

Master Thesis

Putinism : its influence on the policies of Viktor Yanukovych and Ramzan Kadyrov from the year 2000

Supervisor :

Prof. dr. André Gerrits

Second reader:

Dr. Vineet Thakur

Marie Le Beuve

2136449

m.u.s.le.beuve@umail.leidenuniv.nl

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1- Introduction

After the fall of the Communist regime, Russia was put in the hands of Boris Yeltsin, who did not have the best of luck inheriting a country in bad shape. The main objective was to revive Russia and make it a strong and reliable international player (Sakwa, 2008). However, those plans were affected by the Russian economic crisis, which was said to be “the worst peace-time setbacks of any industrialized nation in history” (Lynch, 2011). On top of it, a secession war between Russia and Chechnya erupted, between 1994-96. Chechnya proved to be a much stronger adversary than expected, forcing Yeltsin to compromise and sign an autonomy agreement. This intertwining of events severely weakened the President’s popularity and pushed him to resign from his functions and leave Vladimir Putin as his successor.

Vladimir Putin has become one of the most significant Russian leaders. He has been at the head of the largest country in the world for nearly twenty years and has brought autocracy, according to his critics, and stability, according to his supporters. Eventually both can be settled on: “Love him or hate him, it’s hard to deny that Putin has made a huge impact on his country and the world” (Luhn, 2015). Regardless of the stance taken, everybody can agree on the fact that Putin has broken with the 90s. He has added a fair share of personal touch in the policies that have been helping him govern Russia over the last two decades. This has made Putin a strong and serious player in the field of foreign policy, and granted him an honest amount of popularity in Russia, with about 86% approval rate in 2015 (Luhn, 2015). This combination gives him an unequalled share of hard and soft power also. He masters modern politics (politics of the 21st Century) which does not have a narrow focus on victory in war (Baylis, Wirtz, & Gray, 2016). In other words, Russia’s foreign policy is not centered around territory gain but rather energy infrastructure control in post-Soviet states (Krastev, 2008).

Former agent of the KGB, becoming President of the Russian Federation was not Putin’s obvious destiny. Originally working at the city hall of St Petersburg, decided in 1996 to resign and join the Moscow political force, as he had already done electoral work in the past. As Lynch (2011) states, Putin’s rise in only three years perfectly reflects the Kremlin’s fast-paced politics at that time. Putin impressed President Yeltsin with his work ethic, discipline and efficiency, qualified as “Germanic”, which led him to

be appointed Chief of the Federal Security Bureau (FSB), the post-Soviet version of the internal branch of the KGB, which he was very familiar with. He made his proof at the FSB and proved Yeltsin that he could keep the Kremlin safe when the President and his family had received threats of criminal charges from Communists (Webber, Mathers, & Morton, 2007), giving him incentives to believe that Putin would be a great leader. It did not take too long: in August 1999, Putin became the 5th Prime Minister under Yeltsin and eventually acting President on December 31st 1999 following Yeltsin's resignation.

From there on, Putin's popularity and power grew exponentially leading to a national fascination. Statues were erected (in Kyrgystan and the Leningrad region), Putin became the image of the ideal Russian man; steady and unbreakable. But beyond his citizens, Putin has attracted attention from all corners of the world. However, this research will remain focused on Putinism as an influential mechanism on other heads of state, informing the research question: To what extent has Putinism influenced the policies of Viktor Yanukovych and Ramzan Kadyrov from the year 2000? This topic is relevant as Putin's charisma does play a severely important role in modern geopolitics, which has affected not only political opinions, but also wars and revolutions such as the Euromaidan Revolution, the annexation of Crimea and the war with Chechnya. Studies have addressed the issue of Putin's cult of personality but, what makes this thesis interesting is the case studies we chose to apply it to: Chechnya and Ukraine. These two cases, which will be explained in more detailed in the research design, allow to look at the influence of Putinism from different angles and allow us to do a comparative case analysis. This topic is relevant as it is helpful to policy. If one identifies criteria that make Putinism so influential on former Soviet countries in political transition and independent republics of the Russian Federation, it might enable other countries (e.g Georgia, Belarus, Kazakhstan) in the future to not fall under the scope of the Russian Federation, as far down as Ukraine, for example. The main purpose of this research is to analyse the influence Putinism has had on the policy making of neighbouring states. The aim is to describe Putinism as a foreign policy tool, guided by four principles explained later on. This allows a measure of its influence on the policies of other heads of state, Yanukovych and Kadyrov in this case.

In order to answer this puzzle effectively, the thesis is divided in four chapters. Firstly, the research will introduce a conceptual framework of Putinism; "A form of autocracy that is conservative, populist and personalistic" (Fish, 2017, p. 60). This

definition will be the start of understanding what Putinism really is. The framework will allow for a better understanding of the viewpoint that Russian citizens and academics have of Putin. Moreover, it will introduce the main literature on Putinism and the current academic debate on the topic. Secondly, the methodology of the thesis will be introduced. That chapter will explain the research design. What kind of analysis will be used, the case selection, data collection and data analysis methods as well as reflect on limitations of the research. Then, we will move onto the analysis of the cases, Ukraine and Chechnya. After having studied each case separately, the conclusion will compare both cases and sum up the findings of this research.

2- Literature Review

This section presents a review of the literature surrounding the concept of Putinism. As mentioned in the introduction, Fish (2017) simply depicts it as “A form of autocracy that is conservative, populist and personalistic” (p. 60). However, this literature review goes further, it identifies four characteristics, each will represent one of the main characteristics of what Putinism is to get a more complete understanding of the concept. While reading literature on Putinism, it quickly becomes clear that certain adjectives are very recurrent, which can describe as characteristics or features. Regardless of the side taken by the author, most of them come to describe Putinism with seven key notions: Autocratic/ Authoritarian; Conservatism/ Historical Roots; Populism and Stability. These seven terms will be associated to create four groups: Autocratic, conservative, populist and stable. These groups are the ones that will help deconstruct Putinism and understand what academic literature has to say on the topic. Moreover, the four groups aim at defining Putin as a person, our concept of Putinism relies on the foreign-policy making capacity of Putin, as described underneath.

