to host a human rights conference in Moscow. The Soviet Union, under the influence of Gorbachev and the indefatigable work of the international Helsinki movement, had moved from refusing to discuss what it considered its internal affairs to proposing to host its own trial. Because many Western countries viewed the Soviet conference proposal as mere propaganda, they demanded human rights concessions from the Soviets before agreeing to such a conference. To everyone’s surprise, the Soviets worked to comply with many of the demands. In 1987, 140 political prisoners were released, Voice of America was allowed to broadcast, and German and Jewish emigration was allowed to increase.³³ By the end of 1988, Gorbachev had

³¹ Liudmila Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*, 1st ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.05440>.

³² Zubok, p. 310.

³³ Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, p. 192.

announced an end of political imprisonment, an end to religious repression, and the repeal of laws limiting freedom of expression. Human rights had become accepted in US-Soviet relations as a topic that had to be engaged. At the UN in 1988 Gorbachev proclaimed his acceptance of universal individual human rights: “Freedom of choice is a universal principle to which there should be no exceptions.”³⁴

The Moscow Conference on the Human Dimension began in September 1991, but by that point the forces unleashed by Helsinki and perestroika had already overwhelmed the Soviet Union. In 1989, the Communist East bloc trembled. Decentralizing reform from the top of the system collided with nationalist and political dissent from the bottom, and regimes toppled. With a swiftness (and peacefulness) that surprised almost the entire world, the Soviet empire and Communist rule disintegrated. Images of crowds swarming over the Berlin Wall to reunite East Germans with West Germans seemed to be a microcosm for Europe, perhaps even the world, at large. Francis Fukuyama certainly saw it as such, writing in his essay later that year, followed by a book of the same title in 1992, about “The End of History.” In his article he speculated that “we may be witnessing . . . not just the end of the Cold War . . . but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”³⁵

Not everyone celebrated the fall of the Soviet Union—Putin has famously called for acknowledgment that “the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the

³⁴ Bill Keller, “Gorbachev’s Journey; Ideals According to Gorbachev: A Call for Tolerance and the End of Force,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1988, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/09/world/gorbachev-s-journey-ideals-according-gorbachev-call-for-tolerance-end-force.html>.

³⁵ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 4.

century,” stating that “the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself.”³⁶ In the post-Cold War era, as individual human rights began to challenge strong, centralized governments, the Soviet Union was not the only state infected with that epidemic.

Yugoslavia

In Yeltsin’s memoir, he recalls the domestic turmoil that enveloped Russia in the wake of the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia. Both Communists and nationalists whipped the nation into a frenzy with sensationalist cries of “Today Yugoslavia, tomorrow Russia!” They warned that NATO would have no qualms about attacking Russia next. Yeltsin, who calls them “hysterical,” nevertheless also worried about American power left unchecked.³⁷

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

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

³⁶ Vladimir Putin, “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, April 25, 2005, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

³⁷ Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 259.

population of Kosovo was 90 percent Albanian, creating concerns over a potential secessionist movement towards Yugoslavia's neighbor. Croatia was 12 percent Serb, while Bosnia-Herzegovina was 31 percent Serb.³⁸

Tito and the Communist leadership of Yugoslavia had hoped to avert nationalist separatism by forming an equal federation and focusing on modernization and working-class identities. As Sekulic et al. summarize, while Tito hoped that in time, the Communists could “reduce the political strength of nationalism, leaving it [sic] its place cultural traditions and ethnic pride held in common by all South Slavic people. What actually transpired was increased fragmentation of identities and the development of political rivalries associated with nationalist claims.”³⁹ The Yugoslav identity never really caught on. In 1989 only 4.6 percent of people in Serbia, 14.4 percent of people in Bosnia, and 9 percent of people in Croatia self-identified as “Yugoslav.”⁴⁰

The 1974 constitution only exacerbated the identity crisis, by continuing a trend of decreasing federal authority. It shifted responsibilities and rights to the republics and created a collective presidency. Presidential decisions could be vetoed by a republic. Although economics were supposed to unite the republic in unity and equality, in practice wealth became unevenly distributed throughout the republics, encouraging nationalist agendas. Tito's death in 1980 robbed the republic of yet another chance at continued unity. As the economic crisis of the 1980s pushed inflation in Yugoslavia to 2,500 percent, Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe.⁴¹

³⁸ Carole Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and the War in Bosnia*, Greenwood Press Guides to Historic Events of the Twentieth Century (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 21.

