Introduction

War and the Tensions of Patriotism

> There was below the surface something of a conflict at that time between "Holy Russia" and the "Soviet Union." Sometimes compromises were reached between the two.
>
> – Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*[1]

> Our masters the Bolsheviks set up the Third International, and our masters the Bolsheviks developed the theory of so-called Socialism in One Country. That theory's a contradiction in terms – like fried ice.
>
> – Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*[2]

In late November 1941, as the Battle for Moscow raged, Soviet newspapers heralded a remarkable act of bravery at a place west of the capital called Dubosekovo. According to reports, twenty-eight members of the 316th Rifle Division (later redesignated the 8th Guards "Panfilov" Division) stood their ground against a column of fifty-four German tanks, destroying as many as eighteen in the process. Although all twenty-eight men perished in the fighting, their gallantry had forced the withdrawal of the much larger and better equipped German force. This story, repeated in various iterations throughout the war, proved extremely popular. As the Germans advanced on the city of Stalingrad in the late summer of 1942, for example, one political officer noted in his diary that he was suddenly compelled "to call out to the soldiers of the south: 'Fight like the twenty-eight! Crush tanks as they were crushed by the Panfilov-Guardsmen outside Moscow. Stand to the death, and the enemy will flee as it fled from Moscow.'"[3] Only later did it emerge that a few of the twenty-eight Panfilovtsy had not died in the fighting at Dubosekovo. While the story was easily modified to accommodate the new details, the matter was further complicated when one of the survivors later admitted to military prosecutors that the Dubosekovo encounter was largely a

[1] Werth, *Russia at War*, 741. [2] Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 299.
[3] P. Logvinenko, "Traditsii 28 geroev (Iz dnevnika politrabotnika)," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Aug. 27, 1942, 3.

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fabrication, the invention of frontline newspaper reporters and editors. The Prosecutor's Office passed this information to the Politburo, which continued to promote the invented and sensationalized account as a highly effective source of agitation. The legend of the twenty-eight Panfilovtsy survived the war's end and Stalin's death; it would thrive for decades as an important component of the Soviet myth of World War II.[4]

The appeal of the story of the twenty-eight heroes derived in large part from the unit's multiethnic composition. Assembled in Soviet Central Asia, the Panfilov division had recruited heavily from the local population, with Russians constituting a small percentage of the overall formation.[5] Although the first newspaper articles devoted to the engagement at Dubosekovo made no mention of the participants' ethnicities, by 1942 the central press was specifying that among the twenty-eight "were Russians, Ukrainians, and Kazakhs," as well as troops of other nationalities. "Their martial comradeship, sealed in blood, became the epitome of the great fighting friendship of the peoples of our country," wrote Aleksandr Krivitskii, the literary secretary of the Red Army newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda* and the man most responsible for the myth's creation and perpetuation.[6] Such an emphasis on multiethnic friendship dovetailed with a broader mobilizational campaign highlighting the heroic pedigree of "non-Russian" men-at-arms.[7] In fact, it was the head of the Red Army's Political Directorate and Soviet Information Bureau, Aleksandr Shcherbakov, rather than Krivitskii, who first publicly emphasized the unit's diverse ethnic makeup.[8]

At the same time, the myth of the twenty-eight reinforced the more Russocentric themes of Soviet wartime culture. Most significant in this regard was the Russian political commissar supposedly in charge of the unit, Vasilii Klochkov. According to an expanded version of the story published in 1942, a few days before leading his men into battle,

[4] GARF R-8131/37/4041/306–320. The location of Dubosekovo was not mentioned in the first article. See V. Koroteev, "Gvardeitsy Panfilova v boiakh za Moskvu," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Nov. 27, 1941, 3; A. Krivitskii, "Zaveshchanie 28 pavshikh geroev," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Nov. 28, 1941, 1. See also Luzhkov, *Moskva prifrontovaia*, 533–540; Petrov and Edel'man, "Novoe o sovetskikh geroiakh," 140–151. For an analysis of the actual engagement and the myth's origins, see Statiev, "La Garde meurt mais ne se rend pas," 769–798.

[5] See Table 13.2 in Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 594.

[6] Krivitskii, *28 geroev-panfilovtsev*, 5, 11–13. The outline of the story's initial publication is recounted in the memoirs of *Krasnaia zvezda*'s managing editor, David Ortenberg. See Ortenberg, *God 1942*, 47–48.

[7] As Brandon Schechter points out, "non-Russian" was a catchall term to denote non-Slavic (Caucasian, Central Asian, etc.) peoples. Schechter, *The Stuff of Soldiers*, 1–2.

[8] "Pod znamenem lenina. Doklad tov. A. S. Shcherbakova 21 ianvaria 1942 goda na torzhestvenno-traurnom zasedanii, posviashchennom XVIII godovshchine so dnia smerti V. I. Lenina," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Jan. 22, 1942, 2–3.

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Klochkov took part in the famed November military parade on Red Square, during which Stalin delivered one of his most famous wartime addresses. "Let the heroic image of our great ancestors inspire you in this war," Stalin urged, "Aleksandr Nevskii, Dmitrii Donskoi, Kuz'ma Minin, Dmitrii Pozharskii, Aleksandr Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov."[9] The author then recounts how, standing in formation, Klochkov felt as though he was following in the footsteps of Russian warriors through the ages, such as the forces of Dmitrii Donskoi before defeating the Mongol–Tatar horde at the Battle of Kulikovo Field, or the militiamen of Kuz'ma Minin and Dmitrii Pozharskii, who ousted Polish–Lithuanian forces in 1612. Alongside these young Red Army volunteers "are the mustachioed fellow-fighters of Suvorov," and with them "Mikhail Kutuzov will soon pursue Napoleon's vaunted grenadiers." The story's narrator then ponders whether it was this moment, admiring the ancient Kremlin walls, that inspired Klochkov's legendary battle cry nine days later as German tanks bore down on the twenty-eight: "*Russia* is vast, but there is nowhere to retreat – Moscow is at our backs!"[10]

The figure of Klochkov is instructive. While the 1942 account described the political commissar deriving inspiration from prerevolutionary Russian sources, by 1952 authoritative treatments were attributing the man's bravery and sacrifice to a decidedly Soviet pedigree: "At the head of the platoon stood political instructor [Vasilii Klochkov]. The son of a poor Russian peasant, Klochkov passed through the difficult school of life. The Soviet Motherland opened before him a path to a happy future. But war broke out, and Klochkov left for the front to defend the Motherland." It was in the name of a homeland that symbolized emancipation from the prerevolutionary epoch, as much as continuity with it, that Klochkov and his men sacrificed their lives. "I will fight to the last breath," Klochkov's 1952 iteration declared shortly before the fateful engagement, "for the Motherland, for Stalin."[11]

As the war experience receded further into the past, the multiethnic, even universal, aspects of the Panfilovtsy story often took precedence over its Russocentric and historical features.[12] By the 1960s, delegations of young communists from around the world were identifying with this

[9] "Rech' Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony i Narodnogo Komissara Oborony tov. I. V. Stalina na Krasnoi ploshchadi v den' XXIV godovshchiny Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsii," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Nov. 9, 1941, 1. Also, Merridale, *Red Fortress*, 329.
[10] Krivitskii, *28 geroev-panfilovtsev*, 7–10 (emphasis added).
[11] Pankratova, *Velikii russkii narod*, 2nd ed., 180.
[12] On the transition from living, "communicative" memory to "cultural" and "political" remembrances, see Assmann, "Re-Framing Memory," 35–50.

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Figure 0.1 Communist youth commemorate the last stand of the Panfilovtsy at Dubosekovo, early 1980s (courtesy of Valery Shchekoldin)

"socialist Thermopylae" (Figure 0.1).[13] Cuban youths visiting Moscow in 1965, for instance, took an oath at the site of the battle, declaring: "As the twenty-eight Panfilov-Guardsmen defended Moscow, so too shall we protect Cuba from American imperialism."[14] All the while the legend of the twenty-eight resonated among the USSR's multiethnic population. It should come as no surprise that one of the most revered Soviet war memorials still standing outside the borders of present-day Russia, one that has avoided the waves of post-Soviet iconoclasm that saw the toppling of other such monuments, is Kazakhstan's Memorial of Glory, dedicated to the feat of the twenty-eight. Unveiled in 1975, at the peak of the late-socialist commemorative cult of the war, the monument consists of a massive sculptural depiction of representatives of each of the country's fifteen republics wrought into the shape of the USSR (Figure 0.2). A popular venue for afternoon strolls and wedding processions, the memorial is situated in a leafy park in the center of Almaty that also bears the name of the Panfilovtsy.

[13] I take the Thermopylae metaphor from Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, 265.
[14] RGASPI M-1/32/1193/39.

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Figure 0.2 Monument of Glory, Almaty, Kazakhstan (author's photo)

Like the legend of the twenty-eight Panfilov-Guardsmen in particular, the larger Soviet myth of victory embodied the fundamental tensions of wartime mobilization, which incorporated seemingly contradictory "Russian" and "Soviet," ethnocentric and "internationalist," transhistorical and postrevolutionary tendencies. The tensions and contradictions between these countervailing patriotic currents did not dissipate after 1945. Rather, they underpinned later Soviet debates about the meaning of victory; about the nature of patriotism and patriotic identity in a socialist society; about the place of the Russian people, their history and culture, within a supranational entity that presented itself as a renunciation of the old imperial order. How the war's "official" memory refracted these tensions of patriotism between the 1940s and 1980s is the subject of this book.

* * *

This is a history of the Soviet myth of victory in World War II from its Stalinist origins to its emergence as arguably the supreme symbol of state authority during the late-socialist period. The book argues that the war's memory encapsulated a range of competing ideological tendencies that gradually coalesced to form a "pan-Soviet" counterpoint to broader notions of Russian leadership and Russian-led ethnic hierarchy. While

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Russocentric historical narratives of the prerevolutionary and early Soviet eras continued to stress Russian benevolence and assistance on the path to modernity, the story of the war evolved as a parallel but countervailing ideological current, which flattened hierarchical configurations among Russians and non-Russians alike. At the same time, many contested the notion of a horizontally integrated "Soviet" political community. The book shows how a "Russophile" faction of party elites, nationalist-oriented intellectuals, and even some non-Russian party organizations in the republics, perpetuated a Russocentric understanding of the war "from below." The competition between Russocentric and pan-Soviet conceptions of victory, which burst into the open during the late 1980s, reflected a wider struggle over the nature of patriotic identity in a multiethnic society that continues to reverberate in the post-Soviet space.

