

The Soviet Myth of World War II: Patriotic Memory and the Russian Question in the USSR. By Jonathan Brunstedt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xvi, 306 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Maps. Hard Bound.

Putin's Russia and the Falsification of History: Reasserting Control over the Past. By Anton Weiss-Wendt. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2020. 326 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. \$115.00, hard bound.

The Future of the Soviet Past: The Politics of History in Putin's Russia. Ed. Anton Weiss-Wendt and Nanci Adler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. xii, 258 pp. Notes. Index. Photographs. \$42.00, paper.

How did the cult of victory in World War II prepare Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine? None of these books were published before February 24, 2022, the day Russia's invasion of Ukraine transformed Russia's relations with the world and launched a new phase of Russian history. But their publication in the run-up to Vladimir Putin's fateful decision to roll the iron dice reflects the rise of a new, mass mobilization of history in Russia in the decade preceding the invasion. On a precipice of his own making, Putin delivered extraordinary tirades about Ukrainian and Soviet history, anointing himself his own court historian. The faith that military force could correct what the dictator deemed the historical mistakes of the last century—an approach Anton Weiss-Wendt aptly terms the “past in the subjunctive” tense (89)—shocked international observers almost as much as phantasmagorical identification of Ukrainians as Nazis. But a full decade before the invasion, these books establish, a discrete constellation of institutions, actors, and ideas launched a new type of memory propaganda with war at its heart. This militaristic history establishment became a central pillar of Putinism and was only further radicalized in the wake of February 24, presenting a war of aggression almost as a historical reenactment.

If history politics was at the center at the moment of invasion, and the war myth was at the center of history politics, how novel and how derivative is the Putin-era myth of the war? Victory over fascism gave Iosif Stalin's USSR a new lease on life, and in the late USSR the Great Patriotic War became so central that it eclipsed 1917 as the central Soviet legitimizing myth. Weiss-Wendt names his book after a 1948 screed published by the Sovinformbureau, *Falsifiers of History* (1948). He does this to emphasize continuities. The publication was edited and partially re-written by Stalin himself; at the outset of the Cold War, it countered US documentation about the Nazi-Soviet Pact, in essence distorting the historical record in the name of anti-falsification.

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It was republished in 2015 as a primer for today's nationalists on "all the contentious issues currently used to distort the history of the Second World War" (2). Having framed his work at the outset in terms of the resurrection of Stalinism, Weiss-Wendt advances a complementary conclusion at the end: the key actors in Russia's burgeoning, interlocking "history establishment" from Putin down transitioned from "matured [sic] socialism to neoconservative nationalism" without "any fundamental change to their worldview" (251).

Are all post-Soviet departures from the past, including a vastly different economy, political system, and media, not to mention the novelties of Putinism, such as its hard-right orientation and trademark pastiche of contradictory ideas, less important than common-denominator continuities such as statism, militarism, anti-Americanism, the cult of military triumph, and the justification of mass repression? Put another way, can we infer that Putinism in the realm of war and memory is best seen as neo-Stalinist, a Russian form of fascism, neither, or perhaps even a hybrid-like amalgam of both?¹ In the first major new study of the Soviet war myth in many years, Jonathan Brunstedt relegates the Putin period to a footnote on how WWII became a framing device for Russia's moves on Crimea and east Ukraine in 2014. But his study's emphasis on the pan-Soviet (as opposed to the "Russocentric") orientation of the late Soviet war myth can be read as a modification if not rebuttal of Weiss-Wendt's continuity framework. Brunstedt's main theme, "the Russian question" in the late USSR, raises questions about the role and nature of nationalism, empire, and war in the Soviet Union relevant for any consideration of continuities with its successor state. The chapters in the edited volume by Weiss-Wendt and Nanci Adler amplify the question of Putinism's novelty by suggesting just how deeply memory policy has been intertwined with other major dimensions of the Putin regime.

Brunstedt's main thesis is that the Soviet war myth coalesced into two competing Russian and Soviet tendencies, the first emphasizing the "trans-historical" dominance of the Russian people across 1917 and the second, "internationalist" trend extoling the post-revolutionary friendship of peoples. The touchstone for the "Russocentric" strand became Stalin's 1945 midnight toast extoling the character and contributions of the Russian people as the "decisive force" in Soviet victory (36). The legend of the twenty-eight Panfilovtsy, a sensationalized account of heroic members of the 316th Rifle Division, rose to the fore precisely because of the unit's multinational composition. The Panfilov legend became closely attached to what Brunstedt calls the Soviet people doctrine, the idea of a unified, supranational Soviet people as a "nation-like entity" (30).

