

Russia's Nineties Generation and their Cultural & Collective Memory of the Soviet Union

by

Kateryna Ivanchenko

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts

in

European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

© 2015

Kateryna Ivanchenko

Abstract

This thesis explores the legacy of Russia's Soviet past in the memory of its youth. It examines the ways of remembering and interpreting the past in light of Russia's present tenure and global collective, and cultural memory theory. Specifically, the thesis explores how members of the 1990s generation remember the Soviet period, which they themselves did not experience firsthand as adults. Using focus groups and interviews carried out in Saint Petersburg and Yakutia (Russia), the author concludes that this cohort's image of the Soviet past contains two divergent and contradictory perspectives, presenting a more nuanced picture of historical memory than expected. One strain, the idealistic variant, which glorifies the past, is representative of memory that is exalted by commemorative rituals and the school curriculum. The second strain, called the representative variant, which remembers history from a much more practical and pluralist perspective that is at times critical of the past. The thesis argues that while the depiction of history in the Soviet period was employed with a propagandistic aim, more pluralistic images of the past were allowed in the 1990s. However, in the current period the state is again taking a more active role in constructing historical memory. The author concludes by raising the question of how these processes may affect ongoing memory formation of the 1990s generation.

Acknowledgements

I have great many people to thank for helping me make the most of this momentous chapter of my life. Looking back now, I realize how unusual a path I have taken to get to where I am today, and I am forever grateful for the presence of key individuals who made my journey a truly remarkable one.

I had the privilege of jumpstarting my Master's on a defining field research course in Berlin, which began my now-complete research endeavor. During that field research course in Berlin, I studied the legacy of Berlin as a divided city, under the supervision of a professor who assumed an essential role maintained to this day. Words cannot express how appreciative I am of Dr. Daniel Stockemer's commitment from the start to my work. He was not only indispensable in building the framework for my Master's thesis, but also in supervising me through to its completion. Daniel has consistently been a reliable and irreplaceable source of encouragement, insight and guidance. His unwavering commitment to seeing this thesis through has never given into doubt, and I could not be more thankful for his steadfast presence and enthusiasm. Thank you, Daniel, for your time, effort and the humbling certainty that you have in me and my potential. It was such an honour to have worked with you!

I am also very grateful to the faculty and staff at Carleton's European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies Institute, who went out of their way to facilitate the unusual course of the studies I pursued. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Joan DeBardeleben, who played an invaluable role in helping me refine my ideas, and provided advice that helped build the foundation for my research. Joan has been a great role model for me,

as a renowned Professor and a highly esteemed scholar. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Piotr Dutkiewicz, who was my link to St. Petersburg, while my journey was in the making, and a link to Carleton, while I was on my exchange there. I took great pride in seeing Piort on TV while in Russia, and continue to admire his work and look up to him as a truly unique scholar and Carleton's honoured ambassador.

My academic exchange to Russia and research work there would not have taken such a productive course if it were not for the effort and assistance of several people, who helped shape it into what turned out to be the experience of a lifetime. The list of these individuals is vast and varied, and ranges from the members of the Russian diplomatic corps in Ottawa, to University administrators in St. Petersburg, to a list of extraordinary, fascinating and progressive professors I had the great pleasure of meeting while on exchange. Dr. Nadezhda Klimovna Kharlampieva is one of those professors who left a lasting impression on me, and exposed me to a world that I would never have thought existed! My trip to Russia's far northeast, a mere 200 km from the Polar Circle, was an experience beyond anything I could have imagined.

I am also grateful to the gracious hospitality of the Mirny Polytechnic Institute branch of Ammosov North-Eastern University hosts, and especially its founder and Director, Dr. Albina Abramovna Goldman. My trip to Yakutia and the Mirny Polytechnic was vital to my understanding of my research topic, as well as my personal maturity and transformation.

I am truly indebted to every member of my tight-knit family, who encouraged my work, but never allowed me to get shortsighted and pass up on the opportunities

that transpired on the sidelines. My exchange, my trip to Yakutia and multiple trips to Ukraine, including one I had taken as an OSCE election observer, came without a doubt at the expense of my parents' peace of mind. I will always remember and be thankful for their encouragement and unwavering support, which was never compromised, even by the most legitimate of concerns.

Moreover, I am truly grateful to my employer, who is an irreplaceable mentor to me, and a politician that will never cease to amaze and inspire. I am proud to work for Toronto's City Councillor, John Filion, and I am lucky to have been learning the art and science of his legendary political tenure since I was first hired as a Summer Political Aid at the age of sixteen. Thank you, John, for inspiring me to write and for your meaningful and genuine encouragement in seeing a successful completion to this thesis. I am also incredibly appreciative of my colleagues' patience and understanding. I thank them for supportively and kindly putting up with my absences.

Finally, the manifestation of this dream into reality is a blessing I owe to many, many more, especially my loyal and loving friends. A big thank you goes out to everyone who has benevolently put up with my absenteeism and continued to play an irreplaceable role in my life.

No textbook could contain the wisdom of a journey so intense and humbling, a timeless journey of conflicting realities and troubling times. I am not the same person at the end of it and I owe it all to those that have made it so.

I am truly blessed and forever grateful to all for all – Thank you!

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
I Introduction	1
II Soviet Ideology & Memory Context.....	10
III Lifestyle Context & the Soviet Society	22
IV Literature Review.....	35
VI Methodology.....	53
VII Findings.....	61
VIII Conclusion & Summary of Findings	97
Sources Cited.....	103
Appendices.....	108

I – Introduction

A leading Bolshevik historian, Mikhail Pokrovsky, famously defined history as “politics projected into the past.” His perception of history has outlived Russia’s kaleidoscopic political transition and caught up with its present form. International and Russian scholars point to the escalation of censorship in history, by means of policy and legislation, in Russia. While some dismiss it as an element of the inevitable, a consequence of Russia’s ambiguous legacy of prolonged authoritarian rule, others point to a clearly established “history politics” in Russia. According to international and Russian scholarship, political legitimacy in Russia is heavily dependent on a unifying historical narrative for two reasons. First, the history of authoritarian culture held sway over political culture and legitimized the subordination of history to an authoritative ideological discourse. Secondly, Russia assumed the legal status of succession to the Soviet Union, inheriting an ideological void and assuming the responsibility over the crimes committed by the Soviet Union. Over time, Russia has engineered a historical discourse that legitimizes its claim to its Soviet power status and fame, while discrediting anything that contradicts the perception of history sanctioned by the modern Russian regime.

The politics of Russia’s past projection is both an ambitious and ambiguous topic. It has little to do with history itself, and everything to do with history as it is perceived, remembered and recalled. On the May 9, 2015, Russians will take to the streets, museums and monuments to publically display their remembrance and indebtedness to

the greatest Soviet era accomplishment of their great country's history – the victory over Nazism. This would hardly seem political or unusual in the case of any other state that publically commemorates and pays respects to those it deems heroes of its past, but in Russia, this event will mark a political turning point and a fundamental milestone that reaffirms its future ambitions as much as merits its past. During the commemorative ceremony ten years ago, Russia invited over sixty foreign dignitaries to attend its grand military parade and acknowledge its past and present military might (Kattago, 2009). This year Russia is bound to outdo itself, to compensate both for increasing international hostility and a rapidly growing number of defectors. This overt display of power by Russia is hardly new; in fact, the idea of grandiose military parades is a Soviet-era legacy drenched in politics, albeit far removed from acknowledgment. After all, what good is acknowledgement of that which constitutes a farce? Ironically, it was Marx, who in 1852 said, "Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce" (Marx 1978). But how history is remembered in light of the past, as well as the present remains contentious and undetermined.

The ideological implications of Soviet history are incredibly complex due to the interaction between the contradictory legacy of history and the collective memory of its citizens. In Soviet-type authoritarian regimes, the state's interference in historical studies and in the politics of memory stems from the official presumption of ideological monopoly, censorship and administrative control over professional historiography (Miller, 2010). Political power is ensured through control over "official memories" and

the channels and forms through which they are disseminated. The Soviet demise led to the resurfacing of the past, which under communism was strictly controlled.

The rehabilitation of the past is a phenomenon associated with the demise of communism that dictated a uniform version of thereof. Russia before the Putin era was at a crossroads, bereft of a statewide ideology or a unifying national idea and coherent version of its past. History was made then, but how did it evolve under the Soviet Socialist rule? This thesis will attempt to shed light on the evolution of memory in Russia throughout its complex history. The extent to which history has been politicized in Russia's post-Soviet historical reconciliation is significant, particularly due to the possible implications it might bear for Russia's construction of a new national narrative, and a common identity (White, 2010). Due to the lack of ideological closure, similar to that which has been attempted on the pragmatic political and economic fronts, some aspects of Russian identity are still integrated in its historic legacy (Dawisha, 2005 p. 647). Russians remember the glorified image of the Soviet Union and its superpower status, the image of the state that launched Sputnik, sent the first man to space, and excelled in science, technology and sports. This memory is exacerbated by the memory of Russia's loss in the Great Patriotic War and the honour of this vivid chapter of its history. For a great majority of Russians, World War II is the most important event in Russian history (Sherlock, 2011). As a result of the nostalgic sentiment associated with the above-mentioned cultural themes and events, a number of Soviet symbols and legacies were not dismantled, and have consequentially found their way into the living memory of Russians. On the other hand, there exists a contrary perception of Russia's

Soviet past – the lingering image of the Soviet system as a failure; unjustifiable implications for individual rights and freedoms under socialism in general and the Stalinist repression, and Soviet purges in particular, are also present. The weaknesses and failures of the USSR regime have been manipulated by proceeding rulers to legitimize the struggle of transition and all the hardship associated with it. This multifaceted reference to the Soviet Union is especially fascinating, when the Soviet experience is a constructed and not a lived memory, which has become the case of the '90s generation. This raises the question of how they remember and perceive their Soviet history? In what light and based on what factors is their understanding of their country's past shaped?

To my knowledge, no previous research has chosen Russia's '90s generation, one to live through and come of age in the most immediate aftermath of the dissolved USSR, as the focus of their study. In other words, when focusing on memory, modern scholarship lacks the breadth of detail that pertains to a very specific population strata, the one that was born after the Soviet Union fell apart, had grown up through the 1990s and had exposure to progressive textbooks and an evolving historic curriculum. The focus of this study is therefore the perception and memory of Russians that were born between 1992 and 1996 and had been uniquely positioned to see history from an unprecedented and pluralist view.

The perception of memory of the generation living through the post-Soviet transition and the analysis of their collective remembering is a topic worth exploring for two reasons. First, the potential of this exploratory research to contribute to the

growing literature on the trending topics of collective and cultural memory, which have not been previously explored under the light of post-communist memory of this given generation. Second, findings might provide an insight into how memory is perceived, interpreted and what are some of the most important sources of its transition. This research perceives memory as a product of social construction (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011) and aims to envisage the framework that shapes memory. There is also a potential to understand how memory evolves in the present, although it is not the main intention of this thesis. The memory of Russia's '90s generation is at the core of this work and it endeavors to concretely analyze what is remembered of the Soviet Union and how it is remembered, by this generation. In other words, how is Russia's Soviet past reconstructed in the memory of those who did not live through that fragment of the history? Or, in what terms is Russia's Soviet past narrated in the individual and collective memory of the post-Soviet '90s generation?

My research findings based on a series of semi-structured focus groups in St. Petersburg and in Yakutia revealed that the memory of Russia's post-Soviet generation can be interpreted from two divergent paradigms, or parallels. One of the parallels entails a longing for past events and the elements of those events that are glorifying and legendary. This type of memory is tenet-driven, because it endorses status-quo scholarship on memory. This memory is sensationalized, built on the mythical principle of Russia's historical triumphs and cultural greatness. I refer to this memory as the idealistic parallel of memory, which aims to celebrate and retain the past for the sake of its honour, while also capitalizing on its glory for the sake of fabricating a sense of

shared societal narrative. History is thus seen as a means to an end, from this trajectory, as opposed to an end in itself. I refer to the opposing, dissenting, more liberal trajectory on which Russia's Soviet past is remembered as the practical or representative parallel of memory. This memory is more polarized, complex and diverse. It values the autonomy of history, as a subject and the past, as a legacy, but does not exclusively capitalize on the positive aspects of the past, to the exclusion of its tragedies. In other words, the past is more contained, pluralist and nuanced.

My research also resonated with assertions in prominent memory scholarship, including the work of one of its best-known thinkers, Maurice Halbwachs. He argues that memory is socially constructed, that is, shaped by societal norms and institutions. He points to the present as a potential variable that could influence social frameworks, which shape the way past, is evaluated and recalled. My findings that pertain to the memory of Russia's '90s generation reassert the importance of Russia's evolving social frameworks and transforming institutions that shape this generation's understanding of its predecessor's life, in light of Russia's progressive transition in the post-Soviet aftermath. Although Russia does not have a firm civic society, even today, and some of its fundamental institutions remain unreformed, the focus of this thesis is not to understand how the memory of Russia's Soviet past is shaped in the present. It is rather to understand what is remembered by the 1990s generation and how that memory might have been changed during the initial years of Russia's transition. That being said, findings suggest that the memory of this generation is malleable and might be

susceptible to being manipulated in the present. More in depth studies would need to be undertaken to confirm this, however.

My findings confirm a relationship between collective memory theory and the living memory in physical memorials, rituals and practices that preserve the memory of the Soviet Union through several generations after it. Collective memory has a time-span of approximately three generations (J. Assmann, 1995), which proved true in the case of Russia's '90s generation, whose Soviet memory will most likely be outlived by the generations that will follow. The question then becomes whether only the legendary moments of Russian history will be remembered since they are currently emphasized, including the memory of its victory in WWII (Kattago 2009). George Orwell once famously wrote, "[T]he most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history." Russia is running the risk of obliterating its present by repeating its past. The extent to which history has been politicized in Russia has never been clearer. 2014 saw Russia collude in the affairs of a neighbouring state under the guise of a commonly shared past, annexing a part of a sovereign nation's territoriality, in contravention with international treaties and law (Ekman, et. al 2015). History had become a valuable component of Russia's internal and foreign policy. The rectification of history is a part of Russia's reality, engraved in its long-held culture of authoritarian politics (Liñán, 2010).

What then is the role of history in Putin's ideological agenda, and how conducive is it to the living memory of the Soviet Union? More importantly, in light of the evolutionary context of Russia's history, and its past, purpose and role, how does it

shape the memory of contemporary Russians? This thesis endeavors to touch on all of these, but the main question at its core is as follows: how is Russia's Soviet past reconstructed in the memory of those that did not live through that part of its history? In other words, in what terms is Russia's Soviet past narrated through the individual and collective memory of the post-Soviet generation of the 1990s?

Prior to embarking on the most fundamental question of this project, the context and circumstantial details of what life in the Soviet Union was like will be elucidated and a detailed background overview of the social, political and economic circumstances of life in transitioning and Soviet Russia will be discussed. This chapter will begin with Russia's years of post-Soviet transition and wrap up with an overview of what life under the Soviet System of Socialism was like. This overview aims to provide the infrastructure for the chapter on findings (Chapter VII), while elaborating on the essential qualities of life in Soviet Russia, seen from the perspective of those that have not directly lived through it. An extensive literature overview immediately follows the chapter on historical context. This chapter will pave the theoretical framework for the conceptual structure of historical and collective memory. Relevant and related definitions and concepts will be explained in light of a detailed theoretical analysis of core memory theory and its evolution. Chapter IV on literature will go into a detailed level of analysis of memory literature that is authentic to Russia and specifically its Soviet-era history and memory. Divergent camps of intellectuals and Russian thinkers that shape its memory politics will also be analyzed and discussed in detail.

The methodology chapter follows and will explain the methodology employed in the thesis and reflect on the limits and biases of this study. Chapter VII, "Findings," will attempt to answer and analyze the fundamental question of this thesis, what Russia's first post-Soviet generation remembers of its past. This chapter opens with the empirical insight gained from participant observation, which serves as a basis for the later part, which reflects on the responses elicited from the focus groups conducted in St. Petersburg. The concluding chapter reflects on the progress of the thesis at large, potential contributions and ideas to enrich the discipline, its inadequacies, and ways to move forward.

II – Soviet Ideology & Memory Context

Politically motivated censorship of history is most notoriously shown (or has been most clearly revealed) (A. Assmann in Olick 2011, 338) in the cases of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The USSR was no exception to this trend, where history evolved but was limited to a single version of the past when it became a part of the school curriculum. Following the revolution in 1917 and upon the inception of a new state ideology, the Bolshevik party sought to impose a new social order. Marxism relied on a uniform and uncontested historical account of pre-socialist Russia; the historical account employed by the communist ideology, however, served to further the ideology and foster a new social order, as opposed to manifesting a historic account of the past. As prescribed in the Communist Manifesto, “the history of all hitherto existing society [was] the history of class struggle” (Marx and Engels in Yekelchuk, 13). The Soviet historical discourse at the time came to view class struggle as its key component and class victory as its turning point. Class struggle became the main propeller of the historical process (Kononov 2011, 79). In the school curriculum, the concept of a national history was rejected and history classes were replaced with subjects like ‘social science’ and ‘political literacy’ (Yekelchuk, 13). An official, unified historical discourse was not reintroduced in the Soviet school system until 1931 (Kononov 2011, 79). In the literature, this marked the onset of the Soviet Union ‘having a fatherland’ and the need to ‘defend it’ (Stalin in Yekelchuk, 14). Those two myths became the benchmarks for the inception of a national historical discourse, fostering patriotism and nationwide

consensus. The historical discourse was still centered on class struggle and the 'honourable role' of the state in overcoming an oppressive regime.

Notably, however, historical accomplishments of key political figures of the preceding regime, such as Alexander Nevskiy, Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great were not excluded from the new historical discourse in the Soviet Union. These figures served as threads to continuity in the construction of Russia's ongoing historic epic (Konocov 2011, 83). History was increasingly manipulated throughout the 1930s, and was employed by the Party to reassert its power and manifest a stronghold over society throughout the coming years. It was increasingly evolving to become an extension of the Soviet ideology, and the means of its dissemination, with the onset of the Great Patriotic War, marked a different era of historical consciousness in the Soviet Union (Konocov 2011, 92). The Great Patriotic War entered the historical discourse and collective memory as a colossal tragedy and a political bargaining chip. A propaganda campaign ensured that Stalin's terrors and costly errors during the war were intentionally left out of the discourse, replaced by a sensationalized and heroic image of him (Ханаева, 2007). The scholar refers to this as "the shielding myth" (in Konocov 2011, 93).

