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## Post-Soviet Russian Aggression: An Analysis of Russian Conflicts, Invasions and Humanitarian Crisis

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## **Post-Soviet Russian Aggression: An Analysis of Russian Conflicts, Invasions and Humanitarian Crisis**

Russian aggression, inferiority complex and brutal foreign policy have plagued nations and international communities because it has given rise to seemingly unsolvable political dilemmas around the world. This research explores post-Soviet Russian conflicts, and invasions, and the ensuing refugee and humanitarian crises caused by these unwarranted aggressions in former Soviet regions. The research hypothesizes that, the aggressiveness of Russia has provoked conflict from the invasion of Chechnya in 1994 to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, is facilitated by an extreme nationalistic drive to establish influence and prove its strength to nations of the globe. As such this research explores the wider picture of Russian aggression, highlighting key conflicts, humanitarian and immigration crises including the situation in Ukraine and understanding what led to these outcomes. Seemingly, despite the best efforts of the West, which consists of the imposition of large economic sanctions and, as of April 2022, a complete cut off from foreign trade. The efforts have proved to be ill equipped to deter Russian Aggression. Russia has continued to serve its own interests without regard for these sanctions and the effects of its actions on its own people.

It is accurate to say that Russian Aggression over the last 30 years has been a developing pattern and should have been recognized sooner by nations of the West. With millions of people currently in need of humanitarian aid or seeking asylum to the west from the unjust conflict in Ukraine, it is apparent that better steps must be taken to ensure that Russian Aggression is deterred or outright halted. However, what do these steps look like and are they possible? Is it possible to negotiate any sort of peace with the Russian Federation, or more importantly, Vladimir Putin? The research endeavors to respond to these questions and provide a cohesive analysis of former instances of Russian aggression to really understand why a nation like Russia feels the need to wage constant and repetitive war with its former territories and cause much destruction and damage. What is the psychology behind such aggressiveness and what does it hope to achieve by the remorseless (or impertinent?) display of military prowess? To answer these questions, first, it is important to know why a Post-Soviet Russia has seemingly always been at odds with the west. The paper explores Russian Policy on Immigration, Foreign relations, its view of the its place in the world

In the late 1980s, a weakened Soviet Union and its president Gorbachev believed NATO, an international government organization designed to specifically counter Russia and its Warsaw Pact, would halt eastern expansion of member states as the Russian super power struggled to keep its republics together. However, when the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact collapsed in 1991, the opposite occurred, with NATO setting its sights on expansion to these former Soviet Republics, a Russia with a massive Inferiority complex felt it was being sidelined, threatened and

ignored. Justifying the continued existence of NATO, the Russian Federation almost instantly proved any hopes of peace with NATO and the west was unattainable.

A struggling post-soviet Russia attempting to rebuild itself ordered Russian troops to enter the region of Chechnya in 1994, only 3 years after the fall of the USSR. Fearful of losing its influence, under the claim to “establish constitutional order” in the former Soviet Republic of Chechnya Russian troops launched an anti-insurgency operation to regain control of the Republic, the outcome of which saw the establishment of a pro-Russian Chechnyan government.

In 2008 Russia launched an invasion into the nation of Georgia marking the first twenty-first century war in Europe. Russia, claiming foreign powers were interfering with Russian politics after the US and NATO sought closer ties to Georgia, invaded the nation supporting pro-Russian separatists in South Ossetia and Abkhazia which sought closer ties with Russia. Moscow received a significantly quiet response from the international community on the conflict. The outcome of which saw a humanitarian and economic impact, causing 150,000 people to be displaced from the invasion. In 2021 over 20,000 people from Georgia are still displaced.