³⁹ Dusko Sekulic, Garth Massey, and Randy Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia,” *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 1 (1994): 83–97, p. 88.

⁴⁰ Sekulic, Massey, and Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs?,” p. 89.

⁴¹ Sekulic, Massey, and Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs?,” p. 88.

Democratization led to political parties being elected in the republics that favored greater autonomy—even independence. As political gridlock gripped Yugoslavia in 1989, Slovene intellectuals called for the establishment of a democratic, sovereign Slovenia based on human rights and freedoms. By 1990 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia had joined the rest of the Communist regimes of Europe on the ash heap of history.

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

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

The details of the conflict in Yugoslavia are far too complex to detail here. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to say that Serbian nationalism, under the banner of a Greater Serbia, affected not only Kosovo. A unified Serbian people would also have to include

Bosnian Serbs and Serbs in Croatia. The resulting wars represented a turning point for NATO and the link between human rights and international relations. When NATO began bombing Bosnia in March of 1994, it was the first time in the history of the organization that NATO had performed a military intervention. Carole Rogel claims that “Bosnia became the test of NATO’s relevance,” in the post-Cold War era.⁴² The bombing campaign, which was approved by the UN and justified as a humanitarian intervention, marked the re-creation of NATO as an organization that defended human rights.

Tensions arose between Serbia and Kosovo again when the Dayton peace agreement failed to address Kosovar demands for sovereignty. Russian foreign minister Ivanov told NATO leaders that although Russia would veto a UN intervention, it could only protest against a move by NATO. Facing accounts of ethnic cleansing and massacres, NATO began a war in Kosovo in March 1999, this time without UN Security Council approval. The decision was contentious—the country under attack was not a NATO member, the traditionally held justification for joint action. In addition, intervention on behalf of Kosovo would constitute interference in Serbia’s internal affairs and a breach of Serbian sovereignty.

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

⁴² Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and the War in Bosnia*, p. 66.

NATO troops. Angela Stent remarks that “it appeared to be more important for Russia to oppose what NATO was doing than to help solve a major humanitarian crisis in Europe.”⁴³ Many Russians called NATO’s intervention hypocritical, saying that a “double standard” was in play, in which separatists across the Balkans were rewarded for actions that caused chaos and instability, but supposedly sovereign states were punished for violating individual human rights.⁴⁴

The wars in Yugoslavia occurred concurrently with Russian attempts at territorial unification. While war ravaged the Balkans, Russia faced Chechen separatism in the Caucasus. There was fear that the “Kosovo model” could be applied to Russia itself.⁴⁵ At a conference in Moscow on 1 February 2000, acting president Putin concluded that “It is unacceptable to cancel such basic principles of international law as national sovereignty and territorial integrity under the slogan of so-called humanitarian intervention.”⁴⁶ Shortly after the Kosovo War ended, Putin began a centralizing campaign in Russia. In 2000, reforms began that transferred authority from the republics to the federal government—the opposite of Yugoslavia’s constitutional reforms in the years before its collapse. Local constitutions were reworked to conform to the federal constitution. In 2004, popularly elected governors from the republics were replaced with presidential appointees.

R2P

⁴³ Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership : U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 44.

⁴⁴ Vladimir Baranovsky, “Vladimir Baranovsky: Humanitarian Intervention: Russian Perspectives,” *Viperson*, May 8, 2001, <http://plogin.viperson.ru/articles/vladimir-baranovsky-humanitarian-intervention-russian-perspectives>.

⁴⁵ Baranovsky, “Vladimir Baranovsky: Humanitarian Intervention: Russian Perspectives,” 14.

⁴⁶ “Newline - February 2, 2000,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 2, 2000, <http://www.rferl.org/a/1142085.html>.