The book challenges a commonly held view that official war memory embodied and reinforced the fundamentally Russocentric basis of Soviet multiethnic governance.[15] Particularly in the years after Stalin's death, the Soviet leadership looked to the war's memory to bolster lateral "friendship" bonds and a supra-ethnic sense of belonging, one that did not succumb to, but remained in constant tension with, state-sponsored Russocentrism and a centuries-long narrative of Russian exceptionalism. In highlighting the fluid and ambiguous nature of the state's informal ethnic hierarchy, the present study sheds new light on long-standing questions linked to the politics of remembrance and provides a crucial historical context for the patriotic revival of the war's memory in twenty-first-century Russia.[16]

[15] This view is discussed in the following sections. Here, I distinguish between linguistic Russification, which was an assimilationist and homogenizing policy, and "Russocentrism" as the more general promotion of the Russian people as a distinct, leading entity vis-à-vis other Soviet peoples. On this distinction, see Aspaturian, "The Non-Russian Nationalities," 143–198.

[16] In 2014, the war served as a framing device for the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed separatist movement in eastern Ukraine. In both cases, Russian state media cast the Russian-speaking near abroad as the heirs to the Soviet generation of victors while branding the Ukrainian government and its supporters "fascists" and "banderovtsy" (a reference to followers of the Ukrainian nationalist leader and Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera). Ukrainian media took part in its own war-related framing of events. See, for example, McGlynn, "Historical Framing," 1058–1080. In Russia, the rekindling of the war's public memory has not been an exclusively top-down process, but has ridden a preexisting wave of popular enthusiasm for victory and grassroots efforts to remember the dead of war, conferring an air of authenticity on this official endeavor. On government cooption of popular commemorations, see Bernstein, "Remembering War," 422–436. The tradition of the Immortal Regiment, to take one example, began as a journalist-led, grassroots movement in the city of Tomsk in 2012. The political leadership has since appropriated and politicized the tradition to the dismay of its originators. See Gabowitsch, "Are Copycats Subversive," 297–314; Fedor, "Memory, Kinship,"

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The Myth of the War Victory

As in other countries that experienced the devastation of war and occupation, the Soviet leadership fashioned a self-serving "myth of the war experience," which recast the conflict as an event with profound meaning and sanctity.[17] Although national myths are always selective and grounded in forgetting as much as remembering, this book is less interested in ferreting out "myth" from "reality" than in looking at how myths structure reality.[18] As the cultural historian Michael Kammen proposes, even where there is a willful distortion of the past, "description and explanation serve us in more satisfactory ways than cynicism about bad faith or evil intent on the part of dominant elites." War myths reflect "a normative desire for . . . national unity, stability, and state-building." They are, moreover, hardly confined to authoritarian regimes.[19] This is to say that the Soviet myth of the war victory, like all officially sanctioned mythologies of war, reflected the universal drive for social cohesion in the wake of national upheaval.[20]

And yet, in the Soviet Union, the collective remembrance of World War II attained a significance arguably without parallel.[21] This was due in

307–344; Edele, "Fighting Russia's History Wars," 90–124. For an excellent overview of these processes under Putin, see Walker, *The Long Hangover*.

[17] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 3–11.

[18] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 142–145; Bouchard, *National Myths*, passim; Dany and Freistein, "Global Governance," 229–248.

[19] Kammen, *In the Past Lane*, 200, 204. In the United States, politicians, journalists, novelists, and many historians engaged in a mythmaking of their own after the war, which perpetuated a sense of American exceptionalism rooted in the wartime experience. Of course, liberal-democratic societies have produced other, more problematic war-related myths. See, for example, the "Lost Cause" erasure of slavery from Civil War memory in the southern United States or the blotting out of collaboration and communist participation from the Gaullist myth of resistance in postwar France. On these issues, see Blight, *Race and Reunion*; Golsan, "The Legacy of World War II in France," 73–101; Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*; Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*; Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory*.

[20] On the Soviet drive for a "homogeneous and harmonious" postwar society, see Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 133–138; Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1114–1155. Following Gérard Bouchard, I take myth to mean "enduring, deeply rooted, inclusive representations that suffuse a nation's past, present, and future with a set of values, ideals, and beliefs expressed in an identity and a memory": Bouchard, *National Myths*, 277.

[21] Although there are various labels used to describe the phenomenon of group memory, each expressing a slightly different nuance, this book generally uses the terms collective, social, or cultural memory or remembrance interchangeably to mean "the body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future." Following John Bodnar, the book takes this "body of beliefs" to be the outcome of a dynamic interaction between "official" and "vernacular" cultures; the former advanced by authorities in positions of power, the latter reflecting "an array of specialized interests that are grounded in parts of the whole." See Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13–15.

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Figure 0.3 Artist at work on an official portrait of Leonid Brezhnev (courtesy of Valery Shchekoldin)

no small part to the sheer scale of Soviet losses. By most estimates, close to twenty-seven million Soviet citizens lost their lives as a direct result of the conflict. The Germans and their allies destroyed as many as seventy thousand Soviet villages and nearly two thousand towns and cities, leaving some twenty-five million people homeless by war's end.[22] Beginning in the 1960s, the public celebration of victory acquired the characteristics of a state-sanctioned cult, which included ubiquitous monuments, commemorative rituals, and mass media productions devised, in part, to legitimate the aging political elite (Figure 0.3).[23] Official portraits of Leonid Brezhnev increasingly tied his personal authority to supposed wartime service and heroics, a connection reflected in the almost comical number of military and other decorations adorning the general secretary's uniform.[24] By 1984,

[22] See Krivosheev, *Rossiia i SSSR v voinakh XX veka*, esp. 115–121. Critics of Krivosheev have given considerably higher figures for military losses. See, for example, Mikhalev, *Liudskie poteri v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*. For a useful discussion of Western biases concerning the Soviet war effort, see Davies, *No Simple Victory*, 9–72.

[23] On the war's veneration as constituting a state cult, see Tumarkin, *The Living & the Dead*.

[24] On Brezhnev's connection to the late-socialist war cult, see Davis, *Myth Making*.

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according to official figures, the CPSU had helped to establish as many as one-hundred thousand monuments and memorial sites dedicated to the war, with more than forty thousand of these falling within the territory of a single republic – the Ukrainian SSR.[25] Even amid the USSR's collapse, the war remained, in the words of one Western chronicler at the time, the only "unquestionable victory of the regime."[26]

The "Great Patriotic War," as Soviet media dubbed the conflict, emerged as the central defining event of the Soviet epoch.[27] It was the lens through which Soviet citizens made sense of everything that had come before. From the vantage point of 1945, the brutality of collectivization, headlong industrialization, the Gulag, show trials, and purges became necessary measures to prepare the country for the long-anticipated showdown with the forces of imperialism, among which Nazi Germany embodied a particularly monstrous strain. Although the war's mythology fluctuated with the evolving political landscape, several key ingredients to victory remained constant: the Soviet political and economic system, the unity and unwavering patriotism of the Soviet people, socialist ideology, cooperation among Soviet nations, and the leadership of the Communist Party.[28]

Long dismissed for its blatantly propagandistic function and its association with both Stalin's cult and late-socialist gerontocracy, the war's public memory has become the object of sustained scholarly investigation over the past two decades.[29] Grounded largely in the theoretical and methodological approaches of the "memory boom" of the 1980s and 90s,[30] studies focusing on the Soviet Union have shed light on the often-dynamic role the war's commemoration played in shaping individual and

[25] Anderson, "Voprosy okhrany," 4. [26] Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*, 400.

[27] On the war's longer-term impact on Soviet society and political culture, see, for example, Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, esp. 7–39; Lovell, *The Shadow of War*; Zubkova, *Russia after the War*; Druzhba, *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina*; Fitzpatrick, "Postwar Soviet Society," 129–156.

[28] To this list, many scholars would certainly add the fraternal guidance and unique historical provenance of the Russian people. In a recent overview of victory culture in the USSR, for example, Mark Edele cites the Soviet system and Russian leadership theme as more or less equal factors: Edele, "The Soviet Culture of Victory," 787.

[29] Indeed, for many years, Tumarkin's *The Living & the Dead* was the only monograph to deal exclusively with the war's public memory. Other early works to identify the significance of the war's memory in Soviet society include Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, esp. chap. 9; Vail' and Genis, *60-e mir sovetskogo cheloveka*, esp. 88–100; Gallagher, *The Soviet History of World War II*; Arnold, *Stalingrad im sowjetischen Gedächtnis*; and individual chapters in Stites, *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*; Garrard and Garrard, *World War 2 and the Soviet People*; Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*; Linz, *The Impact of World War II*.

[30] Professional historians were responding to a confluence of circumstances that included the *Historikerstreit* in West Germany and renewed interest in Holocaust memory, the fiftieth anniversary of V-E Day, and the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern

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group recollections and identities.[31] In recent years, pathbreaking monographs have explored both the production and reception of Soviet war memory from a variety of perspectives.[32]

Europe. For an overview of the memory boom, see Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper, "The Politics of War Memory," 4–7. Key works in the English-language literature include Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*; Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France*; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*; Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. See also important discussions in Adorno, "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?," 114–129; Gillis, "Introduction," 3–26; Herf, *Divided Memory*; Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*; Koonz, "Between Memory and Oblivion," 258–280; Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces*; Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*. This wave of scholarship was attuned to modernist developments in the study of nationalism, which conceptualized the nation as a fundamentally modern construct: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*; Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions"; Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation." More recently, theorists of nationalism have highlighted the quotidian aspects of nation and ethnicity: Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. Likewise, they incorporated insights from the bourgeoning field of memory studies, namely the idea that memories are given distinct shape and meaning in relation to the group or groups within which one is embedded: Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," 1–20; Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 125–133. These ideas were rooted in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, who argued in the 1920s that memories are "socially framed": Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

[31] In her excellent study of war memory in Leningrad, for example, Lisa Kirschenbaum reveals how official remembrance practices produced a framework within which individuals structured their conceptions of the past, "endowing loss with meaning as the necessary and terrible price of victory." See Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, 11–17, 186–228, qt. 320; Peri, *The War Within*, passim; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 189, 264, 373–395.

