

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

<https://www.e-ir.info/2016/06/22/neo-nationalism-in-the-foreign-policy-of-the-putinmedvedev-regime/>

CHRISTOPHER P. ISAJIW, JUN 22 2016

### CHAPTER ONE. Neo-nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin Medvedev Regime

Using the methodology of a combined case study and content analysis format, this study examines the fact that the current Russian foreign policy under the regime's former President Dmitry Medvedev, and recently re-elected President Vladimir Putin, is heavily influenced by neo-nationalist rhetoric and sentiment. Furthermore, this rhetoric is central to the strategy of the Putin/Medvedev regime in having Russia assume its traditional role as a *Velikaya Derzhava* or "great power", an idea that harkens back through Soviet and even to Tsarist times. This rhetoric is used in the speeches and proclamations of the regime, especially during key events during the tenure of Putin. This strategy is also evident in the actions taken by the Putin/Medvedev regime as evidenced by the facts of our case study analysis of the ongoing Russo-Chechen Conflict, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008.

During the three watershed events of Russian foreign policy mentioned above, a key tactic of the Putin/Medvedev regime has been to purposefully and knowingly use neo-nationalist rhetoric and symbolism and manipulate the key traditional symbolism of Russian Soviet and Tsarist history. This has resulted in a neo-nationalist renaissance of Soviet symbols of the traditional institutions of Russian central state authority, namely the military, a strong almost paternalistic government headed by Putin, and also the Russian Orthodox Church. While a somewhat new inclusion in this symbolism, the state security apparatus in the form of the FSB (*Federalnaya Sluzba Bezpecki* or internal state security) and the SVR (*Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki* or external state security) have also been reified by Putin, as a former head of the FSB and as the head of the *siloviki* ("strong men") Kremlin elite composed of other former state security cronies.

This rhetoric takes the form of the protection of Russian interests and citizens in Russia's sphere of hegemony – i.e. its Inner and Near Abroad and its self-proclaimed "sphere of privileged interests" of which Chechnya, Ukraine and Georgia are a key part. While perhaps not seeking to necessarily restore the old Soviet "evil empire", and have these countries under tight political, economic and military control as they once were, the foreign policy of the Putin/Medvedev regime does seek to keep these countries under strong Kremlin alignment, as in the case of Chechnya (albeit a nominal part of the Russian Federation already) and Ukraine (a separate nation state, if not viewed so by the Putin/Medvedev regime). If this is unachievable, the Putin/Medvedev regime will use every tool of soft and hard power at its disposal to undermine any states becoming too democratic and tied to the United States, and especially from joining NATO, as it has tried to do in the case of Georgia and Ukraine.

### CHAPTER TWO. Introduction

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

The present day regime of Russian President Dmitri Medvedev and former Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, is one that is caught at a crossroads of identity. Modern day Russia as a whole is a nation that is struggling to find its place in an ever globalizing world, where national borders and even the notion of the Westphalian nation state arguably mean less in terms of global prestige and power, and where economic strength and open liberal markets are the hallmarks of success and influence in the post-Cold War and post-Soviet global international order. Thus, simply speaking, as contended by Dmitri Trenin, the fundamental twin questions on the national and indeed international agenda of the Putin and Medvedev Regime at the beginning of the 21st century are the key questions of: What is Russia? Who is Russian? As Trenin contends, the problem of Russia is partially a problem of space and borders; “a problem which is inseparably linked to and compounded by the problem of identity” (Trenin, 2002, p. 16).

An obvious question to be posed therefore is what degree of neo-nationalism is driving the current regime? Is it an extreme form of neo-imperialism, whereby the regime of Putin and Medvedev are trying to re-establish the old “evil empire” (as it was famously called by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan), as is contended by some theorists and analysts, for example Edward Lucas (2009)? Or are their aims more modest, simply seeking to maintain Russia’s national self-interests especially in its “traditional” hegemony of the “Near Abroad”, of which the countries to be examined here in the case study, namely Ukraine, Chechnya and Georgia are a part? This thesis will examine whether or not the current Russian foreign policy under the regime of current President Dmitry Medvedev and current Prime Minister and soon again to be President Vladimir Putin is influenced by this sort of nationalistic imperialist rhetoric and sentiment, and indeed even knowingly uses it in its speeches and proclamations.

More than just a problem of boundaries and borders, Russian identity and how it has been manifested and manipulated by the Putin and Medvedev regime is also a problem of Russia’s longstanding imperial history; both Tsarist and Soviet, and its self-perception and self-identification as a rightful power of global status and influence. This, of course, is a stark contrast to the realities of modern day Russia, which, while it has done relatively well due to the price of natural energy commodities such as oil and natural gas – of which it is the No.1 and No.2 producer and exporter in the world respectively – still is a fading global power with tremendous internal social problems.

For example, Russia has the world’s third-largest heroin abuse rate and accounts for a third of all heroin deaths worldwide, feeding into a demographic disaster that experts say will drain one million people from the workforce every year until 2017. The UN’s World Health Organization says heroin use has fueled Russia’s HIV/AIDS epidemic, one of the fastest growing in the world. High rates of heavy smoking, alcoholism, pollution, and poverty, together with a fall in birth rates in the years after the fall of Communism, underpin U.N. projections that the population will shrink to 116 million by 2050 from 143 million in 2010 (Anischuk, 2011). Added to this is the Russian Federation’s declining Slavic birth rate, and the growing Muslim birth rate (mostly in the North and South Caucasus regions) quickly outpacing the decline, a fact that has been well known by the Kremlin elite since the days when Nikita Khrushchev gave awards to families who produced ethnically Russian and Slavic children.

In some ways the question of Russian identity is still predicated on the geographical extent of the old empire, rather than any notion of a modern state. In many ways this is precisely Russia’s problem within its identity crisis; the Russian Federation cannot exit from this “old empire” without risking, to a certain extent, its territorial integrity and identity (Trenin, 2002, p. 14). Also included in this mix, is of course, the question that the Russian language has become a mother tongue and vehicle of modernization for millions of non-Russians, for better or worse. This is true of the three countries in our case study: Chechnya, Georgia, and to a lesser however still significant extent, Ukraine. Furthermore, traditional Russia, whether Soviet or Tsarist, has always been and still is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious empire; it has never been a “melting pot”. Rather, it is closer to a “salad mixed by the authoritarian regime, and under Stalin a layered cake with each ethnic group assigned its own status and territory within a clearly defined hierarchy” (Ibid., p.15),

Another ongoing tension in the historical, political and socio-cultural dimensions of this Russian identity, especially as seen by the elites, is the one between the two polarities of Russia as being both a European and Asian power, hence the created title of a “Eurasian” power. The underlying ideology of Russian elites, since the time of Peter the Great, has been the “uniqueness” of Russian civilization and culture and belief that its manifest destiny is to unite the European and Asian landmasses (Trenin, p.35). Both “Europe” and “Asia” are arguably mental constructs; however,

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

there can be little doubt that the conscious self-identification of Russia's political elites with Europe or Eurasia has defined the practical policies of the Russian State (Ibid. pp.35-6). This can even be seen in some of Putin's nationalistic speeches and his exhortations of Russia as a Third Way between growing globalization and the unipolarity of the West and especially America, positing Russia in a unique position in a multipolar world as one node in this world while still retaining its "Great Power" status, particularly via its seat on the UN Security Council (Mankoff, 2009, pp. 15-16).

However, while Putin has emphasized this, especially in the first "New Foreign policy Concept", the current Putin/Medvedev regime has also vociferously emphasized the "Europeaness of Russia". Also, earlier on in his first term as President, Putin emphasized that: "we are a part of Western European culture...we derive our worth precisely from this. Wherever our people might live, in the Far East or in the South we are Europeans". He also later added at his first EU-Russia summit in May 2000 that: "Russia is a European country by its nature, location, culture and attitude towards economic integration in the natural European direction" (Sakwa, 2008, p.276). Juxtaposed with this rhetoric of Putin's have been the actions of adventurous Eurasianism in the form of the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 (Mankoff, p.84). We will see this in greater detail in our case study and content analysis. Furthermore, it can be argued that the Second Chechen Conflict was an example of Eurasianism and neo-nationalism as well. Thus we see in many ways that the neo-nationalist foreign policy of the Putin/Medvedev regime plays Russian nationalist themes in the form of Eurasianism, while at the same time catering to the idea of its "unique" status as both a European and an Asian power, as a key part of its neo-nationalist foreign policy ideology.

One must also posit the question of whether or not the rule of President Dimitry Medvedev and his personal approach to foreign policy, when contrasted to Putin's, has differed. This is an especially useful question to introduce as a control variable to the neo-nationalist question posed by this study. We will see in the content analysis later that while there is some more moderate neo-nationalist rhetoric from Medvedev, there is much similar rhetoric as well. There is of course also the general consensus by the foreign policy establishment of the U.S. and the EU, recently reaffirmed by the Wikileaks "scandal", that indeed Putin is the real person in charge and essentially "Batman", while Medvedev is the second fiddle "Robin", and not really controlling things, especially in the field of foreign policy which is according to the Russian constitution under the auspices of the President and not the Prime Minister (Ioffe, 11/30/10). According to these documents a high ranking U.S. diplomat was even told by Azeri President Ilham Aliyev that Medvedev is surrounded by people he does not control. "Many high-ranking officials don't recognize (Medvedev) as a leader," Aliyev was quoted as saying in a cable published by Britain's Guardian newspaper. Aliyev said he had seen Medvedev taking decisions that needed further approval and that some were stymied by others, presumably in the prime ministerial (Putin's) office. "He said that there are signs of a strong confrontation between the teams of the two men, although not yet between Putin and Medvedev personally," the cable added (Faulconbridge, 11/29/10).

These are indeed interesting observations on the status of who is "really in charge" between the two men. Of course, the official Russian version is that the government is really a "tandem" form, run by both men (Ioffe, 11/30/10). It is logical to assume that both Putin and Medvedev are both quite involved, as is the entire Kremlin elite, which is composed of primarily the former FSB (Federalnaya Sluzba Bezpecki, Federal State Security) and SVR (Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki) siloviki, literally "strong men" – a term that has come to denote the elite of former intelligence officials that came to control the Kremlin during Putin's rise to power. Both the FSB and SVR are the state intelligence and security agencies that "succeeded" the former KGB. Of course the current March 2012 re-election of Putin to the Russian presidency has rendered this point largely moot in contemporary terms.

Russia is no longer quite a closed society, as it was during Soviet times. Unlike the Soviet Union, Russia is no longer plagued as much by the economic woes of the Yeltsin era. To the contrary, investments are pouring in and most Russians "have never had it so good, with Putin's approval rating at 80%, Russians are delighted with his handpicked successor, Dmitri Medvedev" (Lucas, 2009, p.4). And yet Vladimir Putin's and Dmitry Medvedev's Russia have developed a garrison mentality. This is especially reflected in Putin's rolling back of previous Russian progress in democratic reforms; civil society and the media have been curbed, elections are neither free nor fair, the legislature is subordinate to the executive, and real power lies not in the hands of President Medvedev, but in largely those of Putin. Freedom House has labeled Russia "not free" since 2005 (Karatnycky and Motyl, pp.113-114).

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

The regime created by Putin has been called everything from a “managed democracy”, to a “fascist-like state”, contend Karatnycky and Motyl. They conclude: “Whatever the exact designation, it is surely nondemocratic, authoritarian and assertively nationalist” (p.113). Russia was rated “not Free” for the first time in 2004 since 1992 due largely to Putin’s policies. These trends worsened in 2005-2006 when Western criticism of Russia focused on its democratic regression, racism, and support for autocratic regimes within the “Commonwealth of Independent States” (CIS) (Kuzio, p.68).

A repetitive and ongoing theme and tenet of Russian foreign policy, dating back through Soviet and even Tsarist times, has been the idea of the need for a “strong state” or a strong central authority in the country. Part and parcel of this philosophy has been a self-perception and subsequent self-identification by the ruling elite of Russia as being a *Velikaya Derzhava*, or “great power”. Underpinning this assertion has been a strong sense of Russian nationalism that has taken varying degrees of strength, but always it can be argued with an underpinning sense of imperialist pretense and ambition.

This will be a case study and content analysis of three distinct but interrelated recent events in Russian foreign policy, the ongoing Russo-Chechen conflict, specifically from 2000 to the present time of writing; the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004-2005; and the Russo-Georgian war of August 2008. Examined specifically will be the response and rhetoric used by the Putin/Medvedev regime during these three events in terms of having neo-nationalist underpinnings. Ultimately it will be shown that the response of the regime was indeed underpinned by a strong neo-nationalist ideology, and that these three events represent a spectrum of varying severity of that response. As a measure of objectivity and a control variable contra bias, the case study analysis will be juxtaposed against the geostrategic and geopolitical realities of Russia’s arguably unique position due to its size, history, “Eurasian” positioning, and legitimate national interests.

There are a variety of competing theories that all provide adequate underpinnings as an explanation for the rise of what will here be defined as “neo-nationalism” in the contemporary foreign policy of the Putin/Medvedev regime and the contemporary Russian ruling elite. During the time of perestroika during the last days of the Soviet empire, and then the social, political and especially economic turmoil of the early democratic reforms of the 1990’s under Boris Yeltsin, Russian society was torn apart by considerable ideological conflicts, in which the ruling political class showed a certain disdain and ignorance towards public opinion that it considered too conservative and unenthusiastic towards the liberal changes that were taking place (Laruelle, 2009, p. 193).

In response, one degree of nationalist posture that emerged from this, particularly during the last half of the 1990’s, was an attempt at what essentially amounted to an ideological reconciliation between the political elite and the people. This has been interpreted as a form of Russian neo-nationalism that cannot be understood simply via the old authoritarian paradigm of being imposed from above, as it was by the Kremlin during Tsarist and Soviet times. Rather, to the contrary, it can be argued that the opposite occurred; the elite had struggled to find a common language with the people during a particularly difficult Russian identity crisis. It was through this updated brand of neo-nationalism that the elite were able to in essence “speak a common language” with the Russian people. This fact could be considered to be especially manifested in the Russian public’s ongoing votes of allegiance to the regime of Vladimir Putin (Laruelle, 2009, p. 193).

Therefore, the slant of neo-nationalism that will be analyzed here is argued from the standpoint that while the neo-nationalism of the Putin/Medvedev regime is a tool that has been used “from above” in consent with those who are “below”, in this case the general Russian speaking, predominantly ethnically Slavic Russian populations of the Russian Federation. It will be shown that the brand of neo-nationalism practiced by the Putin/Medvedev regime especially in foreign policy terms is a form of “managed nationalism”, just as the regime practices a form of “managed democracy” in domestic affairs (Laruelle, 2009, p. 194).

In many ways Russian foreign policy, as practiced by the Putin/Medvedev regime, is very closely linked to internal domestic policy, which will be a key factor examined particularly in the case of the ongoing Russo Chechen conflict and to a lesser degree the Russo-Georgian conflict. This factor is the key link between Putin/Medvedev’s foreign policy and the process of reinforcing and strengthening the nations’ internal potential, above all a general nationalistic

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

positing of the idea of the Russian state, above all else. Presenting the essence of this new “Third Way” in his annual address when then President Putin first took power in 2000, he notably remarked:

only a strong and efficient democratic state is able to protect civil, political and economic freedoms, and to create the conditions necessary for the peoples well-being and prosperity of our Motherland (Melville and Shakleina, 2005, p. 260).

Putin further went on to stress that external challenges cannot be properly addressed unless the state is strengthened. He also contended that successful foreign policy could not in essence be separated out from successful domestic policy, as part of a “well-coordinated operation of the entire state mechanism”. Furthermore, it must “reflect the interests of the main political parties and civil movements representing the entire nation.” (Ibid., p.261).

Therefore, as we will see in the case studies, Putin and Medvedev’s foreign and domestic policies are in a sense part of a holistic system of the larger putative “state mechanism” in their ideological definition. While it would be an overstatement to say that they are one and the same, the point cannot be emphasized enough that they are very much interwoven, and as we will see this is reflected in their foreign policymaking in the three cases to be examined. An examination of the foreign policy response of the Putin and Medvedev regime to the three aforementioned crisis/conflict situations. Each of these events tested the resolve and willingness of the Putin and Medvedev regime to use some sort of force or coercion, via either traditional military and political “hard power” in the case of the Russo-Chechen conflict and the Russo-Georgian war of August, 2008, and also more economic “soft power” in terms of turning off the gas energy taps to Ukraine (and earlier in 2004 also to Georgia). The motivation methodologically of choosing these three events in particular to review via the conduct of a case study analysis is that they represent three varying degrees of severity of response of the Putin and Medvedev regime to crisis in terms of aggression; arguably Chechnya being the most aggressive response by the regime, manifested by a brutal military campaign that targeted not only Chechen militant fighters but also civilians (by both sides) and resulted in the commission of atrocities and arguably war crimes by the Putin and Medvedev regime. This could be considered an example of an extreme neo-imperialist response taken from the pages of Russian history from the heinous deeds of Tsar “Ivan the Terrible” or any one of the numerous atrocities or genocides committed by the Soviets.

Ironically, the case study of Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution” in this analysis will represent the least severe of the responses of the Putin and Medvedev regime. It is ironic inasmuch as the history of Russia’s long history of attempted domination and Russification of Ukraine and her people has been filled with the most brutal and dehumanizing forms of violence and atrocities, not the least of which was the *Holodomor* Famine Genocide committed by Stalin in 1932-33 that killed roughly 6 million people. We will see that at least in recent history, while the response of the P and M regime towards Ukraine’s bids for greater independence from Russian political, economic and military influence has used all forms of coercion (shutting off of gas) and surreptitious means (the attempted poisoning assassination of former “pro-Western” Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko, the rigging of the elections in 2004 that sparked the Orange Revolution), it has at least been more restrained from outright military invasion, as was in the case of Chechnya and Georgia.

Added to the irony of Ukraine, is that while the Orange Revolution was hailed as a great victory for pro-Western and pro-democracy forces, this victory was in many ways undone by the fact that the ousted “villain” of 2004, current Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich was fairly and democratically (that is without any obvious meddling by the Putin and Medvedev regime in the election as was the case in 2004) elected over Yulia Tymoshenko and others in 2009. This of course brought Ukraine in some ways “closer” to the Kremlin and the Putin and Medvedev regime. However, while Yanukovich has putatively damaged the state of Ukrainian democracy and has turned away in part from the West by flatly rejecting a bid for NATO membership (much to Putin’s pleasure) and renewing the lease of the Russian naval fleet base at Sevastopol, he has also actually done more to bring Ukraine closer to EU membership than his predecessor. While Yanukovich is a greater ally and advocate of the Putin and Medvedev regime than Yushchenko, and therefore arguably more prone to its influence, he is also relatively independent of the regime as well, and far from a simple stooge of the Kremlin as was originally feared by the West.

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Finally, the examination of the Georgian conflict of August 2008 represents a sort of middle degree of nationalistic response of the Putin/Medvedev regime. It is in many ways perhaps the most interesting of the three cases, as the government of current Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili is the most Western leaning, and was diplomatically aligned with the Yushchenko government of Ukraine. There have also been allegations by the Kremlin of his Saakashvili's government clandestinely harboring and aiding Chechen militants pursuing a terrorist and insurgent campaign against Russia. His government has had, next to the Chechen separatists, the most confrontational and overtly defiant relations with the Putin and Medvedev regime, and as a result of which has experienced a taste of the same sort of "soft power" economic and political coercion from the Kremlin as Ukraine did, and also outright "hard power" military invasion like Chechnya by the Russians in August 2008. The interconnectedness of the three events pose further interesting aspects to be analyzed behind the degree of severity of the nationalistic response by the Putin and Medvedev regime in each case.

## CHAPTER THREE. Literature Review of Russian Neo-Nationalist Themes

Current theorists on the foreign policy of the Putin/Medvedev regime espouse a spectrum of harshness and severity in terms of asserting that the regime is pursuing an aggressive form of neo-imperialism and trying to restore to a greater or lesser degree lost Tsarist and Soviet imperial glory, while others are less extreme, stating that Russia simply is pursuing traditional "great power" politics and legitimate interests. They also contend that Russia is simply trying to find its place in the ever globalizing multi-polar world ruled more by economic might than by traditional military and diplomatic tools of state. There are different schools of thought on the resurgence. One school looks at modern Putin/Medvedev's Russia as the *Velikaya Derzhava*, or the "Great Power" that must pursue its own unipolar form of internal policy and foreign policy essentially free of interference and influence of the West, the United States and the EU. This idea is an old one that dates back centuries to Tsarist Russia, and was one that hearkens to the "great power politics" that dominated colonial European powers' foreign policies as contended by Mankoff for example.