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

States are now widely understood to be instruments at the service of their peoples, and not vice versa. At the same time individual sovereignty—by which I mean the fundamental freedom of each individual, enshrined in the charter of the UN and subsequent international treaties—has been enhanced by a renewed and spreading consciousness of individual rights. When we read the charter today, we are more than ever conscious that its aim is to protect individual human beings, not to protect those who abuse them.⁴⁷

His statements on the necessity of intervention urged UN debate over humanitarian intervention and eventually led to the R2P doctrine. Unanimously adopted at the 2005 UN World Summit, R2P rests on three “pillars”: First, the concept that the state is primarily responsible for protecting the population from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Second, that the international community has a responsibility to assist. And third, the community has a responsibility to use diplomatic, humanitarian, and “other means” to protect populations. R2P proclaimed that “sovereignty no longer exclusively protects states from foreign interference; it is a charge of responsibility where states are accountable for the welfare of their people.”⁴⁸

The UN Security Council authorized military intervention under R2P for the first time on 17 March 2011, as Libya's Arab Spring turned into a bloody civil war. What began as anti-government protests turned into armed revolt seeking to depose Muammar Gaddafi. The UN's

⁴⁷ Kofi Annan, “Two Concepts of Sovereignty,” *The Economist*, September 16, 1999, <http://www.economist.com/node/324795>.

⁴⁸ “Peace and Security,” *United Nations*, accessed March 6, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/index.html>.

decision responded to “acts of violence and intimidation committed by Libyan authorities against journalists”; “arbitrary detentions”; and “systematic violation of human rights.”⁴⁹ Russia abstained from the vote, with Representative Vitaly Churkin concerned that military intervention could have a destabilizing effect on the region. NATO air strikes supported rebel forces united under the National Transitional Council, which promised that a liberated Libya would become a pluralist, democratic state. Instead, democratic institutions failed to take root before rival militias plunged the state into civil war a second time.

Russian representatives to the UN have since worked to introduce resolutions countering the placement of protection of human rights over state rights to sovereignty. In December 2011, Vladimir Kartashkin, a Russian nominated member of the UN Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council, submitted a study to the Committee with the following advice: “Promotion of and respect for human rights must accord not only with individual dignity and freedom but also with responsible behavior in respect of the State, society and other people.”⁵⁰ In 2012, a Russian-sponsored UN resolution was passed based on Kartashkin’s report titled: “Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind.”⁵¹

When Syria followed a similar path from peaceful protest to civil war, Russia vetoed UN attempts to apply R2P, citing “alarm that compliance with Security Council resolutions on the

⁴⁹ “Security Council Approves ‘No-Fly Zone’ over Libya, Authorizing ‘All Necessary Measures’ to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions: Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” *United Nations*, March 17, 2011, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.

⁵⁰ Vladimir Kartashkin, “Preliminary Study on Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind” (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee of the United Nations, February 20, 2012), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/173/22/PDF/G1117322.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁵¹ “Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind: Best Practices” (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee of the United Nations, September 21, 2012).

situation in Libya had been considered a model for future actions” by NATO, and warning that removing Assad from power could destabilize the entire region.⁵² In 2014 Russia opposed a UN Human Rights Council resolution called “The promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests.” Russia supported an amendment to the resolution that “protests should not constitute threats to national security and the stability of the state.”⁵³

The Crisis in Ukraine: The West Stops Here

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

To a lesser extent than Yugoslavia, Ukraine has its own problem of split identities: While western Ukraine looks to Central Europe, regions in the south and the east of the country are culturally closer to Russia. At the time of its annexation, Crimea was an autonomous region in Ukraine with a majority ethnically Russian population and a history of succession and independence claims. In 1994, pro-Russian separatists won the presidency of the Republic of Crimea, but the crisis was diffused by lackluster Russia support, and Crimea was reduced from a

⁵² “Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution Condemning Syria’s Crackdown on Anti-Government Protestors, Owing to Veto by Russian Federation, China: Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” *United Nations*, October 4, 2011, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10403.doc.htm>.

⁵³ “Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development” (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee of the United Nations, March 24, 2014), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G14/123/34/PDF/G1412334.pdf?OpenElement>.

republic to an autonomy. Other separatist movements surfaced in 2008, when the prospect of NATO membership was briefly extended to Ukraine.

