

# GETTING A FOOT IN THE DOOR: CREATING A FUTURE RUSSIA NOW

BY STEPHEN G. F. HALL



DEMOCRACY | FREEDOM | HUMAN RIGHTS

**RUSSIA &  
EURASIA  
STUDIES  
CENTRE**

November 2023

Published in 2023 by The Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society  
Millbank Tower  
21-24 Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP

Registered charity no. 1140489  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7340 4520

**[www.henryjacksonsociety.org](http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org)**

© The Henry Jackson Society, 2023. All rights reserved.

Title: "GETTING A FOOT IN THE DOOR: CREATING A FUTURE RUSSIA NOW"  
By Stephen G. F. Hall

ISBN: 978-1-909035-88-1

£9.95 where sold

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and are not necessarily indicative of those of The Henry Jackson Society or its Trustees.

Cover image: The Winter Palace (The Hermitage) in St. Petersburg, Russia, by Irina Burakova at Shutterstock (<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/winter-palace-hermitage-st-petersburg-russia-67066117>).

# GETTING A FOOT IN THE DOOR: CREATING A FUTURE RUSSIA NOW

BY STEPHEN G. F. HALL



DEMOCRACY | FREEDOM | HUMAN RIGHTS

**RUSSIA &  
EURASIA  
STUDIES  
CENTRE**

November 2023

## About the Author

---

**Dr Stephen G F Hall** is an Associate Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society. He is a specialist on Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus and on authoritarian regions. He received his PhD from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Cambridge. He has published extensively in Europe-Asia Studies, Problems of Post-Communism, East European Politics, Post-Communist Economies, Russian Politics, and the Journal of Eurasian Studies.

His book entitled *The Authoritarian International: Tracing how Authoritarian Regimes Learn in the Post-Soviet Space* came out in 2023 with Cambridge University Press. In the past, Stephen taught at the Higher School of Economics - National Research University, St. Petersburg. Stephen speaks English and Russian and is trying to get better at Ukrainian. Follow Stephen on Twitter / X @stephenghall or on his personal website: <https://www.sgfhall.co.uk/>.

## Acknowledgments

---

The author would like to thank Howard White and Natasha Khurt for their insightful reviews.

## Contents

---

<b>About the Author .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>About The Henry Jackson Society .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About the Russia &amp; Eurasia Studies Centre.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Marching Forward to the Past in Russia .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. An Afeared Dictatorship?.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Getting the Foot in the Door .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5. Ukraine <u>Must</u> Win! .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Keep up the Sanctions Pressure! .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>7. Talking to the Devils.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>8. Helping the Diaspora and Exiled Media Outlets Work for a Better Russia .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>The Diaspora Trump Card .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Letting Exiled Media Outlets Be Free .....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Truth, Justice...and just maybe, Reconciliation.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<b>9. Training People and Building Institutions for Future-Russia .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>10. The Federation’s Collapse.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>11. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>37</b>

## About Us

---



DEMOCRACY | FREEDOM | HUMAN RIGHTS

### About The Henry Jackson Society

---

**The Henry Jackson Society** is a think-tank and policy-shaping force that fights for the principles and alliances which keep societies free, working across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights, and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world.



### About the Russia & Eurasia Studies Centre

---

The **Russia and Eurasia Studies Centre** undertakes in-depth, analytically-focussed research into domestic and foreign policy issues in Russia and the other post-Soviet states. Established in 2010 as the Russia Studies Centre, the programme's geographical scope has widened since 2014, mirroring the high level of importance attached to the region.

## Executive Summary

---

- Getting the collective West to act jointly will take time and this report gives general ideas. It primarily concentrates on the United Kingdom.
- The West must plan for two eventualities: firstly, a post-Putin Russia wanting revenge and blaming the West for Russia's defeat in Ukraine and likely seeking a new conflict, forcing the West to prepare for the next war. The other possibility - which should be planned for in combination with the war scenario - is a democratic future-Russia. Planning well for this option will reduce the likelihood of the war scenario. But this should not induce relaxation towards the war scenario.
- Ukraine **must** get the weapons to win the war quickly. Calls for a negotiated settlement should be ignored. This will be viewed by Russia as the West losing interest. The Russian regime believes it can outlast the West and negotiations would increase this conviction.
- Moscow believes it is fighting a proxy war with the West, with Ukraine as the battleground. It is time for Western states to realise that they are at war. The West must remain strong and show Moscow it is with Ukraine for the long-term.
- A humiliating defeat in Ukraine **may** precipitate calls for revenge in Russia. But something the Kremlin can spin as a victory **will** lead to further revanchism. The Russian military is already planning for a prolonged war and even further into the future.
- Humiliation may spur change in Russia and begin the process of thinking about Russia's place in the world. While it may catalyse a stronger reaction with the regime trying to re-militarise, a defeat to an 'inferior' - as many Russians view Ukraine - would likely spark resentment towards the Putinist system, which in time could precipitate a revolution.
- As tempting as it is to isolate Russia, pull up the drawbridge and leave Russians to sort out their own mess, this will not lead to a better future-Russia. It will foster resentment - and a future war - and further isolate the already small faction of pro-Western Russians.
- Western governments must be clear about what it would take for sanctions to be partially - or fully - lifted. Russia should be punished for invading Ukraine and the enormity of its crimes there. Sanctions should be hardened if necessary and Ukraine given military support. NATO should maintain forces in Eastern Europe past the current conflict. Knowing what may lift sanctions and seeing the West maintaining - and toughening sanctions - may compel the elite to re-think their strategy regarding Ukraine and to begin to change the system.
- Another way to help the elite make that leap is to open dialogue channels about a future-Russia, what this would entail and how the elite can get there. Talking to those in the regime is unpalatable but short of Western armies occupying Moscow it is the only option.
- The Russian diaspora are the strongest tool the West has to shape a future-Russia. They should be supported in maintaining contact with Russians in Russia. Western governments should make it easier for Russians to obtain visas and settle in the West. This would give the new diaspora a narrative to undermine Kremlin propaganda about Western Russophobia and possibly precipitate a Russian brain drain.

- Exiled Russian media outlets should be supported to produce content relatable to Russians that will shape their thinking and counter state propaganda. A whitelist of acceptable media outlets should be created to allow them to raise advertising revenue to help improve content and expand their audience.
- A Russian university-in-exile should be created to train the next generation in business, law, politics, journalism and teaching to be ready for the future. This university would teach in Russian and run long and short online and offline courses for those in exile and in Russia.
- This process will take time and have many false starts. Support for Ukraine should be maintained during the war and after. But there must be a Russia plan. Without it, there will be more conflict when Russia has rebuilt its military capacity.



## 1. Introduction

---

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is now in its second year with no end in sight. Western military strategists and policymakers are now planning for increased weapons supplies and training for Ukrainian troops to prepare for a 2024 Spring offensive.<sup>1</sup> Quite rightly, Western focus is on supporting Ukraine. Let's be totally frank – Ukraine must win this war. The collective West has done well to remain united in its support, but it could be doing so much more. However, there is an elephant in the room. What to do with Russia? There is an argument for seeking to isolate Russia.<sup>2</sup> But a detached Russia – think a big North Korea – will be even more “paranoid, angry” and insular.<sup>3</sup> This is not just Putin's war, Russians share responsibility too.<sup>4</sup> But treating all Russians as willing collaborators will increase regime support and make it harder to build a democratic future-Russia.<sup>5</sup>

Western governments must develop a democratic future-Russia plan and be ready to implement it in the event of regime collapse. This report suggests how this can be achieved. As unpalatable as it may be to advocate Western support for a future-Russia, it is the only option to safeguard Europe. It will be a long and expensive path, but it must happen. This report suggests how preparations for a democratic future-Russia might begin. It is up to the Russian diaspora and elites to fully develop the plan, but Western governments must start this process. The report relies on content analysis of available documents interspersed with anonymised interviews with academics, journalists and civil society activists – both Russian and non-Russian. The EU made a start on planning for future-Russia by meeting Russian opposition leaders in Brussels in June 2023, but more must be done.

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Michaels, “Ukraine's Slog Prompts Focus on Next Year's Fight”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 August 2023, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-slog-prompts-focus-on-next-years-fight-d638cdf7?mod=Searchresults\\_pos2&page=1](https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-slog-prompts-focus-on-next-years-fight-d638cdf7?mod=Searchresults_pos2&page=1).

<sup>2</sup> This is represented by the Tweet by former Ukrainian Ambassador to Estonia, Mariana Betsa, who called for Russia to be “sanctioned, isolated, tried before international courts...”, Mariana Betsa (@Mariana\_Betsa), *Twitter/X*, 28 June 2023, 7:25am, [https://twitter.com/Mariana\\_Betsa/status/1673940781378281472](https://twitter.com/Mariana_Betsa/status/1673940781378281472).

<sup>3</sup> T. L. Friedman, “Putin Is Trying to Outcrazy the West”, *The New York Times*, 30 September 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/30/opinion/putin-russia-ukraine.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Jade McGlynn, *Russia's War* (Cambridge and Hoboken, NJ: Polity Press, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Love Bombing Moscow”, *The Moscow Times*, 25 February 2022, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/02/25/love-bombing-moscow-a76585>.

---

## 2. Marching Forward to the Past in Russia

---

The Russian regime is increasingly autocratic and conservative, espousing a discourse of patriotism, nationalism and great power status.<sup>6</sup> The regime reacts to events.<sup>7</sup> Putin is an opportunist<sup>8</sup> rather than a grand strategist. The EuroMaidan protests and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fleeing Kyiv – which were falsely spun using the Kremlin’s “firehose of propaganda”<sup>9</sup> as a neo-Nazi coup<sup>10</sup> – are an example of this opportunism. The Russian regime took advantage of the situation by annexing Crimea, which increased regime support as many Russians saw Crimea as Russian territory – and Putin’s popularity jumped from around 60% to 88%.<sup>11</sup> This precipitated further support for incursions in Donbas. In Russia, Putin may be the final arbitrator, but regime factions often follow their own interests.<sup>12</sup> The Donbas incursion was a case in point, pushing Putin to react and providing him with plausible deniability in case it went wrong. As it stopped Ukraine integrating with the West it was spun as a victory.

Russia’s conservative turn has led to a re-interpretation of Russian history, with Ukraine playing a central role. Increasingly, the regime has militarised history and the Great Patriotic War<sup>13</sup> for use in everyday life. This plays on a narrative of greatness combined with victimhood and allegations of Western Russophobia.<sup>14</sup> Pro-regime youth groups have instilled Kremlin-approved history in schools and universities,<sup>15</sup> and implanted a militaristic and patriotic nationalism bordering on fascism.<sup>16</sup> While we can only presume Putin’s views on Ukraine are long felt, it is only post-2012 that Ukraine increasingly became front-and-centre in regime nationalist, conservative, historical revisionist, and patriotic discourse. Putin’s address to the State Duma and Federation Council after Crimea’s annexation in March 2014 was a potted history – claiming Crimea was where Prince Vladimir of Kyiv was baptised, linking an unbroken line from Kyivan Rus’ to Russia.<sup>17</sup> Putin’s 2021 article argued that Ukraine was created as anti-Russia by the Austro-Hungarians and Poland, and Vladimir Lenin created the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic from Russian lands.<sup>18</sup> Putin’s speech proclaiming the independence

---

<sup>6</sup> Miriam Elder, “Putin relying on support outside Moscow to win back presidency”, *The Guardian*, 2 March 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/02/putin-support-outside-moscow-for-presidency>. This was corroborated by PW619Y, FP935J, XY916R.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Putin: Tactician or Strategist?”, In *Moscow’s Shadows*, 19 October 2012, <https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2012/10/19/putin-tactician-or-strategist/>. This was corroborated by UB624K, GJ938M, EH382J, LU925M, SH235F.

<sup>8</sup> T. Stępniewski, “Putin is not a grand tactician, he is an opportunist”, *New Eastern Europe*, 22(3-4) 2016: 125-131.

<sup>9</sup> “The Russian firehose of falsehood” is a term provided by Paul and Mathews at the RAND Corporation: Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, “The Russian ‘Firehose of Falsehood’ Propaganda Model: Why it Might Work and Options to Counter It”, RAND Corporation, 2016, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE198.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Putin’s first statement about a coup in Ukraine appeared on 4 March 2014 – a week after Russian forces annexed Crimea – and the nationalist and neo-Nazi elements to the narrative first appeared on 18 March: “Vladimir Putin otvetil na voprosy zhurnalistov o situatsii na Ukraine [Vladimir Putin answered journalists’ questions about the situation in Ukraine]”, Kremlin.ru, 4 March 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366>. “Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]”, Kremlin.ru, 18 March 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

<sup>11</sup> Alexey Levinson, “Zdes’ krymskii dukh vse bol’she chakhnet [The Crimean Spirit is Languishing More and More]”, Levada Centre, 8 October 2021, <https://www.levada.ru/2021/08/10/zdes-krymskij-duh-vse-bolshe-chahnet/>.

<sup>12</sup> See: Mark Galeotti, “The Putin myth: the Russian leader isn’t nearly as powerful as you think”, *Vox*, 19 April 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/4/19/11459034/putin-myth>; Timothy Frye, *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin’s Russia* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Jade McGlynn, *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin’s Russia* (London, New York and Dublin: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Ilya Yablokov, *Fortress Russia: Conspiracy Theories in Post-Soviet Russia* (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Mathers and Allyson Edwards, “Russia: Programme of ‘patriotic education’ aims to create next generation of Putin faithful”, *The Scotsman*, 2 May 2022, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/russia-programme-of-patriotic-education-aims-to-create-next-generation-of-putin-faithful-3674878>.

<sup>16</sup> Ian Garner, *Z Generation: Into the Heart of Russia’s Fascist Youth* (London: Hurst & Co, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> “Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]”, Kremlin.ru, 18 March 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

<sup>18</sup> “Stat’ya Vladimira Putina “Ob istoricheskom edinstve russkikh i ukrainsev [Article by Vladimir Putin “On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians]”, Kremlin.ru, 12 July 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

---

of Russia's proxy states in Donbas only mentioned them once. He devoted most of his speech to re-iterating his ideas about Ukraine.<sup>19</sup> Putin has consistently viewed Ukrainians as Russians, and claimed that Ukraine was created out of historic Russian territory and is anti-Russia.

Of course, it is speculation whether Putin truly believes all this, but his constant references to Ukraine as an artificially created anti-Russia, Ukraine as full of neo-Nazis, and Ukraine, Russia and Belarus as part of the same Slavic nation highlight that the regime finds these narratives resonate among Russians, which increases support for the war. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine would have seemed inconceivable with the troop numbers Russia initially deployed unless Putin believed Ukraine was an artificial state and would quickly collapse, with limited Western reaction.<sup>20</sup> The Federal Security Bureau's (FSB) Fifth Directorate gave Putin information on Ukraine that he wanted to hear.<sup>21</sup> Covid isolation likely pushed Putin to consider his legacy.<sup>22</sup> There are indications that the full-scale invasion was based on poor intelligence, Putin's legacy concerns, believing their own propaganda, perceiving that the Ukrainian army was the same weak military as in 2014, and that the West would not react as in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014).<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> "Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Message from the President of the Russian Federation]", Kremlin.ru, 21 February 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>.