While many books and articles, both scholarly and journalistic, have been written on modern Russian nationalism and the foreign policy of Putin/Medvedev, none have explicitly linked a deliberate usage of neo-nationalist ideology and rhetoric by the regime. Also the usage of the term neo-nationalism itself has not been used. The current literature on the topic fails to address the significance of neo-nationalism in guiding the policies of the Putin/Medvedev regime. Also, as mentioned above, there is an overall polarization of opinion on the motives of the regime for using neo-nationalism. One seminal work is *In the Name of the Nation; Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia* by Marlene Laruelle. She points to the central idea of Putin's overall ideology as being that of *Derzhavnosti*, or a return to a strong central state system emphasizing order and control.

The election of Putin in 1999 marked therefore the symbolic end to the anarchy of the free market reforms and a repudiation of Yeltsin's Western-style democratic reforms. The focus of the government shifted to stabilization and restoration and built around two slogans: the "vertical of power" (*vertikal vlasti*) and the "dictatorship of the law" (*diktatura zakona*). It is no coincidence that the ongoing Chechen conflict, especially the tragic events of the Dubrovka Theater hostage crisis in October 2002 and the Beslan school "massacre" in September 2004, caused the presidential party, Our Russia, to emphasize the need for returning to a constitutional order for all of the Russia Federation. Putin's first mandate as president therefore focused around these issues (pp.18-19).

Putin's second mandate (2004-2008) was more aggressive in both domestic and foreign policy. Putin essentially hamstrung and curtailed all forms of non-Kremlin aligned and controlled NGO's, human rights groups and all forms of civil society (p.20). While Laruelle points this out, she seems to downplay the significance of this aggressive action by Putin. While invoking *raison d'état* for this squelching most anti-Kremlin dissent under such propagandistic ideological slogans as the ones pointed out above, Putin has in all actuality consolidated his control over domestic and foreign NGOs that could challenge his regime. The authoritarian and dictatorial nature of this action should not

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

be downplayed and has not been lost on the U.S., EU and Russian relations policymakers.

Laruelle points out the exploitation of traditional Russian state symbols and institutions of power from both Tsarist and Soviet times. These are namely the Russian Army, the Russian Orthodox Church, and more uniquely coming to reified and near-mythological status under Putin, the state security services the FSB and SVR. Laruelle points out that an important part of his foreign policy mandate when he came to power was recognizing the limits of Russia's traditional hard power assets (the military, the geopolitical influence of the former Soviet Union) and to retrench Russian power in terms of both economic modernization and leveraging Russia's vast gas and oil resources, and an attempt at retrenchment in its own backyard, the "near abroad" countries of the faltering "Common of Independent States" (CIS) (p.32).

Putin also worked to develop active diplomatic and economic relations with the rising economic powers of China and India and Iran, often at the expense of relations with the U.S. and EU, particularly in the wake of the tensions lingering over the 1999 standoff between Russia and NATO over the air campaign waged against the Serb forces in Kosovo, and then later in the mid 2000's over NATO's eastward expansion especially to Poland and strong lobbying on NATO's part for Ukraine and Georgia to eventually join, especially manifested under the anti-Russian axis of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUAM) (p.32). Between the years 2000-2006, Putin succeeded in strengthening the fledgling Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to confront growing Islamic extremist threats in the Caucasus (especially Chechnya) and Central Asia. After having practically vanished as an influential player in Central Asia, Russia again was using its economic, cultural and military (although this was greatly decreased since the fall of the Soviet Union) influence in the region (Ibid. p.32)

Jeffrey Mankoff, a noted Russian foreign policy scholar and author of *Russian Foreign Policy; the Return of Great Power Politics* contends that the term *Velikaya Derzhava* was used by Vladimir Putin in his early first term in office and first was used by him in his drafting of the "Foreign Policy Concept" and the "National Security Concept in 2000. Russian foreign policy therefore ultimately concentrates on creating an international relations system based on sovereign nation states as the guardians of the global order, free to pursue their own national interests while maintaining a larger "balance of power". Russia's leaders never ceased viewing themselves as one of these "great powers." Beginning with former Yeltsin foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, Russian diplomats and foreign policy makers have repeatedly emphasized that Russia must have an independent foreign policy economically and militarily, and not simply function as "an appendage of the West or a supplier of natural resources to the world market" (Mankoff, 2009., p.12).

In a slightly more moderate break with former President (and now again President-elect) Putin, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (who took office in 2008) signed an updated Foreign policy Concept. The reference to "Great Power" is gone, with repeated references to a "new Russia as one of the leading centers of the contemporary world" (Mankoff, 2009, p.13). In addition one of the passages of priority for Medvedev is:

Creating favorable external conditions for the modernization of Russia, transformation of its economy through innovation, enhancement of living standards and consolidation of society, strengthening of the foundations of the constitution, rule of law and democratic institutions, realization of human rights...and ensuring national competitiveness in a globalizing world (Mankoff, 2009, p.13).

We see here on the surface at least a much more contemporary and modern sounding official policy stance than Putin's. However, the reality is that also written into the new document is the specification that the cabinet, which is headed by the Prime Minister (now Putin who upon Medvedev's succession stepped into the role), carries responsibility for foreign policy. This de facto allows Putin to continue to wield a disproportionately strong hand in controlling foreign policy, a power denied to previous prime ministers (Mankoff, p.13). Vladimir Putin rose to power on the back of an extremely nationalist platform of restoring Russia its "rightful place" in the world, as a "Great Power" or major pole in a geopolitically multipolar world. Putin is known for his controversial and nationalistic remarks and famously asserted that the collapse of the USSR "was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century (Mankoff, 2009, p.296).

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Mankoff maintains that while Russia has acted aggressively in securing its interests in the “Near Abroad” this does mean the reestablishment of a Soviet-like empire. Despite Russia’s greater economic stability and greater assertiveness in the international arena (for Mankoff manifested in the 2008 War with Georgia), it is still suffering from a sort of throwback form of foreign policy that is wholly inadequate to adapt it to the geopolitical realities of the 21st century, and is still trying to come to terms with whether or not it can truly still claim “great power” status and whether this is even relevant any longer. The old fall back to a strong state and strong military of the 19th and 20th centuries have created increasing tensions between Russia and the West, especially the United States, but also reflect an ongoing tension and identity crisis within the Russian ruling and foreign policy elite as manifested in the Putin/Medvedev regime.

British journalist Edward Lucas sees things in far more stark and harsh terms in his book *The New Cold War: Putin’s Russia and the Threat to the West*. Essentially he contends that Putin’s Russia is sliding into a recidivistic form of neo-Soviet imperialism in a very aggressive and politically underhanded manner. Opposition and freedom of speech that can threaten the regime have been stifled, civil society squelched and corruption and cronyism are rampant in both the government and the private sector. The Putin/Medvedev regime have squandered billions of dollars and have failed to reform or modernize the Russian economy. While the Russian military is inept, with low morale amongst enlisted men and a corrupt officer corps, they are barely able to quell Chechen resistance. While Russian air and tank power easily overwhelmed Georgia’s puny military in the August 2008 war, Lucas maintains it was Putin and the Kremlin’s political spin doctoring that kept NATO and the West at bay which was the truly insidious and imperialistic form of behavior in this case (ibid., p.x).

For Lucas the “New Cold War” is especially being fought over the countries of Russia’s Near Abroad, especially the countries of the former Soviet Union. He contends that these “weak and badly governed countries are ripe for the picking by the Kremlin’s mixture of bribes and bullying.” They are, as in the case of Ukraine, especially vulnerable to the energy weapon i.e. reliance on Russian natural gas (ibid., p.17). One very interesting and salient point he makes in this regard is that Georgia should be included into NATO and that both Georgia and Ukraine should receive all the economic and political help that they can from the EU to counter Russia’s aggressive bully tactics (ibid., p.212).

In the book *Vladimir Putin and the New World Order*, J.L. Black looks at the more aggressive and assertive foreign policy of the Putin regime in the Near Abroad, especially against the expansion of NATO. The book is interesting as it looks at these aspects of Putin’s foreign policy from December of 1999 until 2004. This was a significant time period as the book points out because really it was when Putin tried to carve out a niche for Russian foreign policy in the early days of his presidency. Black makes a study of Russian press reports that reflect the mood and opinions of the Kremlin and the ruling elite. He shows how the key to Putin’s success in restoring Russia’s place as a great power, especially in the early days of his presidency, was his mandate to restore national pride and dignity, and that nationalist forces were his political strength (ibid., p.40). In foreign policy terms this meant winning the war against Chechen separatists and countering any movements by especially Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO or the EU and undermine Russia’s dominance over their international and internal affairs.

In a seminal article entitled “Russia Reborn; Reimagining Moscow’s Foreign Policy”, Dmitry Trenin, whom Edward Lucas refers to as a “well connected” Russian foreign policy analyst, looks at what he considers to be Putin’s mostly failed nationalistic re-casting of Russia as an independent great power. Most of these failures and flaws are due to the regime of Putin/Medvedev’s inability to diversify the economy away from reliance on energy resources and a clinging to the ideological and political relics of the Soviet past (ibid., p.64). According to Trenin:

Russia’s leaders have chosen growth without development, capitalism without democracy, and great power policies without international appeal...these cannot hold forever. Russia will fail to achieve its principal foreign policy objectives, it will fall further behind in a world with open borders and instant communications leading to dangers not only to its status but also its existence. Russian foreign policy needs more than a reset: it requires a new strategy and policy instruments. (2004, p.65).

Trenin outlines how the Putin/Medvedev regime, after largely abandoning joining the West, has refocused its energies and efforts to turn the countries of the CIS into a Russian power center. Russia was not trying to revive the



# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Soviet Union, but to ensure political loyalty of these states to Moscow that would then get preferential treatment for Russian business interests and the dominant influence of Russian culture. Key again to this effort was keeping Ukraine and Georgia under the Kremlin's influence. Russia's defiance was manifested (as similarly asserted by Mankoff) in its willingness in 2008 to go to war with Georgia. When Washington failed to come to Georgia's aid with anything more than diplomatic condemnations it raised real credibility issues of the U.S.'s willingness to act as a guarantor of security in the region. This in turn resulted in the Kremlin getting exactly what it wanted in the region; NATO symbolically cut off ties with Russia and put plans for the accession of Ukraine and Georgia on the back burner (*ibid.*, p.66). Furthermore, Trenin points out how Russian military power in the Caucasus combined with its bribing of corrupt leaders failed to stop separatists in Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya and has done little to stop terrorist attacks in Moscow and other parts of Russia (*ibid.*, p.69).

## CHAPTER FOUR: Symbols of Russian Neo-Nationalism

Laruelle also points out that a key underpinning of Putin's nationalistic foreign policy in the Near Abroad was developing the culture and nationalism (what he termed "patriotic statism") of the ethnic Russian diasporas. However, for all of these efforts Laruelle points out that the CIS essentially ceased to be a viable entity, especially as tensions increased between Moscow and Kiev, as manifested in the gas crises and the Orange Revolution (to be examined in greater detail later), and also between Moscow and Tbilisi starting in the autumn of 2006 with several clashes between Russian forces and the Georgian army. This led to a subsequent imposition by Russia of an anti-Georgian trade embargo and extreme visa regime that economically strangled the small republic (Laruelle, 2009, p.33). Of course in the case of Russia and Georgia, events especially came to a crisis in August 2008 with the Russo-Georgian War over the would-be separatist forces in North Ossetia and Ingushetia, which Russia had always supported as proxy against the increasingly democratic and Westward leaning policies (especially through overtures made to join NATO) of Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili.

It is worth briefly going into greater detail about three aforementioned points as they are significant as to how the Putin/Medvedev regime have used neo-nationalist ideology to further their agenda; these are the symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church, the army and the state security apparatus. These three symbols could be defined as another Russian "troika" of interrelated state run institutions, key to the generation and prosecution of the neo-nationalist foreign policy of the Putin/Medvedev regime. This is particularly true as they relate as powerful symbols used to help gain and maintain public and political support for Putin's often brutal campaign against Chechen separatists and putative Islamic terrorists. As mentioned above it is important to note the neo-nationalist usage of the symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the army and state security apparatus. According to both the Church's and the Russian State's logic, Russia is the center of the matrix of Orthodox civilization, a sphere of religious, cultural and historical influence extending far beyond the borders of the Federation. The Church has tried to reestablish the old canonical territory which coincides with the old Soviet Union, where despite official state atheism, the Church was a powerful ideological tool of the Communist totalitarian regime. The Church has tried to be included in Russian foreign policy inasmuch as it seeks very much to influence pro-Moscow policies from "brother" Slavic states such as Ukraine, Belarus and others (*ibid.*, p.165).

The Church in Putin/Medvedev's Russia also plays an important symbolic role as the sole legitimate source of "spiritual fortification" for the Army and the state security services (*ibid.*, p.171). It has also been vociferous in opposing anti-Kremlin NGOs, especially "foreign" human rights groups and Protestant evangelical proselytizers in Russia and the other countries where it holds sway. Therefore, while the Russian Orthodox Church has been a key element and symbol of state power, Laruelle is quick to point out that its overall influence should not be overstated.

Vladimir Putin's favorable and pro-military sentiments have resulted in very strong links between Kremlin neo-nationalist ideology and the reification of the Russian army as a patriotic symbol. The military represents Russia's historical unity over and above ethnic, religious and regional differences. It embodies state power, and as Putin's

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

expression formulates it: “no army no Russia” (p.174). Under Putin there have been many focuses on the relationships between state and society via a nationalistic link focused around military history, with the Soviet victories of WW2 as the natural focal point. Putin has developed new military doctrines between the years 2002-2007, and has encouraged “patriotic historical societies” and “patriotic education programs” in schools (elementary and high school level) centered on these themes, as well as many other neo-nationalist “State Programs for Patriotic Education” (ibid.)

While Putin has pumped money in attempts to modernize the Russian military (during his two mandates as President, the army’s budget increased 500%), the military according to Laruelle is still socially very much in disarray. Conscription still remains and results in a less than professional military culture and officer core. Often corruption is high and morale is low, and brutal hazing rituals continue to be a problem. Also the qualities of military techniques have not improved much since the Soviet-Afghan war and two Chechen wars (p.176). As will be seen in the Chechen conflict portion of the case study analysis, while the Russian military improved under Putin, especially after their humiliating defeat during the First Chechen War under Yeltsin, their often heavy handed, flat footed and downright incompetent tactics have resulted in mixed successes in fighting Chechen separatists and Chechens alike. One notable such failure was the botched special-forces rescue attempt during the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow which killed 170 hostages being held by Chechen terrorists.

Another alarming symbol utilized to bolster the neo-nationalist ideology of the Putin/Medvedev regime has been the resuscitation of the brutal dictator and mass-murderer Joseph Stalin. We will see this to have particular significance to Russian-Ukrainian relations in the case of Orange Revolution and until today. Stalin is particularly reviled by many Ukrainians due to the Holodomor Famine-Genocide he committed. Nevertheless, in particular when dealing with nationalist mythology surrounding the so called “Great Patriotic War”, the cult of Stalin and his “great leadership” is cleverly manipulated and kept alive in popular state controlled media and state run historical celebration by the ruling elites. For example in 2004, Putin requested that the name of Stalingrad replace the name Volgograd on the tomb of the unknown soldier to “build respect for the heroism of the defenders of Stalingrad and preserve the history of the state” (Laruelle, 2009, p.190).

The Putin/Medvedev regime has also used various media as tools of propaganda to reify the state security apparatus, in particular Putin’s alma mater the FSB. Since 2000, patriotic films have increased especially movies and TV series showing FSB agents as heroes fighting Chechen terrorists etc. These have enjoyed a special “patriotic Fund” set up by the Kremlin. Since 2009 the Education Ministry has been specially tasked and funded to promote films and TV shows like this in the interests of fostering “ideas of humanism, spirituality, and other traditional values of the Russian peoples” (Laruelle p.187). The Russian soldier therefore embodies honesty and integrity and war as a just cause waged in the name of a “holy and eternal Russia” (ibid.).

## CHAPTER FIVE. Xenophobia and Racism in Contemporary Russian Culture

Some key features of xenophobia and racism amongst ordinary Russians taken from polls and surveys are revealed by Laruelle as particularly relevant in allowing the Putin/Medvedev regime to exploit this sentiment using neo-nationalist rhetoric and ideology. She shows that while mass support for self-proclaimed overtly racist neo-Nazi style and related groups is not the case, there is much general xenophobic sentiment amongst Russians (ibid. p.37). While racist acts of violence are culturally not acceptable to most Russians, they are not viewed as hate crimes but more as criminal acts of hooliganism of wayward youth; however the victims, especially those of Caucasian (those from the North Caucasus region of Russia) origin, elicit little sympathy in general (ibid. p.37).

A survey in 2003 showed that 81% of those surveyed considered nationalism as something bad, while 53% approved of the “will to maintain the purity of the race” (ibid. p.38). However juxtaposed to this view of nationalism (often synonymous with the old association with the defeated Nazi regime and the great Soviet victories against

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

fascism during “The Great Patriotic War”) is a sense of Russian national pride that often mixes the above mentioned notions of racism and xenophobia. Marked with these contradictions, Russian society, as studies by the Levada Centre demonstrates, has been saturated with slogans like “Russia for the Russians”, formerly only the domain of neo-Nazi style groups. When asked what was to be understood by this expression, 47% replied state support for Russian culture. However overall the slogan remains relatively hard to define due to the fact that it is too vague to know what is meant by the term “Russian” (rusски); for some it is an ethnic definition of “Russianess” that is exclusive of national minorities, while for others it is the equivalent of a Russian citizen and not migrants. However an ethnicization of the term “Russian” is on the rise, 51% of those surveyed feel it necessary to have a law defining the specific status of Russian people as the “eponymous people” of the Russian Federation (ibid. p.39).

The dominant form of xenophobia in Russia especially and is against Chechen and people from the Caucasus region (Caucosophobia). Hand in hand with this, especially in the wake of ongoing terrorist acts perpetrated by Chechen and Islamic extremist groups are a fear of Islam (“Islamophobia”). The fear and hatred of Chechens finds its roots in the Caucasian wars of the 19th century. In recent years anti Chechen sentiment in Russia has become particularly ugly and widespread, and does not distinguish between civilians and extremists, but has developed in to a general paranoia. Anti-Semitism has reduced because of these “new enemies”, but more than a third of those surveyed would still like “restrictions to be placed on the number of Jews in the cultural and political spheres” (ibid. p.40).

All of the Caucosophobia and Islamophobia has resulted in a very ugly situation where all non-ethnically Russian people (and not only Chechens but also Georgians, Azeris, Dagestanis, Armenians and so forth) are disassociated from being citizens of the Russian Federation and lumped into derogatory sub-groupings such as “southerners”, “shepherds” and “blacks” (chernye). Often then these “foreigners” whether they be Caucasian, Central Asian, African or Chinese become the target of skin head violence and also harassment at the hands of local and regional security forces and Russian law enforcement officers (ibid. p.41).

## CHAPTER SIX. Methodology

This will be a chronological qualitative case study and content analysis of the three watershed events in the neo-nationalist actions and rhetoric undertaken by the Putin/Medvedev regime. It will start with an analysis of the Second Russo-Chechen War from December 1999 to 2006, and then examine the events of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and finally the brief Russo-Georgian War of August 2008. This will involve an examination of themes in the nationalist rhetoric of both Vladimir Putin for the first two cases (Second Russo-Chechen War, Orange Revolution) and Putin and Medvedev for the Russo-Georgian War.

It will draw primarily upon scholarly sources of secondary analysis and press reports to draw on framing the case study and as evidence of the neo-nationalist themes to be examined. These secondary sources will be “interlaced”, with an analysis of official speeches and proclamations made by Putin and Medvedev specifically referring to each of the cases. The core themes to be examined in the rhetoric are Russia’s allusions and slogans pertaining to its protection and defense of its “sphere of privileged interests”, “the Near Abroad”, “protection of Russian speaking peoples” (Diaspora), “protection of Russian passport holders”. These themes will be particularly evident when linked to the background of the three chosen case studies. Also examined will be any overtly or blatantly neo-nationalist statements about the notion of Russia as a Velikaya Derzhava, “Russia for Russians” etc.