These fault lines in Ukrainian identity and territorial integrity come to the surface whenever the government seems to sweep too far either towards Russia or towards the West. During the 2004 Orange Revolution, a number of Western NGOs backed protestors who decried a rigged election that gave the presidency to the Russia-backed candidate, Yanukovich. After the Orange Revolution, regional and local authorities in eastern and southern Ukraine formed a coordinating body to oppose the Yushchenko presidency and to consider separatism. These authorities had supported the pro-Russian candidate, and viewed Yushchenko as a “representative of Western Ukraine.”⁵⁴

In 2013 unrest broke out again in Ukraine after President Yanukovich decided not to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. Students who had favored closer ties with Europe staged non-violent protests against the government. As in the Pristina protests in Kosovo, the government responded with force, galvanizing resistance and spreading it beyond the original students. Euromaidan, the movement that coalesced around those first protests, resulted in the ousting of President Yanukovich. Without a pro-Russia president in office, Crimea organized a referendum on succession on 16 March 2014. The Russian forces already stationed in Russia multiplied with additional reinforcements, and troops began to block the peninsula off from the rest of Ukraine. While some Russian troops are allowed in Crimea at approved military installations, Russian troops deployed outside of these mutually agreed upon locations without Ukrainian consent. The referendum passed, and days later Russia formally annexed Crimea. This

⁵⁴ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, p. 45.

prompted armed insurrection in the east of Ukraine, as rebels in the Donbas region tried to seize control of the government and promoted their own referendums of succession.

The fighting in the Donbass region smolders on unresolved, as Russia appears reluctant to give full support to the rebel movement. While Russia denies official military involvement, reports indicate that several thousand Russians are in fact fighting in the region, and that Russia is sending the rebels military equipment and weapons. NATO has called the presence of Russian troops in the region an invasion.⁵⁵ What Russia will officially admit to, is humanitarian aid. A 260-truck convoy—supposedly an aid convoy—crossed the border from Russia into Ukraine without permission from the Ukrainian government in August 2014.⁵⁶ In a meeting with reporters, President Putin suggested that Russia could deploy the Armed Forces in Ukraine under international law in a humanitarian mission.⁵⁷

The annexation of Crimea has several similarities with Kosovo, and the Russian response to the crisis in Ukraine has tried to stress these similarities as much as possible. Putin has noted that if Albanians in Kosovo were given the “right of nations to self-determination,” then the people of Crimea also deserve this right.⁵⁸ When Kosovo lost its autonomous status in 1989, Kosovar Albanians were denied education in their own language.⁵⁹ Putin claims that Russians in

⁵⁵ Carlotta Gall, “Ukraine Town Bears Scars of Russian Offensive That Turned Tide in Conflict,” *The New York Times*, September 9, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/10/world/europe/ukraine-town-bears-scars-of-russian-offensive-that-turned-tide-in-conflict.html>.

⁵⁶ Alec Luhn and Dan Roberts, “Ukraine Condemns ‘Direct Invasion’ as Russian Aid Convoy Crosses Border,” *The Guardian*, August 23, 2014, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/22/russian-convoy-crosses-border-ukraine-without-permission>.

⁵⁷ “Transcript: Putin Defends Russian Intervention in Ukraine,” *Washington Post*, accessed March 8, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-defends-russian-intervention-in-ukraine/2014/03/04/9cadcd1a-a3a9-11e3-a5fa-55f0c77bf39c_story.html.

⁵⁸ “Transcript.”

⁵⁹ Agon Demjaha, “The Kosovo Conflict: A Perspective from Inside,” in *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship*, ed. Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Chandra Thakur (Tokyo; New York: United Nations University Press, 2000).

Crimea and southeast Ukraine were denied their rights to their own history and language and subjected to “forced assimilation.”⁶⁰

Yet, even if we take Putin’s claims at face value, Crimea and Kosovo still have some serious differences. Putin’s narrative seems to regard the Ukrainian crisis as an internal issue, rather than the external, humanitarian intervention the Euro-Atlantic states faced with Kosovo. Indeed, it certainly became an internal issue, since Crimea joined Russia, as opposed to Kosovo’s route of independence in 2008. The NATO forces that intervened in Kosovo did so to protect individuals from Serbian nationalists who claimed that Kosovo was the spiritual and historical heart of Serbia. In an address to the State Duma, Putin justifies the Crimean annexation from a cultural standpoint.⁶¹ Citing Prince Vladimir’s 10th-century baptism in Crimea, he argues that the Prince’s adoption of Orthodoxy has united the peoples of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine in a common culture, civilization, and understanding of human values ever since. In this way, Putin defends the Crimean annexation by extolling the natural unity of the Crimean and Russian people.

