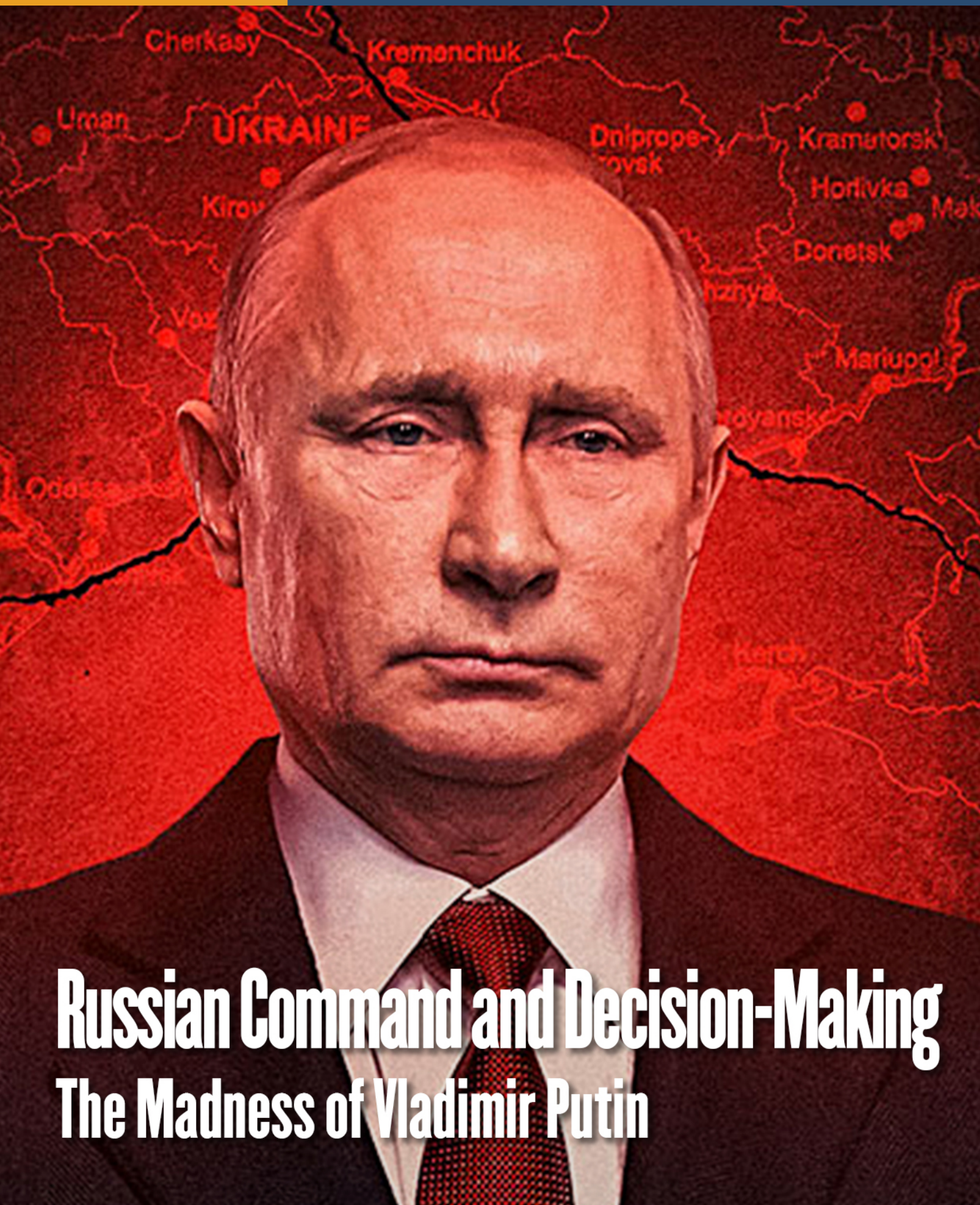


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Commentaries



Russian Command and Decision-Making

The Madness of Vladimir Putin

Russian command and decision-making The Madness of Vladimir Putin

What Next?