Autocratic or authoritarian are concepts that have been associated with Putin since his arrival on the Russian political sphere. As early as 2000, he was awarded the nickname of “Little Napoleon” during his first elections due to the image the leader gives out (Sakwa, 2008) and this “facelessness” (Laqueur, 2015, p. 110) or “smugness” (Stan, 2016, p. 745) which Putin inherited from his past in the KGB and the FSB. Some go as far as describing Putinism not only as a concept of power but as a doctrine (Stan, 2016). His autocracy can also be perceived through his will to always move towards a greater

consolidation of his own power, centered around his person (Luhn, 2015). This image that Putin gave creates a sentiment of fear which is also reflected in his politics. Russia is an illiberal democracy, it has a one-man rule: no parties, institutions or individuals other than Putin will be recognized as a political actor, despite the group of oligarchs that Putin controls himself (Fish, 2017). As of 2020, Putin has been in power for two decades, creating this authoritarian feel to Putin's presidencies (Nalbandov, 2016). Putin's party itself, United Russia, was created to suit the line of work of the leader which will support him no matter what direction is taken. Putin's politics remain centrist, rare for authoritarian leaders who tend to reach extremes, however, one has described Putin's centrism as "removed from the field of party politics, and elevated the presidency to a degree even above the political field" (Kaspe, 2001).

Described as a conviction politician, his convictions (ideas and ideals for the future of Russia) sometimes got the better of his political judgement, he took the risk of provoking chaos instead of instilling order, while making genuine efforts to modernize the country (Sakwa, 2008). The emphasize on his personal preferences and ideas reflects an authoritarian state leader, who acts according to his liking. However, his desire to modernize Russia and thus, act to the benefit of the people, grants him legitimacy in his autocracy. However, one can question that, if Putin is dismantling Russian democracy, how can one explain his sustained popularity? One possible answer is that "Putin's popularity does not appear to rest on an authoritarian mass political culture" (Sakwa, 2008, p. 87). Putin's popularity represents the illiberal and undemocratic sentiments of Russians. This means that, Russians do not believe there has been a democratic backsliding since Putin took the power (Sakwa, 2008). Moreover, opponents of democracy in Russia are not necessarily Putin supporters while Putin supporters do not necessarily hold undemocratic views (Sakwa, 2008). Additionally, polls have shown that democracy is not a priority for Russians. When asked about what was important to them, Russian were more focused on the stabilization of the country's political and economic situation (53%) and social protection (51%), rather than freedom of speech (9%) and democracy (7%), displayed in Annex 4 (Poll, Stabilization Versus Democracy, 2016). This leads us to the next features of Putinism, conservatism and historical roots.

While attempting to modernize the country, Putin's regime remains conservatist (Fish, 2017): the lack of women rights (non-punishment of domestic violence) or

LGBTQ+ rights are the most prominent setbacks in Putin's logic toward modernism. Putin has tried to kill the rumors about the repression of homosexuals in Chechnya, a republic which still belongs to Russia. Despite the efforts to punish domestic violence, there are still about 40 women dying on a daily basis (Fish, 2017). However, aside from the Kremlin, conservatism also remains a societal element in Russia, where people hang onto values in a fast-evolving country, a country where the political orientation changes rapidly (Fish, 2017). This links to Putin's popularity and his success as an 'authoritarian' and conservative president. Other authors claim that strong leading figures are embedded in Russian historical roots (Inozemstev, 2017). One describes it as a strategic culture of ruling which is based on realist assumptions of such models as Thomas Hobbes or Niccolò Machiavelli (Lo, 2018).

Another explains that Putin's autocratic regime derives from Russia's historical and cultural past: the Russian word 'gosudarvsto', used for 'state', has old Slavonic roots meaning a person who owns something and therefore, puts the Russian state into a position of possession to any incoming state leader (Inozemstev, 2017). Although this argument seems obsolete at first sight due to its lack of political reference, semantics and linguistics are an important part of one's culture. Nevertheless, assuming that a country which used to be under an authoritarian regime will more likely become one again, is a rather pessimistic view. The argument is validated when saying that "In Russia, people are accustomed to deferring to the current leader and to judging him not by his successes, but rather by his personal qualities" (Inozemstev, 2017, p. 81), which brings us back to the argument of Putinism being built on tradition and historical roots. In other words, the Russian people have a certain approach to politics which is undeniably attached to the main leading figures their country has known (strong Tsars, Lenin, Stalin, Gorbachev, Putin), whether it was during the Empire or after the revolution. Polls have shown that 46% of Russian citizens believe that Russia needs a special kind of democracy, appropriate to Russia's national tradition and unique characteristics, displayed in Annex 1 (Poll, Democracy in Today's Russia, 2016). On the other hand, other authors have referred to this tendency as a sorry reflection of Russian politics and that, Russia has a cultural predisposition towards strong personalized leadership. This is also displayed in polls where Russians are asked to choose between order and democracy, 61% of the polled citizens are willing to sacrifice some democratic values in favor of order, seen in Annex 2 (Poll, Ideas about democracy, 2015). The

author however accentuates that this is rather a fallout from former regimes rather than an asset (Sakwa, 2008). This means that Russia is more likely suffering from this heritage of strong leading figures rather than taking advantage of it. A final and more positive point of view on conservatism in Russian politics is that, it might just be the most appropriate system for that country. One claims that “Liberal authoritarianism may well be a more desirable alternative and a more practical response than the utopian wish for immediate mass democracy in Eastern Europe” (Jowitt K. , 1991, p. 97). Jowitt (1992) defines liberal authoritarianism as the absence of ideologically defined political attachments which leads to endemic political fragmentation and favors authoritarian developments.