1. See esp. Marlene Laruelle, *Is Russia Fascist? Unraveling Propaganda East and West* (Ithaca, 2021). The most prominent historian arguing today's Russia is fascist has been Timothy Snyder, who writes: "the late Soviet cult of victory lay the potential for fascist interpretation. Although nostalgia for victory and worship of military power had their source in the Soviet Union, such ideas could very easily be steered to the extreme right, as they have been in Putin's Russia." Snyder, "9 Theses on Putin's Fascism for 9 May: How Putin's Myth of 2022 Differs from the History of 1945," <https://snyder.substack.com/p/may-9-in-russia?s=r>, last accessed June 5, 2022.

Clearly and effectively dissecting a wide range of archival and ideological sources relating to memory policy, Brunstedt shows that during the war and late Stalinism, the leader and his ideologues alternated between or sometimes combined the two strands of the war myth. During de-Stalinization, however, the Russocentric strand became associated with Stalin's excesses. Brunstedt concludes: "Stalin's successors retained the myth's international orientation, while channeling Russocentric themes away from the war and into the narrative spheres of historical preservation and revolutionary activism. In this way, the discursive tension of Soviet patriotism persisted, but with the victory myth tied exclusively to its internationalist pole" (260).

The Soviet Myth of World War II rightly dismisses older scholarship picturing Stalinism as a form of nationalism. Although Brunstedt himself is not motivated to advance this interpretation, it reinforces the notion of Stalinism as a hybrid consisting of differing strands evolving over very different subperiods.² His claim that the supranational strand of the official war myth has been under-emphasized seems justified. Brunstedt tilts particularly against David Brandenberger (whose first book, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Russian National Identity, 1951–1956* [2002], was translated into Russian as *Staliniskii russotsentrizm*), as well as the major studies on late Soviet Russian nationalism by Yitzhak Brudny and Nikolai Mitrokhin, for over-emphasizing the Russian "national-patriotic" orientation of the late Stalinist and late Soviet state (20–21).³ He does so while remaining in an extended dialogue with their contributions. It is refreshing to see such a tightly argued, seriously researched academic monograph.

At the same time, the dichotomy between "increasingly incompatible" (258) Russocentric and "pan-Soviet/internationalist" (231) paradigms is repeated so often throughout the book that it threatens to become rigid and uninterrogated. True, there are several points when Brunstedt notes overlaps, interconnections, and compromises between the two. In the context of the Zhdanov-era anti-cosmopolitan campaign, for example, he notes that "the pan-Soviet paradigm could be every bit as insular and chauvinistic when wielded against otherness as the narrower, Russian variety" (65). But just how internationalist was it, after all? Despite ritual Soviet invocations of proletarian internationalism, it hardly highlighted class. Extra-Soviet alliances never interfered with its celebration of Soviet superiority and infallibility. It was therefore thoroughly statist, multinational, and, ultimately, neo-imperial. Was it even truly supra-national (as was the imperial House of Romanov, the

2. David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Interwar Russia* (Oxford, 2007); Michael David-Fox, "Razmyshleniia o stalinizme, voine i nasilii," in Oleg Budnitskii and Liudmila Novikova, eds., *SSSR vo Vtoroi mirovoi voine: Okkupatsiia. Kholokost. Stalinizm* (Moscow, 2014): 176–95.

3. David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002); *Stalinskii russotsentrizm: Sovetskaia massovaia kul'tura i formirovanie russkogo natsional'nogo samosoznaniia, 1931–1956 gg.* (Moscow, 2017); Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000); Nikolai Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia: Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR, 1953–1985* (Moscow, 2003).

military victories of which the “Russocentrics” claimed as their own)? The notion of a “Soviet people” did not seriously anticipate a “fusion” of nationalities (148). In the texts Brunstedt quotes as reinforcing pan-Sovietism, moreover, the national hierarchy is always reinforced: Great Russians are listed first, followed by the other Slavs, Ukrainians and Belorussians, then trailed exclusively by other titular nationalities (42, 45, 155). The material does not support Brunstedt’s claim that this work highlights “the fluid and ambiguous nature of the state’s informal ethnic hierarchy” (6).