The main focus of Russia’s aggression has been towards the nation of Ukraine, beginning in 2014 and currently ongoing. Similar to Georgia, Russia saw NATO’s mission of seeking closer ties with the nation of Ukraine as a threat. The rise of pro-Russian separatist breakaway regions and the Annexation of Crimea, of which the Russian Federation has supported over the last 8 years leading to refugee and humanitarian crises with a total of 1.8 million displaced IDPs before the 2022 Conflict. In February of 2022, Russia launched a “special military operation” to “de-nazify” the Ukrainian Government. As of April 2022, its estimated Ukraine has over 2.5 million refugees outside its borders

Extremely important research is constantly being done analyzing the ever-developing issue of Post-Soviet Russian Aggression, politics and foreign policy. Scholars and the international community approach this issue from many different angles. “Moscow’s imperialist ideology has been linked to diverse ideas and images about a cultural unity of peoples in the post-Soviet territory that Russia is predestined to preserve” (Rezvani, B Russian foreign policy and geopolitics in the post-Soviet space and) these ideals of Imperialism are still rampant within the nation’s leadership today, which influence its crude and brutal diplomatic and military actions. Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia sees itself as lower on the metaphorical power ladder in the globe, since the late 1990s its actions have been focused on power projection and influence in the wider internationally community. Scholars suggest its entire invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was an attempt to flex its military might, and prove Russia is still on the playing field, which has led to catastrophic failure for the Russian Military. It can be difficult to understand Russia’s perspective, the nation has struggled with its own freedoms and

governance for well over 100 years. While the international communities of the world have stood against Russia's Soviet like actions, Russians believe they're being targeted and singled out for simply being Russian. Unfortunately, the hopes of a Western-Eastern friendship are still far off the coast. But what do the effects of this feud look like for those in-between?

There is no doubt that internationally displaced people have been through the most extreme hardships and difficulties, the case of those in Ukraine is no different. "This conflict has caused an increase in (IDPs) Internationally Displaced Peoples which has resulted to the nation having registered 1.4 million IDPs in 2020 caused millions of people to be displaced" (Gwendolyn Sasse, War and Displacement: The Case of Ukraine) in 2022 alone, over 2 million refugees have fled Ukraine to Both Russia and western nations. While the treatment of Ukrainian refugees in the west has been good, it seems those in Russia have a different story. While the Russian government has granted "temporary citizenship" to the Ukrainian refugees, the increase in state control have led to refugees having silenced voices, social exclusion and minimal if any rights. Russia's own Anti-Immigration and Suppression policy contradict their propaganda machine. While they state Russian forces are "Liberating" their brothers with light bonds "Russian authorities welcomed hundreds of thousands of persons who fled Donbas in 2014, referring to them as 'brothers' and survivors, and offering opportunities to apply for temporary asylum and a special route to citizenship. Comparing Russia's generally very restrictive and unwelcoming position on refugees, the case of displaced people from Ukraine suggests that Russia has a selective refugee policy, based on nationalistic narratives of Slavic brotherhood and a contemporary geopolitical situation in which Russia is attempting to win back lost influence" (Kuznetsova, Irina. "To Help 'Brotherly People'? Russian Policy Towards Ukrainian Refugees."), Scholars and the internationally community, stand against Russian Aggression and the conflict in Ukraine.

While Russia's interest in the region of Ukraine since 2014 has certainly changed world events and policy, it's been a perpetual countdown to war, of which seemingly nothing was done, to the violation of the Minsk agreement to pre-Russo-Ukrainian War sanctions. It's been proven Putin's sense of imperialist Influence seeking isn't slowing down anytime soon. While Policy at preventing these crises has failed, it's important to understand the situation of people effected by the crisis in Ukraine and what the west has done to help. while geopolitical neighbors Russia only allows Ukrainian refugees "based on nationalistic narratives of Slavic brotherhood and a contemporary geopolitical situation in which Russia is attempting to win back lost influence." This stance on immigration acceptance counters our western policies especially when it comes to refugees fleeing conflict, in 2014 Russia saw a large number of refugees during conflict in the Donbas region spending over 18 billion Rubles to accommodate them, with Russia preaching a

propaganda narrative that sees these Ukrainian citizens as “brothers” with “light bonds”. It’s interesting to note that in the 2022 Ukrainian humanitarian crisis, these bonds between citizens of both nations are very much real, yet Russia’s current propaganda narrative has been to free Ukrainians from fascist rule, offering refuge to Ukrainians seems to deliberately sabotage itself while oppressing and silencing the voices of the displaced, causing a push for peace with their Ukrainian brothers and sisters among Russian Citizens.

