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## THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF RUSSOPHILIA IN EUROPE: A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS RUSSIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper* is to investigate the historical trajectory, spread, and evolution of russophilia, a sociological phenomenon that exists in contemporary Europe. The article conducts a comprehensive analysis of the developmental process of russophilia in Europe, tracing its origins from the early stages of primitive sympathy towards the Russian state during the Middle Ages to its subsequent conscious ideological-cultural and political-economic manifestations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, the article examines the contemporary projection of russophilia, which reached its pinnacle in the aforementioned region during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while also exploring the factors contributing to the current decline of russophilia.

The article introduces a significant *scientific contribution* by being the pioneering study to comprehensively explore the historical evolution of russophilia in Europe. Previous research on russophilia has been limited in scope, with only a few articles addressing the topic in a fragmented manner. Prior to this article, there has been a lack of comprehensive studies examining the overall development of russophilia in Europe. Therefore, this article stands as the first comprehensive endeavor in this field of research, filling a notable gap in the existing literature.

**Conclusions.** The results of the study shed light on the origins and development of russophilia in Europe, examining both Western and Eastern regions. Key factors contributing to russophilia include the influence of communism, particularly the USSR, as well as cultural expansion. Effective propaganda campaigns and the establishment of economic and social connections play crucial roles in fostering admiration for another culture. Ethnic kinship alone is insufficient to foster deep affinity without widespread and systematic propaganda integrated into state policy. Nostalgia for communism, fuelled by shared experiences and the positive aspects of former communist systems, also contributes to russophilia. Countries such as East Germany, Poland, and Serbia etc., which underwent communist rule, exhibit heightened russophilia. The common fate shared by these nations, including the same political ideology, communist culture, and perceived defeat by the capitalist USA, further strengthens russophilia sentiments among communist nostalgics.

**Keywords:** Europe, positive attitudes, national sympathy, Russia, russophilia

## ІСТОРИЧНА ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ РУСОФІЛЬСТВА В ЄВРОПІ: ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ РОЗВИТКУ ТА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ ПОЗИТИВНОГО СТАВЛЕННЯ ДО РОСІЇ

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### АНОТАЦІЯ

**Мета статті** – дослідити історичну траєкторію, поширення та еволюцію русофільства – соціологічного явища, яке існує в сучасній Європі. У статті проведено комплексний аналіз процесу розвитку русофільства в Європі, простежуючи його витoki від ранніх етапів первісних симпатій до Російської держави в період Середньовіччя і його наступних ідеологічно-культурних і політико-економічних проявів у 20 ст. Крім того, у статті досліджується сучасна проекція русофільства, яке досягло свого апогею у вищезгаданому регіоні протягом 20 ст., а також досліджуються чинники, що сприяють нинішньому занепаду русофільства.

**Науковою новизною** статті є піонерський підхід комплексного дослідження історичної еволюції русофільства в Європі. Попередні дослідження русофільства були обмежені за обсягом, лише кілька статей розглядали цю тему фрагментарно, не вистачає комплексних досліджень загального розвитку русофільства в Європі. Отже, стаття є першою комплексною спробою в цій галузі досліджень, заповнюючи помітну прогалину в існуючій літературі.

**Висновки.** Результати дослідження проливають світло на походження та розвиток русофільства в Європі, розглядаючи як західні, так і східні регіони. Ключові фактори, що сприяють русофільству, включають вплив комунізму, зокрема СРСР, а також культурну експансію. Ефективні пропагандистські кампанії та встановлення економічних і соціальних зв'язків відіграють вирішальну роль у вихованні захоплення іншою культурою. Сама по собі етнічна спорідненість недостатня для розвитку глибокої спорідненості без широкомасштабної та систематичної пропаганди, інтегрованої в державну політику. Ностальгія за комунізмом, підживлена спільним досвідом і позитивними аспектами колишніх комуністичних систем, також сприяє русофільству. Такі країни, як Східна Німеччина, Польща та Сербія тощо, які зазнали комуністичного правління, виявляють посилене русофільство. Спільна доля цих націй, включаючи однакову політичну ідеологію, комуністичну культуру та сприйняту поразку від капіталістичних США, ще більше посилює русофільські настрої серед ностальгуючих за комунізмом.

**Ключові слова:** Європа, позитивне ставлення, національна симпатія, Росія, русофільство

## INTRODUCTION

Russophilia refers to a conceptual framework utilized to denote a sentiment of reverence and affection towards Russia, encompassing an appreciation for its historical legacy, cultural heritage, and societal traditions<sup>1</sup>. The emergence of russophilia dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Subsequent to that period, numerous transformations have occurred pertaining to the conceptualization and historical trajectory of russophilia. In contemporary times, russophilia has evolved into a notion closely tied to the interests of the Russian state, elevating it to a matter of national concern. The utilization of russophilia as an instrument of public diplomacy by Russia in various nations has become an integral component of its strategic endeavors<sup>3</sup>.

**Purpose of the Study.** The study sets out to address the fundamental questions of “what?”, “where?”, “when?” and “why?” in relation to russophilia. The phenomenon of russophilia is identified as the subject of investigation, while the geographical scope is narrowed down to Europe. Through an extensive review of relevant literature and empirical observations, it is established that russophilia is indeed present within the European context. Consequently, the primary objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive and systematic explanation, drawing on the methodologies and techniques afforded by the field of historical science, to unravel the underlying reasons for the existence of russophilia in European geography.

**Methodology.** The study on the historical evolution of russophilia in Europe employs the historical method and the comparativist method to investigate positive attitudes towards Russia in different European contexts. The historical method involves analyzing primary sources to understand the socio-political and cultural context of different periods. The comparativist method allows for a comparative analysis of russophilia, identifying common themes and factors across European regions. This interdisciplinary approach aims to enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between Europe and Russia, tracing the historical roots and transformations of russophilia.

In addition to the historical method and comparativist method, this article incorporates the method of *portraiture*, a qualitative research approach that is infrequently utilized in the social sciences. Portraiture, as described by Donald Hackman, is a method that merges aesthetics and empiricism to gain insight into the intricate nuances, dynamics, and complexities of human experiences and organizational phenomena. By employing *portraiture*, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of russophilia in Europe, delving into the rich and nuanced portrayals of individuals and their interactions within the context of positive attitudes towards Russia. This method allows for a more holistic exploration of the subjective aspects of russophilia, complementing the historical and comparative analyses undertaken in this research<sup>4</sup>.