The war myth legitimized the expression of publically experienced horror and brutality (Konocov 2011, 93). This myth reinforced the image of the enemy, strengthening public consensus and unity in light of a tangible threat. Collective discourse was oriented towards nationalism and grounded in the virtue of victory, sacrifice and chauvinism at this point in time, roughly in the late 1940s.

Historical discourse in the Soviet Union was reoriented towards the earlier accomplishments of the Soviet regime and away from the war myth when Nikita Khrushchev came to power, replacing Stalin in 1953 (Konocov 2011, 94). His arrival marked the onset of the “Khrushchev’s Thaw” and the weakening of political and ideological censorship in the USSR. Khrushchev sought to rehabilitate the memory of some of the victims of Stalinist repression and released political prisoners from the Gulag (Konocov 2011, 96). His de-Stalinization reforms and policies went so far as to remove Stalin’s body from Lenin’s Mausoleum, a move that was criticized and condemned in the Soviet’s ruling elite circles (Konocov 2011, 97). Khrushchev distanced himself from Stalin’s brutality and publicly condemned his extreme methods, namely the infliction of terror and the cult of his personality. Stalin had been fiercely accused of being unprepared for the war, executing prominent military personnel, trusting Hitler, and monopolizing military leadership, which deprived him of necessary expertise and insight from others in the military (Konocov 2011, 99).

The use of the war myth was limited during Khrushchev’s Thaw, however, because it contradicted his rhetoric of Stalin’s condemnation (Konocov 2011, 100). Khrushchev steered the historical discourse away from the past and into the future, orienting it towards technological evolution, modernization and progress (Konocov 2011, 101). Khrushchev’s shift in political focus coincided with the relative economic boom and rise of consumerism taking place between early 1950s and late 1960s, as well as the first astronaut’s launch into space. According to Kaposov (Konocov), the sixties in the Soviet Union are characterized by state propaganda, intellectual culture and public

optimism merited on tangible progress and future aspirations (Konocov 2011, 101).

The discourse of the preceding Soviet epoch was once again transformed during the Soviet Union's celebration of its 20th anniversary of victory over fascism, and was then further reinforced during Brezhnev's time in office (Konocov 2011, 102). Brezhnev, upon assuming power in 1964, sought to restore Stalinist accomplishments and reinstate the war myth as the major theme of Soviet propaganda (Konocov 2011, 102). Monuments were erected in Stalin's commemoration, and the Great Patriotic War was elevated to the point of a binding national narrative. The theme of future progress no longer conserved social cohesion, plagued by the weakening communist ideology (Filitov, 2011), economic stagnation and declining public morale. The Soviet period called "zastoi" ("stagnation," literally translated as "backwater") is characterized by the public perception that the Soviet experiment had reached its expiration date. Under these circumstances, the regime had opted to reassert its legitimacy by propagandizing its classic ideology and past achievements, bringing history to the forefront of its rhetoric (Konocov 2011, 105). The seeds planted during Khrushchev's years, particularly in academia, had to an extent been adopted amongst the marginalized intellectual elite (Konocov 2011, 106). Some scholars and historians resisted the state's reassertion over the monopolization of history, which then contributed to the recovery of the suppressed memories of the victims of communism during the onset of Gorbachev's Perestroika roughly twenty years later (Konocov 2011, 111).

Communism was increasingly condemned for the brutality of Stalin's repressions and increasingly challenged by weakening Soviet institutions. Collective memory was

seen as a crucial tool now in the hands of the democratic opposition of Soviet satellite states seeking autonomy (Filitov, 2011). In the second half of the 1980s, upon the onset of Gorbachev's tenure, historical memory ceased to be a useful political tool for the communist party, instead working to its detriment. The state apparatus lacked uniformity on the question of history and politicization of memory (Konocov 2011, 112). Upon the dissolution of the Union and the subsequent dismantling of the Soviet ideology, history had become an obsolete variable in the perplexed ideological equation of the Russian Federation (Konocov 2011, 114). On the one hand, Russia inherited an ideological void in the place of a powerful and binding myth that constructs a uniform identity; on the other hand, history was set free (Konocov 2011, 114). These forces have ignited a 'memory boom' in Russia, where the question of the rehabilitation of memory arose at the forefront of the public debates, assuming an almost unprecedented level of recognition under Yeltsin. The avalanche effect that had triggered the memory boom can be traced back to Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika reforms. Although historians had largely shied away from challenging the prevailing discourse of the Soviet history, including the war myth that had dominated it, Glasnost had unleashed democratic reforms that enabled journalists, socialists, writers and philosophers to challenge aspects of the established narrative of Soviet history (Konocov 2011, 112). Perestroika lead to a radical reassessment of the Soviet past (Konocov, 2010), a trend that spilled over into Yeltsin's rise to power and Russia's post-Soviet transition era.

The 1990s exposed a newly-independent Russia to a calamity that challenged its societal consensus and uniformity. After the collapse of communism, Russia's identity

was in flux (Liñán 2010). Other newly-independent Soviet republics began building identities that stood in fierce opposition to their Soviet past, reconstructing their identities on the auspice of forward-looking aspirations for autonomy and independence. These ambitions were further reinforced by their marginalized visions of the past, in which they were subjected to Soviet oppression and aggression. Russia's president Yeltsin, on the other hand, declared the Russian Federation a legal successor to the Soviet Union; Russia inherited its Soviet legacy and the ever-present reminder of the shriveling status of communism (Копосов 2011, 115).

Yeltsin was making a considerable effort to construct a new post-Soviet national idea for Russia that would unite public opinion, which proved difficult. His efforts were fruitless and subject to widespread public discontent. They were also secondary to his scrambling for measures to prevent an imminent economic collapse Russia was on the brink of, in the early 1990s (Горшков and Шереги, 2010). On the public fronts of past reminiscence and contemplation, contentious and often contradictory information was entering the public domain. A number of unorthodox interpretations of history were entering the discourse, along with contradictions regarding a number of episodes in Russia's Soviet past, and memories of communist brutality were slowly being integrated into the societal mainstream (Горшков and Шереги, 2010).

Although largely incomplete, another notable progress in the realm of history under Yeltsin's regime was a partial "archival revolution," principal to Yeltsin's liberal reforms (Копосов 2011, 115). It is referred to as 'partial' because Russia did not reform the fundamental infrastructure of its Soviet-inherited institutions, including that of its

secret services.

Unlike in the case of the German Democratic Republic, which upon unification with the Federal Republic of Germany had released information formerly classified as state secret into the public domain, Russia maintained the state-secret status of the vast majority of classified documents (Etkind 2009). The Stasi files of the former GDR were opened up to the public, while the state security agency itself was dismantled; events transpired differently in Russia, where the status of classified files remained largely unchanged (Etkind 2009). Moreover, upon Putin's coming to power, prominent historic documents released or declassified under Yeltsin were reclassified as secret (Концов 2011, 115). Notwithstanding the shortcomings of Russia's liberalization reforms in the ideological realm, the society was still experiencing an unprecedented level of openness and inflow of information.

Subsequently, a flurry of controversy arose around a number of contentious historic events that occurred during Russia's Soviet era of history. Some of these controversial events remain convoluted today, including the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Stalin and Hitler (Солонин, 2004) and the Katyn massacre of Polish officers (Концов 2011, 266). Other events—including Ukraine's Holodomor and the illegal occupation of the Baltics by the Red army after the war—are not only highly contentious, but pose serious strains on Russia's relations with its neighbours (Kattago, 2009).

Putin's influential work, published before replacing Boris Yeltsin in power, is worth mentioning for its pertinence to Russia's ideology and culture. On December 29,

1999, Putin published a treatise titled “Russia on the Threshold of the New Millennium” (Томашов, 2013), a document in which he outlined Russia’s mission and priorities for the years to come. In this document he emphasizes Russia’s historic continuity and a system of values rooted in its cultured past. He rejects the idea of a comprehensive, overarching Soviet-style state ideology, suggesting instead that the riches of Russia’s historic and cultural inheritance are employed as binding societal myths (Томашов, 2013). Putin’s intent to capitalize on Russia’s historic legacy reasserts Russia’s focus on the past, rather than a future-oriented direction. Russia’s history, including its Soviet history, evolved to become the backbone of his rhetoric throughout his three terms in the office, as well as a vehicle for the legitimization of his policy orientation. Putin set the course of Russia’s history by means of a “reconciliatory comprehensive approach,” which pertains to Russia’s state symbols (Томашов, 2013). Putin adapted Russia’s Soviet anthem to its original music of Alexandrov, with a slight change in the lyrics. He also reinstated the Russian flag and the code of arms, both of which date to Russia’s royal era and had been abolished under communism.

One of Russia’s most important symbols today is the St. George ribbon, rolled out in 2005. It is a unique symbol with a historic connotation and is Russia’s first noncommunist symbol associated with its role and victory in World War II. This symbol is immensely popular in Russia, worn on the lapel by the veterans and civilians alike during commemorative and celebratory war events. It played a peculiar role during Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and is now synonymous with nationalist pride in Russia

(Tétrault-Farber, 2015). The growing prominence of this state symbol attests to the primacy of the war myth in modern Russia.

Much like the presence of the St. George ribbon, the escalation of Russia's war myth did not resonate well with those post-Soviet countries that have a contradicting memory of the Soviet Union. As already mentioned, contentious and unsettled memory conflicts in the Baltics and Ukraine persist, pointing pervasive memory faultiness (Kattago 2009) in Eastern Europe and the subsequent "memory clashes." The clashes of memory and confrontation between Russia and its neighbours shapes the dynamic of memory politics in Russia (Kattago 2009). An in-depth treatment of the details of these memory clashes is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, the presence of an obvious contestation is not irrelevant to the ambiguous nature of Russia's collective memory. In fact, these clashes are of particular note in the context of Russia's newly unraveled jurisdiction pertaining to its Soviet history.

During the course of this thesis, Russia's State Duma amended a memory law that has been surrounded by controversy during its lengthy brewing process. In 2009, Russia's government initiated a commission to prohibit "the falsification of history," a decision which was spurred by clashes in Estonia surrounding the government's decision to relocate a Soviet monument prior to the commemoration of the 64th victory over Nazism celebration (Kattago 2009).

The latest development in Russia's increasingly aggressive politicization of history is "the law on the rehabilitation of Nazism," tabled in May 2014 (Kurilla 2014). This law sanctions a uniform version of Russia's Soviet history to the detriment of

plurality and complexity that characterizes it, making the interpretation of memory and Russia's soviet past a burden and a source of ongoing dispute.

Between the appearance of the original version of Law on the Rehabilitation of Nazism on the eve Russia's 64th victory celebrations in 2009, and Putin's implementation of the law in 2014, it had undergone several revisions (Копосов 2011, 228). The lead-up to the 60th anniversary of victory in World War II, and its commemoration on May 9th 2005, triggered a wave of memories among the population (Kurilla 2014). Russia's memory law idea was conceived in light of a fear of alternative recollections of the war, which might pose a threat to its portrayal of a 'glorious victory.' International controversy surrounding the 60th anniversary commemoration set the ball in motion well before the clashes in Estonia, when international dignitaries declined the invitation to attend the Victory day parade in Russia (Kattago, 2009). Contradictory memories and unresolvable differences in the perception of history between Russia and its neighbours largely centre on the above-mentioned events. In a ripple effect of Russia's Soviet memory reinvigoration, the complicity of the Soviet's instigation of WWII, as per the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, has surfaced (Солонин, 2004). The role of the Red Army in the Katyn massacre of Polish Officers came under heavy scrutiny when the Russian government suspended the investigation of the massacre of over 20,000 allied military personnel (Etkind, 2009).

The international community and residents of former Soviet satellite states began to aggressively seek answers from the Russian government as to the Soviet occupation of liberated territories and the raiding and violence carried out by the Red

Army. Putin's pursuit of the symbolic continuity of Russia's historic legacy of greatness was threatened. It had prompted him to mold a historical discourse sparing Russia's history of its Soviet crimes, while acknowledging and celebrating its achievements (Kattago 2009). To keep his intentions in line with Russia's desire for democratization, Putin needed a systematic "politics of memory," a trajectory of memory reflective of its glorious past, attuned to both its present and future ambitions (Konocov 2011, 228).

The Nuremburg Tribunals, which are directly tied to the newly passed "Law against the rehabilitation of Nazism," scarcely speak to the role of the Soviet Army, or to any of the above-noted points of contention (Kurilla 2014). Yet the Tribunals solidified a history of World War II and therefore the Soviet role (and by extension, Russia's role) in its victory. While the Tribunal solidified WWII history at large, Russia sought to construct its interpretation of history in light of this prominent and internationally-recognized institution, in order to validate its own interpretation of history (Konocov 2011, 229). The Russian government effectively sought to justify this undemocratic move in lieu of an international convention, to the detriment of public opinion, scientific plausibility and, most importantly, democracy.

This chameleon-like weapon in the hands of the Russian government somewhat resembles one employed by the Soviet regime in the past. It convolutes the historic memory of the Soviet Union by relegating it to a vague international convention, without direct relation to the crimes that the Soviet government committed. The government then adopts and promotes a simplified, non-contentious version of its Soviet past, hiding the details under the auspice of the comprehensive Nuremburg

Tribunals. The implications of this are not the focus of this thesis, however, given how recent this jurisdiction is and how unlikely it is to be a variable that shapes the memory of Russia's '90s generation today.

III Lifestyle Context and the Soviet Society

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past. The tradition of all the generations of the dead weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.”
(Marx, 1978)

Embarking on a Post-Soviet experiment

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s exposed a newly-independent Russia to a path unknown. In June 1991, Boris Yeltsin became Russia's first elected president, succeeding an ailing Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's final supreme ruler (Velikonja 2009). Gorbachev's final years in office had witnessed a decline in economic output, a swelling of military spending, worsening shortages of available products, and uncertainty that further magnified an already gloomy societal morale (Velikonja 2009). “[In] April 1991, only 12 percent of respondents in a national survey claimed to have seen meat in state stores and only 8 percent had seen butter” (Shleifer 2005). Embarking on the trajectory of democratic reforms and adopting a free market system of capital, Yeltsin, Gorbachev's successor, introduced sweeping changes to the deep structure of political, economic and social structures of the formerly Soviet society (Filitov 2011). The centrally planned Soviet economy was transformed into a capitalist order, based on deregulated markets and private ownership. It occurred, however, in an abrupt and unbalanced manner, exposing a largely unsuspecting and unprepared

population to aggressive market reforms without the cushioning of welfare safety nets guaranteed by the preceding regime.

Internal consensus in the newly-independent Russia was lacking between people and politicians alike. The Soviet-inherited bureaucracy and its well-organized Communist Party proved difficult to reform for Russia's newly-minted democratic leader (Rosefielde 2004). The subsequent political gridlock accompanied the transfer of unreformed Soviet institutions, most notably its parliament and judiciary (Rosefielde 2004). The transfer of these institutions concentrated their limited autonomy under the country's supreme leader, its president. Similarly, the state has reasserted its oversight over the public sector and media outlets and the security services, but a lack of political consensus and direction has inhibited tax collection and the formation of a sound economic policy (Rosefielde 2004). Russia's federal budget ultimately collapsed in 1997-1998, responding to declining oil prices and East Asia's financial crisis (Rosefielde, 2004). In the lead up to Russia's crisis-led debt default, Russia engaged in aggressive economic reforms, including privatization, which only served to increase its fiscal vulnerability. Between December 1992 and July 1994, Russia rapidly privatized its shares in public enterprises, transferring nearly 70% of its assets into private hands by the mid-1990s (Volkov, 2015). These economic reforms said to have fueled a vast income disparity in Russia and created a small class of ultra-rich oligarchs (Shleifer, 2005). While a tiny fraction of the Russian population was disproportionately capitalizing on the ownership of former state assets, the vast majority of the population was stuck in low-paying jobs at best, and unemployed at worst. In fact, during the nineties, the

unemployment in Russia was approximately 25 percent, while its GDP was roughly 25 percent below 1989 levels (Shleifer, 2005). Rent-seeking and corruption were widespread, and income disparity, according to the Gini coefficient for money, rose from 0.26 in 1991 to 0.41 in 1994, hovering at around 0.5 by 1997 (Shleifer 2005). In the 1990s, Russia also engaged in an aggressive and costly military campaign against a breakaway Chechen Republic, landlocked within Russia's territoriality. The fight against Chechen rebels led to tens of thousands of casualties, further aggravating an already fragile reality of post-Soviet transition (Liñán 2010). According to Rosefielde, Russia sustained 3.4 million excess deaths between 1990 and 1998 (Rosefielde, 2001, in Rosefielde 2004).

Endemic alcohol abuse has also plagued the nation during the turbulent years of transition (McKee 1999). The late 1990s also witnessed a sharp rise in death related to drug overdose, HIV infections, and tuberculosis, leading to a subsequent depreciation in life expectancy trends (Shkolnikov, 2001). "Between 1990 and 1994, male life expectancy in Russia dropped from 63.8 to 57.6 years. It then increased to 61.3 in 1998, but fell back to 58.6 in 2001. Female life expectancy followed the same pattern, although the changes were less extreme: it fell from 74.2 years in 1990 to 71.0 in 1994, rose to 72.9 in 1998 and fell to 72.1 in 2001" (Shleifer 2005).

In retrospect of Russia's turbulent initial ten years of post-Soviet transition, it is not difficult to sympathize with the scholarship that looks more favourably on the Soviet episode of its history. The desperation struggle of Russian society through this lingering transition period has, understandably, perceived the Soviet episode of its history in a

more positive light. Putin's coming to power in 2000 as Russia's second president marks the onset of a different era in Russian history.