[32] Perhaps no single monograph has done more to invigorate scholarly interest in the war's political and cultural legacy than Amir Weiner's work on the west-central Ukrainian region of Vinnytsia. Weiner demonstrates the conflict's profound impact on the nature of political authority and legitimacy, state violence, and collective identities. Weiner also revealed the war's place as a key milestone in Soviet eschatology: Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 16–17; Weiner, "When Memory Counts," 167–188; cf. Lane, "Legitimacy and Power," 213. On the eschatological features of Marxism in Russia, see also Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*. The relatively recent literature on Soviet war memory includes important examinations of the local dimensions of memory in Leningrad and other urban and regional milieux (e.g., Mijnssen, *Russia's Hero Cities*; Donovan, *Chronicles in Stone*; Peri, *The War Within*; Davis, *Myth Making*; Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City*; Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*; Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*; Risch, *The Ukrainian West*; Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction*; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*; Weiner, *Making Sense of War*); the war's treatment in Soviet cinema, literature, and historiography (e.g., Dobrenko, *Late Stalinism*, esp. 35–86; Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, esp. 263–283; Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, esp. 173–211; Ellis, *The Damned and the Dead*; Youngblood, *Russian War Films*; Markwick, *Rewriting History*); the evolution of Victory Day (e.g., Gabowitsch, "Victory Day before Brezhnev" as well as his forthcoming edited volume, *Pamiatnik i prazdnik: etnografiia Dnia Pobedy*; and on post-Soviet Victory Day: Norris, "Memory for Sale," 201–229); the plight of veterans and their part in propagating war memory (e.g., Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II*; Fieseler, *Arme Sieger*; Merridale *Ivan's War*, chap. 11); the impact on women, gender, and youth (e.g., Fraser, *Military Masculinity*; Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat*; deGraffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*;

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But whereas the scholarly literature has tended away from high politics and the Party's central mythmaking apparatus to shed light on regional and societal variation and lived experience, the present study focuses on the production of what Amir Weiner called the "dominant myth" and its relationship to the most numerous Soviet nationality – the Russian people. That is to say, *The Soviet Myth* is primarily concerned with the mechanisms of rule, the outlook and intentions of political elites, and the methods whereby those elites sought to forge a sense of common identity through remembrance of war.[33] As Krishan Kumar observes, far from ignoring popular attitudes and perceptions, a focus on "rulers" and "ruling peoples" can elucidate the process of negotiation between state and citizenry, "to see it not simply in oppositional terms but as a matter of a shared enterprise that could unite rulers and ruled as much as it divided them."[34] Even one-party political systems depend on their capacity to connect with their subjects, to – as Frederick Corney puts it – implicate "the listeners in the telling of the story."[35] The myth of victory in the Great Patriotic War, and its relationship to the Soviet Union's "first among equals," played a central role in this official endeavor. But before examining the book's argument in greater detail, it is necessary to first

Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*; Markwick and Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline*; also Bernstein, *Raised under Stalin*, chap. 8; Harris, "No Nastas'ias on the Volga," 99–130; Harris, "Memorializations of a Martyr," 73–90; Conze and Fieseler, "Soviet Women as Comrades-in-Arms," 211–234); the role of wartime mobilization in bringing non-Russian – and especially non-Slavic – communities into the Soviet fold (e.g., Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*; Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 202–222; also Florin, "Becoming Soviet"; Shaw, "Soldiers' Letters to Inobatxon and O'g'ulxon"; Shin, "Red Army Propaganda"; Rudling, "For a Heroic Belarus!"; Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*; Yilmaz, "History Writing"; Schechter, "The People's Instructions"; Stronski, *Tashkent*, chap. 4); the war's place within a specifically Russian martial longue durée (e.g., Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*; Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory*; Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, esp.189–223; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 183–239; Vujačić, *Nationalism, Myth, and the State*, 185–193); the changing nature of citizenship viewed from the "stuff" soldiers carried (Schechter, *The Stuff of Soldiers*); among other works cited throughout this book.

[33] For important critiques of the state-centered approach to social memory, see Confino, "Collective Memory," 1386–1403; Winter, *Remembering War*, 135–153; Winter and Sivan, "Setting the Framework," 6–39. However, in authoritarian societies where a small political elite controls the mechanisms of social memory, analyses of the "official" production of memory are especially relevant; they elucidate the framework within which memory is made. As Winter concedes, "political groups and institutions inject collective memory . . . into the process." Winter, "The Performance of the Past," 17.

[34] Kumar, *Visions of Empire*, 6. A similar point is made in Blitstein, "Nation and Empire," 204–205.

[35] Corney, *Telling October*, 10–11. Among scholars who have revolutionized our understanding of the relationship between the Soviet state and its citizenry by demonstrating ways official messaging helped structure popular perceptions, behaviors, and actions, see, for example, Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*; Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

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consider the party-state's evolving posture toward its most prominent (one might even say "awkward") national community, ethnic Russians, in the years leading up to and during the war.[36]

The Russian Question

Having emerged victorious from the bloody civil war that came in the wake of the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, Russia's Communist government faced the daunting challenge of transforming a vast former empire into a structure that claimed not to be one. The Bolsheviks unveiled their novel approach to this problem in 1923, following the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the previous year.[37] Based on the Marxist assumption that national identity was a transitory, bourgeois phenomenon that needed to be traversed and transcended before advancing to the purely class-based consciousness of socialism the regime granted forms of nationhood to the inherited ethnic minorities of the former Russian Empire in hopes of defusing their politically charged aspirations and antagonisms. This "anti-imperial state" was conceived not only to assist in the revolutionary drive toward socialism, but also to facilitate trust between the state's various ethnic groups and the former oppressor nation of Great Russians. To this end, the regime introduced measures that positively discriminated against the state's ethnic Russian core. In the cultural sphere, this meant the denigration of tsarist military heroes and Russian literary icons. At an institutional level, the Bolsheviks denied the Russian people their own communist party, academy of sciences, state security service, and ethnically delineated territory. They were granted a federative (SFSR) rather than national (SSR) republic. And while this encouraged Russians to more closely identify with central, all-union institutions – and thus territorially with the USSR as a whole – the objective was to hamstring Russian cultural and political nationalism, which both Lenin and Stalin initially identified as the greater threat than the "local" nationalisms of non-Russian peoples.[38]

During the 1930s, Stalin reversed the official line on Russians in what has been cited as an important facet of a more general conservative "retreat" from the internationalist and class-based precepts of the prior

[36] This is in reference to Terry Martin's apt description of the RSFSR as the "awkward republic." Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 394–402.

[37] This outline of early Soviet nationalities policy is indebted to pioneering studies emphasizing the Bolsheviks as nation-builders rather than destroyers. For several, now-classic examples, see Edgar, *Tribal Nation*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*; Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*; Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment"; Suny, *The Revenge of the Past*; Simon, *Nationalism*.

[38] Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 19; Vihavainen, "Nationalism and Internationalism," 79.

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decade.[39] The very creation of the Soviet Union in 1922 and Stalin's subsequent thesis of "socialism in one country" reflected the gnawing sense that revolution in the industrially advanced West was unlikely anytime soon; hence, the fledgling Union would need to fend for itself.[40] The War Scare of 1927 and especially Hitler's rise to power in 1933 appear to have convinced Stalin that Marxism-Leninism alone lacked the mobilizational potential necessary to successfully defend the Soviet state.[41] Just as troubling were indications that indigenization policies, far from accelerating the obsolescence of ethnonational identities, were fueling anti-Soviet "bourgeois" nationalism within the USSR's borders. Thus, throughout the decade, the regime took a hard line against perceived instances of non-Russian nationalist activity, resulting in the "unmasking" of several dozen real or imagined nationalist conspiracies across the country.[42]

At the same time, Soviet cultural production shifted attention away from abstract social forces as the drivers of history toward individual agency and everyday heroism. Following Stalin's decimation of the Old Bolshevik ranks in the latter part of the decade, the focus shifted more thoroughly toward Russian cultural and historical themes. The press celebrated Russians as "first among equals" while touting Russian cultural, scientific, and, especially, military achievements of the prerevolutionary era. Films, histories, and monuments depicting Russian and proto-Russian heroes such as Aleksandr Nevskii, Dmitrii Donskoi, and Mikhail Kutuzov complemented official appeals to patriotism and patriotic devotion to motherland.[43] Russian language instruction became mandatory in schools in 1938 while the introduction of the internal passport (1932) had fixed one's sub-state national identity, which was based on the nationality of one's biological parents. Such "cultural technologies of rule" helped imbue both Soviet officialdom and the broader citizenry with an increasingly ethnonational outlook and self-perception. By the end of the decade, the concept of nationality had displaced the former preoccupation with class identity, a phenomenon Terry Martin

[39] The classic work arguing that there was a retreat from Soviet socialism toward a more traditional Russian nationalism is Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*, esp. chap. 7 and 378–382.
[40] The term is based on Stalin's 1924 thesis, which argued for developing socialism within a Soviet framework rather than prioritizing revolution abroad.
[41] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 21–24; Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, 76; Dobrenko, "The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste," 153–164.
[42] Service, *Stalin*, 326–328; Suny, "Stalin and His Stalinism," 37–38.
[43] This outline is drawn primarily from Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 29–42, 77–94. See also Service, *Stalin*, 205–206.

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goes so far as to describe as a turn toward ethnic primordialism.[44] During the war, as we will see, these processes helped render whole ethnic groups vulnerable to accusations of collective treason.