The chronological timeframe of the progression of the analysis will be:

*Second Russo-Chechen War, December 1999 to December 2009*

- Here more specific focus will be given to Putin’s speeches and proclamation between Dec. 1999 when he officially took office until the end of 2000 which is often considered the end of the “battle phase” of this

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

conflict, and beginning of the “insurgency phase” during which numerous terrorist acts were committed by Chechens extremists against Russians which elicited in turn a brutal response and the commission of atrocities against Chechen civilians by Russian forces (special forces or spetsnaz, “OMUN” Internal Ministry troops, and FSB paramilitary militias).

- Arguably the insurgency phase unofficially continues until this day, however officially on 16 April 2009, the counter-terrorism operation in Chechnya ended.

## *Orange Revolution November 2004 to January 2005*

- A review of speeches and proclamations and interviews of Putin’s around this time frame

## *Russo-Georgian War of August 2008*

- Analysis of speeches and proclamations by Medvedev (at this time period President of Russia) and Putin (at this time Prime minister),
- This time period analyzed will be from time leading up to the war until recently as many salient interviews and comments given by Medvedev on the subsequent anniversaries’ of the conflict.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN. Case Study 1: The Russian-Chechen Conflict: Neo-Nationalism**

By far the most alarmist and nationalistic interpretations of the Chechen conflict have come from Vladimir Putin himself. “What’s the situation in the North Caucasus and in Chechnya today?” he asked himself in an early 2000 interview: “It’s a continuation of the collapse of the USSR.” Then he justified the renewal of all out warfare against Chechen separatists: “This is what I thought of the situation in August (1999), when the bandits attacked Dagestan, if we don’t put an immediate end to this, Russia will cease to exist” (Evangelista, 2002, pp.5-6). A major key to this was restoring order and control of the Russian “internal abroad” of Chechnya, especially after Yeltsin’s humiliating loss in the First Chechen War that concluded in 1996 with some semi-autonomy for Chechnya, and a badly shamed and unhappy Russian military. While initially at least the Second Chechen War provided a political springboard for Putin, by the end of his first presidential term the lingering conflict had become a liability that had threatened his political legacy (Trenin et al., 2004, p.1).

Putin’s initial skyrocket accession to the presidency was the main result of the second campaign in Chechnya. In August, 1999, right after Chechen separatists, under the command of Basayev entered neighboring Dagestan, Yelstin appointed Putin, then the head of the FSB, Prime Minister. Yeltsin later abdicated 6 months prior to the end of his term, and as according to the Russian constitution, Putin became acting president. On March 26, 2000, Putin was elected the second president of the Russian Federation (Trenin et al., 2004, p.35). Many mainstream analysts believe that the Kremlin planners of presidential succession skillfully exploited a developing situation. Later mysterious and deadly bombings of an apartment block in Moscow, and two other towns in September of 1999 claimed some three hundred Russian lives (Trenin, et al 2004, p.36). This bombing made the Second Chechen War highly popular and set the tone for a nationalistic “war on terror” much in the same way 9/11 did to the U.S. It has often been postulated that these bombs were deliberately set by FSB operatives and blamed on Chechen terrorists in order to stir up public outrage and nationalist sentiment. As contended by Dmitri Trenin:

One thing is certain however. Moscow’s tactical success at the beginning of the second campaign in Chechnya was, above all, a political instrument to create a springboard for Putin’s leap to the presidency and then boost the new Russian leaders’ authority in society. Chechnya made Putin Russia’s president (Trenin, et al 2004, p.36).

We see therefore strong and compelling evidence for the power vacuum left by Yeltsin’s failures, both economically, militarily and politically in dealing with the first Chechen crisis, as being filled by Putin and a Kremlin elite that very

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

much saw the Chechen crisis as an opportunity if not even a fabricated and manipulated excuse to further the ultimate policy of resurgent nationalistic neo-imperialism. Therefore, despite any separatist bids or notwithstanding the threat of Islamic extremism/jihad (which although admittedly an important mitigating factor, is beyond the scope of this examination), Chechnya was integral to the furtherance of the Kremlin's and ultimately Putin/Medvedev's nationalist power politics.

Putin's policy towards Chechnya was typical of the leaders of the security establishment, the siloviki. As a former FSB man he would have been privy to the policy ideas of state security elite, like former minister of defense Kulikov, who repeatedly made the assertion that Chechnya was ungovernable, a "bandit" and "terrorist" state increasingly dominated by fanatical Islamic Wahhabis intent on wider destabilization in the North Caucasus. The only solution therefore was force, to re-impose order and re-conquer Chechnya by military might. Russia's initial suit for peace and recognition of Chechnya had only encouraged further destabilization in that country and had turned it into a "terrorist state" (Hughes, 2007, p.107).

Hughes further indicts Putin: "Chechnya was to be the anvil on which Putin hammered out a public position as an ideologue for a new form of Russian nationalism. The re-conquest of Chechnya would not only undo the national humiliation of the defeat of 1996, but also serve as the vehicle for a recentralization and strengthening of state power in Russia, for the consolidation of a new Putin regime...This equated the "renewal" of Russia with restoring Russia's pride in itself and a return to 'strong state power'" (Hughes, 2007, p.107).

It is first important to briefly analyze four very important documents written early in the Putin presidency that give an excellent insight into the mindset of the Putin/Medvedev regime pertaining to the Second Chechen War, the Orange Revolution, and ultimately the Russo-Georgian War. By examining the wording and rhetoric in these four documents we will also take an important first step in linking the repetitive and pervading neo-nationalist themes that ultimately are quite similar in tone in all three cases, and show that they are closely linked. The documents are: The Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation (2000), The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2000), National Security Conception of the Russian Federation (2000), and finally Putin's first major epistle as the new president Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.

The Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation (2000) is an excellent foundation. As a fundamental, "traditional" foreign policy document, it is in essence an objective document that without excessively propagandistic language lays out a basic framework and architecture of the early Putin/Medvedev regimes at this time Medvedev was Prime Minister legitimate interests of Russia, which are at least as reflected in the document, arguably relatively universal interests of any sovereign nation state. Some fundamental concepts put forth by the document:

The topmost priority in the foreign policy of Russia is the protection of the interests of the individual, state and society...directed towards the following principle objectives:

- To ensure the reliable security of the country, preserve and strengthen its sovereignty, its territorial integrity, and its strong position in the world community, which is what best meets the interests of Russian Federation as a great power (Velikaya Derzhava) and an influential center in the modern world, and is essential to the growth of its political, economic, intellectual and spiritual potential." (Approved by Putin, 2000, in Melville and Shakleina 2005, p.90).

Here we clearly see the "coining" and initial injection of the neo-nationalistic term, as we have already defined it as a great power. This is significant as it is found amongst otherwise very traditional, "Western" if you will values of any sovereign nation state (e.g. "protection of the interests of the individual, state and society", security etc.). We must also recall that this term was indeed removed at the beginning of Medvedev's presidency (see p.22 of this paper), however its tone and usage is very significant here at the beginning of Putin's presidency and arguably still holds true up until today, especially given the fact that it is commonly thought that Putin looks to make a return to his role as Russia's president in 2012.

Some further key points in this document:

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

- To influence global processes with the aim of forming a stable, just, and democratic world order based on the generally recognized norms of international law and above all the goals and principles of the UN Charter.
- To create external conditions favorable to the steady development of Russia, to building up its economy, improving the living standards of the population, successfully implementing democratic transformations, reinforcing the foundations of the constitutional system, and observing individual rights and freedoms.
- To form a belt of good neighborliness along the perimeter of Russia's borders, to promote the elimination of existing hotbeds of tension and conflict, and prevent the emergence of any more, in the regions adjacent to the Russian Federation.
- To uphold in every possible way the rights and interests of Russian citizens and fellow countrymen living abroad
- To promote a positive perception of Russia in the world, to popularize the Russian language and cultures of the Russian Federation abroad (Ibid. p.90).

Again we see here on the surface seemingly benign statements of the pursuit of legitimate state interests. In and of themselves, taken out of context, none of these points are any proof of neo-nationalism, with the exception perhaps of the usage of the term "Great Power", as already has been discussed. However, when put into the context of the actions taken by the Putin/Medvedev regime in response to the crisis situations of the three case studies, and further rhetoric around these situations, we will find several key themes set here that recur in both word and deed that are clear examples of neo-nationalist sentiment and behavior. These are the protection of Russia's interests in both its "near abroad" and "inner abroad", which includes Chechnya, Georgia and Ukraine. The point on increasing Russia's "neighborliness" along its perimeter applies directly to its actions in these three areas. The next point of "uphold in every possible way the rights and interests of Russian citizens and fellow countrymen living abroad" is also key as this was the excuse used by Russia when they invaded Georgia in 2008, but as we will see was little more than a pretense for the neo-nationalistic policy pursued by the Putin/Medvedev regime.

The document goes to make some statements about Russia's pivotal importance in the world due to its permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Ibid., p.95). It also decries the "weakening" of the Charter and exhorts how the use of unauthorized force to resolve international conflicts is "unlawful", a tenet broken by Russia both in Chechnya and later in Georgia. Also this line has been interpreted as a reaction to the standoff and diplomatic crisis that occurred between NATO and Russia over the bombing of Serb forces in Kosovo in 1999. This was to be and still in many ways is a recurring thorn in the side of Russia in its relations with the U.S. and NATO.

A final few notable points of this document are a heavy emphasis on the importance of Russian economic development in the global economy, to seek respect for human rights and freedoms all over the world, and a caveat to protect the rights of Russian citizens abroad through bilateral and international law (Ibid. p.97). It also lays out a section on its "Regional Priorities" as a "priority of foreign policy to ensure...multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the member states of the CIS for the countries national security tasks...developed with due consideration of their respective openness to cooperation and readiness to acknowledge...the interests of the Russian Federation, and in particular guarantee the rights of Russian compatriots" (Ibid. p.97).

Again, we see here an emphasis on Russia's Near Abroad of the CIS, which, of course includes Georgia and Ukraine, and the protection of "Russian compatriots", which will be a crucial point used by the Putin/Medvedev regimes decision to invade Georgia in 2008. Moving on to the document *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (2000), in an area entitled "Military-Political Principles", the document lays out some strategic doctrine of the Russian military. One key factor is a recognition that threats have changed, essentially shifting away from a large scale conventional and nuclear threat, to smaller scale regional threats and new regional "power centers" (Approved by Putin, 2000, in Melville and Shackleina 2005, p.106). It goes on to list, significantly, several factors that are new threats and challenges to the military forces of the Russian Federation. These are: advance of national, ethnic and religious extremism, the rise of separatism, spread of local wars and armed conflicts, and an intensification of a regional arms race (ibid., p.106).

These points are a crucial insight into the mentality and motivations of the Putin/Medvedev regimes response during

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

the Second Chechen War and the Russo-Georgian War. This shows the new architecture of the type of conflicts that the Russian military was being re-tasked to fight; namely the containment of smaller regional separatist and "terrorist" threats like Chechnya in its Inner Abroad, and Georgia (in the form of protecting ethnic Russians who were issued Russian Federation passports in the contested territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) in Russia's Near Abroad. While in the case of Ukraine and the Orange Revolution there were no obvious plans for a military incursion or invasion by Russian forces (notwithstanding rumors and some evidence of Russian Interior Ministry "OMUN" troops being shuttled into Ukraine and remaining on standby during the crisis), nonetheless by extension these military principles no doubt in theory apply to Ukraine as well.

As with the Foreign Policy Concept there is once again a sort of "protest clause" to unilateral U.S. and NATO military action in the name of "humanitarian intervention"; again we see an allusion to NATO military operations against Serb forces in Kosovo the previous year. The document decries attempts to diminish and circumvent the UN Security Council, and Russia's vote against such action as a Great Power (ibid. p.107). Some further key points of relevance to the Second Chechen War billed in the document as "main internal and external military threats":

- territorial claims against the Russian Federation, interference in Russia's internal affairs
- attempts to ignore (violate) the interests of the Russian Federation in resolving international security problems, and to oppose its strengthening as an influential centre in a multi-polar world
- the existence of seats of armed conflict, particularly close to state borders of the Russian Federation and the borders of its allies.
- the expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the military security of the Russian Federation.
- discrimination and the suppression of the rights, liberties, "and legitimate interests of the citizens of the Russian Federation in foreign states" (ibid., p.108)

The most significant wordings to note here are the first, second and fourth bullet points respectively. Again we see the case being made by the wording for a wide margin of interpretation on how the Putin/Medvedev regime will interpret "interference in Russia's internal affairs", "the expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the military security of the Russian Federation." The first point of course can mean many things that the regime can consider its 'internal affairs', from the obvious goal of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism and quashing a separatist rebellion in the case of Chechnya; or defending Russian passport holders living in South Ossetia. Countering the expansion of military blocks and alliances is clearly a reference to countering NATO expansion eastwards, as the Putin/Medvedev regime has done successfully in the case of the membership aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia, which will be discussed briefly later. Interestingly again we see Russia define itself as a Great Power and warns that it is an important player in the global "multi-polar" (mnogopolarnost) order not to be ignored. This seems almost like a vain neo-nationalistic warning that although the U.S. and the West have militarily and economically surpassed Russia, it is still declaring itself to be an important power and will not allow its interests to be ignored, especially not in the case of its Inner or Near Abroads.

In the case of the Second Russo Chechen War the key point to note here are of course the first and third bullet points. One could of course argue that countering internal threats and putting down "seats of armed violence" as in the case of Chechnya are perfectly legitimate goals and privileges of a sovereign nation state, and therefore not in and of themselves indication of neo-nationalist sentiment or motivations. The National Security Conception of the Russian Federation (2000) lays out explicitly a reiteration of the neo-nationalist themes found in the other documents. The first section entitled "Russia in the Global Community" exhorts "what is going wrong in the world, one key thing being

the establishment of a structure of international affairs based on the domination of the US led developed nations over the international community...designed to provide unilateral solutions to the key problems of global politics, above all through the use of military force in circumvention of the...norms of international law. (Approved by Putin, 2000, in Melville and Shakleina 2005, p.130).

We see a blaming of the "US led West" that seeks to dominate the international structure through the use of military

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

force in direct contravention of international law. This is perhaps a statement of protest against NATO and the actions taken against the Serbs, and also what is viewed by the Putin/Medvedev regime as a growing trend of Western dominance and increasing Russian irrelevance in global affairs. One can argue that perhaps there is some truth to these allegations, and again look at it from the Russian point of view is more less a legitimate observation. The document goes on to claim Russia's unique Eurasian role as one of the world's largest nations with a centuries long history that despite the

complex international situation and its own internal difficulties continues to play an important role in the global process global processes by virtue of its great economic, scientific and technological and military potential (ibid. p.130).

The document continues to say that Russia has a great economic potential, and indeed economic security is a large part of the Concept, and stresses the commonality of interests that Russia has with other countries in the world, as well as its prospects for "further integration into the world economy". This commonality of interests is ensuring global security and stability, especially within its regional sphere as well as countering terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and international organized crime, all legitimate interests. The document states:

a number of states have increasingly undertaken efforts to weaken Russia's position in political, economic, military and other spheres. Attempts to ignore Russia's interests when addressing major issues in international relations...may undermine...security, stability, and positive developments in international affairs (Ibid. p.130).

This is an interesting assertion, as we will see that Russia followed this doctrine in the case of the Georgian (also called South Ossetia) War. Even as Medvedev took office in 2008, and softened, as we have already mentioned, some of the rhetoric in the slightly revamped National Security Concept document in 2008, Russia was still struggling to form its' "historically determined identity as a Great Power onto the new realities" of the global order (Mankoff, 2009 p. 3). Part of this was Russia needed in the case of Georgia to assert itself militarily and show the West, especially the United States and NATO, the price of ignoring Russia's interests (ibid., p.1) By extension therefore, this was even truer in the case of Putin's decision to prosecute the Second Georgian War militarily, and his "shutting of the taps" when using Russia's vast natural gas resources and monopoly over gas pipelines in the case of the Orange Revolution and actions meant to punish Ukraine's defiance of the Kremlin.

Overall, the Russian elites' conception of itself and its place in the world looks much the same as it did in the 1990's. After the collapse of the initial strategy pursued by Yeltsyn of greater political and economic integration with the West, there was a shift to a new approach emphasizing Russia's role as a sovereign Velikaya Derzhava in an anarchic, self help international system where power instead of international norms or institutions remained the primary driving force in international relations (Mankoff, p. 5). This approach has been approved of by the Russian elite ever since, and has found its ultimate manifestation in the de facto neo-nationalism of the Putin/Medvedev regime. Putin has succeeded largely in uniting Russia's elite behind him by embodying the neo-nationalist mythos of Russia's Great Power role and its subsequent pursuits of its interests (Mankoff, p. 5).

Indeed, this is reflected in the National Security Concept as it asserts:

Russia's national interests can be safeguarded only through stable economic development. Therefore Russia's interests in the economic sphere are crucial...In the spiritual sphere, Russia's national interests consist of maintaining and developing the moral values of society, traditions of patriotism and humanism...With regard to international affairs, Russia's national interests consist in ensuring the sovereignty and enhancement of Russia's position as a great power and one of the influential centers in a multi-polar world, and developing equal and mutually beneficial interactions with all nations...above all with the members of the CIS and Russia's traditional partners, in general respect for human rights and liberties... (Approved by Putin, 2000, in Melville and Skakleina, 2005, p. 130).

Again we see here a mixture of legitimate and democratic language interspersed with neo-nationalist rhetoric. The liberal sounding parts about seeking "beneficial interactions "above all with the members of the CIS and Russia's traditional partners, in general respect for human rights and liberties" sounds in the document very benign indeed,



# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

however it shows the “sphere of privileged interests” mentality by singling out the CIS countries and whoever Russia considers it’s “traditional partners”. The document has some final important points of merit. It lists its protection of the “cultural, spiritual and moral heritage, historical traditions and social norms, preservation of the cultural heritage of all of Russia’s peoples...the spiritual renewal of society is impossible without preserving the role of the Russian language as a factor of spiritual unity of all the peoples of the multinational Russian Federation and as a language of inter-state communication of the peoples of the CIS member states” (ibid. pp.140-141).

The rhetoric used here, while seemingly benign in tone as it recognizes the “multinational” nature of the Russian Federation, actually has rather paternalistic overtones and reflects some of the traditional Tsarist and Soviet themes of the Russian fatherland as the supreme “spiritual and moral” guide of both the Inner and Near Abroads (i.e. the “multinational peoples of the Russian Federation and the CIS). As we saw in the Laruelle book and in our Introduction, traditionally Russian nationalism and imperialism, during both Tsarist and Soviet times was carried out using the Russian Orthodox Church under the direction of a strong centralized state system guided by the Kremlin. A key part of this was of course the imposition of the Russian language on all subjugated peoples as part of the official policy known as “Russification”. Under the process of Russification, in a historical sense, the term can be used to denote the official and unofficial policies of both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union aimed at Russian ethno cultural and ethno linguistic domination. In Ukraine this policy was the most brutal and evident.

Under Tsarist and Soviet rule respectively, Russification and Sovietization were intended to ensure state control over a diverse population. The Russian Empire rarely attempted to assimilate culturally the diverse ethnic groups living under tsarist rule, and after 1917 Sovietization aimed more ambitiously at a total transformation of human existence. While Sovietization never overtly advocated cultural assimilation, it did presume that Soviet citizens would use the Russian language as the primary “all-union” language and expected Soviet citizens to adopt “modern” lifestyles that often drew on Russian models (Weeks, 2010). Therefore, we see the neo-nationalist rhetoric of the Putin/Medvedev regime is really just recycling the old traditions and models of Russian imperialist nationalism.