Putin's Rise to Power

The driving forces of history at the onset of Putin's regime were widespread public discontent; a depreciating standard of living; a demoralizing war in Chechnya; rampant corruption; worldwide humiliation; and political infighting. Once a global superpower, Russia's leverage waned on the international stage and much of its influence in Eastern Europe was diminished. Russian society was craving order and was therefore willing to make concessions on its newly-gained liberties for the sake of stability (Rasizade 2008). Putin appealed to Russia's demoralized public through his nationalistic rhetoric, backed with statistical figures that reaffirmed the dire state of the Russian economy (Horsfield 2014). He has famously acknowledged "[that] the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. As for the Russian people, it became a genuine tragedy. Tens of millions of [Russian] citizens and countrymen found themselves beyond the fringes of Russian territory. The epidemic of collapse has spilled over to Russia itself" (Rasizade 2008). Putin instilled a sense of assuredness that guaranteed his widespread popularity. It is worth mentioning, however, that the election that brought him to power saw a third of the public's vote backing the Communist Party, with a mere 6 percent endorsing the liberal reformers that steered Russia through its initial ten years of transition.

With a strong mandate of widespread support, Putin moved swiftly to bring order. He reinstated the Kremlin's control structures and inserted himself at the top of

Russia's system of governance pervading every level of Russia's governance (Rasizade 2008). He has similarly reinforced his monopoly over the economy by striking a compromise with Russia's new and powerful elite, who emerged under Yeltsin. Putin legitimized their assets and granted an element of political protection in exchange for retaining a considerable level of power and access to resources.

Russia's economy is an instrument of the state, which is highly dependent on oil; the energy sector currently accounts for approximately two-thirds of Russia's exports, around 30 percent of Russia's GDP, and almost half of the Federal Budget revenues (Sharples in Gromov 2012).

Putin's consolidation of power brought about order, structure, predictability, and a subsequent economic rebound that coincided with the global surge in oil prices. Between 1999 and 2007, Russia's GDP increased by 69% and in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms reached a \$1 billion threshold (Shleifer 2005). According to the International Monetary Fund, Russia's per capita income in 2013, measured in terms of purchasing power parity, is roughly \$18,600, nearly double China's per capita income of around \$10,000 (Shleifer 2005). From 2001 to 2013, Russia's GDP grew at a robust 4.4% average annual rate, with other macroeconomic measures of stability, including inflation, unemployment and deficit normalizing. Macroeconomic stabilization has positively impacted a raising standard of living in Russia, restoring the public morale and their optimistic prospects for the future (Rasizade, 2008).

A significant surge in the Russian economy and a rising standard of living and societal morale in Russia are all associated with Putin's leadership by those living in

Russia. Putin delivered a collective sense of status and integrity to Russians and introduced his own brand of “sovereign democracy,” which is passed on the leader’s authority and the unity and conformity of the people, to the detriment of pluralism (Rosefielde, 2004).

Putin redefined Russia’s federalism by reforming both of its branches of Parliament. As of September 2004, he directly appoints governors, who previously were elected to the upper house of Russia's Parliament, its Federation Council (Rosefielde, 2004). The lower house of Parliament, or the State Duma, was also weakened and constricted by elections, largely overseen by the government (Rosefielde, 2004).

Putin reinstated the capacity of the state’s Soviet-inherited intelligence services, leaving Russia’s secret services and law enforcements agencies without parliamentary control or oversight (Etkind, 2009); Russia does not have an independent judiciary.

The regime’s increasingly punitive legislation and tighter grip on civil society organizations and the media, as well as the elimination of any viable political opposition, mark major anti-democratic developments in Russia (Horsfield, 2014). A number of other issues, including increasing limitations on civil liberties, have recently gained notoriety. Aggressive nationalistic discourse, Orthodox revival and anti-Western sentiment seem to fill the post-Soviet identity void and are shaping public consensus. In 2012, Russia requested foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to register with the government as foreign agents. In 2013, as per Putin’s request, a uniform teachers’ history manual was written, followed by a uniform history textbook. In 2014 an official memory law was passed, creating an official version of history, under the guise of

rehabilitation of Nazism. The significance of these and other regressive developments can be best understood in light of what life in the USSR was like within the ideological and system confines of its socialist order.

What life in the Soviet Union was like

On November 7, 1917, Vladimir I. Lenin led a Bolshevik Party coup, consolidating the power of the ruling classes in the hands of a newly empowered communist party (Filitov, 2011). The revolution set in motion the creation of the first socialist state, The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or the Soviet Union. While the extent to which the classical communist ideology of Marx and Engels was actually implemented is debatable, their manifesto certainly served as the political, economic and ideological blueprint of the Soviet Union. The communist-inspired principle of power diffusion to the people unleashed a vast state bureaucracy apparatus. The state effectively controlled union-wide institutions, such as the Communist Party, the military, the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB), and a vastly hierarchical and complicated bureaucracy onto the fifteen republics comprised by the USSR (Kornai, 1992). The state had further reinforced and exercised its monopoly in the legislative branches of governance. While the formal Soviet constitution, laws and even branches of government resembled that of a typical, modern nation state, the fundamental institution in the power structure, however is the Communist Party (Kornai, 1992). The monopoly of the party's power was concentrated in the hands of the general secretary, who was the party leader and the head of state. The state exercised political and economic supremacy, which were highly intertwined since the economic means (the

means of production) were State owned, while the economic aims (output) were dictated by the state. The centrally-planned economy aimed to rationally produce services and manufacture goods, satisfy demand and allocate resources independently of market forces. The state had an exclusive monopoly over legal economic boundaries and regulations, and acted as a proprietor of state-owned firms, farms and factories (Filitov, 2011). Private property ownership was outlawed and collectivization agricultural policies adopted.

The scope of the state's control reached far beyond politics and the economy, spilling over into the traditional civil society and citizenship spheres (Kornai, 1992). The state sought to incept a superior social code of moral values and imperatives by dictating some of them through its cultural policies, or by vicariously through its influence on religion, family life and family planning, and career and employment-related decisions (Clover, 2011). For example, the state promoted conservative family values to compensate for a high divorce rate, a large number of orphans and a low birth rate. Abortion was outlawed and divorce was made less accessible (Velikonja, 2009). The state reinforced its monopoly of force by soft coercion tactics such as information control, propaganda and consent manufacturing (Linan, 2009). The state could also exercise its power arbitrarily via the hard coercion tactics at its disposal, such as the use of its military, security agency, and police force. In the Soviet Union, "an account was kept of every resident and employee by the party branches, mass organizations, state apparatus, police authorities of each locality and place of work" (Kornai, 1992). Citizens were obliged to carry a state-issued identification document with their marital status,

place of residence and place of work (Kornai, 1992). Rigid rules were in place with respect to having family members living abroad, and accessing western media or possessing something foreign-made, were all punished by prison time.

Culture was heavily subject to state ideology, much like history (Linan, 2009). A single version of history was taught in schools, derived from and consistent with the official historical discourse accepted by the state. History was not always in the curriculum, while details about the past that contradicted the state ideology were deemed state secrets and therefore outside the public domain (Копцов 2011, 87). Maps were said to have been inaccurate, and catastrophic state errors were underplayed or hidden. The state monopoly of propaganda and mass information was employed as a tool for suppression, intimidation, the infliction of terror, and a coercive form of consensus-building. Western TV and radio channels were muffled; products were denied entry into the Soviet market and traveling was restricted to movement within the Soviet territoriality. Totalitarian eclipse brought about several generations of top-down order, structure and intimidation (Kinsman, 2013).

To criticize or even question the state was a life-threatening endeavor, which by 1936 manifested in what today is known as the Stalinist purges. A two hundred-page document drafted by a Politburo member condemning the regime has fanned the flames of change (Filitov, 2011). Over ten million deaths in the Soviet Union alone are attributed to the harshest rule of the Soviet Union, under Joseph Stalin, the prime instigator of the purges and collectivization. Stalin's use of repressive controls was an

integral function of his regime, with which he was able to transform a relatively backward agrarian society into a powerful industrial state.

Stalin's successor, Khrushchev, denounced Stalin's extreme methods and personality cult (Копосов 2011, 95). He condemned Stalin's excess terror used to force public compliance, and distanced himself from Stalin's brutality. Social life was generally on the rise during this era, enjoying the prolonged post-war recovery and a relative boom in consumerism, as exhibited by an increase in car and property ownership (Копосов 2011, 95). Because the problems of Soviet agriculture were of great importance, several reforms in this sector were implemented. One such reform was that payments were increased for crops grown on the collective farms. The state had also invested more in agriculture and encouraged people to grow more on their land.

Unfortunately, not all of Khrushchev's reforms proved to be successful. His "virgin land campaign" in the mid-1950s, an initiative to harvest and farm what ended up being unfertile tracts of land, was a huge failure (Копосов 2011, 96). In 1957, Khrushchev moved to decentralize the central state bureaucracy by replacing local industrial ministries with regional economic councils, transferring substantial economic power to the regions. This move was arguably counterproductive and led to some disruption and inefficiency. Already marginalized private enterprises were entirely liquidated under Khrushchev (Kinsman 2013). Coupled with his wage-leveling reform, which standardized the level of income of all Soviet citizens, all of Khrushchev's industry and administrative changes created even greater problems for the increasingly overburdened Soviet economy.

In the late 1960s, Khrushchev's reforms birthed the infamous era of Stagnation, which had largely played its course under Brezhnev (Konocov 2011, 103). Characterized by economic stagnation, decreased public morale, and decline in economic output, Brezhnev opted to reverse some of the changes made by Khrushchev instead of envisaging the necessary political and economic reforms (Konocov 2011, 103). Agricultural output further declined, failing to supply the demand within the Soviet Union and leading to large quantities of grain import from the West.

Era of Stagnation

Brezhnev's Era was different from Khrushchev's in that it was perceived from a more negative perspective, marked by economic stagnation, decreased public morale and reinstatement of censorship. People felt inferior to their western counterparts and were dissatisfied by limits on expression, free flow of information, government inefficiency and corruption. Brezhnev failed to instigate progressive economic reforms (Konocov 2011, 102). The industrial shortfalls were felt most sharply in the consumer goods industry, where the public steadily demanded improved quality and increased quantity. Agricultural development continued to lag in the Brezhnev years (IB Guides.com, 2012). Despite steadily higher investments in agriculture, growth under Brezhnev fell below that attained under Khrushchev. Droughts occurring irregularly throughout the 1970s forced the Soviet Union to import large quantities of grain from the West, including the United States. In the countryside, Brezhnev continued the trend toward converting collective farms into state farms and raised the incomes of all farm workers. Despite the wage raises, peasants still devoted much time and effort to their

private lots, which provided the Soviet Union with a considerable share of its agricultural goods. One of the most defining characteristics of Brezhnev's socialism was continuous deficit, a consequence of centralized economic planning and the inability of supply and demand to reflect trends outside of the planned economy. A rapidly developing industrial country, the Soviet Union by the 1970s found it increasingly difficult to maintain the high rates of growth in the industrial sector that it had sustained in earlier years. Significant investment was required to sustain growth, however, capital and other economic inputs were increasingly difficult to obtain, given a gradual stagnation and years of economic mismanagement. The economic five-year plans in the 1970s were scaled down from previous years, however their targets remained unmet. Brezhnev failed to instigate progressive political and economic reforms to revive the stagnant economy, which led to an indefinite economic decline by the 1980s, although the economy had been experiencing a decline since the 1950s. In the 1980s, other trends, such as life expectancy, were similarly worsening, while alcohol consumption and infant mortality were on the rise.

The era of stagnation continued under Yuri Andropov from 1982 to 1984 and Konstantin Chernenko from 1984 to 1985 until the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 (IB Guides, 2012). Command economy was the principle rule of economic production, frequently blamed for continuing economic decline of the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev sought to strengthen political activity in the society, while scaling back ideological censorship. His dual reform program of Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring) introduced profound changes in economic, political and the

union's international relations apparatus. He decentralized control over the command economy, reducing the government's role in the planning and decision making processes of the economy, pursuing a more "laissez faire" approach to economic management. Within five years these reforms swept out communist governments in Eastern Europe and inadvertently brought down the Iron Curtain and subsequently the USSR. Gorbachev resigned from office on December 25, 1991 from a nation that no longer existed, but had instead dissolved into fifteen republics. In terms of living standards under Gorbachev, the qualitative difference across the Iron Curtain varied astoundingly, making it more difficult to contain the Soviet Union's increasingly evident backwardness. Internal and external, political, economic and social factors had to a varied extent added to the momentum that swept the change, leading to the disintegration of the union, triggering a new wave of sweeping reforms that the newly-independent Russia was subjected to.

IV LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Consideration and Definition of Concepts

Memory is a concept that defies easy classification, yet continues to be debated and discussed among modern scholars across a variety of disciplines. In the late 1970s, the increased scholarly attention to the study of memory gave rise to the concept called “memory boom” (Olick, 4, 2011). The modern preoccupation with memory is believed to have occurred in conjunction with the changing nature and needs of the modern nation state. More specifically, Kattago explains the memory boom as a consequence of specific events in the twentieth century, including two world wars, the Holocaust, the end of colonialism and the fall of Communism. She asserts that 1989 was a particularly important year in terms of an increased interest in memory as a result of these events.

The subject of memory studies is complicated by sophisticated, interrelated interdisciplinary theories, which are constantly evolving and are at times contradictory. The labyrinth of the contemporary memory boom connects and complicates the relationship between historical consciousness, nostalgia, tradition, myth and identity. At heart of the memory boom are difficult junctures between past and present, and individual and collective. Some of the most essential concepts of memory studies, and their respective pioneers, include collective memory (Maurice Halbwachs); cultural memory (Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann); and lieux de mémoire (Pierre Nora). Theories of commemoration, mnemohistory, historical consciousness, nostalgia, forgetting, and trauma have also been studied for their pertinence to memory. Sophisticated scholars

of the post-communist transition and memory studies, such as Siobhan Kattago, Marek Tamm and Alexander Etkind, have taken a particular interest in the rich potential afforded by this discipline.

Russian scholarship on the topic of memory study is equally diverse, and is also divided and at times conflicting. The esteemed work of Nikolai Koposvo (Копосов), along with other elements of Russia's diverse memory scholarship, are examined in the literature review and subsequent chapters in this thesis.

Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs is considered the founding father of contemporary memory studies. In 1925 he had coined the term "collective memory" (*la mémoire collective*), explaining that what is remembered and how it is remembered is subject to evolving social arrangements and structures. To him, collective memory is a fluid social construct acquired and shaped by societal norms and institutions (Ekman & Linde, 2005, Erll & Nünning, 2008), which in turn trigger and allow for the recollection of those memories. Collective memory to Halbwachs is "a matter of how minds work together in society" (Olick 2011, 18) and how they are shaped by social frameworks, past circumstances and historic arrangements. These social frameworks are linked to group consciousness, which helps interpret and store the memory of an individual. According to Halbwachs, "while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember" (1980: 48). Individual memory to Halbwachs is a concept of "remembering," just like collective memory, but it is associated with a different, a more shallow level of memory (Erll & Nünning, 2008). The individual level of remembering is cognitive, based on the

idea that memory is purely individual, but is shaped and influenced by the collective context (Halbwachs in Olick 2011, 20).

On an individual basis, people create a schema to recall the past and encode new experiences, yet their consciousness is not shaped in a vacuum; memories constitute social constructs. Halbwachs' emphasis on the social frameworks of memory is arguably rooted in Durkheim's theory of collective representations and the idea of historical consciousness.

Halbwachs has been criticized for over-socializing the remembering collective and neglecting the materials or the media that shape memory. The turn from the sociological to cultural emphasis in memory studies has been pioneered by the well-regarded scholarship of Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg, Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann and Pierre Nora.

Cultural Memory

Cultural memory is the memory that is maintained through cultural formations, such as institutions, texts, tradition and monuments. In his own terms:

The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and conserve that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part, (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity (J. Assmann, 1995).

Whereas "[collective] memory [is] characterized by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday" (J. Assmann, 1997).

By the same token, collective memory is said to have a lifespan of approximately three

generations, while cultural memory is much more persistent, rooting in different facets of cultural life (Siobhan Kattago). In Jan Assmann's terms, "what communication is for communicative memory, tradition is for cultural memory" (J. Assmann, 2008). The significance of tradition in cultural memory can be attributed to the earlier scholarship of Walter Benjamin, who argued that "memory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation" (in Olick 2011, 102). Commemorative traditions, ceremonies and rituals are key components of collective memory discussed by many scholars, including Pierre Nora, in places of remembrance or lieux de mémoire. Sites of memory contain the remains, traces, ruins and fragments of the past that serve to maintain the societal remembrance and invoke the perception of a shared past. The sense of historical endurance and a nation's shared past can serve as an affective myth, or what Eric Hobsbawm calls the "invention of tradition" (Olick 2011, 13).

Places of Remembrance and Commemoration

The significance of shared past as the source of Russian post-Soviet identity has been extensively considered in both foreign and Russian scholarship (Ignatieff 2008). For example, Edkind and Kuposov (Копосов 2010) argue that the Soviet ideology was future-oriented, while Russia's current identity is grounded in its past; in her scholarship on the study of Russia's places of remembrance, Siobhan Kattago similarly argues the importance of the myth of the Great Patriotic War to Russia's modern identity. Kattago draws on the work of Lev Gudkov, quoting him in her study; he asserts that "in the opinion of Russian inhabitants, [the Great Patriotic War] is the most important event in

their history: it is the basic image of national consciousness” (Kattago, War Memorials, 2009). Kattago and Kopusov (Копосов 2010), among others studying Russian memory, tie Eastern European ‘memorial clashes’ to the historic politicization in Russia and the state’s increased reliance on history for political purposes.

The prominence of the war myth and its suitability as a binding force of consensus-building, as it pertains to memory, is remarkable. According to Gudkov, in 2003 87% of Russians identified the Great Patriotic War as the achievement in Russia’s entire history of which they are the proudest. Kopusov (Копосов 2010) argues that the war myth is practical and effective for two reasons. First, the war myth is emotionally laden, thus easy to manipulate; it is well engraved on the Russian psyche. This is in part due to the efforts of Soviet propaganda, which were an effective attempt to guard the Soviet reputation from being tarnished by its own crimes. Secondly, Russia’s “war myth” has resonance outside of the Russian Federation. After all, it marks Russia’s footprint on the ‘right side of history,’ in concert with both the other Allies and the victims of the war. To this date, it serves to validate Russia’s position in the global political order and warrants its claims to the power status it once held.

According to Kopusov (Копосов) sovereign patriotism rooted exclusively in Russia’s history, “artificially backfilled an ideological void that it inherited upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. On the international arena, Russia’s escalation of the war myth and its consolidation in the center of its post-Soviet identity, proved highly problematic. The year 2000 marks the onset of ‘memorial clashes’ and reveals the contentious memory fault lines in the East European memory landscape” (Kattago, 150).