This paper was written with an Asian view of Vladimir Putin, the European Union, and Asians in Europe looking at Europe. The view is skewed in Asia. Putin and the Russians are not seen as the threat Putin's policies pose to the rest of the global order. Cold but professional, holding back but described as a good listener and quick study, Putin falls into many categories of his contemporaries.

The question posed is a wicked problem. Europe needs to come to terms with Russia's rearming, the changed role of the United States, and if Russia's has imperial ambitions, mainly those of President Vladimir Putin.

If Putin is mad, it is based on the Intelligence report to the UK parliament committee, public discourse, academic publications, the author's experiences, and Russians' reporting. It is not a clinical question but a pragmatic reason for Russians to take the war options to the extreme. The practical questions of wealth generation, economics, and personal context will be examined. Experts such as Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Prof. Dr. John Mearsheimer are debating direct War with Russia¹. It is no longer an abstract question.

Vladimir V. Putin's persona undoubtedly touches the clinical questions; however, the decision-making process is not sufficiently addressed. William Burns, the ex-ambassador to the Russian Federation and now head of Central Intelligence, stated clearly that Putin is not a madman. Vladimir Putin has repeatedly warned the West, and the interlocutors ignored some warnings. Certainty remained; Munich was the Rubicon for Russia.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvFtyDy_Bt0&t=2s; 15 September 2024; last accessed on 19 September 2024

Total War, Russian style

Three narratives successively emerge that weaponize Ukrainian food production and explain the ideological base of Putin's extreme steps. The collective Western powers need to recognize these actions,

1. First, the ideological (idiotic), narrative of Neo-Nazism,
2. Secondly, the systematic destruction of the Ukrainian agricultural industry and,
3. Third, a conversion of the arms industry (and incorporation for the state's GDP).

We are no longer in the interwar years. The world and the US-Russian, US-China² relations have changed. We either adopt and overcome or remain in second place to the Russian Federation and China. Putin justifies his action, the invasion of Ukraine, as an end of 'ideology,' an equalizer to the U.S. and Western ideological debates. Munich was the warning signal that many misinterpreted. Dugin writes, "Russia needs to follow a different path. Its own Putin's doctrine calls for a "develop a new world order free from American hegemony" by creating and deploying an "offensive information campaign," integrating various measures against "a coalition of hostile countries"³. We need to come to terms with lethality and creativity to the Russian threat. Euronews wrote,

Those depend on the target audience: when they address the far left, they swear by anti-colonialism. When they talk to the far right, they speak about "wokeism" and traditional values. When they turned to Europeans, they claimed the US was exploiting the continent and that Washington provoked the war. When they move to the Middle East, they speak about the invasion of Iraq and the "Western Crusades." When they look at Africa, they pretend that Russia did not colonise swaths of the Asian continent⁴.

² President Xi stated the PLA needs to be ready to take Taiwan by force by 2027.

³ <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/the-harsh-reality-behind-kremlin-s-plans>; 31 August 2024; last accessed on 31 August 2024

⁴ <https://www.euronews.com/2023/04/13/when-russia-calls-others-nazis-it-should-be-taking-a-hard-look-at-itself>; 13 April 2023, accessed on 28 August 2024

First, the ideological (idiotic), narrative of Neo-Nazism

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin is a product of the 'Cheka'. As a proud Chekist ("Tschekist" in German), his career in Germany is downplayed by the public narrative, observers, and commentators on Putin. Even right to the "errand boy" level, who must get approval from the bosses in his KGB station⁵. This narrative is misleading and false.

East Germany was Putin's first overseas posting. The post played a considerable role within the KGB as a case officer of RAF/German activists. Vladimir V. Putin is a product of his time; therefore, going forward, his decision-making will reflect his past.