Nowhere of the foundational documents being analyzed is this more evident than in Putin’s millennial epistle Russia at the Turn of the Millennium. We recall Marlene Laruelle mentioning the notion of the “strong state” and centralized power. In a section entitled “The Russian Idea” Putin formulates the cogent points of his neo-nationalist doctrine. He begins by pointing out that the Russian “Motherland” needs to be unified as a strong state under a strong central, paternal power. Russia at the turn of the millennium is a state in disarray and confusion, much like it “found itself” to be after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the failed democratic and market reforms of Boris Yeltsin’s 1990’s (Melville and Shakleina, 2005, p.226). Putin maintains that he is against an official “state ideology” as was the case during the Soviet era. He does not want a “forced social consensus”, in a democratic Russia. He points out that Russian citizens value freedom of speech, the right to do business, leave the country, and they want security, prosperity, and stability. These are “universal values” that are “above those of social and ethnic groups”. He states that another thing holding Russia together as well are what “can be called the inherent traditional Russian values” (ibid. p.237).

Again, we see a mixture of relatively legitimate statements that are not in and of themselves evidence of neo-nationalist policy. To the contrary, this epistle of Putin’s thus far could have been written by a U.S. president. We must therefore dig deeper, and as reflected by Laruelle’s work, see how the rhetoric is fleshed out within the larger framework of our analysis. Putin then in the document further elaborates his “traditional Russian values”:

**PATRIOTISM:** This word sometimes used in an ironic and even abusive sense. However, for the majority of Russians citizens it has preserved its original, totally positive meaning. This word refers to feeling proud of one’s Motherland, its history and achievements...When these feelings are free of national arrogance and imperial ambitions; there is nothing obnoxious or conservative about them...If we lose patriotism, and the national pride and dignity associated with it, we will lose ourselves as a nation of great exploits.

**STATE AS A GREAT WORLD POWER (Derzhavnost)** Russia has been and will be a great power. This status is preconditioned by the inherent qualities of Russia’s geopolitical, economic and cultural essence...

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

**STRONG STATE POWER:** Russia will not soon, if ever, come to be a second version of, say, the USA or UK where liberal values spring from deep rooted historical traditions. In this country the state and its institutions have always played a crucial role in the life of the nation. From the perspective of the Russian citizen, a strong state is not an anomaly, it is not something someone should fight against, it is rather a source of and guarantor of order, the initiator and primary force behind any change. Today's Russian society does not identify a powerful and efficient state with a totalitarian one. We have learned to appreciate the benefits of democracy, rule of law and freedom of the individual and political freedom, at the same time people are concerned by the weakening of state authority...Today the clue to Russia's revival and rise lies in the sphere of state policy. Russia needs a strong state authority...This is not a call for a re-establishment of a totalitarian state...it is only democratic systems that last." (Approved by Putin, 2000, in Melville and Shakleina 2005, p.227-9).

There are several interesting points and seeming contradictions being made by Putin in these passages. These in a sense seem to reflect a sort of "do as I say, not as I do" way of interpreting his proclamations of the absolute need for a strong central state that is a *Velikaya Derzhava* and primary driving force of social, political and economic dynamism and change in Russia; that still at the same time respects individual social and political freedoms, promotes private enterprise and a free press and a civil society. As we have already seen, the realities of this odd and contradictory union of opposing values in practice are patently false. As we have seen from Lucas, Trenin, and Freedom House, the Putin/Medvedev regime has done everything it can do to ensure no real political freedom, no civil society and freedom of speech that is critical of the regime (the murder of Anna Politovskaya comes to mind as an example). Even in terms of private industry the state controlled natural gas and oil industry monopoly giants like Gazprom and Lukoil are hardly models of free enterprise, and are essentially political weapons of the regime, as we will see in the case of Ukraine and Georgia.

At the same time however, admittedly the regime, although a "sovereign/managed democracy", has not completely reverted to a Soviet totalitarian model, as Putin's epistle emphasizes it is contradictory to the nature of the "new" Russia. Yet, at the same time, it is precisely Putin's "neo-Sovietist" qualities that have kept him relatively popular and in power all these years. These qualities are precisely the contradictions that are reflected in the Millenium document. This is a nod or recognition that Russia needs to embrace the future of a quasi-democracy and quasi-free market system, albeit a Russian version and not a mimicking of the U.S., while playing up on neo-nationalist sentiments of Russia's "traditional values" of being a strong state, "culturally unique Great Power" and so forth. He does this, as we have already seen, by revitalizing the myths of Stalinism and the Great Patriotic War, and with slogans like the following from a book of his interviews: "I was a pure and utterly successful product of Soviet patriotic education" (Sakwa, 2008, p.2).

The sentiment is further echoed by Putin's assessment in 2000, much as he writes in the above passage, about a strong state not being a totalitarian state in his Russia, as he once argued that while it would be ultimately foolish not to recognize that the Soviet Union and communism were a "failed social experiment", it would also "be a mistake not to realize the unquestionable achievements of those times" (Sakwa, 2008, p. 53). He also made the now infamous statement that the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century was the fall of the Soviet Union" (Putin, 2005, in AP, 4/25/2005). In this dualistic manner we see that Putin has been able to use neo-nationalistic rhetoric to gain and keep popular support from Russians. This was extremely clear in his prosecution of the Second Chechen War. For example while Putin's campaign managers in 2000 certainly used his tough stance on Chechnya to his advantage, Russians themselves wanted "a strong leader capable of bringing order to their tragically unpredictable lives" (Sakwa, 2008, p.34). It is interesting to note that in the context of the Second Chechen War, Putin drew support from a broad base of the Russian electorate, even the liberal young, educated and socioeconomically successful (*ibid.*, p.34).

Putin's plans to fight Chechen separatists and insurgents were already being laid in 1999 when he was still head of the FSB, working with former President Boris Yeltsin. Several flashpoint events prompted and to some extent necessitated a strike (according to official sources) by Russian forces into Chechnya in October 1999, which was initially seen as what was going to be a limited military operation (Sakwa, 2008, p.21). Two key events that finally prompted Putin's response were the killing of Russian deputy interior minister major-general Gennady Shpigun in March of 1999 by Chechen insurgents. The second main flashpoint was in August when some 1500 Chechen

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

fighters under the leadership of the infamous Shamil Basaev and Saudi born Habib al Rahman, (known as “Khattab”) invaded the neighboring province of Dagestan. A third and final event whose causes are still under speculation today was the bombing in August of a shopping mall and then in September the bombing of apartment buildings, all in suburbs of Moscow that killed over 200 people. The extent of the involvement of Chechens in these bombings however still remains uncertain (*ibid.*, p. 21). There have even been allegations that these bombings were “staged” by FSB agents in order to essentially give Putin the *causus belli* to invade Chechnya (Lucas, 2009, p.26).

It was at this point that Putin also made some rather derogatory nearly bigoted remarks about Chechnya. In one famous media broadcast in September 1999 he used rather vulgar Russian “street language” where he made allusions to drowning the Chechen “bandits in the John” (Sakwa, 2008, p.22) or even “the shithouse” (Lucas, 2009, p.23) and this supposedly gained him wide appeal as a would-be “man of the people” (Sakwa, 2008, p.22). At the same conference around the same time he further burnished his tough guy action man image (with which he has since become synonymous almost to a comical degree), he declared “Russia is defending itself, we have been attacked, and therefore we must throw off all syndromes, including the guilt syndrome” (Sakwa, 2008, p. 22). To this he later added that they would attack the “terrorist republic” of Chechnya (Lucas, 2009 p.23).

There wouldn't have been a second campaign if it hadn't been imposed on us. That is obvious. During the so-called first campaign the independence of Chechnya was at issue and eventually Russia agreed to this, and I don't mind saying that it agreed at the cost of national humiliation, but it agreed to this. And what did we get? We got not an independent state called the Chechen Republic, but a territory occupied by armed gangs and religious extremists, a territory which started to be used as a bridgehead to attack our country and destabilize it from within. Not only Russia, but any other state would not tolerate such a situation. We showed patience for a long time. There was no need to attack the neighboring republics in order to protect the independence of Chechnya. It was an aggression which spilled out into another region of the Russian Federation. Even then, we did not immediately decide to launch the operation in Chechnya. It took four attacks on Dagestan and explosions of residential buildings in Moscow to finally convince us that we wouldn't be able to solve this problem without liquidating the terrorist bands inside the Chechen Republic. But where do we go from here? We should complete the job in military terms...we should gradually normalize the situation there, create the bodies of government. The main problem to... is social rehabilitation and economic reconstruction of the Chechen Republic. The long-suffering Chechen people must at long last understand and support the efforts that Russia is exerting to make that region of Russia viable again. (Putin, December 25, 2000).

In the above much more measured speech we see Putin give a long and rational, and arguably legitimate rationalization for the prosecution of the Second Chechen War. At the same time we see the insertion of the qualification that:

during the so-called first campaign the independence of Chechnya was at issue and eventually Russia agreed to this, and I don't mind saying that it agreed *at the cost of national humiliation*, but it agreed to this. And what did we get? We got not an independent state called the Chechen Republic, but a territory occupied by armed gangs and religious extremists, *a territory which started to be used as a bridgehead to attack our country and destabilize it from within* (Putin, 12/25/2000).

Here we see the familiar neo-nationalistic themes of defending Russia's interests, and especially the mention of the “cost of the national humiliation” suffered by Russia in making this concession to begin with. Clearly this is a statement designed to garner what we have seen Putin define as his “patriotic” sentiment and values. After all, how could Russia, a *Velikaya Derzhava*, have allowed this outcome of the First Russo-Chechen War to happen in the first place? At the same time, something must be said for his candor and honesty; the defeat of Russian military forces that led to their falling back and subsequent lawlessness that resulted in Chechnya was an international as well as a national embarrassment and humiliation for the Kremlin of Boris Yeltsin.

The Second Chechen War from 1999 onward has been marked by the “dual radicalization” of the participants in both Russia and Chechnya. In Russia, the conflict was first framed by the Putin/Medvedev regime as a “counter-terror” operation, and later as part of the “global war on terror”. Russia's military successes against the Chechens, won by

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

an arguably brutal use of excessive military force, were instrumental to Putin's victories in 2000 and 2004. The Chechen side in the second war saw a steady shift from secular nationalism to radical Islam and the idiom of *jihād* (Hughes, 2007, xiii). The Putin/Medvedev regime has increasingly relied on the use of feudal like proxies, most notably current Chechen governor Ramzan Kadyrov and his family, hearkening back to Tsarist imperial policies towards Chechnya. It uses Chechen proxies as much as it can to distance itself from the putative war crimes committed by Russian and pro-Kremlin forces. The war has de-modernized Chechnya, contrary to the rhetoric of "restoration" used in Putin's speeches (for full speeches see Appendix A). As a result of this, the chances for resolution of the conflict have actually decreased over the years of the war and the Kremlin's policies have largely failed to mitigate the instability of further spillover conflicts in the North Caucasus region (ibid.).

Extreme tactics on both the Chechen and Russian sides as well as a breakdown in the discipline of the Russian military have made Chechnya the site of some of the worst human rights abuses in Europe since WW2. The failure of the Russian military authorities to curtail crimes such as looting, rape, "torture camps", disappearances and mass executions of Chechen civilians have fostered a culture of impunity and corruption among the federal troops stationed there. In 2003 and 2004, the Chechens were the largest asylum-seeking population in the world (Gerber and Mendelson, 2008, p.42). It has also been stated by policy experts that the ongoing Chechen conflict is a "localized issue focused around the perceived threat of terrorism, not a symptom of naked Russian aggression" (Sakwa, 2008 p.228). As long as the mainstream of Russian political life remains insulated from it, the issue exerts little pressure to stop the conflict (ibid.).

This, however, seems a naïve interpretation. While the large scale military and more aggressive components of the conflict have been scaled down by the Putin/Medvedev regime since the declaration of the cessation of military operations in April 2009, the conflict is still very much ongoing with the Russian Interior Ministry (which controls the "OMUN" special purpose interior security force still conducting military operations) announcing recently that "terrorist crime" in the North Caucasus was up by 60% from the preceding year, and the chief prosecutors office for the region announcing that 80% of all Russia's terrorist incidents take place in this region (King and Menon, 2010, p.21). The assertion that the Chechen and larger North Caucasus struggle is "local" and "isolated" seems particularly hollow in the face of ongoing terrorists strike in the heart of Moscow with the subway bombing in March 2010 and the January 2011 terrorist bombing of the Domodedovo International Airport.

Perhaps a more accurate description of the conflict would be the assertion by Anatoly Lieven that Chechnya was a "tombstone" (during the First Russo Chechen War) of "Russian power" (Sakwa, 2008 p.228). Beginning in 1999 for Putin, the Second Russo-Chechen War has served as a restoration of that power. As Trenin and Malashenko put it:

owing to the weakness and corruptibility of the (Russian) government, the regime failed to respond to the Chechen challenge, thus sending a signal to neighboring countries and beyond that a power vacuum existed in Russia from the Caucasus to the Kremlin (ibid.)

In his *Millennium Manifesto*, Putin insisted that Chechnya was "where the future of Russia was being decided". In a televised speech in January 2000 he noted: "in my opinion the public support for our actions in the Caucasus are not only from a hurt sense of national identity but also from a feeling that *the state has become weak, and it ought to be strong*" (ibid.). The Second Chechen War provided Putin a springboard to the Presidency, with the great significance that was the sense that Russia had its national interests at stake in its traditional Inner Abroad, and the Putin/Medvedev regime were willing to defend them (ibid.)

In another speech by Putin:

We are all familiar with the events that took place in the Caucasus in the preceding decade. In 1995 Russia agreed to the independence of Chechnya, although it did not legally recognize it. It totally withdrew from Chechnya...Everything was dismantled. *I must tell you that it looked like a national humiliation, but Russia did it in order to achieve reconciliation...*

*To all intents and purposes we had encountered the physical annihilation of the Russian-speaking population in*

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

*Chechnya, yet Russia failed to react to this, it was in about the same state as the US was after the Vietnam War. Russia was in a shock after 1995...The territory of Chechnya, which was not controlled by any authorities, started being used as a bridgehead for a criminal invasion of the Russian economy, because there were no borders. Yet, Russia failed to react to that. Attacks on neighboring Russian territories, Dagestan and other Russian regions were being launched almost every day. People started selling their homes and leaving. There was no one to talk to because there were no authorities in Chechnya...What was the outcome? A large-scale attack by several thousand armed men on Dagestan under the slogan of seizing additional territories from Russia and creating a new state that would stretch from the Black to the Caspian Sea, the United States of Islam, as they called it. ...What would you suggest that we do? Talk with them about Biblical values? They even interpret the Koran in their own way. And they consider everyone who wears a cross to be an enemy.*

I told the President: "Imagine that some armed people come along and want to grab half of Texas. Can you imagine that?"...*And yet that was exactly at issue in Russia...I sometimes think about what is happening in the media and I don't believe that nobody understands it. If a campaign is being mounted, I think it is simply a deliberate attempt to use the situation in Chechnya in order to destabilize the Russian Federation. I can think of no other explanation. Everything is forgotten: beheaded foreigners...and public executions of Chechen citizens in squares...Nobody pays any attention to it...*

To us the issue of Chechnya's independence or non-independence is not a fundamental issue.*The only fundamental issue is this: we will not allow this territory to be used as a bridgehead for attacking Russia.* This is just not on. ...*The international community has never recognized the independence of Chechnya. We believe that it is a constituent part of the Russian Federation. And we believe that it will remain so now and in the near historical perspective.* And of course we must bear the responsibility for what is happening there. Unfortunately, it involves huge humanitarian problems. We are ready to cooperate with international organizations in tackling these humanitarian problems...We assume that whoever breaks Russian laws must be brought to account. It applies equally to our servicemen and civilians. We are not going to act like occupiers. It is our own country (Putin, June 18, 2001).

We see in this speech again, a mixture of legitimate points mixed with hyperbole of comparing Chechnya to Texas and Viet Nam (this was a press conference after a meeting with George W. Bush). We also see the repetitive neo-nationalist themes of defending "Russian speaking citizens" from "complete obliteration" and protecting Russia from being destabilized, Chechnya and Dagestan being used as "bridgeheads" to attack Russia (again relatively factual to a degree) etc. However, perhaps the most interesting areas of rhetoric here is the mention "*a campaign is being mounted...a deliberate attempt to use the situation in Chechnya in order to destabilize the Russian Federation.*" Not at all ironically, the same type of rhetoric used by Putin – of foreign governments, NGOs and agencies of the U.S. government deliberately using all kinds of dirty tricks to cause trouble in Russia against his regime – has been used by him time and time again, to the point of being comical.

Recently, as current events are unfolding with the seeming reawakening of putative civil society in Russia, manifesting themselves in mass protests against corrupt elections and dissatisfaction with the Putin/Medvedev regime in general, Putin has once again used this type of rhetoric by accusing the United States and current (2012) Secretary of State Hilary Clinton of fomenting public dissent and agitating against the Kremlin: "She set the tone for some opposition activists, gave them a signal, they heard this signal and started active work," Putin told supporters as he laid out plans for his campaign to return to the presidency in a March election. Invoking Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution and the violent downfall of governments in Kyrgyzstan – another fellow former Soviet republic where Moscow has suggested street protesters had U.S. support – he said Western nations were spending heavily to foment political change in Russia. "Pouring foreign money into electoral processes is particularly unacceptable," said Putin. "Hundreds of millions are being invested in this work. We need to work out forms of protection of our sovereignty, defense against interference from outside." He added: "We have to think of ways to tighten accountability for those who carry out the aims of foreign states to influence domestic political processes." Putin's remarks echoed the tough anti-Western rhetoric he employed in his 2000-2008 presidency to suggest Western nations were funding Kremlin critics to try to weaken Russia and prevent its resurgence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. He has turned increasingly to the same tough talk since revealing in September that he planned to swap jobs with President Dmitry Medvedev next year (Gutterman and Bryanski, 12/8/2011).

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

After 9/11 the Chechen jihadi terrorist ideology took firmer root, by many accounts, in influencing Chechen terrorists in order to commit several high profile acts of carnage against Russian civilians. On October 23 2002, 40 Chechen terrorists seized the Dubrovka Theatre Centre in Moscow and took 914 people hostage. On October 26 the hostages were freed, but 130 people died in a botched rescue operation on Putin's order (Bodansky, 2007, pp.244-250). On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the infamous and bloody hostage-taking crisis took place at a school in Beslan. Radical Islam first gained an evident purchase in Chechnya in 1996 after the first withdrawal of Russian troops. There was an intra-elite struggle for power within the Chechen leadership, between the more secularized product of the Soviet military, such as Aslan Mashkadov, who has been Dzhokar Dudayev's under-commander until his assassination (Dudayev's) by Russian bombs in early 1996, and other commanders (Hughes, p.95). The other commanders were the Wahabbist Shamil Basaev, killed in 2006 in a spectacular, almost movie-like fashion by FSB operatives while trying to complete a major terrorist operation against a G8 summit in St. Petersburg and Raduev (Bodansky, 2007, p.xvii). Also rising in power and influence were the non-Chechen global jihadist groups united under Khattab (Hughes, p.95).

Basaev, one of Mashkadov's former lieutenants would later go on to become Russia's and Putin's "public enemy number 1" and largely the architect of the infamous Beslan siege (King and Menon, 2010, p.21). The rise of "political Islam" in Chechnya illustrates the difficulties of reconciling "localist" (territorialized) and "universalist" ideologies within Islamist movements. Whereas Islamic radicalism has often been fused with nationalism (for example Hamas in Palestine), and often does so with tension, the toughest part with the melding of the global jihadist ideology in Chechnya with that of Al Qaeda is precisely that; Chechnya started as a *regional* conflict that left a power vacuum that was filled to a certain extent by the global jihadists (Hughes, p.97-8).