But the turn to Russocentrism and prerevolutionary patriotic imagery signified neither an abandonment of socialism nor an embrace of Russian nationalism.[45] The Stalinist leadership, like all revolutionary elites, continued to legitimate itself through a revolutionary metanarrative that emphasized the cleavage between the old and the new orders and that often explained away negative social phenomena as "remnants of the old regime."[46] Not unlike the nineteenth-century American magazine editor John O'Sullivan, who pointed to his country's revolutionary break as justification for its unfettered westward expansion, Stalinist authorities regularly signaled their antipathy toward "monarchies and aristocracies of antiquity" and nostalgic "reminiscences of battle fields [*sic*]."[47] As Marxists, however, the Bolsheviks did not reject the past wholesale. Instead, they viewed their movement as the culmination of a process centuries in the making. History even offered a blueprint that, if properly deciphered, could illuminate the inexorable march toward communism.[48] Although Russian history was rife with "reactionary" elements, Stalin believed it was entirely appropriate to celebrate its "popular" features, including pre-Soviet proletarian struggles and wars fought in defense of the homeland.[49] Far from irrelevant to the revolutionary project, the Communists saw "progressive" historical subject matter as vital to comprehending the prehistory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, even if there was not always a consensus over whether tsarist commanders and proto-Russian warriors constituted acceptable models of revolutionary patriotism.[50]

Stalinist Russocentrism might best be appreciated as a pragmatic and populist shift in the method of ideological indoctrination. As David Brandenberger has argued, at a time of rapid industrialization and mobilization for war, the new line "cloaked a Marxist-Leninist worldview within russocentric, etatist rhetoric" in order to more

[44] Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 99–227; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 442–451.

[45] For the view that Stalin embraced a variation of Russian nationalism, see, for example, Lewin, *The Soviet Century*, chap.12; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 41–43.

[46] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 19–51.

[47] O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," 426–430; Hopkins, *American Empire*, 191–193. I thank Lawrence Culver for first pointing me to O'Sullivan's text.

[48] For an illuminating discussion of this issue, see Bergman, *The French Revolutionary Tradition*, esp. i–xiv, and passim.

[49] Walicki, *Marxism*, esp. 398–454.

[50] This issue became particularly acute in the post-Stalin era. David Hoffmann makes a similar point about the challenges Stalin's Russocentrism presented in the longer term: Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 165.

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effectively "propagandize state-building and promote popular loyalty to the regime."[51] Such an interpretation is especially apt given the official declaration, following collectivization and the First Five-Year Plan, that socialism had been "built in its foundations."[52] In light of the purported elimination of capitalist exploitation within the Soviet Union, the shift in policy of the mid 1930s – observed in the promotion of traditional familial roles, in the move from avant-gardism to neoclassical monumental forms, and in the seemingly un-Marxist notion of a Soviet homeland – could now be justified as legitimating and consolidating the revolutionary order.[53] The Russian national revival was selective and largely adhered to Stalin's doctrine of national cultures, which mandated that they be "national in form" but "socialist in content."[54] Pushkin's rehabilitation, to take one example, recast the poet-aristocrat as a true "people's poet," largely alienated from the ruling class to which he belonged.[55] Similarly, authorities rehabilitated certain tsars – Ivan IV and Peter the Great, but not Catherine – for having enabled a strong central state in which to build socialism.[56] Put simply, the turn to Russian prerevolutionary cultural and patriotic motifs was, from its inception, highly pragmatic and instrumental; it was a provisional means of ideological indoctrination and mobilization at a time when the country was about to face an existential threat.

War and Ethnic Hierarchy

It was during the war that the Soviet state most effusively co-opted tsarist symbolism and Russian historical motifs.[57] The Soviet leadership cast the war as a struggle for national liberation, as a "Great Patriotic War"

[51] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, qt. 6, 62; Brandenberger, "Stalin's Populism," 723–739.
[52] On the profound significance of this claim, see Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 4, 152–153, passim.
[53] Hoffmann, "Was There a 'Great Retreat' from Soviet Socialism," 651–674; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 357.
[54] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, chaps. 2–3.
[55] Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, 131–134.
[56] As Erik van Ree notes: "Stalinist attention to Russian struggles against foreign invaders in late medieval times ... can be similarly interpreted as highlighting not the primordial character of the Russian nation but precisely the fact that this nation was a historical creation." Ree, "Stalin as Marxist," qt. 176; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 51–52; Perrie, *The Cult of Ivan the Terrible*, 29–33, 98.
[57] For example, Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 202–222; Maddox, "These Monuments Must Be Protected!"; Norris, *A War of Images*, 179–185; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, chaps. 7–10; Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, 159–194; Kirschenbaum, "Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families," 825; Barber, "The Image of Stalin," 38; Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 89–108. See also the various entries in Platt and Brandenberger, *Epic Revisionism*; Stites, *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*. On wartime loyalties, particularly among Russians, see, for example, Enstad, *Soviet Russians*; Budnitskii, "The

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evocative of the 1812 Patriotic War against Napoleon. State media touted traditional Russian soldierly virtues as a model for new recruits. These included "physical stamina," "sense of duty," "self-sacrifice," "hatred of oppression," and, most of all, "steadfastness [*stoikost'*]" and "love for the motherland [*rodina*]."[58] Iconography depicting prerevolutionary Russian commanders urging on Red Army troops became a mainstay of wartime propaganda. In early 1944, the state adopted a new patriotic national anthem to replace the old "Internationale," one that made explicit reference to the role of Russia, which "united forever" [*splotila naveki*] the country's various peoples.[59] Meanwhile, chauvinistic and anti-Semitic attitudes among party functionaries, such as the head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation (Agitprop), Georgii Aleksandrov, only added momentum to the Russocentric surge unleashed by the war.[60]

But the Russocentric propaganda of the war years did not target Russians exclusively. As late as 1945, the Soviet leadership remained committed to mobilizing non-Russians through the deployment of local national-patriotic imagery, albeit within a Russocentric historical framework.[61] This campaign stemmed primarily from complications presented by the recruitment and arrival at the front of soldiers from Central Asia and the Caucasus who often lacked knowledge of the Russian language and among whom political indoctrination before the war had met with limited success. The program sought to localize and contextualize the war for non-Russian recruits in several ways. The military created

Great Patriotic War and Soviet Society"; Edele, *Stalin's Defectors*; Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*.

[58] GARF 6903/12/87/637. On "steadfastness [*stoikost'*]" as a particularly important Russian historical virtue, see Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*, esp. chap. 4. On "love for the motherland," see Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 91, 99, 201, 380–381, and passim.

[59] Service, *Stalin*, 442–448.

[60] The Russians as "elder brothers" and "first among equals" built on prewar declarations and thus appeared very early in the war. See, for example, "Velikaia druzhba narodov SSSR," *Pravda*, July 29, 1941, 1; V. Kruzkhkov, "Velikaia sila leninsko-stalinskoi druzhby narodov," *Pravda*, Feb. 21, 1942, 3. On Aleksandrov's chauvinism, see Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 163. Additional Russocentric measures included the limited revival of the Russian Orthodox Church and the disbanding of Comintern. The more general Russocentric thrust of wartime propaganda and policies proved extremely popular among frontline soldiers, where, alongside Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, one of the most popular stories was that of a Russian peasant soldier, the titular *Vasilii Terkin*, by Aleksandr Tvardovskii. See Tvardovskii, *Vasilii Terkin*, 35–36, 122–127, 203, and passim; Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*, 86–88; Hosking, "The Second World War," 162–187. Other popular writers, such as Aleksei Tolstoi, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Konstantin Simonov, conflated Soviet and Russian loyalties. Examples include Simonov, *Russkie liudi*; and the various entries in Erenburg, *Voina: Aprel' 1942 – Mart 1943*. On the popularity among soldiers of Russocentric propaganda, see Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 381.

[61] Recent explorations of this campaign include Carmack, *Kazakhstan in World War II*, passim; Florin, "Becoming Soviet"; Shaw, "Soldiers' Letters to Inobatxon and O'g'ulxon"; Shin, "Red Army Propaganda."

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a number of national formations within its ranks while central authorities deployed bilingual political instructors to articulate Soviet objectives in recruits' native languages. In addition, training in the Russian language intensified during the war to improve communication between the predominantly Russian and Slavic officer corps and the new arrivals.[62]

Along with these measures, mobilization involved the selective resurrection of non-Russian national pasts. Georgian writers produced histories on state-building monarchs like eleventh-century King Davit Agmashenebeli. Uzbeks were reminded of the hero Tarabi, who "struggled for freedom against the Mongol invaders."[63] Ukrainian newspapers traced the fighting traditions of the Ukrainian people to the seventeenth-century Cossack leaders Petro Konashevich-Sahaidachnyi and Bogdan Khmel'nitskii, who, in 1654, pledged Cossack allegiance to the Muscovite tsar. In 1943, the state went so far as to establish the Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskii for outstanding combat service leading to the liberation of Soviet territory. Patterned on military orders named for Nevskii, Suvorov, and Kutuzov established in 1942, this order remained the only military decoration recalling a historical figure of non-Russian lineage.[64] The advancement of non-Russian national pasts supplemented the central media's emphasis on the present-day heroism of non-Russian Soviet citizens in defense of the motherland – the myth of the twenty-eight Panfilovtsy being the most famous example.[65] However, authorities intended such measures to reinforce rather than replace a sense of ethnic hierarchy. Indeed, Stalin approved the introduction of the Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskii mainly because of the latter's role in promoting the "sacred union" between Ukrainians and Russians.[66]

Such efforts to mobilize non-Russian groups through targeted propaganda accelerated the essentialization of ethnic categories that began

[62] For excellent treatments of this subject, see Schechter, "The People's Instructions," 109–133; Dreeze, "Stalin's Empire." On national formations in the Red Army, see Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 548–51, 600–604. On the way these wartime processes fostered a Russified sense of Soviet national belonging, see especially Shaw, "Making Ivan-Uzbek."

[63] Stronski, *Tashkent*, qt. 84; Shin, "Red Army Propaganda," 55.

[64] On the introduction of historically themed military decorations and the incorporation of elements of tsarist uniforms, see Schechter, *The Stuff of Soldiers*, 58–72. In terms of the timeline of their appearance, naval decorations were an exception. As late as 1944, the state approved decorations bearing the names of the Russian admirals Fedor Ushakov and Pavel Nakhimov. See also Vdovin, *Russkie v XX veke*, 150.

[65] Among numerous other publicized examples of multiethnic cooperation in the defeat of Nazi Germany, see the defense of the so-called Pavlov House during the Battle of Stalingrad, which purportedly involved nearly a dozen Soviet nationalities. Rodimtsev, *Gvardeitsy stoiali nasmert'*, 84–105.