<sup>20</sup> Shane Harris, Karen DeYoung, Isabelle Khurshudyan, Ashley Parker and Liz Sly, "Road to war: U.S. struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion", *The Washington Post*, 16 August 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Galeotti, "Putin is devouring his children", *The Spectator*, 13 April 2022, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/putin-is-devouring-his-children/>.

<sup>22</sup> David E. Sanger and Anton Troianovski, "U.S. intelligence weighs Putin's two years of extreme pandemic isolation as a factor in his war time mind-set", *The New York Times*, 5 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/putin-pandemic-mindset.html>. This was corroborated by UB624K, GJ938M, BM431Y, FR826J.

<sup>23</sup> Taras Kuzio, "Putin believed his own propaganda and fatally underestimated Ukraine", Atlantic Council, 28 July 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putin-believed-his-own-propaganda-and-fatally-underestimated-ukraine/>; Tracey German, "Ukraine: what Russia had learned about western responses from its past military manoeuvres", *The Conversation*, 25 February 2022, <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-what-russia-has-learned-about-western-responses-from-its-past-military-manoevres-177856>.

---

### 3. An Afearred Dictatorship?

---

The war has completed the transition to a police state in Russia.<sup>24</sup> In 2023 alone, surveillance spending increased by 160%.<sup>25</sup> Opposition figures have been jailed.<sup>26</sup> In early March 2022, Putin signed a law that allows for a 15-year jail term for criticising the military.<sup>27</sup> This was changed in March 2023 to include criticising anyone helping the military.<sup>28</sup> This flurry of repressive activity is not because the Kremlin feels strong. Rather, it masks weakness.

Russia is a personalist autocracy. Putin's image is crucial to regime legitimisation, but Putin does not take all decisions personally.<sup>29</sup> There are competing regime factions fighting to get their interests promoted. These alliances are created and broken depending on present factional interests.<sup>30</sup> Overall, the regime can be split in two – the Siloviki and the modernisers – but there are different ever-changing alliances in these clusters.<sup>31</sup> The *'otmashka'* system of Putin as the final arbitrator, albeit allowing personnel to deal with issues he agrees to, but with no steer as to implementation, worked relatively well until the pandemic.<sup>32</sup> When Putin began to isolate, clan infighting went into overdrive.<sup>33</sup> Without Putin's arbitration the system broke down.<sup>34</sup> Putin's isolation pushed him closer to the Siloviki – especially more hardline factions – who shared the same worldview of the West out to destroy Russia, the belief that Ukrainians were just heretical Russians, and that repression was the only solution to crises.<sup>35</sup> This put the regime on its present trajectory. By believing their own propaganda, the authorities pushed themselves into a corner.

Having made the mistake of invading Ukraine with such a small force – believing Ukrainians would welcome Russians as liberators<sup>36</sup> – the Kremlin has now doubled down.<sup>37</sup> Due to

---

<sup>24</sup> Interviews with CH538A, DN829P, UB624K, MN572Y, WN618D, EH382J, FR826J, MW903B.

<sup>25</sup> "Gosudarstvo na 160% uvelichilo rashodi na slezhku za rossiyanami [The state increased spending on surveillance of Russians by 160%]", *The Moscow Times*, 17 August 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/08/17/gosudarstvo-na-160-uvelichilo-rashodi-na-slezhku-za-rossiyanami-a52353>.

<sup>26</sup> Ilya Yashin was jailed for 8.5 years for denouncing the war: Andrew Roth, "Russian opposition figure Ilya Yashin jailed for denouncing war in Ukraine", *The Guardian*, 9 December 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/09/russian-opposition-figure-ilya-yashin-jailed-for-denouncing-ukraine-war>; Vladimir Kara-Murza got 25 years for treason: James Robinson, "Vladimir Kara-Murza: Russian opposition leader jailed for 25 years after treason conviction", *Sky News*, 17 April 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/vladimir-kara-murza-jailed-for-25-years-in-russia-for-treason-after-criticising-ukraine-invasion-12859257>; Alexei Navalny, who was already in jail for nine years, received another 19-year sentence for extremism: Claudia Chiappa, "'Stalinist' Putin nemesis Alexei Navalny gets 19 more years in prison", *Politico*, 4 August 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-alexei-navalny-19-years-prison/>.

<sup>27</sup> Marina Dulneva, "Putin podpisal zakon o lishenii svobody do 15 let za feiki o voennykh [Putin signed the law on imprisonment for up to 15 years for fakes about the military]", *Forbes Russia*, 4 March 2022, <https://www.forbes.ru/society/457931-putin-podpisal-zakon-o-lisenii-svobody-do-15-let-za-fejki-o-voennykh>.

<sup>28</sup> Alexandra Ivanova and Sergey Dik, "15 let za 'lozh' o dobrovol'tsakh": chto govoryat advokaty RF [15 years for the "lie about volunteers": what lawyers in Russia say]", *DW*, 2 March 2023, <https://www.dw.com/ru/15-let-za-loz-o-dobrovolcah-advokaty-v-rossii-ob-uzestocenii-zakona/a-64863774>. August 23, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Ben Noble and Ekaterina Schulmann, "Myth 15: It's all about Putin – Russia is a manually run, centralized autocracy" in *Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia: How they affect Western policy, and what can be done*, Russia and Eurasia Programme Report, Chatham House, May 2021, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/13-myths-misconceptions-debate-russia-nixey-et-al\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/13-myths-misconceptions-debate-russia-nixey-et-al_0.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Stated by SH235F, MN572Y, LG962X, LU925M, EH382J.

<sup>31</sup> Brian D. Taylor, "The Russian Siloviki & Political Change", *Daedalus*, 146(2), 2017: 53-63. This was stated as well by interviewees RO253W, SH235F, LG692X, EH382J, LU925M, FR826J.

<sup>32</sup> Tatyana Stanovaya, "Pyat' putinskikh elit na fone tranzita [Five of Putin's elites against the backdrop of transit]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 27 February 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/02/27/ru-pub-81158>.

<sup>33</sup> See: Frye, *Weak Strongman*.

<sup>34</sup> Tatyana Stanovaya, "Zhizn' pri kollektivnom Putine. Kakim budet 2021 god dlya rossiiskogo rezhima i obshchestva [Life under the collective Putin. What will 2021 be like for the Russian regime and society?]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 31 December 2020, <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/83537>.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Treisman, "Putin Unbound: How Repression at Home Presaged Belligerence Abroad", *Foreign Affairs*, 6 April 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/putin-russia-ukraine-war-unbound>.

<sup>36</sup> Luke Harding, "Demoralised Russian soldiers tell of anger at being 'duped' into war", *The Guardian*, 4 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/04/russian-soldiers-ukraine-anger-duped-into-war>.

<sup>37</sup> Max Seddon, Christopher Miller and Felicia Schwartz, "How Putin blundered into Ukraine – then doubled down", *Financial Times*, 23 February 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/80002564-33e8-48fb-b734-44810afb7a49>.

the personalist nature of the regime, Putin must be seen to win every time. With failure in Ukraine, his power is at stake. The removal of several generals – four were fired on 27 April 2023 alone<sup>38</sup> – and failure to hold early gains has increased elite dissatisfaction and upset plans for what to do if Russia loses.<sup>39</sup> In desperation, Russian state-controlled businesses, regional governments, elites and even the Defence Ministry have created private military companies (PMCs) and hired mercenaries.<sup>40</sup> There are many people in the provinces who can be mobilised. The threat of mobilisation and creating a total-war economy can scare the West into believing that Russia can ratchet up mobilisation when needed. It highlights to a domestic audience that the authorities are not implementing full mobilisation to protect civilians, which gains legitimacy.<sup>41</sup> However, this partial mobilisation likely has more prosaic reasoning. The authorities are nervous that full mobilisation could lead to protests.<sup>42</sup>

The Wagner mutiny in June 2023 appeared to weaken Putin. Prigozhin skilfully used social media to promote Wagner's image – helped by taking Bakhmut – and increase his support in the regime and in society.<sup>43</sup> During the rebellion, Prigozhin criticised the regime's corruption and bureaucracy and appealed to Russian patriots to support his march on Moscow.<sup>44</sup> Wagner had support among some security and military personnel, who did little to stop the march.<sup>45</sup> During the rebellion, Putin all but disappeared. But the day after, he publicly presented awards to the military.<sup>46</sup> Putin's inaction and then overcorrection highlighted weakness rather than strength. While the mutiny failed, the fact that someone had challenged Putin, and got away with it initially, made elite divisions public.<sup>47</sup>

Prigozhin and his top-command died on 24 August in a plane crash, suggesting that the regime took time to plan<sup>48</sup> and then strike. This signalled to elites how Putin deals with traitors and sent a message to "Patriot" groups – who were too vocal – to stay in line.<sup>49</sup> While we may never know by whom the plane was destroyed, it is unlikely its destruction so close to Moscow

---

<sup>38</sup> "Poleteli golovi z-voenkori soobschili o massovom uvolnenii generalov posle vizita Putina na front ["Heads flew." Z-military correspondents announced the mass dismissal of generals after Putin's visit to the front]", *The Moscow Times*, 27 April 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/04/27/poleteli-golovi-z-voenkori-soobschili-o-massovom-uvolnenii-generalov-posle-vizita-putina-na-front-a41426>.

<sup>39</sup> Tatyana Stanovaya, "Elita na fone porazhenii. Gde pokhodit raskol v rossiiskom rukovodstve [The elite on the background of defeats. Where is the split in the Russian leadership?]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 7 December 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88563>.

<sup>40</sup> Ryan Bauer and Erik E. Mueller, "Russian Private Military Companies Thriving Due to War with Ukraine", *The Moscow Times*, 16 June 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/06/14/russian-private-military-companies-thriving-due-to-war-with-ukraine-a81490>.

<sup>41</sup> Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, "Russia's Halfway to Hell Strategy: Why Putin Has Not Yet Launched a Total War in Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, 6 March 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/russias-halfway-hell-strategy>.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Kruglova, "Mobilisation in Russia: How to Convince Men to Fight in Ukraine?", *RUSI*, 20 March 2023, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/mobilisation-russia-how-convince-men-fight-ukraine>.

<sup>43</sup> Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage, "The Beginning of the End for Putin?", *Foreign Affairs*, 27 June 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/beginning-end-putin-prigozhin-rebellion>.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Ilyushina, "Mercenary boss warned of revolution in Russia, but his own was short-lived", *The Washington Post*, 25 June 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/06/25/prigozhin-wagner-mercenary-rebellion-war/>.

<sup>45</sup> Catherine Belton, Shane Harris and Greg Miller, "Putin appeared paralyzed and unable to act in first hours of rebellion", *The Washington Post*, 25 July 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/07/25/putin-prigozhin-rebellion-kremlin-disarray/>.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Yuhas, "In Kremlin Stagecraft, Putin Tries to Rewrite the Mutiny in Russia", *The New York Times*, 27 June 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/27/world/europe/putin-kremlin-appearances.html>. He also allegedly visited Derbent – of all places – in Dagestan to talk to ordinary people.

<sup>47</sup> Jonas Driedger and Adrián del Río Rodríguez, "Weakening Putin? Discussing the Long-Term Significance of Wagner's March to Moscow", *El País*, 23 August 2023, <https://agendapublica.elpais.com/noticia/18784/weakening-putin-discussing-long-term-significance-of-wagner-march-to-moscow>.

<sup>48</sup> Tatyana Stanovaya, "Vosstanovlenie vertikalii. Zachem nuzhna gibel' Evgeniya Prigozhina [Vertical recovery. Why do we need the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin?]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 August 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90429>.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander Baunov, "Rossiya posle Prigozhina [Russia after Prigozhin]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 August 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90430>.

---



was done without Putin's approval. If it was some other group, then it further highlights regime weakness. Prigozhin could have met his end quietly, but such a death strongly suggests a regime worried about the war and trying to keep others in line. The killing of Prigozhin showed the public that the regime will use terror. It is also likely to have alienated some previously supporting "patriot" groups and made it clear to would-be putschists that they must go all the way next time and remove Putin.

The authorities increasingly portray the war as a battle to protect Russia from American imperialism<sup>50</sup> where the present dark days will eventually lead to victory.<sup>51</sup> The regime uses Great Patriotic War imagery, casting the present war as Russian soldiers humanely protecting 'Russian' peoples and lands against Nazi hordes. In using history, the authorities try to bind society to the view that Russia is beset by enemies and only Putin can protect against this.<sup>52</sup> However, even here, the regime is in trouble. The authorities repeatedly use the image of the Great Patriotic War to link the current war on Ukraine to past achievements.<sup>53</sup> But the lack of a quick victory may besmirch the Great Patriotic War image and hastily decrease support for the war.<sup>54</sup> With few obvious victories in the war, most Russians have switched off from it,<sup>55</sup> although support for Putin – who is seen as a protector of Russia from the West – remains. This will take time to change.

As the war continues, Russia's trajectory appears to be moving towards a period like the lawlessness of the 1990s. Many of the soldiers killed in Ukraine were the main breadwinners for their families, resulting in straitened economic times for many Russians.<sup>56</sup> While the Covid pandemic had already affected Russian demographics adversely, the war – which affects men unfavourably – has led to an even greater demographic decrease.<sup>57</sup> There has also been a spate of killings and robberies perpetrated by returning soldiers in Russia. This is likely to be the start of a crisis in soldiers returning to civilian life with significant combat stress.<sup>58</sup> This will likely increase the number of robberies, murders, instances of domestic abuse and cases of substance misuse.<sup>59</sup>

The state is fragile. With growing isolation and an inability to extricate from Ukraine, the regime may precipitate its own demise by creating a period of instability that could hasten protests or state collapse.<sup>60</sup> A more likely scenario is that the regime will increasingly rely on repression

---

<sup>50</sup> Andrey Kolesnikov, "The Plot Against Russia", *Foreign Affairs*, 25 May 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/plot-against-russia>.

<sup>51</sup> Andrey Pertsev "Kredo razvitogo putinisma. Kak ob'yasnyayut mir "Osnovy rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti [The credo of developed Putinism. How the Foundations of Russian Statehood Explains the World]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 21 July 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90247>.

<sup>52</sup> Jade McGlynn, "Russia's History Textbook Rewrite Is a Bid to Control the Future", *The Moscow Times*, 15 August 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/15/russias-history-textbook-rewrite-is-a-bid-to-control-the-future-a82146>.

