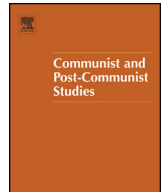


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Communist and Post-Communist Studies

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud

Soviet and Russian anti-(Ukrainian) nationalism and re-Stalinization



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Available online 8 January 2016

Keywords:
Bourgeois nationalism
Fascism
Militocracy
re-Stalinization
Leonid Brezhnev
Vladimir Putin

ABSTRACT

The term 'fascist' has been misused by both the Soviet totalitarian system and Russian authoritarian nationalist militocracy to such an extent that it is detached from scholarly understanding and openly manipulated for political purposes. In Vladimir Putin's Russia World the term 'fascist' is manipulated even further by political technology and massive state control of television that spews Ukrainophobic and anti-Western xenophobic propaganda. The article investigates a hitherto under-researched field of Tsarist, Soviet and Russian continuity in the denigration of 'Ukrainian nationalism' that goes back as far as the early 18th century. The article focuses on the Soviet and post-Soviet eras by showing how the growth of Russian nationalism, 'conservative values' and anti(Ukrainian)nationalism has taken place during specific periods that have combined re-Stalinization through the glorification of Joseph Stalin and downplaying and ignoring of his mass crimes against humanity with anti-Western xenophobia. Putin's re-Stalinization is therefore in line with a tradition that requires domestic and external enemies to sustain the authoritarian nationalist militocracy.

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'How can you urge an anti-terrorism coalition if you inspire terrorism right in front of your own door? How can you talk peace and legitimacy if your policy is war via puppet government? How can you speak of freedom for nations if you punish your neighbor for this choice? How can you demand respect for all if you don't have respect for anyone?' (President Petro Poroshenko's speech to the United Nations, September 29, 2015).

'Rendering comprehensive support to the Russian World is an unconditional foreign policy priority for Russia ... we will keep enthusiastically defending the rights of compatriots, using for that the entire arsenal of available means envisioned by international law.' (Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, November 5, 2015).

Russian campaigns against Ukrainian separatism and nationalism stretch as far back as the 1709 Battle of Poltava where Ukrainian Cossack forces led by Hetman Ivan Mazepa forged an alliance with Sweden and were defeated by the Russian Empire. For the last three centuries the themes of 'betrayal' and Western governments behind a Ukrainian conspiracy to weaken Russia have been at the center of Ukrainian–Russian relations. In this discourse Ukrainians have been positively defined if they have supported the Tsarist, Soviet and Russian hierarchy of nationalities with Russians the elder brother (and have been disparagingly called Little Russians by Ukrainian patriots) and those who disagree with the hierarchy who have been defined as 'agents of Austria,' 'bourgeois nationalists' and 'fascists.' Those loyal to the hierarchy of Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet nationalities policies accept Russia as the 'elder brother.' They strongly believe that Ukrainians are forever 'brotherly peoples' in close union whether as a gubernia in Tsarist Russia, Soviet republic, or as a dominion in the

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.12.005>

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Commonwealth of Independent States, accepting Ukraine's junior role in the *Russkii Mir* (Russian World) (Wawrzonek, 2014) and opposing the country's European integration. These Ukrainians are likely to hold Soviet identities and up to 2014 they represented a majority in the Crimea and Donbas. Ukrainians who do not accept the Russian hierarchy of nationalities policies and seek Ukraine's future in Europe are the 'betrayers' who have turned their back on the Russian 'brotherly people' and since World War II, have been disparaged as 'bourgeois nationalists' and 'fascists.' The mirror image of Ukrainians who accept the Russian hierarchy of nationalities and Vladimir Putin's Russian World have been and continue to be depicted as 'Little Russians' who have little Ukrainian national consciousness, for example, such as a former Soviet Ukrainian Communist Party leader Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, or 'Sovok's' – short for *Homo Sovieticus*.

Ukrainians in the Soviet and Russian worldview have never been independent and sovereign actors but only the conspiratorial pawns of conspiracies by the Swedes (1709), Austrians in World War I (Wolkonsky, 1920; Bregy and Obolensky, 1940), Nazi Germany in World War II, Western and Israeli intelligence agencies during the Cold War and the US, democracy promotion foundations since 1991 and the EU since the formation of the Eastern Partnership in 2009. Conspiracy theories remain deeply ingrained in anti-Western post-Soviet political forces such as United Russia and the Party of Regions and Viktor Yanukovich has always been convinced that the Orange and Euromaidan revolutions were Western conspiracies to prevent him from taking power in the first instance and remove him from power in the second (Kuzio, 2011). Putin has a pathological fear of revolutions since he was stationed in the GDR where he witnessed people power overthrowing the Communist regime in the late 1980s (Ambrosio, 2007; Silitki, 2005). Putin told the UN that the Euromaidan capitalized on 'discontent of the population with the current authorities' and 'the military coup was orchestrated from outside,' which then 'triggered a civil war as a result,' thereby blaming Western governments, not Russia, for the ensuing conflict (Putin, 2015).