**Scope of the Study.** The study investigates russophilia in Europe from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. This extensive timeframe enables a comprehensive analysis of the

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<sup>1</sup> Иванов А., Казин А., Светлов Р. Русский национализм: основные вехи исторического осмысления. *Вестник Русской христианской гуманитарной академии*. 2015. Т. 16. Вып. 4. С. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Ripetsky S., Sereda, O. Russophiles. *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*. 1993. Vol. 4. URL: <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/pages%5CR%5CU%5CRussophiles.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Путин: Русский язык объединяет цивилизационное пространство СНГ. *Мир24*. 2021, 15 октября. URL: <https://mir24.tv/news/16479069/putin-russkii-yazyk-skrepa-civilizacionnogo-prostranstva-sng>

<sup>4</sup> Hackmann D.G. Using portraiture in educational leadership research. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. 2002. Vol. 5 (1). P. 51-60.

development, transformation, and persistence of positive attitudes towards Russia. By examining historical events, cultural movements, and political shifts, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the enduring dynamics between Europe and Russia.

### **BY THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE AGE OF PRIMITIVE SYMPATHY**

Sympathy for Russia during the Middle Ages encompassed various European regions, particularly those that had direct or indirect interactions with the Russian sphere of influence. The Nordic countries, including Sweden and Norway, forged substantial trade and cultural connections with the Rus' people and later with the Russian Empire, engendering an appreciation for Russian culture, artistic expressions, and religious customs<sup>5</sup>.

Similarly, Eastern European nations like Poland and Lithuania exhibited sympathy for Russia despite intermittent conflicts and political rivalries. These regions maintained significant cultural and dynastic affinities with Russian principalities and subsequently with the Russian state. Interdynastic marriages, shared religious affiliations, and a common Slavic heritage fostered a sense of affinity and mutual comprehension among these entities<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, regions under the cultural influence of the Byzantine Empire, such as the Balkans and Greek-speaking territories, likewise manifested a degree of sympathy for Slavic ethnics<sup>7</sup>. The historical and cultural ties between Byzantium and Russian geography, coupled with their shared Orthodox Christian traditions, facilitated a sense of kinship and admiration<sup>8</sup>.

It is essential to acknowledge that the nature and extent of sympathy varied across different regions and periods in the Middle Ages, shaped by factors including political alliances, economic interests, and cultural exchanges. Besides, Italy's historical associations with the Byzantine Empire, which maintained close ties with Russia, contributed to the cultivation of awareness and admiration for Russian culture and civilization in Italy. The Byzantine Empire served as a vital conduit for the exchange of trade, ideas, and artistic influences between Eastern and Western societies, fostering interactions between Italian merchants, scholars, and Byzantine society<sup>9</sup>. Through these interactions, Italy gained exposure to Russian cultural practices, traditions, and historical accomplishments. Moreover, geopolitical considerations played a significant role in fostering sympathy for Russia among the Italian populace. As a prominent actor in European politics during the Middle Ages, Italy recognized the strategic significance of establishing diplomatic and trade relations with various powers, including Russia. Engaging with Russia offered valuable prospects for economic partnerships and diplomatic alliances, which held the potential to benefit Italian city-states and ruling families in terms of expanding their influence and securing advantageous positions in the regional and international spheres<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Nordstrom B. *Scandinavia Since 1500*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Halecki O. Imperialism in Slavic and East European History. *American Slavic and East European Review*. 1952. Vol. 11, Is. 1. P. 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. P. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Hüseyinov T. *Rusların Hıristiyanlaşması*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 2001. P. 42-44.

<sup>9</sup> Byzantine Empire: From 867 to the Ottoman conquest. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2023. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Byzantine-Empire/Estrangement-from-the-West>

<sup>10</sup> Guicciardini F. *The History of Italy*, translated by Sidney Alexander. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. P. 71-72.

### 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: RUSSOPHILIA TAKES ROOT IN EUROPE

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a significant emergence and consolidation of russophilia throughout Europe, signifying a notable transformation in European perceptions and attitudes towards Russia. This era was characterized by a complex interplay of political, cultural, economic, and intellectual factors that contributed to the establishment and deepening of russophilia across the continent. One prominent catalyst for the development of russophilia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the prevailing geopolitical landscape. Following the tumultuous aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, Europe underwent a reconfiguration of power dynamics and geopolitical interests. Russia, as a rising power, assumed a central role in these dynamics, garnering attention and admiration from European nations. The successful collaboration between Russia and other European countries in countering the influence of Napoleon Bonaparte fostered a sense of solidarity and nurtured a positive perception of Russia as a capable and trustworthy ally<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, the cultural and intellectual exchanges that flourished between Europe and Russia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century played a pivotal role in cultivating russophilia. Russian literature, art, music, and philosophy captivated European intellectuals and artists, engendering a profound fascination with Russian culture and an acknowledgment of its distinctive contributions to European intellectual and artistic movements. Prominent Russian literary figures like Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy gained international recognition, shaping European perceptions and instilling a deep appreciation for Russian creative achievements. In essence, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a transformative period characterized by the ascendancy of russophilia in Europe. The intricate interplay of political alliances, cultural exchange, and intellectual admiration converged to shape a new paradigm in European attitudes towards Russia. This shift in perception left an indelible mark on European-Russian relations, influencing the course of their historical trajectory<sup>12</sup>.

Moreover, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the unification of Germany under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck, which marked a transformative period in the country's history. Bismarck's astute diplomatic maneuvering and his pursuit of a *realpolitik* approach aimed to strike a delicate balance between the interests of both Eastern and Western powers. In this context, Germany sought to maintain friendly relations with Russia as a means of ensuring stability and security on its eastern flank, while simultaneously engaging with Western powers<sup>13</sup>. This approach led to a positive perception of Russia as a potential ally and a strategic partner in Germany's pursuit of its geopolitical objectives. Therefore, the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the establishment of a favorable disposition towards Russia in Germany, driven by a combination of shared political goals, successful cooperation during the Napoleonic Wars, and the pragmatic approach of German leadership. This convergence of interests and positive perception laid the groundwork for the development of russophilia, solidifying a relationship between the two nations that would have implications for their future interactions and the broader European geopolitical landscape.

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<sup>11</sup> Morkva V. Russia's policy of rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire in the era of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792-1806. Ankara: Bilkent Üniversitesi, 2010. P. 23-24.

<sup>12</sup> İnanır E. Rus Yazınında Slavcılık Düşüncesi. *Litera: Dil Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi*. 2004. Vol. 16. P. 126-130.

<sup>13</sup> Türk T. Alman Birliği ve Bismarck: Bir analiz düzeyi uygulaması. İstanbul: İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi, 2017. P. 68-69.

Economic factors exerted a substantial influence on the development and consolidation of russophilia within Germany during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This period witnessed a notable expansion of German industrial prowess, leading to heightened commercial ambitions and the pursuit of new markets<sup>14</sup>. In this context, Russia emerged as a highly attractive destination for German goods and investments due to its burgeoning industrialization and growing consumer demand. German entrepreneurs, businessmen, and industrialists seized the opportunity presented by the Russian market, making significant investments and forging economic ties with their Russian counterparts<sup>15</sup>. These economic interactions not only yielded substantial profits but also fostered a sense of mutual benefit and interdependence. The influx of German capital, expertise, and technology into Russia contributed to the modernization and industrial development of the country, while simultaneously enhancing the economic interests and influence of German elites.