Yet it is precisely this local/international dimension of the Chechen crisis that has been both bane and blessing of Putin's neo-nationalist platform and has allowed Putin to reassert Russian control of its Inner Abroad. After 9/11, the foreign policy stance of the Bush administration was largely a "hands off" approach towards the Putin/Medvedev regime's heavy handedness in the Second Russo Chechen War. After the events of Dubrovka and Beslan, and ongoing terrorist attacks against Russian civilian targets, in many ways the Russo-Chechen conflict become a part of the larger struggle of the "Global War on Terror" (GWOT). Yet again however, mixing legitimate policy with neo-nationalist ideology, Putin was able to continue to make his case for the prosecution of the war in a speech right after the Beslan massacre:

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN: Speaking is hard. It is painful. A terrible tragedy has taken place in our world. Over these last few days each and every one of us has suffered greatly and taken deeply to heart all that was happening in the Russian town of Beslan. There, we found ourselves confronting not just murderers, but people who turned their weapons against helpless children. *Russia has lived through many tragic events and terrible ordeals over the course of its history. Today, we live in a time that follows the collapse of a vast and great state, a state that, unfortunately, proved unable to survive in a rapidly changing world. But despite all the difficulties, we were able to preserve the core of what was once the vast Soviet Union, and we named this new country the Russian Federation...* We are living through a time when internal conflicts and interethnic divisions that were once firmly suppressed by the ruling ideology have now flared up...We stopped paying the required attention to defense and security issues and we allowed corruption to undermine our judicial and law enforcement system...Furthermore, our country, formerly protected by the most powerful defense system along the length of its external frontiers overnight found itself defenseless....*We showed ourselves to be weak. And the weak get beaten...Some would like to tear from us a "juicy piece of pie". Others help them. They help, reasoning that Russia still remains one of the world's major nuclear powers, and as such still represents a threat to them. And so they reason that this threat should be removed.* (Putin, Sept. 4, 2004)

Yet later between 2004 and 2008, the end of Putin's terms as President, the international community again began to question the heavy handedness of the regime and ongoing bloodshed and atrocities committed by both sides in the conflict. This was coupled with what was to become a gradual cooling of relations between the U.S. and Russia that arguably has lasted until today and has even worsened. The result was a retrenchment of the Putin/Medvedev regime's use of neo-nationalist ideology as justification for aggressive actions:

BRIDGET KENDALL: Exactly on this theme, this question is from Joseph O'Donnell in Ireland who asks *how you*

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

*reconcile your opposition to separatism within Russia to your apparent sympathy for it in Abkhazia, South Ossetia...? Shouldn't Chechnya have the same right?*

VLADIMIR PUTIN: Of course everybody has the same rights. This gentleman should be aware that we have conducted a referendum in the Chechen republic on its constitution and it says, black on white, that Chechnya is an inalienable part of the Russian Federation. The people of Chechnya voted for that – 80% percent of the people not only turned up at the voting stations but they supported that decision... it turned out that the Chechen people did support the constitution that was offered and had been developed inside Chechnya itself...we extended to the Chechen Republic extensive rights of autonomy. And we were aware of what we were doing. I think that it was the right decision. So the same thing can be extended to Abkhazia and other places.

BRIDGET KENDALL: But nonetheless this referendum and the way it was carried out in Chechnya was quite heavily criticized.

And another question on Chechnya, this time from Youhan Mistry who asks: was the Chechen war worth it? Thousands of Chechen civilians were killed as were Russians, including in the theatre siege and in Beslan. So was it worth it?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: First of all, with respect to criticism about the Chechen referendum. I want to draw your attention to the fact that we invited international observers in order for them to be able to control the way the referendum and the voting took place...These were the organizations that came to Chechnya...in their reports there were some unfavorable remarks but on the whole they were satisfied with how the referendum proceeded and how the constitution was adopted.

I know that in the western media this process – the voting and adopting the constitution – was criticized. I don't think that was justified. Moreover, I believe that providing political, moral and communications support to people who have taken up an armed struggle to attain political aims is unjustified in today's world. I already talked about Great Britain but we also know about the Basque country in Spain... Why should we aggravate this situation in Europe? It is very dangerous and absolutely inadmissible to do so.

*And now the question: was it worth it for us to fight the war in Chechnya? Of course it was. Because the war was not only linked to the independence of the Chechen Republic. We realized that we would not be left in peace by these forces who have nothing in common with Chechen people. They would be using the territory as a foothold to construct inroads into the Russian Federation and for attacking other neighboring Russian regions. There were masses of people who had to flee from certain areas of Russia because it was not possible to live beside the Chechen Republic. Because of bandits, because of kidnappings and other such things that occurred en masse. In five to seven years over two and a half thousand people were openly sold or bought on the Chechen market as slaves. Do you know about that? I am sure you do. And that is not all We are simply convinced that if we had not acted, and brought the situation to the one that currently prevails, of course Chechnya wouldn't have just been used as a jumping off point for attacks on Russia, it would have gone further. What was at stake? They were talking about creating a new state from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. A state with a very radical government.*

BRIDGET KENDALL: You say that you would never tolerate the disintegration of Russia. But anyone from Georgia who's listening to our discussion now might very well say that this holds true for us in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We wouldn't want to see them leave Georgia (Putin, July 6, 2006).

Again this is a mixture of truth and misinformation as with the other speeches. We see Putin comparing Chechnya to other European states to gain legitimacy etc. Interestingly, we also, perhaps unwittingly, see a foreshadowing of the events that were to occur over Russia's stance on South Ossetia in terms of supporting its separatist sentiments as a proxy counter to Georgian anti Kremlin and pro-Western desires under the government of Mikhail Saakashvili. To conclude on Putin and Chechnya, Hughes puts it best:

"Chechnya was to be the anvil on which Putin hammered out a public position as an ideology for a new form of

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Russian nationalism. The re-conquest of Chechnya would not only undo the national humiliation of the defeat of 1996, but also serve as the vehicle for a recentralization and strengthening of state power in Russia, for the consolidation of a new Putin regime...This equated the "renewal" of Russia with restoring Russia's pride in itself and a return to 'strong state power'" (Hughes, 2007, p.107).

## CHAPTER EIGHT. Case Study 2: The Orange Revolution

In any discussion of the attitudes and neo-nationalist ideology of the Putin/Medvedev regime towards Ukraine, one cannot help but invoke Putin's infamous proclamation that "Ukraine is not a real country" to former U.S. President George W. Bush at a Bucharest NATO summit in 2008 (Lynch, 2011, p. 111). Russian foreign policy elites are convinced that Ukraine's separation from Russia in 1991 was an unfortunate and begrudgingly temporary state of affairs, and that Ukraine either should or could be reincorporated into the Russian empire (ibid.). At the same time the Putin/Medvedev regime is convinced that at a minimum Russia's best interests as a *Velikaya Derzhava* are served by Ukraine never joining NATO, and probably even the EU, and at a maximum accept that Ukraine's key political and economic international interests be transacted through the Kremlin (ibid.). Delegitimizing Ukrainian sovereignty and national self assertion, and preventing Ukraine from developing closer ties with the West has been always an objective of Russia's ruling elites dating back to Tsarist times, reaching an arguable apex during the Soviet era, beginning with Stalin's deliberate mass murder of 6 million Ukrainians in the Holodomor (Famine-Genocide) and ongoing Russification policies.

It is also important to note that Putin's foreign policy towards Ukraine has been consistent from the beginning of his presidency in 1999 through until the most recent election of pro-Kremlin Yanukovich in 2010. That is, to essentially control the outcome of all Ukrainian elections as much as possible to ensure a pro-Russian and pro-Kremlin Ukrainian president. Of course the success of this has been mixed, even at the best of times, and as we will see in the case of the Orange Revolution outright backfired. That is of course arguably until Yanukovich's return in 2010. During the Kuchma presidency, Putin's foreign policy towards Ukraine was very direct, intrusive and active in promoting pro-Russian and pro-Kremlin policies using not just neo-nationalist rhetoric but a variety of dirty tricks involving illicit means and often outright subversion and subterfuge worthy of a KGB master of mayhem.

For example, Russian political technologists imported anti-American conspiracies into Ukraine, alleging that the United States was behind Melnychenko and "Kuchmagate" ("Kuchmagate" was the event that led to the ousting of former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma just prior to the run up to the 2004 presidential election). One of these was the *Brzezinski plan*, which claimed Kuchmagate was a U.S. backed provocation that aimed to topple Kuchma and replace him with Yushchenko. It was a convenient way to sidetrack the numerous allegations of executive misconduct found on the tapes. Yushchenko's supporters and the anti-Kuchma opposition that sprung up during Kuchmagate were allegedly anti-Russian nationalists financed by the U.S. government through foundations, such as Freedom House and others, all of which were allegedly involved in overthrowing Serbian President Slobodan Milosovich (Kuzio, 2005, p.492).

There is no small irony that similar tactics and accusations of funding and backing of foreign and especially American NGOs were exhorted by Putin during the recent protests in Moscow and other parts of Russia against his corrupt authoritarian tactics, as he is poised to return to power in March of 2012. Prior to the 2004 election, the leading opposition presidential candidate Yushchenko was the target of a range of dirty tricks intended to defeat his bid to succeed President Kuchma. There was a Russian-run "political consultancy" group with deep and well known ties to the Kremlin, which was hired by the Kremlin to secure a Yanukovich victory by defeating his main rival, Yushchenko. Failing this, the election results could be annulled, with Yushchenko and Yanukovich barred from a repeat election. Kuchma could then stand for a third term. The EPF's main objectives fell into three main categories. First they sought to undermine Yushchenko's credibility by producing fake leaflets, critical books, and pamphlets; and by launching inflammatory television attacks. Second, they used the tax police to investigate businessmen who supported his



## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

campaign, thus undermining his financial support. Third, they paid extreme nationalists to claim they supported Yushchenko and used the same groups to carry out terrorist attacks that were then blamed on Yushchenko (Kuzio, 2005, pp.494-96).

Another leaked plan instructed how Yushchenko would be depicted as somebody who would cause instability if he were elected; Kuchma or Prime Minister Yanukovych would then be proposed as a source of stability. The strategy paper openly stated, "Our aim is to destabilize the situation in the regions (through political intrigues, not by harming the economy), to drag Yushchenko into these processes . . ." These leaked secret strategies outlined how conflict could be provoked between the Tatars and Russians in the Crimea (Ibid. p.496). The first act of terrorism took place in August 2004. Two bombs exploded in Kyiv's Troyeshchyna market, killing one and wounding tens of others. One week later, the Interior Ministry (MVS) announced that it had arrested five individuals. Two of those arrested were allegedly members of the Ukrainian People's Party (a member of Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc) (Kuzio, 2005, p.496). All of these events show the bag of dirty tricks used by the Putin/Medvedev regime to undermine the democratic election of Yushchenko.

The Ukrainian presidential election cycle of late 2004-Oct. 31, Nov. 21, and Dec. 26 represented a major opportunity and ultimately a huge humiliating defeat for Putin, as he campaigned dramatically and personally at that time to seat pro-Kremlin candidate Victor Yanukovych over the West-leaning Victor Yushchenko. Yushchenko's main platform was to join Ukraine to NATO and the EU regardless of what the Putin/Medvedev regime thought (ibid.). Putin's choice for Ukraine's next president was of course Yanukovych. He threw the vast oil and gas revenues of the Russian state behind Yanukovych's candidacy and Russian state media broadcast nearly incessant pro-Yanukovych propaganda ads into Ukraine in the Russian language (Lynch, p.112). Putin himself made several dramatic visits to Ukraine and very publicly supported Yanukovych on several occasions, which in many ways ultimately backfired in the pro-Yushchenko vote. He also cut a deal with the Ukrainian government, after several natural gas conflicts where he "turned off the tap" of gas from Russia to Ukraine as a punitive measure against Ukraine. The deal he cut was for five years and expired in 2009 whereby Ukraine could purchase gas from Russia at a very preferential rate of \$50 per 1000 cubic meters, less than a quarter of what Western European customers like Germany, heavily dependent on Russia's natural gas monopoly, were paying. Putin emphasized this as being good for Ukraine if it voted for Yanukovych (ibid.)

In the meantime, the campaign of Yushchenko was going well and had strong foreign and by proxy Western (especially U.S.) support. Interesting to note, anti-Russian and anti-Putin Georgian president Sakaashvili came to Kiev to support Yushchenko. Prominent members of the Ukrainian Diaspora from Western Europe, the U.S. and especially Canada saw the election as an opportunity to exit Ukraine from Russia's orbit by democratic electoral means. Also significantly, Western election monitoring officials from a multitude of nations and the OSCE were throughout Ukraine during the cycle monitoring against corruption. Dramatically, Yushchenko himself who had emerged as a symbol of the Orange Revolution and had started to get ill in September of 2004, as it was discovered he had been steadily poisoned secretly with a toxin known as dioxin. His life was saved by American doctors in Vienna and many experts saw the classic signs of a politically motivated KGB operation, with the Putin/Medvedev regime as the ultimate puppet masters (Lynch, pp.111-12).

These events actually helped Yushchenko secure a vote against Yanukovych after several highly contested rounds of voting of 52 to 44 percent. Systematic analysis of earlier election polls, in which Yanukovych was claiming a narrow margin of victory, showed clear signs of vote rigging and election fraud in several key eastern Ukrainian districts that had voted for Yanukovych. European and American election monitors corroborated charges of fraud, and the news of this brought out massive crowds of pro-Yushchenko supporters with orange scarves and flags in Kiev's Independence Square. There were also mass protests in other parts of Ukraine and worker strikes in the industrial east and coal mining regions. The protesters occupied the square for several weeks and for that time the world was literally watching Ukraine and waiting to see if Putin would intervene with a heavy hand (there were rumors that some units of Russian "OMUN" special purpose interior ministry troops were being bused into Ukrainian territory to "assist" in crowd control). In the end Putin had very publicly tried to intervene in the democratic electoral process of a sovereign nation and had been repudiated and ultimately humiliated (ibid., p.112).

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

As a punitive measure against the new Western leaning Yuschenko government, Putin played the tap weapon against Ukraine yet again by shutting off the gas pipelines in the cold winter in January 2006. Saying that Ukraine was behind on gas payments (which to a certain extent was true), Putin's objectives nonetheless were politically motivated and designed to punish Yuschenko's pro-Western and hostile stance to the Kremlin government, and to make Ukraine look like a gas bandit that was stealing gas from Western Europe (which it had siphoned off gas in response to all gas to Ukraine being shut off). However again, in this case Putin overplayed his hand and the EU diplomatically intervened and for the most part put the blame squarely on the Kremlin and the Putin/Medvedev regime. The gas flows were re-established within a few days and Ukraine again paid far below market value for its gas (ibid., p.113) Western Europe started scrambling for alternate sources of supply and energy to circumvent this problem for the future.

The significance of the influence that Russia wields in the geopolitical order is due to its status as the number one natural gas producer in the world. Under the current regime of Putin/Medvedev, the use of gas and energy influence is especially poignant as a foreign policy tool. It has, by many analysts and foreign policy experts assessments, become apparent that Russia is using its energy resources and transit procedures to control its neighbors in the so called "Commonwealth of Independent States" (CIS) (Nygren, 2008, p.3). Russia also uses it beyond the borders of the countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), especially as a key strategy in its relations with the EU, which is overly reliant on Russian gas exports, as Russia is the largest exporter of gas to the EU (Noel, 2008).

Indeed, part of Russia's foreign policy doctrine called the "Energy Strategy of Russia up to 2020", adopted in 2003, declares that "the role of the country in global energy markets largely determines its geopolitical influence" (Poussenkova, 2010, p.108). The updated document in 2009 – after the 2003 document received much criticism and consternation from the EU and the U.S. – muted the bold link to Russia's foreign policy. "The Energy Strategy of Russia to 2030" claims: "The goal of Russia's energy policy is to ensure...strengthening of its global economic positions" (Poussenkova, 2010, p.108).

Whereas oil companies are key players as a Russian foreign policy tool, the role of state-owned gas production and export company Gazprom has been described by an old cliché that "what is good for Gazprom is good for Russia" (Poussenkova, 2010, p.113). Since the 2000s Gazprom has become the Kremlin's faithful servant, and the Kremlin Gazprom's protector. Dmitry Medvedev, a former chairman of Gazprom's board of directors, once contended that Gazprom is a business and does not exist for the sake of satisfying the needs of the state. However, contrary to this proclamation, Gazprom is increasingly acting as a foreign policy tool, and political motives prevail in many business decisions (Poussenkova, 2010, p.113).

Perhaps the best example of the Putin/Medvedev's regime's use of the "tap weapon" was the "Gas War" with Ukraine. Ukraine owed back payments to Russia for not having paid the (European, or higher as opposed to the domestic, or lower) market price for many years during the late 1990s and continuing well into the 2000s. Putin in the early 2000s was heavily trying to establish good relations with Ukraine, a major gas transit country, through which 80% of all European gas exports travel. Essentially what Russia did several times going back and forth from 2000 to 2006 was shut off the gas supply to Ukraine and demand instant payment at high EU market prices, which the cash-strapped and struggling emerging Ukrainian economy could scarcely afford to do.

These events culminated and received international attention during the 2004 democratic Ukrainian Orange Revolution that saw Western-leaning Ukrainian President Viktor Yuschenko installed over the corrupted ballots that "voted in" Putin-favored Viktor Yanukovich. Russia failed at this juncture at its attempt to block a democratic, EU- and NATO-oriented Ukrainian leader in its use of gas and the tap weapon as a tool of foreign policy. This gas war ended in January 2006 when Gazprom reached a complicated agreement whereby gas would be provided at \$230 per thousand cubic meters to a joint intermediary company (RosUkrEnergo, based in Switzerland and 50 percent owned by Gazprom), which in turn would resell it to a Ukrainian company for \$95 per thousand cubic meters, and Ukrainian transit rates would increase by 50 percent. The formula seemed quite strange. The arrangement was harshly criticized in Ukraine, and one week later the Ukrainian government collapsed over the deal (Nygren, 2008, p.6).

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

It is no small irony, that after the Ukrainian governments' collapse in 2006 – which was due not only to the Kremlin's energy tactics, but also to the fierce internal governmental divisions between then Ukrainian president Victor Yushchenko and the “gas princess” (she earned this nickname from having been a prominent executive in a Ukrainian gas company), then Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko – in January 2010, pro-Putin and pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, the loser of the 2004 Orange Revolution, was actually more or less democratically and legitimately voted into office. It seems the Putin/Medvedev regime had gotten its man into Kiev after all. Key to this was the use of the “tap weapon”.

Going back to specifically focus on the events of the Orange Revolution in 2004, Yushchenko was the target of a range of dirty tricks intended to defeat his bid to succeed President Kuchma. As Russian political commentator, Andrei Piontkovsky, wrote,

The basic strategy of the outside political image makers is aimed mostly at the Russian population of Ukraine, to portray Yushchenko as a Russophobe and Ukrainian nationalist and to provoke an ethnic split in Ukrainian society. (Kuzio 2005, p.495)

Russian political technologists, with close links to Russian President Putin, were very active in Ukraine's presidential campaign.

Another leaked plan instructed how Yushchenko would be depicted as somebody who would cause instability if he were elected. Kuchma or Prime Minister Yanukovich would then be proposed as a source of stability. The strategy paper openly stated, “Our aim is to destabilize the situation in the regions (through political intrigues, not by harming the economy), to drag Yushchenko into these processes . . .” These leaked secret strategies outlined how conflict could be provoked between the Tatars and Russians in the Crimea (ibid., p.496).

In May 2005, Russian officials sought to delegitimize the Orange Revolution. In an interview with *Strategiya Rossii*, Igor Ivanov initiated a political attack against the color revolutions, calling them ‘undemocratic’ and ‘unconstitutional’ regime changes that Russia must learn from and respond to (Kuzio 2005, p.67). Later that month, the Russian Duma, dominated by members aligned with Putin's de facto political party, overwhelmingly directed its delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe (PACE) to raise the issue of political oppression in Ukraine (ibid., p.68). This was an ironic turn for the Russian legislature which has seen press freedoms, liberties and its own institutional autonomy significantly eroded by the Kremlin's authoritarian tendencies and shift toward greater presidential rule. The Russian Duma and its delegation to the Council of Europe were quiet about Kuchma's moves toward autocracy. The scope of the resolution was expanded to call into question the human rights standards and democratic credentials of Georgia, the Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan – states that had all undergone color revolutions (Ambrosio 2007, p. 246).

The Kremlin also tried to advance its interests in Ukraine more directly through a formal agreement on cooperation between Yanukovich's Party of Regions and the Russian “presidential party”, United Russia, in July 2005. Upon signing the agreement, Yanukovich stated that its purpose was to restore “strategic relations between Ukraine and Russia” and to secure a “strategic partnership with Russia” (ibid p.70) Yanukovich and Konstantin Kosachyov (the signing representative of United Russia and chairman of the Duma committee on international affairs) made it clear that this agreement was also designed to help the Party of Regions in the March 2006 parliamentary elections (ibid p.71). Moreover, after consulting with the leadership of United Russia at their November 2005 party congress, Yanukovich proclaimed his support for the creation of the Common Economic Space – an economic union of Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan which stands as an alternative to the EU. It is important to note that out of these four countries, Ukraine is the only democracy (ibid).