The political views have been characterized as ultra-nationalist, fascist, or neo-fascist. It is a deceptive narrative and created confusion at the Western political level in the early stages (2020-2022) of the war. Speculation of Stalinist narratives or empirical ambitions, neo-Nazi narratives are speculative at best or serve only self-interests. Interestingly in the opening sentences of *The Fourth Political Theory*, a reference to Carl Schmidt, the German Nazi ideologue, was made.⁶

The role of Aleksandr Gelyevich Dugin within the Russian state somewhat addressed Vladimir Putin's adaptation of the political narrative. Dugin was a fellow traveler to Gennadiy Seleznyov and Sergey Yevgenyevich Naryshkin when they served in the Russian Duma (parliament). Putin's family connections and political narrative align with Naryshkin, Putin, and Dugin, making him part of the Siloviki, the security apparatus.

The fourth political theory, a book theorized by Dugin, integrates and supersedes National Bolshevism and Eurasianism, liberal democracy, Marxism, and fascism, setting the ideological

⁵ <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/were-vladimir-putin-s-years-in-germany-less-thrilling-than-the-stories-a-178de140-b799-472d-83bc-5e3b1adf65b2>; 7 June 2023; accessed on 27 August 2024

⁶ <https://somaclies.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/alexander-dugin-fourth-political-theory.pdf>; page 5, accessed on 27 August 2024

tone for Putin. Naryshkin was one of the main coordinators of contacts with European far-right and far-left parties supporting Russian foreign policy in Europe⁷.

Gennadiy Seleznyov passed away in 2015. His son, Kirill Seleznyov, is a prominent manager at Gazprom, a state oil and gas company. Sergey Yevgenyevich Naryshkin is the Director of the Russian Federation Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the former Third Secretary at the Russian embassy in Brussels. Naryshkin was a contemporary of Vladimir Putin in the Higher KGB school.

Vladimir Putin has for some time repeated the Dugin philosophy portraying the Russian invasion of Ukraine as part of a holy war against "absolute Evil, embodied in Western civilization, its liberal-totalitarian hegemony, and Ukrainian Nazism. Dugin disapproves of liberalism and the West, particularly US hegemony, and therefore is in line with Putin's worldview. Dugin also advocates for a Russian-Arab alliance. These are KGB/SVR policies becoming Russian main foreign policy.

However, Dugin is not a mouthpiece of Vladimir Putin's ideology. In Putin's speeches, the Russian way collides with the United States. Putin challenges the established rules of the world order. Putin said, "I am convinced that we have reached that **decisive moment** when we must seriously think about global security architecture."⁸

Putin's revival of the Russian empire needs a political justification. A popular discourse is the resurrection of Moscow, "the Third Rome," or having an alliance between Austria, Italy, and the Russian Federation to form a new Slavic empire with Serbia in the centre. Anecdotal evidence exists within the Russian diaspora from Odessa in Rome, and Putin's viewpoint may be highly exaggerated. Many commentators have already debunked Russian President Vladimir Putin's absurd claim to be waging war to "de-nazify" Ukraine⁹.

⁷ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/alde-wants-investigation-of-le-pen-s-contacts-with-moscow/>; 29 May 2015; last accessed on 31 August 2024

⁸ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>; last accessed 29 August 2024

⁹ <https://theconversation.com/putins-fascists-the-russian-states-long-history-of-cultivating-homegrown-neo-nazis-178535>; 21 March 2022, last accessed on 28 August 2024

Vladimir Putin, over time, adopted a line of Dugin's points of view, as stated in 2007: "There are no more opponents of Putin's course, and, if there are, they are mentally ill and need to be sent off for clinical examination. Putin is everywhere, Putin is everything, Putin is absolute, and Putin is indispensable." Once Putin broke the resistance, the Sloviki ensured minimal resistance.

Secondly, the systematic destruction of the Ukrainian agricultural industry

The systematic theft of Ukraine's grain and wheat has impacted Ukraine and global pricing. Russian traders appropriated an estimated 6,000,000 tons of grain. Putin's policy of total war, including economic warfare, affects the global balance, making the Russian Federation an international powerhouse in the wheat, corn, and barley trade.

Some evidence is present of the shift away from the capital, Kyiv, towards the lucrative South and Southeast of Ukraine's rich soil and exports to the Middle East. Before the invasion, the Russian Federation entered obligations to wheat trading. This resulted in Egypt ordering from Russian grain exporters. Ukraine was unable to fulfil the orders. The Russian Federation stepped in and has become the global grain exporter, replacing the Ukraine.