Furthermore, Germany's imperial aspirations and geopolitical ambitions in Eastern Europe played a pivotal role in fostering russophilia. Viewing Russia as a potential ally and strategic partner, German policymakers and elites saw in Russia a means to assert German influence in the region and counterbalance rival powers. The shared goals of expanding German geopolitical influence, maintaining stability in Eastern Europe, and securing access to resources further deepened the positive sentiment towards Russia within German circles<sup>16</sup>.

Therefore, it becomes evident that Germany played a central role in the gradual establishment of russophilia in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. During this era, in addition to Germany, Greece emerged as a significant catalyst in the dissemination of russophilia, exerting a substantial influence on its spread. Profound historical connections intertwine Greece and Russia, with roots extending back to the Byzantine era. These ties encompass diverse dimensions, including economic and trade relations, political and ideological affiliations, as well as religious bonds. Religion and its corresponding ideology hold considerable significance in Greece, exerting a notable influence not only on domestic politics but also on foreign relations, even in the present day. In contrast to numerous European nations, the Greek Orthodox Church occupies a position of considerable strength within Greek society<sup>17</sup>. The religious nature of the Greek populace necessitates that political leaders in the country duly acknowledge and consider this circumstance in their formulation of both domestic and foreign policies.

The historical origins of the Russian Orthodox Church can be traced back to Byzantium, thus establishing a significant connection with Greece. A noteworthy parallel between the two nations lies in the paramountcy of Orthodox Christianity as a catalyst for nationalism. Religious elements played a pivotal role in shaping the nationalist sentiments in both Greece and Russia. Historical accounts indicate that the Russians' adoption of Christian Orthodoxy commenced under the influence of the Greeks<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> So F.W. *Germany's Colony in China: Colonialism, Protection and Economic Development in Qingdao and Shandong, 1898-1914*. London: Routledge, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Falkus M.E. *The Industrialisation of Russia, 1700-1914*. London: Macmillan Education, 1972.

<sup>16</sup> Zeman Z. *Germany and revolution in Russia 1915-1918: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*. 1958.

<sup>17</sup> Patsea E. Church diplomacy: Greece, Russia and beyond. *Modern Diplomacy*. 2015, March 8. URL: <https://www.ifimes.org/en/researches/church-diplomacy-greece-russia-and-beyond/3758#>

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

In this context, it is evident that the Greeks exhibit a deep-rooted sense of national consciousness and a strong remembrance of their history. Their profound historical awareness contributes to the consolidation of russophilia within the country. One factor behind this phenomenon is the enduring memory of the Greek Civil War, which unfolded during the Second World War and subsequent years, and continues to evoke ideological divisions within Greek society. The Greeks' meticulous remembrance of their history and the significance they attribute to it have played a crucial role in solidifying russophilia.

The Russo-Ottoman wars, which transpired throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the Ottoman Empire's technological backwardness, considerably weakened and debilitated the Ottoman Empire, resulting in rebellions and territorial losses. One such rebellion occurred in Greece, setting it apart from other revolts as it was the brother nation, perceived by the Russian Empire as the ancient Byzantine people. The independence of Greece held immense importance for the Russian state. Subsequently, when Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1831, the Russian state extended substantial support to the Greeks. The Russians provided comprehensive assistance to the Greeks, both in their struggle for independence and in the subsequent consolidation of their newly established state. Military agreements were forged between Greece and Russia from the early years of Greek independence, with the Greeks receiving military support from their Russian counterparts<sup>19</sup>.

By the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian state garnered widespread recognition as an ascending power exerting substantial geopolitical sway. Its expansive territorial expanse, substantial populace, and augmenting military capabilities positioned Russia as a formidable actor within the global arena. European powers acknowledged Russia's strategic significance and conceded its capacity to mold the equilibrium of power in Europe. This discernment was particularly pronounced amid Russia's competition with other influential European powers, including Britain and Germany, engendering a measure of trepidation and prudential diplomacy<sup>20</sup>.

## 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: THE CULMINATION OF RUSSOPHILIA IN EUROPE

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the internal dynamics of the Russian state played a pivotal role in shaping European perceptions. The autocratic political framework prevalent in Russia, characterized by Tsarist rule, engendered apprehension among proponents of liberal democracy across Europe. The presence of socio-economic disparities within Russian society and intermittent instances of political turmoil, exemplified by the 1905 Russian Revolution, added layers of intricacy to European perspectives. While some admired the resilience and fervor of the Russian populace in their pursuit of political reform, others regarded Russia as politically volatile and potentially capricious<sup>21</sup>.

Russia's involvement in the First World War played a multifaceted role in shaping a positive perception of the nation within Europe. Initially, the decision of the Russian Empire to align with the Allies was met with admiration and a sense of solidarity from European nations. The remarkable mobilization of Russia's abundant resources,

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<sup>19</sup> Kokkinidis T. What Has Russia Ever Done For Greece? *Greek Reporter*. 2022, September 22. URL: <https://greekreporter.com/2022/09/22/what-russia-ever-done-greece/>

<sup>20</sup> Blanning T.C. *The Oxford History of Modern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

significant manpower, and its willingness to confront the Central Powers were viewed as substantial contributions to the collective effort against the shared adversary<sup>22</sup>.

Moreover, the early triumphs of the Russian military, exemplified by the Brusilov Offensive in 1916, which inflicted significant casualties upon the Austro-Hungarian forces, bolstered Russia's image as a formidable military power. These victories engendered optimism among the Allied powers and fostered the perception of Russia as a valuable ally in the struggle against the Central Powers<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless, as the war progressed, Russia encountered a multitude of challenges that eroded its favorable image in Europe. The protracted nature of the conflict, compounded by internal socio-political unrest and economic hardships, resulted in a decline in the efficacy and morale of the Russian army. Instances of military setbacks, desertions, and shortages of essential provisions began to undermine the perception of Russia's capabilities and reliability as a collaborative partner on the European stage<sup>24</sup>.

In the aftermath of the First World War, Europe experienced a notable upsurge in empathetic sentiment towards Russia, which can be attributed to several interconnected factors. Foremost among these was the Russian Revolution of 1917, which toppled the Tsarist regime and established a communist government under the leadership of the Bolsheviks. This revolutionary upheaval captivated and inspired segments of the European populace, particularly those aligned with progressive and leftist ideologies. The Bolsheviks' espousal of principles such as egalitarianism, social justice, and workers' rights resonated deeply within certain factions in Europe, especially against the backdrop of post-war disillusionment and societal unrest<sup>25</sup>.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the First World War brought about a significant reconfiguration of power dynamics across Europe. As traditional imperial powers such as Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire faced substantial setbacks, Russia emerged as a prominent actor in the post-war landscape. The Bolshevik government's decision to withdraw from the war and its subsequent advocacy for peace struck a chord with war-weary Europeans who yearned for stability and an end to prolonged conflict<sup>26</sup>.