<sup>53</sup> Ilya Kalinin, "United Russia and Partial Mobilization", *Russia.Post*, 30 May 2023, <https://www.russiapost.info/politics/partial>.

<sup>54</sup> Jade McGlynn, "The Great Patriotic Special Military Operation", *The Moscow Times*, 8 May 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/05/08/the-great-patriotic-special-military-operation-a81069>.

<sup>55</sup> Andrey Kolesnikov, "The End of the Russian Idea: What It Will Take to Break Putinism's Grip", *Foreign Affairs*, 22 August 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/vladimir-putin-end-russian-idea>.

<sup>56</sup> Alexey Kovalev, "For Russians, It's the Wild 1990s All Over again", *Foreign Policy*, 9 May 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/05/09/russia-ukraine-war-putin-casualties-1990s/>.

<sup>57</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, "Consequences of the War in Ukraine: A Bleak Outlook for Russia", The RAND Blog, 28 February 2023, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2023/02/consequences-of-the-war-in-ukraine-a-bleak-outlook.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Timofey Rozhansky, "'Strashno khodit' po ulitsam i dazhe ostavat'sya doma.' Pochemu vernuvshiesya s fronta naemniki ChVK 'Vagner' sovershayut novye ubiistva [It's scary to walk the streets and even stay at home.' Why do mercenaries of the Wagner PMC who returned from the front commit murders?]", *Nastoyashchee Vremya*, 27 April 2023, <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/new-crimes-of-mercenaries-pmc-wagner/32380319.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Dara Massicot, "The Russian Military's Looming Personnel Crises of Retention and Veteran Mental Health", The RAND Blog, 1 June 2023, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2023/06/the-russian-militarys-looming-personnel-crises-of-retention.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Tatiana Stanovaya, "Putin's Age of Chaos: The Dangers of Russian Disorder", *Foreign Affairs*, 8 August 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/vladimir-putin-age-chaos>.

and the mantras of anti-Americanism, protector of Russian civilisation from Nazism, and Russian ethno-nationalism.<sup>61</sup> Putin's regime is likely to turn increasingly revanchist and if Putin were to lose power, what follows him may well be on a similar trajectory to the current authorities. It is likely that many Siloviki groups would survive in some form and re-assert their power.<sup>62</sup>

The collective West must plan for two eventualities. Firstly, a post-Putin Russia bent on revenge – blaming the West for Russia's defeat in Ukraine – and so forcing the West to build up its military for the next war. Secondly, to plan for when the regime collapses and moving quickly enough to implement a democratic future-Russia plan, which will be a long-term strategy. The West must prepare for another war by strengthening inter-operable military capacity.<sup>63</sup> Western governments must expect that what comes after Putin may be worse.<sup>64</sup> By planning for a democratic future-Russia now, the West can support Russia away from revanchism. This report sets out how below.

---

<sup>61</sup> Jade McGlynn and Kirill Shamiev, "The Return of Russian Ethnonationalism: Chauvinism Under – and After – Putin", *Foreign Affairs*, 17 August 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/return-russian-ethnonationalism>.

<sup>62</sup> Calder Walton, "What Comes After Putin's Rule in Russia. The West Should Beware", *Time*, 2 June 2023, <https://time.com/6284209/after-vladimir-putins-rule-in-russia/>.

<sup>63</sup> Alina Polyakova, Edward Lucas, James Lamond, Bobo Lo and Lauren Speranza, "What Does Europe Look Like 3-7 Years After Russia's War in Ukraine?", *CEPA*, 24 May 2022, <https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/what-does-europe-look-like-3-7-years-after-russias-war-in-ukraine/>.

<sup>64</sup> Timothy Frye, "Why Regime Change in Russia Might Not Be a Good Idea", *Politico*, 4 December 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/04/12/regime-change-russia-putin-00023953>.

---

## 4. Getting the Foot in the Door

---

An indisputable defeat for Russia in Ukraine should be the West's end game. In the short-term it is likely that the West will face a revanchist Russia whose population wants to blame someone. Invariably, this will mean developing methods to deal with tainted officials, be that through lustration, revelation or admission.<sup>65</sup> Poland is a prime example of lustration, where former communist functionaries and state security informants were barred from government and civil service positions. Another option is the South African truth and reconciliation commissions which investigated gross human rights violations and allowed the victim to confront their persecutor publicly. A final option which should not be considered is the Spanish pact of forgetting. Russia already had something similar after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This allowed former Soviet security service personnel to rebrand themselves and take control of the state, epitomised by the figure of the incumbent president.<sup>66</sup>

While it may seem unlikely that lustration can occur in Russia, the West has certain levers that it can use. A scenario where Western – or Ukrainian – soldiers are on the streets of Moscow is unlikely, so a lustration committee will not be externally enforced. But the West can use sanctions which can be increased and maintained for a long time. As mentioned, there should be a clear signal about what it would take to reduce sanctions and one could be that the Russian elite lustrate themselves, or at least the judiciary which is a key part of the regime's capacity to exert control over society and opposition groups within it.<sup>67</sup> Giving Ukraine what it needs to win quickly, increasing sanctions and maintaining their pressure, and supporting Russian opposition, civil society and media by giving them haven abroad may lead only to a Korea scenario of an uneasy ceasefire. But this pressure may eventually spark a German scenario of regime change in Russia and a new government looking for rapprochement with the West. There should not be a victor's justice of imposed lustration. Russian elites must come to that decision themselves. If that does not happen then the West should support civil society groups to publicise Russian crimes in Ukraine and try to shape Russian public perceptions towards the need for change.<sup>68</sup> At best though, this will be a long-term scenario.

Defeat in Ukraine – which could be anything from Russian forces returning to the 2014 borders or ideally to Ukraine's 1991 borders – and Western pressure may create a necessary scenario for lustration or ideally truth and reconciliation. A humbling in Ukraine and a truth and reconciliation commission would emphasise that an imperial mind-set is why Russia failed in Ukraine, thus starting the process of change in the state and in society. This report focuses on long-term planning. If the West wants to help Russia make this transition, then it must prepare for regime collapse.

Autocracies can survive on repression alone for a long time. Putin can – and for a while probably will – cling to power, but the legend of him as a geopolitical mastermind one step ahead of the West, while improving Russia's great power status, is dead.<sup>69</sup> Putin may be finished but he will be here awhile. The worst option for the West – short of stopping supporting Ukraine

---

<sup>65</sup> See: Susanne Y.P. Choi and Roman David, "Lustration Systems and Trust: Evidence from Survey Experiments in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland", *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(4): 1172-1201.

<sup>66</sup> Catherine Belton, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and then Took on the West* (London: HarperCollins, 2021).

<sup>67</sup> Igor Slabykh, "Lustrating Judges Is the Key to Post-Putin Transitional Justice", Wilson Center, 22 September 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/lustrating-judges-key-post-putin-transitional-justice>.

<sup>68</sup> Monika Nalepa and Thomas F. Remington, "Transitional Justice Options for Postwar Russia", 9 March 2023, accessed from Monika Nalepa's personal website: <https://www.monikanalepa.com/uploads/6/6/3/1/66318923/russiatj.pdf>; Selbi Durdiyeva, *The Role of Civil Society in Transitional Justice: The Case of Russia* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2024).

<sup>69</sup> Mark Galeotti, "Opinion: Putin can cling to power, but his legend is dead", *CNN*, 11 November 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/11/opinions/after-putin-power-health-regime-galeotti/index.html>.

---



- is to close Russia off and tell Russians to sort it out themselves. Having seen the military atrocities in Ukraine, few Russians will willingly rise up. Arming a pro-democratic militia or protesters would be a bloodbath.<sup>70</sup> Even if Putin is removed, he will likely be replaced by a more nationalist and autocratic leader. If Russia is isolated, it is unlikely the next leader will be even a minimal democrat.<sup>71</sup>

To start planning for a democratic future-Russia, Western governments must do certain things. Firstly, Western governments should not just support Ukraine for as long as it takes but give Kyiv the weapons to end this war quickly. Secondly, sanctions must be tightened to hurt Russia. Only a humiliating defeat will give Russian society and elites the bandwidth to start seeing the imperialist and autocratic narrative as false.

---

<sup>70</sup> Interviews with KZ527L, FH829M, JH285D, YM182W.

<sup>71</sup> Kathryn Stoner, "Is Putin vulnerable? One autocracy in Russia may lead to another", *The Washington Post*, 27 September 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/09/27/putin-ukraine-regime-survival-autocracy/>.

---

## 5. Ukraine Must Win!

---

Western unity in supporting Ukraine has been impressive and astonishing.<sup>72</sup> It is commendable that Britain is at the forefront of this. Yet weapons have been slow to come and getting all the collective West onside has been painstaking. Western leaders, fearing what may happen to Russia, have taken too long to give Ukraine sufficient weapons to win. Calls for Russia not to be humiliated are non-sensical.<sup>73</sup> If Russia is not to be humiliated, then Ukraine will be. Ukraine will lose territory and see Western support diminish, and thus remain susceptible to further Russian aggression.

The correct approach is to stand firm and support Ukraine. The Russian authorities react to strong signals and see negotiation as weakness.<sup>74</sup> A strong signal in the war's first days – perhaps sending NATO troops in civilian clothes for coffee in L'viv – would have shown Putin that the West was serious.<sup>75</sup> Russia only began talking to French President Nicholas Sarkozy about ending the 2008 Russo-Georgia war because NATO ships entered the Black Sea.<sup>76</sup> The West has consistently failed to understand that Russia only reacts to force. This must change. Talk of not humiliating Russia or entering into negotiations show Putin that he can outlast the West.<sup>77</sup> Russia even plays on the idea that a humiliated Russia will lash out again, thus increasing calls in the West not to chasten Russia.<sup>78</sup>

Russia will use grey-zone practices to weaken Western resolve. While the Russian authorities believe they are fighting the West, it is implausible that Russian tanks will appear in Helsinki, Riga or Tallinn. Rather, we can expect hacking attacks, assassinations, greater funding of politicians and political parties, use of criminals, and private military companies.<sup>79</sup> The Russian authorities will play on escalation fears and the scenario of a Yugoslavia with nukes<sup>80</sup> – indeed they have regularly threatened the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>81</sup> The worst response the collective West can make is to call for restraint in the manner of Macron. Anticipating such a reaction, Putin will continue to use the nuclear card knowing that the West will blink first. While it is possible Russia may use nuclear weapons, it remains unlikely – and nuclear build-up can be monitored. Thus, Western states should not lessen support to Ukraine<sup>82</sup> over fear of escalation.

---

<sup>72</sup> Nigel Gould-Davies, "The Astonishing Endurance of Unity on Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, 8 March 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/astonishing-endurance-unity-ukraine>.

<sup>73</sup> Stated by French President, Emmanuel Macron: "Russia must not be humiliated despite Putin's 'historic' mistake, Macron says", *Reuters*, 4 June 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-must-not-be-humiliated-despite-putins-historic-mistake-macron-2022-06-04/>.

<sup>74</sup> Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs Chatham House, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Dalibor Rohac, "The battle for Ukraine has already been lost", *The Spectator*, 9 December 2021, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-battle-for-ukraine-has-already-been-lost/>.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew E. Kramer, "NATO Ships in Black Sea Raise Alarms in Russia", *The New York Times*, 27 August 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/world/europe/28russia.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Anton Troianovski and Paul Sonne, "Barely Noting War in Public, Putin Acts Like Time Is on His Side", *The New York Times*, 27 May 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/27/world/europe/russia-putin-ukraine-war.html>; Tatiana Stanovaya, "What the West (Still) Gets Wrong about Putin", *Foreign Policy*, 1 June 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/01/putin-war-ukraine-west-misconceptions/>.

<sup>78</sup> Maria Domańska, "The fetish of Russia's stability: an intelligent weapon against the West", *New Eastern Europe*, 24 March 2023, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2023/03/24/the-fetish-of-russias-stability-an-intelligent-weapon-against-the-west/>.

<sup>79</sup> Elisabeth Braw, "Countering Aggression in the Gray Zone", *PRISM* 9(3), National Defense University Press, 18 November 2021, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2846403/countering-aggression-in-the-gray-zone/>; Missy Ryan, "Russia spent millions on secret global political campaign, U.S. intelligence finds", *The Washington Post*, 13 September 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/09/13/united-states-russia-political-campaign/>.

<sup>80</sup> Interviews with MW903B, U719M, AM071U, NH716P.

<sup>81</sup> David Axe, "Ukraine is winning a crucial part of the land war. It's nuclear button time for Putin – again", *The Telegraph*, 8 August 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/08/08/russia-ukraine-war-medvedev-putin-nuclear-threat-weapons/>.

<sup>82</sup> Keir Giles, "Russian nuclear intimidation: How Russia uses nuclear threats to shape Western responses to aggression", Research Paper – Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, March 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2023-03-29-russian-nuclear-intimidation-giles.pdf>.

Russia reacts to a strong stance and the West must continue to remain united. But even now, some politicians want to work with Russia, for example Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Austria's government has offered muted support for Ukraine, hoping that the economic relationship with Russia can be rebuilt post-war.<sup>84</sup> Putin will use European disunity. Those calling for negotiations have posited a Korean solution,<sup>85</sup> whereby Russia keeps what it has taken. This would create a terrible precedent of might makes right. The Russian regime espouses a violent nationalism steeped in historical revisionism, victimhood, messianism and great power status. Giving Russia what it has gained by violent means will trigger further conflicts. Fearing Russian revanchism is nonsensical. Russia is already revanchist. Humiliation may precipitate societal and political change, pushing Russia on a new path.<sup>86</sup>

To support Ukraine fully, Western economies must be put on a war-footing.<sup>87</sup> The West must react forcefully to Russia and its grey-zone playbook. The Russian elite must be told that a move to nuclear weapons will be met with force. Russia would need to move its nearest nuclear weaponry from Belgorod or missile silos deeper in Russia. This would be seen and should be widely publicised to engender international condemnation. If Russia used such a weapon, then the West should destroy the units directly responsible for such an attack. If Russia used a second weapon, then the West – principally America which has the greatest capacity – must take out Russian units in occupied Ukraine.<sup>88</sup> The West should be clear that this is what would happen should Russia go nuclear. It would send a signal that nuclear blackmail will not work.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Amanda Coakley, "Putin's Trojan Horse Inside the European Union", *Foreign Policy*, 3 August 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/03/hungary-orban-russia-conservative-politics/>.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew Karnitschnig, "How Austria Became Putin's Alpine Fortress", *Politico*, 5 June 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/austria-russia-vladimir-putin-alpine-fortress-ukraine/>.