Even with the best harvest, the Russian Federation could not produce the grain figures needed to export to international markets such as Egypt.

Thirdly, a conversion of the arms industry and incorporation into the GDP of the state

The third leg is converting the GDP and generating a sustainable war economy. Russia built its military presence on the peninsula and warned against outside intervention. Opposing the "annexation" label, Putin defended the referendum as complying with the principle of the self-determination of peoples. The Vladimir Putin administration set out to realign the economy.

The combined GDP measured in purchasing power parity of countries such as India and China are already greater than that of the United States. The GDP of the BRIC

countries – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – surpasses the cumulative GDP of the EU¹⁰ Putin's Munich declaration may depend on building a collective alliance with the Russian Federation. Hence, the calculi need a counter strategy.

The Russians make many of the same mistakes, such as taking a country to war without being honest about it to the public. Delaying the conversion to a wartime economy¹¹ Russia needs weapons and manpower now¹² and that's where the opportunity lies. In July 2024, agreements between North Korea and Russia exchanged notes on manpower supplements.

Increasingly, the data shifts to the third leg, converting the Russian economy into a war economy and becoming an attritional force. After more than 800 days of Russian aggression, the war of attrition is a key element of the conflict¹³. Immediately after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, economic activity contracted by 4.4 %, and the country was close to a financial crisis as households queued to withdraw cash from banks¹⁴. The ruble lost over 40% of its external value in a few days.

A swift interest rate hike to 20% and the introduction of capital controls stabilized the situation in the financial markets, and the overall economy started to recover. Recovery was boosted by increased public spending, first in construction and later in military procurement. Housing construction also benefited from large subsidies¹⁵. In the short term, military procurement will stimulate the Russian economy.

¹⁰ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>; last accessed 29 August 2024

¹¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielmarkind/2024/08/28/mongolia-twists-the-knife-further-into-vladimir-putin/>; 28 August 2024; last accessed on 29 August 2024

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/russian-economy-war-footing-new-reality-financed-commodity-exports>; 28 August 2024; last accessed on 29 August 2024

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Sanctions have affected production, but Russia has had access to enough components, even at higher prices and the cost of the civilian output, to keep its military production running. Russia's federal government deficits have remained relatively small, at approximately 2% of GDP in 2022 and 2023¹⁶Russia's gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by 2.1% in 2022, and its economy may continue to shrink in 2023. According to the World Bank, its GDP is forecast to decline by 2.5% in the worst-case scenario (OECD) or by 0.2%. The IMF expects growth in 2023 (0.7%).¹⁷

These deficiencies allowed the Russian government to find workarounds and exploit loopholes. Gazprombank, one of Russia's largest banks, and Raiffeisen Bank, a large Austrian bank, are exempted from sanctions. Research suggests that long-run economic growth for Russia will be less than 1% per year¹⁸. The Russian costs for waging war is considerable. It cost the Kremlin nearly 1.2 billion euros. The slowdown of trade in the Russian economy will impact supply lines in the hinterlands of the Russian Federation. Alternative sources of good imports will flood the market, and trade with Asia and China will circumvent the sanction regime.

Putin's decision-making paradigm

Vladimir Putin will likely threaten the Ukrainian state with injunctions, including the use of nuclear weapons. Putin has already gamed out the possibility of using a nuclear weapon in Ukraine and has concluded that even a limited strike would do nothing to benefit the Russian Federation¹⁹, for the moment, at least. Those threats worried Western countries sufficiently

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/impact-sanctions-russian-economy/>; 12 October 2023; last accessed on 29 August 2024

¹⁸ <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/russian-economy-war-footing-new-reality-financed-commodity-exports>; 28 August 2024; last accessed on 29 August 2024

¹⁹ <https://www.ft.com/content/80002564-33e8-48fb-b734-44810afb7a49>; 23 February 2023; last accessed on 31 August 2024

that the US, UK, and France, NATO's three nuclear powers, delivered a joint message to Russia vowing to retaliate with **conventional weapons** if Putin decided to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine²⁰. For the moment, we collectively moved back from the nuclear abyss.