Moreover, the Bolshevik government actively pursued a policy of internationalism and endeavored to disseminate its revolutionary principles beyond Russia's borders. This endeavor engendered sympathy among socialist, communist, and labor movements throughout Europe, as they perceived in Russia a beacon of optimism for the establishment of a more equitable and just society<sup>27</sup>.

Perceptions of Russia as a potential ally in Europe during Stalin's era encompassed a complex blend of pragmatism, ideological considerations, and geopolitical calculations. While certain European nations recognized the Soviet Union as a prospective partner against shared adversaries, others maintained reservations rooted in ideological disparities and apprehensions regarding Soviet expansionism.

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<sup>22</sup> *Suny R.G.* The Cambridge History of Russia. 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> *Khodarkovsky M.* Russia's 20<sup>th</sup> Century. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> *Davenport J.C.* The Bolshevik Revolution (Milestones in Modern World History). New York: Chelsea House Pub, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>27</sup> *Griffith W.E.* Communism in Europe. Continuity, Change, and the Sino-Soviet Dispute. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1964.



Within the context of World War II, the Soviet Union's pivotal role in vanquishing Nazi Germany engendered an acknowledgment of Russia as an indispensable ally. The immense sacrifices borne by the Soviet populace and the Red Army's decisive contributions on the Eastern Front engendered admiration and respect among numerous European nations. The wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, though primarily motivated by strategic imperatives, engendered a sense of solidarity and a shared purpose in the struggle against fascism. However, as the war neared its conclusion and the post-war epoch unfolded, ideological divergences between the Soviet Union and Western powers became increasingly conspicuous. Stalin's consolidation of authority, autocratic policies, and the establishment of Soviet-dominated regimes in Eastern Europe instilled misgivings among Western nations pertaining to Soviet intentions and the dissemination of communist ideology.

### *Germany*

The genesis of russophilia in Germany exhibits historical underpinnings and cultural components; however, to maintain focus on the contemporary context, we will refrain from delving into past narratives. Consequently, drawing upon our research findings, it becomes evident that the consolidation of russophilia in Germany aligns with the Cold War era. Commencing in 1948, East Germany assumed the status of a satellite state under the Soviet Union, with the USSR's military apparatus assuming responsibility for the country's defense. Through sociological means, the USSR sought to cultivate a generation in East Germany that held an admiration for the USSR. Societal initiatives encompassed compulsory lessons in Marxism-Leninism and the mandatory instruction of the Russian language in secondary schools<sup>28</sup>. The compulsory acquisition of the Russian language among Germans engendered an inevitable exposure to Russian culture and literature. Proficient German speakers of Russian were afforded the opportunity to peruse Soviet newspapers, thereby facilitating cultural assimilation and directly contributing to the development of admiration for communism, and indirectly fostering russophilia in East Germany. Furthermore, East Germany frequently organized Russian language competitions, wherein substantial rewards were bestowed upon the victors. This could be regarded as an additional factor nurturing the affinity towards Russians within the country.

Following the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the subsequent implementation of intensified control measures, a significant decline in the number of educated Germans seeking to flee from East Germany to the Western part of the country was observed. Prior to the construction of the wall, individuals who had not yet embraced russophilia and had endured years of hostile anti-USSR propaganda during the Nazi era made attempts to escape. Nonetheless, the restrictive measures implemented and the fortification of border controls effectively curtailed the flow of such escapees<sup>29</sup>.

The situation in West and East Germany during the 1960s can be likened to the present-day division between South and North Korea, albeit with notable differences in the intensity of hostility. While the divisions in Germany and Korea did not manifest in the same degree of radicalism, both East Germany and North Korea fostered a culture of

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<sup>28</sup> Grix J., Cooke P. *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany (New Germany in Context)*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2002. P. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Berlin Wall. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2022, August 26. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Berlin-Wall>

deep animosity toward the opposing side. Notably, both countries shared similar systems in terms of the organization and functioning of their respective intelligence agencies. The German populace experienced successive periods of subjugation under the Nazi dictatorship from the mid-1930s and later under the dominance of the USSR following the late 1940s. These circumstances contributed to the development of a cult of personality and the consolidation of power within the collective consciousness of individuals living in East Germany. Consequently, the propagation of concepts such as a “strong leader” and the exaltation of an exceptional individual assumed significance, which, in turn, helps elucidate the persistent yearning for a powerful leader among a segment of the German population even in contemporary times. Thus, it becomes conceivable to comprehend the existence of a certain affinity towards Vladimir Putin on the part of Germans in the present era<sup>30</sup>.

Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union implemented an extensive propaganda campaign across various spheres within East Germany. Embracing communism and russophilia became ingrained in the cultural landscape, spanning domains such as cinema, theater, press, television, music, literature, and more. Within a relatively brief span of 15 to 20 years following the conclusion of the Second World War, the Soviet leadership successfully nurtured the emergence of a generation in East Germany that espoused a profound affinity for Russian culture and values.

Let us consider the case of an individual, denoted as X, born in 1970 in East Germany, who presently stands at 53 years of age. For a significant period of 20 years, X's formative years were spent in East Germany under the influence and control of the Soviet Union. This encompassed X's education, including both schooling and initial university studies, which were shaped by the prevailing conditions and educational materials endorsed by East Germany under Soviet authority. Subsequently, following the reunification of Germany, X transitioned into the realms of business, bureaucracy, or politics, embarking on a trajectory that led to advancements in their professional career. Eventually, attaining a prominent position within the state administration, X now assumes the role of a high-ranking bureaucrat or politician in a unified Germany.

Despite the passage of time and the transformative events, the indelible imprint of communism on X's cultural upbringing and worldview remains inescapable. The enduring presence of such influences can be attributed to the challenge of entirely eradicating the impact of long-standing, systematic propaganda and the cultural assimilation experienced over an extended period<sup>31</sup>. Hence, the manifestation of Russophile tendencies in the behavior of such individuals should not come as a surprise, given the profound impact of their background on their political perspectives. Consequently, the purpose of delineating this portrait resides in acknowledging the existence of a substantial number of individuals resembling this profile in Germany, spanning various domains such as bureaucracy, politics, and other spheres of influence. These individuals actively engage in political activities, aligning themselves with opposition parties when circumstances warrant, and with ruling parties when appropriate.