The increase in natural gas prices came at a convenient time for pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine, given the scheduled March 2006 parliamentary elections. An economic crisis in Ukraine could only help to undermine the government and embolden the opposition Party of Regions and its leader, Yanukovich. Already weakened by internal divisions, the ‘Orange Coalition’ was further hurt by the dismissal of Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's government in September 2005. The natural gas crisis compounded these problems and likely led to the Party of

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Regions winning a plurality of the vote and eventually forming the government (Ambrosio 2007, p.247,). The success of a pro-Western, liberal democracy in Kiev is seen as detrimental to both Russia's security interests and the Kremlin's political interests. If the contest over the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections might be seen as a conflict by proxy between democracy and authoritarianism, Russian foreign policy in the post-Orange Revolution era is a continuation of this conflict, with the Kremlin on the defensive but seeking to lessen the impact of its failure to prevent a democratic transition in its most important neighbor (ibid).

In one exchange in a press conference around the time of the crisis:

QUESTION: Does the European Union agree that the possible resolution of the "Ukrainian" question is a court appeal? I would like to know what this means, and whether on the basis of talks that were held with Ukrainian representatives, it can be said that this resolution is at all possible.

MR PUTIN: You know, we must be concerned about the development of democracy in all countries – in Russia, in the post-Soviet sphere, and in western countries. We must strengthen institutions of civil society and the multi-party system. But we must not forget about another component of democracy. We must have democratic laws, and the state must be able to implement them. And if we look at the problem from this side, *I would like to stress that the electoral law in Ukraine was passed with the direct involvement of the Ukrainian opposition. In fact, the Ukrainian opposition is perhaps the main author of Ukrainian electoral legislation.*

*Secondly, in the final vote count, representatives of the opposition headquarters, representatives of Mr Yushenko's headquarters, as far as I know, signed all the documents allowing the Central Election Commission of the Ukraine to make a conclusion on the victory of Mr Yanukovich.*

*I am convinced that we have no moral right to incite mass disturbances in a major European state. We must not make solving disputes of this nature through street disturbances part of international practice. We must ourselves learn and teach everyone else that such disputes are solved constitutionally – with the use of laws... Other issues of can and must be solved only by peaceful means and through political dialogue.*

QUESTION: I would still like to return to the issue of the situation in Ukraine. The Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Mr Bot, recently said in Brussels that Kiev must, I quote "re-examine the results of Presidential elections". And the American senator Lugar, who literally does not leave, as far as I know, Mr Yushenko's headquarters, also demands that the election results are re-examined. And the Foreign Minister of Estonia also proposes, I quote again, "to encourage Ukrainian democratic forces to disobey the authorities". My question to representatives of the European Union is: what in your opinion constitutes interference in internal affairs? I have another question for the Russian President: why does Russia take such a passive position, and against the background of unprecedented activity of other countries? T

MR PUTIN: I do not think that we, Russia, are behaving passively. I also do not think that any nations should acknowledge or not acknowledge the results of elections in Ukraine. This is the Ukrainian people's affair. Although, of course, everyone understands that Ukraine is in the centre of Europe and must – I am convinced – and will establish normal friendly relations with all its neighbors.

*I have already said at the very beginning of the election campaign in Ukraine that we are prepared to work with any President elected by the Ukrainian people. After the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine announced the preliminary results it became clear that Mr Yanukovich had won. We do not believe that we have the right to interfere in the electoral process in any way, or force our opinions on the Ukrainian people. (Putin, November 25, 2004)*

Here, at least we see Putin choosing his words carefully, and not forcefully endorsing Yanukovich and downplaying his (and therefore the Kremlins) role in the events, almost appearing neutral, in seeming contradiction to his actions as we have seen in the preceding case study. Yet at the end, he voices his assessment that Yanukovich is indeed the winner of the elections, much later to his ultimate chagrin. In other press conference just before the final and

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

decisive votes in the runoff election of December 26, 2004:

MAXIMENKO (Peterburg television company): Good afternoon, Vladimir. In a recent interview, Mr Kwasniewski said that the United States would prefer to have a Russia without Ukraine, than a Russia with Ukraine. Will you comment on this remark? And what is your opinion?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: What does it mean a Russia without Ukraine is better than a Russia with Ukraine? To begin with, as you know, we are developing relations in the post-Soviet space in an exclusively civil and proper manner. Russia did not take the Yugoslavian path. Russia did everything for the post-Soviet states to gain an independent foothold. We are developing relations with all our friends and partners in the former Soviet Union not just at the level of good-neighborliness, but on the basis of true equality, with complete respect for the past and future of these countries, with responsibility for the future development of our inter-state relations *If it is said that a Russia without Ukraine is better than a Russia with Ukraine, we need ask what is meant by this...* Indeed, you know that as far as all post-Soviet space is concerned, *I am concerned above all about attempts to resolve legal issues by illegal means. That is the most dangerous thing. It is the most dangerous to think up a system of permanent revolutions – now the Rose Revolution, or the Blue Revolution. One should get used to living according to the law, rather than according to political expediency defined elsewhere for some or other nation – that is what worries me most. Certain rules and procedures should mature within society. Of course, we should pay attention to, support and help democracies, but, if we embark on the road of permanent revolutions, nothing good will come from this for these countries, and for these peoples. We will plunge all the post-Soviet space into a series of never-ending conflicts, which will have extremely serious consequences.*

I am troubled by these double standards we so often talk about. What do we mean when we speak about double standards? ...You know there is much talk about elections, Ukraine's elections...

As to our differences on certain issues, for example, the US administration or public's attitude to political processes in Russia, I should say that we are not happy about everything that is going on in the United States either. Do you think that the US electoral system is absolutely flawless? Shall I remind you of some election (scandals) in the States? *Do you know that the OSCE commission that monitored elections in Ukraine, Afghanistan and the US made similar, organization-related claims to the US. For example, the OSCE criticized American organizers for preventing monitors from visiting some polling stations. There were even instances of voter intimidation ...We do heed constructive criticism, but do not pay attention to instances of, as they say, muddying the waters (Putin 12/23/2004).*

Here, we see Putin again alluding to other instances of election fraud cited by the OSCE against the U.S. run elections in Afghanistan in a seemingly vain effort to somehow minimize and divert attention away from the fraud committed by his regime during these events. He also equates all the "colored revolutions" with destabilization and a potential for "plunging" the Near Abroad of Russia into "never ending conflicts".

What he does not mention, of course, is that these "conflicts" are about the introduction of true democracy into the Near Abroad, and therefore will be most threatening to the Putin/Medvedev regime. It is also interesting to note that he uses the term "post-Soviet" space, indicating its Russian heritage as it were. What he also does not mention is his regime's usage of KGB-style *dyzinformatsia* or disinformation used by Kremlin political technologists. For example, *dyzinformatsia* occurred when Russian mass circulation newspapers reprinted information that came from a fake German source about Yushchenko's poisoning in September. The poison, which was confirmed in December 2004 as dioxin mixed with other poisons, was prepared in a former Soviet Moscow laboratory controlled by the FSB.

The widely published fake information aimed to discredit what happened to Yushchenko as having anything to do with poisoning. Instead, it was alleged that it was an attempt to make his appearance younger that went badly wrong by using discarded fetuses. Similar *dyzinformatsia* was released by the Kuchma camp after Yushchenko was poisoned. It then claimed that Yushchenko's disfigurement was the result of bad sushi and excessive moonshine after a dinner party in the Deputy of Security Service chairman's home. There are many other examples of the use of disinformation during the 2004 election cycle by the Kremlin (Kuzio, 2005, p.513).

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

In a speech soon after Yanukovych's "defeat" and the beginning of the Viktor Yuschenko presidency:

Now, regarding Ukraine. The question was phrased in quite a serious manner. What should we do to avoid a split there? First of all, I think we should talk about it less. We should not help to create such expectations and push anyone towards such events and actions. *No one on the European continent has any interest in large-scale and serious destabilization of the situation in Eastern Europe. Russia has special relations with Ukraine, special in the sense that a large number of ethnic Russians live there and practically every second Ukrainian family has friends or relatives in Russia.* We have very large-scale economic cooperation with Ukraine. Some sectors of the Russian and Ukrainian economies simply cannot survive without each other. *We have no political preferences in Ukraine and are ready to develop an equal partnership and cooperation with the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian people. But what I spoke about earlier and can repeat now is that we are against not going through the law to resolve political issues. Let's leave Ukraine aside and look at Georgia, where the West actively supported President Shevardnadze over a period of many years. Why was it necessary to topple him through revolution? And if it was necessary to topple him through revolution, then we can't help but ask ourselves who the West was supporting and why. All these issues should be resolved based on the law and according to the current constitution, and then this question of a split in the country would not arise so seriously. We will do everything within our power to support the current Ukrainian leadership and will use our influence to ensure the country does not face any political crises.* (Putin, 3/18/2005).

In this passage we see a clear mentioning of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine, thus giving claim and voice to the assertions made by the various policy documents outlined earlier in this thesis dealing with the protection of Russian citizens living abroad. It also anchors Russian interests in Ukraine with relatively legitimate arguments. It also is interesting to note that again Putin mentions Georgia in the same breath as the "foreign influences" (i.e. the West and the U.S.) that toppled Shevardnadze, and linking this to the Orange Revolution. Interestingly, in the aftermath of recent mass protests against his re-election bid for president and allegations of fraud in recent parliamentary elections and plummeting popularity amongst the general Russian populace, Putin made similar mentions of the dangers of "colored revolutions" and he blamed the U.S. for being the funders and instigators of the mass protests (Guterman and Bryanski, 12/8/2011).

Finally, it is important to note that as time went on between 2005 until the Ukrainian Presidential elections of 2010, which saw a surprising and highly ironic comeback of Yanukovych and ultimately an arguable return of Ukrainian foreign and internal policy, relations between the Yuschenko and Putin/Medvedev governments deteriorated over a number of issues, especially the more overtures Yuschenko gave and received from the U.S. and organizations like NATO. The Yuschenko government itself deteriorated due to primarily continuous internal political conflict and bickering between Victor Yuschenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, leading to their ultimate discrediting and ousting in the 2010 elections. The recent actions of the Yuschenko government have been very pro-Kremlin, and have been viewed by the West and the United States as an unfortunate gradual degradation of democracy in that regime. The Yanukovych government has gone as far as to jail Yulia Tymoshenko on charges of corruption for the favorable gas deal with Russia she helped broker with Putin in 2006. Ironically Putin himself publicly criticized Yanukovych for this action. Many foreign policy experts view these actions by Yanukovych as primarily politically motivated (Bryanski and Busvine 10/11/2011).

Perhaps it is little surprise that some of Putin's strongest neo-nationalist rhetoric against Ukraine actually came much later after the Orange Revolution and the steady deterioration of relations with Kiev. At the infamous NATO April 4 2008 summit in Bucharest where Putin said "Ukraine is not a real country", he made the assertions that:

*As for Ukraine, one third of the population are ethnic Russians...there are 17 million Russians in a population of 45 million...Ukraine in its current form, came to be in Soviet times, from Russia the country inherited vast territories in what is now Eastern and Southern Ukraine...If the NATO issue is added there, along with other problems, this may bring Ukraine to the verge of existence as a sovereign state.* (Aslund, 2009, p.227).

Given the above statements and Putin's more hands off approach in assisting Yanukovych's return to power in 2010 (who was, it must be pointed out, fairly elected), it is perhaps little wonder that Yanukovych quashed any bids for

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Ukraine's entry into NATO and extended the lease of the Russian Black Sea fleet in the Crimean port of Sevastopol. Needless to say while an examination of how "pro-Kremlin" the policies of the Yanukovich government are beyond the scope of this study, the Putin/Medvedev regime is surely happier with having him in Kiev and having *de facto* reversed in many ways the democratic and anti-Kremlin dangers that the Orange Revolution had posed.

Arguments have even been made that indeed the Putin/Medvedev regime does not recognize Ukraine as a separate country (Kuzio, 2005, p.216). We have already seen this reflected in the above statement. Indeed the mixed success of Putin/Medvedev in turning Ukraine into a mini-Russia has been evident, ultimately resulting in the failure of his policy during the Orange Revolution. Even pro-Russian Kuchma and Yanukovich have had differences with Kremlin foreign policy towards Ukraine, and have not always marched in lock step with it, and even the re-ascendant Yanukovich seems often to defy Putin. Russian interventions in Ukraine's elections in 1999, 2002, and 2004 increased at the same time as Putin rose to power in Russia (Kuzio, 2005, p.515). Clearly it would seem Putin took a much more "hands off" approach after 2004 in supporting the return of Yanukovich and ultimately undoing the damage done to his neo-nationalist foreign policy towards Ukraine by the fleeting democratic victories won by the Orange Revolution. While such an analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be interesting to go into greater depth on the regime's efforts in this regard.

While clearly the Putin/Medvedev regime has its pro-Kremlin man in place in the form of Yanukovich, it has been Yanukovich himself who is in some ways recently behaving like a wild card and sometimes even embarrassing the Kremlin. One notable example is the largely political and illegal arrest and imprisonment of the fiery and most recognizable champion of democracy and pro-Western reforms in Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko. In October of 2011, Tymoshenko was sentenced to 7 years in prison for allegations of corruption for her role in brokering the 2009 agreement between the state energy firm Naftogaz and Russia's gas giant Gazprom, which ended a pricing dispute between Ukraine and Russia that had led to disruptions of gas supplies to some EU countries. It was greeted with relief by Europe at the time (Polityuk and Balmforth, 2011). This was in spite of protests from the EU and the United States and at the risk of losing further IMF lines of credit and a free trade agreement with the EU.

Putin himself reacted negatively to this and has since chastised Yanukovich for allowing this politically motivated harsh sentence and ongoing harsh and cruel treatment of Tymoshenko since her imprisonment. He even stated that it could jeopardize energy relations between the two states, while the foreign ministry said it had detected an "obvious anti-Russian subtext" in the outcome (Polityuk and Balmforth, 2011). It seems ironic that even pro-Kremlin allies turn on the Putin/Medvedev regime. It also shows that for all of the Kremlin's machinations and hard work to enforce its neo-nationalist foreign policy in the Near Abroad, it cannot control the outcomes even under ideal conditions.

## CHAPTER NINE. Case Study 3: The Russo-Georgian War of August 2008

Much like the reasons for the conflicts of the Second Chechen War and the Orange Revolution, the Russo-Georgian war (also called the "South Ossetian" war) are part of a continuum of the ongoing efforts of the Putin/Medvedev regime's neo-nationalist reassertion of Russia's "Great Power" status and policies dating back through Soviet and to Tsarist times. Georgia, on the border with Chechnya in the South Caucasus region, has, like Ukraine, always been politically, strategically and culturally considered as an integral part of Russia's Inner Abroad. Much of this also has to do with Russian elites' "Eurasian power" mythos that we have previously examined in this study. Jeffrey Mankoff describes the event:

while the world's attention was on the opening of the Beijing Olympics in early August, 2008, Russian tanks poured into the breakaway Georgian province of South Ossetia. In a matter of days, the Russians had smashed the Georgian military, seized control of South Ossetia, and threatened the capital of Tbilisi. Days later Russia announced its recognition of South Ossetia and another separatist province of Georgia, Abkhazia, while dismissing all the

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

protests and threats of the West. To a world that had grown used to seeing Russia as a dysfunctional shell, the invasion of Georgia was a stunning announcement that Russia again had a force to become reckoned with (Mankoff, 2009, p.1).

Indeed, the Russo-Georgian conflict showed that Russia was willing to flex its military muscles, this time under the Presidency of the newly elected Dmitry Medvedev and his so called "Medvedev Doctrine", that stipulated that Russia has a certain sphere of "privileged interests", of which Georgia, along with Ukraine and Chechnya are a part (Mankoff, p.32). In the book on the Russo-Georgian War *A Little War That Shook the World*, Ronald Asmus summarizes the significance of the war well in terms of the muscular military response used to back the neo-nationalist policies of the Putin/Medvedev regime. Asmus writes:

The Russo-Georgian War of August 2008 lasted a mere five days. Casualties were modest. By the standards...of warfare, it was a little war...that nonetheless shook the world. It sparked the greatest security crisis in Europe since Serbian dictator...Milosevic committed ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the 1990's and brought Russia and the West to the edge of a new cold war...Moscow broke the cardinal rule of post Cold War European security that borders were never again to be changed by force of arms...Russia showed an ugly neo-imperialist side of its policy...It showed Putin's Russia was once again prepared to use military force to pursue its interests vis-a-vis its neighbors. Western diplomatic intervention came late and rescued a democratically elected Georgian government teetering on the brink of disintegration...this was a war aimed not only at Georgia but at Washington and the West in general. It was also aimed at a European security system Moscow had come to see as tilted against itself and its interests. Moscow's goal was to kill any chance of NATO ever expanding to Georgia or anywhere else near its borders...In other words the Russo-Georgian War had been small, but it raised some big questions about European security. The system that Western diplomats had spent two decades developing failed in August 2008...Moscow's goal was to dominate the energy sources and supply routes to Europe, and Tbilisi was trying to circumvent that by creating an alternative way to bring Caspian energy to the West by by-passing Russia. The Kremlin openly told Tbilisi and Mikhail Saakashvili that it had to decide whose side they were on and that Moscow's attitude to solving the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia would be driven by Georgia's decision. Had Georgia abandoned its Western aspirations and acquiesced to Russian demands, this war in likelihood never would have happened (Asmus, 2010, pp. 5-7).

Indeed as shown by Asmus we see similar neo-nationalist underpinnings for the Russian invasion of Georgia as in the case of Chechnya and the Putin/Medvedev regime's interference in the Orange Revolution. Also as contended by Asmus, the use of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as proxy "breakaway" republics for its own assertions has been an ongoing Kremlin strategy. Before looking at the statements made by Medvedev around the time of the occurrence of the crisis it is first interesting to examine one interview of Putin on the subject a few years earlier in 2006:

QUESTION: Mr President, in response to the arrest of four Russian officers in Georgia, Russia has cut off all communications with this country. *Do you want to destroy Georgia economically because it has a very pro-American president?*

VLADIMIR PUTIN: Of course not. *This is the Georgian people's choice and we will always respect their choice because we have close, centuries-old ties to this people.*

*Georgia in its time asked to become a part of the Russian Empire. This was the people's desire. The Georgians are a very proud, freedom-loving and talented people. Like the Russians, they are Orthodox Christians. Even in as sensitive an area as military affairs, our two peoples have written many vivid pages together.*

*Many Georgians live in Russia and it makes us very proud that they have chosen our country as their second homeland. They have made a great contribution to the development of our country and our culture.*

*But the problem in this region is far more complex. Do you and your readers know, for example, that the Ossetians believe that ethnic cleansing has been carried out twice in their lands in recent times, first in the 1920s and then at the end of the 1980s? They say that this is genocide carried out by Georgia. This is where the root of the problem lies.*



## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

*The same goes for Abkhazia. Whether our Georgian colleagues like it or not, they are seen in this region as a sort of regional mini-empire.*

*This concerns us directly because, in the case of the Ossetians, for example, during the Soviet era, Ossetia was simply divided in two, with part of the people on one side of the mountain range, in the North Caucasus – today this is a region within the Russian Federation, the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania – and the other part transferred to Georgia, where it is today known as South Ossetia. The Ossetians are a divided people today, just as was the case for the Germans when the country was divided into the Federal Republic of Germany and the former GDR. That division was a result of World War II, while the division of the Ossetians was a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Ossetian people find themselves today in the same situation as were the German people after World War II.*

*We are willing to help Georgia restore its territorial integrity, but our position is that this can be done only based on the desire of the Ossetian people themselves. No one has the right to force them to do this. What is needed is to act carefully using diplomatic and humanitarian means, especially keeping in mind earlier historic problems. We have spoken about this many times with the Georgian leadership and they agree and say that yes, of course this is what we need to do. But in reality they are doing everything to resolve this problem through war: they are arming themselves beyond all limits, violating all the previous agreements and constantly carrying out provocative acts in the conflict zone.*

To speak frankly, I have said these same words to the Georgian leadership and said that this concerns Russia directly because part of the Ossetian people lives in Russia.