The Russian Federation does not want to trigger an open conflict with NATO. Vladimir Putin, if challenged, backs down. Like many Russians, Putin understands the limitation of his power and the unlimited powers Putin and his Siloviki are facing.

Whereas Munich was a warning, the invasion in 2022 was not. Putin believes the Western alliance will not do anything other than preserve the peace. Under all costs. His views on Germany and the European Union, and alias the United States, guided him in the narrow analysis. The anger is a repeated theme by Putin and his U.S. counterparts. Recognizing the lack of acknowledgement by the U.S. administration and pre-occupation is a consistent response. But the narrative has changed.

By September 2024, Russian commentators speak of "NATO troops" and not Ukrainian (!). This feeds into the perception that NATO is attacking the Russian Federation²¹ and mobilization efforts by the Russian administration. An escalation with NATO is foreseeable, although political leaders may not perceive such a notion. From President Putin's perspective, this feeds into the Russian psyche that Russia is at war with NATO.

The missile attack against Moscow and the incursion into the Kursk region are a first. It caught the Russian Federation off guard and changed the dynamic of the conflict. John Bolton assesses tactical nuclear response as possibly justifying its use. Units of the Russian Federation are responding, but the outcome is uncertain, and now, the Russian armed forces are limited to a traditional response. The incursion into Russian territory will result in an organic response that is harsh, brutal and intensive. The response started on Monday, 26th September 2024.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ https://x.com/Gerashchenko_en/status/1830895955895271605; 3 September 2024

The counterpunch will start from the static pound-for-pound ground artillery creeping attacks. Russians do not react well to mobility warfare. Flanking maneuvers, sweeping in-depth, and strategic targeting is not the policy. The Russian army is not equipped ideologically and materialistically to execute a grand mobility strategy. Slow, destructive targeting infrastructure, and people with creeping artillery barrages are its key elements of Russian advances.

In viewing Putin's command decision-making, we can draw from a wide body of evidence for the practitioner. This is combined with the author's experience and official information from the United Kingdom. Excerpt from the UK House of Parliament Security and Intelligence report²² were integrated. Russian history and Vladimir Putin's personal history is rich in history and context,

The Russian **decision-making apparatus is concentrated on Putin and a small group of trusted and secretive advisers (many of whom share Putin's background in the RIS). The limited number of individuals in the know' makes decision-making hard to understand compared with systems where power and influence are dispersed among many political players. Moreover, the President can make swift decisions that even his inner circle is unaware of, further complicating any ability to understand or predict Russian government intent.**

Globalization is thus **nothing more than a globally deployed model of Western European, or, rather, Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism, which is the purest manifestation of racist ideology**²³.

This is a common problem in the West versus the Russian decision-making process. Western values speak with multiple voices, sometimes contradictory. In a dictatorial system, power strives towards the person in charge. Putin has grown over the years into a "swift decision"

²² https://isc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20200721_HC632_CCS001_CCS1019402408-001_ISC_Russia_Report_Web_Accessible.pdf; last accessed on 24 August 2024

²³ <https://somaclies.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/alexander-dugin-fourth-political-theory.pdf>; page 39, last accessed on 31 August 2024

maker in the absence of the council. Hence, centralized decision-making simplifies the lines of communication.

Vladimir Putin, therefore, turns to trusted voices within the administration. Anna Tsivilyova, his niece, was promoted to State secretary for defense and deputy defense minister, and Igor Sechin is one such example. Forces like Shoigu and Patrushev are examples of power circles that yield considerable political power.

Putin feared both Shoigu and Patrushev as potential threats. Therefore, the army and intelligence services were cut down to minimize the dangers to the leadership. Belousov's appointment is another indicator that the Kremlin's power circles are subject to change.

Andrey Belousov, an outsider with no links to the military, is to solve these problems and make Russia's war machine in Ukraine more effective, a dangerous new development²⁴. However, experts have expressed concern that Andrey Belousov's statist and interventionist approach could ruin Russia's economy in the long run.