Furthermore, Putin blames Western attempts to prevent “Eurasian integration” as a source of Ukrainian unrest in both the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan. (Ukraine’s signing of the EU Association Agreement would have damaged Putin’s vision for the Eurasian Economic Union). He compares this with what he sees as the results of Western attempts to force liberal values onto Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the countries of the Color Revolutions and Arab Spring uprisings. Standards foreign to these countries’ traditions and cultures created chaos, he argues. This is a common argument from the Russian government. In 2017, Foreign

⁶⁰ Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” *President of Russia*, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

⁶¹ Russia, “Address by President of the Russian Federation.”

Minister Lavrov reiterated that the West is to blame for the Arab Spring and the Ukrainian crisis due to attempts to export their values abroad.⁶² He chastised Western Europe for promoting “post-Christian” values that do not reflect Europe’s own traditional cultural heritage, suggesting that the imposition of outside, liberal values is inhumane and to blame for Christian suffering in the Middle East.

Although the Putin administration is trying to frame Crimea as a human rights intervention, the language Putin uses to justify the annexation focuses on cultural values, tradition, stability, and the rights of peoples. This is not the language of Euro-Atlantic human rights, with its emphasis on shared, universal values and protection of individual freedom.

Conclusion

Some similarities can be drawn between the challenges faced by the Russian Federation today and the Communist bloc of the 1980s. Like Gorbachev, the Putin administration is struggling with a diverse population, economic woes, and the fear of Western military superiority. The Communist bloc was held together through an autocratic Muscovite political regime, justified by a collective class identity. When Euro-Atlantic human rights challenged this centralized system—both through Gorbachev’s reforms and through international pressure—the bloc fragmented.

The Russian Federation is smaller in scale than the USSR, but fears of splintering and succession are strong. In the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, many doubted that the 20 autonomous republics of the Russian Federation could maintain cohesion. Indeed,

⁶² “Western ‘Messiahship’ Bred Ukrainian Crisis, Arab Spring, & Refugee Flood – Lavrov,” *RT International*, January 17, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/373993-lavrov-speech-messianism-values/>.

throughout the 1990s many republics challenged the supremacy of the federal government. Komi and Bashkortostan, for example, claimed that their constitutions superseded federal legislation; while Tuva proclaimed the right to declare war and peace; and Tatarstan, Dagestan, and Ingushetia claimed the right to pursue their own foreign policy.⁶³ Fears of Chechen separatism that threatened Russian unity in the 1990s continue today. Like in the case of Yugoslavia, Russia's current borders do not perfectly correspond with ethnic and cultural demographics. Although Putin's centralizing reforms in 2000 quashed some of the internal turmoil, the fragmentation of the federation remains a very real security threat, as identified in the security doctrines discussed at the beginning of this paper.

The Russia Federation currently is held together by another (increasingly) autocratic Muscovite political regime, although it lacks a clear, unifying identity to justify that regime. Russia is still a young nation-state in the middle of nation-building. Yet ethnic identity is profoundly strong in the republics, especially in Dagestan and among the Tatars, Chechens, and Yakuts.⁶⁴ In 2010, a census revealed that residents of Kaliningrad were claiming "Kaliningrader" as their chosen identity over "Russian."⁶⁵ And with over 200 ethnic groups represented in the Russian Federation today, the Euro-Atlantic conception of human rights—interdependent with liberal democracy and founded on the liberal version of self-determination that gives individuals the right to choose and prioritize their own government—could challenge the state's fragile internal cohesion.⁶⁶

⁶³ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, p. 50.

⁶⁴ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, p. 62.

⁶⁵ Dmitriï Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, p. 64.