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<sup>30</sup> Ackeret M., Müller H., Hermann J. Five reasons why many Germans are on Putin's side. *New Zürcher Zeitung*. 2022, February 1. URL: <https://bit.ly/3Qw2pBE>

<sup>31</sup> Chakotin S. *The Rape of The Masses: The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1940. P. 36.

It becomes evident, therefore, that attributing the proclivity towards cooperation and cultural integration with Russia solely to energy dependence, economic relations, and lobbying activities represents a severely limited perspective. Rather, the multifaceted phenomenon of russophilia among German authorities can be comprehended by considering the collective impact of individuals shaped by their experiences and backgrounds, as described in this portrait. For instance, Angela Merkel, who was born in 1954 in Hamburg, West Germany, spent 36 years of her life in East Germany: studied at an East German school, then studied at an East German university, and worked as a researcher at an East German educational institution<sup>32</sup>. While at school, Merkel studied Russian perfectly and was even awarded for her excellent Russian language skills<sup>33</sup>. Of course, her proficiency of the Russian language led her to be very familiar with Russian culture and the Russian press from an early age. The University of Leipzig, where Angela Merkel studied, was called Karl Marx University at that time. According to Spiegel magazine, Merkel even received support for her projects from the East German Communist Party during her university years<sup>34</sup>. During these times, as everyone knows, East Germany was under the curation of the USSR. As a cause-and-effect relationship, Angela Merkel was also exposed to USSR propaganda and cultural expansion of the USSR as an educator in a communist country. Again, according to Spiegel magazine, Merkel worked as a secretary for agitation and propaganda at the East German Academy of Sciences. According to former colleagues, her main function here was to propagate Marxism. From this, it is possible to understand the orientation of Angela Merkel, who was often criticized for her Russophile behavior in her political career. It is quite natural for a politician with such a background to exhibit Russophile motives in her behavior. Recalling East Germany 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Merkel praised those times and said that life in East Germany was calmer and more stable, as well as more comfortable<sup>35</sup>. From here it appears that she is still under the influence of the USSR, thus a Russian state.

It should be noted that there are many politicians and bureaucrats in Germany who share a common past with Angela Merkel. It seems that the social and political background of a certain part of the German political elite becomes clear for us through the portrait of a politician. This also allows us to understand the positions of the German government in the Russia-Georgia and Russia-Ukraine wars. In front of Russia, which is strongly condemned by almost the whole of Europe and NATO and has taken concrete steps, the German governments have taken a relatively restrained and centrist position both during Merkel's time and Olaf Scholz's time. At this point of our study, it should be noted that Scholz himself has a history of supporting Marxist groups<sup>36</sup>. In general, the attitude of the German society to concepts such as 'democracy' and 'liberal democracy' is ambiguous. Therefore, Germans are inclined to accept the concepts presented by Russian culture in search of an alternative to democracy.

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<sup>32</sup> How Close Was Merkel to the Communist System? *Spiegel International*. 2013, May 14. URL: <https://bit.ly/3Qut4yN>

<sup>33</sup> Langguth G. Angela Merkel: Biographie Auflage: Ausgabe August. Berlin: DTV, 2005. P. 50.

<sup>34</sup> Reitler V.T. Drogenwahn auf der Dauerbaustelle. *SPIEGEL Geschichte*. 2009, March 27. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/legendaere-clubs-a-949765.html>

<sup>35</sup> Life in Communist East Germany was 'almost comfortable' at times, Merkel says. *Reuters*. 2019, November 8. URL: <https://reut.rs/3SNqas3>

<sup>36</sup> Feldenkirchen M., Sauga M. Rückkehr eines Bauernopfers. *Der Spiegel*. 2007, November 25. URL: <https://bit.ly/462m1Dw>

### *Italy*

Although widespread Russophilization of society is not evident in Italy and Spain within the European Union, certain politicians among the political elites of these countries exhibit a notable admiration for Russia and Vladimir Putin. These politicians can be found within both populist right-wing and far-left political factions. While acknowledging that the historical roots of russophilia in Italy are ancient, our analysis will focus on the onset of this trend in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, refraining from delving into ancient history. Upon examination, it becomes apparent that comprehensive communism played a pivotal role. During the reign of the Italian Communist Party, concerted efforts were made to foster russophilia within society. Measures included the establishment of Russian Studies faculties at universities and the cultivation of robust cultural, touristic, political, and economic ties with the USSR. Notably, the established tourist and economic relations with Russia persist to the present day<sup>37</sup>. Indeed, it is possible to claim that the Russophile propaganda carried out by the Italian Communist Party gave quite effective results.

### *Poland*

In the period from 1947 to 1989, Poland was known as the Polish People's Republic, a nomenclature commonly associated with communist countries. As the second largest communist nation in Europe during that era, Poland emerged as a significant recipient of Soviet influence on the continent<sup>38</sup>. The country's communist past entrenched its strong connections to the USSR and its exposure to Russophile propaganda. Although not formally integrated into the Soviet Union, Poland experienced a high degree of Soviet control in the military, political, and economic spheres, akin to that of the union republics. The Soviets exercised comprehensive oversight over Poland, particularly in matters of economy, politics, and notably, the military. Poland, akin to East Germany, actively participated in the Warsaw Pact and exhibited similar patterns of russophilia development. The attitude of the communist Polish populace, whose armed forces received training from the Soviets<sup>39</sup>, towards the Red Army requires no extensive analysis. The support extended by the Russian people, regarded as their elder sibling, coupled with the dissemination of propaganda in a distinct discourse through the communist-controlled Polish media, engendered a profound sense of sympathy and reverence among ordinary Poles towards the USSR.

Furthermore, the organizational structure of the police force and other power institutions in communist Poland bore distinct resemblances to those of the USSR, with shared methodologies and objectives in combating perceived "traitors of the state". Particularly in the 1950s, a powerful wave of Stalinism swept through Poland, shaping the prevailing literary discourse<sup>40</sup>. The leadership of Poland, acting as a satellite state of the USSR, mirrored the steps taken by the Soviet leadership in suppressing dissent within its own borders. Over time, the language employed in USSR propaganda also found

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<sup>37</sup> Roberts H. Italy and Russia: A love affair that hasn't quite ended. *Politico*. 2022, April 6. URL: <https://www.politico.eu/article/italy-russia-love-affair-no-end/>

<sup>38</sup> Sawe B. What Was The Eastern Bloc? *World Atlas*. 2018, August 8. URL: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-was-the-eastern-bloc.html>

<sup>39</sup> Paczkowski A. Polish-Soviet Relations, 1944-1989: The Limits of Autonomy. *Russian History*. 2002. Vol. 29, No. 2/4. P. 277-300.