One of these highly controversial events is the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Stalin and Hitler, which points to the Soviet Union's implicit role in igniting the Second World War. The second is the traumatic Katyn massacre of Polish officers by the Soviet Red Army. A third is the Soviet occupation of the Baltics after the Second World War. In the international arena, these events generate criticism and hostility towards Russia, which it has been refusing to acknowledge and, more recently, has even outlawed as a topic of discussion. As discussed in the previous chapter, Russia's law on the Rehabilitation of Nazism was intended to endorse an official state version of Russia's Soviet history. Kopusov (Kopocob 2010) argues that Russia's memory law aims to protect Russia's global image by halting the speculation over Russia's complicity in igniting the Second World War. Russia's memory law is an instrument of regulating history and defending the version of history recognized by the state, at the cost of a historical account which acknowledges the reality of its victims.

Kopusov (Kopocob 2010) further argues that the tradition of public debates over past civic and academic liberties has not yet crystallized in Russia. Moreover, its judiciary lacks autonomy, and its archives remain inaccessible. The tabling of a memory law and the subsequent consolidation of "an official version of history" would instill an ideology not dissimilar to the one that prevailed throughout Russia's Soviet era. Besides propagating a version of the history that legitimizes the actions of the Soviet regime, the memory law would also legitimize its indoctrination via state institutions, including those of mass education and mass media.

In conjunction with relatively limited access to archives, increased censorship, as A. Assmann has argued, can be conducive to “destroying material and mental cultural products” (A. Assmann 334, 2011).

Memory and Forgetting

A Czech novelist, Milan Kundera, said, “[T]he struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.” We are naturally predisposed to forgetting, which Assmann classifies as the norm under the category of passive forgetting. In contrast, the ‘active forgetting’ characteristic of authoritarian regimes is a process which is forced through censorship and manipulation of material and mental cultural products. Active forgetting is therefore an instrument of oppression, seeking to erase memories of “politically inconvenient past.”

State secrecy and censorship is frequently addressed in scholarship on the memory of Soviet repressions and the Stalinist purges (Etkind 2009). The memory of victims of the terror of the Soviet Union’ early ages has been revived to a considerable extent, in part due to the international interest in consolidating and recovering historical accounts of the Gulag. Memorial Society is an organization in Russia that advocates a historic trajectory, which often runs counter to the state official memory and related discourse. Russian scholarship on the individual, collective and cultural memory of Russia is visibly intertwined with its contradictory and often ambiguous legacy of history.

Russian Scholarship on the Memory of the Soviet Union

According to international and Russian scholarship, political legitimacy in Russia

is heavily dependent on a unifying historical narrative for two reasons. First of all, the legacy of a prolonged authoritarian rule and its sway over political culture had legitimized the subordination of history to an authoritative ideological discourse. Second, a unifying narrative would fill the ideological void Russia inherited upon the Soviet dissolution. During the post-Stalin years of Russia's Soviet era specifically, history became entrenched in the state's ideological discourse and became an instrument of its propagation. The autonomy of history as a subject in Russia is unprecedented, which according to some scholars contributes to the continuity of culture of marginalization of historiography. A uniform historic narrative is argued to have been an important variable in the Soviet equation for political legitimacy (Кирчанов, 2013). The communist ideology had the sway and capacity to bind the Soviet nation. Upon the dissolution of the nation and the subsequent dismantling of the Soviet ideology, these once binding forces were challenged.

Secondary research and scholarly literature suggest that Russia inherited an ideological void in the place of a powerful and binding myth that constructed a uniform identity (Горшков and Шереги 2010). History had effectively become the only manner in which Russia could reliably monopolize political legitimacy. This had, in effect, triggered a post-Soviet memory boom of its own accord in the Russian Federation, with the state reasserting its monopoly over memory. The formation of an established view of memory and history had already been set in motion by Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's reforms, and had generated two competing camps of thinkers, and Russian scholars and historians can be classified into these two different categories of thinking. The country's

ideologists, historians and politicians (the more conventional thinkers) comprised one camp, which promoted the status quo, while in direct opposition stood the dissenting, more liberal and progressive camp of thinkers.

The status quo camp argues that Russia is entitled to its heroic and victorious past, and must actively keep its legacy alive in the present (Бомсдорф, 2010). Russian scholars subscribing to this school of thought believe that modern Russian generations have a poor historic awareness of, and appreciation for, their past. They welcome the state's involvement in the packaging and dissemination of historical knowledge and discourse at every level of society. These scholars and historians believe that in order to reach the widest audience, history should be brought to an uncomplicated and accessible level, steering clear of contradictions and ambiguities (Бомсдорф, Бордюгова 2010). They also lobby for uniformity of the historical discourse and an active involvement of the state to engage its citizens in a past that they can be proud of. On the other hand, the dissenting camp of Russian historians and thinkers looks at the Soviet's war and post-war era and calls for a balanced perspective, which would take into account not just the war's outcome, but also the brutal war crimes that were committed by the state during the war—crimes that contravene just-war principals prescribed by international law (Кирчанов 2014). This school of thought is pioneered by Russia's not-for-profit Memorial organization, a coalition of historians, scholars and politicians who criticize the state's heavy hand with respect to Russia's history. The Memorial organization questions the State's efforts to create a single version of Russia's past.

One of the main differences between Russia's 'status quo' and 'dissenting' historians is that the former support the historical narrative that defends the actions of the Soviet Union, rather than that of those victimized by it. Nikolai Kaposov (Концов) is one of those dissenting Russian scholars, who has for a long time analyzed the dangers of implementing "an official version of history" in Russia, though such an idea is increasingly employed by the state and frequently endorsed by its status quo historians. He argues that history is increasingly becoming a different phenomenon in the realm of governance and policy-making, institutionalized as a means of propelling the version of past events conducive to Russia's modern image of itself (Концов 2011, 162).

According to Kaposov (Концов), the tradition of public debates over the past, civic and academic liberties in Russia have not yet been solidified. Moreover, its judiciary lacks autonomy and its archives remain inaccessible (Концов 2011, 183). Scholars like Kaposov (Концов 2010) have notoriously criticized the proposed "official version of history" and Russia's long in the making memory law that would cement it. The memory law has since been tabled under the guise and official title of "the law against the Rehabilitation of Nazism," in May of 2014 (Kurilla 2014). It is too recent a phenomenon to have generated a vast body of scholarship to incorporate in the literature review. However, since its initial draft in the Duma in 2009, it generated a lot of criticism and debate that remains relevant. For example, dissenting scholars argued that Russia's memory law is an instrument of regulating history and defending the version recognized by the state to the detriment of the one that acknowledges its victims. Kaposov (Концов 2010) argues that Russia's memory law aims to protect

Russia's global image by propagating a version of history that legitimizes the actions of the Soviet regime. This law would also legitimize the indoctrination of a single historical narrative though. Moreover, it would not only marginalize Russia's dissenting intellectuals and historians, but also criminalize the dissemination of any alternative versions of Russia's Soviet-era history. It would forever close the door on Russia's unresolved historical conflicts, including those with its neighbours. In other words, it would remove the contention from Russia's ambiguous historic debates, by eliminating them from the public discourse.

The long-term effects of this law can be considered in light of Assmann's conceptualization of active forgetting, closely associated with censorship and authoritarianism. Highly contentious topics—such as the Soviet occupation of the Baltics after WWII, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Stalin and Hitler, and the Katyn massacre of Polish officers—are at risk of being forgotten. The memories of the victims of the Gulag, Holodomor, and other Soviet crimes are highly marginalized by the law that qualifies any argumentation in the opposition of the Soviet praise and greatness a crime (Lyons and Bernardyová 2011). Dissenting historians argue that the guidelines on what constitutes “the rehabilitation of Nazism” are vague, making almost any argument in contravention to the state's position a punishable crime.

The spillover of history into the realm of governance and policy-making is not a matter of concern for Russia's status quo historians and intellectuals, who support the state's efforts in purging history of contentious topics and disseminating a standardized version of its past that Russia's upcoming generations can be proud of.

While it may appear simple to judge and classify the memory of Russians from the perspective of the establishment, the process of memory recollection itself defies easy classification. In fact, few studies have attempted to analyze the memory of Russians with respect to their Soviet past, and those that did were unable to successfully categorize it. Given Russia's two divergent camps of thinkers, as well as the significant evidence of indoctrination of history by the state, with a propagandistic aim, the question of what is actually remembered becomes even more valuable than ever. Russia's history is not only complex and multifaceted, but has also been refined through an ideological lens that has undergone significant transformation.

Russian memory, with respect to a firsthand experience of the Soviet past, is extremely ambiguous. No reputable study has crossed my eyes that has explicitly demonstrated evidence of a prevailing uniform version of recalled memory. In fact, I was unable to find any studies that declared the memory of Russians to be anything but polarized and variable. In terms of the memory of the very specific generation that is the focus of my study, there have not been any studies that analyzed it, to my knowledge. Studying the memory of the generation of Russians that have been born in the Russian Federation has the potential of providing a valuable inside into which of its divergent trajectories is more prominent in Russia's historical discourse. Moreover, this research has the potential of establishing whether there is a unifying historical narrative amongst the generation that cannot rely on their first-hand memory of experience. This finding would either confirm or disprove my hypothesis that the memory of Russia's post-Soviet generation is a pure construct.

What makes this post-Soviet generation unique is not only that its place of origin is the Russian Federation and not the Soviet Union, but also that it came of age during Russia's most immediate years of post-Soviet transition. This is especially intriguing because the propagandizing of Russia's history is not a phenomenon that is associated with its immediate years of transition; rather, democratization is typically associated with this period. Unlike the generation of Russians currently obtaining their historical knowledge from a uniform history text, the generation of Russians born in the 1990s was arguably exposed to a much more multifaceted version of its soviet ancestry. To my knowledge, no previous research has depicted this "90s generation"—one that lives through and came of age in the immediate aftermath of the former USSR—as the focus of any study.

The discourse of the generation living through the post-Soviet transition and the analysis of their constructed memory are topics worth exploring for two reasons. First, the potential of this exploratory research to contribute to the growing literature on the trending topics of collective memory and cultural memory is high, because these two concepts are at the heart of this research. Second, there is also the likelihood that the findings of this research might shed light onto which of Russia's historic trajectories is more prominent and readily acceptable by society.

In light of Halbwachs' assertion that evolving social arrangements and structures have an impact on what is remembered and how it is remembered, is it important to point out the unique disposition of Russia's first post-Soviet generation. The memory of this generation is shaped in light of Russia's ever-evolving social arrangements.

Moreover, while it is not a static phenomenon, according to Halbwachs, shared memory is a source of a binding, collective identity, prompting the question: is there a sense of collective identity amongst Russia's post-Soviet generation? This question has proven popular among many scholars; however, identity is not a constitutive theme in this thesis.

Global overview of Russia's Collective Memory of the Soviet Union

The media that shapes and carries memories is emphasized in Jan and Aleida Assmann's conceptualization of cultural memory. To Aleida Assmann, "[the] tension between pastness of the past and its presence as an important key to understanding the dynamics of cultural memory" (A. Assmann in Olick 2011, 335). Her writing on canon, which brings the past into the present, and on archive, which preserves the past, sheds important light on the limitation imposed on memory by societal constraints and individual inability to remember. She highlights censorship as an instrument of destroying material and mental cultural products. Her insight into active forgetting, as she calls it, resonates with those scholars that have come to question and criticize Russia's largely unreformed Soviet archives and its concealment of key historic events.

Tamm suggests that Lotman's distinctions between formative and creative cultural memory are similar to those made by Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann between storage and functional memory, cannon and archive. "Lotman wrote during the Soviet regime, 'where in-depth study of culture and memory was more academic pursuit, but inevitably entailed an ethical and political stance (Tamm 2013).'" Memory is a major subject of cultural studies. Tamm argues that the Assmanns' theory of collective

memory was inspired and influenced by the work of Juri Lotman (1922 -1993) and other research of the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics (Tamm, 2013). Tamm explains the importance of Lotman's theory for the advancement of cultural memory studies:

We understand culture as the nonhereditary memory of the community, a memory expressing itself in a system of constraints and prescriptions. ... Furthermore, insofar as culture is memory or, in other words, a record in the memory of what the community has experienced, it is, of necessity, connected to past historical experience. Consequently, at the moment of its appearance, culture cannot be recorded as such, for it is only perceived *ex post facto*. (Lotman and Uspensky in Tamm, 2013)

One of the most important western articles studied and employed extensively for this thesis was Joseph and Rea Zajda's article, entitled "*The Politics of Rewriting History: New History Textbooks and Curriculum Materials in Russia*" (2003). This article "uses qualitative methodology to examine the shifts in ideological and cultural representations of history narrative in Russian core history school textbooks (J. I. Zajda and Zajda 2003)." It argues that the core texts published between 1992 and 1996, and approved by the Ministry of Education (a total of 6 studied by Zaidas) were uniformly adopted throughout Russia, and portrayed a manifestation of a new post-Soviet identity. Joseph Zajda and Rea Zajda conducted a study in 2003 aimed at evaluating the new version of Russia's post-communist history taught in schools, and contrasting it with Russia's 1991 secondary school text. They studied how the culture of students and their identity was influenced by the interpretation of social and political change, significant events (looking for possible new biases and omissions), leadership (the contribution of key individuals), and continuities (J. I. Zajda and Zajda 2003). Their findings affirm a continuation of emphasis on historical greatness of the Russian state in

school history textbooks. They assert, “In the transition period, a search for historical models for the new nation’s identity became imperative (J. I. Zajda and Zajda 2003).” Finally, in comparison to the earlier history textbooks they studied, “Russia’s new school history textbooks had to disclaim the Soviet narrative of identity, post-Soviet texts are in general very critical of Stalin and the Soviet past.” Their methodology, employed qualitative content analysis and portrayed a new post-Soviet national identity envisaged in textbooks and other materials that “aim[ed] to instill a critical consciousness in students by approaching history from multiple perspectives and confronting certain chapters in the country’s past (J. I. Zajda and Zajda 2003).” That is to say, their findings showed that while the historical discourse aimed to envisage a new ideology and was widely employed throughout Russia, it was also open to interpretation.

These findings reveal examples of historical cases and events that were open to interpretation (Sherlock 2011). The theoretical grounding of their findings is attributed to the ideas of Foucault, Adorno, and Benjamin, as well as “Namenwirth and Weber (1987), [who] theorised that texts can be viewed as supra-individual cultural phenomenon. They justified the use of text analysis in the study of social change and cultural dynamics.” Zajda and Zajda (2003) cite Apple (1979) and Anyon (1979) in their understanding of ideological function of [history] textbooks, which could “represent a clear manifestation of ideological discourse in education (see, among others, Gilbert 1984 and Sutherland 1985). This article is important to my study because their findings are generated from both data drawn from interviews and data generated from the content analysis of secondary school textbooks. These sources are pertinent to my study

for two reasons. First of all, there has not been a reform in Russia's history textbooks until Putin's dissent to power and his mandate for a more uniform, and more generic textbook. Alexander Filipov's (2008) handbook *Noveishaya Istorii Rossii, 1945-2008; Kniga Dlia Uchitelii* (The Modern History of Russia: 1945–2006: A Teacher's Handbook) was the result of this mandate. Initially produced as a teachers' guide in 2008, the complementary students' book was produced in 2010, which means that these texts are largely what Russia's first post-Soviet generation was exposed to (Портнов 2013). Moreover, since the introduction of the new text in 2003, there has been a single version of the history textbook (in retrospect of previously existing eight alternative versions) (Ханаева 2007). While the scope of my study is limited to the content analysis of the teacher's manual that came with Russia's newest history textbook, Zajda and Zajda's (2003) findings and analysis of the teachers' manual that came with the old textbooks proves to be a very useful additional resource and basis for comparison. Chapter V of this thesis makes use of much of the secondary data gathered from *The Politics of Rewriting History: New History Textbooks and Curriculum Materials in Russia* (2003). Similarly important is Miguel Vazquez Linan's (2010) article "History as a propaganda tool in Putin's Russia," which interprets Zajda and Zajda's findings in light of Filipov's handbook. Linan (2010) argues that the handbook leaves no room for interpretation, but instead imposes "the interpretation of recent Russian history by [its] governing elite." He also argues that the handbook praises Putin (Liñán 2010).

Generally, Western scholarship on post-Soviet memory, largely seeks to classify or categorize memory as a phenomenon with either a nostalgic sentiment or a negative

connotation. Western scholarship has extensively analyzed Russia's collective memory under the communist rule, whereby ideological indoctrination of society with regards to historical consciousness and collective memory are intrinsic components of the Soviet identity apparatus. Many have studied the Soviet politically-motivated censorship of history.

VI METHODOLOGY

Participant Recruitment Methodology

My primary research and academic student exchange tenure in Russia that lasted between late August 2013 and late April 2014 were at once enhanced and complicated by a series of unforeseeable geopolitical menaces that erupted. As a native Russian speaker and a geopolitics enthusiast I had taken a keen interest in scrutinizing Russia's complex foreign and internal policy infrastructure. The St. Petersburg State University courses, which I was enrolled in, at the Faculty of Foreign Affairs, served as a forum for interaction with Russia's foreign and local students alike. I've attended lectures, conferences, took part in studies, conducted my own research and tutored English at an English academy. I was fully integrated academically and therefore exposed to St. Petersburg's status quo and anti-establishment scholars and thinkers. I was also completely immersed in the society at large, having had the benefit of ethnic similarity and language fluency that opened up channels of communication and allowed for a full immersion in the society. My part-time job as an English language tutor hugely benefited my research endeavors in St. Petersburg, providing me access to a vast pool of potential respondents. I offered the possibility of a free language discussion group after formal English classes and invited everyone who was born after the year 1991 to participate. Potential respondents were eager and willing to sign up and I successfully conducted 5 focus groups within the language academy, with participants ranging from 5 to 8 individuals. Having had a vast pool of respondents that had willingly signed up for

a focus group outside of their regular language classes proved highly successful and beneficial to all parties. These focus groups, as well as other ones conducted in Yakutia and St. Petersburg State University, were conducted with due diligence and in accordance with Carleton's ethics guidelines. This tactic had worked similarly well within the university setting, as I was able to attract potential respondents by indicating my credentials as an English tutor working for a reputable academy. The Yakutia focus groups were similarly arranged. The Dean of the University in Yakutia, who had sponsored my attendance at a prestigious conference, requested that I stay an extra four days to give English tutorials. All respondents were equally keen on participating, however, the Yakutia participants took part in my focus group as part of their free-conversation English class. They were advised on the perimeters of my research and had consented to contribute to my study.