<sup>85</sup> Carter Malkasian, "The Korea Model: Why an Armistice Offers the Best Hope for Peace in Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, 20 June 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/korean-war-diplomacy-armistice-nato>. This remains one of the better analyses from a cottage-industry calling for negotiations with Russia and stopping support for Ukraine. See: Max Abrahms, "I Teach International Relations. I Think We're Making a Mistake in Ukraine", *The Atlantic*, 7 March 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/03/russia-ukraine-war-pundits-history-international-relations/673293/>; John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault", *Foreign Affairs*, 93(5) 2014: 77-89. John Mearsheimer, "Playing with Fire in Ukraine: The Underappreciated Risks of Catastrophic Escalation", *Foreign Affairs*, 17 August 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/playing-fire-ukraine>; Samuel Charap, "Opinion: The U.S. Approach to Ukraine's Border War Isn't Working. Here's What Biden Should Do Instead", *Politico*, 19 November 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/11/19/ukraine-russia-putin-border-522989>; Samuel Charap, "How to Break the Cycle of Conflict With Russia: Seeking Consensus Isn't Appeasement – Its Pragmatism", *Foreign Affairs*, 7 February 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-02-07/how-break-cycle-conflict-russia>; Samuel Charap, "The Perilous Long Game in Ukraine: Compromising with Putin May Be America's Best Option", *Foreign Affairs*, 30 March 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-30/perilous-long-game-ukraine>; Samuel Charap, "Ukraine's Best Chance for Peace: How Neutrality Can Bring Security – and Satisfy Both Russia and the West", *Foreign Affairs*, 1 June 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-06-01/ukraines-best-chance-peace>; Samuel Charap, "An Unwinnable War: Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, 102(4) 2023: 22-35; Samuel Charap and Scott Boston, "The West's Weapons Won't Make Any Difference to Ukraine", *Foreign Policy*, 21 January 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/21/weapons-ukraine-russia-invasion-military/>; Samuel Charap and Michael Mazarr, "The Wisdom of U.S. Restraint on Russia: As in the Cold War, Washington Cannot Wish Moscow Away", *Foreign Affairs*, 12 September 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/wisdom-us-restraint-russia>; Samuel Charap and Miranda Priebe, "Don't Rule Out Diplomacy in Ukraine: Biden's Current Strategy Risks Escalation and Forever War", *Foreign Affairs*, 28 October 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/dont-rule-out-diplomacy-ukraine>; Samuel Charap and Miranda Priebe, "Avoiding a Long War: U.S. Policy and the Trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict", RAND Corporation, 2023, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA2510-1.html>; Stephen M. Walt, "Liberal Illusions Caused the Ukraine Crisis", *Foreign Policy*, 19 January 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/19/ukraine-russia-nato-crisis-liberal-illusions/>; Stephen M. Walt, "The Morality of Ukraine's War Is Very Murky", *Foreign Policy*, 22 September 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/22/ukraine-war-ethics-morality-murky/>; Stephen M. Walt, "Ukraine and Russia Need a Great-Power Peace Plan", *Foreign Policy*, 18 April 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/18/ukraine-russia-china-united-states-peace-ceasefire/>.

<sup>86</sup> Jacek Rostowski, "Russia Must Be Humbled", *Project Syndicate*, 25 October 2022, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-putin-humiliation-in-war-often-drives-progress-by-jacek-rostowski-2022-10?barrier=accesspaylog>.

<sup>87</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz "Wars Aren't Won with Peacetime Economies", *Project Syndicate*, 17 October 2022, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/west-needs-war-economics-energy-food-supply-shortages-by-joseph-e-stiglitz-2022-10?barrier=accesspaylog>.

<sup>88</sup> Eric Schlosser, "What If Russia Uses Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine?", *The Atlantic*, 20 June 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/06/russia-ukraine-nuclear-weapon-us-response/661315/>.

<sup>89</sup> Nigel Gould-Davies, "Putin Has No Red Lines", *The New York Times*, 1 January 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/01/opinion/putin-russia-ukraine-war-strategy.html>.

---

Putin will not negotiate over Ukraine,<sup>90</sup> but helping Ukraine win may precipitate Putin's demise and hasten future-Russia.

Full Western support for Ukraine during the war – and NATO and EU membership shortly afterwards – would give a stable foundation to rebuild Ukraine. While Russia should pay reparations this may never happen. Most importantly a prosperous and democratic Ukraine would be an example to Russians that they could have this future and that Russia is not just destined to repeat autocracy.<sup>91</sup> Russia sees any sign of Western weakness as a signal to continue pressure. Anything Putin can spin as a victory will mean Russia goes further when its forces are rebuilt.

A humiliated Russia may seek revenge, but it also may not. Defeat in Ukraine may cause a cataclysm that starts a sea-change in Russia. In truth, we do not know what defeat will look like. However, as this war has shown, Russians have little regard for Ukrainian lives and Ukrainians are looked down on from Moscow. Being fought to a standstill – as in 2014-2015 – at the hands of a country seen as inferior and a little brother may trigger a crisis in Russia that brings about humiliation, truth, reconciliation and change. The West should support Ukraine to quickly reach this situation and re-take Ukrainian territory from Russian occupation, which would hasten that change. Even negotiating from a position of strength for Ukraine would likely accelerate Russian transformation.

---

<sup>90</sup> Konstantin Sonin, "Why There Will Be No Negotiating with Putin", *The Moscow Times*, 4 August 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/04/why-there-will-be-no-negotiating-with-putin-a82021>.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Person and Michael McFaul, "What Putin Fears Most", *Journal of Democracy*, 22 February 2022, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/what-putin-fears-most/>.

---

## 6. Keep up the Sanctions Pressure!

The West must create a financial register of all Russian elite – and family – assets abroad. The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) has created a Russian Asset Tracker database,<sup>92</sup> and this should be funded further to make it easier to track all Russian elite assets abroad. It is high time that the families of the elites are named on no-travel lists and banned from the West.<sup>93</sup> Direct Russian flights to Europe and North America are banned and taking an in-direct route is expensive which stops most Russians leaving. But the very people whom the West should stop, can travel. Western sanctions should be tightened to go after businesses, elite assets and limiting family travel abroad.

Western sanctions have been relatively effective and have shaken Russian capacity to get weapons capable equipment to continue the war.<sup>94</sup> But many sectors of the Russian economy remain untouched, like Rosatom.<sup>95</sup> Sanctions should be tightened to target any Russian effort to fund the war. The West may feel some economic pain, but contrary to some views,<sup>96</sup> sanctions – which take time – are slowly forcing Russia to rely on inferior technology.<sup>97</sup>

The West can work with third-country companies trading with Russia. They may not directly require financing from global financial centres – which are predominantly Western. However, the banks that fund these companies do.<sup>98</sup> Western banks should make it clear that they will not financially support third-country banks whose portfolios include companies trading with Russia. The ghost ships that help Russia trade oil under the radar<sup>99</sup> are predominantly owned by third-country companies. However, these companies need insurance certificates, which are issued by Western financial centres. These should be refused if a business trades with Russia. If trade with Russia is not reduced, then the West must threaten third countries with secondary sanctions. The West must be willing to implement secondary sanctions, but it is a last resort.<sup>100</sup>

The Russian economy has held up relatively well so far. However, sanctions are a long game, and it may take time for the Russian economy to eventually stagnate.<sup>101</sup> The economy is propped up by state war orders. Other sectors have lost export markets and finance.<sup>102</sup> The increased difficulty of importing technology means that there is limited supply to meet demand. The

<sup>92</sup> Link to the database is here: <https://cdn.occrp.org/projects/russian-asset-tracker/en/>.

<sup>93</sup> Marc Bennetts, “Where are the sons and daughters of Russian defence officials?”, *The Sunday Times*, 25 May 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/where-are-the-sons-and-daughters-of-russian-defence-officials-k6lwt5qfb>.

<sup>94</sup> Iikka Korhonen, “Sanctions against Russia: what have been the effects so far?”, *Economics Observatory*, 22 June 2023, <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/sanctions-against-russia-what-have-been-the-effects-so-far>.

<sup>95</sup> Kateryna Farbar, “Why Russia’s nuclear energy company Rosatom has avoided sanctions”, *Open Democracy*, 31 July 2023, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russia-ukraine-eu-nuclear-energy-zaporizhzhia-rosatom-sanctions/>.

<sup>96</sup> Larry Elliott, “The west’s tightening of Russian sanctions is a sign of failure”, *The Guardian*, 21 May 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/may/21/the-west-tightening-russian-sanctions-a-sign-of-failure>.

<sup>97</sup> Lawrence Freedman, “Are sanctions on Russia working?”, *The New Statesman*, 19 May 2023, <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/ukraine/2023/05/sanctions-russia-working-hurting-economy>.

<sup>98</sup> Tom Keatinge, “The sanctions net around Russia is tightening – but there is scope to do more”, *Financial Times*, 30 April 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/a9750db3-5d5c-4afb-a33e-e5b960b63a93>.

<sup>99</sup> Jared Malsin, “The Ghost Fleet Helping Russia Evade Sanctions and Pursue Its War in Ukraine”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 August 2023, [https://www.wsj.com/business/energy-oil/the-ghost-fleet-helping-russia-evade-sanctions-and-pursue-its-war-in-ukraine-19e77a0c?mod=Searchresults\\_pos1&page=1](https://www.wsj.com/business/energy-oil/the-ghost-fleet-helping-russia-evade-sanctions-and-pursue-its-war-in-ukraine-19e77a0c?mod=Searchresults_pos1&page=1).

<sup>100</sup> Tobias Gehrke and Filip Medunic, “Rules of the road for the EU’s secondary sanctions”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 9 June 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/article/rules-of-the-road-for-the-eus-secondary-sanctions/#:~:text=Secondary%20sanctions%20should%20be%20reserved,trading%20with%20certain%20third%20countries>.

<sup>101</sup> “Alfa-Bank sprognoziroval rezkoe uskorenje ekonomicheskogo spada v Rossii v 2023 godu [Alfa Bank predicted a sharp economic downturn acceleration in Russia in 2023]”, *The Moscow Times*, 5 December 2022, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2022/12/05/alfa-bank-sprognoziroval-rezkoe-uskorenje-ekonomicheskogo-spada-v-rossii-v-2023-godu-a27524>.

<sup>102</sup> Andras Toth-Czifra, “Russia 2023: An Irresolvable New Year”, *Riddle*, 30 December 2022, <https://ridl.io/russia-2023-an-irresolvable-new-year/>.

Russian economy depends on imports. It will take time for other sources to be found, which have so far been worse.<sup>103</sup> Russia's war has reduced productivity. Close to 900,000 people have fled. Military production requires specialisation. With so many fighting or having left, those skills cannot be replaced.<sup>104</sup>

The Russian economy will experience a long stagnation. Even if the war ended tomorrow, the economy would remain stationary for years.<sup>105</sup> While mass protests are low, a combination of higher prices, lower salaries, economic stagnation and a never-ending war could precipitate demonstrations. Russia has a long history of protests appearing from nowhere.<sup>106</sup> While they tend to be localised, sometimes they occur in the capital and can spiral if given enough support. With a slowing economy, the government will find it harder to maintain middle-class and elite support. The middle-class are already seeing their savings and way of life disappearing. Stagnation could mean reduced elite assets and their dissatisfaction. Fearing this, the regime has nationalised subsidiaries of Western companies to maintain elite wealth, but this firefighting to limit economic stagnation may be too difficult. This gives Western governments an opportunity.

---

<sup>103</sup> Nick Trickett, N "Russia's Brittle Wartime Economy", *Riddle*, 16 May 2022, <https://ridl.io/russia-rsquo-s-brittle-wartime-economy/>.

<sup>104</sup> Konstantin Sonin, "Pochemu Tsetnral'nyi Bank ne vinovat v deval'vatsii rublya [Why the Central Bank is not to blame for the devaluation of the ruble]", *The Moscow Times*, 11 August 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/08/11/pochemu-tsentrlnii-bank-ne-vinovat-v-devalvatsii-rublya-a51758>.

<sup>105</sup> Konstantin Sonin, "Russia's Road to Economic Ruin: The Long-Term Costs of the Ukraine War Will Be Staggering", *Foreign Affairs*, 15 November 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/russias-road-economic-ruin>.

<sup>106</sup> Stephen Crowley, "Sanctions, Economic Hardship and Social (In)stability in Russia", *Riddle*, 26 August 2022, <https://ridl.io/sanctions-economic-hardship-and-social-in-stability-in-russia/>.

---



## 7. Talking to the Devils

---

This section does not advocate a great power concert that leaves Ukraine out in the cold – Russia is not a great power now nor was it in the past. The West should be clear that there are red lines that if Russia tries to cross will end any talks. The main red line is that any end to the war is decided by Kyiv with the West acting as a support. Sanctions will continue even if Russia leaves Ukrainian territory, pays reparations and holds elections. The talks advocated here are not for the West to leave Ukraine high and dry, but to precipitate regime collapse in Moscow and build elite support for a future-Russia. This will be challenging and frankly abhorrent to conceive, but providing a plan for a future-Russia and clear red lines that do not abandon Ukraine and leave the Russian elite with little alternative will eventually lead to change in Russia.

Continuing sanctions makes it harder to talk to regime personnel, but these are necessary to keep pressure on the Russian economy to induce change. Even if change comes, sanctions should be eased slowly – dependent on compliance – and can easily snap back if needed. With victory elusive, economic stagnation is ever-present, causing elite dissatisfaction. This is made worse by Putin continuing to play factions and giving some more power than others.<sup>107</sup> This creates winners and losers and discontent among the losers. While unpalatable, the West should speak with elites to sharpen these divisions.

One of the less salubrious aspects of working towards future-Russia is the need for dialogue with current elites. This is not sitting down with Putin. But feelers should be put out to ascertain elite dissatisfaction; discussions on peace talks have occurred between former American officials and people close to the Kremlin.<sup>108</sup> This report does not advocate this. Any discussion about beginning talks must include Ukraine, but talking to the elite about a future-Russia may induce regime cracks and help the future-Russia plan be implemented. Britain has spoken with Russian officials about global security issues.<sup>109</sup> This is a good place to start to build communication and perhaps in the future to move towards discussing future-Russia with current elites.

While talking to the elites is abhorrent, there have been defections,<sup>110</sup> albeit not inner-circle Putin confidantes. If the West is serious about weakening the current regime sufficiently as a basis for a more democratic future-Russia, then it must talk to regime personnel and give them options for defection. If Western governments are willing to support and safeguard defectors, it is possible this will hasten many defections and weaken the regime.<sup>111</sup> Most in the inner-circle see themselves as patriots<sup>112</sup> and if the West offered an appealing picture of what a future-Russia would be like it may hasten defections. As many are instinctively anti-Western, Britain could use proxies, like Turkey and Brazil, offering a quicker Free Trade Agreement with Turkey and something similar with Brazil to incentivise these governments to talk to the Russian elite and see what comes of it.