<sup>40</sup> Kemp-Welch A. Stalinism in Poland, 1944-56. Warsaw: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

resonance in Poland, particularly in historical contexts and celebrations of victory, where shared terminology such as 'bandits', 'traitors', 'anti-Semites', and 'Jew-killers' was utilized<sup>41</sup>. These keywords served as instrumental components of propaganda campaigns against former Nazis, contributing to a sense of closeness between the Soviet and Polish populations and fostering shared values over an extended period.

In communist Poland, social policies resembling those implemented in the USSR were adopted. Through measures aimed at enhancing social well-being, such as guaranteed employment, provision of housing, and the rotational allocation of cars, a substantial segment of the population developed an affinity for communism<sup>42</sup>. Presently, during periods of economic turmoil, this segment reminisces about the 1970s and 1980s, nurturing a sense of nostalgia for the communist era. Consequently, there exists a yearning for the reinstatement of Russian governance in the country. These examples illustrate the distinct role of communism in cultivating russophilia within Poland. It is more accurate to assert that affection for communism equates to fondness for the USSR. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the USSR assumed the mantle of global communism, and endorsing the USSR entails expressing admiration for the Russian people. As the architects and custodians of this union, it was the Russian people who shaped and administered it. Hence, lending support to communism indirectly signifies support for Russia.

### ***Balkans***

The emergence of russophilia in the modern Balkans cannot be dissociated from the historical context of Yugoslavia. However, when examining the dynamics of political relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, it becomes evident that their relationship was characterized by fluctuations rather than a consistently high level of engagement, as observed in the case of the USSR-East Germany relations<sup>43</sup>. Russophilia did not gain as widespread popularity throughout Yugoslavia as it did in East Germany. Even during periods of cooling relations between Stalin and the Yugoslav government, propaganda and caricatures targeting the Yugoslav leader, Tito, were disseminated in East Germany. Nevertheless, the prevalence of Slavic ethnicities within the Yugoslav population, coupled with the country's socialist foundations in social, political, and economic realms, could be deemed significant factors contributing to the emergence of russophilia to a certain extent<sup>44</sup>.

During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a significant distinction between socialism in Yugoslavia and socialism in the USSR emerged, as Yugoslavia implemented Titoist socialism, which deviated from the Marxist-Leninist communism practiced in the Soviet Union. Consequently, occasional accusations by the Soviet government were directed at the Yugoslav government, claiming a misinterpretation of socialism<sup>45</sup>. Furthermore, the

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<sup>41</sup> Chodakiewicz M. The Dialectics of Pain: The Interrogation Methods of the Communist Secret Police in Poland, 1944-1955. *Glaukopis*. 2005. URL: <http://www.projectinposterum.org/docs/chodakiewicz2.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Toro P., et al. Comparing the Characteristics of Homeless Adults in Poland and the United States. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 2014. Vol. 53 (1-2). P. 134-145.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen L. Federalism and Foreign Policy in Yugoslavia: The Politics of Regional Ethnonationalism. *International Journal*. 1986. Vol. 41 (3). P. 626-654.

<sup>44</sup> Kosanović M. Brandt and Tito: Between Ostpolitik and Nonalignment. *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: European and Global Responses*. New York: German Historical Institute Washington DC & Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 232-243.

<sup>45</sup> Boeckh K. Allies Are Forever (Until They Are No More): Yugoslavia's Multivectoral Foreign Policy During Titoism. *The Foreign Policies of Post-Yugoslav States. New Perspectives on South-East Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. P. 18-43.



USSR's military operations in socialist Afghanistan garnered disapproval from the Yugoslav government. Instances like Yugoslavia's reluctance to join the Warsaw Pact illustrate that the USSR did not consistently hold dominance over Yugoslavia. As a result, the development of russophilia in Yugoslavia did not reach the same magnitude observed in communist nations such as Poland and East Germany. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that Yugoslavia was a Slavic state, where the majority of languages spoken belonged to the Slavic language family<sup>46</sup>. The linguistic affinity between Slavic languages and the Russian language facilitated familiarity with Soviet culture among the Yugoslav population, thus contributing to the presence of russophilia in the former Yugoslav countries today.

In the present stage of our investigation, it is imperative to recognize the significant role of language as a tool for public diplomacy. To exemplify this, we can consider two hypothetical nations, X and Y. Country Y, being smaller in size and reliant on Country X across various domains, shares ethnic proximity with Country X, which is further reinforced through a shared language. Consequently, the inhabitants of Country Y engage extensively with the cultural outputs of Country X, encompassing literature, press, visual media, and radio broadcasts. In essence, Country Y extensively consumes a broad range of cultural products originating from Country X. In this context, the effective implementation of propaganda by the government of Country X can cultivate a sense of affinity or "*X-ophilia*" within the society of Country Y. However, the development or attenuation of this sense of *philia* can be influenced by additional factors at play. Regarding Yugoslavia, we observe that russophilia finds support through factors such as ethnic and linguistic affinities, as well as ideological alignment. Despite occasional divergence between the policies pursued by the leadership of the USSR and Yugoslavia, the penetration of russophilia within Yugoslav society was notably extensive, bolstered by these fundamental factors.

In addition, Yugoslavia had very deep economic ties with the Soviets, and the country occasionally became economically dependent on the Soviets<sup>47</sup>. The USSR leadership was generally generous in meeting the economic needs of Yugoslavia. This is still remembered by the elderly in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, it can be perceived naturally that a part of the population in these countries feels gratitude and kinship to modern Russia and Russians.

The federal structure of Yugoslavia, akin to a smaller version of the USSR, undoubtedly exerted a significant sociological influence on its people. It is implausible to disregard the impact of this federal structure on the daily lives, music, art, and other aspects of Yugoslav society. Remarkably, the Yugoslav and Soviet populations exhibited notable similarities in these domains. However, a key distinction between the Yugoslav and Soviet populace during this period was rooted in their respective ideological orientations. While both societies espoused socialist ideologies, the Yugoslav people embraced a nationalist ideology, whereas the Soviet people espoused a state-centric ideology. Recognizing these distinctions is crucial in comprehending the underlying reasons for the relatively sympathetic disposition towards the modern Russian state observed in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

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<sup>46</sup> Milekic S. Post-Yugoslav 'Common Language' Declaration Challenges Nationalism. *BalkanInsight*. 2017, March 30. URL: <https://bit.ly/49i23Y2>

<sup>47</sup> A.Z. Soviet-Yugoslav Economic Relations 1945-1955. *The World Today*. 1956. № 12 (1). P. 38-46.