Mass democracy being unsuited for the Russian political scene (Jowitt K. , 1991), populism has been a defining feature of Putinism. However, one can find different interpretations of populism when coming to Putin’s politics. Some refer to Putin as a populist due to the wide reach of his policies amongst different socio-political groups (Fish, 2017). Indeed, the president has always remained very blurry about his political stance and United Russia, as mentioned above, was created as a political vehicle for the Putin leadership. Moreover, when asked about his political program before the elections in 2000, Putin would not give an answer knowing that his personality and his will to end the second Chechen war was enough for him to win because it reached all strata of Russian society. In other words, Putin’s vagueness about his political agenda has attracted attention from all political backgrounds, from revolutionaries to anti-reformists and from imperialists to extreme right (Shevtova & Antonina, 2005). This widespread popularity of Putin has led authors to refer to him not only as a popular politician but maybe as the only real politician (Fish, 2017). On the other hand, other authors (Wregen & Herspring, 2010) claim that Putin cannot be referred to as a populist because he was never afraid to lose popular support even when implementing unpopular policies such as the alliance with the United States after the 9/11 attacks. As mentioned above, Putin is a conviction politician, meaning that he is loyal to a core set of beliefs about the type of state and society that he personally wishes to establish (Sakwa, 2008), which cannot coincide with a populist one (Wregen & Herspring, 2010).

One can also argue that Putin is not a populist but rather, implements popular policies (Sakwa, 2008). This can be interpreted the same way as Wregen et al. (2010): he is not afraid to lose popularity when implementing unpopular policies, in other words,

unpopular policies become popular due to the continuous support of Putin. In addition, polls have shown that one of Russians' favorite thing about Putin is the foreign policies that he has implemented (Annex 3) (Poll, Vladimir Putin's Work, 2017), confirming the popularity of his policies. The alternative explanation to Putin's popularity is that, the masses that were not allowed to emerge before 1991-93 are now coming to life in Russian society and Putin is their leader but most importantly, he is the leader of the opposition to the old regime (Sakwa, 2008).

Russia has had a very instable political history: from a Tsardom overthrown by the Bolshevik revolution to a Stalinist authoritarian state; Putin wants a status quo for Russians, which has won him impressive support from Russians who have an appetite for stability. However, this new status quo needs to be created through reform and new policies. Putin became the image of a renewal and stability in Russian politics. Russians, avid of firmness and steadiness from a leader and Putin gave it to them. When asked what they like about Putin, 19% of Russians responded with 'decisive, manly, firm, strong-willed, strong, calm, brave, clear-cut, self-confident, a real man' and 16% with 'experienced politician, manager, strong leader, a professional, competent' (see Annex 3) (Poll, Vladimir Putin's Work, 2017). Putin is the figure of the official end of the Soviet era, of the 90s and of poverty; and attempted at creating his own. He shared his vision for the future of the country and became the president of hope. He maintained a certain stability and therefore consensus in society through consistent reforms and logical modernization of the country (Sakwa, 2008). Putin engaged in a third-way: an intermediate solution from Soviet communism and American capitalism. He found a midway, very specific to Russia's self-identity and problems of developments the country has faced the past two decades (Sakwa, 2008). Putin's midway lies between Soviet communism and American capitalism, borrowed from all corners of the political spectrum (Sakwa, 2008). Although continuity and stability could have been lost when Putin left the presidential office in 2008, his role as Prime Minister enabled him to keep some share of control. As Wrege et al. (2010) state: "Putin then took up the duties of Prime Minister and was thus able to ensure that 'Putinism after Putin would continue'" (p. 17).

Overall, multiple authors (Fish, 2017; Kaspe, 2001 ; Laqueur, 2015; Luhn, 2015; Sakwa, 2008; Stan, 2016) agree on one feature of Putinism: the autocratic/ authoritarian aspect of it. The main idea is that, Putin is so successful and influential as a politician, it

is because he has built this image around his personality, using leftover features of an FSB agent, taking strong stands in international relations, putting his convictions and ideas (re-installing Russia's grandeur) first as a tool in his decision-making and focusing on the consolidation of his own powers. However, Sawka (2008) accentuates Putin's genuine desire to modernize Russia and the appetite of Russian citizens for strong leading figures. Moreover, his conservatism and reflection of Russian historical roots is also a feature different authors settle on (Fish, 2017; Inozemstev, 2017; Jowitt, 1991; Sakwa, 2008). Russians have a certain approach to politics which has resulted in them favoring strong leading figures. It is argued that this approach to politics is the most adapted one for a country that has for long been ruled over by dictators and that would not be ready for mass democracy. Mersol (2017) resumes Putinism rather well when saying: "Vladimir Putin and his allies have been able to garner populist support for their increasingly centralized government and its active, interventionist foreign policy by relying upon traditional Russian cultural values, as well as a populist desire to see Russia return to the world stage as an economic and military superpower." (p. 95) Lastly, the stability that Putin has brought to Russia after the turmoil of the never-ending Soviet era, completes his profile and his capacity as a policy-maker.

For the purpose of this thesis, Putinism needs to be understood as an influencing element on foreign policies of other states, using the above-mentioned criteria. Therefore, Putinism shall be defined as a combination of an autocratic, conservative, populist and stable leading style. It forged the assertive foreign policies of the Russian Federation, under Vladimir Putin (as President and Prime Minister) and its rejection of the unipolar model which decreased the prestige and influence of Moscow (Wrege & Herspring, 2010). Putinism, in this thesis, will be referred to as the factor which has built Vladimir Putin's governing style and interaction with other states, Ukraine and Chechnya in our case, and its influence on them.

3- Research Design

This section of the paper aims to lay down the research design. In order to properly establish it, five steps will be followed to ensure the completeness of the explanation. First, I will touch upon the basic design of the research in other words, the set-up of the study. Secondly, I will touch upon the case selection and justify the choices made.

Moving on, the data collection method as well as the data analysis method will be touched upon. Lastly, one will look at the limitations of the study, which also implies an assessment of the validity and reliability of the research.