[66] Yekelchyk, "Stalinist Patriotism," 51–80.

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before the war.[67] If the leadership considered certain nationalities useful in the fight against Germany, it looked upon others with suspicion and came to regard whole ethnic groups as irredeemable "enemy nations."[68] For example, in 1944, authorities deported nearly half a million Chechen and Ingush peoples to Central Asia. Given their "enemy" status, wartime and postwar commemorations downplayed the contributions of these groups. Soviet media gave strikingly little recognition to the numerous fighters of Chechen origin who participated in the defense of Brest Fortress in June 1941.[69] Amir Weiner describes such a ranking or outright "excision" of peoples based on their perceived wartime contribution as "hierarchical heroism," one of two major cornerstones of the emerging war myth.[70]

The other cornerstone Weiner identifies is the principle of "universal suffering," which applied most directly to the uniqueness of the Jewish wartime experience. Jews were well represented throughout the Red Army and industry and Soviet media acknowledged the Jewish contribution to the fight until very late in the war.[71] Readers of Soviet newspapers, moreover, could find in the journalism of Ehrenberg and other published reports direct references to the Nazi extermination program.[72] While not a full-throated appeal to the Soviet Union's Jews, the sporadic release of such information probably contributed to a general sense of outrage, a reaction that occasionally provoked calls for the creation of Jewish military formations within the Red Army.[73] Nevertheless, public representations typically cast the Nazis' campaign against Soviet Jewry as being waged against "citizens of the USSR."[74] This was in part an effort to counter German characterizations of the Soviet Union as a bastion of

[67] Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism."

[68] Smith, *Red Nations*, 147–162; Naimark, "Ethnic Cleansing"; Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, chaps. 3–4; Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples*.

[69] An exception among Chechen soldiers was the celebrated machine-gunner Khanpasha Nuradilov. Merlin, "Remembering and Forgetting," 37; Tishkov, *Chechnya*, 200.

[70] Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, chap. 4.

[71] Weiner, 216–235. Likewise, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow, under the leadership of Solomon Mikhoels and Shakne Epshtein, operated a relatively successful propaganda campaign geared toward audiences abroad.

[72] Berkhoff, "Total Annihilation"; Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 136–166.

[73] As one Soviet soldier mentioned in a letter to Ehrenburg, "I am convinced that the Jews will fight the Fascists with a hatred ten times greater, both as patriots of the motherland and as the avengers of the blood of their brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers, wives and children." Quoted in Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner*, 9. There is also evidence that many Soviet citizens welcomed news of the systematic killing of Jews. See Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 162–166.

[74] Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner*, 7–11; Arad, "Stalin and the Soviet Leadership: Responses to the Holocaust."

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"Judeo-Bolshevism."[75] It also stemmed from anti-Semitic attitudes among the party rank and file, further complicating representations of Jewish heroism. It was quite common, for instance, to encounter rumors that Jews were evading military service. As a sign of things to come, public accounts increasingly glossed over the Jewish identity of soldiers as the war drew to a close.[76]

Hence, Weiner and others contend, the war not only furthered the essentialization of ethnic identities, it also reified their hierarchical configuration. Russians, through their wartime service, remained the paramount Soviet collective, while groups suspected of disloyalty were consigned to political oblivion.[77] Between these two poles stood everyone else, grouped into Soviet nations arranged vertically in the order of their supposed contribution in wartime.[78]

Interpreting Victory

The relationship between the hierarchical mode of heroism detailed in the preceding section and the fledgling myth of victory has divided historians. A number of scholars have argued that the war victory fostered a transcendent, pan-Soviet identity, one that superseded hierarchical ethnic particularism.[79] As Barbara Epstein asserts in her study of the Minsk Ghetto, "The Great Patriotic War became the basis of a new or at least refashioned and revived Soviet identity, transcending the various

[75] Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 83.
[76] Manley, 229–235; Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 216–235.
[77] This is certainly not to equate Soviet ethnic hierarchy with the racial ideology and biological determinism of the Nazis. As Weiner is careful to point out, in the Soviet case, "individuals maintained the right to appeal and often did so successfully," while "the fear of allowing biological-familial heredity to dictate the prospects of redemption continued to haunt the regime." Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 201–202.
[78] Among "loyal" national communities, the war reinforced a Sovietized sense of ethnic identity. This process involved its own hierarchical complications and reconfigurations. Tarik Cyril Amar has demonstrated that the official history of the Ivan Franko People's Guard, an underground organization based in the western Ukrainian city of L'vov (Lviv), came to promote a distinctly Soviet-Ukrainian national myth. This was achieved in part by diminishing the very prominent role played by Polish Communists, Jews, and other groups within the organization. See Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, 282–297. More generally, see Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1149–1154.
[79] See, for example, Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto*, passim; Whittington, "Making a Home for the Soviet People," 147–161; Lovell, *The Shadow of War*, 231; Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted*, 44–45; Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine*, xxxv–xxxvi; Szporluk, "The Fall of the Tsarist Empire," 82; Dunmore, *Soviet Politics*, 130; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 145–146. Similarly, Lisa Kirschenbaum argues that the war's memory helped perpetuate "such (unrealized) visions of Soviet citizenship and the Soviet person." Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, 13.

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ethnic groups, or nationalities, composing the Soviet Union."[80] Amir Weiner, too, contends that the emerging myth of the war nurtured a "supraclass, cross-ethnic" sense of belonging that provided "the polity with a previously absent integrating theme." Yet precisely how this wider sense of Sovietness impacted the war myth's hierarchy of heroism – and in particular the notion of Russian wartime primacy – is less clear. Weiner notes, for example, that toward the end of the war the inclusive all-Soviet mode of heroism was reinstated in Ukraine so as to "curtail the mistaken assumption ... that Ukraine was liberated from the Nazis 'under the banner of [Taras] Shevchenko and [Panteleimon] Kulish.'" Here, Weiner frames mobilization as a "balancing act" between ethnonational-oriented appeals and what he calls the "Soviet component." Should it grow too strong, the national factor threatened to destabilize the Soviet component; at the same time, the Soviet component offered a means of tempering ethnonational assertiveness linked to wartime mobilization.[81] But how this intriguing framework, taken from Ukraine, applied to Russians and to Soviet multiethnicity more generally remains unexplored.

An investigation into the relationship between the "Soviet component" and the concept of Russian hierarchical primacy seems especially appropriate given that scholarship on postwar ideology, mass culture, and nationalities policy has largely interpreted the war's official memory to be an extension of the Russocentric hierarchy of the war years.[82] It is in its attention to the war myth's bearing on the so-called Russian Question – defined here as "the role and status of the Russian people, language, and culture within the Soviet Union" – that the present study builds on the important groundwork laid by Weiner and others.[83]

The most important scholarly examination of this issue to date is David Brandenberger's *National Bolshevism*, which explains the trajectory of the Stalinist turn toward Russocentric etatism from 1931 to 1956. Brandenberger affirms the link between the war's memory and the

[80] Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto*, 228. [81] Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 354–356, 385.

[82] As Yuri Slezkine remarks of the first postwar decade, "Every day and every hour, in every classroom and at every meeting, the Soviet people ... were told that the war had been won by the Russians and their friends; that the Russians had won the war because they were a great nation; that they had been a great nation for as long as Russian had been spoken." Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 309. For other examples, see Kozhevnikov, *Russkii patriotizm*, esp. 399–403; Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom*, 274–275; Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*, esp. 85–89; Shin, "Red Army Propaganda," 39–40; Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*; Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 235–237; Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema*, 136–137; Brandenberger, "Stalin, the Leningrad Affair," esp. 247–248; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 183–225; Hosking, "The Second World War," 162–187.

[83] This is following Terry Martin: Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 24.

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Russian people's enduring status as the paramount Soviet nation.[84] As he observes, ideologists' main preoccupation in the immediate postwar period involved reconciling "the previous decade's emphasis on prerevolutionary Russian history with the war's undeniably modern, 'Soviet' character." For Brandenberger, this ideological reconciliation hinged on the emerging war myth, which presented the 1941–5 conflict "as a fundamentally Russian experience." In this view, nuanced distinctions between the Soviet war effort and Russia's much longer history of patriotic struggles against foreign aggressors mattered little, as a broader Russocentric ideological framework quickly subsumed the victory narrative.[85] The war victory thus enabled the Stalinist leadership to craft an ideological amalgam of sorts, which paired Russian-led victory in 1945 and a millennium of Russian exceptionalism in a patriotic double axis, offering ideologists an "evocative vocabulary of myths, imagery, and iconography with which to rally the population."[86]

A similar emphasis on the Russocentric basis of Soviet patriotic identity has dominated the historiography of the late-socialist period.[87] Groundbreaking studies by Yitzhak Brudny, Nikolai Mitrokhin, and others, have exposed the sometimes-intimate relationship between Russian nationalist-oriented intellectuals and the late-socialist party leadership, as well as the state's continued reliance on Russian national-patriotic motifs for popular mobilization. As Brudny argues, faced with a decline in revolutionary fervency, the Brezhnev-led Politburo of the 1960s and 1970s made an ideological compromise, co-opting elements of the Russian nationalist intelligentsia in order to bolster the state's mobilizational capacity. The official support for a limited, pro-Soviet Russian nationalism was, Brudny contends, most apparent in the increased print runs of nationalist "thick" journals and in the protection and elevation of so-called village prose writers. Likewise, Mitrokhin has charted the permeation of Russian nationalist attitudes among the middle echelons of the Party and state. The development of an informal network of Russophiles in positions of authority, and the likeminded artists, writers,

[84] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*. The most recent iteration of Brandenberger's argument is Brandenberger, *Stalinskii russotsentrizm* (2017).

[85] Brandenberger writes that postwar attempts to discern between the prerevolutionary and Soviet eras while nevertheless capturing a sense of Russian historical exceptionalism "was remarkably awkward, if not totally finessed. Ultimately, this prescription proved to be impossible to enforce and was quickly forgotten." Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 193.

[86] Brandenberger, esp. 183–196.