Data collection and samples in numbers

This research employs qualitative methodology – focus group and participant observation; a total of 11 semi-structured focus groups were contacted between September 2013 and March 2014. A total of 50 individuals took part in the study, 47 of whom participated in semi-structured focus groups, filling out a discussion-based questionnaire, following the focus group commencement. A total of 45 questionnaires were returned, with 34 of them registering a response to at least half of the questions posed. The respondents were given 15 – 20 minutes to answer the written questions and 35 to 55 minutes were attributed to the proceeding discussion. The age range of the focus group sample varies between 19 and 23 years of age, comprising of individuals

born between 1992 and 1996.

Of the 11 semi structured focus groups, 8 took place in or around Russia's St. Petersburg University. As mentioned earlier, 5 of these groups were a result of my part time job, and the other 3 were arranged within the university. The size of the 3 university-sample groups was the smallest, ranging from 3 to 6 participants. The focus groups from English tutoring, as indicated, had from 5 to 8 participants. All focus groups were made up exclusively of university-age students, most of them in their first or second year of studies, a few were in their third or final year of undergrad. The group selection sample comprised an equal or almost equal representation of genders. Age wise, the participants were exclusively post-Soviet born. Ethnicity wise, they were almost entirely ethnic Russians, with the exception of several Ukrainian, Belarusian and Asian participants.

Three other focus groups were conducted in Russia's autonomous Sakha, Yakut republic in the country's Siberia region, in the town of Mirnyi. The Yakutia focus group sample was comprised of 9 to 13 participants each of the 2 focus groups, having produced a total of 28 written questionnaire responses. 12 of the returned responses have registered a response to half of the questions or more. In the Yakut group selection sample, females overwhelmingly outnumbered males, with a mere 5 male participants in total. The sample was comprised largely of ethnic Yakuts, with nearly 1 in every 5 participants being an ethnic Russian, Ukrainian, mixed or other.

Of the 50 study participants, 3 have voluntarily taken part in an interview. Of the interviews conducted, 2 were follow-up question and answer, and one other interview

was a brief discussion following a panel presentation by a Russian professor on the topic of memory. The interview with the presenter was insightful, but does not constitute a part of my primary findings.

Recruitment of focus group participants was nondiscriminatory and in line with Carleton's Research Ethics Protocol. The conduct of research and analysis were similarly consistent with Carleton's requirements prescribed by the Research Ethics Protocol. Anonymity and confidentiality guidelines were adhered to at all times and questionnaires destroyed upon having been processed, without being transported in their original form. No primary research was sought outside of the granted September 2013 to May 2014 timeline. My primary research and focus groups sessions had officially adjured on the 24th of March 2014.

Questionnaire and Structured Focus Group Questions

The findings of this thesis are based on the analysis of a total of 34 structured questions. 14 of them required a written response and were on the questionnaire. The other 20 were intended for steering an elaborate focus group discussion. Structured questions provided a framework for my research and were relatively successful in generating discussion. The questionnaire and focus group questions were in English, but a translated version of the focus group questions was available to me, in case respondents encountered difficulties understanding them. The lists of questions employed for this research are attached under appendix 1 through 3.

Participant Observation

The opportunity to live in Russia exposed me to unique opportunity to continue my research beyond the confines of my university and focus groups. Having the ability to integrate into the society and communicate with its members on a daily basis was a unique and enriching experience. It allowed me to keep my hand on the pulse of Russian politics while digging deeply into the marrow of its society. I valued this experience and opportunity greatly, while making the most of my research. As a result, empirical and participant observations are a substantial and invaluable part of this project that had an enriching spillover effect onto the more methodically executed research component of this thesis. Given the nature of the research topic and the importance of memorials and commemorative practices, my research was shaped in an environment that displayed cultural memorabilia. War memorials in Russia are widespread and their symbolism is key to understanding the portrayal of Russia's past. In St. Petersburg I had the occasion to come across multiple statues and memorials that enlightened my understanding of these symbols. In Yakutia, statues and memorials were unique and inclusively commemorating Russia's Soviet era. Participant observation was frequently employed as a primary research tool. Having been living, studying and otherwise functioning as any regular member of the society, I was uniquely positioned to obtain information from seemingly typical daily behaviors of Russians. I have frequently engaged in conversations, watched television and analyzed the society by being fully immersed in it. I've obtained an invaluable insight, which is difficult to categorize scientifically, but I otherwise regard as an instrumental extension to the structured methodology of this work. Particularly insightful was the experience of observing the escalation of Ukraine's

revolution and the ousting of its former president, Victor Yanukovich, as portrayed by the Russian media. Moreover, the role of collective memory and the employment of history cannot be discounted. I had firsthand exposure to evident propagandization of historical narratives, employed by Russia's state-sponsored propaganda in order to elicit public support and discredit opposition. The lengths to which Russia's current leadership had gone to discredit, demonize and delegitimize the Ukrainian revolution couldn't be understated. And the role that the manipulation of historical facts and collective memory played in the hands of the state's propaganda is surreal. It is not the purpose of this project to debunk myths and legends, but having been living in Russia during a truly perilous time, through the eyes of those around me have given me a perspective, which should not be discounted. On a similar token, having a full comprehension of the language and access to university facilities had granted me access to resources, including to conferences on collective memory and related themes. This unique insight had an inexplicable effect in the shaping up of the outcome of my study.

Research Limitations

The project was carefully planned to deliver a sample as representative as possible. However, a number of conditions and implications that were encountered throughout the research stage of this project, as well as the proceeding analysis, were beyond my control and overwhelming at times. My personal bias, which I had made every effort to keep in check, had inevitably affected the conduct and outcome of my research. Being of Ukrainian descent and belonging to the very same post-Soviet generation I studied meant having considerable memory of the Soviet Union and an

opinion of my own, with regards to the past. Although, I firmly believe that my personal background merely lead to my discovery of this topic, I acknowledge the likelihood of having erroneously interpreted findings, understated or overgeneralized whatever resonated with my memory. By the same token, my eastern European identity and near-native fluency in Russian also gave me a considerable advantage when conducting research.

Other than an element of personal bias, this project was also subject to sample representation that was not always consistent. The size of the sample, comprising of 50 individuals in total is in itself limited, given the scope of this topic. Therefore, the finding based on 50 responses may not resonate with every member of Russia's 112 million population scattered throughout its 11 time zones, though St. Petersburg and Yakutia are vastly different, with visible different populations and lifestyles. All of my respondents were highly literate and academically adept, which is likely true but may not necessarily be representative of Russia's post-Soviet generation at large. In addition, another deficiency in my research may have come from the relative success of each focus group that varied on a case-by-case basis. Although, the structured questionnaire was a solid foundation for discussion, not all groups were equally elaborate and insightful. It was challenging to keep the conversation flowing and get all members to the focus group to contribute to the discussion. Often times, individual respondents asserted their point of view, to the detriment of both the group dynamic and the opportunity for everyone else to take part. While I've made every effort to keep the conversation going, my experience as a researcher is limited, but my skills improved as I

conducted more focus groups.

Other limitations of study can be attributed to a discrepancy in the language. All translations that are a part of this thesis were my own and although the margin of effort in translation is minimal, it is not accounted for. Moreover, roughly half of my non-memory-theory literature is in Russian. While I have worked off literature in both languages, the Russian variant has been translated into English without expert advice or assistance. Conducting interviews in English and seeking English-speaking students for my research may also have affected the responses that I gathered.

In light of comprehensive memory scholarship and extensive studies by renowned scholars like Nikolai Kozlov (Козлов), my primary research lacks breadth. That being said, I am confident in the authenticity and professionalism of my efforts.

VII FINDINGS

To recap the essence of the secondary data, I will reiterate its main assertions on which the findings of my research will be based. First of all, scholarly literature reveals the evidence of a prominent legacy of prolonged authoritarian rule in Russia and the extent of its sway over political culture that legitimizes the subordination of history to politics. Secondly, it has been argued that history has been serving as an instrument of propaganda and discourse dissemination for the purpose of consensus and “imagined community”-building in Russia. The secondary literature also suggests that memory is a social construct in Russia, which lacks autonomy and is subject to fluctuation and transformation in light of prevailing social trends and attitudes. Finally, Russian memory with respect to the Soviet past is complex, and defies easy classification and clear-cut categorization. My findings, however, will show that the memory of Russia’s post-Soviet ‘90s generation can be interpreted and analyzed from a much more focused point of view.

Primary research on Russia’s first post-Soviet generation supports the hypothesis that the memory of this generation is socially constructed, prone to transformation and evolution. Findings also reveal that this generation fails to give its Soviet past a definitive moral grade. In other words, the memory of this generation, much like the memory of its ancestors, lacks autonomy, and is fluid and contradistinctive. Extensive focus group observation and interviews have also led me to infer that the memory of this generation can be interpreted from two telescopic lenses, or divergent trajectories of memory

parallels. The first of these trajectories I would describe as the idealistic parallel of memory, which largely subscribes to the status quo history scholarship, a category of scholarship comprised of Russian scholars and intellectuals of status quo or orthodox thinking. This camp's perception of history is ambitious and immobile. The memory trajectory of the idealistic parallel resembles an element of ideological connotation that would justify history as a variable in the equation for political legitimacy. Memory and history are more closely correlated and act as a thread in the continuity of an imagined community's heritage. This trajectory rejects dissenting scholarship, because history is not perceived at face value, but rather as a means to an end.

The second memory trajectory is of the representative, or practical parallel. It encompasses the dissenting scholarly perspective and status quo scholarship, but is alternative in the sense that it endorses historic plurality and perceives history at face value. It also leaves room for status quo scholarship that emphasizes history proper, or the knowledge of actual historic facts, dates and significant events. The representative parallel of memory views history as an end in itself, versus a means to an end. Although some historical confines and conditions cannot be challenged, the future is neither indicative of, nor is a prisoner of, the past. I will further explain each parallel of memory in greater detail and in light of focus group and interview feedback. Findings will, in the latter part of this chapter, be analyzed in light of existing memory scholarship and on the merit of their contribution to the evolving field of memory studies.

Upon analysis, the focus group's findings were divided into three categories of responses, the first two pertaining to their respective memory parallels, and the third

being strictly a fact-based response group. Respondents of the third group could not be directly subscribed to either of the memory parallels, because their responses were strictly knowledge based, historically oriented; in other words, this category of responders displayed a limited degree of remembering, recalling concrete historic facts, without an element of personal reflection or interpretation. As explained in the methodology section, the questionnaire and focus group questions contained roughly 50% history and 50% memory-based questions. Although some knowledge-based history questions did trigger a response with an element of remembering and interpreting, the majority of these type of questions elicited exclusively fact-based answers. By and large, all respondents displayed a comprehensive level of knowledge of historic facts. Therefore, my findings show that the level of historical knowledge of Russia's post-Soviet generation is high.

The knowledge-based questions where respondents' answers did not fit neatly into either of the memory parallels include: questions about important dates; the number of Socialist republics that comprised the Soviet Union; who the Soviet Union's only president was; and who its other leaders were, and when they were in power. Some of the other knowledge questions pertained to which freedoms and liberties were available to the Soviet citizens and which were obsolete, as well as who the first man to fly to space was. By and large, the knowledge questions were answered correctly. When it came to the responses elicited by memory-based questions, it was possible to categorize them into two memory trajectories, as described above.

The following presents a question-by-question analysis of the Soviet History questionnaire, and the resulting categories into which the answers fall.

Question: What Characterized the Cold War Era?

Respondents attributed to the memory trajectory of the idealistic parallel, including respondent Alina, read something like this: “it was a time characterized by global bipolarity.” Respondent Oleg said it was “[a] time of ideological confrontation between two superpowers.” Words ‘clash’ and ‘competition’ were used by respondents to convey the existence of conflicting interests. Katya argued that ‘isolation’ was characteristic of the Cold War. She also said that “the Soviet Union was advancing, thanks to its autonomy and self-reliance.” Katia believed that to be a positive feature that is characteristic of the Cold War, although she did not think such positives outweigh the negatives, such as “ongoing competition and concentration of efforts outside of areas that could benefit people and improve their living standards.” Like Katya, other respondents evaluated the Cold War Era on the merit of its contribution to the living standards of the average person at the time. These responses can be more effectively subcategorized into the memory trajectory of the representative parallel, as opposed to the ideologically-inclined first category of responses. Some responses attributed to the second category emphasized the practical meaning of ‘memory,’ such as Dina’s response that “it was a time of proxy war fighting,” or “[a] time characteristic of relative political stability.” Igor (focus group 8). Respondents like Vitya reflected on the “impracticality” and the implications of living behind “the Iron Curtain.” Vitya indicated that security and surveillance were “widespread.” The example he used was a story of

how letters were sent to relatives living abroad. It is my understanding that there was a time when it was permissible to send letters to relatives abroad, but from his story, I also understood that the government typically read them. Vitya said that he had been told that several of his distant relatives kept in contact by mail and that they knew to use red ink in the letter to convey an “uneasy” situation and blue ink for indicating that things “were going okay, behind the curtain”

The question with regards to the Cuban Missile Crisis similarly elicited two sets of different answers that emphasized a different aspect of the memory, similarly to the first question.

Question: Which countries were involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis? Explain the crisis and its significance.

The knowledge of facts pertaining to the crisis was consistent and accurate on both fronts. Respondents indicated that the Soviet ballistic missiles were deployed in Cuba, that the crisis lasted 13 days, and that it was the closest standoff verging on a full-fledged missile confrontation and nuclear war that the world had ever seen. Beyond the facts and knowledge-based feedback, the idealistic parallel respondents, such as Sasha, tended to emphasize that the event was somewhat of a Soviet victory, or an important milestone (Denis). “We were able to speak up,” said Nikita. “Soviets intimidated and likely embarrassed the U.S.,” said Edik.

Some of the respondents from the second group, the representative parallel pointed to a win-win situation that indicated that “[the] conflict was proceeded by de-escalation of tension between superpowers” (Yan), and that “the good compromise”

saw the Soviets withdraw from Cuba, while “the U.S. withdrew its missiles from Italy and from Turkey” (Anton). Responses with regards to the legacy of the Soviet history and its key achievements show an existing divide in the memory of Russia’s Post-Soviet generation.

Question: Which Soviet achievement/accomplishment/heritage are you most proud of?

Nothing resonates more in the memory of Russia’s post-Soviet generation than the glorious efforts and sacrifices made by their predecessors during the course of the Second World War. Despite that fact that there were no direct questions inferring on any aspect of the Second World War in Russian history, it was a topic that surfaced in every focus group without exception. The trigger question that in 66% percent of the cases elicited a response mentioning the Soviet victory over Nazism in some form was: “What [element of the] Soviet legacy are you most proud of?” Respondents were also proud of the USSR’s modernization efforts, economic development, and advancements in science and technology. Respondents also cited progress in industrialization made by the Soviet early agrarian society, as a Soviet legacy they are proud of.

The surface-level responses to the Soviet legacy question could be predominantly subscribed to the representative parallel of memory. The divide between memory parallels is most clearly demonstrated by the emphasis on the Soviet supremacy and magnitude of its progress, by respondents of the idealistic parallel of memory. The idealistic parallel respondents described the Soviet Union’s victory as inevitable by the time the second front was launched by the allied forces. The same respondents indicated that Stalin’s decisiveness and ruthlessness was at times

unavoidable, and was integral to securing the Soviet victory over Fascism. This group also emphasized other progress under the Soviet regime: “pre-revolutionary Russian society embarked on an experiment of a total societal makeover, which transformed its ideological, economic and political order.” This was given as a justification, or a necessary means to rapid growth, advancement and modernization that respondents deemed essential to Soviet society. “Progress [in modernization] and achievements in culture as well as science and technology” was another common theme in responses to this question. Other than “building” a society based on communist principles “from the ground up,” the respondents were also proud of the Soviet’s post-war achievements. “Destruction and calamity left behind the [Great Patriotic] war were enormous and the Soviet society was able to rebuild its cities and repair destruction without any extensive foreign assistance in the form of a Marshall plan.” “Eventually the Soviet Union had become a superpower.” “Construction of a world superpower, second only to the United States in economic competence and military might.” The Soviet acquisition of a nuclear arsenal and the space debut of a Soviet cosmonaut were other legacies its descendants were proud of.

The other set of responses, pertaining to the representative parallel of memory shared the memory and appreciation for the Soviet efforts in defeating fascism, however, their feedback was a subdued version of their counterparts. For example, Stas said, “While recognizing and commemorating the sacrifices of heroes is important, there are many more victims than just those that died in the war.” Stas elaborated on his response during a follow-up interview, where he indicated that his ancestors were not

only victimized by the war, but also the regime itself. He explained that, besides the war, people were also dying as a repercussion of political crimes.

In a different focus group, Maria, like Stas, said that the war was a great loss and a victory at once. She questioned whether it is a justifiable legacy, given its humanitarian implications. Respondents spoke of some of the Soviet Union's most costly battles, like in Stalingrad, with considerable knowledge. Velera, in group 3, like Edik in group 7, spoke of "remarkable losses" and "compromises" made by "not only the Red Army, but also civilians. It was explained to me by group five respondents that nearly every Russian city of a certain size (although the size of the city was debatable by respondents) has a war-related memorial. Students spoke of memorials and their significance, particularly in maintaining "historical knowledge" and "understanding of the cost of the war" (Valera, Vika and Denis). It was mentioned by nearly one-third of the sample that "history of the Great Patriotic War" is an essential chapter in Russian history and that "education, monuments and cultural artifacts should continue being sacred."

Maria said that the Soviet's war efforts need to be celebrated, but she saw legitimate merit in other Soviet accomplishments, including the socialist experiment at large. While the experiment was not a success and in her words "had succumbed to its deficiencies," it remained a legacy in its own right. Maria said Russia's Soviet history was too complicated to be narrowly judged on the legacy of its war efforts.

There were multiple other responses from students that recalled their Soviet past as abstract and multifaceted; however, Russia's war myth was reiterated from both

memory trajectories and envisaged as a theme more significant and essential than any other aspect of Russia's Soviet history. This leads to an assertion, consistent with secondary literature, that the war myth is a pivotal element of Russian memory.