In adopting the political terminology of the regime’s own self-presentation, Brunstedt adds to recent fascination with Soviet internationalism.⁴ But the issue is more than terminological. In a top-down study of mechanisms of rule and ideology, intent, effect, and unintended consequences may merge. In the service of the “internationalist” Soviet people doctrine, for example, Nikita Khrushchev’s 1958 educational reforms made Russian language mandatory and titular language instruction optional. No other measure did more to further linguistic russification, which was never an official goal. Virtually all urban Kazakhs, for example, became fully Russophone. But did this limit “heterogenous hierarchy in favor of a laterally united and Russian speaking ‘Soviet people’” (31)? It often cut non-Russians off from their own families and pasts, evoking feelings of shame and inauthenticity; yet even if a Kazakh spoke perfect Russian that never could erase national hierarchies. It made no difference that under Leonid Brezhnev Russian was dubbed the “language of socialism.”⁵

Brunstedt advances a noteworthy claim: the USSR was “a unique type of modern polity, one that exhibited characteristics of both empire and a multiethnic national state” (33). While the USSR was certainly distinctive, much new scholarship has suggested the frequency with which imperial and national forms overlap and intertwine. Brunstedt does flag something more unique, the place of Russians as the “awkward” Soviet nation (12), following Terry Martin’s designation of the RSFSR as the “awkward republic.” Teodor Shanin dubbed the Russian peasantry the “awkward class” because it did not conform to the predictions of major schools of social science theorizing.⁶ The specificity of Brunstedt’s mission, to establish the primacy of the “pan-Soviet” tendency specifically within the war myth, may draw attention away from a major phenomenon that, in fact, cuts across both of his paradigms: the late Soviet Union was simultaneously becoming increasingly imperial and increasingly national. Late imperial Russia has also been called a “nationalizing empire” in the run-up to its collapse, the first of two state meltdowns of the twentieth century. If one is looking for origins of the peculiar Russian

4. By contrast, Katerina Clark was careful to distinguish between the official concept of internationalism and a specific type of “cosmopolitanism” grounded in Soviet patriotism, see *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 30–41.

5. Adrienne Edgar, *Intermarriage and the Friendship of Peoples: Ethnic Mixing in Soviet Central Asia* (Ithaca, 2022), chap. 7, quotation 164.

6. Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1922–1939* (Ithaca, 2001): 394–400; Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society. Russia, 1910–1925* (Oxford, 1972).

imperial nationalism that rocked the world in 2014 and 2022, this dual intensification of the national and the imperial is significant.

By the 1960s–80s, the pan-Soviet version of the war myth had triumphed, becoming a vehicle for “projecting supra-ethnic unity and managing ethnic diversity” (155). In his final chapters, Brunstedt supplements previous works by Brudny and Mitrokhin on Russian political and cultural nationalists in the late Soviet Union, suggesting that even at their height they never came close to coopting the war myth. Adopting Brudny’s notion of a Brezhnev-era “politics of inclusion,” Brunstedt shows how Russian nationalistic sentiment was instead channeled into pre-revolutionary themes, historical preservation, cultural and literary movements, and Aesopian maneuvering “at the margins of Soviet Russian cultural production” (254). Crucially, for Russian national-conservatives in the late USSR, de-Stalinization helped transform Stalin into the “true Russian national patriot” (227). Far from the cunning arbiter of competing ideological stratagems, Stalin for them came to symbolize unalloyed Russian national pride—and, as the architect of wartime victory, I would add, imperial greatness.

In light of Brunstedt’s work, we can see more clearly how the broader struggle between reform and counter-reform, westernizers and Russophiles, anti-Stalinists and neo-Stalinists not only survived but intensified after 1991 and 2000. Oleg Khlevniuk has suggested something similar in terms of late Soviet and post-Soviet understandings of the GULAG, a historical symbol just as potent as the war in terms of the Stalin question after Stalin.⁷ There is marvelous opening for further studies of history politics and Russia’s national-imperial nexus that transcend the 1991 divide.