Firstly, it is important to establish the structure of the analysis. For the purpose of this thesis, a comparative case analysis is put in practice, using the cases of Ukraine and Chechnya in order to answer the formerly mentioned question: To what extent has Putinism influenced the policies of Viktor Yanukovych and Ramzan Kadyrov from the year 2000? As explained by Van der Maat (2018), a comparative case analysis will mostly fit a deductive research, a research that starts with a theory and, has a focus on comparison. Hence, it is important to assess whether this research is fitted for a between-case analysis. Liamputtong (2011) came up with three criteria that help evaluate whether one's research is deductive: content validity, concurrent validity and repeatability. The first asks whether a particular measurement or indicator really describes the concept. In our case, the measurement would be how and to what extent Putinism (authoritarianism, conservatism, populism and stability) influenced the leaderships of Ukraine and Chechnya. What is meant by influence is, to which extent the leadership of these countries have changed their policies under the pressure of Putinism. Although these features are not mathematically measurable, the research looks at how Yanukovych and Kadyrov aimed at copying the policies and behavior which have made Putin the study object of this thesis. In order to make sure that the concept is clear, the literature review has presented the four main features Putinism to ensure its validity throughout the whole thesis.

Secondly, concurrent validity assesses whether measurements of the same concept converge, in other words, whether they correlate across a given set of cases. In our case, the problem would arise if the changes which occurred in the foreign policies of Ukraine and Chechnya had been influenced by another factor than Putinism; this is what this research aims to find out. Lastly, repeatability refers to the question whether the measurement will yield the same results when it is applied again on the same sample. In our case, once we have established to which extent Putinism influenced Ukraine and Chechnya, there should not be chances for the results to differ when conducting the research again but, this is to be determined in the data selection, collection and analysis. Hence, one can assure that this is a deductive research, adapted for a comparative case analysis. Additionally, it is also essential to mention that this is a

qualitative research, according to the criteria of Kumar (2011): few cases selected, an open methodology and covers multiple issues.

Secondly, one must discuss the case selection. As mentioned above, our cases are Ukraine and Chechnya, two countries that at some point, fell under the scope of the Russian Federation and the aim of the research is to find if this influence is directly linked to Putinism. These two cases are interesting because, they both went through massive changes in policies within a similar timeframe, all the research will be evaluated from 2000 onwards, when Vladimir Putin became President of the Russian Federation. Although Kadyrov and Yanukovych only came to power in 2007 and 2010 respectively, it is important to look at Putin's first years in the Kremlin, and the changes in policy throughout the years, starting in 2000. The couple years of Putin's presidency are relevant to the analysis as the power he accumulated during that time is what led Putinism to be so influential. This time frame also encloses the Russo-Chechen war of 1999-2008. The first few months of the Chechen war will be touched upon in the Chechnya chapter, when Boris Yeltsin was still leading Russia and which helped Putin access to power.

Additionally, both those cases are interesting because they are what López (1992) described as most different systems design. This means that we are going to compare cases that only share a certain political outcome (loss of influence to Russia/ accountability to Russia) and one explanatory factor considered crucial to generate the outcome (Putinism). What also makes those cases different and interesting is that one of them, Ukraine, is a former Soviet republic whereas Chechnya, is still today of republic of the Russian Federation yet, they both experienced a change in foreign policy under the pressure of Putinism. Therefore, the case selection does not reflect any selection bias, as it was not done on the dependent variable in order to get specific results but rather in the sense to fill a gap in the academic literature as those two cases have not yet been compared under the scope of Putinism. These cases were also chosen for the worldwide impact Putinism has had on them: the annexation of Crimea in Ukraine and the end of a war in Chechnya. Although the case of Georgia can be studied under the same scope, I preferred to select the most recent (and ongoing for Ukraine) cases. Moreover, due to the length restrictions of this thesis, not all cases could be analysed. A triple comparison study including Georgia is a feasible research project for the future. For the case of Ukraine, the research will look at Yanukovych's tendency to copy Putin's policies and its

fear of Putin when facing the option to turn towards the European Union. Ultimately, his policy decisions led him to flee to Russia when the Ukrainian people rebelled against his somewhat imitation of Putin and rejecting European agreements. For the case of Chechnya, the focus will be on the relationship between Vladimir Putin and Ramzan Kadyrov, hypothetically largely influenced by Putinism and will to keep Chechnya under control and avoid another insurgency.

Thirdly, one must look at the data collection method; documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources. While there are so many different and interesting ways to retrieve information, this research will mainly make use of journal articles, policy papers and books. For the analysis of the cases, policy papers will be studied in order to assess the before and after of the influence of Putinism in each country and look at how each country has evolved. When I started the research for this thesis, I focused on secondary sources using key words (Putinism, Putinism and Ukraine, Yanukovych and Putin, Putin and Kadyrov) in databases to collect as many articles as possible which seemed relevant to my topic. Once I had a solid base of sources, I started skimming those articles mostly through their table of contents. I would find an interesting chapter, read a couple of lines and decide to keep it or not. Once this process done, I was left with the sources that seemed the most relevant and useful. The use of primary sources and quantitative data was added further along in the process, in order to put the triangulation into practice. Triangulation is a good way to improve the validity of research: use two different methods to get at the same research question and looking for convergence in research findings (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Quantitative data is used in the literature review of this paper. The poll results shown aims at giving a more realistic take on what Russians really think of Putin rather than solely rely on academic and often, foreign (non-Russian) literature. In order to gather relevant and reliable polls, I found a Russian non-state-owned polling center (Levada center), and also conducted a search based on key words (Putinism, foreign policies, democracy, Putin voters). This search led me to multiple categories, each presenting multiple polls. From there on, I selected what was relevant to my research and what would help the reader understand Putinism. Moreover, for the analysis of the policy changes in the chapters on Ukraine and Chechnya, I attempted to gather the most primary sources possible in order to study the actual words of the politicians involved rather than study second hand opinions on the matter. However, this appeared to be a difficult task. Most public appearances,

speeches, interviews and meetings are either heavily scripted or held behind closed doors.