A majority of Western scholars of Russia have downplayed Putin's Russian nationalism and ignored his chauvinism towards Ukrainians and other peoples. Chaisty and Whitefield (2015, 172) believe Putin 'is not a natural nationalist.' Western scholars have paid little attention to how national identity explains the different outcomes of transitions in Ukraine and Russia with the former a democracy and the latter an authoritarian nationalist militocracy (Brudny and Finkel, 2011). Ignoring or downplaying ideology and nationalism in analyses of Putin disable the scholars to come to grips with the evolution of his political system from soft authoritarianism in the early 2000's to a hard authoritarian nationalist militocracy (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2003, 2009) grounded in 'conservative values' and Eurasianist xenophobia and messianic views of Russia (Laruelle, 2008; Shlapentokh, 2014; Engstro, 2014). Putin has backed the reburial of White Russian leaders since 2005 when Anton Denikin was brought to Russia and successfully reunited the Russian Orthodox and émigré Russian Orthodox Churches in 2007. Putin receives inspiration from White émigré writers, such as the nationalist and fascist publicist Ivan Ilyin (Barbashin and Thoburn, 2015) who, like Alexander Wolkonsky (1920, 160), believed 'There is no doubt as to the Austro-German origin of the legend of the existence of a separate Ukrainian nation.' Putin's White émigré ideological sources never considered Ukrainians to be a separate people and therefore they should not be an independent state. This long historical record of Russian and Soviet thought and discourse views Ukrainians as unable to be autonomous actors. Dissidents in the Soviet Union and democratic revolutions in Ukraine were allegedly funded and manipulated by Western intelligence agencies and governments, operating through democracy promoting foundations and international organizations like the EU. There has been a continuity of thought and article of faith in Tsarist Russia, the USSR and Putin's Russia that Ukrainian nationalists have always been paid by foreign powers that have harbored anti-Russian intentions (Barbashin and Thoburn, 2015).

This article argues that conservative counter-liberalization in the Leonid Brezhnev and Putin eras has drawn on the mythology of the Great Patriotic War and Generalissimo Stalin and led to re-Stalinization in the USSR and Russia and re-Sovietization in Putin's Russia. Taken together, these factors have fanned Ukainophobia through accusations of 'bourgeois nationalism' and 'Nazi hirelings' in the USSR and 'fascism' in the pay of the West in contemporary Russia and the Donetsk and Luhansk separatist enclaves. Putin was socialized in the Brezhnev era and therefore, as somebody who believes the disintegration of the USSR was a tragedy, his reference points for building contemporary Russia are not surprisingly the conservatism that flourished and Russian nationalism that was permitted under Soviet leader Brezhnev.

Soviet and Russian ideological tirades against 'Ukrainian nationalism' therefore go together with glorification of Stalin and in the contemporary era fundamental disagreement with Ukraine's de-communization (Motyl, 2015) and commemoration of the Holodomor as a major Soviet crime and genocide against the Ukrainian people. In 2009–2012, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev headed a Presidential Commission of the Russian Federation to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests and in August 2009 sent an 'address' (a form of demand and threat rather than a friendlier open letter) to President Viktor Yushchenko. In the 'address,' Medvedev (2009) claimed that: 'Russian–Ukrainian relations have been further tested as a result of your administration's willingness to engage in historical revisionism, its heroization of Nazi collaborators, exaltation of the role played by radical nationalists, and imposition among the international community of a nationalistic interpretation of the mass famine of 1932–1933 in the USSR, calling it the "genocide of the Ukrainian people."'

The term 'fascism' is used on many occasions in this article but has nothing in common with Western political science definitions of the term. 'Fascism' was a misused and abused term in the Soviet Union and continues to be in contemporary Russia. In both cases it has incorporated all shades of political opinions, ranging from national communists through to liberal democrats and nationalists in Ukraine; who oppose the Soviet Stalinist-Brezhnevite and Russian designation of Ukrainians as a branch of the Russian nation with Russians being the 'elder brothers'; do not support Ukraine's place within the Russian World and instead back Ukraine's integration into Europe. In Ukraine, those who accept these tenets and the Soviet and Russian hierarchy of nationalities possess Soviet identities and lived primarily in the Crimea and Donbas.

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