Not unlike Brunstedt, Weiss-Wendt in his *Putin’s Russia and the Falsification of History* provides a top-down treatment of grand strategy in the realm of memory and myth. Some of the many topics he surveys, including the war and victory cult, monuments, academic crackdowns, popular culture, and the Holocaust, have been treated with greater depth and acuity by others. But his synthetic sweep is valuable: it establishes the emergence by the early 2010s of a “history establishment” (252), run by an interlocking group of key figures who profit politically and financially from using the past as a political weapon. Virtually all of them continued to play high-profile, indeed central roles after February 24, 2022. All those who followed history in Russia in the 2010s through the lens of its internationally-oriented historiographical elite may be jolted by the scope of this “massive operation” (43). Putin’s own early obsession with the past is well known; in their biography, Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy dubbed him “the history man.”⁸ But Weiss-Wendt shows that “Russia arrived relatively late at the idea of institutionalizing history making, following the East European lead” (44). It only tentatively got off the ground in the mid-2000s, in the wake of Putin’s “preventative counter-revolution”

7. Oleg Khlevniuk, “The GULAG and the Non-GULAG as One Interrelated Whole,” in *The Soviet Gulag: Evidence, Interpretation and Comparison*, ed. Michael David-Fox (Pittsburgh, 2016): 25–41.

8. Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC, 2013): 63–77.

against the threat of “color revolutions” in the near abroad.⁹ The lasting “framework for the present Russian history politics” was put in place in 2012, following the 2011 pro-democracy protests. According to Weiss-Wendt, therefore, 2011 was “a much stronger catalyst than Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in 2014” (251).

Whatever the initial impetus for its crystallization, the Putinist memory machine quickly came to fuse domestic political motivations with international, anti-western, and anti-American agendas. This deep amalgam of internal, regional, and global agendas became inseparable from the east European memory wars and the simmering war in east Ukraine. By the late 2010s, the Russian population was being marinated in mass messaging about a thousand years of anti-western military prowess—the same single-stream construct so typical of nationalism and embraced by Brunstedt’s late Soviet national-patriotic minority.

In any study involving ideology and propaganda, insights into the intentions of the ideologues and propagandists are key. When it came to the Stalin period, Brunstedt was often forced to read intentionality through public pronouncements and texts; the greater post-Stalin visibility of political disagreements and the end of mass terror noticeably broadened the potentialities of his sources. By contrast, Weiss-Wendt was “amazed, even flabbergasted, to discover numerous policy documents related to Russian history politics,” including minutes of key agencies and organizations, “readily available on the internet” (3). He never explains why, likening this openness to publicizing secret plans to annex Crimea in advance. One can only conclude that in the political culture of Putinism, a crudely instrumentalist view of history as a political and geopolitical weapon is taken as a given and can only advance those seen to wield it. Concealment is superfluous, given the equally cynical certainty that the rest of the world takes the same approach.

Weiss-Wendt makes a distinct contribution in describing an interlocking parastatal complex of NGOs, quasi-official history societies (in particular, the massive Russian Military-Historical Society), Orthodox Church prelates, youth groups and bikers, and international memory diplomacy entrepreneurs. Reading about many of them, we observe not merely the militarization of history in terms of subject-matter but an overt and naked militarism—something the Soviets had balanced out with an official peace movement, the rhetorical legacy of socialist pacifism, and generational experiences far closer to the horrors of total war. Geopolitics, derided by the Soviets as a bourgeois science in the service of fascism, is the cornerstone justification-cum-motivation for politicizing history in the service of a militaristic state. In his elaboration on these quasi-governmental organizations in the 2021 edited volume, Weiss-Wendt refers to a “corporate system” in which “shadowy structures with extensive political and business interests” vie for influence, as history becomes a “commodity” integrated into the corrupt political economy of Putinism (64). These contemporary features of right-wing nationalism and imperial revanchism, embedded as they are in the new political economy of Putin’s Russia,

9. Robert Horvath, *Putin’s Preventive Counter-Revolution: Post-Soviet Authoritarianism and the Spectre of Velvet Revolution* (London, 2014).

again cast doubt on the simple continuity thesis with Stalinism with which Weiss-Wendt frames his book.