The data analysis method of this paper was very typical of a qualitative research. Firstly, it was conducted in a chronological order. The articles and books selected in the data collection phase were therefore read according to date, from oldest to newest documents. This helped establishing a timeline for the paper, identify the key dates and actors. Within those documents, a process tracing was conducted. Process tracing is defined as the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the researcher. The promise of process tracing as a methodological tool is that it enables the researcher to study more-or-less directly the causal mechanism linking an independent variable and an outcome, allowing us to open up the 'black box' of causality itself (Bennett & Checkel, 2015). Process tracing is a within case analysis method which can be adapted to this research. Although two cases are presented in this research, each case is analyzed separately and compared only in the final conclusion. Moreover, my approach of process tracing can be combined with Bayesianism as it « rely on using evidence to affirm some explanations and cast doubt upon others, and each approach emphasizes that the probative value of evidence relative to competing explanations is more important than the number of pieces of evidence. Both argue for the possibility that a few pieces of evidence with high probative value, and in some instances even just one piece of evidence, can allow observers who approach a case with different theoretical priors to converge in their views on the proper explanation of the case. » (Bennett & Checkel, 2015, p. 19). In this research, few but strong pieces of evidence are used to show the degree of influence of Putinism on Yanukovych and Kadyrov, matching with a Bayesianism process tracing analysis.

Lastly, it is important to touch upon the limitations of the research. Research is never free of errors so it is essential to identify weak points and to measure the validity and reliability of the analysis. The validity asks whether our results are trustworthy and reliability asks if the results of the research would be the same if one was to re-conduct the analysis. The aim of this analysis is to show to which extent Putinism has influenced the policies of Yanukovych and Kadyrov. One of the limitations of this research and which can influence the validity and reliability is the description of Putinism. When researching the concept, many definitions were available and made it quite confusing.

For the purpose of this research, I decided to gather the most prominent features of Putinism that arose in the literature and created my own definition: a combination of an autocratic, conservative, populist and stable leading style. It forged the assertive foreign policies of the Russian Federation, under Vladimir Putin (as President and Prime Minister) and its rejection of the unipolar model which decreased the prestige and influence of Moscow (Wrege & Herspring, 2010). However, if someone else was to use their own interpretation of Putinism, the results of the research could eventually be altered. So many academics have focused their idea of Putinism on a precise angle whether it is the authoritarian or populist side, excluding the others. I therefore believe that the results of this research rely on the precise definition of Putin I have given in the literature review. Accordingly, one can say that the most prominent limitation of this research is the concept of Putinism as its interpretation can vary from one researcher to another. Yet, the definition of Putinism presented in this thesis is one of the most complete available in the academic debate.

4- Putin, Ukraine and Yanukovych

This chapter is dedicated to analyzing the influence of Putinism on the foreign policies of Viktor Yanukovych, president of Ukraine between 2010 and 2014. In order to understand the consequences of Putinism, it is firstly important to understand the major changes in Russian foreign policy vis à vis Ukraine and the European Union. Secondly, we will look at the Ukrainian foreign policies also vis à vis Russia and the European Union. This section will analyze the influence of Putinism on Yanukovych's foreign policies from 2010 onwards and this will help us understand the major influence that Viktor Yanukovych was under when he made a sharp turn eastward in his policies in 2013, the key event which displays Putinism at its finest. In order to demonstrate the influence of Putinism, this chapter will analyze key decisional moments of Yanukovych, which have a direct link with actions of Putin, or Putinism as described in the previous chapter. It is important to insist on the fact that the analysis is looking at the influence of Putinism and not Putin as a person. As explained above, Putinism is a combination of an autocratic, conservative, populist and stable leading style. It forged the assertive foreign policies of the Russian Federation, under Vladimir Putin (as President and Prime

Minister) and its rejection of the unipolar model which decreased the prestige and influence of Moscow (Wregan & Herspring, 2010). When officially coming to power in 2000, Putin's objective was to revive the country, end the Chechen war, and create new, strong alliances with Western powers and political stability (Wregan & Herspring, 2010). During his annual speech to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in April 2005, Putin declared his willingness to move towards the European values of freedom and democracy, at Russia's own pace. The Russian President also insists on the development of Russia as a free and democratic state to be the main goal. Moreover, after discussing legal and economic issues of the country, Putin moves onto the relations it holds with former Soviet republics: "While standing up for Russia's foreign political interests, we also want our closest neighbors to develop their economies and strengthen their international authority." (Putin, 2005). This speech was very strategic as it occurred a couple months after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, a revolution which emerged following the run-off of Ukrainian presidential elections, which was claimed to be marred by massive corruption, voter intimidation and electoral fraud. These new policies are qualified of 'assertive' with a strong focus on a multipolar world (Wregan & Herspring, 2010). During the first two terms of Putin, Ukraine is key in foreign policies as the Soviet and Russian historical legacies ought not to be completely dismissed, that the collapse of the Soviet Union was unfortunate and that the country's former prestige must be restored (Özdal & Demydova, 2011). President Dmitri Medvedev took on the same policies and amplified them in 2008 while Putin positioned himself as his Prime Minister in order to reengage to the West in terms that the Kremlin was comfortable with, and under Putin's control. These policies, in 2008, can be depicted in five principles, according to Reynolds (2008). 1. International law 2. Multi-polar world 3. No isolation 4. Protect the citizens 5. Spheres of influence. Overall, these principles establish that Russia is willing to respect the primacy of international law (despite its war with Georgia in 2008), that Russia will not accept the primacy of the United States and that it will not isolate itself nor start confrontations with any country. Moreover, one of the Russian priorities remains to protect its citizens "wherever they are", and argument which was used in the above-mentioned conflict with Georgia and which will eventually be used again when annexing Crimea. Lastly, Russian foreign policy keeps great emphasis on its sphere of influence but described it as "keeping friendly relations"

although, the conflict in Georgia proved it to be of secondary importance (Reynolds, 2008).