Ekaterina Shulman wrote for Putin "**war is his lifestyle**. It is a method for running Russia and his only opportunity to keep his job"²⁵. Sergei Medvedev, a journalist wrote on Facebook on May 13, "**Putin's Reich has its own Speer now...** he has always been a convinced statist, a supporter of interventionism, an exemplary technocrat, and servant of the state,". The reference to Albert Speer, Germany's minister of armament and war production, is not coincidental. Both historical references to Nazi Germany and Stalin, are constantly resurfacing in the Russian narrative.

Western decision-making by consensus stifles the administration. In the Russian leadership paradigm, one voice makes one decision. Everyone lines up behind the leader. But in Putin's decision paradigm, if opportune, the reverse of critical decision-making can be applied.

²⁴ https://isc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20200721_HC632_CCS001_CCS1019402408-001_ISC_Russia_Report_Web_Accessible.pdf; last accessed on 24 August 2024

²⁵ <https://kyivindependent.com/russias-new-defense-minister-belousov-to-put-russias-economy-on-war-footing/>; last accessed on 24 August 2024

This **centralized decision-making** allows the Russian government to carry out **decisions at speed**. Putin's inner circle appear to be **willing and able to make and enact major decisions (for example, on the deployment of troops) within days**, and they **retain tight command and control over the whole government infrastructure** – which can be **put in the service of Russia's foreign policy goals at a moment's notice**. It is difficult for the UK's democratic and consensus-based structures to match this pace. **Putin appears to value surprise and the unexpected and has, therefore, consciously retained and cultivated this 'decision advantage' as a way of outmaneuvering adversaries.**

Therefore, Putin must face the "leadership of consequence." In other words, a decision of action ("X") has been communicated through lines of communication. Once the leadership can make a quick decision, much to the surprise of all the parties, the decision-making can be from the top of the decision-making pyramid. However, quick changes will confuse the Russian system and muddle the analysis.

It is **not clear to the Committee whether HMG and our allies have yet found an effective way to respond to the pace of Russian decision-making**. This has severely **undermined the West's ability to respond effectively to Russian aggressions in the past** – for example, the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Russian decision-making is based on Vladimir Putin's belief system. Putin was convinced the Western alliance would not take any steps to stop him, which was a miscalculation by the Russians. Because the decision-making chain is limited to a handful of individuals, decision-making is relatively rapid.

In the case of Russia, the **potential for escalation is particularly potent**: the Russian regime is paranoid about Western intelligence activities and "is not able to treat objectively" international condemnation of its actions.

Putin maintains the flexibility of changing his mind. This is the advantage of having a dictatorial decision-making paradigm of five (5) “friends”, like Igor Sechin, the “grey cardinal of the Kremlin”²⁶, the head of the Sloviki faction, and Sergey Naryshkin. Alexander Vasilyevich Bortnikov²⁷ who coined the term “punishing sword” to describe the Cheka. Vyacheslav Volodin is one of the younger generations of Siloviki and a close aide to Vladimir Putin. Volodin is said to be a possible successor to Putin.

Viktor Medvedchuk, a former Ukrainian fellow traveler and another close friend of Vladimir Putin, provided the head of the SVR, Nikolai P. Patrushev, with the claim that “Ukrainians will welcome Russians”. The obvious wrong conclusion has created a decision-making point for Vladimir Putin and his entourage. Patrushev and Sergey Shoigu are considered ‘hawks’ in the administration. But Sergey Naryshkin statement that Russian soldiers would be welcomed as liberators by the people of Ukraine, eroded his standing with Vladimir Putin²⁸.

Alexander V. Bortnikov and Nikolai P. Patrushev are said to have promoted the invasion of Ukraine. Patrushev is Putin's go-to man for special tasks, such as the attempted coup in the West Balkans in 2016. Putin appears to have made him the Kremlin's point man on the Balkans. Some will be changed, but the inner circle consists of five interchangeable individuals.