---

<sup>107</sup> Aleksandra Prokopenko, “Vkhod – kopeika, vykhod – zhizn’. Chto sdelał god voiny s rossiiskoi elitoi [Entrance is a penny, exit is life. What did a year of war do to the Russian elite]?”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 7 March 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89212>.

<sup>108</sup> Josh Lederman, “Former U.S. officials have held secret Ukraine talks with prominent Russians”, *CNN*, 6 July 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/former-us-officials-secret-ukraine-talks-russians-war-ukraine-rcna92610>.

<sup>109</sup> Richard Holmes, “UK has held secret talks with Russia during the Ukraine war”, *iNews*, 22 September 2023, <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-secret-talks-russia-ukraine-war-2633482>.

<sup>110</sup> Melissa Bell, Saskya Vandoorne and Joseph Ataman, “High-ranking Russian officials are defecting. This man is aiding them”, *CNN*, 25 January 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/25/europe/russia-fsb-defectors-osechkin-intl-cmd/index.html>.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with CE072P.

<sup>112</sup> John Sipher, “If You Want to Understand Russian Power, Listen to the People Who Leave It”, *Time*, 22 May 2023, <https://time.com/6281663/russia-vladimir-putin-defectors/>. This idea that the sloviks see themselves as patriots was corroborated by: LG692X, LU925M, SH235F, AM071U, EH382J.

---

Either option would mean the interlocutor playing to elite material interests. Few people willingly give up power without the understanding that they keep their assets. Putin's regime is a kleptocracy,<sup>113</sup> and loyalty is bought through access to state resources. The need to prise elites away from Putin is something that the West must do before any future-Russia can be planned.

Talking to the Putinist elite must occur now as the West or its chosen representatives should gauge what will be needed to weaken Putin's support-base. A coherent plan for a future-Russia could cause regime splits, especially if the West can offer incentives for doing so, like an amnesty or retention of some assets. There will need to be lustration – or truth and reconciliation – where those who show contrition can still have a role in politics or business. Some form of lustration should happen, most likely a truth and reconciliation commission, to start the painstaking process of changing elite and popular perceptions of Russia's role in the world and its past.

However, the first thing to do is to see what can cause elite splits, and this may mean incentivisation to having some role in the future. Calls for lustration may lead to elite consolidation around the regime. However, a truth and reconciliation commission would begin societal healing and provide elites with a sense that they can get a fair hearing, thereby reducing their need to support the regime.

An elusive victory and the loss of assets in the West have garnered some disenchantment with Putin among elites, but the West needs to up the pressure.<sup>114</sup> Many elite members want to holiday on the French Riviera – rather than Sochi – and be able to visit Paris, New York and London.<sup>115</sup> Western governments should be clear what it would take to return to this. Stating clearly what it would take for Russia to see a possible lifting of sanctions while increasing sanctions in the here and now and arming Ukraine may lead some Russian elites to decide that supporting Putin is too risky. When the full-scale invasion happened in late February 2022, Western governments should have set out what it would take to remove sanctions, making it easier for elites to remove Putin and de-escalate. However, without such indications, there has been little elite recourse to stop supporting the war. Saying what could be done to lift sanctions would precipitate elite splits.

A further reason for dialogue is to increase regime paranoia. Putin does not trust many people and his inner-circle has got smaller over the years due to his mistrust.<sup>116</sup> With victory elusive, Putin's back is increasingly up against the Kremlin wall and his suspicion of those around him will increase. By opening back-door channels to elites, the West will increase that feeling. If someone speaks to Western representatives and tells Putin, Putin will fear other elites are doing the same. Elites will have to make a difficult decision either to tell Putin or not. If they do, then the paranoia level increases. If they do not – but others do – then it again increases the paranoia and the likelihood of Putin lashing out. This will alienate more elite members and precipitate defections and dialogue with the West.

As horrible as it is to talk to those who have perpetrated the war and crimes in Ukraine, it is necessary. The West must swallow hard and talk to people it accuses of war crimes. It must plan. This means talking to some very insalubrious people. Constitutionally, if Putin was removed – or incapacitated – power would pass to Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin. Sanctions have ended his personal plans for state modernisation, and it is unclear what his personal

---

<sup>113</sup> See: Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

<sup>114</sup> Olga Chyzh, "Putin enables the lifestyle of Russia's elite – until they lose faith, there is little hope of peace", *The Guardian*, 17 March 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/mar/17/putin-lifestyle-russia-elite-peace-military-loyalty>.

<sup>115</sup> Interviews with EM736K, EH328J.

<sup>116</sup> Interviews with SH235, GJ983M, LG692X, LU925M, EH328J, EM736K, CE072P, FR826J.

---



position on the war is.<sup>117</sup> Modernisers in the regime are likely to be dissatisfied that their job is now to firefight to support the economy, and that their plans to modernise Russia have gone out of the window.<sup>118</sup>

One who likely truly believes the West is out to destroy Russia is Head of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev.<sup>119</sup> Any potential transition needs his tacit approval. Patrushev was trying to elevate his son, Dmitry, to the Prime Ministership – and eventually the presidency. Patrushev will not want his son in charge of a country in crisis. If Western governments opened discussions on Patrushev Junior being the next president, this may soften the hardliners' hardliner and obtain Patrushev's acquiescence on regime change.<sup>120</sup>

This is the situation Russia's war on Ukraine has reached. Elite back-channels may allow for talks on a democratic future-Russia. These will increase regime paranoia. While it could lead to consolidation, Putin is increasingly less trusting of his elite<sup>121</sup> and may lash out. This could unite elite groups to remove Putin. The war is increasingly deadlocked and the elites fear losing power and their assets. Back-channels can open dialogue and give the elites options in a future-Russia. Discussion may be the catalyst for change.<sup>122</sup> Primarily Western governments should support those elites they want in power for a transition or new regime.<sup>123</sup>

Short of instigating regime change, there is little alternative but to splinter the elites around Putin. By playing to their patriotism, ensuring they get to keep some ill-gotten gains and providing a roadmap on how sanctions can be lifted, the West can plausibly get elite support. We do not know what will come after Putin – or even if the West will have any say on the matter as Russians must decide – but talking to elites now will stoke fear in Putin's inner-circle, leading to infighting, defection and regime splintering. To achieve future-Russia, discussions with the elite must begin now.

The common counterargument to this is why should the West allow the Russian elites to get out of the mess they themselves made? Ideally the current elite should all go to The Hague. Certainly, some form of lustration must occur, and this may spark increased regime support among the elite. But an intelligible future-Russia plan<sup>124</sup> that builds a better Russia – with perhaps a place for those elites who show remorse after a time out of politics and plays to elites' patriotism – can precipitate elite calculations to step aside.

Few autocracies collapse cleanly. This is something that the West must face. This does not mean abandoning Ukraine. The West should be clear that Ukraine will not be discarded, sanctions will continue, some form of lustration must occur in Russia and Russia will pay reparations –

---

<sup>117</sup> Andrey Pertsev, "Ne vyskazyvaetsya dazhe pri zakrytykh dveryakh. Kak voyna izmenila rabotu Mikhaila Mishustina – i pochemu prem'er otkazalsya ot piara, kotoryi tak lyubit. Rasskazyvaet spetskor "Meduzy" Andrei Petsev [Does not speak out even behind closed doors. How the war changed the work of Mikhail Mishustin – and why the prime minister abandoned the PR that he loves so much. Meduza special correspondent Andrey Pertsev reports]", *Meduza*, 21 July 2022, <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/07/21/ne-vyskazyvaetsya-dazhe-pri-zakrytykh-dveryah>.

<sup>118</sup> Svetlana Reiter and Margarita Lyutova, "Kryshka groba zakryta i zakolochena. Pochemu Elvira Naibullina ne ushla is Tsentrobanka posle nachala voyny – i kak TsB pytaetsya spasti rossiiskuyu ekonomiku. Rassledovanne "Meduza" [The lid of the coffin is closed and boarded up. Why Elvira Naibullina did not leave the Central Bank after the start of the war – and how the Central Bank is trying to save the Russian economy. Meduza investigation]", *Meduza*, 27 June 2022, <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/06/27/kryshka-groba-zakryta-i-zakolochena>.

<sup>119</sup> Mark Galeotti, "Russia's Hardliners Present Their Manifesto", *The Moscow Times*, 29 April 2022, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/04/29/russias-hardliners-present-their-manifesto-a77537>.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with AM071U.

<sup>121</sup> Interviews with EH382J, LU925M, SH235F.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with AM017U.

<sup>123</sup> Interviews with MW903B, NH716P.

<sup>124</sup> Andrey Yakovlev, "Rossiiskoi elite pridetsya dogovarivat'sya o prekrashchenii voyny [The Russian elite will have to negotiate an end to the war]", *The Moscow Times*, 31 August 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/08/31/rossiiskoi-elite-pridetsya-dogovarivatsya-o-tom-chtobi-prekratit-voynu-a53600>.

although these should not be as prohibitive as after Versailles in 1919. By making these red lines clear and remaining united and supportive of Ukraine, the West can push Russian elites to decide that the situation needs to change and to begin that change. This will take a long time and may not happen, but it should be tried. It is possible that few elites will talk directly with the West, but Western governments have a trump card – the Russian diaspora.

## 8. Helping the Diaspora and Exiled Media Outlets Work for a Better Russia

Like many autocracies, Russia is a highly repressive regime. Russian society is atomised, making it hard to know what others think and so difficult to unite. The opposition in exile is disunited and mistrusts each other.<sup>125</sup> The EU has begun a programme with Belarusian democratic forces to unite these groups and work on implementing a future-Belarus vision.<sup>126</sup> A similar EU-Russia group could mitigate the distrust and begin to develop a coherent future-Russia plan.

Anti-regime media outlets and non-state civil society organisations have a small footprint outside Moscow and St Petersburg.<sup>127</sup> The diaspora that left Russia – especially to Europe – is largely pro-Western, anti-regime and innovative.<sup>128</sup> Giving these groups time and space to build a democratic future-Russia is something Western governments must invest in. The West should be careful though to fund those groups that support the same values. It will take time, but it should begin now.

### *The Diaspora Trump Card*

The Diaspora that has arrived in Western states since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is a trump card for the West. There are questions over the limited number of protests outside Russian embassies,<sup>129</sup> and a perception that male Russians fled to save their own skin, rather than protesting the war,<sup>130</sup> but in an autocracy that promotes disinterest in politics, few Russians know where to begin.<sup>131</sup> Someone may be against the war but have little idea how to show this or who to contact. This is especially so when having hurriedly left Russia for a foreign country.

This is heightened by the fact that the Russian opposition distrusts one another. Again, this is a problem of operating in an autocracy that regularly represses opposition. It takes time to overcome this distrust.<sup>132</sup> But there was a meeting in Brussels – minus Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation – to unite the opposition around developing aims for a future-Russia, which is a start.<sup>133</sup>

While opposition mistrust is understandable, now is the time for unity and planning for future-Russia. A government in exile is not an option as it isolates the potential future leadership

<sup>125</sup> Allan Kaval, "Russia's exiled intelligentsia in Riga are in disarray", *Le Monde*, 29 May 2022, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/29/in-riga-members-of-russia-s-exiled-intelligentsia-remain-in-disarray\\_5984951\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/29/in-riga-members-of-russia-s-exiled-intelligentsia-remain-in-disarray_5984951_4.html).

<sup>126</sup> Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Belarus, "Belarus: High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell launches a new Consultative Group with democratic forces and civil society", Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 29 June 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belarus-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-launches-new-consultative-group-democratic\\_en?s=218#:~:text=During%20their%20first%20meeting%20today,and%20needs%20of%20democratic%20forces.](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belarus-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-launches-new-consultative-group-democratic_en?s=218#:~:text=During%20their%20first%20meeting%20today,and%20needs%20of%20democratic%20forces.)

<sup>127</sup> Scott Lucas talking to the *YouTube* channel, Silicon Curtain: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_kajx8pGso&list=PLd8tNQqWJDKK\\_WPknrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_kajx8pGso&list=PLd8tNQqWJDKK_WPknrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=28) (32:00).

<sup>128</sup> Konstantin Sonin, "Stop Victim-Blaming Russian Refugees", *The Moscow Times*, 27 April 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/04/25/stop-victim-blaming-russian-refugees-a80919>.

<sup>129</sup> Marika Semenenko, "Why Aren't Russians Abroad Doing More to Protest the War?", *The Moscow Times*, 31 May 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/01/12/why-arent-russians-abroad-doing-more-to-protest-the-war-2-a79899>.

<sup>130</sup> Charlie Campbell, "Why Thousands of People Are Fleeing Russia Now", *Time*, 27 September 2022, <https://time.com/6217096/russia-exodus-mobilization-protests/>.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Goble, "Atomization of Russian Society at Unprecedented Heights, Sociologists Say", Window on Eurasia Blog, 28 January 2018, <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2018/01/atomization-of-russian-society-at.html>. This was reiterated in interviews with HX783Y, NS308K, MN572Y, NC924Y, KZ527L, FH829M, UY719M, KG519T.

<sup>132</sup> Lucian Kim, "Russian Exiles Struggle to Form a United Opposition to Putin", *Foreign Policy*, 28 November 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/28/russian-exiles-emigres-diaspora-anti-putin-ukraine-war-opposition/>.

<sup>133</sup> Elizaveta Fokht, "'My budem rabotat' c Rossiei. No drugoi Rossiei.' O chem rossiiskaya oppozitsiya govorila s evropeitsami na konferentsii v Bruyussele ['We will work with Russia. But a different Russia.' What the Russian opposition talked about with the Europeans at a conference in Brussels"]", *BBC News – Russian Service*, 12 June 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-65877931>.

from the populace and makes it easier for the regime to paint the exiled leadership as Western stooges. But elections to a council-in-exile among the diaspora would give some legitimacy and could start planning for a future-Russia. This council would be part of the transition. It would develop a coherent plan for future-Russia and develop these practices. It would organise Russian groups abroad to work towards this. Once the regime collapses and elections are held the council would act as a monitor that the next government is still working towards the plan. A council-in-exile with a plan could convince some current elites of this path. One crucial first step is to decide on the 2024 presidential election strategy. In Belarus, the Honest People NGO publicised a strategy where voters folded their ballots in a particular way. This highlighted the level of support for opposition leader Svitlana Tsikhanouskaya,<sup>134</sup> as it was difficult for electoral observers to miss the number of folded ballots. Thus, when Aleksandr Lukashenka was re-elected as President, the only conclusion was that the regime had stolen the election.

