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MEMORY MAKERS, THE POLITICS OF THE PAST IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA, By Ayse Dietrich*, Published by: Bloomsbury Academic, Written by Jade McGlynn, Year of Publishing: 2023. Subject Area: Russia, politics and government, collective memory, patriotism, Book Type: Russian History and Politics. Total Number of Pages: 236. ISBN: 978-1-3502-8076-2, hardback, \$27,00.

The book was written before Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. McGlynn describes why this war is an outcome of Russia's preoccupation with policing the past, why so many Russians support their government's unjust war against Ukraine and see themselves as the heroes, how the Russian government, media and associated bodies assume power over cultural memory and depict historical narrative as a matter of existential and everyday concern.

In the first chapter, the author states her book will explain why policymakers and analysts interested in propaganda and historical issues should take them much more seriously and recognize their ability to stir powerful emotions. She states that Russia will never be at peace with its neighboring countries since it is not at peace with itself and its history. She claims that Russian officials and the Russian people are obsessed with cleaning history, and replacing it with something usable to prove their heroism and victimhood and that this insecure behavior was born with changing ideological regimes and the historical traumas Russia went through in the 20th century. She argues that Russia uses the power of these cultural memories to prepare its nation for war and repression.

The author lived in Russia from 2011 to 2015 and she was fascinated to see how this historical framing is used by the media not only to legitimize government policy but also to construct and impose a revised understanding of patriotism, of the meaning of Russianness and even of truth itself. The media use the historical framing to allow viewers to feel as if they were participating in, even reconstructing, heroic episodes from the past.

In the second chapter, the author explores the policies that were implemented to create agencies that are dedicated to defending historical truth, the large-scale implementation of youth-oriented military history initiatives and the establishment of influential organizations to promote the Kremlin's

historical narratives. She states that besides creating the ‘correct’ view of history, the government also monitors different interpretations of the history, introduces legislation to ban the discussion of ‘taboo’ historical topics, prohibits proper historical inquiry and even persecutes and silences dissenters; and the Kremlin frequently threatens both domestic and foreign social media companies with fines or restricted market access. To convince people of the correctness of their view, the Kremlin and state-aligned media create a discourse to make people to recognize the relevance and importance of the historical symbols and references in their news cycles.

In the third chapter, the author examines how pro-Kremlin politicians and state-aligned media made history a relevant topic of everyday discussion in the news by ‘historically framing’ current affairs as continuations of the past. The author also discusses how the media sought to present important moments in Russian domestic and foreign affairs, how it covered the war with Ukraine as a repeat of the Soviet Union’s epic battle against Nazi Germany and creating a story about ‘denazifying’ Ukraine. She examines how the Russian media and government combined the Ukraine Crisis with the Great Patriotic War; how Russian government reported Western sanctions and how English-language studies reported Russian media coverage of the intervention in Syria from 16 September 2015.

In the fourth chapter, the author shows how the tone of these television programs, and of Russian politics uses conspiracies, how the media enjoys fantasies of conspiracies against Russia and how the US-dominated world order depict Russia and Putin as victims of an unfair global order, how Russian media shows the Russian president Vladimir Putin’s *narodnost*’ (being of the people) as a model of heroism, how Russian media likes citing foreigners who openly express their admiration for Vladimir Putin’s or Russians’ knowledge of history, and interviewing ordinary people who strongly attracted to Russian culture, how Russian elite political language and self understanding include elements of messianism, from the declaration of Moscow as the Third Rome to the Soviet Union as the first international workers’ state, how the state-aligned media and politicians’ hostile language tactic divides people into ‘good’ or ‘bad’, declares anybody who oppose them as traitors for directing populist tendencies.

In the fifth chapter the author examines what these legislative and discursive framework brought to life for ordinary citizens, how the government mobilizes citizens into performing and reinforcing the Kremlin’s historical narratives, how the Ministry of Culture forced its patriotic history into everyday life, and acts more like a Minister of Memory than a Minister of Culture.

In the sixth chapter, McGlynn talks about how the Kremlin’s efforts to utilize history to support its arguments and justify the Kremlin’s power by leading the Russians to believe that they possessed a unique ‘cultural consciousness’ and ‘patriotic awareness’, how the government determines what is acceptable memory and promotes this as historical truth through the media, through its laws and through creating a range of initiatives, how the Russian government was able to promote a unifying idea by propagating its own historical narratives denoting the need for Russia to be a strong state with a broader purpose and mission, emphasizing the meaning of Russianness in a way that suits the Kremlin’s political needs, and how pro-Kremlin media depictions of patriotism became images of cultural consciousness, and why Soviet media traditions and templates of class consciousness matter for the media and politicians to legitimize government policy.

In the seventh chapter, the author discusses how the authorities used cultural memory to distract

people from government failings telling a story of how Putin was leading Russians to the embodiment of cultural consciousness. The author argues that “the government’s intensive uses of history are aimed at creating a narrative that distracts people from government failings, promotes government policies and reinforces the Kremlin’s view of current events, and such depictions and efforts bolster and manipulate a unifying sense of identity via a government-directed campaign to place historical interpretation at the center of cultural consciousness and therefore at the center of what it means to be Russian”.

This is well-conceived and well-written work of research in Russian politics, history, cultural memory. While this book could be of interest to anyone in the broad field of Russian history, it is of particular value to anyone with an interest of historical memory used by Russian political leaders and the role of the media in politics.

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