[87] One, introductory textbook summarizes the era thusly: "Soviet civilization was firmly under the sway of a Russian cultural pantheon and a Russian-dominated cult of World War II." Lovell, *The Soviet Union*, 111.

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historians, and veterans they cultivated, constituted nothing less than an informal "Russian Party" embedded within party-state structures. Although Mitrokhin notes in passing that Russian nationalist cultural figures were instrumental in shaping the war's memory, the connection between state-supported Russian nationalism and the late-socialist victory myth has remained almost wholly unexplored. This omission is particularly glaring given that the war's memory was the subject of perhaps the largest propaganda campaign of the late-socialist era – the cult of World War II. The few authors who do touch on the war's remembrance in this context tend to view it as an outgrowth of broader Russian national-patriotic tendencies.[88]

This book makes three significant contributions to this literature, which will be explicated in detail in the following sections. Together, these interventions – which I categorize as "wartime threads," "discursive tension," and "the doctrine of the Soviet people" – form the core of the book's argument.

Wartime Threads

The book's first major contention is that Stalinist Russocentrism was merely one of several competing patriotic strands unleashed during wartime mobilization that vied to define the war's memory in the postwar era. By the war's end, as Agitprop terminated certain wartime appeals, such as those pertaining to non-Russian heroic pasts and Orthodox Church-inspired proclamations, the various remaining mobilizational threads coalesced to form two prevailing ideological paradigms. The first, which this book terms the "Russocentric paradigm," was a direct extension of the wartime Russocentric line. Epitomized in Stalin's "great ancestors" speech of 1941, its essence involved positioning the Great Patriotic War along a thousand-year continuum of Russian martial struggles. This tendency was multiethnic in the sense that it highlighted the state's ethnic diversity and Russians' leading place within a highly variegated population. It was "Soviet" in that it cited the Soviet system, party leadership, and socialism as important wartime factors. But the Russocentric

[88] Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 3–4, 57–80, and passim; Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia*, 114–116, 276–283, 291–293, and passim; Kozhevnikov, *Russkii patriotizm*, 404–499. Brudny does not address the Russian nationalist link with the war's official veneration at all, while Donovan implies a subtle connection, rooted in late-socialist reflections on the Nazi destruction of Russian cultural artifacts. Hosking sees the war cult as partly emerging from the broader "Russianist outlook." See Donovan, *Chronicles in Stone*, 31–105; Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, 324–337, 361–371, qt. 362. For classic treatments of the growth of Russian nationalism during this period, see Dunlop, *Faces*; Yanov, *The Russian Challenge*; Yanov, *The Russian New Right*; Zaslavsky, *The Neo-Stalinist State*, chap. 5.

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paradigm presented Russian leadership and historical pedigree as fundamental, even overriding, ingredients to victory.[89]

The other dominant postwar tendency this book identifies, one that is often glossed over in the scholarly literature by the more evocative nationalistic imagery, was an ideological line firmly rooted in the Soviet era, its unique achievements, and the motif of a "socialist motherland" inhabited by a supra-ethnic community of "Soviet people."[90] This "pan-Soviet /internationalist paradigm" was highly statist and patriotic in the sense that it advocated the "patriotism of socialism in one country."[91] It was Russified in its emphasis on Russian as the language of interethnic communication and in its veneration of the Russian cultural canon. Its internationalism was domestic – that is, reflecting "friendship" bonds among Soviet peoples.[92] But unlike the Russocentric paradigm, the pan-Soviet /internationalist tendency maintained an uneasy if not antagonistic relationship to both Russian-led hierarchy and pre-Soviet patriotic motifs. The concept nearly always served to underscore the depth of the revolutionary divide, the novelty (as opposed to antiquity) of the Soviet people, and the primacy of a supranational and postrevolutionary sense of political identity.[93]

The pan-Soviet line portrayed the state's various ethnonational constituencies as bound not by Russian leadership but by lateral loyalties: "Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Tajiks and other peoples of the multinational Soviet Union" defending their motherland

[89] In addition to Brandenberger's "russocentric rubric," this paradigm is similar to both Gregory Carleton's notion of a "Russian myth of exceptionalism" and Mischa Gabowitsch's concept of "panhistorical militarism." See, respectively, Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*; Gabowitsch, "Russia's Arlington," 89–143.

[90] For an important discussion of the wartime evolution of the term "motherland," see Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 131–136, 373, 380–381. Regarding the concept of the "socialist motherland," Roger Reese observes perceptively how it signified that "not only was the USSR in danger; as the only socialist country, socialism itself and its potential for saving humankind were threatened." See Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, qt. 188, 197.

[91] Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*, 235–236.

[92] On the concept of "domestic internationalism," see Scott, *Familiar Strangers*, 29–36.

[93] See "Geroicheskii sovetskii narod," *Pravda*, Nov. 11, 1944, 1. This paradigm was evident from the outset of the war: "Nash otvet: smert' vragam! Nash lozung: pobeda!" *Pravda*, Jun. 23, 1941, 2; "Sviashchennaia nenavist' k vragu," *Pravda*, Jun. 23, 1941, 2; "Vse sily na zashchitu rodiny," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Jul. 3, 1941, 2; V. Iakutenok, "Moia mechta – bit' fashistskikh gadov," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Jul. 4, 1941, 2; V. Stavskii, "Armiia, dostoinaia svoego naroda," *Pravda*, Jan. 21, 1942, 3; P. Iudin, "Lenin – Osnovatel' sovetskogo gosudarstva," *Pravda*, Jan. 21, 1942, 3; "Za Rodinu, za stalinskuiu konstitutsiiu!" *Krasnaia zvezda*, Dec. 5, 1942, 1; "Nerushimaia sem'ia narodov SSSR," *Pravda*, Dec. 30, 1942, 1. On the importance of inclusive "Soviet" themes, see also Brooks, "Pravda Goes to War," 20–21; Florin, "Becoming Soviet," 495–516; Shaw, "Soldiers' Letters to Inobatxon and O'g'ulxon," 517–552; Hellbeck, *Stalingrad*, 18–68; Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 206–207.

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"arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder," as one wartime article in *Pravda* phrased it.[94] Such appeals minimized ethnonational particularities as the multiethnic "friendship" and "family" of nations became a monolithic "fortress" and "ferocious wall."[95] The pan-Soviet paradigm was distinct from the closely related doctrine of the "friendship of the peoples." As initially conceived, the friendship of the peoples formula functioned to perpetuate notions of ethnic hierarchy and primordialism.[96] It was the Russians, according to the friendship narrative, who first cast off the yoke of old regime oppression and whose guidance and cultural achievements led non-Russians along the path to modernity. As *Pravda* explained in February 1942, "The Great Russian people – elder brother and first among equals in a single Soviet family – lent tremendous assistance to other peoples. With its help, formerly oppressed peoples achieved their liberation, [and] economic and cultural golden age."[97] The opening stanza of the new national anthem, adopted in January 1944, reflected this aspect of the friendship of the peoples doctrine: "An unbreakable union of free republics, / Great Rus' has united forever to stand."[98]

However, by mid-1944, press accounts were commonly attributing the impending victory to a homogeneous "Soviet people" [*sovetskii narod*] rather than to metaphors underscoring ethnonational diversity and variegated hierarchy. Allusions to the war as the "trial" [*ispytanie*] or "crucible" [*surovoe ispytanie*] of the Soviet people appeared frequently, while rote formulations such as "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people" and "great feat of the Soviet people" routinized the link between victory and the overarching Soviet community.[99] One *Pravda* editorial reacted to a speech in which Stalin honored the "great Soviet people"[100]

[94] "Ot sovetskogo informbiuro (vechernee soobshchenie 15 iiulia)," *Pravda*, Jul. 16, 1941, 1.
[95] "Boevoe bratstvo narodov Sovetskogo Soiuza," *Pravda*, Oct. 31, 1942, 1.
[96] Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 432–461.
[97] V. Kruzhkov, "Velikaia sila leninsko-stalinskoi druzhby narodov," *Pravda*, Feb. 21, 1942, 3.
[98] Dubrovskii, "Glavnaia pesnia," 181. Tellingly, Shcherbakov and Voroshilov's original call for proposals for a new anthem specified that while the hymn should have a "national" rather than party character, it should reflect Soviet-era motifs, which included the friendship of the peoples. See ibid, 170.
[99] See, for example, "Torzhestvennoe zasedanie moskovskogo soveta deputatov trudiashchikhsia, posviashchennoe prazdnovaniiu XXVII godovshchiny Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsii," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Nov. 7, 1944, 3; Iudin, "Lenin – Osnovatel' sovetskogo gosudarstva," 3; "Velikii pod"em," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Nov. 25, 1943, 1; "Besprimernyi podvig naroda v zashchite Rodiny," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Jan. 7, 1944, 1.; "Za Rodinu, za stalinskuiu konstitutsiiu!" 1.
[100] "Doklad Predsedatelia Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborony tovarishcha I. V. Stalina," *Krasnaia zvezda*, Nov. 7, 1944, 2. First applied to the Russian people in 1937, the epithet "great" was typically reserved for Slavic ethnonational communities. On the use of this designation for Ukrainians, see Yekelchyk, "Stalinist Patriotism," 62–63.

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by exclaiming that "[t]hese simple words ... speak of a fervent *Soviet* patriotism," characterized by "boundless love of the Soviet person for the Soviet Motherland and Soviet state," a "superior worldview," and a "deeply civic identity." In contrast to the virulent ethnonationalism of the Nazis, "[o]ur patriotism," the author specified, "is Soviet, socialist patriotism." The article concluded by looking to the Soviet people's venerable past:

Twenty-seven years ago, the workers and peasants of our country, heeding the appeal of the Party of Lenin and Stalin, began to build a new, Soviet society ... They defeated their domestic enemies – the imperialists. They defended their state from fierce attacks by foreign invaders. They overcame all deprivations and tribulations, and gave the world the most striking demonstration of their ability to govern, organize domestic life, [and] advance the cause of their country and world civilization. Today the Soviet people have shown they are able to defend the Soviet cause and the cause of all humanity on the battlefield against fascism.[101]

While Russian military exploits in 1242, 1380, 1612, and 1812 continued to provide ideologists with convenient images of heroism in wartime, with the pan-Soviet paradigm such distant connections were no longer requisite.[102] It was not inspiration from prerevolutionary models that facilitated victory in the present but rather the radical transformations that had begun a mere "twenty-seven years ago" (Figure 0.4).