Research on Putin’s Desire for power and acts of Russia’s previous aggression in multiple nations around the world, have proven the dictator’s unreliability, untrustworthiness and unhinged warlike attitude, time and time again to be a major threat. Hence, the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine should have been no surprise to international communities around the world. International communities failed to learn from the invasion of Georgia in 2008 that the strategy of appeasement does not work. As if it wasn’t evident enough, a failure to learn our lesson with appeasement in World War 2, when Hitler and the Third Reich began seizing control of nations. Much like when Hitler seized Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland with little to no repercussion from the West, we repeated the errors of the past when Putin began reclaiming old Soviet Republics, we turned a blind eye with Chechnya and Georgia, and now Ukraine, while we impose sanctions on Russia, let us not forget the sanctions and boycotts we imposed on Nazi Germany before World War 2, and how little it did to halt the Reich from taking Europe. However, Russia’s similarities to the Reich doesn’t end with Western outlook of appeasement towards the tyrannical despotic regimes, Putin’s motives and military failures follow a similar note to that of the Third Reich. Vladimir Putin’s unjust cause for war and view towards Ukraine can only be viewed as untrue rambling words from a despot, in a similar attitude to Hitler, Putin addresses his people with echoing with the shortcomings of Russia and promises of restoring old glories. While Tyrants all throughout history can be compared to one another, its important to understand Putin’s justification for his actions, and how Russia views the west.

While this paper has established some of Russia’s history, view of the self and potential motives, there’s more to the story than nationalistic drives and propaganda narratives. When the Soviet Union collapsed, multiple economic and strategic locations went along with the territories it lost. These key locations provided the Soviet Union the ability to project its influence via power on a much larger scale, while Russia’s strategies of gaining influence have not changed since the Soviet Union, the locations and territories it occupies has. Research shows when Russia occupied Crimea in 2014, it gave Russia a vital strategic location it had lost in the 90s and with it, the ability to launch and support naval operations. This gave way to a much larger Russian presence in the Black Sea allowing the nation to secure both military and economic interests.

Although these locations are key to Russian interests, they are also key to Russian morale and are often used as a justification for violence. Seizure of old Soviet assets and locations are a part of Russian propaganda to restore lost glories. While this greatly fits into Russia’s inferiority

complex it also shows the hypocrisy and flaws of the west. Russian acquisition of assets and strategic locations by force has been a major issue for the west, however this is not to say NATO and similar organizations of the west have been pure of heart either. While its very clear that Russia is the aggressor, a common Russian perspective that's been frequently discussed is this aggression is their response to NATO expansion. Throughout the Post-Soviet world, NATO has been securing its own interests within eastern Europe. While NATO is not committing war crimes and invading other nations, it's certainly not taking the necessary steps in preventing Russian Aggression either. NATO's expansion has been a key issue with Russia in the conflicts of Georgia and Ukraine respectively, As Russia gave claims to NATO interference within the Russian sphere of influence. While this expansion can be seen as a faint similarity to Russia in how it secures its own strategic interests, it's important to keep in mind NATO is an organization designed to counter Russia. However, in countering Russia its crucial NATO does not provoke Russia, which it seems has unfortunately been the case, regardless of NATO intention.

Russian Aggression and the outcomes of it have hopefully began to teach the world the shortcomings and failures of the past. The unjust and aggressive warmonger Vladimir Putin has shown to the world the unreliable and unhinged trustworthiness of his word and his nation. Its actions strike resemblance to its long history of brutality and in ways that are similar to the Tyranny of the Soviet Union. Scholars have discussed the inferiority complex of the Russian government and their desire to overtake the west in influence. Popular Sources have shown the hardship and suffering of refugees from places such as Ukraine, showing the world Russia's disregard for the wellbeing of immigrants, refugees and innocent lives. The blatant use of force has proven to the world that Russia is not above brutality or conflict to secure its strategic interests or gaining influence. While we can hope the Aggressive nature of Russia changes. the solution to Russian Aggression may be difficult or impossible to find and the west may not be infallible, one thing is for sure is that the way we handle Russia in foreign policy, especially after the Ukraine Conflict in 2022, must be changed.

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