**CONTEMPORARY HISTORY: "RAZVYAZKA"**

The level of European sympathy towards Russia following the dissolution of the USSR has exhibited variations across different countries and time periods. Although it is challenging to make sweeping generalizations encompassing an entire continent, discernible trends have emerged. Initially, there was a sense of optimism and anticipation for democratic reforms and closer integration with the Western world in the aftermath of the USSR's collapse. However, subsequent developments have contributed to a decline in sympathy for Russia within Europe. Besides, internal political dynamics in Russia, including the consolidation of power under President Vladimir Putin, the curtailment of democratic institutions, and concerns regarding human rights violations, have engendered doubts and skepticism among European nations. The divergence in values and governance between Russia and many European countries, particularly concerning democratic principles, rule of law, and freedom of expression, has fostered a growing disillusionment and a waning of sympathy. It should be noted that these trends are not universally applicable and differ among individual countries and contexts. Furthermore, public sentiment is subject to fluctuations over time, influenced by evolving geopolitical circumstances and events.

***Germany***

According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 47 percent of people in modern Germany do not like the United States<sup>48</sup>. Of course, the fact that 47 percent of the population of a country where 21 NATO military bases are located<sup>49</sup>, which is the basis of the military defense force, harbors antipathy towards the founding state of NATO, indicates both the modern relics of the communist past of this country, and also requires us to look at the current sociological situation in Germany from a different perspective. It should also be noted that since we are looking at the issue from the aspect of russophilia, we do not take into account the influence of the history of US-German relations on these statistics. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 47 percent of people in modern Germany do not like the United States<sup>50</sup>. Of course, the fact that 47 percent of the population of a country where 21 NATO military bases are located<sup>51</sup>, which is the basis of the military defense force, harbors antipathy towards the founding state of NATO, indicates both the modern relics of the communist past of this country, and also requires us to look at the current sociological situation in Germany from a different perspective. It should also be noted that since we are looking at the issue from the aspect of russophilia, we do not take into account the influence of the history of US-German relations on these statistics.

In addition, the German Communist Party also has a great role in preventing the weakening of russophilia in modern Germany. Although from the 1990s until now, the party has not had a significant influence and has regularly lost elections, it is still on the rise in recent years. If we pay attention to the difference between the statistics of 2009 and 2021, we see that the votes received by the Communist Party in the Bundestag

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<sup>48</sup> Stokes B. Which countries don't like America and which do. *Pew Research Center*. 2014, July 15. URL: <https://pewrsr.ch/49t26Ag>

<sup>49</sup> Knight B. US military in Germany: What you need to know. *Deutsche Welle*. 2020, June 16. URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/us-military-in-germany-what-you-need-to-know/a-49998340>

<sup>50</sup> Stokes B. Which countries don't like America...

<sup>51</sup> Knight B. US military in Germany...

elections increased more than 8 times in 12 years<sup>52</sup>. Considering that the communist parties are the main pillars of the Russian government's foreign expansion in modern times, we can claim that this pillar is getting stronger in Germany year by year.

### **Italy**

Continuity in warm relations established during the Soviet era has persisted between Italy and its successor, the Russian Federation. Particularly notable were the strategic cooperation ties forged during the rule of Berlusconi, which have left a lasting impact evident even in present times<sup>53</sup>. Italy currently harbors a significant presence of Eurosceptic and anti-NATO political factions, colloquially referred to as the "Russian party"<sup>54</sup>. Undeniably, the growth in popularity of these politicians correlates with the deepening of relations with Russia. Empirical research further suggests that if a referendum were to take place in Italy, there is a distinct possibility of the country withdrawing from the European Union<sup>55</sup>. It is important to acknowledge that certain factors underpinning Italian society's Euroscepticism have gradually bolstered these politicians over the years.

In addition to the above, we can see the results of the cultural expansion of Russia in Italy. Russia's 2013 and 2016 foreign policy concepts described *soft power* as an integral element in achieving its foreign goals. From this point of view, the cultural activities in Italy can be explained as a part of this policy in order to strengthen russophilia at the international level. In addition, Russia's special "care" for Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic and its extensive coverage in the Italian media also played a special role in the development of russophilia in Italy<sup>56</sup>.

At the same time, there are many *Russlandversteher* in Italy<sup>57</sup>. This social group, which has influence in many areas of cultural, academic and media life, has an exceptional role in the formation of Russophile generations in the country. Even in recent years in Italy, the concept of "Putin's Wisdom" is often used by this social group<sup>58</sup>, and this concept is an important element of Russophile propaganda.

### **Poland**

Following the demise of communism, Poland underwent a rapid and transformative shift toward a market economy, characterized by profound changes. This swift transition propelled Poland, which had long been aligned with the USSR, to become one of the early supporters of Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union<sup>59</sup>. Over time, attitudes toward Russia within the country have evolved and deteriorated. Factors such as the proliferation of capitalism, the impact of globalization under the influence of the United

<sup>52</sup> The Federal Returning Officer. Bundestag election 2021. *The Federal Returning Officer*. URL: <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundestagswahlen/2021/ergebnisse/bund-99.html>

<sup>53</sup> Roberts H. Italy and Russia...

<sup>54</sup> Caselli I. Why Italy Is The Most Pro-Russian Country In The West. *World Crunch*. 2022, June 14. URL: <https://worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/italy-support-russia>

<sup>55</sup> Roberts H. Italy and Russia...

<sup>56</sup> Caselli I. Why Italy Is The Most Pro-Russian Country In The West...

<sup>57</sup> Iacoboni J. Italy: Putin's Biggest European Friend? *CEPA*. 2022, February 23. URL: <https://cepa.org/article/italy-putins-biggest-european-friend/>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Mick C. Ukraine and Poland: why the countries fell out in the past, and are now closely allied. *The Conversation*. 2022, June 15. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3SyemIQ>



States, and the assertive foreign policies pursued by successive Russian governments have contributed to a negative stance toward Russia, particularly among the younger generation of Poles. Presently, the majority of Poles identify themselves as European and perceive their nation as an integral part of Europe. Within Poland, there exists a profound animosity towards Russia, particularly in response to Putin's aggressive actions. Nonetheless, a segment of the population, particularly the elderly and those influenced by familial nostalgia, still maintain a fondness for Russia.

Based on a survey conducted in June 2022, a mere 2% of Poles identify as Russophiles, even during a period when Russia's standing in Europe has reached its nadir<sup>60</sup>. Although this proportion may appear modest at first sight, it corresponds to approximately 760,000 individuals within the Polish population, constituting a considerable electorate. It is worth noting that this figure represents a historic low, primarily attributable to Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, and there is a possibility that this proportion may have been higher in previous years.

### ***Balkans***

Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Serbia has emerged as a significant political stronghold for Russia in Europe. The close political, economic, and military ties between Serbia and the Russian Federation have undoubtedly influenced the propaganda efforts of both governments. Notably, Serbia has refrained from joining the sanctions imposed on Russia during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, a stance that finds support among a substantial segment of the Serbian population. Consequently, alongside historical, ethnic, and linguistic affinities, the presence of shared political and military interests has contributed to the persistence of a high level of russophilia in modern Serbia. Paradoxically, while the country aspires to join the European Union, it also maintains its alignment within Russia's sphere of influence. This reality has resulted in a sociological division within the Serbian population. The first group identifies as European-oriented and considers themselves part of the European community, while the second group aligns with Russophile politics, emphasizing their Slavic heritage. A similar dichotomy exists in other countries of the former Yugoslavia, although the proportion of those identifying as European-oriented is significantly higher elsewhere, indicating a more pronounced divergence. However, in the case of Serbia, the difference between these two groups is not substantial<sup>61</sup>.