By the time the historian M. V. Nechkina proposed what she saw as the emergence of a "fundamentally new" community of Soviet people in the summer of 1944, she drew on what had become a commonplace pan-Soviet/internationalist model of patriotic identity, one that, though difficult to define, was certainly "higher" than any one nation, Russians included:

The formation of the "Soviet people" has passed through significant stages during the [Great] Patriotic War. The Soviet people is not a nation [*natsiia*], but something higher ..., fundamentally new and novel in the history of mankind, a stable community of people. It combines a unity of territory, a fundamentally new, shared economic system, the Soviet system, [and] a type of single new culture despite a multiplicity of languages. However, this is not a nation, but something new and higher. This is quite a new phenomenon in human history.[103]

[101] "Geroicheskii sovetskii narod," 1 (emphasis added).
[102] As Alexis Peri observes, Leningraders sometimes interpreted analogies with 1812 subversively, which might partly explain some of the privileging of the pan-Soviet line. Peri, *The War Within*, 217–222.
[103] "Stenogramma soveshchaniia," no. 2, 80–81. Although careful to specify that the narod was "not a nation," her definition certainly conforms to Western modernist and older Bolshevik formulations. Şener Aktürk argues that the term is better translated into English as "Soviet nation." See Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity*, 198.

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Figure 0.4 "Glory to the valiant Soviet fighters who are smashing the fascist beast in his lair!": 1945 poster pairing the impending victory with Soviet-era precedents (Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS via Getty Images)

Nikita Khrushchev's 1961 declaration that the Soviet people constituted a wholly "new historical community," sharing a "common socialist motherland," "a common economic base," and a "common worldview" was not, as is often suggested, an invention of the post-Stalin era.[104] Rather, it embodied one of two contrasting mobilizational strategies that would go on to shape official conceptions of victory for decades.

[104] For example: Evans, *Soviet Marxism-Leninism*, 88. Indeed, a variant of such a project began at least as early as the 1930s. See Brandenberger, *Propaganda State*, esp. 98–119; Sanborn, *Drafting*, 96–131.

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Discursive Tension

How authorities attempted to reconcile the Russocentric and pan-Soviet/ internationalist tendencies after 1945 is the book's second major theme. While many scholars have pointed to the wartime and postwar emergence of a Russified ideological amalgam, this book argues that the two mobilizational paradigms did not so much fuse as constitute a set of divergent patriotic discourses.[105] Starting late in the war, the ideological establishment worked to harmonize the competing Russocentric and pan-Soviet threads through what might be called discursive tension. A set of norms rather than an explicit policy prescription, discursive tension involved positioning what were two distinct patriotic paradigms at the opposite poles of an ideological spectrum.[106] In the postwar era, the war narrative itself embodied this tension. Late Stalinism tolerated the coexistence of rival Russocentric and "internationalist" victory narratives, enabling a surprisingly fluid mobilizational repertoire that the leadership could use to promote either Russian leadership and ethnic diversity or the idea of a homogeneous "Soviet" people as the changing domestic and international landscape required. Despite the victory myth's continued multivalence under Stalin, the Cold War saw many Soviet ideologists confine Russocentric dynamics to prerevolutionary and early Soviet historical narratives, while advancing the emerging victory myth as an overwhelmingly pan-Soviet/internationalist ideal. It would take over a decade after the war for the pan-Soviet victory myth to prevail over its Russocentric counterpart. Nevertheless, this more compartmentalized form of discursive tension, in which the war became the exclusive domain of the pan-Soviet end of the ideological spectrum, was already observable in some of the mobilizational strategies of the latter half of the war. To illustrate the concept, it is useful to examine its initial, wartime manifestation.

[105] On the emergence of an amalgam, see Suny, "The Contradictions of Identity," 27; Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 145–153; Hosking, "The Second World War," 178. Roger Reese contends that propaganda organs treated the motif and sanctity of the revolutionary divide as a secondary motivation for soldiers, and in some cases entirely jettisoned the theme. See Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought*, 188, 197. David Brandenberger's sophisticated argument that the use of the Russian national past was first and foremost a "populist flirtation," supports the view that there was a longer-term amalgamation in which Russocentric concerns fused with Marxist-Leninist and proletarian internationalist ambitions: Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 6–7; Brandenberger, "Stalin's Populism," 730. As indicated, my own reading of Soviet wartime propaganda suggests that, after 1941, Agitprop only sporadically reconciled "Russian" and "Soviet" aspects of patriotic culture in anything like a stable fusion, although these twin tendencies both broadly pointed in the direction of social cohesion.

[106] Following Jesse Kauffman, I take "norms" to mean "usually unspoken and unwritten but generally shared habits, values, and assumptions." Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance*, 221.

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For instance, both the new state hymn and the "friendship of the peoples" narrative limited the scope of Russian exceptionalism to the period leading up to and during the establishment of Soviet power. In the case of the national anthem, following the single mention of the Russians' part in uniting the peoples of the USSR, the chorus and subsequent verses stressed ostensibly supra-ethnic, Soviet ideals: the revolution, Stalin's cult, and war against a foreign enemy.[107] Likewise, the course of the war reconfigured the friendship metaphor in subtle but not insignificant ways. Representations of the friendship of the peoples increasingly concentrated the theme of Russian leadership around the events of the revolution and the spheres of cultural and technological advancement. As an article in *Pravda* asserted in November 1944,

> The Russian people rallied the other peoples of Russia on to the Great October Socialist Revolution, liberating working people from bondage to industrialists and imperialists ... [Revolution] put into practice the humane ideas of Lenin and Stalin on the self-determination of peoples, on the equality, brotherhood, and friendship of the peoples.[108]

The war, according to the same article, embodied not Russian leadership but "the common cause of all working people regardless of national distinction." The author continues,

> The [Great] Patriotic War has expanded and strengthened ties between our peoples, between the republics belonging to the Soviet Union ... Today the RSFSR, the Kazakh SSR, and the Georgian SSR help to rebuild Ukraine. People in Tashkent and Ashgabat think about the revival of Kiev. The residents of Baku, Yerevan, Kazan, Novosibirsk, [and] Vladivostok are avidly interested in the fates of Minsk, Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Kishinev and Petrozavodsk.

The article pointed to the legendary twenty-eight Panfilovtsy as the exemplification of this newfound wartime unity between peoples. In a telling omission, the author cited the battle cry of the commander of the twenty-eight, Vasilii Klochkov ("There is nowhere to retreat – Moscow is at our backs!"), shorn of its original reference to "Russia."[109]

By 1945, many ideologists were asserting that victory represented the fulfillment of 1917 and the rejection of the tsarist inheritance, even those aspects that were celebrated as emblematic of a heroic pedigree.[110] This

[107] Stalin personally helped cultivate the draft of what would become the new official state hymn, submitted by S. V. Mikhalkov and G. El'-Registan. See Dubrovskii, "Glavnaia pesnia." Reports from 1946 indicate the Soviet public had not yet fully embraced the new patriotic anthem. See "Bol'shinstvo liudei ne znaiut slov Gimna," 95.
[108] "Nerushima stalinskaia druzhba narodov nashei strany," *Pravda*, Nov. 5, 1944, 1.
[109] "Nerushima stalinskaia druzhba narodov nashei strany," 1.
[110] For an excellent example, see the February 1945 meeting of *Pravda* ideologists presided over by the paper's chief editor, Petr Pospelov: RGASPI 629/1/83/1–71, 105–127,

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variation of the war myth stressed the political, socioeconomic, and ideological sources of victory over notions of Russian leadership, ethnic hierarchy, or the association with prerevolutionary Russian military exploits. Indeed, as victory became more certain, elite conceptions of the war's significance often portrayed it as a uniquely Soviet feat, as the basis for an imagined political community disengaged from any prerevolutionary inheritance.

None of this is to suggest the elimination of the Russocentric paradigm either during or after the war. Historical narratives continued to underscore prerevolutionary Russian benevolence and Russian-led industrial and agricultural modernization in the Soviet era. Moreover, Stalin reiterated the Russocentric understanding of victory on multiple occasions between 1945 and 1946. These statements, together with memories of wartime propaganda highlighting Russian historical precedents, assured that the victory myth would itself contain Russocentric and pan-Soviet vectors.

However, within the deeply Russocentric ideological ecosystem of the late 1940s, Soviet patriotism's discursive tension facilitated a variant of the war's memory that diminished the primacy of Russians in favor of an aspirational and undifferentiated Soviet people.[111] The Soviet state remained committed to fostering multinationalism within its borders. Yet victory in the war offered the party leadership an alternative wellspring of heroic imagery with which to bridle ethnonational identities and emphasize their transitory rather than primordial nature. In this way, late-Stalinist war memory would work to collapse the heroism hierarchy in certain contexts while reinforcing it in others.[112]

The Doctrine of the Soviet People

The book's third major assertion is that a doctrine of the Soviet people reconceptualized how discursive tension operated throughout the post-

where discussants even rejected analogies with 1812. For other examples, see "Ob ideologicheskoi rabote partorganizatsii," 4–8; "Lenin i Stalin o sovetskom patriotizme," 15–17; Solodovnikov, "Za vysokuiu ideinost' sovetskogo iskusstva," 54. See also Burdei, *Istorik i voina*, 157–159; Orlov, "Natsional'nyi i internatsional'nyi komponenty," 406–415.

[111] This was part of a wider European quest for social homogenization in the wake of war and occupation. As Weiner acknowledges, crafting an image of the nation as an "undifferentiated entity" was a goal of most European states after the war. Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory," 1126. For Western European efforts toward homogenization, see Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*.

[112] The promotion of ethnic particularism and hierarchy persisted, of course. The point here, and where this study diverges from Weiner, is that it persisted mainly outside the realm of the war myth.