Question: Was life in the USSR it better or worse than it is today? How has the quality of life changed?

With respect to remembering and perceiving the memory of the Soviet dissolution, the responses can be expressed under the overarching theme of solidarity and consensus above all. Unity of the people in the face of adversity, hardship and hostility, infirmity and consensus amongst people, were cited as things that Russia lost upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Over 54% of the total respondents believed that "Russia lost more than it gained upon the breakup of the USSR," although this response is more difficult to analyze. When raised during the focus group, this question in particular generated a lot of "fence-sitters," as well as argumentative respondents that answered the question from both angles: the perspective that Russia lost a lot, but also that it had a lot to gain. For example, in focus group number six, Ilia said:

[W]ithout a doubt, Russia lost a lot. The Soviet Union was a vast and powerful coalition, which upon termination resulted in a set of related broken parts, playing a game by someone else's rules. The USSR, a superpower, was dissolved into minor peripheral states that were forced to transition and reform to survive, concentrating on asserting their monopoly of force over their newly defined boundaries. Yet, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was inevitable because people no longer related or believed that they belonged to a superpower. Consensus was hard to keep, and people became skeptical and wanted change.

Similarly, Tatiana from the fourth focus group, said,

[The] grand scheme of communism was just that—grand and utopian. The Soviet society didn't come close to the attainment of communism, to the full extent of its order/ideology. People worked hard, progress was made on many fronts, but it eventually stagnated. Communism was good in theory until it became difficult to deny its plausibility and justify its costs.”

Tatiana went on to explain: “it was a costly experiment, yet gains were made. It gives no justice to our history to limit our Soviet experience to the rule of its despotic leaders.” Misha and Vova helped Tatiana finish her thought by adding that “brutal power was necessary for survival” after all, and that “forced development, collectivization and other harsh realities of the Soviet Union were at times necessary to live and move forward.”

None of the above-mentioned respondents, although able to “justify” aspects of their Soviet history, were part of the 54% that believe that “Russia lost more than it gained upon the breakup of the USSR.” They believed that Russia gained more than it lost. Iliia, from group 6: “Russia may have compromised some of its might and prestige on the world stage, but its people have gained in the long run. Transition was a tough reality for most Russians, but I think today, realistically, people would be enraged to find themselves under the Soviet Union conditions/restrictions.” He explained that people take all sorts of liberties for granted without reminiscing on the restrictions of the Soviet Union. He added that, while people might dwell on sentiments or Soviet-era memories, he doubts that anyone would legitimately be willing to give up the lifestyles and freedoms they currently have. Tatiana did not elaborate further but stuck to the opinion that “Russia had more to gain,” as did Misha and Vova. Vova added that it is virtually

impossible to be isolated economically in today's world, and that no country is self-sufficient. He believes that Russia gained by remaining a meaningful player on the global stage and by opening its primary commodities to the foreign market.

Those respondents who believe the loss outweighed the gain can be much more readily understood from the standpoint of a representative parallel of memory. One of the reasons for that is that this question generated rich discussion; the kind of discussing that revealed the complexity of unresolved memories, versus some kind of consistent, uniform and autonomous answer. The respondents who felt that Russia lost more than it gained based their reasoning on the compromise of Russia's superpower status and international prestige. Their answer was somewhat more uniform and representative of the idealistic parallel of memory.

Dima did not think the compromise was worth it, and explained that upon privatization, only those with connections had access to state assets that were "racketeered." It is these people that make up Russia's ultra-rich today, to the detriment of its vanishing middle class. Although socialism may have been overly idealistic, Dima felt that it provided a level of security that could not possibly be achieved today. Dima said that Russia is losing a lot of the progress it made during the Soviet Union, especially outside its major cities. He said that with the exception of Russia's major cities, the majority of its citizens are living in the periphery.

Aida spoke of the influence of the Soviet Union on the global stage and how nobody is really considering Russia as a meaningful player any longer. She explained that NATO's eastern expansion is just one example of how international agreements are

being contradicted simply because Russia is not as influential as it once was. Interestingly, the extent of Russia's influence as an international actor had increased over the course of this research, revealing a much closer link to the memory of Russia's greatness vested in its global image.

Other than the war myth, the Soviet global image was revealed as an important variable in the memory discourse of Russia's post-Soviet generation. Running almost exclusively on the idealistic parallel of memory, the memory of the Soviet superpower status witnessed somewhat of a transition. Despite the fact that the questions "What characterized the Iron Curtain era?" and "What characterized the Cold War era?" elicited comparable memories that can be categorized under their respective parallels, during the latter focus group, group 8 a different pattern was observed. The present spilled over into the analysis of the past and somewhat altered the memories associated with the Iron Curtain. Respondents Yakov and Misha were discussing the memory of the "isolation" characteristic to the Iron Curtain as a phenomenon emerging in the Russian present. Yakov said that sanctions are a more modernized and less extreme version of the isolation Russia experienced under the Iron Curtain. A respondent in the same group elaborated on his colleague's point of view, saying that Russia is being put under political duress with the aim of conforming to a subordinate international role. Misha felt that the isolationist approach of the curtain had a single aim, to undermine Soviets' greatness. In his view, Russia is currently being undermined, and it is unlikely that the history will repeat itself. Unfortunately, only one focus group was conducted in the aftermath of important geopolitical events, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea.

However, more than one question or comment made within that focus group suggested that memory is susceptible to the political phenomenon that shape the present in light of which past is recalled. The question, “Do you believe there is any nostalgia associated with Russia’s Soviet Past today?” generated a much more representative response, triggering memories of lifestyle subtleties and day-to-day realities of life in the Soviet Union. Misha’s sense of nostalgia for the Soviet Union centred solely on its international status. While respondents in the earlier-held focus groups, whose memories were characteristic of the idealistic parallel, highlighted the importance of Russia’s superpower status, Misha’s answer had concrete references to the present: “Solidarity and togetherness in the society were undone by the dissolution of the USSR. What we get today, in the case of Ukraine, is a direct consequence of that fracture.” His explanation went undisputed by his peers. He said, “[I]f we still had the Soviet Union today, Russia and Ukraine wouldn’t be running the risk of going to war [with each other].” A central concept of memory literature, which argues that the future in which memory is recalled has an impact on how and what is remembered, is thus consistent with my preliminary findings. These findings also add to the vast body of literature pointing to the malleability of Russian memory, and how susceptible it is to political subordination and manipulation. The demise of the USSR, in light of the intensifying conflict in Ukraine, where Russia claims a special interest based on the shared aspects of their past, had an impact on the quality and nature of respondents’ recollections. However, more research would be necessary to definitively confirm this finding.

Another intriguing observation pertaining to the same issue—whether more was gained or lost upon the Soviet dissolution—can be gleaned from the Yakutia focus groups. This question typically generated substantial feedback, but my Yakutia focus groups were a notable exception to the case. The consensus in Yakutia was to firmly support the statement, “Russia lost more than it gained upon the dissolution of the USSR.” Maria believes that all Soviet people share a common mentality and could accomplish much more when working together. She has parents of different nationalities, unlike the majority of her ethnic Yakut classmates. She used the example of her parents’ marriage to explain that cross-cultural and cross-lingual differences are imposed and not at all real. Maria’s classmates agreed that she and they are not so different after all. Maria’s highly idealistic response was not motivated by memory.

The second Yakutia group delivered a similar consensus. The discoveries of diamond deposits in Yakutia, and the increased industrialization they attracted, are attributes of the Soviet legacy in this part of Russia. Although the Yakutia focus groups engaged in the least discussion, providing far from complete feedback, they did reveal different motivations behind their concept of identity. The post-Soviet generation of Russia’s ethnic Yakuts was markedly different from the respondents in St. Petersburg, in that they did not have a direct connection to the Soviet past, and they valued their Yakut identity over their Russian one—yet both their Russian identity and Russian history also made them proud. A non-ethnic respondent in Yakutia expressed regret over the demise of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Soviet sense of camaraderie. After their local identity, which was given the highest importance, the

respondents ranked their Asian identity almost on par with their Russian identity—almost, because the count in favour of Russian identity exceeded the count of those who prioritized their Asian identity by four of the seventeen total respondents. None of the four respondents were ethnic Yakuts, implying that ethnic Yakuts value their local and Asian identity over their Russian identity. Also, with the exception of a total of four respondents, all of whom were ethnic Russians and/or Ukrainians, respondents did not identify themselves European, though this was a secondary identity to the Russian one that they identified with primarily.

The responses given in the questionnaire and as follow-up to the focus group questions elicited no references to Russia's 1990 crisis, difficult economic reforms, or any recent memory of Russia's post-Soviet transition time. These responses were representative of both my Yakut focus groups, while entirely contradictory to the seven focus groups conducted in St. Petersburg. Russia's might, greatness and uniqueness were the common themes in responses elicited from all focus groups conducted up to that point. Yakut respondents attributed Russia's uniqueness to its Asian and European land span, and a claim to its unique history and identity.

Notwithstanding the Soviet monuments, the historic memory of Russia's post-Soviet Yakuts does not bear a direct connection to the Soviet past, or even to Russia's recent history. The identity of Russian Yakuts seemingly pivots on a moral element that underlies a sense of community and camaraderie, seemingly more in line with Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities versus a broader sense of shared identity (Anderson 1991). Yakuts seemed distanced from Russia's Soviet past, yet fairly content

with its present, and above all, with their belonging to a seemingly more tangible ethnic union.

Yakutia has its own rules of living and sociocultural schemes, and I had an opportunity to witness and take part in some of its cultural practices. The geographical seclusion of Yakutia distances its people from the public sphere, cultural centres, and political and economic livelihoods of their St. Petersburg counterparts. They are not active participants in their country's past, possibly because their access is limited to the sociocultural institutes that serve to invigorate a culture's memory. Russia's Yakutus are distanced from their country's official discourse on historical memory, beyond public education, national symbols and commemorative practices. Yakuts are proud of their Russian nationhood, although their ethnicity seemingly buoys their identity. The question of what kind of impact geographical span could have on remembering could serve as an interesting beginning for future research.

Question: In your opinion, what caused food shortages and empty shelves at various times throughout the Soviet Era?

With respect to the representative parallel of memory it has been mentioned that many quotidian memories of Soviet living were elicited during the course of this study. Sometimes comically, with a nostalgic undertone at other times, sometimes shamefully, some of my respondents recalled memories of what routine life in the Soviet Union was like. "To answer your question on whether life was better then or now and how our quality of life has improved, let me tell you the story of Soviet underpants. It's a classic," said Vova, in focus group 3 before he painted a comic and tragic picture of

what Soviet-style undergarments were like. The illustration was meant to portray an image of how primitive and basic life in the Soviet Union was like. By the same token, I have heard countless references to endemic empty store shelves and long lineups for even the most basic of commodities. “Store shelves were frequently empty because Soviet producers only provided so much variety...I can’t tell you why exactly the shelves were empty, but if you go to a store now and remove whatever is left of from things made outside of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, are you left with much?” asked Timofey in focus group 8. He argued that the common shortages were a consequence of a chronic lack of resources and the state’s inability to manage them. A wide array of responses had been collected and subcategorized under the representative parallel of memory, which addressed a set of practical daily memories, as well as anecdotes about what life was like.

The memory of respondents that is representative of the typical and regimented Soviet life is quite consistent with the information that exists in Russian and English scholarship alike. Predominantly, this is the memory of going along to get along and get by. An element of nostalgia did surface during the recollection of some of these memories. “Everybody was equally poor; they [people] came together to survive and resorted to camaraderie and good neighbour practices to get by.” It was explained that people had to resort to all sorts of barter practices because not all people had the same access to all goods. For example, it was beneficial to be friends with someone working at a factory or produce distribution facility, because those people had always had access to foodstuffs and items that were highly scarce.

According to Ivan's memory, everything was in short supply, but most things could be obtained—in particular by non-monetary means. Bartering and favours went a long way. No wonder a sense of camaraderie struck a chord in the memory of respondents, who generally believed that that is exactly what Russia's modern society is missing. "Kuminalniyu kvartiry" mandated a certain lifestyle, highly conducive to cooperation and solidarity. Respondents explained that groups of people shared a rather limited territory under the same roof and had to get by, because that was the only option they had (Illia, group 4). People learned to live, to gossip, to sympathize and to become connected—anywhere from like a distant family member to like a very close friend. "Maybe it's just the movies, but I think it was probably easier to make friends. The communal living enshrined a lifestyle that was easy to adopt beyond the shared kitchen...like on the train, it was very easy to make friends on the train."

The same sentiment of solidarity and understanding is enshrined in the memory of this generation. This togetherness was vital for survival and for advancement, development and for building the society the Soviet Union strived to achieve. Moreover, it was not only necessary for its internal progress but also in order to claim a meaningful position on the international stage. Lina believes that Russians are much more selfish and unwilling to collaborate. Their mentality operates on the basis of a win-lose situation, where as in the past, people were more inclined to think in the win-win terms.

"We now live in an era fueled by our individual needs and wants, so preoccupied in our pursuit of meeting our daily needs that we forget to lend our neighbour, a pensioner, a hand. You've asked me about volunteering, once, Kate. That is not something we are familiar with. The closest thing that comes to mind is the Soviet Subtonic, yet another version of the famous [infamous] "they forget to pay us, we

forget to work” sentiment. Altruism is a thing of the past...dating back to when you could at least know that you could ask for a favour. There are no favours given these days. Favours take time and time is money and we have neither the time nor the money.”

This is a quote from my student and good friend, Nina, made outside of a focus group setting, but in line with the thinking of her peers.

The collection of anecdotes and stories gathered in focus group that pertain to the practical parallel that I’ve gathered is extensive and well documented. Memories belonging to this category are frank and uncompleted. They paint an image of the past that is representative of its primitiveness. Yet, respondents reminisce on this very simplicity, making it and the society at large more genuine, forgiving and altruistic.

Change and memory volatility

It has been argued that the memory of Russia’s ‘90s generation is a pure construct, because, not having directly lived through the Soviet era, they lack the lived-memory component of recollection. The volatility of their memory renders it subordinate to external forces and factors that shape it, including key events that unravel in the present. My focus group findings revealed a slight shift in the recollection of memory of my respondents, which are attributed to three separate events, earlier in this chapter referred to as “geopolitical circumstances” at large. The evolving political circumstances and their implications for memory will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Empirical Findings – Anti-western propaganda

St. Petersburg greeted me in the midst of its G20 preparations in late August 2013. It was Russia’s turn to host dignitaries of the world’s most powerful states. Russia

embraced its reputation as a lavish host, and St. Petersburg seemed to have spared no expense to leave a lasting impression on its visitors. Upon arrival for the G20 summit scheduled on 5-6 September, 2013 foreign dignitaries were stationed in the extravagant Constantine Palace, a legendary St. Petersburg landmark and historic symbol. A UNESCO recognized World Heritage Site, Peterhof Palace was yet another distinguished summit quarter—which I realized when the vehicle I was traveling in was subjected to a thorough police examination of while I was in its nearby vicinity. Several of St. Petersburg’s central subway stations were closed for the duration of the summit for safety reasons, making the event even more impossible to ignore.

Minor inconveniences aside, I was taken in by the city’s incontrovertible glamour, charm, and imperial representation, all of which formed my initial impression. The celebration of Russia’s impeccable organization and hospitality was exacerbated by its state television. There was no shortage of facts pertaining to Russia’s generosity, in particular its lavish treatment of foreign politicians and media reports on the news. It was announced that 1882 journalists were accredited for the occasion and that they were transported to St. Petersburg via its innovative high-speed waterbuses, which had made over one hundred trips during the first day of the summit alone. The news of how much food was eaten by Russia’s foreign guests during the first day of the summit – 26 tons—dominated the headlines. Media coverage buzzed with flashy summit photos of Putin shaking hands with numerous heads of state.

Long after the summit was over, Russia’s media continued its extensive coverage. Obama’s opting out of meeting with the Russian host was heavily scrutinized

and harshly critiqued. Putin, on the other hand, was praised for putting on a successful summit that would help contribute to Russia's projection of a positive image abroad. That image was further exaggerated by Putin's "pragmatic" yet firm stance on "consolidating" a "peaceful Russian-Syrian solution," to the detriment of the "military-US-led efforts." Putin garnered further praise over the ratification of a joint treaty, which combined international efforts to eradicate the Syrian standoff. Russian television proclaimed the "Syrian issue" as the summit's most contentious matter. Its resolution was later declared Russia's primary achievement in foreign policy and the pinnacle of its diplomatic accomplishments in 2013.

In fact, Russian media named 2013 as Russia's year of historic achievements in global politics. Russia's role in advocating for and consolidating a peaceful resolution to eradicate the chemical threat in Syria was celebrated, while the United States' "military resolution" was mocked.

During the "Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons" negotiations and the subsequent Russian-led international efforts to examine and liquidate Syria's chemical weapons production facilities, a sentiment of resentment was spun by Russia's TV towards the United States. Through late September and October, I began to take note of derogatory themes of "compromised moral authority," "hypocrisy" and "disengagement" that the Russian media used to label American foreign policy. I was deeply intrigued by prime time television news content dedicated to exposing the Russian audience an insight into what made the news in U.S. with respect to Russia. Edward Snowden quickly became Russia's protagonist, further propelling its anti-

western resentment and debasing the U.S.'s moral authority and international legitimacy in the eyes of Russians.

On September 18th, the Russian coast guard detained the Arctic Sunrise fleet and all 30 members of its Greenpeace crew. Conspiracy theories infiltrated the Russian media airways, some accusing the anti-oil drilling protestors of western espionage operations. Putin's display of power towards the Greenpeace protestors, and his subsequent act of amnesty, were widely covered and proclaimed as legitimate. Moreover, the incident came to serve a necessary reminder of Russia's righteousness.

The overarching theme of Western resentment was further fueled by the Western ridicule of Russia in the lead up to the Russian-hosted Winter Olympics. Pre-existing irritants in Russia's relationship with the West, including Russia's treatment of gays, were further amplified.

The case of Ukraine contemplating membership in the European Union was yet another ticking time bomb widely broadcast on Russian television. A propaganda series called "Divorce a-la Ukraine" was launched on Russia 24, its prime state television channel. The series featured interviews with various scholars, politicians, historians, economics and other so-called "prominent experts," who accused the west of subjugating Ukraine and forcing its economy into a downturn.