### ***Greece***

Greece, which gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire with the help of the Russian state, is currently a NATO country. However, there is almost no spiritual value that binds it to the organization. The main reason behind the Greeks' membership of NATO is the security problem. The security opportunities that NATO can offer to Greece caused it to be included in the organization<sup>62</sup>. However, Greece is the only NATO country that has an official military alliance with Russia. Except that Turkey has approached

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<sup>60</sup> Tilles D. Only 2% of Poles view Russia favourably, lowest of any country in global study. *Notes From Poland*. 2022, June 22. URL: <https://bit.ly/3QN0HgC>

<sup>61</sup> Filipovic B. Pro-Russia Serbs march in Belgrade as country treads ever finer line between East and West. *Reuters*. 2022, March 5. URL: <https://reut.rs/3MxjY3i>

<sup>62</sup> Ozturk B. Greece violates the spirit of NATO but alliance partners look away. *TRT World*. 2022, September 8. URL: <https://bit.ly/3QPEZIQ>

Russia in recent years and signed some military agreements, it has no military solidarity with Russia dating back to old years. However, Greece is both a NATO country and a Russian military partner. In the modern era, Greece's relations with Russia are developing not only at the military level, but also at the religious and political levels. In fact, Greece's relations with Russia in the 2010s are characterized by the concept of *church diplomacy*<sup>63</sup>. As a result, it is understood how great the use of religion is in the diplomatic relations between these two countries.

From this, it is understood how geopolitical events and processes can greatly affect culture and sociology. As we can see, the warm relations between Greece and Russia bring the Greek people closer to Russia<sup>64</sup>. Of course, the course of history also has a great influence here. Greek history lessons taught in schools and universities told the Greeks that they had historically good relations with Russia, that the transition of the Russians to orthodoxy was based on the Greeks, that the independence of Greece from the Ottoman Empire was achieved with Russian support, as well as the Greek civil war that coincided with the years of the Second World War. It is taught that the concern and support of Russia at the time was at a high level<sup>65</sup>. Therefore, studying history in this direction helps to create a great Russian admiration and Russian sympathy in Greece.

Presently, Russia's military intervention in Ukraine has engendered divisions within Greece. However, a significant majority opposes a deterioration of relations with Russia. Surveys indicate that 67% of Greeks are against Greece supplying weapons to Ukraine, while 65% believe that Greece should maintain neutrality amidst the ongoing turmoil. Furthermore, over one-third of respondents do not view Russia's military intervention in Ukraine as an invasion<sup>66</sup>. These findings illuminate the existence of deep-rooted russophilia within the country.

The expansion of russophilia in Greece can be attributed to various factors, including the influence of the Greek Communist Party. In recent years, the party has experienced significant electoral gains, steadily increasing its representation in the Greek parliament<sup>67</sup>. This trend is perceived as a further manifestation of russophilia within the country, fostering closer ties with Russia. Moreover, the current leftist government's close relationship with Russia and President Putin, coupled with systematic pro-Russian propaganda in the Greek media, serve to strengthen russophilia in Greece<sup>68</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Our study focused on investigating the origins and progression of russophilia in both Western and Eastern Europe. Through the utilization of portraiture, comparative analysis, and historical examination, we aimed to elucidate the factors contributing to the emergence and dissemination of russophilia. The findings of our research indicate that the prevalence of russophilia across European territories can primarily be attributed to the influence of communism, particularly the USSR, as well as cultural expansion.

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<sup>63</sup> Patsea E. Church diplomacy...

<sup>64</sup> Силенко И. За что греки так любят Путина. *Rua.gr*. 2022, 4 апреля. URL: <https://rua.gr/news/sobmn/47321-za-hto-greki-tak-lyubyat-putina.html>

<sup>65</sup> Avdela E. The Teaching of History in Greece. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. 2000. № 18 (2). P. 239-253.

<sup>66</sup> Simon D. Why Putin has so many fans in Greece. *Neoskosmos*. 2022, April 3. URL: <https://neoskosmos.com/en/2022/04/03/sport/sport-opinion/why-putin-has-so-many-fans-in-greece/>

<sup>67</sup> Frezza B. Give Greece What It Deserves: Communism. *Forbes*. 2011, July 19. URL: <https://bit.ly/3MzWpqt>

<sup>68</sup> Simon D. Why Putin has so many fans in Greece...

Notably, our study revealed that effective propaganda campaigns and the establishment of economic and social connections play pivotal roles in fostering profound admiration for another culture within a nation. As two peoples become more familiar with one another, accurate propaganda becomes an influential instrument in cultivating robust and positive relations between them. This phenomenon is evident in the cases of East Germany, Poland, Italy, and several other European countries examined in our research.

In addition to cultural expansion and the influence of communism, another significant factor contributing to the emergence of russophilia in Europe is ethnic kinship. This can be observed, for example, in the case of Yugoslavia. However, historical analysis reveals that ethnic kinship alone is not sufficient to foster deep cultural and political affinity. In order for ethnic kinship to evolve into integration, it must be supported by widespread propaganda that is systematically integrated into state policy. A manifestation of such propaganda can be observed in present-day Serbia, which has established closer relations with Russia compared to other former Yugoslav countries. These relations encompass various aspects, including economic and military ties.

Furthermore, the historical dynamics indicate that the severity of economic recessions in Europe has often accelerated the convergence of European societies towards communist ideology. Consequently, nostalgia for communism has become another driving force behind the strengthening of russophilia in Europe. Countries such as Germany, Poland, and Serbia, among others, have experienced an extended period under communist rule, particularly among the middle-aged and older generations. The positive aspects of the former communist systems still influence these individuals, intensifying their nostalgia for communism. This sentiment is not limited to the general electorate but is also observed among high-level politicians and bureaucrats. As a result, russophilia indirectly develops in some countries and directly in others, as the Russian-led USSR represented the most prominent bastion of communism worldwide throughout the 20th century.

Another important reason that develops russophilia under the influence of this nostalgia is that the nations share the *same fate*. Countries like East Germany, communist Poland, Yugoslavia and others shared the *same fate* as the USSR. They had the same (or similar) political ideology, lived the same (or similar) communist culture, had *fraternal* relations and were defeated by the *capitalist USA*. Through these commonalities, Russophile motifs multiply and deepen in the outlook of communist nostalgics.

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