In a personalist autocracy like Russia, regime legitimacy relies on Putin's support. By having voters fold their ballots in a certain way, electoral observers can show the scale of opposition. In a personalist autocracy like Russia, presidential elections must have a high turnout with a large majority voting for Putin. But many folded ballots would highlight limited support for Putin and force the authorities into significant electoral fraud to get Putin's 'support'. If observers can show the fraud's scale it may hasten mass protests. Protesters only need to be lucky once. Another option is to boycott. This report advocates for the opposition competing in the elections and using the folded ballot tactic, but either option must be agreed on now.

There are Russian diaspora groups across Europe developing ideas for future-Russia, but they are disunited. The diaspora is the trump card to prepare for when the door is ajar and Western governments should give it more support. News reports could publicise diaspora activities. Many Russians have protested the war,<sup>135</sup> but this has got lost in the correct support for Ukraine. Western media could promote individual protest stories with social media links at the end of each article to allow diaspora Russians to connect. Such articles would help show the Western public that not all Russians support Putin, and that diaspora groups are planning for a better future-Russia.

This will take time. But diaspora groups are the West's secret weapon, as they have links to Russian elites and citizens.<sup>136</sup> Kremlin personnel may not necessarily talk to Western governments – although other avenues mentioned above should be opened – but they may talk to Russian diaspora groups. While it will take time, contacts should be made to begin to change elite and public thinking. Some former elites living in the West have criticised Putin and the war and had sanctions partially lifted.<sup>137</sup> This may lead other former Kremlin insiders to speak out, precipitating those in Russia to leave and speak out. If elites see that the West will lift personal sanctions, it may hasten more defections.

Of more importance are ordinary Russian people. Western governments must make it easier for the diaspora to settle and find accommodation, open bank accounts, set up businesses and find jobs. The British Government could create a position of Russian diaspora ambassador<sup>138</sup> to help newly arrived Russians with all the bureaucracy. This would lessen perceptions of

---

<sup>134</sup> "How Belarus voted: Minsk election commission members explain the shenanigans and intimidation used to stage Alexander Lukashenko's 'landslide victory'", *Meduza*, 18 August 2020, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/08/19/how-belarus-voted>.

<sup>135</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, "Across the Globe, the Russian Diaspora Finds Ways to Protest Putin's War", *The New York Times*, 26 February 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/26/world/europe/russia-diaspora-protests.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with NH716P.

<sup>137</sup> Max Seddon, Jane Croft, Lucy Fisher and Chris Cook, "UK removes sanctions against Russia oligarch Oleg Tinkov", *Financial Times*, 20 July 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/fe6ab027-fb19-4593-9ef1-bb751aeeb14b>.

<sup>138</sup> Michael McFaul, "Opinion: The U.S. needs to launch a diplomatic surge on Ukraine", *The Washington Post*, 20 June 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/06/20/us-launch-diplomatic-surge-ukraine/>.

---

Russophobia. Another idea would be to create “democracy passports”<sup>139</sup> and special visas allowing Russian opposition, civil society and media personnel to continue their work in exile towards a democratic future-Russia. The new Russian diaspora is the strongest link the West has to Russia. New arrivals have family in Russia and will phone home. When talking to family and friends they will start to dispel myths of Russian persecution in the West.<sup>140</sup>

Since 2012, regime rhetoric about Western Russophobia has increased.<sup>141</sup> The regime portrays the West as anti-Russian, trying to destroy Russian culture and minimise Russia’s role in the Second World War victory, and even making Russians second-class citizens in Western states. By speaking to family and friends regularly, the diaspora can show how easy it is to get a visa, find accommodation and set up a bank account and business, and show that Russian culture is not being cancelled in the West.<sup>142</sup>

Western governments should provide more humanitarian and student visas to enable Russians to leave Russia and those countries many fled to such as Turkey, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia and the UAE. Organisations such as Guide to the Free World<sup>143</sup> should be funded so they can continue advertising ways out of Russia and travel on to Europe and North America. The British Government should create an individualised Russia visa based on the High Potential Individual (HPI) visa to attract recent graduates from Russian universities – particularly in IT, finance and communication. Russian universities have produced thousands of well-educated specialists in science, maths and engineering, and Russian developers have a global reputation and penchant for creating excellent start-up companies.<sup>144</sup> But many are now in third countries.<sup>145</sup> Precipitating a brain drain in Russia – and providing support for those who have already left – through something like a HPI visa will worsen Russia’s economy and affect its war machine.<sup>146</sup> On a cynical note, it will also add value to the British economy, and other Western governments should do something similar.

Western governments should support university graduates in Russia and third countries to precipitate a brain drain and economic recession in Russia. But one group is missing here – the less educated.<sup>147</sup> They are more likely to support Putin and the war. Targeting this sector will be hard but can be done.

One option to target this audience is to expand organisations like Call Russia.<sup>148</sup> This Lithuanian organisation employs Russian speakers and has made over a million phone calls to people in Russia inviting them to talk about themselves and their opinion of the war. After this, the caller then offers their own opinion about the war. At the beginning, callers were regularly verbally abused, but over time the phone conversations have got longer and calmer. Increasingly many callees agree to further conversations and, when rung again, offer talking points from non-

---

<sup>139</sup> “Draft Report”, European Parliament, 28 September 2023, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/AFET-PR-753627\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/AFET-PR-753627_EN.pdf).

<sup>140</sup> Interview with NH716P.

<sup>141</sup> Neil Robinson, “‘Russophobia’ in Official Russian Political Discourse”, *De Europa*, 2(2) 2019: 61-77.

<sup>142</sup> Putin has constantly claimed that Russian culture is being cancelled in the West. See: “Putin zayavil, chto Rossiya ne budet otkazyvaetsya ot mirovoi kultury [Putin said that Russia will not live without world culture]”, *Izvestiya*, 25 January 2023, <https://iz.ru/1460050/2023-01-25/putin-zaiavil-chto-rossiia-ne-budet-otkazyvatsia-ot-mirovoi-kultury>. The state international channel RT even ran a documentary about how the West was cancelling Russian culture: <https://rtd.rt.com/films/russians-can/>.

<sup>143</sup> Link to the website: <https://relocation.guide/> (in Russian).

<sup>144</sup> Andrew Orlowski “Putin has debased and exiled Russia’s own geniuses”, *The Telegraph*, 7 August 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/08/07/putin-has-debased-and-exiled-russias-own-geniuses/>.

<sup>145</sup> Cade Metz and Adam Satariano, “Russian Tech Industry Faces ‘Brain Drain’ as Workers Flee”, *The New York Times*, 13 April 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/13/technology/russia-tech-workers.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Daniel Freeman, “Let’s brain-drain Russia”, IEA, 29 September 2022, <https://iea.org.uk/lets-brain-drain-russia/>.

<sup>147</sup> Frida Ghitis, “Russia’s Brain Drain Is Helping Putin”, *World Politics Review*, 16 February 2023, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/russia-brain-drain-emigration-public-opinion-putin-war-ukraine/>.

<sup>148</sup> A link to the organisation is here: <https://callrussia.org/eng>.



state sources.<sup>149</sup> Occasionally callers get through to Russians who do not support the war but feel isolated. Finding out that they are not abandoned gives hope.<sup>150</sup> The British Government could support such initiatives. Increasing capacity to discuss the war, the West and the diaspora can discuss with Russians in Russia what is important for them, and accommodate this in the future-Russia plan to increase support for the strategy.

The diaspora's role in beginning the process to a future-Russia is crucial. Utilising the diaspora will weaken Putin's ties to the population. It will start a conversation and the regime will try to restrict Russians' access to exiled media outlets, slowing down or blocking sites like YouTube, and even stopping phone calls with the outside world. But this will make the regime look repressive to its own supporters. By supporting diaspora groups to speak to a wide audience, Western governments can plant seeds of change. These seeds may never sprout and the journey to a democratic future-Russia will take time.<sup>151</sup> However, it must start now. The diaspora, with its links to Russia, is crucial on this journey.

### *Letting Exiled Media Outlets Be Free*

Russian expat media outlets like *Meduza*, *Mediazona*, *TV Rain* and *iStories* have a Russian viewership/readership and could offer programming/articles on politics and history, interviews with Western politicians and information on future-Russia plans. These outlets cater to a middle-class audience but by word-of-mouth, the audience could expand. Other outlets that may not have the same world-outlook as the West should be helped to access a wider audience to help change. While Western governments must work with diaspora groups with a different view of future-Russia it can better fund those groups more attuned to the West. Some Russian liberals still hold imperialist views, although many do not.<sup>152</sup> Obtusely, this can be an asset. They share liberal values of rule-of-law, market capitalism and democracy – but can speak to a Russian society that retains an imperial mindset.<sup>153</sup> This would engage non-liberal Russians in dialogue and over time bring them closer to thinking about democracy and the rule-of-law which would reduce imperial thinking.

It is possible for diaspora Russians to become non-imperialist democrats although this will take time.<sup>154</sup> For now, most in the diaspora believe in a democratic future-Russia and if being patriotic opens the door to Putin supporters then this should be tolerated. Russian society will have to change together or not at all, and it will be a slow process. Some of the Russian diaspora remain tied to Russia and have been “captured” by regime narratives.<sup>155</sup> The West must do better to integrate this new diaspora with language training, history, and culture courses and integration support. The Russian diaspora ambassadors could support this process. Better integration will reduce isolation and bring diaspora Russians together to develop effective future-Russia plans. Integration would help the campaign against Russophobia, emphasising that the West supports resident Russians. Direct contact with the West, may make the diaspora

---

<sup>149</sup> Louise Nordstrom, “‘At first people yelled’: #CallRussia activists fight the Kremlin's propaganda machine”, *France 24*, 25 March 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220325-at-first-people-yelled-now-they-interact-more-callrussia-fights-kremlin-propaganda>.

<sup>150</sup> Anna Plotnikova, “‘Pozvoni Rossii’: mozhet li telefonnyi zvonok v Rossiyu ostanovit' voinu [‘Call Russia’: Can a phone call to Russia stop the war]?”, *Karavansarai*, 30 January 2023, [https://central.asia-news.com/ru/articles/cnmi\\_ca/features/2023/01/30/feature-01](https://central.asia-news.com/ru/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2023/01/30/feature-01).

<sup>151</sup> Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, “Russians Know the Reality of War and Many of Them Still Support Putin”, *The New York Times*, 27 October 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/opinion/russia-putin-war.html>.

<sup>152</sup> Emily Couch, “Why Russian Liberalism Has to Change”, *Foreign Policy*, 25 August 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/29/russian-liberal-universities-hse-ukraine-war/>.

<sup>153</sup> James Nixey, “Russian imperial mindset must change for real victory”, Chatham House, 8 December 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/12/russian-imperial-mindset-must-change-real-victory>.

<sup>154</sup> Masha Gessen, “How Russian Journalists in Exile Are Covering the War In Ukraine”, *The New Yorker*, 6 March 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/13/how-russian-journalists-in-exile-are-covering-the-war-in-ukraine>.

<sup>155</sup> Joshua Askew, “Russians in Europe: Dreams, dissent and divided loyalties”, *euronews*, 28 June 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2023/06/28/russians-in-europe-a-misunderstood-minority-or-free-riders>.

---

less nationalist and contribute to pushing Russian society towards civic nationalism to. Currently, exiled media must reach an audience who are being told it is the West killing Russian soldiers.<sup>156</sup> Refusing to work with outlets which retain imperial thinking is self-defeating<sup>157</sup> if a democratic future-Russia has any chance of being built.

While headline figures put Putin's approval rating at about 75% – with 60% believing Russia is headed in the right direction<sup>158</sup> – collecting public opinion polling data in an autocracy is difficult. It is probable that Russians simply tell pollsters what they think they want to hear.<sup>159</sup> Independent pollsters – Russian Field – found that four out of five people refuse to respond, so pollsters only speak to those who want to talk and who are likely to support Putin.<sup>160</sup>

With the state monopoly on media – TV remains the main information source – Russians are constantly fed a message that the army is defending 'Russians' in the Donbas and that the war was started by Anglo-Saxons who are using Ukraine as a proxy army to defeat Russia. There was a clear rally-round-the-flag effect in Russia,<sup>161</sup> which partially explains war support. It is likely even now that most Russians support the war – or acquiesce to it – through passive conformity. While there is a growing perception that victory is elusive, Putin retains support as the man who "saved Russia",<sup>162</sup> although it is mostly passive.<sup>163</sup>

At the beginning of the war there were protests against the invasion in 45 Russian cities.<sup>164</sup> Frustration in the West has grown at too few Russian anti-war protests. But this misunderstands Russian society. It is highly atomised, with most Russians unsure what their neighbours think. There is a high sense of disorientation, bewilderment and deeply internalised obedience to the state. Many simply voted with their feet and left. In a highly repressive system, such a stance is understandable. Moreover, parts of Russian society believe Putin knows more than they, that there is logic to his actions and that Russia fights defensive and morally just wars.<sup>165</sup> This is deeply ingrained in Russian society.

There have been protests, albeit "muted".<sup>166</sup> In an autocracy, there are few avenues for protest. Thus, there have been anti-war protests of plasticine figures in Moscow,<sup>167</sup> individual and

<sup>156</sup> Anatol Lieven, "Few Russians wanted the war in Ukraine – but they won't accept a Russian defeat either", *The Guardian*, 30 August 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/30/ukraine-war-vladimir-putin-prigozhin-russia>.

<sup>157</sup> Max Bergmann, "What Could Come Next? Assessing the Putin Regime's Stability and Western Options", CSIS, 20 January 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-could-come-next-assessing-putin-regimes-stability-and-western-policy-options>.

<sup>158</sup> Data on this can be found at the Levada Centre: <https://www.levada.ru/2023/08/31/odobrenie-institutov-rejtingi-politikov-i-partij-v-kontse-avgusta-2023-goda/> (in Russian).

<sup>159</sup> Interviews with KZ527L, FU829M, AM071U, MN572Y, EM736K, U719M.

<sup>160</sup> "Pochti 80% rossiyan otkazyvaetsya uchastvovat' v oprosakh o voine [Almost 80% of Russians refuse to participate in surveys about the war]", *The Moscow Times*, 21 August 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/08/21/pochti-80-rossiyan-otkazivayutsya-uchastvovat-v-sotsoprosah-o-voine-a52561>.

<sup>161</sup> Niko Vorobyov, "Who are the everyday Russians rallying behind Putin's war?", *Al Jazeera*, 6 April 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/6/the-russians-who-rally-behind-putins-special-operation>.

<sup>162</sup> Marc Bennetts, "Putin's Russia, 20 years on", *Politico*, 31 December 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-russia-20-years-on-anniversary/>. (Interview given to the author – not author's personal belief.)

<sup>163</sup> Keir Giles speaking to the *YouTube* channel, Silicon Curtain: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbHLrH9Q\\_E4&list=PLd8tNQqWJDkK\\_WPknrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbHLrH9Q_E4&list=PLd8tNQqWJDkK_WPknrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=24) (from 18:39); Andrey Kolesnikov, "Zhdunyya la Russe: Kak srednii rossiyanin prisposablivaetsya k novym realiyam [Waiting a la Russe: How the average Russian Adapts to New Realities]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2 August 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90291>.