*As for Abkhazia, it is the same situation. There are many peoples in the Russian North Caucasus who consider themselves ethnically very close to the Abkhaz people. Here too, there is a need to act using humanitarian, political and diplomatic means.*

*But the current Georgian leadership for some reason thinks that if relations between Russia and Georgia worsen, this will help them to resolve the problem of restoring their territorial integrity. At the same time, we have almost one million Georgians living permanently in Russia, working here and sending money back home to support their families, a total of around \$1 billion every year. There are very close ties between our peoples, between our industries. Every country has the right to its sovereignty and the right to choose its partners and advisers, but this should not lead a country into taking aggressive action. In this situation, we have no choice but to react.*

As for the anti-Russian rhetoric, we tolerated it, but when the Georgians began taking provocative action and arrested our officers, we had no choice but to start reacting. We had reached an agreement with Georgia, at their request, that we withdraw our troops who were still stationed there after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and we are doing this as agreed and according to schedule. (Putin 10/2006)

Most of the highlighted neo-nationalist rhetoric in this passage is, perhaps, the most overtly vociferous and obvious of the three case studies examined. Putin here again exhorts the close cultural ties of Georgia with Russian and Soviet history and tradition, invoking that symbolism. He even goes as far as to make the Georgians out to be aggressive nationalists by calling them “a mini empire.” It is ironic that he on the one hand speaks of desiring to “help Georgia restore its national integrity”, and on the other hand is then very critical of the “Georgian leadership”, i.e. American-educated and supported and anti-Kremlin Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. This of course is due to the fact that, like Yushchenko did during his presidency in Ukraine, Saakashvili’s policies, especially the desire for Georgia to join NATO, are an obvious threat to the neo-nationalist aspirations of the Putin/Medvedev regime.

In the passage Putin also mentions that while he wants to help Georgia:

*We are willing to help Georgia restore its territorial integrity, but our position is that this can be done only based on the desire of the Ossetian people themselves. No one has the right to force them to do this. We have spoken about this many times with the Georgian leadership and they agree and say that yes...But in reality they are doing*

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

*everything to resolve this problem through war: they are arming themselves beyond all limits.*

It is almost as if he is perhaps setting the tone for any future potential incursion or conflict into Georgia by pinning the blame of aggressive militaristic behavior and troop and arms build-up on them. Factually, however, most evidence points to the fact that although it was the Georgian forces that fired first in August 2008 by shelling South Ossetian forces and occupying the city of Tskhinkvali, Russian forces were building up and crossing into Georgian territory long before this. Indeed, as contended by Asmus in his book and as claimed by Saakashvili himself, this was the reason he attacked to begin with, albeit perhaps foolishly.

The Putin/Medvedev regime has also described 8 August, the day Georgian forces began their operation against Tskhinvali in the disputed region of South Ossetia and Russian forces poured south across the Russian border into this Georgian territory, as 'Russia's 9/11'. Many western analysts would agree that some kind of watershed has been crossed, but would see it rather as one that divides periods in post-Cold War relations between Russia and the West. Western states have been aghast at the expansion of Russia's initial supposedly 'defensive' military foray in South Ossetia into a wider occupation of numerous regions of the Georgian state and at the Kremlin's open repudiation of Georgia's territorial integrity, the speed and scale of the Russian offensive in the name of coercing Georgia to peace (Allison, 2008, p.1145).

During the 2006 mini crisis in question to which Putin refers to in the above passage, Tbilisi arrested 4 Russian intelligence officers in Georgia for espionage, Moscow closed all air, sea and land transport links with Georgia and deployed an armored force to be instantly ready to move into South Ossetia in the event of military hostilities. At that time, Russia and Georgia seemed to be preparing for armed conflict, while separatists in Ossetia and Abkhazia were apparently ready to provide a pretext for this (Allison, 2008, p.1147). The antecedents to the 2008 crisis date back at least as far as the bitter small conflict between Tbilisi and local authorities in South Ossetia in 1991-2 that followed the declaration by the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast in 1990 of independence from Tbilisi. The Georgians claim that the Russians helped and supplied the Ossetians in various ways during this conflict, and the South Ossetians certainly received assistance from their ethnic kin across the border in North Ossetia, which lies within the Russian Federation (Allison, p.1146)

In June 1992 the chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet claimed that the killing of civilians in South Ossetia could compel Russia to consider a request by the South Ossetians to join the Russian Federation. This option, and the South Ossetian conviction that their human rights would not be secure under rule from Tbilisi, remained background factors over the following decade and a half. A ceasefire mediated by Russia in June 1992 (the Sochi Agreement) initiated a peacekeeping operation, involving a Joint Control Commission and joint Russian-Ossetian-Georgian patrols. In fact, this served to freeze the conflict in a frame that maintained the de facto separation of South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia. Tskhinvali was controlled by the separatists, but villages in the conflict zone remained split between those inhabited and controlled by the Georgians and those inhabited and controlled by the Ossetians. Georgia never viewed the Russian peacekeepers as impartial and in later years even believed they were shielding South Ossetian militias involved in attacks on Georgian villages (ibid., pp.1146-47).

Therefore, we can see that the roots of the crisis well predate the neo-nationalist policies towards the region of the Putin/Medvedev regime. However, as we have shown with our analysis of the historical roots of the regime's policy as being based on ideology dating back to Soviet and Tsarist times, the renaissance of the policy in the brand of the Putin/Medvedev style should come as no surprise. It can be argued that the de facto regime seized on already existing policies and assets in the form of already deployed Russian "peacekeepers" and pro-Russian separatist militias and used them as a proxy for fomenting conflict. This conflict, when further bolstered by the ongoing issuance of Russian passports to South Ossetians and Abkhazians, gave the Putin/Medvedev regime further cause to invade in August 2008 under the pretext of the commitment to protect "Russian citizens" (Allison, 2008, p.1146). It is interesting and perhaps not at all coincidental to note that this is exactly the same policy pursued by Russia in Ukraine for the ethnic Russian minority living in Crimea (ibid.,pp 1167-8). This policy too caused tensions and discord between Kiev and Moscow in 2004, just prior to the Orange Revolution.

This extended not just to South Ossetia where the combat operations were carried out, as Saakashvili suggests; the

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

focus of Russian planning for a significant military campaign in Georgia was Abkhazia, but Russia had to shift the first phase of combat to the more difficult terrain of South Ossetia as clashes erupted there and local events created a more compelling justification for carrying out a major offensive against Georgia. Abkhazia is far more strategically and politically significant to Moscow than South Ossetia. One obvious scenario would have been Russia prompting for an operation by Abkhaz formations against the Kodori Gorge, precariously held by Georgia, which would have forced a response by Georgian troops (ibid., p.1150).

In a very terse and to-the-point announcement by Medvedev around the time of the conflict:

*PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV: As you know, Russia has maintained and continues to maintain a presence on Georgian territory on an absolutely lawful basis, carrying out its peacekeeping mission in accordance with the agreements concluded. We have always considered maintaining the peace to be our paramount task. Russia has historically been a guarantor for the security of the peoples of the Caucasus, and this remains true today.*

*Last night, Georgian troops committed what amounts to an act of aggression against Russian peacekeepers and the civilian population in South Ossetia. What took place is a gross violation of international law and of the mandates that the international community gave Russia as a partner in the peace process.*

*Georgia's acts have caused loss of life, including among Russian peacekeepers. The situation reached the point where Georgian peacekeepers opened fire on the Russian peacekeepers with whom they are supposed to work together to carry out their mission of maintaining peace in this region. Civilians, women, children and old people, are dying today in South Ossetia, and the majority of them are citizens of the Russian Federation.*

*In accordance with the Constitution and the federal laws, as President of the Russian Federation it is my duty to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they may be.*

*It is these circumstances that dictate the steps we will take now. We will not allow the deaths of our fellow citizens to go unpunished. The perpetrators will receive the punishment they deserve. Medvedev (8/8/2008)*

A few days later:

*DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Vladimir Vladimirovich, we agreed that the Government will take steps to address and deal with the consequences of Georgia's aggression against South Ossetia.*

*You have just come back from North Ossetia. I would like to hear your assessment of the situation there, the situation with refugees, the problems that have arisen as a result of this tragedy.*

*VLADIMIR PUTIN: I can tell you in detail what is being done to take in refugees and ensure that normal life continues...*

*But first of all I'd like to share my impressions from meeting with the refugees. For a start, these people have found themselves in a very difficult situation today. For the most part these are women, elderly people and children. They have seen more than enough tragedy and things are not easy for them now. But what caught my attention most of all is that what they spoke about, the episodes they recounted, go far beyond the normal limits of military operations. It seems to me that we are seeing elements of a kind of genocide against the Ossetian people.*

*I think it would be the correct course of action, Dmitry Anatolyevich, for you to instruct the Military Prosecutor's Office to document episodes of this type, all the more so as most of the population of South Ossetia are citizens of the Russian Federation. The things I heard about today from the refugees are clearly crimes against the civilian population.*

*DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I will issue this instruction of course. The prosecutors should indeed investigate all such*

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

cases. We are talking here about the fate of our citizens, for whom we are responsible. All crimes committed must therefore be documented as thoroughly as possible and analyzed as thoroughly as possible right up to bringing criminal charges against the specific perpetrators of these acts (Medvedev 8/10/2008).

In these two speeches, we see both Putin and Medvedev essentially citing the protection of “Russian citizens”, the South Ossetians, as justification for military invasion of putative Georgian territory. Putin even goes as far to classify what he claims to have seen perpetrated by the Georgian military against South Ossetian (and therefore “Russian”) citizens as “genocide”. Russian leaders have twinned Georgian aggression with “genocide”, a term introduced by Putin early in the crisis and reiterated by other Russian politicians. Having “raised the temperature” with this very serious claim, Russian officials argued that their mission was intended first to prevent an unfolding humanitarian disaster and second to save those for whom Russia is responsible. Moscow accused Georgia of violations of international humanitarian laws. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov argued, more specifically, that the Russian constitution and Russian laws made it ‘unavoidable for us to exercise responsibility to protect’ (Allison, 2008, p.1152).

By invoking international law and putative humanitarian mandates as per the usage of quasi-UN resolution language, the Putin/Medvedev regime sought to insulate itself against any accusations of aggression, especially from the U.S. and the E.U. At the same time by using such strong rhetoric as accusations of genocide and invoking the “right to protect Russian citizens” doctrine, the regime cleverly gave a thinly veiled veneer of legitimacy to the invasion of Georgian territory. Further in the above passages, Putin/Medvedev cite how the Georgian peacekeepers even had the audacity to fire upon and kill the Russian “peacekeepers” (again invoking the original UN mandates from the 1990’s if only nominally). Therefore, there is some at least *prima facie* semblance of legitimacy to these claims as the reasons for the invasion and *de facto* occupation of Georgia.

In one interview at the end of August 2008, we see the “Medvedev doctrine” explicitly laid out, and see the neo-nationalist arguments of the five documents examined from the beginning of the Putin presidency repeated in the case of the Russo-Georgian conflict, and therefore come full circle, so to speak:

VERNITSKY (Channel One): Dmitry Anatolyevich, *events in South Ossetia and Abkhazia have been unfolding for 17 long years now. Why was the decision to recognise these territories’ independence taken when Georgia attacked Tskhinvali? Were there other options possible?*

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I think this decision was inevitable in the given situation, and that it has been effective is clear to all now. *We really did try throughout these 17 years to hold together a state that was in effect coming apart, and we encouraged all possible settlement efforts. Our peacekeepers were on duty day and night, helping to keep conflict at bay. We prevented large-scale bloodshed in the 1990s. There would probably have been continued chances for achieving a settlement were it not for this idiotic adventure launched by the Georgian leadership, which effectively put an end to hopes that Abkhazians, Ossetians and Georgians could live together. Not only did it put an end to these hopes but it caused a great number of deaths. Civilians, our citizens among them, lost their lives. Peacekeepers, who were trying to keep the conflicting parties apart, lost their lives. That Georgian peacekeepers opened fire on their own colleagues is especially monstrous. All of these things ultimately led to events taking this most dramatic and serious turn. We were left with no choice but to respond to this absolutely insolent and brazen attack, return things to normal and protect the lives and dignity of South Ossetia’s people. A separate plan to attack Abkhazia had been prepared...We therefore made our decisions in order to prevent any future genocide and exodus of Abkhazians and Ossetians from their territories. As I said, events have shown that these decisions were evident and necessary.*

POZDNYAKOV (NTV): Dmitry Anatolyevich, our Western partners have responded to Russia’s decision as was to be expected, with moderate to very sharp criticism. What kind of reaction can we expect from our closest neighbours, from the CIS countries, for example? How important for Russia is it to have other countries follow our example and recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia? How much influence will this have in determining our next steps?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Russia has already taken all the main steps that were necessary in this situation...this was not

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

an easy decision, but it was necessary. Reactions in other countries have indeed varied, and this was probably to be expected. Our closest neighbours have been completely objective in their reaction...They understand the motivations for the decisions Russia has taken.

Recognition is a separate issue. I want to remind you that each country makes its own individual decision on recognition. There is no collective action in this situation...From a legal point of view these new states have come into existence now. The process of their gaining recognition might be a long one, but this will not affect our position. We have made our decision and it is irreversible. Our duty is to ensure peace and calm in the region, and this is the basis for our position.

KONDRASHOV (Rossia): What steps will Russia take now in these republics? What form will Russia's plans take?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: *We will help these republics in every way we can of course. Work is underway on drafting agreements, already international agreements now, between our countries: between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia, and between the Russian Federation and South Ossetia. These agreements will set out our obligations regarding all forms of support and aid: economic, social and humanitarian aid in the broad sense of the word, and military assistance. We will establish normal full-fledged relations under international law with these republics and build relations as allies with them.*

KONDRASHOV: Dmitry, everyone realises now that Russia's place in the world has undergone serious change since the events of August 8. The whole previous system of agreements is changing dramatically before our very eyes. A number of international institutions have already demonstrated their total ineffectiveness in resolving this conflict. But Russia and the West are not ready, as I understand it, to completely break off relations. How do you see the world's future, the future world order, and Russia's place in it?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I will make five principles the foundation for my work in carrying out Russia's foreign policy.

First, Russia recognizes the primacy of the fundamental principles of international law, which define the relations between civilized peoples. We will build our relations with other countries within the framework of these principles and this concept of international law.

*Second, the world should be multi-polar. A single-pole world is unacceptable. Domination is something we cannot allow. We cannot accept a world order in which one country makes all the decisions, even as serious and influential a country as the United States of America. Such a world is unstable and threatened by conflict.*

*Third, Russia does not want confrontation with any other country. Russia has no intention of isolating itself. We will develop friendly relations with Europe, the United States, and other countries, as much as is possible.*

*Fourth, protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, wherever they may be, is an unquestionable priority for our country. Our foreign policy decisions will be based on this need. We will also protect the interests of our business community abroad. It should be clear to all that we will respond to any aggressive acts committed against us.*

*Finally, fifth, as is the case of other countries, there are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbours. We will pay particular attention to our work in these regions and build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbours. These are the principles I will follow in carrying out our foreign policy.*

As for the future, it depends not only on us but also on our friends and partners in the international community. They have a choice.

A.VERNITSKY (Channel One): Dmitry Anatolyevich, are the priority regions the territories that border Russia?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: *The countries on our borders are priorities, of course, but our priorities do not end there.*

## Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

POZDNYAKOV (NTV): Dmitry Anatolyevich, you said that Russia would respond to any act of aggression committed against it. Do you think our laws give sufficient power to do this? Is this written into our laws?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Of course.. Everything has long since been done. The international community has approved the UN Charter, which states countries' right to self-defence. We have the Constitution and we have special Russian laws on which we base decisions on counter-measures, including the use of Russia's Armed Forces. (Medvedev, 8/31/2008).

There are several key and telling points here to be mentioned. First, is a very interesting admission by Medvedev of *"A separate plan to attack Abkhazia had been prepared... We therefore made our decisions in order to prevent any future genocide and exodus of Abkhazians and Ossetians from their territories."* As we have noted earlier, Abkhazia is of key strategic importance to Russia, even more so than South Ossetia, and one of the main reasons cited by Saakashvili as the "real" reason behind the invasion. Second we see Medvedev do what many Western experts claimed Russia wanted all along, namely to give recognition and status to South Ossetia and Abkhazia and pledge all forms of

*support and aid: economic, social and humanitarian aid in the broad sense of the word, and military assistance. We will establish normal full-fledged relations under international law with these republics and build relations as allies with them.*

This is an interesting juxtaposition to the mention of how they *"did try throughout these 17 years to hold together a state that was in effect coming apart, and we encouraged all possible settlement efforts. Our peacekeepers were on duty day and night, helping to keep conflict at bay"*. Again, he invokes the name of humanitarian assistance and condemns the treacherous actions of the Georgian peacekeepers who *"fired on their own colleagues"*, the Russian peacekeepers.

Not surprisingly the claims of invasion for "humanitarian" reasons proved to be specious upon observation of the aftermath of the conflict in terms of the details on the ground. The war created another humanitarian catastrophe. Since the war, international monitors are no longer allowed into the Ossetian territories as well as the Russian-controlled 'buffer zones' around the Ossetian borders. Nevertheless, it has become obvious that almost one-third of the original population in South Ossetia have been driven out of the territory because of their Georgian ethnicity. Several villages, which used to be populated by ethnic Georgians, have been almost completely destroyed and their inhabitants are now internally displaced persons in Georgia without much hope of returning (Bloed, 2008, p.323)

Some analysts therefore contend that the war was an excuse for another round of 'ethnic cleansing' in Europe on the part of Russia. Although this crime is said to have been committed by Ossetian warlords, it is clear that this would have been impossible without Russian backing. Efforts by the OSCE to send monitors to the region, based on an original agreement with the Russian President, have remained futile. Even the UN High Commissioner on National Minorities who visited the region in September was not allowed into South Ossetia. The HCNM thereby declared that the de-facto authorities in this breakaway region 'have something to hide' (ibid., p.323).

Further proof points to a premeditated invasion plan by the Putin/Medvedev regime as being well in place prior to August 2008. This was indeed the rationale behind Saakashvili's ill-fated attempt at a pre-emptive strike. Facts show that Russian deployments for invasion were well in place by the time the first shots were fired by U.S. trained Georgian forces. Saakashvili seems convincing in his assertion that by August Russia had established the infrastructure and logistical support for an invasion by a large contingent of Russian troops, though Saakashvili claims he expected a smaller offensive than actually took place and one in Abkhazia rather than South Ossetia. Certainly the swiftness with which large Russian contingents were deployed after 8 August into South Ossetia and beyond was remarkable. An elite paratrooper battalion and smaller special force units spearheaded the Russian invasion, and these were followed immediately by the deployment of the equivalent of a motor-rifle division (Allison, 2008, p.1149). All of this was backed up by massive Russian air power as well as a naval blockade of key Georgian ports on the Black Sea coast.

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Therefore, the swiftness and scale of the Russian invasion certainly belie the rationale of a reactive “peace coercion” limited purpose strike, as claimed by the Putin/Medvedev regime. Indeed, upon further analysis of the above rhetoric, we see Medvedev unapologetically makes grand proclamations of recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and seemingly unlimited military, economic and political support, with an open ended promise to “punish” those who hurt “Russian citizens and their compatriots”, and so forth. Most interesting is perhaps, the fact that Medvedev at this press conference goes one step beyond all of this even, and lays out his very carefully prepared five points of the so called “Medvedev doctrine.” Upon closer examination, these points contain similar neo-nationalist rhetoric as we have examined earlier in the four documents on Foreign Policy, New Security Concept, etc.

Again, we see Medvedev’s exhortation of his first principle is to invoke the Russian regime’s recognition of the “fundamental principles of international law, which define the relations between civilized peoples.” This of course sets up, as we have already seen, a veneer of legitimacy to the invasion as being legally and morally justified. Then we see the ideology of *mnogopolarnost* or a “multi-polar” world. As well there is the explicit notion that the U.S. should not dominate international affairs. What is not said, but perhaps implied, is that Russia is an important pole in this multi-polar world, and does not have to listen to the U.S. and the EU in matters pertaining to its sphere of “privileged interests”, especially in protecting its citizens as reflected by the fourth and fifth points.