In the early years of Medvedev as President, Russia did open itself to the world and more specifically to the European Union. Although the two first terms of Putin were focused on restoring the national economy, Medvedev's presidency had a larger focus for long-term economic policies. In his 2008 speech in Berlin, Medvedev talks about "unity between the whole Euro-Atlantic area, from Vancouver to Vladivostok" (Medvedev, 2008). This is what Wrengen et al. (2010) refer to as the 'enlightened' policies which form Putinism, an attempt to modernize the Russian economy through integration and trade. The EU and Russia concluded important agreements such as new pipeline routes however, the European Union and Russia did not see eye-to-eye when it came to economic security and eventual disputes between Russia and former Soviet Republics (due to the new pipelines) were seen as a threat (Wrengen & Herspring, 2010). The disagreements between Russia and the European Union do not only rely on energy and near abroad but it is also a clash between post-modern state (EU) and traditional modern state (Russia) (Krastev, 2008). Additionally, the West (including the European Union) wanted to expand NATO and therefore, Russian foreign policy re-affirmed its true nature in the years following Medvedev's continuation of Putinism without Putin. Although it mentions wanting to keep its sphere of influence, Russia also claims wanting to keep friendly relations with those countries. Nonetheless, Russia has no remorse trying to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO: keep it under its direct influence and prevent Ukraine from having access to western institutions promoting democracy and the rule of law (Economic and Political Weekly, 2014). Russia used what one would call 'the carrot and stick policy' throughout the years, the carrot being, buying Ukraine's government bonds valued at \$15 billion and cut gas prices; and the stick being, use protectionism against certain Ukrainian products as well as the creation of the new pipelines that bypass Ukraine (Özidal & Demydova, 2011). Nord Stream 2 is a good and recent example of those pipeline constructions. The project is to transport natural gas from Russia to the European Union bypassing Ukraine as it will travel through the Baltic sea (Construction, 2012). Russia has gone as far as mentioning that if Ukraine accepted to forget about a NATO membership, it was willing to ensure its territorial integrity, as it did with Georgia (Wrengen & Herspring, 2010).

On the other side of the spectrum, Ukraine is making its own changes in its foreign policies vis-à-vis Russia and the European Union. After the Orange Revolution, Ukraine was very much focused on turning westwards, modernizing the country, and leave behind its Soviet past. In 2005, Ukraine enters the European Neighborhood Policy scheme which has for purpose to strengthen the stability and effectiveness of institutions guaranteeing democracy and the rule of law (Özdal & Demydova, 2011). In 2007, Ukraine created an Association Agreement with the European Union for future cooperation in security and foreign policy and in 2009, Ukraine joins the Eastern Partnership, the Eastern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy. Overall, Ukraine is tying knots with the European Union in order to protect itself from Russia, and to have an ally in case Putin's regime decides to take measure against Ukraine. While doing so, Prime Minister Tymoshenko, as early as 2007, warned the West about Russia's policy of destabilizing the Ukrainian government and in 2008, the Ukrainian foreign ministry protested against the mass distribution of Russian passports in Crimea (Bebler, 2015). This Russian influence in Ukraine led to anti-Ukrainian protests in Crimea asking Russia to seize the region, the same way it did in Georgia (Bebler, 2015). Although Russia had claimed wanting to keep friendly relations, it is leading disguised maneuvers in order to create an anti-Ukrainian uprising in Crimea.

Ukrainian foreign policy took a new turn when Yanukovich knows a slim victory at the Ukrainian presidential elections in 2010 against Tymoshenko (Motyl, 2010). Most appointees of the new president come from his home region, Donbass, very much influenced by Russia and therefore, the people (the 45% which voted for Tymoshenko-Annex 5) (Ukrainian presidential election 2010, 2010) are expecting a very centralized and anti-Ukrainian government (Motyl, 2010). For example, Yanukovich's appointment for minister of education and science, Tabachnyk, hold anti-Ukrainian views and believe the west of the country is too westernized and that Ukrainian culture flourished in Soviet times (Motyl, 2010). As seen in Annex 5 (Ukrainian presidential election 2010, 2010), Yanukovich voters are from the Ukrainian areas with heavy Russian influence, in the east. One of Yanukovich's first action in April 2010, was to extend the basing rights of Russia's black sea fleet in Sevastopol, area considered for a NATO base, in exchange for gas discounts. Therefore, from the very first weeks of Yanukovich's presidency, an influence of Putinism is already distinguishable. Putin, always being a Yanukovich

supporter, knew that if once in power, Yanukovich would do what is necessary to please him.

Although Yanukovich wants to appear as a fair president and one who wants to 'bridge Russia and the European Union' (Motyl, 2010), he is clearly biased by Russia from the start of his presidential term. Yanukovich wants to create strategic alliances but goes in strong and hard, worrying Russia about its influencing capacities on Ukraine if it becomes an independent decision-maker, without Putin's input. Russia feels Ukraine slipping away and wants to take its power back. Therefore, when Putin comes back as president in 2012, the Kremlin accelerated its efforts to bring back the arsenal of active measures (tools of political warfare: manipulation of media, society and politics) once used in the Soviet Union in order to use it on Ukraine (Polyakova, 2016). However, part of Putinism is the subtleness of the approach in order to not frighten Ukraine but rather, create tools (foreign policies) that will make Ukraine turn Eastwards on its own. Although a weak Ukraine may be to Russia's benefit, a Ukraine on the verge of another revolution is not (Motyl, 2010). Therefore, a customs union was introduced by Russia to be negotiated with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine however, this customs union would not be compatible with the Association Agreement or the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement Ukraine has with the European Union. This was a very strategic timeframe for the customs union to be introduced and therefore displays a new approach of Putinism. Surely, the Kremlin would not create such a policy if it was not in its interests: create new trade with these countries and keep Ukraine away from making deals with the European Union. Although Putin claims that Ukraine associating with the European Union would hurt its economy, it remains debatable (Shevel, 2015). The direct effects of that were to give bargaining power to Ukraine as it asked \$175 billion through 2017 from the European union for the costs of adopting European standards (Shevel, 2015).