<sup>164</sup> Tom Parfitt and Catherine Philp, "Anti-war protesters take to the streets in 45 Russian cities over Ukraine invasion", *The Times*, 28 February 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/anti-war-protesters-45-russian-cities-ukraine-invasion-latest-spf5hbt18>.

<sup>165</sup> Andrey Kolesnikov, "Poza embriona. Pochemu rossiiskoe obshchestvo smirilos' s proiskhodyashchim [Fetal position. Why Russian society has come to terms with what is happening]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 26 January 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88886>.

<sup>166</sup> Andrew Roth, "'It's a disgrace not to go to war': muted Russian protest against Ukraine conflict", *The Guardian*, 22 February 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/22/its-a-disgrace-not-to-go-to-war-muted-russian-protest-against-ukraine-conflict>.

<sup>167</sup> Yulia James, "Ukraine war: Russians stage plasticine protests to oppose war", *BBC News*, 27 July 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-66273597>.

collective graffiti protest artwork<sup>168</sup> – and, in one example, barcodes in a St Petersburg supermarket giving shoppers statistics on the death and destruction wrought by the Russian military.<sup>169</sup> There have been wildcat strikes,<sup>170</sup> numerous arson attacks on military enlistment offices – 17 between 29 July and 1 August 2023<sup>171</sup> – and railway signal boxes. Partisans have allegedly derailed trains.<sup>172</sup>

Sustained large-scale protests were never likely. The Russian private sector is largely state-affiliated<sup>173</sup> and nearly 50% of Russians are state employees.<sup>174</sup> Similarly, students rely on government scholarships and subsidised accommodation and transport costs.<sup>175</sup> The authorities are highly repressive, with torture, security service monitoring, arrest, threats before protests and increasing demoralisation as the regime keeps winning.<sup>176</sup> Thus, protests at the beginning of the war were notable, but short-lived. By arresting children<sup>177</sup> – something that had never happened before – the Kremlin sent a brutal signal, followed up with 15-year jail terms for criticising the army. Most people are not heroes and will not put themselves in harm's way.<sup>178</sup>

While the number of Russians in an excellent mood remains high at 74%, those who are despondent has increased to 25% with the war being the main cause (47%). 58% of respondents believe that worse time are coming.<sup>179</sup> The sense of anxiety, fear and inability to plan<sup>180</sup> have all increased during the war, and there is growing understanding that people cannot influence how the country is run.<sup>181</sup> Another poll showed that while 74% support the army, 53% think that peace negotiations should begin but without returning the occupied Donbas and Crimea to Ukraine.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> Jane Aaron, “7 Anti-War Street Artists Still Working Inside Russia”, *The Moscow Times*, 2 January 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/01/02/7-anti-war-street-artists-still-working-inside-russia-a79835>.

<sup>169</sup> “Trial of Russian Artist for Anti-War Supermarket Protest Begins”, *The Moscow Times*, 16 December 2022, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/15/trial-of-russian-artist-for-anti-war-supermarket-protest-begins-a79711>.

<sup>170</sup> “Rabotniki ul'yanovskogo avtomobil'nogo zavoda potrebovali povysit' zaplatu [Ulyanovsk automobile plant workers demanded an increase in salary]”, *Idel.Realities*, 18 May 2023, <https://www.idelreal.org/a/32417537.html>.

<sup>171</sup> “V Rossii novaya volna podzhogov voenkmatov. Zaderzhannye vinyat telefonnykh moshennikov [There is a new wave of arson attacks on military registration and enlistment offices in Russia. Detainees blame phone scammers]”, *BBC News - Russian Service*, 1 August 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/c3g1zxdnd3wo>.

<sup>172</sup> Alisa Zemlyanskaya, “Etot poezd v ogne: kak rossiiskie partizany podzhigayut voenkomaty i puskayut poezda pod otkos [The train is on fire: how Russian partisans set fire to military registration and enlistment offices and derail trains]”, *Mediazona*, 5 July 2022, <https://theins.ru/politika/252389>.

<sup>173</sup> Interviews with BC296V, CF628V, KD632T.

<sup>174</sup> “Byudzhetikami okazalas' polovina rossiyan: Bolee 60 mln chelovek zabisyat ot byudzheta [Half of Russians turned out to be state employees: More than 60 million people depend on the budget]”, *Kapital Strany*, 19 October 2021, [https://kapital-rus.ru/articles/article/budjetnikami\\_okazalas\\_polovina\\_rossiyan\\_bolee\\_60 mln\\_chelovek\\_zavisyat\\_ot\\_b/](https://kapital-rus.ru/articles/article/budjetnikami_okazalas_polovina_rossiyan_bolee_60 mln_chelovek_zavisyat_ot_b/).

<sup>175</sup> Nikolay Titenok, “L'goty, posobiya i skidki dlya studentov [Benefits, allowances and discounts for students]”, *Tinkoff Magazine*, 1 September 2023, <https://journal.tinkoff.ru/guide/lgoty-studentam/>.

<sup>176</sup> Anna Kuleshova, “Why are Russians who oppose the war not taking to the streets?”, *Open Democracy*, 14 June 2023, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-war-why-russians-are-not-protesting/>.

<sup>177</sup> Nadeem Badshah, “Moscow police detain children for laying flowers at Ukrainian embassy”, *The Guardian*, 2 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/moscow-police-arrest-children-for-laying-flowers-at-ukrainian-embassy>.

<sup>178</sup> Mark Galeotti speaking with the *YouTube* channel Silicon Curtain: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG1ee699olw&list=PLd8tNQqwJDKK\\_WPKnrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=25](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG1ee699olw&list=PLd8tNQqwJDKK_WPKnrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=25) (from 40:03).

<sup>179</sup> “Obshchestvennyye nastroyeniya: iyun' 2023 goda [Public sentiment: June 2023]”, *Levada Centre*, 11 July 2023, <https://www.levada.ru/2023/07/11/obshchestvennyye-nastroyeniya-iyun-2023-goda/>.

<sup>180</sup> “Konflikt s Ukrainoi: Otsenki kontsa iyunya 2023 goda [Conflict with Ukraine: Assessment for the end of June 2023]”, June 30. Accessed from the *Levada Centre*, 30 June 2023, <https://www.levada.ru/2023/06/30/konflikt-s-ukrainoj-otsenki-kontsa-iyunya-2023-goda/>; “Konflikt s Ukrainoi: Otsenki kontsa marta 2023 goda [Conflict with Ukraine: Assessment for March 2023]”, *Levada Centre*, 30 March 2023, <https://www.levada.ru/2023/03/30/konflikt-s-ukrainoj-otsenki-marta-2023-goda/>; “Predstavleniya o budushchem: Gorizont planirovaniya i nastoeniya [Vision for the future: Planning horizon and mood]”, *Levada Centre*, 1 January 2023, <https://www.levada.ru/2023/01/11/predstavleniya-o-budushhem-gorizont-planirovaniya-i-nastroyeniya/>.

<sup>181</sup> “Chuvstvo otvetstvennosti i vozmozhnosti vliyat' na situatsiyu [A sense of responsibility and the ability to influence the situation]”, *Levada Centre*, 13 January 2022, <https://www.levada.ru/2023/01/13/chuvstvo-otvetstvennosti-i-vozmozhnosti-vliyat-na-situatsiyu/>.

<sup>182</sup> Dina Smeltz, Emily Sullivan, Denis Volkov and Stepan Goncharov, “Many Russians Support Ukraine Peace Talks but Not Letting Territory Go”, *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, 13 December 2022, <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/many-russians-support-ukraine-peace-talks-not-letting-territory-go>.



Thus, the situation is more nuanced than the headline that Russians support the war. Many Russians are confused and unsure – with a minority acting. This is why supporting exiled media is crucial. By providing news that there are anti-war protests, strikes and train derailments, and profiling anti-war groups, these outlets can show anti-war Russians that they are not alone. By providing alternative information, these channels could increase their audience in Russia. While the authorities may block these outlets and finally jam YouTube,<sup>183</sup> this would take time and media outlets can multiply. It would become a game of whack-a-mole. YouTube is popular in Russia and its loss would show Putin supporters how repressive the regime is.

Google and Microsoft have banned all Russian media advertisements. However, this was a key revenue source for many opposition YouTube bloggers and media outlets. Understandably Google and Microsoft chose the blanket ban approach as it takes revenue from state media which uses YouTube. Monitoring who is and who is not pro-regime is difficult to do at the granular level. However, diaspora groups could create a whitelist, to give anti-regime media access to advertising revenues.<sup>184</sup> This would generate money – and better content – to reach a larger audience. Western politicians through these channels could explain why the West supports Ukraine and highlight that this is Putin's war and not Russia's, and the potential for a democratic future-Russia.

### *Truth, Justice...and just maybe, Reconciliation*

Of course, this is not an ideal situation – but then little about what needs to be done to support a democratic future-Russia is. There is a need for justice for the crimes that Russia has done in Ukraine. However, the West needs to engage in dialogue directly or indirectly with the elites and offer a better future for Russia to the populace. Therefore, rhetoric that demands Russia pays reparations,<sup>185</sup> gives up all Ukrainian territory,<sup>186</sup> works with a special tribunal in Kyiv<sup>187</sup> and splits up Russia,<sup>188</sup> should be toned down for now. But this does not mean that the West cannot support some form of justice, which absolutely must happen.

This would be seen as victor's justice – especially the tribunal in Kyiv – and would coalesce the Russian population around their government when the exact opposite is needed. This is not to say that there should not be criminal prosecution. But it should be at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Russians must see their elites being held to account and hear the details of the crimes. This would help the process of reconciliation and show that the Russian elite is not beyond the law. The ICC hearing could consist of judges from a mix of so-called 'friendly' countries such as Brazil, India and South Africa and more neutral countries such as New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland. A truth and reconciliation commission may work just as well but only if the regime has changed sufficiently. An ICC hearing would allow Russians to see what their elites did in their name and begin a change in perception and taking of responsibility.

Public rhetoric could be more placatory to bring more Russians onside and ensure that the West is not perceived as pernicious. The level of distrust remains high, and it will take time to

---

<sup>183</sup> Dmitry Gudkov, "Putin ostavit rossiyan bez mul'tikov: v Kremle nashli novye 'ugrozy' [Putin will leave Russians without cartoons: new 'threats' found in the Kremlin]", *Apostrof*, 13 August 2023, <https://apostrophe.ua/article/world/ex-ussr/2023-08-13/putin-ostavit-rossiyan-bez-multikov-v-kremle-nashli-novyie-ugrozyi/53522>.

<sup>184</sup> Interviews with AM071U, TX142B, JH285D.

<sup>185</sup> Ian Bond and Timothy Ash, "Why Russia Must Pay For The Damage It Has Done To Ukraine – And How To Ensure It Does", Centre for European Reform, 19 June 2023, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/why-russia-must-pay-damage-ukraine>.

<sup>186</sup> Kaja Kallas, "No Peace on Putin's Terms: Why Russia Must Be Pushed Out of Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, 8 December 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/no-peace-putins-terms>.

<sup>187</sup> Kateryna Farbar, "Zelenskyi wants justice for Russia's invasion. But will he get it?", Open Democracy, 18 September 2023, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-russia-hybrid-tribunal-special-justice-icc-war-crimes-aggression/>.

<sup>188</sup> Janusz Bugajski, "The benefits of Russia's coming disintegration", *Politico*, 12 January 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/opinion-russia-benefits-disintegration/>.

---

lower. Promoting a victor's justice will not get support among Russians when the West needs to break the link between the regime and the populace. In the same way Western governments either directly or indirectly through the Russian diaspora must speak to current elites. There will be a need to moderate rhetoric – such as calls for splitting up Russia – which risks closing off any avenues to the Russian populace. The West can point towards needing to rebuild Ukraine – which indicates Russian reparations without stating it – and talking about returning as much Ukrainian territory as possible without saying Ukraine must return to its 1992 borders.

Putin has made it difficult for future-Russian politicians to row back from giving up illegally held Ukrainian territory or paying reparations. Certainly, this will make such people unelectable in the present. However, defeat in Ukraine and a concerted campaign by diaspora and exiled media groups can in time lead to a change of perception in Russian society. Again, it will take time but more compassionate rhetoric and a clear message can reduce opposition in the long-term.

Exiled media could effectively get the idea of future-Russia to a wide Russian audience. Along with civil society, these organisations can run a bottom-up campaign of highlighting Russian atrocities in Ukraine and starting the process of truth and reconciliation. This will take time and may fall on deaf ears, but by initiating ideas about Russian responsibility in Ukraine it will make an ICC case or truth and reconciliation commission easier to accept and begin an internal reckoning with Russia's present and past. Opposition media are seen as traitorous but a concerted campaign of effective broadcasting and messaging on a future-Russia could affect public perceptions in Russia.

## 9. Training People and Building Institutions for Future-Russia

---

It is also necessary to train people in media, civil society, teaching, politics and even prison work. The only way for Russia to change is to train cadres who can build the future-Russia. There is a risk that these people will be viewed as Western stooges upon returning to Russia, but this is why the diaspora work laying the foundations is crucial for when the door opens. The West must be ready with the next generation of politicians, lawyers, judges, journalists, teachers, prison wardens and civil society activists for when this happens.

Organisations like the New European University support Russian and Ukrainian academics. Having Russian academics working in Western universities gives them access to new ideas, excellent resources and outstanding teacher training programmes like Britain's Advance HE. The Smolny/Bard College Beyond Borders programme gives Russian students – who left – online courses. Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Open University Initiative gives domestic Russian students high-quality courses that improve critical thinking and provide the skills to develop and defend opinions.

To increase the chances for change in Russia, Western governments must make it easier to obtain student visas. The British Chevening Scholarship supports foreign students to study in the UK on the understanding that they then return home. Something similar could occur for Russian students. Many British universities have leadership scholarship programmes, and more investment could help Russian students access world-leading education and develop new ideas, helping them become tomorrow's leaders in politics, business and society in Russia.

International students provide several benefits. Some Russian students when back in Russia may have positive feelings towards their host country – in this case, Britain. Data shows that these relationships increase political and economic ties between parent and host countries.<sup>189</sup> This would help build ties with Britain in future-Russia. While a Russian Chevening programme should ideally have students returning to Russia, this may be impossible in the short-term. Britain should support Russians to stay. International students contributed £41.9 billion to the British economy in 2021.<sup>190</sup> They increase the tax base and create jobs and businesses. Young Russians are entrepreneurial. Britain would see large economic contributions for little cost. Making it easier for Russian students to come to Britain increases ties between the countries – making a future-Russia easier to build – while significantly contributing to the British economy. The message that Britain is open to Russian students and will support those wanting to build a democratic future-Russia should be made. Other Western states should also adopt this policy.