Weiss-Wendt adopts what might be called a neo-totalitarian approach to his topic, in that monolithic state designs are assumed to produce all-powerful effects. “History—as it has been understood, studied, and narrated since the time of ancient Greece—is under existential threat in Russia Anno Domini 2020,” he declares in conclusion (258). Except for well-known attacks on Kirill Aleksandrov’s doctoral dissertation on the Andrei Vlasov movement in 2016–17 and a few other cases, Weiss-Wendt tends not to factor in the upper levels of the Russian history profession and historically minded social sciences, which the government itself financially supported and incentivized to publish internationally up until February 24. Many thousands of excellent historians and well-trained students remain in Russia even after the brain-drain following the invasion of Ukraine. Beginning in the 2000s, a top-flight social science community emerged in Russia—something Soviet Marxism could never allow. Writing in Weiss-Wendt and Adler’s edited volume, Ivan Kurilla shows how professional historians pushed back over the course of the 2010s, scoring symbolic victories and demonstrating “resolve not to participate in the dissemination of myths” (40). To be sure, the Free Historical Society Kurilla highlights is miniscule compared to the mass activities of the patriotic NGOs, which in the edited volume Weiss-Wendt says received a total of 4.6 billion rubles in presidential grants in 2016 alone (60). Suffice it to say, however, that in the Soviet era the regime’s valorization of science, not to mention patterns of party-intelligentsia symbiosis and the academic elite’s conformity and prestige, were radically different from what we now observe. Kurilla also points to a novel relationship between today’s pervasive history politics and polarized political affiliations: “the best way to understand the political outlook of ordinary Russians is to ask them” what they think of Stalin, Peter the Great, 1917, or 1991 (31).

Perhaps more to the point, Weiss-Wendt frequently undermines his own histrionic rhetoric of totalizing effectiveness with mockery of bumbling bureaucrats and the kitsch-filled idiocy of *pobedobesie*, or victory-mania. The “percentage of Russians who take no interest in the Russian history [sic] whatsoever has doubled in recent years,” as arid myth-making “has sucked the life” out of “living history,” particularly for younger Russians (100). Putin himself “ascribes history [sic] more power than it actually possesses” (84). (Bloomsbury Academic Press, as noted by reviewers of other books not written by native speakers of English, has again not properly copyedited a text marred throughout by minor infelicities and errors in English.) The regime “has run out of ideas” and “has been pushing just too hard, including on issues relevant to history, to the opposite effect” (261). Since Weiss-Wendt frequently invokes “hybrid warfare” to explain the regime’s investment in history, in this context the shockingly poor performance of the well-financed Russian Army in 2022 is not irrelevant.

The Future of the Soviet Past, like many edited volumes, contains chapters of mixed quality. But taken together, they demonstrate the extent to which the Russian state-sponsored memory policy of the 2010s is embedded in and interconnected with a wide range of areas including popular culture, law, and foreign policy. Boris Noordenbos’s excellent contribution analyzes “the myth

of a subterranean war against insidious fascist aggression” (164) on television, starting with two wildly popular series about World War II themes: the 2007 *Liquidation* and the 2013 *Black Cats*. Both recycled features of Soviet spy series, including hidden ideological saboteurs, and western-fascist collusion. But as opposed to the “Soviet spy tradition,” in these series “the exact nature of the ‘enemy’ is much vaguer,” lumping together a motley cast of “American imperialists, Ukrainian separatists, Nazi spies, and SS Obersturmbannführers engaging in treacherous alliances” (159). In a well-crafted theoretical intervention, Noordenbos usefully discusses myth as ideology in narrative form, serving to naturalize identities and legitimacies through a timeless schema in which past, present, and future merge. Thus, “in these popular-cultural revisions of history, the Soviet triumph over Nazism is elevated from its specific place in history and transposed, in real or symbolic form, to other moments in time. . .” (164). With uncanny foreshadowing, this cultural mythologization anticipated the alternate reality shaped by political propaganda to justify the invasion of February 24, 2022.