⁶⁶ "The World Factbook — Russia," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed March 4, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

In addition, compliance with these human rights have become increasingly enforceable in the international community. The expansion of NATO is listed as a main external threat to the Russian Federation in the 2014 Military Doctrine, especially the trend of “vesting NATO with global functions.”⁶⁷ As seen in the case studies in this paper, the repercussions for human rights violations since Helsinki have increasingly challenged state sovereignty, and NATO has become the vehicle for enforcement. In the late Cold War-era, the Euro-Atlantic tied human rights to economic and security issues in order to leverage compliance. During the wars in Yugoslavia, NATO recreated itself as a security alliance that identified human rights as security, and engaged in a military conflict that, in Russian eyes, protected a separatist movement.⁶⁸ (And in NATO’s most recent strategic concept, member states define themselves as “a unique community of values, committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.”⁶⁹) R2P created a framework for future interventions. And while the Libyan intervention was not premised on instituting democracy in Libya, it was based on the protection of those protesting for political change. The line between interfering in a sovereign state’s political structure and intervening for human rights has blurred.

Putin is not taking a Gorbachev approach to solving the problems facing Russia—indeed, he seems determined not to make Gorbachev’s mistakes. Rather than accepting Euro-Atlantic values, the Putin government is challenging the concept of universal human rights through the

⁶⁷ “The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” Section II, n. 12a.

⁶⁸ The NATO 1999 Strategic Concept identified new risks that had emerged in the post-Cold War order, including human rights abuses, and based its definition on broad factors of political, economic, social, and environmental factors in addition to military defense. NATO, “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept Approved by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C.,” NATO, accessed May 15, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27433.htm.

⁶⁹ “Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization” (NATO Summit Lisbon: NATO, November 19, 2010), http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.

UN and through its explanation of the Crimea annexation, which framed the annexation in terms of the rights of peoples, rather than individuals. Internally, the Putin regime is searching for a unifying national Russian identity that is an alternative to liberal, Euro-Atlantic identities.

In a 2013 speech at the Valdai Discussion Club, Putin announced the need for a new Russian national identity, saying that Russia had “left behind Soviet ideology, and there will be no return.” In the next breath he also denounced “extreme, western-style liberalism.”⁷⁰ In a report titled “Foundations of State Cultural Politics, the Russian Ministry of Culture disavowed the “principles of multiculturalism and tolerance,” instead proclaiming that “the preservation of a single cultural code requires the rejection of state support for cultural projects imposing alien values upon society.”⁷¹ During the Valdai speech, Putin warned against attempts to copy identities from abroad, saying “the time when ready-made lifestyle models could be installed in foreign states like computer programmes has passed.”⁷² Addressing Russian nationalists, the president cautioned them to remember that Russia has been a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country from the beginning. Challenging that multi-ethnic character with appeals to Russian, Tatar, Caucasian, or Siberian separatism will destroy the country. Lauding early Soviet nationality policies that worked to preserve the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, Putin concluded that “One must respect every minority’s right to be different, but the rights of the majority must not be put into question.” Although people should keep in touch with their ethnic and religious roots, Russian citizens need a larger, unifying identity. The most important

⁷⁰ Team of the Official Website of the President of Russia, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club,” President of Russia, September 19, 2013, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>.

⁷¹ D. Garrison Golubock, “Culture Ministry Affirms ‘Russia Is Not Europe,’” *The Moscow Times*, April 7, 2014, <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/culture-ministry-affirms-russia-is-not-europe-33701>.

⁷² Russia, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.”

guarantee of national success, Putin explained, is whether citizens identify as a nation. Citizens must be united in common responsibility before society.

This new Russian identity is yet amorphous and inchoate—but certain characteristics seem certain. As stated above, it must accommodate ethnic diversity, but promote the well-being of the state over the rights of the individual. One possible inspiration could be Eurasianism—a convoluted ideology born amidst the Russian Revolution in 1917 and revived in modern Russia through the work of Neo-Eurasianist such as Alexander Dugin. Eurasianism—in the most general terms—views Eurasia as a unique civilization destined to oppose the expansion of the liberal West. Eurasianism is not an endorsed ideology of the Putin regime, but Putin has used the language of Eurasianists in recent years, notably in his Valdai speech on Russian identity.⁷³ Furthermore, Eurasianist beliefs overlap with what the Putin administration has identified as a security threat to the Russian Federation, and can offer an alternative model of morality from which to define what is “good” for humanity.