The subsequent coverage of the Ukrainian Euro Maidan Revolution and the wave of events that was triggered by Ukraine's former President Yanukovich's backing out of the EU Association agreement was largely downplayed at first, presented as a rational evasion of a dubious western sham. The escalation of the crisis in Ukraine was later

characterized as a fascist coup by Russian media and reiterated within the public discourse. Crimea was annexed under the pretext of the subjugation of Russian-speaking Ukrainians living there, as well as their refusal to recognize the so-called “Kiev junta.” In the aftermath of Crimea’s annexation, I noticed several key themes re-surfacing from the margins of history and dominating Russia’s policy, legislature debates and mass media. First of all, the myth of fascism in reference to Ukraine, elicited from a Soviet-Era historical episode. Second of all, a set of revisionist moves made by the Russian government, to the detriment of social movements and democracy in Russian. These moves were executed on the policy and judicial levels of Russian governance. The reactive approach of the Russian government to the spectrum of events unfolding in Ukraine was blatant and forceful. I watched the passing of three seemingly unrelated bills into laws unprecedented to Russia’s post-Soviet jurisdiction. Tougher punishment was legislated to discourage Russians from engaging in all types of protests and demonstrations that were “unsanctioned” by the government. Online bloggers were significantly deterred, being subject to new regulations requiring them to register with the state in order to have permission for online publishing. Moreover, Russia’s long-discussed memory law came into force, though this went seemingly unnoticed. Russian media was in the midst of an aggressive anti-Western campaign aimed at discrediting Western sanctions, which were beginning to take their initial toll on the Russian economy.

Russia’s Memory Law

On April 4, 2014, Russia's State Duma adopted in the first reading the draft law: on amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and tabled its memory law. The adopted article 354.1 of Russia's Criminal Code under the auspice of "the Law on Rehabilitation of Nazism," made it a palpable state offence to deny "facts established by the verdict of the International Military Tribunal for the trial and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis countries."

It made it illegal to disseminate information with respect to the activities of the Soviet Union during World War II, in contradiction with the Tribunal's decree. Other than disseminating information to the detriment of historic facts established by the Tribunal, Russia's memory law made it a crime to disrespect Russia's "days of glory and anniversaries, related to the protection of the Fatherland, as well as the desecration of symbols of military glory of Russia, committed publicly." Criminals convicted under the rehabilitation of Nazism law are subject to a three to five year imprisonment or a fine in the amount of 100,000 to 500,000 rubles. Individuals with connections to the media, political office or in any other position conducive to vast propagation are subject to the harshest punishment and eviction from their post. By tabling this law, the Russian state constructed a historic "truth," which derives from a decree of a higher, international order. Not only did Russia reiterate its historic stance, or discourse, it made it a punishable state offence to contradict that position. Russia has effectively constitutionalized the defense of its Soviet-era activities and its version of the events of the Second World War, to the detriment of the memory of the past, which contradicts them.

Russia's interpretation of the Nuremberg Tribunal is a supreme body of law, which on the one hand excuses Russia from its Soviet war crimes, for the Soviet Union was not its primary aggressor. This interpretation simply has little to do with singling out or punishing Russia or the Soviet Union for any crimes committed by the regime. It also declares it an irrefutable victor. Russia's Rehabilitation of Nazism law is its overarching legislation, which entrenches Russia's systematic politics of memory (Копцов 2011, 264). Russia's memory law is only a foundation of its broader memory scheme. The appropriate interpretation of memory and attitudes towards memory are transmitted through state controlled mass media, schooling system, state sponsored commemorative practices, both at home and abroad, in film and in literature. Throughout the course of my studies in Russia, I had carefully followed and scrutinized the state's media projection. I had come to realize the value of history as a variable in establishing societal consensus. I had also witnessed how the Russian government proceeded to ban an independent TV channel, which breached the use of Russia's Soviet history as consensus building apparatus. This TV channel was punished for steering up controversy over a glorified historic event, which is key to Russia's glorification of its Soviet history and societal consensus building.

Telekanal Dozhd' Controversy

On January 26, 2014 Russia's popular TV channel Dozhd' carried out an online survey through its website, asking readers whether Leningrad should have been surrendered to the occupying Nazi forces in an effort to save hundreds of thousands of lives. The channel also posed the same question to a live on-air audience; all this took

place on the eve of the commemorative ceremonies dedicated to the anniversary of Leningrad's liberation during its siege in the Second World War. The question was not well received by the program's live audience, and triggered a wave of online criticism on social media forums such as Twitter. Approximately twenty minutes after the initial uproar, the chief editor of channel's Internet page issued a public apology, which proceeded with televised commentary and an explanation along the lines that the question was poorly formatted and taken out of context. In the following days, politicians and state actors, as well as activists and regular viewers, condemned the channel. Comments on Twitter echoed this criticism. Russia's Minister of Culture was quoted as saying the following, in reference to the anchors of the controversy-plagued program: "I don't even know what to call these people. They are not people." Another notable remark came from Russia's deputy of the State Duma, a member of Edinaya Rossia referred to the incident as "an attempt to rehabilitate Nazism." Vladimir Putin's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, said the channel more than crossed the line, infringing not only on the State's law, but also on societal moral and ethical codes. On January 29th, Russia's largest TV providers disconnected the channel, and by the 31st, every remaining provider was forced to do so.

This incident further demonstrates that the Russian leadership still utilizes history with the propagandistic aim of influencing public opinion, just as it has done in the past. The extent to which this process influences memory and past-perception in the present is unknown.

Similarly, history was Russia's primary justification behind its act of aggression in encroaching on another state's territoriality when it annexed Crimea, in the Ukraine. History was also a variable used to justify Russia's recent amendment of the memory law, which is similarly aimed at deriving societal consensus.

The interpretation of history can shape the public consciousness and influence memory perception. History and memory are therefore not mutually exclusive, as memory is reshaped in the present, through evolving emphasis, depiction and manipulation of certain historic events. The reactive approach of the Russian government to the spectrum of events unfolding in Ukraine triggered policy and judicial changes to revamp the political legitimacy of the Russian government. History was the main justification for enacting these changes, propagating myths and propagandizing the objective of the Russian government through mass media.

History was streaming through the public consciousness and debates in Russia, except it was a particular version of history that was dominating the discourse. It was the version of history the Russian government propelled to narrate a common ground, to justify its course of action. But what happened to the alternative memory that did not make the mainstream endorsed by the government? Forgetting is a key component of the findings pertaining to Russia's post-Soviet generation.

Forgetting

Other than actively taking a position on controversial events in its Soviet history, Russia pursues a policy of forgetting. Unlike in the case of the German Democratic Republic, which upon re-unification with the Federal Republic of Germany had released

what were classified as state secrets into the public domain, Russia did no such thing. The Stasi files were opened up to the public and the state security agency itself was dismantled. In Russia things transpired differently, with the status of classified files remaining largely unchanged. The Soviet KGB classified sensitive information into the categories of “highly secretive,” “secret,” and “state secret,” the state secret seal of confidentiality bearing a non-disclosure date ranging from anywhere between five and 50 years. While the secrecy of some of these documents had reached its expiry date and saw them released into the public domain, the due dates for a disproportionate number of highly classified documents were extended, and these documents remain undisclosed to this day.

While conducting research in Russia, I uncovered two intriguing and highly-classified Soviet state secrets that were recently released into the public domain via a popular Russian talk show. One of them was the incident of February 1-2, 1959, in the Northern Urals, on a trail later named Dyatlov Pass (Rennell, 2014). It was kept secret under a 50-year secrecy ban and parts of it are still classified. According to the archive, a group of nine students had gone missing on a hiking trip. The parents of the missing students were still advocating for a search long after the students’ anticipated return date. Several weeks after the hike, a search and rescue crew uncovered all the bodies of the team, decapitated and scattered around the mountain, mutilated beyond the point of recognition, with no clues as to what may have happened. The state buried the unidentifiable remains of the missing students at its discretion nearly a month after the incident. The parents were not permitted to seek an independent inquiry, and for the

next 50 years this event was a highly-classified state secret. To this day no one really knows what happened.

During a recent public outcry as a consequence of the incomplete disclosure of the events surrounding this incident, speculative reports from undisclosed parties brought forth facts that showed that the government was conducting military training and had been testing a new biochemical weapon in the vicinity of the Dyatlov Pass. The Russian Federation ignored cries for an inquiry and a full disclosure of the facts, which was in keeping with the policy of dismissing and forgetting historical incidents that do not serve the image of the regime.

Another example of a contentious former state secret that has recently been declassified and brought to light is the disastrous July 12, 1968 incident of a military plane crashing into a kindergarten, killing 18 children between the ages of 1 and 4, as well as 5 adults (not including the pilot and the crew). Near 40 years after the incident, parents have yet to hear an explanation from the government as to the cause of the crash. The state buried all the deceased in a mass grave at the crash site, and erected a statue of commemoration on the former kindergarten grounds. Only a handful of the parents that had their children buried that day are still alive, and their plea for an explanation is slowly silenced by time. One of the crew members who by chance did not board the flight spoke out for the first time after nearly 40 years; he too had been prohibited from speaking out any earlier by the Soviet NKVD (Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del – People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs). While he does not qualify

as a legitimate witness and his position has limited fact-based evidence, he insists that the pilot and the crew were heavily intoxicated the night before the flight.

While these shocking incidents are limited in their scholarly scope, they can be traced back to real people with living memories. These stories, much like the stories buried under the state secret labels to date, exist outside of the sphere of collective, or living memory because they are barred from the public domain. Methodically-backed evidence suggests that there are currently 4 million Soviet-era state secrets, which are unlikely to fuel the collective or living memory of Russia's post-Soviet generation.

While these two stories are localized, mass-scale crimes committed by the Soviet regime continue to similarly go unacknowledged. Findings show that the Gulag and millions of executions in the hands of Russia's special services constitute a relatively minor component of Russia's collective memory.

Based on the limited availability of evidence of memories pertaining to the Soviet's crime against its own people, in addition to the continuing inaccessibility of the archives, an assertion can be made that the Russian government pursues a policy of active forgetting. Furthermore, strong evidence points to a much greater involvement of Russia's government in shaping its historic discourse, beyond merely the facilitation of forgetting; the Russian government plays a direct role in dismissing its Soviet history. It seeks to construct historic consensus to the detriment of historic complexity and completeness, by promoting a simplified version of Russia's Soviet past.

Memorials and Commemoration

On May 9th, 2015, Russia will celebrate the 70th anniversary of its victory in the Great Patriotic War. If this year's celebrations resemble those that took place in 2005, when the 60th victory anniversary was marked, Russia can anticipate that hundreds of foreign dignitaries will accept an invitation to admire its military might. Other than a military parade and millions of rubles spent towards the event's execution, we can anticipate resurfacing of memory fault lines and historic political frontiers in Eastern Europe—or, from the State's point of view, Russia's backyard.

Victory day and the commemoration of the Patriotic War are integral to the living memory of Russians. Other than witnessing commemorative events pertaining to the celebration of the Soviet achievements in the Second World War, I had daily encounters with the various symbols and monuments of Russia's commemoration.

Formerly known as Leningrad, the city of St. Petersburg, where most of my primary research was conducted, is the capital of Russia's culture and cultural heritage. It hosts capitals from various eras of Russian history and vividly bears the scars of World War II. Leningrad fell under fascist siege for nearly two and a half years, and this memory is still fresh in the minds of St. Petersburg's inhabitants. It is a truly dark and abominable chapter in the city's history, and elements of that darkness persist into its present. The city's central square proudly bares a "City Hero" title, inscribed on top of a Soviet-era building. It is virtually impossible to ignore the multitude of plaques and monuments of commemoration scattered throughout the city. A casual walk on Nevsky Prospect, the city's central street, has brought me to face an old information sign that was kept since the days of World War II days, honoring the terrors of the war in present

day. It indicates that the west side of the street is safer during an air strike. Just a couple of meters down the same street is a stone bridge which bears obvious signs of bullet holes. A plaque below indicates that these bullet marks bear the memory of the Red Army's liberation of the city from its hold under siege.

It was impossible to ignore the city's extensive network of war memorials, plaques and statues, an integral component of St. Petersburg's modern landscape. The park that I walked in every day housed many tsarist-era memorials, just like much of the city, but it also had an information plaque, which described an incident of a German plane crash. Needless to say, the city vividly displays its wartime burdens and is visibly haunted by its Soviet-era ghosts. Moreover, there is still a living generation of people in that city that have lived through its most horrific years. While in line at the postal office one day, an elderly lady proceeded to tell me that during Leningrad's occupation; she had worked at this very post office. She had shared her story, which attested to my perception of a vast population of residents in St. Petersburg whose memory of the Soviet Union is first-hand.

In conjunction with other monuments and commemorative symbols of the war legacy, it is evident that Russia's Soviet past is not merely its past, it is also a living memory that persists on a daily basis. More importantly, the imagery of this living war legacy is so striking that nearly a year later, the vivid imagery of various war memorials persists in my memory.

Similarly unforgettable remains my encounter with a Stalin stature, in Yakutia. In early March of 2014 I took advantage of an opportunity of a lifetime and accepted an

invitation to take part in a conference in a remote part of Russia's Far East. A six hour flight across Russia's six time zones landed me in subzero temperatures well out of my comfort zone. I was speechless on the ride up to the University dorm, where the international and Russian conference participants were stationed. It was literally as though I had traveled back in time to seek the answer to the question of what life in the Soviet Union was like, with my own eyes. Although it was dark outside on the way from the airport, the landscape visible from the minibus window was remarkably unsophisticated, unveiling the omnipresent Soviet-style architecture, not dissimilar to what I recall having seen in secluded regions in Ukraine when I was a child. In the following days, my perspective broadened to include a range of blatant Soviet symbols and elements of less imposing yet nonetheless vivid Soviet legacy.

Like many regions throughout the former Soviet Union, the town of Mirniy, in Yakutia, was the site of a narrowly specialized industrial settlement, which upheld its legacy throughout Russia's recent past. Russia's northern periphery is rich in natural resources, and has been a profitable and strategically valuable region for the Soviet government. Uncovered resource deposits contributed to further exploration and paved the way for official regional developmental policies aimed at resource extraction. New mines attracted industrial settlements like magnets, which in some cases turned into self-sufficient industrial towns, resembling other industrial towns throughout the Soviet Union.

Mirny was an example of a town originated upon the discovery of a kimberlite pipe, by a famous Soviet geological expedition in 1955. The Mir Mine is an open pit, 525

meter deep mine. It has a diameter of 1.25 km and was the first and the biggest diamond mine in the Soviet Union. While this particular mine has not been operational since 2011, ALROSA (Almazy, Rossiya, Sakha) the company with a Russian-wide diamond monopoly, continues to operate there today, exploiting nearby mines and running other factories and operations out of Mirny. ALROSA is a publicly owned enterprise, although 50% of its stocks belong to the Russian Federation, another 40% to the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), and the rest to private shareholders. The diamond industry employs the majority of the region's population and ALROSA is the Republic's main source of income.

The visible appeal of Mirny was markedly different from anything I've seen, even elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Of course, its climate and proximity to the polar circle has a lot to do with how the town was urbanized. While on the official tour of the town, our local guide informed us that the settlement never went by an official plan. In fact, there was no urbanization or development planning, and the miners, whose numbers multiplied over time, were simply stationed around the mine. As further details revealed on the tour, the 2-storey wooden houses were first settled and erected upon the Mir Mine construction site, some of which to this day are not connected to the town's sewer system or water main.

The architectural design of many other buildings resembles Soviet-era construction, although these apartments are not settled directly on the ground due to the permafrost. The majority of these buildings are five storeys, although I recall several 9-storey buildings, including the dorm I stayed at.

On the same tour, I encountered a number of Soviet-era monuments, including a statue of Stalin erected in the town during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Second World War victory. The purpose of the statue was to commemorate “Russia’s great leader for developing this regions potential and industrializing it.” Stalin’s decisiveness and ability to rid the world of fascism were also glorified. We were also taken to Lenin’s statue in the central square of the town, as well as a memorial complex in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Second World War Victory, and a memorial complex in praise of Yakut land (Yakutia-Mat’), diamond discovery (Vilyuiskoe Koltso), Past Present and Future of the Diamond Region. We had also encountered numerous commemorative plaques and memorials dedicated to miners, archeologists and soldiers. There are a total of 16 distinguished memorials in the town of Mirny, of them 11 are dedicated to this town’s Soviet Era legacy.

Collective events, rituals, ceremonies, symbols and monuments are pivotal to societal consensus-building, preservation of social solidarity and constitution of shared past. Although only partially successful, questionnaire and focus group findings revealed that the memory of Russia’s post-Soviet generation is glorified.

According to international and Russian scholarship, political legitimacy in Russia is heavily dependent on a unifying historical narrative. My primary findings show how deep, multifaceted and even contradictory memory in Russia is. This notion is irrefutably mirrored and further complicated in the memory of Russia’s post-Soviet generation. This generation is capable of approaching a nuanced memory from more than one perspective. My assertion is consistent with the literature that highlights the ambiguity

of the Soviet Union in the memory of its people, for a definitive moral grade is not easily prescribed to Russia's Soviet past. Understandably, the post-Soviet generation's memory of Russia's Soviet history is even more ambiguous and polarized, having been shaped in light of Russia's transition and progressive reforms. The memory of this generation is shaped in light of multiple factors from both, past and present. Although the extent to which current events and phenomenon shape the memory of this generation cannot be generalized, based on my findings. Findings do attest to the constructed nature of this generation's memory, a generation that has not directly lived through the Soviet era of its country's history. The volatility of their memory renders it subordinate to external forces and factors that shape it, including key events that that taken place in Russia's recent, post-Soviet past.

During the course of my field work in Russia, I observed the heightening of anti-western propaganda in Russia. This sentiment coincided with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the immediate aftermath. Similarly, I observed and studied the transformation of the recollection of memory in light of Russia-hosted Winter Olympics Games in 2014. The growing prevalence of anti-western sentiment, just like the euphoria surrounding the Olympic Games, had come up in the focus group, though under a different light during the earlier, versus the later discussions, as mentioned in this chapter earlier. It is these events that had found their way into my focus groups on memory. However their pervasiveness and impact on the memory of this generation is undetermined.