The war is long-term, so the outcome is defined as a strategy rather than a battlefield victory. The conversion of the Russian economy can be associated with the three principles; thus, Vladimir Putin's decision-making will isolate Ukraine to avoid becoming an economic powerhouse, contain Ukraine, and limit its association with NATO and the European Union.

“We can also conclude that the war is seen (by the Kremlin) as a long-term affair”.²⁹

²⁶ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/2022/03/15/meet-russias-siloviki-putins-inner-circle/>; 15 March 2022, last accessed on 24 August 2024

²⁷ Son Dennis is the chair of the state run VTB bank.

²⁸ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/2022/03/15/meet-russias-siloviki-putins-inner-circle/>; 15 March 2024; last accessed on 30 August 2024

²⁹ <https://kyivindependent.com/russias-new-defense-minister-belousov-to-put-russias-economy-on-war-footing/>; last accessed on 24 August 2024

The issues associated are cessation of armed conflict and acceptance of the borderline as is. Putin views Ukraine as a non-entity; a non-state is the driver in Putin's decision-making. Not in line with policy but a personal interpretation of individual interests, that of Vladimir Putin, as a force of the Russian state.

Putin and his allies never could get over the failed Soviet Union, despite he is trying to resurrect Stalin on places like the Red Square. In the moment Putin is mobilizing the public.

SIS told us that this means operating with “strategic patience” in recruiting agents and increasing staff. Having limited channels of communication with the Russian government can be beneficial. The ability to have direct conversations enables an understanding of the intentions of both sides in times of crisis. It is nevertheless striking that two out of the five ‘pillars’ of the cross-Whitehall Russia Strategy are still focused on proactive engagement and relationship-building with Russia beyond essential communication.

Gleb Pavlovsky, the architect of the “managed democracy” under Boris Yeltsin and Putin before his passing stated Vladimir Putin's obsession with Ukraine. Pavlovsky, a Kremlin insider first a ‘spin doctor’ for two presidents and an eloquent voice on the machinations and intrigue taking place in the Kremlin halls of power, was adamant that Putin **started a war that he could not win.**³⁰ Pavlovsky develops Russia's "managed democracy" that marginalized, exiled, or jailed Putin's rivals. The Siloviki faction, under Sechin, worked to protect one of their own, Vladimir Putin, and experts stated that the making of the KGB/FSB state is a product of this process.

After the outbreak of war with Ukraine, when Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was asked whether Putin consulted with him, he replied, “Putin has three advisers — Ivan the

³⁰ <https://www.dw.com/en/putins-former-political-technologist-gleb-pavlovsky-dies/a-64831903>; 27 February 2023; last accessed on 21 August 2024

Terrible, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great.”³¹ Although anecdotal, the bottom line is once more, Vladimir Putin made a historical reference. Vladimir Putin's passive influence comes from the Kovalchuk brothers, Mikhail³² and Yuri, neighbors adjoining Vladimir Putin's dacha outside of St. Petersburg. Mikhail encourages Vladimir Putin to think about the historical significance of Peter the Great before the invasion. Putin is increasingly fixated on Ukraine but does not spend considerable time on the subject.

This is manifested in media coverage following the Ukraine invasion. Vladimir Putin's irritation with the speaker giving a briefing about the situation is obvious. Although all sources say Putin is a great listener, the TV interview suggests otherwise. Gleb Pavlovsky suggested Putin does not like work.

Putin himself understands Information War/Information Operations. He pointed out that Western information placement is part of this strategy.

In 2023, in Ukraine, the internal fight between the FSB and the army leadership came to the fore, with the FSB challenging command. The FSB saw the conflict as their domain; the army leadership did not. The Russian army has many special operation forces at its disposal.

Russia has many military and paramilitary formations called special operation forces or Spetsnaz (short for spetsialnoe naznachenie or special assignment). For this study, the special forces of the armed forces' Main Intelligence Directorate, Spetsnaz GRU, the special forces of the Federal Security Service (FSB), Spetsnaz FSB, the special forces of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Spetsnaz SVR, the Special Operations Command (SOC) and the 45th Special Forces Regiment of the Airborne troops are the most relevant.