In 2011, former Prime Minister Tymoshenko was being tried in Ukraine on criminal charges of abuse of power. In order for the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement to go through, the European Union requested that the Tymoshenko's trial follow the European standards of democracy and the rule of law (Özdal & Demydova, 2011), a condition that pushed president Yanukovich to make a move eastward and go forward with a Russian custom Union rather than comply with the European Union when it has another option available. The potential creation of a customs union is a good

representation of Putinism: assertive foreign policy in a very specific timeframe which will most likely influence the Ukrainian president. The influence of Putinism worked: Putin built a foreign policy making use of his power as an authoritarian leader, his populism by gathering popular support, his historical roots as he wants to unite former Soviet republics, and stability as it will benefit the economies of the countries concerned. Although the customs union ended up being created without Ukraine, it did drive Ukraine away from the EU, Putin's main objective. However, the European Union eventually dropped its resolution that warned the Ukrainian leadership and agreed to go ahead with the finalizing of the agreement (Özdal & Demydova, 2011). It is believed that the European Union dropped the resolution by fear of losing Ukraine to Russia therefore, leading Ukraine to keep its options open and Russia to intensify its Putinism 'campaign'. In the words of Freeland (2014): "For Putin, Ukraine is both a threat and a temptation. A threat, because a prosperous, democratic Ukraine would be a next-door example to Russians of a different way of life, and one achievable by people very much like themselves. A temptation because Putin is an authoritarian leader over a stagnating economy. That means he always needs new enemies and new conquests. Ukraine, he seems to have decided, might provide both." (p. 42)

In 2013, the issue of corruption in Ukraine made a big come back as Putin is back in power and Yanukovich wants to be Russia's best student by re-establishing some "Vladimir Putin-style vertical separation of power" (Riabchuk, 2012, p. 2). Although the effects of the orange revolution had been quite disappointing, the country had not been left more authoritarian than it was, but Yanukovich set the clocks back (Ritter, 2017). The oligarch domination and a more powerful presidency were put back in place, allowing Yanukovich and 'his family' (some of the oligarchs) to get immensely rich from the national economy, leading to about €30 billion being embezzled. Yanukovich was copying Russia and Putin's style hoping that Putin would leave Ukraine alone if it ruled itself in a similar manner: "Ukraine's rule of oligarchs as a political and economic system – what has sometimes been referred to as kleptocracy – is almost identical to what Russians refer to as the *sistema*, the unofficial arrangement that allows Putin and his "friends" to pillage Russia's economic resources. If Russians, who are well aware of the politico-economic system in which they live, were to be provided with evidence that oligarchy could be removed and replaced with more transparent, democratic rule, then what would prevent them from seeking the same type of change at home?" (Ritter, 2017,

p. 204). If Russians were to seek changes at home because of the image Ukraine gave to them, Yanukovich would have to fear Putinism rather than benefitting from it. This became both an advantage and a shortcoming to Russia: advantageous as it would drive the European Union and Ukraine apart; a shortcoming if Ukraine's system crumbles, Russians will see the possibility for another system in Russia too. Nonetheless, advantage or shortcoming: Putinism is what drove these new policies and gave bargaining power to Ukraine: it ramped up its demands to the European Union (such as future accession) and argued with the fact that the agreement led them to lose trade with Russia (customs union). Although one can argue that Yanukovich being pro-Russia from the get-go, did not require Putinism to be influenced. However, Yanukovich was ready to sign those agreements with the European Union. Yanukovich's attitude to the EU changed when Putin introduced his new policy idea (the customs union), leading us to believe that it is Putinism which changed the course of policy-making between Ukraine and the EU.

The Association Agreement was delayed because of the Tymoshenko trial which was intended to lead Ukrainian progress but as mentioned above, it had the opposite effect: it drove it towards Russia. As Ritter (2017) mentions, by challenging the foundation of Yanukovich's style of government, the European Union made itself part of the problem rather than the solution. Putin installed chaos in the relationship Ukraine was building with the European Union again with the carrot and stick policy: economic sanctions against Ukraine, including the closing of the physical borders in exchange for Yanukovich to not sign the Association Agreements (Ritter, 2017).

Days before his meeting in Brussels to finalize the Association Agreement in November 2013, Putin went to Kiev, being the final stroke of influence of Putinism on the Ukrainian president. From there on, the Association Agreement was suspended and days after Brussels, Yanukovich visited Moscow to confirm that NATO accession was off the agenda (although it had been since 2008 at the Bucharest meeting where the members agreed that Russia would be capable to make use of force to keep its sphere of influence, like in Georgia) (Fean, 2010), the strategic partnership with Russia and Yanukovich praised Russia for its stability (a key feature of Putinism) (Besemeres, 2016). Yanukovich's turn eastward created the Euromaidan Revolution, a civil protest in favor of the European Union and against the Russian model. By January 2014, Yanukovich's regime tried to suppress the protests but it only had opposite effects (De

Spiegeleire, Akimov, & Shantz, 2015). The protests forced the Yanukovych regime to repeal its amendments and eventually, for the president to flee to Moscow in February 2014. Shevel (2015) describes it as “a humiliating defeat for Putin’s strategy on Ukraine” (p. 11). Close cooperation with Yanukovych had lowered the need of annexation of Ukrainian territory and therefore, avoided Russia to look like the invader however, Bebler argues that the annexation had long been planned and that Yanukovych’s downfall was an “opportune moment” to do so (Bebler, 2015, p. 194), making it a success for Putin, looking from another viewpoint. The following March, Russian militias marched into Crimea, getting Putin what he wanted. Although Putinism had the influence it wanted, the results were not exactly what the Kremlin had anticipated. The Russian leadership underestimated the resolve of the Ukrainian people and the potential ripple effect of the revolution for Russia (De Spiegeleire, Akimov, & Shantz, 2015). Since the annexation, Putin has been faced with breaches in international law and was even kicked out of the G8 that year.

However, an interview with Valery Fedorov, director of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (WCIOM) reveals that, despite the problems Putin has faced since the annexation of Crimea, it might also have helped Putinism reach its goals. Earlier in this research it is mentioned that Putinism started when Putin decided to adopt more assertive policies and one of them being a multipolar world and Russia as an important player. The 2015 interview of Fedorov explains that Russia can no longer be blamed as an ‘evil aggressor’ but rather acknowledge it is back in the international decision-making process (Fedorov, 2015). Moreover, Fedorov tries to explain Putin’s high popularity, which has not decreased since the annexation, one year and a half earlier. According to him, Putin “went through his second symbolic birth [...] transitioned from the category of a politician that might be compared to other public figures to category of a historical figure” (Fedorov, 2015). However, the WCIOM is state controlled and reports to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the statements made by Fedorov are therefore questionable. Though the WCIOM is state control the Levada Center is not but, its numbers remain rather similar. Putin still being in power in 2020 might prove that his Putinism tactics succeeded, after all. Although his ratings have massively dropped (30% in January 2020), Putin remains the most approved politician in Russia (Annex 6) (Confidence in political leaders, 2020).

