

Why Did Putin Invade Ukraine?

The Phases of Putin and How they Contributed to his War Ideology

Young Putin



Born in 1952, Putin's home city of Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, was still recovering from a long, deadly, and destructive siege by Axis powers during WWII. Putin's parents had sustained major injuries and their son Viktor died to starvation during the siege. His parent's trauma affected Putin all throughout his childhood.

KGB Putin



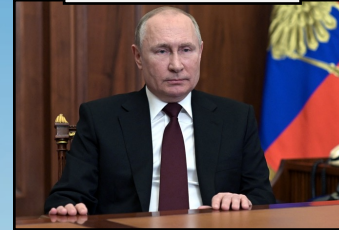
Putin's Dresden incident in 1989 was said to have changed his life forever. In their book *Mr. Putin: Operative in Kremlin*, Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy wrote that "Putin clearly had no experience with, and no idea of how to deal with large crowds." Putin saw how failure of the USSR could result in large mobs and civil unrest.

1990's Putin



1990's Putin used his KGB skills to rise to power. Once he was in power, Putin's brutal crackdown on Chechnya foreshadows a series of repressions that may occur in the future. Even though Russia was still relatively democratic at this time, Putin had already begun his purge of Russia's external enemies.

Modern Putin



In 2014, Putin invaded and subsequently annexed Crimea. Russian forces also invaded the Donbas region of Ukraine, which led to the Minsk Agreements. In 2016, Donald Trump was elected, who wanted to pull out of NATO. In 2020, Biden was elected, and wanted to reinsert the United States into foreign affairs including Ukraine, which Putin did not like.

What is the Future that Putin Wants for Russia?

Putin is looking to **reinstate Imperial Russia** by invading Ukraine. Russia has always seen itself as a European country, and the loss of Ukraine wounded that image. Regaining control over Ukraine would help Russia to restore its pride as a European country (Reid 2022). Putin thought that Ukraine would be eager to return to Russia: "it is this late-Soviet "little brother" relationship that Putin grew up with-and which he may believe (or have believed) Ukrainians would be ready to return to were it not for the West's interference" (Reid 2022, 7).

Putin also hopes to **regain relevance in the western political sphere**. "US domestic politics made NATO's geographic expansion inevitable by late 1994 -while Russian domestic politics made any Russian partnership with the West untenable as long as the *West insisted on leading* the new international security order, with or without NATO's geographic enlargement." (Marten 2017, 4, emphasis added). This kind of systematic undermining of Russian power is what led to Putin's sense of resentment towards the West, and he sees this war to show the west that he will not be ignored as a legitimate voice in international affairs. Welcoming these Eastern Bloc states into the biggest western military alliance made Russia feel that its former authority over Eastern Europe as the USSR was officially coming to an end. Putin simply could not handle this lack of influence, and he saw the invasion of Ukraine to regain this influence.

How do these Phases of Putin Contribute to his War Ideology?

From **Young Putin**, the Siege of Leningrad contributed to his justification to de-Nazify Ukraine. Trauma and neglect from Putin's parents also contributed to his damaged, abusive and distrustful future self, all characteristics that can contribute to a controlling dictator. **KGB Putin** found out how the loss of political control contributed to the downfall of governments, in both East Germany and the Soviet Union, and therefore fears losing political control in Russia. He thinks that by invading Ukraine he can cement his own rule. **1990's Putin** foreshadowed the invasion of Ukraine through the invasion of Chechnya. The invasion of Chechnya bolstered Putin's popularity in Russia, so Putin came to think that a quick invasion of Ukraine would do something similar. **Modern Putin** wants to be remembered as a great Russian leader, and therefore is looking for ways to accomplish Russian greatness and put a stop to foreign meddling from international leaders such as Biden. He believes the way he can accomplish this is through invading Ukraine.

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