Finally a few years later in an interview with the Financial Times, Medvedev made this statement:

*It so happened during my presidency that we had in August 2008 a very unpleasant, dramatic event that could have led to trouble for Russia, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and even Georgia, let alone the international community. I remember everyone’s tension at the time. Anyway, we managed to stand for our national interests, on the one hand, and prevent the escalation of the conflict, on the other. There was a conflict, but it was brief and it had not the grave consequences a conflict like that could have had. I should say that trial by an armed conflict is the hardest one for the head of state. Happy is he who has never taken a test like that, and I envy such people. It would have been very good if we could have avoided all that, but you know our point of view: we did not start the conflict, but it is they who unleashed it. Anyway, I consider that the optimal solution was found in that situation, and I am content with it (Medvedev, 6/19/2011).*

Perhaps the most significant bit of neo-nationalist theme here is the fact that Medvedev asserts that his regime “*managed to stand for our national interests, on the one hand, and prevent the escalation of the conflict, on the other.*” From his standpoint the validity of the first part is certainly true, however in the larger picture and in the eyes of the West and parts of the international community, and especially Georgia, the conflict is far from over and escalation is still no doubt a distinct possibility as long as the Putin/Medvedev regime continues to bully Georgia and occupy its sovereign territory, and use South Ossetia and Abkhazia as strategic proxies for its neo-nationalist policies. The Russo-Georgian War is perhaps a sort of “capstone” for a case study analysis of neo-nationalism under the Putin/Medvedev regime. It shows the aggressive potential of the regime in using even military force to enforce its policies.

While the current events unfolding in Moscow show Putin’s popularity plummeting in the face of mass protests, even as he seeks re-election to the presidency for the third time, creating a de facto autocratic unbroken period of his rule, he is still immensely popular and wields nearly absolute power over most of Russia’s key institutions. Putin is hardly omnipotent or infallible, as even a recent election in South Ossetia showed an anti-corruption and anti-Putin candidate Alla Dzhioyeva was elected by an overwhelming majority in a place where one would think a pro-Putin puppet (like Kadyrov in Chechnya, and perhaps to a lesser degree Yanukovich in Ukraine) would be guaranteed a victory.

## CHAPTER TEN. Conclusion: Whither Neo-nationalism in Russian Foreign Policy?

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Using the methodology of a combined case study and content analysis format, it has been shown in that current Russian foreign policy under the regime of former President Dmitry Medvedev and recently re-elected President Vladimir Putin is heavily influenced by neo-nationalist rhetoric and sentiment, and indeed used in its speeches and proclamations, and also in the actions taken by the Putin/Medvedev regime as evidenced by the facts of our the case study analysis of the ongoing Chechen Conflict, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008. Central to this neo-nationalist ideology are the themes of Russia as assuming its traditional role as a *Velikaya Derzhava* or “great power” that harkens back through Soviet and even to Tsarist times.

A key tactic of the Putin/Medvedev regime has been to purposefully and knowingly use neo-nationalist rhetoric and symbolism and manipulate the key traditional symbolism of Russian Soviet and Tsarist history. This has resulted in a neo-nationalist renaissance of Soviet symbols of the traditional institutions of Russian central state authority, namely the military, a strong almost paternalistic government headed by Putin, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church. While a somewhat new inclusion in this symbolism, the state security apparatus in the form of the FSB and the SVU have also been reified by Putin, as a former head of the FSB and as the head of the *siloviki* Kremlin elite composed of other former state security cronies. In the analysis of neo-nationalist rhetoric from both Putin and Medvedev during the three key watershed events of Russian foreign policy examined here in the case studies, we have seen the repetition of the same themes and even rhetoric.

This rhetoric takes the form of the protection of Russian interests and citizens in Russia’s sphere of hegemony, its Inner and Near Abroad, its self-proclaimed “sphere of privileged interests” of which Chechnya, Ukraine and Georgia are a key part. While perhaps not seeking to necessarily restore the old Soviet “evil empire”, and have these countries under tight political, economic and military control, as they once were. The foreign policy of the Putin/Medvedev regime seeks to keep these countries under strong Kremlin alignment, as in the case of Chechnya (albeit a nominal part of the Russian Federation already) and Ukraine (a separate nation state, if not viewed so by the Putin/Medvedev regime). If this cannot be achieved, the regime will use every tool of soft and hard power at its disposal to undermine any states from becoming too democratic and tied to the United States and particularly from joining NATO.

This was shown to be the case in Putin’s direct intervention in Ukraine’s elections during the Orange Revolution, where KGB style disinformation, election fraud, and all other forms of underhanded tactics (including the poisoning of Victor Yushchenko) were used. In the case of Chechnya and Georgia, the regime showed itself willing and capable of using military force and invasion quite readily as well. The neo-nationalist rhetoric in these three cases also represented a spectrum of severity, from more harsh “off the record” comments by Putin, that sometimes bordered on bigotry in the case of Chechnya, to cleverly crafted claims of legitimate motivations in the case of the Russo-Georgian War, to more subtle manipulations in the case of Ukraine and the Orange Revolution.

It is difficult to prognosticate the next sequence of events that will unfold in Putin’s Russia and its Near and Inner Abroad. While the recent social protests and seeming re-emergence of anti-Putin civil society and the emergence of anti-Putin candidates like billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov provide some glimmer of hope for some type of potential return to democracy, ultimately it is up to the Russian, Georgian, Chechen and Ukrainian people, themselves, to decide the way forward either away or towards the neo-nationalist dreams and myths of the Putin regime. As contended by Lucas, Asmus, and many other foreign policy analysts, the West and especially the United States should remain firm and stern in dealing with Putin, and do more to support civil society and democratic forces in Russia and in its Near and Inner abroad when the propitious opportunities present themselves. It seems highly unlikely, in the face of Putin’s inevitable return as President of the Russian Federation, for there to be any change in the neo-nationalist foreign policy status quo.

As unpleasant as the prospects are, especially in the wake of the Russo-Georgian conflict and Putin’s muscular and aggressive response, and his essential success at in the case of Ukraine and Georgia in rolling back or severely damaging the democratic and pro-U.S. results of the Rose and Orange Revolutions, the neo-nationalist foreign policy of the Putin regime may even become more pronounced. It is likely that Russia will continue to see itself as an alternative to the United States and the West, and comport itself towards its self-proclaimed *Velikaya Derzhava* status, a magnetic pole of power in the multi-polar international community that is its current weltanschauung. In



# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

terms of its sphere of “privileged interests”, its Inner and Near Abroads, countries like Ukraine, Georgia and the Chechen region will continue to feel the ramifications of this doctrine. We have seen this reflected in the neo-nationalistic themes in the rhetoric and foreign policy actions of the Putin/Medvedev regime as examined here.

## REFERENCES

- Allison, Roy, “Russia Resurgent? Moscow’s Campaign to Coerce Georgia to Peace” *International Affairs*, Volume 84, No. 6, 2008, pp. 1145-1171
- Ambrosio, Thomas, “Insulating Russia from a Colour Revolution: How the Kremlin Resists Regional Democratic Trends” *Democratization*, Vol.14, No.2, April 2007, pp.232-252
- Anischuk, Alexei, “Russia Makes Little Progress Against Drugs-Medvedev” *Reuters* Mon Apr 18, 2011, retrieved 9/8/2011 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/18/us-russia-makes-little-progress-against-idUSTRE73H37420110418>)
- Aslund, Anders, *How Ukraine a Market Economy and Democracy*, Washington DC: Petersen Institute for International Economics, 2009
- Asmus, Ronald, *A Little War That Shook the World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of West*, USA: Palgrave Mac Millan Books, 2010.
- Bloed, Arie, “Georgian-Russian War, the turning point in East-West relations?” *Security and Human Rights 2008 no. 4*, pp. 322-325
- Bodansky, Yossef, *Chechen Jihad*, New York: Harper, 2007.
- Bryanski, Gleb and Busvine, Douglas, “Jailing of Ukraine ex-PM “dangerous”: Putin” *Thomson Reuters*, 10/11/2011, retrieved 10/11/2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/11/us-jailing-of-ukraine-ex-pm-dangerous-pu-idUSTRE79A3E120111011>
- Falconbridge, Guy “Alpha-dog” Putin rules Russia’s chaos: WikiLeaks” *Reuters*, 11/29/2010, retrieved 12/9/2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6AS4BZ20101129?pageNumber=2>
- Gerber, Theodore and Mendelson, Sarah, “Casualty Sensitivity in a Post Soviet Context; Russian Views of the Second Chechen War”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 123, No.1, 2008, pp. 39-68.
- Gutterman, Steve and Bryanski, Gleb, “Putin says U.S. stoked Russian protests” *Thomson Reuters*, 12/8/2011, retrieved 12/12/2011. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/08/us-russia-idUSTRE7B610S20111208>)
- Hughes, James, *Chechnya, From Nationalism to Jihad*, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute Press, 2002
- Ioffe, Julia, “Holy WikiLeaks, Batman!” *Foreign policy, FOREIGN POLICY Online*, 11/30/2010, retrieved 12/9/2010 [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/29/holy\\_wikileaks\\_batman](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/29/holy_wikileaks_batman)
- Karatnycky, Alexander and Motyl, Adrian, 2009 “The Key to Kiev, Ukraine’s Security Means Europe’s Stability”, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2009, Volume 88, No. 3, 106-120.

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

King, Charles and Menon, Rajan, "Russia's Invisible Civil War; The Kremlin's Crisis in the Caucasus" *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2010, Vol. 89, No. 4, pp. 20-34.

Kuzio, Taras. *Demokratizatsiya*, Fall 2005, Vol. 13 Issue 4, p491-517,

Laruelle, Marlene, 2009, *In the Name of the Nation; Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan,

Lucas, Edward, *The New Cold War, Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009

Lynch, Allen, *Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft*, 2011, U.S., Potomac Books, retrieved 12/3/2011 ([http://books.google.com/books?id=OHnY1Qm9OYQC&pg=PA111&lpg=PA111&ots=ZgzaBCAivT&dq=vladimir+putin+says+ukraine+is+not+a+real+country&output=html\\_text](http://books.google.com/books?id=OHnY1Qm9OYQC&pg=PA111&lpg=PA111&ots=ZgzaBCAivT&dq=vladimir+putin+says+ukraine+is+not+a+real+country&output=html_text))

Mankoff, Jeffrey, *Russian Foreign policy, The Return of Great Power Politics*, USA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009

Medvedev, Dmitry 8/8/2008, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 11/20/2011, ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553\\_type82912type82913\\_205032.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553_type82912type82913_205032.shtml))

Medvedev, Dmitry, 8/10/2008, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 1/10/2012 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/10/0343\\_type82913\\_205084.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/10/0343_type82913_205084.shtml))

Medvedev, 8/31/2008, "Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Rossia, NTV" *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 1/10/2012, ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/events/details/2008/08/08\\_205064.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/events/details/2008/08/08_205064.shtml))

Medvedev, Dmitry, "Transcript: interview with President Dmitry Medvedev" *Financial Times*, June 19, 2011 10:36 pm, retrieved June 20, 2011, (<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4bfa1f38-9a90-11e0-bab2-00144feab49a.html#axzz1h6tckGYI>)

Melville, Andrei, and Shakleina, Tatiana, Eds., 2005 *Russian Foreign policy in Transition, Concepts and Realities*, New York: Central European University Press

Noel, Pierre, "The EU and Russia's Gas" *The European Council on Foreign Relations*, 11/21/2008, retrieved 12/10/2010 ([http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary\\_the\\_eu\\_and\\_russias\\_gas/](http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_the_eu_and_russias_gas/))

Nygren, Bertil: "Putin's Use of Natural Gas to Reintegrate the CIS Region", *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 55, no. 4, July/August 2008, pp. 3-15.

Poussenkova, Nina, "The Global Expansion of Russia's Energy Giants" *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2010, Vol. 63, No. 2., pp. 103-123

Polityuk, Pavel and Balmforth, Richard, "Ukraine Jails Tymoshenko for 7 Years, Irks EU, Russia", *Thomson Reuters*, October 11, 2011, retrieved 2/20/2012, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/11/us-ukraine-tymoshenko-idUSL5E7LB0OQ20111011>)

Putin, Vladimir, in "Putin: Soviet Collapse a Genuine Tragedy" *AP* 4/25/2005, retrieved 2/7/2012 ([http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7632057/ns/world\\_news/t/putin-soviet-collapse-genuine-tragedy/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7632057/ns/world_news/t/putin-soviet-collapse-genuine-tragedy/))

Putin, Vladimir, Interview with ORT and RTR TV Channels and the Nezavisimaya Gazeta Newspaper, 12/25/2000, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

11/20/2011, [http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/12/25/0000\\_type82916\\_135616.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/12/25/0000_type82916_135616.shtml)

Putin, Vladimir., June 18, 2001 Opening Remarks at a Combined Meeting on Law Enforcement and Political and Economic Settlement in the Chechen Republic, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts*, retrieved 11/21/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/07/05/0002\\_type82912type82913\\_127326.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/07/05/0002_type82912type82913_127326.shtml))

Putin, Vladimir, Sept. 4, 2004 Address by President Vladimir Putin, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts*, retrieved 12/1/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/09/04/1958\\_type82912\\_76332.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/09/04/1958_type82912_76332.shtml))

Putin, Vladimir, July 6, 2006 Transcript of the Interactive Webcast with the President of Russia, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts*, retrieved 12/1/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2006/07/06/2312\\_type82917type84779type148989\\_108352.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2006/07/06/2312_type82917type84779type148989_108352.shtml))

Putin, Vladimir, Novemebr 25, 2004, Press Conference with Russian and Foreign Media, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 12/15/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2004/11/25/1350\\_type82914type82915\\_80203.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2004/11/25/1350_type82914type82915_80203.shtml))

Putin, Vladimir, 12/23/2004, Press Conference with Russian and Foreign Media, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 12/18/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/12/23/1806\\_type82915\\_81700.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/12/23/1806_type82915_81700.shtml))

Putin, Vladimir, 3/18/2005, Results of Russian-Ukrainian Talks *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 12/18/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2005/03/18/2334\\_type82914type82915\\_85457.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2005/03/18/2334_type82914type82915_85457.shtml))

Putin, Vladimir 10/2006, *President of Russia official website; Archives of Speeches and Transcripts* retrieved 12/18/2011 ([http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2006/10/10/1519\\_type82916\\_112362.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2006/10/10/1519_type82916_112362.shtml))

Sakwa, Richard, *Putin: Russia's Choice* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., USA: Routledge, 2008

Trenin, Dmitri, "Russia Reborn; Reimagining Moscow's Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs* November/December 2009, Volume 88, No.6, 64-78

Trenin, Dmitri, and Malashenko, Alexei, and Lieven, Anatol, *Russia's Restless Frontier; the Chechnya Factor in Post Soviet Russia*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 2004

Trenin, Dmitri, *The End of Eurasia; Russia on the Border of Geopolitics and Globalization*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002

Weeks, Theodore, "Russification/Sovietization" *EGO, European History Online*, 12/3/2010, retrieved 11/21/2011 (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/models-and-stereotypes/russification-sovietization>)

## APPENDIX. Research Notes of Search for Content Analysis

*Advanced Search 1, Date Range Key words "Chechen terrorists", Date Range 01/01/1999 to 12/31/2010, Search in Section "All Speeches", Present Results: 50 Documents, Full, by frequency of coincidence (Sorted Here in Chronological Order).*

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

December 25, 2000

Interview with ORT and RTR TV Channels and the Nezavisimaya Gazeta Newspaper  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/12/25/0000\\_type82916\\_135616.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/12/25/0000_type82916_135616.shtml)

July 5, 2000,

Mozdok, North Ossetia

Opening Remarks at a Combined Meeting on Law Enforcement and Political and Economic Settlement in the Chechen Republic

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/07/05/0002\\_type82912type82913\\_127326.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2000/07/05/0002_type82912type82913_127326.shtml)

June 18, 2001,

Moscow

Conversation with Heads of Local Bureaus of Leading US Media Outlets (Good for Chech. AND Georgia

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2001/06/18/0000\\_type82915type84779\\_143577.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2001/06/18/0000_type82915type84779_143577.shtml)

On September 4, 2002, President Vladimir Putin sent a message to Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze on current aspects of Russian-Georgian relations. The message was a reply to the Georgian leader's appeals received recently.

<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/news/2002/09/151629.shtml>

February 9, 2003

Interview Granted to France-3 Television

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2003/02/09/0003\\_type82916\\_44193.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2003/02/09/0003_type82916_44193.shtml)

*Second Search: Date Range Key words "Beslan", Date Range 01/01/1999 to 12/31/2010, Search in Section "All Speeches", Present Results: 50 Documents, Full, by frequency of coincidence (Sorted Here in Chronological Order).*

September 4, 2004,

The Kremlin, Moscow

Address by President Vladimir Putin

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/09/04/1958\\_type82912\\_76332.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/09/04/1958_type82912_76332.shtml)

Transcript of the Interactive Webcast with the President of Russia

July 6, 2006

The Kremlin, Moscow

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2006/07/06/2312\\_type82917type84779type148989\\_108352.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2006/07/06/2312_type82917type84779type148989_108352.shtml)

December 23, 2004,

The Kremlin, Moscow

Press Conference with Russian and Foreign Media

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/12/23/1806\\_type82915\\_81700.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2004/12/23/1806_type82915_81700.shtml)

*Search "Ukrainian Elections", 1/1/2003 to 12/31/2010, Search in Section "All Speeches", Present Results: 50 Documents, Full, by frequency of coincidence (Sorted Here in Chronological Order). Retrieved 12/16/11*

Press Statement and Answers to Questions by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin at a News Conference at the End of the Russia-EU Summit

November 25, 2004

The Hague, The Netherlands

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2004/11/25/1350\\_type82914type82915\\_80203.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2004/11/25/1350_type82914type82915_80203.shtml)

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

March 5, 2010,  
The Kremlin, Moscow  
News Conference following Russian-Ukrainian Talks  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2010/03/05/1600\\_type82914type82915\\_224672.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2010/03/05/1600_type82914type82915_224672.shtml)

*Search "Yuschenko", only 2 results*

TO THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE VIKTOR ANDREYEVICH YUSCHENKO (2007)  
<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/209178.shtml>  
(From Medvedev)

*Search "Ukrainian President" 1/1/2004 to 12/31/2010*

Meeting with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko  
January 24, 2005  
Moscow, Kremlin  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/01/24/2120\\_type82914\\_82952.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/01/24/2120_type82914_82952.shtml)

Press Conference on the Results of Russian-Ukrainian Talks  
March 19, 2005  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/03/19/2336\\_type82914type82915\\_85603.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/03/19/2336_type82914type82915_85603.shtml)

March 18, 2005,  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2005/03/18/2334\\_type82914type82915\\_85457.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2005/03/18/2334_type82914type82915_85457.shtml)

February 14, 2008,  
The Kremlin, Moscow  
Transcript of Annual Big Press Conference  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/02/14/1011\\_type82915\\_160266.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/02/14/1011_type82915_160266.shtml)

October 10, 2006  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2006/10/10/1519\\_type82916\\_112362.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2006/10/10/1519_type82916_112362.shtml)

December 18, 2007  
14:30 NEWS  
President Vladimir Putin sent a reply to President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko regarding the activities of the Ukrainian Literature Library in Moscow.  
<http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/news/2007/12/155052.shtml>  
Interview with the German Newspaper *Suddeutsche Zeitung*

Putin ON GEORGIA:

*Search "South Ossetia 6/1/2008 to 12/31/2010, by frequency of occurrence*

Statement on the Situation in South Ossetia  
August 8, 2008  
The Kremlin, Moscow  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553\\_type82912type82913\\_205032.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553_type82912type82913_205032.shtml)

Beginning of Working Meeting with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin  
August 10, 2008  
Gorki, Moscow Region  
[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/10/0343\\_type82913\\_205084.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/10/0343_type82913_205084.shtml)

# Neo-Nationalism in the Foreign Policy of the Putin/Medvedev Regime

Written by Christopher P. Isajiw

Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Rossia, NTV

August 31, 2008

[http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/events/details/2008/08/08\\_205064.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/events/details/2008/08/08_205064.shtml)

*Written by: Christopher P. Isajiw*

*Written at: Northeastern University, Boston, MA., U.S.A.*

*Written for: Masters of Science in Global Studies and International Affairs*

*Date written: 03/2012*

---

## About the author:

**Christopher P. Isajiw** is a consultant to private, government, and non-governmental organizations in the areas of business development and strategy. He holds a MS in IR. He speaks Ukrainian and Russian, and has also written articles on a variety of topics for *The Diplomat*.