VIII CONCLUSION & SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The controversy and ambiguity in recalling the Soviet past lies not in its inconsistency, but rather in how consistent its interpretation is from two seemingly divergent parallels. One of these parallels is driven by dogma. It is abstract, sensationalized, and designed to reinforce the notions of Russia's unique tenure and historical greatness. This memory is upheld by powerful myths engraved in Russia's cultural legacy and historic triumphs. It is manifested in the celebration and commemoration of the Soviet socialist regime and its principals, ideology and ideals. It embraces the idealized views of the past. The idealistic parallel of memory is closely associated with the Russian orthodox thinkers, scholars and historians. It perceives history as a means to an end, as opposed to an unequivocal variable of the country's lived past. This trajectory buoys public consciousness and generates a sense of pride and identity. These memories proved to be more volatile and susceptible to political manipulation, as was revealed by participants whose responses shifted in light of a number of political events.

With respect to the same events, it can be argued that the memories of the representative, or practical, parallel proved to be less volatile. This in part has to do with the separation of the past and future in the perception of history, and the memory of those thinkers belonging to the representative category. It also has to do with the

emphasis those thinkers place on the autonomy of history and the acceptance of history as a complex, multifaceted, and pluralistic form.

The second, seemingly contradictory type of memory recalling, in light of the primary, glorious recollection of history, is a category of practical memories driven by the perception of what the typical day-to-day life was like. The reason these memories seem contradictory is that they are recalled with a greater negativity, apathy, bitterness, and sense of dissatisfaction with life than that which existed at the time. Not all memories that I see as belonging to this category are anti-nostalgic or carry negative undertones—they are simply based more in practicality than in ideology. According to my findings, memories belonging in this category are memories with a more concrete tenure—those that are predominantly based on the lived experience of the respondents' ancestors. They speak to the concrete reality of day-to-day life in the Soviet Union.

A unifying historical narrative has for decades been a pivotal tool in consolidating political legitimacy in Russia. In fact, some scholars would go as far as to rationally justify its tendency to monopolize the nation's historic discourse for political means, so as to attribute it the prolonged legacy of authoritarianism in Russia. History has always played a valuable role in Russia's culture and society, especially under authoritarianism. During the Soviet regime, it was deemed irrelevant, although it was amalgamated into the broader communist ideology and often used in service of it. History was seldom an autonomous discipline in Russia, and was often used as a political tool, although its role was transformed along with the transformation of Russia's system of governance.

History in Russia might be running the risk of becoming the dominant instrument of ideology propagation because that is what society remembers, will likely remember and associates with its past for many more generations to come. A uniform historic narrative was an important variable in the Soviet equation for political legitimacy and the Communist ideology was in itself a variable within the same equation for political legitimacy, the binding force of which was undone upon the Soviet dissolution. Secondary research and scholarly literature suggest that Russia inherited an ideological void in the place of a powerful and binding myth that solidified its nation's uniform identity. Which is why history and memory are topics so pivotal to a transitioning and democratizing, modern Russia. Nikolai Kozlov (Козлов) and a multitude of other Russian and international scholars have been pointing to Russia's continued use of history for politically driven purposes. In 2014, Russia adopted a heavily-criticized law pertaining to memory and the rehabilitation of Russia's past under the Soviet Union. Coupled with this law is Russia's bold agenda of commemorating and memorializing the Second World War. Russia is showing signs of moving in the direction of altering its history to fit a political agenda reflective of its global geo-political ambitions and an internal policy that seeks to consolidate its post-Soviet identity. While significant evidence suggests that history is currently subject to the government's monopoly of information—to a discourse that the government believes will be most legitimate and conducive to Russia's future advancement—it is less clear how the Soviet Union is remembered by those not who have not been subject to the recent changes in the dissemination of historical discourse in Russia. Moreover, the memory of Russia's post-

Soviet generation, one that has grown up during the most immediate years of Russia's post-Soviet transition, remains intriguing and undetermined. The impact of the present, within which it is shaped and re-evaluated, is also unknown.

What is known, or has at least been supported in this thesis, is the relatively nuanced and sometimes contradictory nature of memory of the Soviet past that characterizes the 1990s generation and the conditions that have shaped the circumstances in the early aftermath of Russia's post-Soviet transition that have influenced their perception of their Soviet past.

My research makes assertions consistent with prominent memory scholarship, including the work of one of its best known thinkers, Maurice Halbwachs. He argues that memory is a social construct that is shaped by societal norms and institutions. He points to the present as another variable that shapes social frameworks and affects the way the past is evaluated and recalled. While the present is a variable in Halbwachs's memory equation this study was not able to confirm, Russia's evolving social frameworks and transformative institutions that shape this generation's understanding of its predecessors' lives.

My findings show a strong link to collective memory theory, its proximity to everyday memorials and rituals, living memory, and forgetting. Collective memory has a time span of approximately three generations, an idea consistent with my argument that the collective memory of the Soviet Union will outlive not only Russia's immediate post-soviet generation, but also several generations that follow it. The prominence of the war myth in Russia, including in the eyes of this generation, lives in Russia's War

monuments and comes to live during its commemorative Victory Day ceremonies, including the upcoming anniversary ceremony on May 9, 2015. Forgetting, on the other hand, relates to the darker moments of Russia's Soviet history, which the present government attempts to erase from the memory of its modern generations. Russia's new law on the rehabilitation of Nazism is evidence of such an attempt. Kopusov's (Копосов) reservations with regards to this law have been mirrored in my findings, which emphasize the dangers of "memory politics." To Kopusov (Копосов), these systemic memory politics constitute a strategic portrayal of history, building on the rhetoric of a convenient discourse of how the past should be remembered. It is convenient because it is conducive to keeping alive the version of the past that aligns with the regime's political agenda in the present. That is to say, the use of history in Russia with a propagandistic aim has a history of its own. The dangers of a uniform of manipulated historical discourse can lead to the kind of memory faultiness mentioned in Kattego's work. Memory is unable to safeguard history in this case, because it is running the risk of not only being inconsistent with the state-disseminated discourse, but also risks transgressing the law.

I hope that my work broadens interest on the topic and leads to more extensive studies and scholarship on Russia in particular. Although memory is far from being the contentious fault line that like a curtain is reemerging over Russia; it prevents Russia from moving forward. Russia is at crossroads yet again, and it is hard to predict how it will shape its present in light of the burdening past it has yet to let go of. Regardless of

its future, Russia needs to look beyond a simplified and glorified version of its history and start accepting its past—with the complexities, faults and victories that that entails.

English Sources

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso. (1991).
- Assmann, Aleida. *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions. Media, Archives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2011).
- Assmann, Aleida. "Canon and Archive" in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, (2008): 97-107
- Assmann, Jan 1995. Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. In: *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies. (1995): 125–133.
- Assmann, Jan. *Moses the Egyptian: The memory of Egypt in Western monotheism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1997).
- Assmann, Jan Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: A. Erll & A. Nünning (eds.) *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, (2008): 109–118.
- Dawisha, Karen. "Communism as a Lived System of Ideas in Contemporary Russia." *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (2005): 463–493
- Etkind, Alexander. "Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror." *Constellations* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2009): 182–200.
- Ekman, Joakim and Jonas Linde. "Communist Nostalgia and the Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol.21, No.3, (2005): 354 – 374
- Erll, Astrid and Nünning Ansgar. "Cultural Memory Studies: An Independent and Interdisciplinary Handbook." Berlin: Walter de Gruyter (2008)
- Filitov, Aleksei. "Problems of Post War Construction in Soviet Policy Conceptions during World War II," in Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War; 1943-1953* London, (1996): 3-23.
- Gromov, Anatoli. Russian gas market perspective. Presentation at Energy Delta Institute, 14 December, 2011 . Available from:
<
<http://regconf.hse.ru/uploads/af36aef2ed0e18f00c79507f262a88b86351d2ff.pdf>>
acceded 20 Jan. 2014
- Horsfield, Dorothy. "Casting Shadows? Authoritarianism in Putin's Russia

- Authoritarianism in Putin's Russia." *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 12, No 4. (2014): 445–56.
- IB Guides. 2007. "Domestic and Foreign Problems of the Brezhnev Era." <<http://ibguides.com/history/notes/domestic-and-foreign-problems-of-the-brezhnev-era-economic-and-political-stagnation-afghanistan>> 19 Feb. 2015
- Ignatieff, Michael. "WORKSHOP WINDOW: Soviet War Memorials." *Oxford University Press*. No. 17, April (2008): 157–63.
- Kattago, Siobhan. "War Memorials and the Politics of Memory: the Soviet War Memorial in Tallinn." *Constellations* Vol. 16, No.1 (2009): 1–17.
- Khapaeva, Dina and Kuposov Nikolai. Les demi dieux de la mythologie soviétique. Etude sur les représentations collectives de l'histoire // *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. Vol. 47 No. 4– 5, (1992): 963–987.
- Khapaeva, Diana. "Historical Memory in Post-Soviet Gothic Society." *Social Research*. Vol 76, No. 1 (2009): 359–394.
- Kinsman, Jeremy. "Russia and Democracy." In *A Diplomats Handbook for Democracy Development Support*. (2013): 1–58.
- Kornai, Janos. *The socialist system. The political economy of communism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (1992).
- Kurilla, Ivan. "The Implications of Russia's Law Against the 'Rehabilitation of Nazism'." *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*. August 2014: 1–5.
- Liñán, Miguel Vázquez. "History as a Propaganda Tool in Putin's Russia." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* Vol. 43, No. 2, (2010): 167–78.
- Lyons, Pat, and Alžběta Bernardyová. "Satisfied, Sceptical or Simply Indifferent? Current Public Opinion Towards the Fall of Communism in the Czech Republic" Vol. 63, No. 9. (2011): 1719–44.
- Marx, Karl. "*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*." Arc Manor LLC. Pp. 594-617 in the Marx--Engels Reader. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.
- McKee, Martin. "Alcohol in Russia." Vol. 34. *Alcohol and Alcoholism* (1999):824-29.
- Miller, Alexei. 2010. "Russia: Politics and History." *Russia in Global Affairs*, July 7. http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russia:_Politics_and_History-14896 17 Feb. ,

2015

- Nougayrède, Natalie. "Vladimir Putin Is Rewriting Cold War History." <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/05/vladimir-putin-yalta-ukraine-crimea-historical-narrative>. 13 Apr., 2014
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," in "Memory and counter memory" Special Issue, *Representations* No. 26. Spring (1989):7-24.
- Olick, Jeffrey. Vinitzky-Seroussi Vered, and Daniel Levy. *The Collective Memory Reader*. New York. Oxford University Press. (2011)
- Rasizade, Alec. "Putin's Mission in the Russian Thermidor." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* Vol. 41, No. 1 (2008): 1–25.
- Rennell, Tony. "Secret Soviet Death Rays. Yetis. Aliens. Just What Did Slaughter Nine Hikers on Siberia's Death Mountain in 1959?" August 23, 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2401175/Dyatlov-Pass-Indicent-slaughtered-hikers-Siberias-Death-Mountain-1959.html>.
- Rosefielde, Steven. "An Abnormal Country." *BOFIT Discussion Papers*, (2004):1–25.
- Sherlock, Thomas. "Confronting the Stalinist Past: the Politics of Memory in Russia." *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 34, No. 2, (2011): 93–109.
- Shkolnikov, Vladimir, Giovanni Cornia, David Leon, and France Meslé. 1998. "Causes of the Russian Mortality Crisis: Evidence and Interpretations," *World Development Report*, Vol. 26, No. 11, (1998): 1995-2011.
- Shkolnikov, Vladimir, Martin McKee, and David Leon. "Changes in Life Expectancy in Russia in the mid-1990s," *The Lancet*, Vol. 357, No. 9260 (2001): 917-21.
- Shleifer, Andrei. *A Normal Country*. Harvard University Press. 2005.
- Tamm, Marek. "Beyond History and Memory: New Perspectives in Memory Studies." *History Compass* Vol. 11, No. 6, (2013): 458–73
- Tétrault-Farber, Gabrielle. "Striped Ribbon Becomes Essential Accessory for Pro-Kremlin Crowd | News," March, 2015. 20 March 2015 <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/striped-ribbon-becomes-essential-accessory-for-pro-kremlin-crowd/496762.html>.
- Velikonja, M. "Lost in Transition: Nostalgia for Socialism in Post-Socialist Countries." *East European Politics & Societies* Vol. 23, No 4 (2009): 545–51.

Volkov, Vadim. "Security and Rule-Enforcement in Russian Business: the Role of the 'Mafia'." 2015.

White, Stephen. "Soviet nostalgia and Russian politics." *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 1 (2010): 1–9

Yekelchik, Sergy. *Stalin's Empire of Memory. Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination*. Toronto. University of Toronto Press, 2004

Zajda, Joseph I, and Rea Zajda. "Schooling the New Russians." *International Review of Education* Vol. 49, No. 3-4. James Nicholas Publishers (2003): 363–84.

Russian Sources

Бомсдорф, Ф, and Г Бордюгова. *60-Летие окончания Второй Мировой и Великой Отечественной*. Фонд Фридриха Науманна. 2010.

Горшков, Шереги. "Историческое Сознание Молодежи." *Вестник Российской Академии Наук* 80 (3). Вестник Российской академии наук. (2010): 195–203.

Дымарский, Виталий. Вспоминая будущее. Российская газета. 11.05.2006.
<<http://www.rg.ru/2006/05/11/pogovorim.html>> 3 Mar. 2013.

Данилов А.А. История России. 1900-1945. 11 класс. Методическое пособие.
<http://www.prosv.ru/ebooks/Danilov_Istoria_1900-1945/index.html> 2 Apr. 2014.

Кирчанов, Максим . "Проблемы Политизации Исторической Науки В России (На Примере Националистических Течений В Историографии)." *Общество: Политика*. (2014)

Кирчанов Максим. *Историческая Наука В Политических Дебатах И Национальном Строительстве. Историческая И Социально-Образовательная Мысль*. Vol. 5, (2013)

Копосов, Николай. *Память строгого режима: История и политика в России*. Москва Новое Литературное Обозрение, (2011)

Копосов Николай Мемориальный закон и историческая политика в современной России. *Ab imperio*. No 2. (2010): 249—274.

Миллер А. Историческая политика в России: новый поворот? // Историческая политика в XXI веке: сборник статей. – М.: Новое литературное обозрение, (2012): 334-337.
<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russia:_Politics_and_History-14896> 9 Sep 2013.

Мазур Л. “Память Истории И История Памяти,” (2013): 1–14.

Портнов, Андрей. 2013. “Учебник Истории По Госзаказу.” *Ab Imperio* Vol. 3, (2013): 388–96.

Солонин М. *22 июня, или Когда началась Великая Отечественная война?* (2004).

Томашов, Игорь. Конструирование исторической памяти как фактор внутренней политики в современной России. НИУ ВШЭ -- Диссертация, (2013).

Хапаева Д., Копосов Н. Сталинизм глазами избирателей 2007:
<<http://www.polit.ru/analytics/2007/09/21/stalinizm.html>> 12 Dec. 2014.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of sample questions from the questionnaire

1) How many republics comprised the USSR? _____

2) Who was the first and only president of the USSR?

3) 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost,' what is implied by these concepts and were they, circle one: BAD or a GOOD thing? Explain:

4) Cold War – what kind of time was that? (Circle one: REALLY BAD, BAD, NOT SO BAD, GOOD, REALLY GOOD) Explain:

5) Protests and demonstrations, were they allowed in the Soviet Union?

6) The main holidays of the Soviet era, can you name a couple?

7) List ONE worst: _____ and

8) ONE best: _____ thing about life in the Soviet Union.

9) After the collapse of the USSR, did Russia have more to GAIN or to LOSE?

10) 'Iron Curtain' can you define the term and characterized the time period within which it is associated?

11) Is there an advantage to the resurrection of the USSR? (YES or NO) explain:

12) If you had a chance to time travel, would you be curious to live in the Soviet Union for a day? (YES or NO) Briefly explain what you would see:

13) Was life better back THEN or NOW?

14) How has the life changed?

Appendix 2: List of sample focus group questions in Russian

1. Можете ли Вы расшифровать СССР?
2. Советский Союз, что Вы знаете об этой стране?
3. Кто был первым и единственным президентом СССР?
4. "Холодная война" что это было за время?
5. Какие страны были втянуты в Карибский кризис?
6. Сколько республик входило в состав СССР?
7. Протесты, демонстрации были ли допустимы в СССР?
8. Главные праздники страны того периода, назовите их.
9. Было ли лучше тогда или сейчас? Как изменилось качество жизни людей?
10. "Свобода слова" в СССР была ли она?
11. Кто был первым космонавтом? Назовите его имя.
12. " Перестройка", "гласность" при каком руководстве появились эти термины?
13. Почему, по вашему, в СССР в магазинах были пустые полки?
14. После распада СССР, думаете, страна больше потеряла или приобрела?
15. Каким советским наследием вы больше всего гордитесь?
16. "Железный занавес" как вы охарактеризуете это время?
17. Как вы думаете, есть ли сегодня ностальгия по СССР?

18. В связи с чем Вы прежде всего сожалеете о распаде СССР?
19. Как Вы считаете, распад Советского Союза был неизбежен или его можно было избежать?
20. Что, на Ваш взгляд, стало основными причинами распада СССР?

Appendix 3: List of sample focus group questions in English

1. What does USSR stand for?
2. The Soviet Union, what do you know about this country?
3. Who was the first and only president of the USSR?
4. "Cold War," what was characteristic of that time?
5. Which countries were involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis?
6. How many republics did the Soviet Union comprise of?
7. Protests, demonstrations, were they condoned (permitted) in the USSR?
8. What were some of the main holidays celebrated in the Soviet Union?
9. Was life better then, or now? How has the quality of people's lives changed?
10. Did freedom of speech exist in the USSR?
11. What was the name of the first man in space?
12. "Perestroika", "Glasnost" what is their meaning?
13. Why do you think there were empty shelves in stores in the USSR?
14. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, do you think Russia as a country has lost more or gained more?
15. Which Soviet legacy are you most proud of?
16. "Iron Curtain" How would you characterize this period?

17. Do you think there is sentiment of nostalgia for the Soviet Union in Russia today?
18. Do you regret the demise of the Soviet Union?
19. Do you think that the collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable or could have it been prevented?
20. What, in your opinion, was the main cause of the collapse of the USSR?