The other outstanding chapter of the edited volume is Nikolay Koposov’s discussion of the 2014 Russian memory law in European context. Rooted in an earlier “French/EU model” (201) banning Holocaust denial and other crimes against humanity, memory laws in eastern Europe starting in the late 1990s morphed as they criminalized both the denial of Nazi and communist crimes. In those parts of eastern Europe with a history of anti-communist uprisings, direct dependency on Moscow in the Soviet period, and a sense of vulnerability to “Putin’s neoimperial ambitions,” a series of east European memory laws turned away from the west European effort to protect victimized groups toward nationalist mobilization in the memory wars with Russia. Broadly speaking, in the era of national populism, lawmakers now appeared “to shift the blame for historical injustices entirely onto the USSR and Nazi Germany, and thus to whitewash their countries’ national narratives” (201, 203). In this light, the 2014 Russian memory law, criminalizing the “rehabilitation of Nazism and the heroization of Nazi criminals and their accomplices,” but dropping Holocaust denial as in an earlier alternative bill, appears as an “extreme” reaction to east European de-Communization (205).

Focusing on 2014, Koposov does not treat Ukraine’s 2015 de-Communization law. But he establishes a long genealogy linking de-Communization starting after 1989 to de-Nazification after WWII, exposing the twisted resentment behind Russia’s use of de-Nazification to justify invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In his 2017 book, he argued that the “language of Putin’s current politics of memory” was “initially developed by a group of pro-Russian Ukrainian politicians and Russian nationalists actively involved in Ukraine’s internal affairs.”¹⁰

In the introduction to their edited volume, Adler and Weiss-Wendt endorse the notion that the Putin regime is “postideological,” in that ideas only serve the preservation of the regime’s power (8). Weiss-Wendt in his book refers to the “syncretic approach” to history in Putin’s Russia—and the same might be said for ideas in Putinism more generally—in that the regime and its agents

10. Nikolay Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge, Eng., 2017), 177.

pick and choose among tsarist, Soviet, Orthodox, nationalist, and imperialist tropes and “the truth is no longer possible to ascertain” (257). By contrast, Nikita Petrov, in his chapter on the victory cult as civil religion, sees “a new doctrine in the making” that is very different from Soviet Marxism (72). Scholars cannot agree on whether Putinism has an ideology and whether its political orientation on the opposite end of the political spectrum from communism makes any difference.

These works on memory establish beyond doubt that Putinism has borrowed very heavily both from Stalin-era and late Soviet ideas and practices. But Stalinism, arguably, was already a hybrid of revolutionary and conservative strands and shared a number of broad similarities with the revolutionary far Right. Regardless, the Putin regime has domesticated those borrowings within a state, economic system, and society very different from the Soviet old regime. It is a fallacy that ideologies need be coherent and monolithic, or that their contradictions are readily discernable to adherents. Nor do they need be elaborate text-based doctrines, such as Marxism-Leninism. The role and nature of ideology in the twenty-first century in general, moreover, appears different than a century ago. Kopusov provides an important clue when he observes that the era of memory laws illustrates how “historical consciousness has become less centered on ‘master narratives,’” which it was in the era of “history-based political ideologies (e.g., Communism, liberalism, or social democracy).” Instead, it is concentrated on “fragments of the past that symbolically represent national, ethnic, religious, and other communities” and serve as tools for establishing political legitimacy (196).

If Putinism has an ideology in what Kopusov calls this age of memory, therefore, it is far more an ethos or world-view than a doctrine.¹¹ What matters more than the eclectic elements and their origins, although of course that is significant, is the amalgam into which they are integrated and the functions that Frankenstein’s monster serves. In the USSR, the war myth reached its height under Brezhnev, who stabilized the Cold War, participated in détente, and, according to his biographer, “was so deeply scarred by the war that he wished to avoid another one at any price.”¹² As of 2022, it seems difficult to deny that Russia’s deadly new configuration of geopolitical and civilizational thinking is capable of precipitating radical change. Does anyone still doubt that the militarism and statism of the cult of victory do more than merely preserve power and maintain the status quo, as Adler and Weiss-Wendt suggested when asserting the post-ideological nature of Putinism? If so, they need only look for connections between the militaristic mythology of war developed in the 2010s and the actual war—disastrous, self-destructive, and transformational—launched in Ukraine in 2022.

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11. Michael David-Fox, “The Blind Men and the Elephant: Six Faces of Ideology in the Soviet Context,” *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, 2015), 75–103.

12. Susanne Schattenberg, *Brezhnev: The Making of a Statesman*, trans. John Heath (London, 2021), 284.