The above university initiatives are excellent starters. Western governments should finance a Russian language university-in-exile focusing on business, law, politics and media. The university would have both offline and online teaching, allowing students outside and inside Russia to access classes and develop their understanding and critical abilities and cultivate future best practices. The university would offer degrees and run combined courses, so students could do a politics degree but with a law elective – or vice versa. This would help train a generation of Russians for future-Russia.

Regular trips to parliaments, law courts, media outlets and civil society organisations would offer hands-on learning. The British Government should fund organisations like the John Smith

---

<sup>189</sup> "Learning more about international students", Office for Students, 16 March 2023, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/learning-more-about-international-students/>.

<sup>190</sup> "International students boost UK economy by £41.9 billion", Universities UK, 16 May 2023, <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/news/international-students-boost-uk-economy#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20international%20students%20in,member%20of%20the%20resident%20population.>

---

Trust to have a Russia programme with online or offline workshops and visits to the British parliament, law courts and think tanks – to meet politicians, civil servants and civil society activists. Fellows would gain first-hand experience of the British political and judicial systems. While these could serve as models to copy, ultimately what should exist in Russia should be organic to Russia. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) could run a ‘democratic future-Russia’ programme. The WFD works in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, so has regional experience that can help a Russian programme develop. These programmes could extrapolate Western experience to structure institutions in a Russian setting. State institutions exist in Russia – although hollowed out – and could be a base on which to build.

The university-in-exile could be headquartered in London with campuses across Europe. If establishing a university is not possible then Western governments can use pre-existing institutions. In Britain, courses could be established at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London, the Russia Institute at King’s College London, the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow and Russian and East European Studies at the University of Oxford. Britain has excellent Russian research expertise and could provide an alternative to establishing a university-in-exile if necessary.

Part of the training programme would be to work for diaspora organisations. It is important they get knowledge of working in the regions. Of course, this does not mean parachuting them into a remote provincial capital, but contact can be established online or by telephone. The regional context has often been missing in Russian politics. Working with these diaspora organisations would help future-Russia plans. Similarly, those trained in journalism and civil society could establish regional connections to build bottom-up processes. With a regional focus, connections can be built across Russia – allowing practices to be perfected and acceptable outside Moscow.

The regime is indoctrinating the next generation into supporting Putin through history textbooks, militarisation of the school curriculum<sup>191</sup> and the Youth Army, all of which present the West as the enemy.<sup>192</sup> While it is unknown how effective this strategy is, the regime has spent a decade trying to increase support among younger Russians.<sup>193</sup> Although coercion is probably not far below the surface, the numbers joining the Youth Army<sup>194</sup> points to effective messaging.

For a democratic future-Russia to have a chance of working, teachers must be trained. It is good that many university academics have left Russia, thus potentially benefitting Russia’s tertiary education sector in the future. However, this is irrelevant if schools do not change. Therefore, teacher training is crucial for future-Russia. Western governments should support Russians training as teachers. The Institute of Education at University College London could be one provider, but prospective teachers would need experience of working in countries more attuned to the Russian present due to history. Teaching would need to be in Russian. Teacher training programmes could be set up in Estonia, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, thus giving trainee Russian teachers hands-on local experience. Many teachers left Russia after the war and set-up schools teaching diaspora children. This is an option to get teaching experience.<sup>195</sup> Western governments could fund these programmes or diaspora schools.

---

<sup>191</sup> Robyn Dixon and Natalia Abbakumova, “Back in class, Russian students get a lesson from Professor Putin”, *The Washington Post*, 1 September 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/09/01/putin-russia-school-militarization/>.

<sup>192</sup> Ian Garner, “Putin’s children: how the Kremlin indoctrinated a generation”, *The Times*, 4 May 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russia-ukraine-vladimir-putin-kremlin-youth-army-v5xpc6f22>.

<sup>193</sup> Jack Cathcart, “Culture Wars – How The Kremlin Securitized Youth Culture,” Security Distillery, 15 October 2021, <https://thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/culture-wars-how-the-kremlin-securitizes-youth-culture>.

<sup>194</sup> Ian Garner, “Russia’s Youth Army is Recruiting”, *UnHerd*, 18 April 2023, <https://unherd.com/2023/04/russias-youth-army-is-recruiting/>.

<sup>195</sup> Andrey Fetisov, “Kak rossiiskaya diaspora mozhet stat’ global’nym igrokom [How the Russian diaspora can become a global player]”, *The Moscow Times*, 8 January 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/08/01/kak-rossiiskaya-diaspora-mozhet-stat-globalnim-igrokom-a50716>.

---

The final groups needing training are the security services, priests and police and prison wardens. The latter may be surprising, but many prisoners joined the army because the military gave them a purpose.<sup>196</sup> Therefore, reforming the jail system towards rehabilitation is necessary. There are few security service, police and prison officer defections so far. But if this changes there should be retraining programmes. The Russian Orthodox Church has priests fighting on the frontline.<sup>197</sup> Programmes could be developed to train priests for a future Russian Orthodox Church that is godlier and less state compliant and corrupt. Russia has highly restrictive religious freedoms laws that discriminate against protestant denominations that came to Russia in the 1990s.<sup>198</sup> Russian Orthodox priests could be trained in religious tolerance, like the British right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Greater religious tolerance in the church – that no longer sees other denominations as a threat – could increase the chance of democracy taking hold in Russia in the future.

---

<sup>196</sup> Interview with CE072P.

<sup>197</sup> Andrey Desnitsky, “Tserkov i armiya ediny...a pochemu? [The church and the army are one...Why?]”, *The Moscow Times*, 9 August 2023, <https://www.moscowtimes.ru/2023/08/09/tserkov-i-armiya-edini-apochemu-a51537>.

<sup>198</sup> Olga Sibireva, “New Restrictions in the Russian Religious Law: What Should Believers Expect?”, *BYU Law*, 23 December 2020, <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2020/12/23/new-restrictions-in-the-russian-religious-law/>.

---

## 10. The Federation's Collapse

---

A final possibility for future-Russia is Russia's collapse. This has been fed by regime propaganda talking about political instability, a post-Putin totalitarianism and Russia's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands.<sup>199</sup> However, for now, elites remain loyal to Putin. Regime collapse is unlikely. But after Prigozhin's rebellion, Western governments must plan for a collapse scenario.<sup>200</sup>

The speed of Prigozhin's rebellion reaching the gates of Moscow stoked fears of regime collapse.<sup>201</sup> There has been some regional unrest, as in Dagestan over military recruitment.<sup>202</sup> But collapse remains unlikely. While Russia has many cleavages, the major divide is between cities like Moscow, St Petersburg and Nizhny Novgorod and the regions, rather than between different ethnicities.<sup>203</sup> Regional leaders are largely appointed by the centre and remain loyal to Putin. While that may change, they have little power and cannot confront Moscow.<sup>204</sup> Regions lack national identities.<sup>205</sup> Russia's defeat may see more decentralisation and emergence of new identities, but it is unlikely to lead to state collapse. Stronger regional cultural identities may push Russia towards democracy.<sup>206</sup> A more asymmetrical federation where different regions have different powers and governors are elected will weaken Moscow's control and provide local accountability.

Western governments must talk with other governments like China and the Central Asian states to plan for a peacekeeping force and securing nuclear weapons stockpiles should Russia collapse. However, the best plan to stop Russia's collapse or reduce the problem of that collapse is to plan for a democratic future-Russia. This needs to be started now. It will take time and effort, but the West must be ready for when Putin leaves office. Without a plan it is likely Russia will seek a new war. It may also collapse. Lacking a plan, the West could have – although unlikely – a disaster on its doorstep. Planning for a democratic future-Russia is crucial and must begin immediately.

---

<sup>199</sup> Maria Sannikova-Franck, "Discussing Russia's Future", Zentrum Liberale Moderne, 17 February 2023, <https://libmod.de/en/discussing-russias-future/>.

<sup>200</sup> Fiona Hill and Angela Stent, "The World Putin Wants: How Distortions About the Past Feed Delusions About the Future", *Foreign Affairs*, 101(5) 2022: 108-123.

<sup>201</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, "Should the West Fear Putin's Fall?", *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 August 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/russia/should-the-west-fear-putins-fall-f4e0a818>.

<sup>202</sup> Alexander Yeo, "Quelling Anti-Mobilization Unrest in Dagestan", *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 27 October 2022, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13736-quelling-anti-mobilization-unrest-in-dagestan.html>.

<sup>203</sup> Marlene Laruelle, "Putin's War and the Dangers of Russian Disintegration: The Unraveling of a Fragile Multiethnic State Could Lead to More Violence", *Foreign Affairs*, 9 December 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/putins-war-and-dangers-russian-disintegration>.

<sup>204</sup> Katarzyna Wolczuk, "Fallacy 6: 'Russia's defeat in Ukraine will lead to greater instability in Russia'", in *How to end Russia's war on Ukraine: Safeguarding Europe's future, and the dangers of a false peace*, Russia and Eurasia Programme Report, Chatham House, 27 June 2023, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/2023-06-27-how-end-russias-war-ukraine-ash-et-al\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/2023-06-27-how-end-russias-war-ukraine-ash-et-al_0.pdf).

<sup>205</sup> Alexey Gusev, "Fetishizatsiya karty. Pochemu Rossiya raspadetsya vdol' regional'nykh granits [Fetishization of the map. Why Russia won't fall apart along regional borders]", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4 April 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89446>.

<sup>206</sup> Pavel Sulyandziga and Dmitry Bereshkov, "What Decolonization Means for Russia's Indigenous Peoples", *The Moscow Times*, 9 September 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/09/what-decolonization-means-for-russias-indigenous-peoples-a82387>. Such ideas were also put forwards by interviewees UY719M and NH716P.

---



## 11. Conclusion

---

This report sets out ideas about how Western governments can promote a democratic future-Russia. It will take a long time and many generations to overturn imperial thinking in Russian society.<sup>207</sup> It is likely that the next Russian government will be autocratic.<sup>208</sup> But the West can prepare for a future-Russia and even steer a post-Putin autocracy towards democracy.

By supporting Ukraine and giving Kyiv everything to win the war – while pressuring Russia constantly – Western governments can force Russian elites into mistakes. Autocrats democratise because they make an error.<sup>209</sup> Autocracies constantly learn but they often learn the wrong lessons and collapse.<sup>210</sup> Therefore, increasing support to enable Kyiv to win the war quickly will put further pressure on Moscow. As abhorrent as it is, Western governments should directly – or through other states or diaspora groups – speak to elites about Russia’s future. This may allow regime soft-liners to cooperate with the opposition or increase regime paranoia, leading to further splits. Western governments should be clear about what it would take to lift sanctions and re-establish relations but should not quickly lift restrictions. Any new Russian government will try to show it is not Putinist but will probably only make cosmetic changes. Western governments should be wary of this and not repeat previous mistakes of assuming that new Russian rulers are liberals.

It is very possible that should the current regime collapse the next President of Russia will put on the cloak of liberalism and make cosmetic changes. Western governments should be clear that only the withdrawal of Russian troops, improved media and civil society freedoms, the release of all political prisoners, the holding of democratic elections, sending former elites to the ICC and ideally paying reparations would be the basis for beginning talks towards changing the relationship. The West should be wary, and sanctions should be continued with the capacity to be closed again if they are opened, depending on Russian actions.

The diaspora is crucial to building a democratic future-Russia. While the opposition is disunited and rent by infighting,<sup>211</sup> Western governments should pressure these groups to cooperate and plan for a future-Russia, and a roadmap on how to get there. Western governments must work with people who may not hold the same views. The new diaspora is the last link to Russia. The West, through humanitarian, work and student visas, should make it easier to find accommodation, set up bank accounts and open businesses. This would undermine propaganda about “Russophobia”.

Exiled Russian media outlets should be supported. They know what will work in Russia and must be allowed to build connections. Reducing Russophobia is one aspect, but the diaspora must provide messages that domestic Russians can relate to. Retaining a sense of Russian patriotism – but shorn of its violent imperialism – could open channels. It is something Western governments must tolerate. If change in Russia is going to happen, then Russian citizens must support it.

---

<sup>207</sup> Keir Giles speaking for a second time to the *YouTube* Channel, *Silicon Curtain*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qwNNsSukMY&list=PLd8tNQwJDKK\\_WPknrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qwNNsSukMY&list=PLd8tNQwJDKK_WPknrXMPMWngjC2b3-9i&index=3) (from 29:50).

<sup>208</sup> Duncan Allan, “Imagining Russia’s future after Putin”, Briefing Paper – Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, 24 May 2023, <https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Public/en-GB/DownloadImageFile.ashx?objectId=6943&ownerType=0&ownerId=203210>.

<sup>209</sup> Daniel Treisman, “Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer Government”, *American Political Science Review*, 114(3) 2020: 792-810.

<sup>210</sup> Stephen Hall, *The Authoritarian International: Tracing How Authoritarian Regimes Learn in the Post-Soviet Region* (Cambridge, New York, Port Melbourne, New Delhi and Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

<sup>211</sup> Alexandr Smirnov, “Russia’s Divided Opposition Must Form an Anti-Putin Coalition”, *The Moscow Times*, 4 September 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/04/russias-divided-opposition-must-form-an-anti-putin-coalition-a82351>.

---

A way to reduce the imperialist mindset among the diaspora and Russia's future generations is to train the next cohort of teachers, politicians, journalists, lawyers and civil society activists. This can be done through a Russian university-in-exile tasked with teaching increased critical thinking and knowledge of rights, and developing effective practices and institutions for future-Russia. Western governments could offer scholarships for Russian students to learn these skills and take them back to Russia later. Teacher training is crucial to begin changing Russian perceptions of the world.

This report does not have all the answers to creating a democratic future-Russia. The process will take decades. However, autocracies often collapse suddenly, and the West must prepare. As understandable as it is to say Russia should be isolated and Russians left to deal with the mess they created and understand their responsibility for the war, this is not a viable solution. It is possible that regardless of what happens now, Russia will initiate another war soon. However, ignoring Russia now **will** lead to this scenario. Developing a plan to build a democratic future-Russia **may** reduce Russian revanchism. While it may not, the West must try. Russia is not going away. Closing the drawbridge will not help. While unpalatable, we must develop a plan for a democratic future-Russia.









Title: "GETTING A FOOT IN THE DOOR:  
CREATING A FUTURE RUSSIA NOW"  
By Stephen G. F. Hall

© The Henry Jackson Society, 2023

The Henry Jackson Society  
Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP, UK

[www.henryjacksonsociety.org](http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org)



DEMOCRACY | FREEDOM | HUMAN RIGHTS

**RUSSIA &  
EURASIA  
STUDIES  
CENTRE**

November 2023