Dugin has consistently and vocally rejected Western conceptions of human rights as universal norms, claiming that “Each society . . . understands the human differently.” In an interview with Vladimir Posner aired on Russia’s Channel One in 2014, Dugin defined Western human rights as “the rights of the individual, as opposed to the collective.”⁷⁴ He then explained that Western human rights are based on a Protestant model of theology and a Protestant political system, which is not appropriate for Catholics, Orthodox Christians, or any other religious

⁷³ Echoing the organicism and cultural differentialism of the Eurasianists, Putin declared that the new Russian national identity must be a “living organism,” a term that seems to be inspired by Lev Gumilëv.

⁷⁴ “Vladimir Posner Interviews Alexander Dugin,” *The Fourth Political Theory*, April 23, 2014, <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/vladimir-posner-interviews-alexander-dugin>. Channel One is also known as First Channel. Charles Clover describes the TV station as “the great beacon of state propaganda.” Charles Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia’s New Nationalism* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2016). p. 269.

people. Eurasianism also consistently relies on differential racism, which pursues the racial or cultural purity of groups under the conviction that cultures are impermeable. This belief, as Marlène Laruelle points out, “has significant political consequences, because it rejects the logic of human rights in favor of the rights of peoples.”⁷⁵ This would allow Russia to “opt out” of the human rights order that threatens its state sovereignty by claiming that Euro-Atlantic values are simply not transferable to Russia. Indeed, this is very similar to what Putin said in his Valdai speech.

Alternatively, given recent events surrounding the 2016 US presidential election, Russia could attempt to weaken Euro-Atlantic support for human rights. If Russia did interfere in the US election in favor of Donald Trump, then the Putin regime worked to put in office a man who has criticized and called for the dissolution of NATO, the security alliance identified in Russian security doctrines as an enforcer of human rights around the globe.⁷⁶ Trump, as a candidate and as president, has praised Putin, defending him against allegations that Putin has had journalists murdered.⁷⁷ He has also suggested deals with Russia to lift the sanctions imposed after the Crimea annexation in 2014. Trump’s response to post-election protest movements in the US has been to call activists “paid protestors,” language similar to Putin’s denouncement of political protest in Russia.⁷⁸ In March 2017, UN human rights experts chastised US legislators for an

⁷⁵ Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, D.C. : Baltimore, Md.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). p. 214.

⁷⁶ Michael R. Gordon and Niraj Chokshi, “Trump Criticizes NATO and Hopes for ‘Good Deals’ With Russia,” *The New York Times*, January 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/15/world/europe/donald-trump-nato.html>.

⁷⁷ Martin Pengelly, “Donald Trump Repeats Respect for ‘Killer’ Putin in Fox Super Bowl Interview,” *The Guardian*, February 6, 2017, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/05/donald-trump-repeats-his-respect-for-killer-vladimir-putin>.

⁷⁸ Tessa Berenson, “President Trump Attacks ‘Professional Anarchist’ Protesters on Twitter,” *Time*, accessed May 14, 2017, <http://time.com/4659323/president-trump-tweets-protests-arnold-schwarzenegger/>.

“‘alarming’ trend of ‘undemocratic’ anti-protest bills designed to criminalize or impede the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.”⁷⁹

The 2015 US National Military Strategy defines “the preservation and extension of universal values” as a US national security interest.⁸⁰ The Joint Chiefs label “preventing conflict, respecting sovereignty, and furthering human rights” as “key aspects of the international order.”⁸¹ If the Euro-Atlantic states continue to define the protection of universal human rights as a security priority, they should expect continued resistance, in some form, from Russia. Russia is moving in the opposite direction, defining universal human rights as a threat and state sovereignty as security. Western values have played a role in the fragmentation of multiethnic and multi-faith states in recent decades—the Russian Federation will be preserved through “Russian” values. It simply has to determine what exactly those are. In the meantime, fragmenting the Euro-Atlantic human rights order looks increasingly possible.

⁷⁹ “UN Rights Experts Urge Lawmakers to Stop ‘alarming’ Trend to Curb Freedom of Assembly in the US,” *Office of the High Commissioner: United Nations Human Rights*, March 30, 2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21464&LangID=E>.

⁸⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015,” Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 2015, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf, p. 5.

⁸¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, p. 2.

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