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Stalin era. During the late 1950s and early 60s, destalinization conflated much of the wartime Russocentric imagery and messaging with the excesses of Stalin's personality cult, discrediting the Russocentric victory narrative in the process. Thus, rather than tolerate contrasting Russocentric and pan-Soviet/internationalist variations on the war's memory as Stalin had done, Khrushchev and his successors put forth the pan-Soviet myth as the sole official expression of victory. They did so by way of the Soviet people doctrine.

First enunciated by Khrushchev in 1961, the doctrine of the Soviet people reified the practice, described previously, whereby the Russocentric and pan-Soviet/internationalist paradigms were tethered to specific narrative spheres along an ideological spectrum. The doctrine therefore contained both homogenizing and variegating discourses. The reformulated victory myth became the exclusive purview of the doctrine's pan-Soviet/internationalist pole, advancing a picture of the Soviet people as a unified, nation-like entity. At the same time, narratives of the Soviet Union's formation and consolidation, which rested at the opposite pole, emphasized Russian-led ethnocultural diversity and hierarchy.

Such a framework helps explain the prominence of the war's commemoration beginning in the late 1960s. While state policies deliberately stoked pro-Soviet Russian nationalistic expression during this period, the theme of the war and its cultic commemorative edifice provided a countervailing pressure that authorities could draw upon as needed to curtail both Russian and non-Russian national assertiveness. As the book argues, neo-Stalinists in the Party, Russophile intellectuals, and cultural preservationist movements were hesitant to openly engage the subject of the war from a Russocentric, much less nationalistic, perspective. Instead, authorities encouraged these groups to silo their nationalism within the designated spheres of prerevolutionary patriotic culture and early Soviet development.

At the same time, the expansion of the war cult was partly geared toward bringing Russian nationalist sympathizers into the fold, not to cater to nationalist concerns but rather to steer Russian cultural nationalism in a pan-Soviet direction. The war's commemoration emphasized key areas of overlap with nationalist priorities, such as devotion to motherland, patriotism, and, most importantly, the dissemination of these values among Soviet youth. Over time, this attention to overlapping areas of interest with nationalistic-oriented intellectuals created ambiguities that eroded the foundations of the Soviet people doctrine. It was precisely those areas of ambiguity that some nationalist writers focused on to cultivate a vaguely Russocentric, even national-patriotic, version of

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the war narrative. Although this remained a marginal tendency, it nevertheless perpetuated a Russocentric memory of the war that was increasingly irreconcilable with the dominant myth of state, a fact made all too apparent when Mikhail Gorbachev lifted many censorship restrictions in the mid to late 1980s, hastening the USSR's demise.

* * *

In short, the book argues that the state employed two distinct mythologies of integration in the decades after 1945, which represented contrasting expressions of collective belonging and loyalty. The first, which the book describes as a Russocentric tendency, promoted Russian leadership of an ethnically diverse and hierarchically configured collection of nations; the second – a pan-Soviet/internationalist tendency – limited displays of the singular role of the Russian people and heterogeneous hierarchy more generally in favor of a laterally united and Russian-speaking "Soviet people." In the initial years after 1945, the war narrative itself reflected these divergent paradigms. Soviet leaders and ideologists could craft accounts of victory that hewed to either end of the ideological spectrum. Following Stalin's death and denunciation, authorities reformulated the discursive tension contained within the war narrative. The new doctrine channeled Russocentrism toward the themes of prerevolutionary and early Soviet ethnic relations while the pan-Soviet paradigm centered on the myth of the war victory.[113]

Although these twin mythologies each served the ends of social integration, they represent contradictory approaches to Soviet multiethnic governance.[114] This is not to suggest that ethnic and Soviet identities were incompatible. Studies of empire have shown that citizens often effectively negotiated local, national, and supranational identities.[115] Recent scholarship on the USSR has likewise demonstrated that non-Russian communities routinely balanced local and all-union loyalties in a way that stabilized relations between the center and the ethnically defined periphery.[116] Rather, the present study locates this contradiction in the practices and outlook of the regime itself, as it

[113] This closely follows Peter Blitstein's notion of simultaneous "imperial" and "nationalizing" practices: Blitstein, "Nation and Empire," 197–219.

[114] On the contradictory nature of the state's practice of "*both* empire maintenance *and* nation-building," see Blitstein, qt. 217; Suny, "The Contradictions of Identity," 29; Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 165.

[115] See, for example, Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*; Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain*.

[116] For important case studies focusing on the South Caucasus, see, for example, Johnson, "Speaking Soviet"; Scott, *Familiar Strangers*; Lehmann, "Apricot Socialism."

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simultaneously elevated and subjugated the status and identity of its Russian national core.

The argument unfolds chronologically and thematically. Chapters 1 and 2 explore ideological production and commemoration in the late Stalinist era through the lens of the fledgling victory myth. Specifically, Chapter 1 pursues the afterlife of Stalin's oft-cited toast to the Russian people in both Russian and non-Russian contexts to tease out its rather inconsistent and ambiguous connection to the official war narrative. Chapter 2 analyzes late-Stalinist commemorations and the victory myth's coexistence with the wider celebration of Russian prerevolutionary themes. It argues that in spite of the highly Russocentric atmosphere, the late-Stalinist leadership tolerated a certain dynamism and multivalence in the war's memory, which preserved the pan-Soviet line as an "internationalist" counterpoise to the otherwise Russian-dominated mobilizational agenda. Chapter 3 focuses on efforts to de-Stalinize the war's memory and recalibrate Soviet identity in the wake of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's personality cult. As destalinization linked the Russocentrism of the war to the figure of Stalin, the leadership elevated the pan-Soviet/internationalist version of the war's memory via the doctrine of the Soviet people. Defenders of Stalin's war record meanwhile contested this process, recasting Stalin as a protector of Russian national-patriotic values. Chapter 4 centers on the production of the commemorative war cult of the mid-1960s to the 1980s. Together, Chapters 3–4 show that the political establishment saw the large-scale veneration of 1945 as a means of diffusing neo-Stalinist and nationalist-oriented resistance to the ideological formula elaborated in the Soviet people doctrine. Finally, Chapter 5 examines Russian nationalist engagement with the state war cult and the limited way nationalist intellectuals sought to Russify the content of the war's memory, while nonetheless adhering to its officially endorsed, pan-Soviet configuration.

This book does not claim to be a comprehensive study of the war's representation in the Soviet Union. It centers squarely on the interrelationship between the Russian Question and the politics of the war's memorialization. *The Soviet Myth* is necessarily selective, therefore, in its sources and lines of inquiry. While the analysis does not ignore films, television, novels, theater, memoir literature, and paintings – all mediums that helped shape the Soviet victory myth – it gives far greater attention to debates among ideologists, historians, anniversary committees, and party leaders. It was these deliberations that most directly engaged the Russian Question and that generated the official framework within which Soviet cultural production operated. Likewise, the book's emphasis on the tension between national and supranational identities precluded an in-depth

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treatment of many other important aspects of the war's memory, including the gendered nature of the war's representation, the memories of deported peoples, local and family commemorations, veterans' gatherings, among other themes. The chapters that follow pursue those voices that, I believe, best shed light on the Russian people's evolving place within official war memory.

The book's analysis aligns broadly with an interpretation of the Soviet Union as a unique type of modern polity, one that exhibited characteristics of both empire and a multiethnic national state.[117] In many ways, patriotic mobilization in its pan-Soviet guise resembled the "imperial patriotism" practiced by certain dynastic empires. Just as the Habsburg and Romanov monarchies sometimes promoted a form of patriotic identity that obscured the dominance of their respective Germanic and Slavic cores, the Communist Party leadership often utilized the war's memory for a similarly dissociative function, to project a supra-ethnic, socialist version of what Clifford Geertz called "the inherent sacredness of sovereign power."[118] But the subordination of a dominant people for the sake of the political community as a whole is also a feature of multiethnic nationalizing states, where, as Anthony Smith observes, myths that advance lateral bonds serve to "weld an ethnically disparate nation together" and "draw in other *ethnies* who have no connection with the communal past of the dominant *ethnie*."[119] Such rhetorical similarities with nationalizing states have convinced a few scholars that the term "Soviet people" is perhaps better rendered in English as "Soviet nation."[120]

[117] It might be, as one important contribution to this matter argues, that the USSR was a "mobilizational state that seeks to sculpt its citizenry in an ideal image." See Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization," 232.

A recent overview of this debate summarized the dominant position that the USSR constituted "an anti-imperialist state that nonetheless exhibited imperial qualities." Goff and Siegelbaum, "Introduction," 3. See also Siegelbaum and Moch, "Transnationalism in One Country," 971–976; Edgar, "Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation," 252–272; Beissinger, "Demise of an Empire-State," 93–115.

[118] Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 123. On the monarchical image as transcendent of ethnic categories in the Habsburg and Romanov contexts, see Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 1–72, 411–414 and passim; Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism*. In the Romanov case, this circumstance changed during the late 19th century, when the tsarist administration experimented with a more Russian national image: Hosking, *Russia*, 120–150. On the Russians' nebulous place in the Soviet imperial context, see Scott, *Familiar Strangers*, esp. 29–36; Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair*, 10; Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, passim.

[119] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal," 38–54. On the role of war in forging an imperial sense of nationhood, see Colley, *Britons*.

[120] See especially Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity*, 198.

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Whether patriotic mobilization in the Soviet Union constituted an imperial or nationalizing outlook, its persistent tensions lent a remarkable fluidity to the state's "repertoire of rule," which alternated between the "production of difference" and the promotion of social homogeneity.[121] On the one hand, these tensions proved irreconcilable in the long term and fueled competing rather than symbiotic notions of what it meant to be at once Soviet *and* Russian. On the other hand, this dynamic enabled Communist authority to assert, reconfigure, or ignore outright ethnic particularism and hierarchy as circumstance dictated.[122] This book argues that the adaptability of Soviet identity hinged on the Russian Question. The pan-Soviet model of patriotism encouraged Russians to subsume their unique sense of identity in the name of a higher "Soviet" sense of belonging. While not the only approach to mobilization and state-building that the regime employed – Russian-led hierarchy and ethnic diversity remained constant themes – the present study contends that such a logic was most fully on display in the myth and remembrance of the Soviet victory in World War II.

[121] Kivelson and Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 4.
[122] Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 3–8; Scott, *Familiar Strangers*, 12–19, 29–36.

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