One should note special forces only make up parts of each of these organizations. GRU, FSB, and SVR have a number of agencies beyond special forces, such as spying bureaus

³¹ <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/06/05/the-real-winner-of-russias-war-the-fsb-a85321>; 5 June 2024; last accessed on 29 August 2024

³² People who know him say he shares a passion for Russian imperial revanchism with his older brother Mikhail, a physicist whose conspiracy theory-laden rants about US plans to develop super-soldiers and “ethnic weapons” have, on occasion, popped up later in Putin's speeches.

(Agentura), SIGINT (signal intelligence) units and others. These latter agencies are also included in this study, since they often work in close cooperation with “their” special forces. However, belonging to the same super-structure is no guarantee of close cooperation. **The rivalry between Spetsnaz and Agentura within the GRU is well known³³.**

Gleb Pavlovsky believed that Putin had changed. In the clinical sense, this comes as no surprise, as the ruler obtains an ideological view in line with his training, falling back on his KGB training and the group that he surrounds himself with.

Russia and Vladimir Putin

The clinical assessment would suggest the transformation Vladimir Putin has undergone for some time. His evolution from spymaster, fellow trusted insider, and professional politician to forming an ad-hoc committee of trusted insiders to rewrite Russian and Ukrainian history is self-evident. The CIA chief Bill Burns does not see Putin’s grip on power weakening. “He does one thing well: repress people at home.”³⁴ Putin’s association with power is linked to fears of insecurity of power. In his drive to carve out a secure niche in the Russian Federation, the security services executed an arrest wave of the political elite resisting the Putin regime. Today, the resistance movement is imprisoned, on the run, or in exile.

Putin is not mad in the clinical sense; many observers attest to this state of mind, although the observer rationale for the invasion was based on the assessment by Russians that the U.S., through Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Peace Corps, and the Open World Center, and others to participate in aid programs in Ukraine. Viewed through the Russian lens, this smelled regime change despite Victoria Nuland’s vehemently rejection of regime change. In an

³³ <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2917&context=parameters>; 2016; last accessed on 21 August 2024

³⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/07/uk/cia-mi6-heads-appearance-london-intl-gbr/index.html>; 7 September 2024

interview with Nikolai Patrushev, the coup in Kiev was perceived as a direct impingement of Russian interests³⁵.

Once a decision was made on the invasion of Ukraine, his narrative remains stale. The objectives are set, the costs are somewhat calculated, and the support structure is geared towards supporting the objectives. The negative impacts are not considered. They are expected. American strategists believed Russian calculus lay in the final destruction of our system of government and the ultimate dismemberment of our country³⁶. Some narrative of ignorance cancels out the losses. Vladimir Putin's calculus is based on the strike-first doctrine.

Any contender challenging Vladimir Putin's leadership will be eliminated, as the mutineers have challenged his leadership. Vladimir Putin's limitation in information, miscalculation, and flawed intelligence is a product of the yes-ministers' culture.

In 2014, Nikolai Patrushev, interviewed for the UK Guardian, analyzed the U.S. position towards the former Soviet Union. The CIA found was its economy. After detailed modeling, the U.S. discovered its weakest link: the chronic dependence of the USSR's budget on the export of hydrocarbons.

They came up with a strategy for bankrupting the Soviet state by pursuing two interrelated goals: 1) slashing the USSR's income from foreign trade at the same time and 2) increasing its expenditure on resolving externally provoked problems, such as Georgia or the Central Asian republics.

Depressing world oil prices was cutting the state's income. Russian Federation policy was determined to have an economic cold war far more effective and decisive than a hot war.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/24/sp-ukraine-russia-cold-war>; 15 March 2014; last accessed on 12 October 2024

Nikolai Patrushev stated, “They expected gratitude for obeying their Western partners and hoped to reap some special benefit for our country by cooperating closely and unconditionally with the US. Our American partners stopped taking us seriously almost instantly and only occasionally gave us a condescending pat on the back.” Putin, however, concealed the true nature of the invasion. Economics.

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