5- Kadyrov, Putin's extension to Chechnya

This chapter's aim is to analyze the influence Putinism has had on the policies of Ramzan Kadyrov, current President of Chechnya, an independent Republic of the Russian Federation. The timeframe of this analysis starts in 2000, Putin's accession to power, up until today, as Ramzan Kadyrov has remained President of Chechnya. However, our timeframe will focus around key dates, which are the turning points of Putinism in Chechnya. Therefore, in order for this chapter to deliver the results it aims at, this chapter will be written chronologically, as the one about Ukraine, in order to understand the progress and the changes throughout time in the influence of Putinism on the policies of Ramzan Kadyrov. The chapter will start with a short background on the first Russo-Chechen war, moving onto Putin's accession to power with the objective to end violence in the North Caucasus and re-establish Moscow's control. The analysis will look at the different Chechen actors which have led to the rise of Ramzan Kadyrov and to the creation of Putin's policy of Chechenisation, which has been the policy with the most influence on the small republic.

Chechnya and Russia have a very gladiatorial recent relationship, which has led both countries to fight two bloody wars: one from 1994 to 1996 and the second one from 1999 to 2009 (Le Beuve , 2018). The first Russo-Chechen war broke out in December 1994, due to an accumulation of power in the separatist movement that managed to gather enough fighters and train them to guerrilla tactics in order to obtain independence from the Federation. Russia took onto the challenge and started fighting back in the objective to keep Chechnya in its scope of influence but more particularly, as part of the Russian Federation. However, Russia had just gone through the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was in the middle of a major economic crisis and its army was not capable, at that time, to fight in any sort of conflict (Le Beuve , 2018). The Chechens were highly prepared and delivered a fight in line with what Baylis et al. describes as an insurgency (2016): the sub-state administers and fights more effectively than its foe following guerrilla tactics, those mostly relying on population support. Indeed, in opposition to Russia, the Chechen fighters actually had a massive popular support, which enhances civil cooperation and facilitates the organization of military air strikes, in order to preserve the lives of Chechen civilians. Russia was caught off guard by the

efficiency of their enemy and lost many lives on top of any national support (Le Beuve , 2018). This pushed Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, to sign an independence agreement with the Chechen separatist leader in order to secure his next electoral victory by stopping the massacre despised by the Russian people (Dannreuther & March , 2008). This signing officially ended the wars and leaves Chechnya in ruins and an enormous number of casualties for Russia (3,826 dead, 17,892 wounded and 1,906 missing) and even more for Chechnya (up to 100,000 dead or missing, most being civilians) (s.d.).

A new war breaks out in 1999 in Russia's attempt to counter-terrorism in the North Caucasus. Russia is prepared and wants to retake control over Chechnya however, Yeltsin has lost all popular support and decided to resign; Putin therefore becomes acting President in December 1999. However, the Russian constitution requires new elections to be conducted in that case, leading Putin to build a presidential campaign, which was around a campaign against Chechnya. The success of the Chechen campaign boosted Putin in the elections and he was elected as the new President of the Russian Federation (Melvin, 2007). When arriving in power, Putin is clear about his objectives: he wants to reshape the federal government and the regions which enable him to strengthen his vertical powers and impose centralizing measures (Melvin, 2007). As early as May 2000, Putin restores executive power over the regions and gives the Russian government the right to remove leaders of republics who breached Russian constitution. However, the separatist and Islamic threat from Chechnya is real and dangerous: two terrorist attacks led by Chechens in the Russian Federation, in 2002 and in 2004, both hostage-taking situations. The first one is known as the 'Nord-Ost' attack which took place in a theatre of Moscow, and the second one is the 'Beslan' attack, which occurred in a school of southern Russia. Both these events are referred as the 9/11 of Russia but were completely over shadowed by the American war on terror.

According to Russell (2011), Putin had three options: 1- Continuing the war and make no political changes 2- Negotiate with the separatist leaders 3- Implement chechenisation. Considering that war was leading to a great number of casualties and that "Russia does not negotiate with terrorists" (Putin, 2004), Chechenisation was the best option to restore peace in the North Caucasus. In 2000, Putin started the implementation of Chechenisation: "indigenization within a Russian vertikal by picking an authoritarian Chechen leader to nullify the separatist threat" (Russell, 2008, p. 661)

of which the main aim was to break the backbone of the armed resistance (Ratelle & Souleimanov , 2016). He therefore appointed Akhmad Kadyrov as interim head of government whom Putin described as the best partner for negotiation. Kadyrov even created his own armed forces to turn as many insurgents as possible and made it appear as a good way to secure a basic living, personal security and for criminals, to pursue their illegal activities in a safer environment (Ratelle & Souleimanov , 2016). The Kadyrovs, being former bandits, have a strategic sense and flexibility to win over former rebels. They were insurgents until the movement turned to a more extreme branch of Islam, Salafism, which they did not affiliate with. In 2003, a new Chechen constitution is passed by referendum which grants Chechnya a significant degree of autonomy but Putin declares Chechnya under direct presidential rule (Melvin, 2007). Akhmad Kadyrov was elected President of the Chechen republic in 2003 and Putin put in place further political and administrative measures to restore economic federal control, especially after the two terrorist attacks. Akhmad Kadyrov was killed in 2004, in a bombing organized by Shamil Basayev, an Islamist Chechen rebel.

From that moment onwards, Putin undertook as a personal mission to take Ramzan Kadyrov, the son, under his wing to ensure that Islamist Chechen rebels are defeated in the North Caucasus. After Akhmad Kadyrov's death, his son did not meet the constitutional requirements to run for president, being above the age of 30. Therefore, Aly Alkhanov, a local police chief was elected Chechen president in August 2004 and Ramzan Kadyrov is appointed Prime Minister in December 2005 (Russell, 2011), giving Kadyrov a lot of power and responsibilities in the government. But new policies were introduced in 2006 in order to undermine Kadyrov by integrating his personal army in the official Russian Forces and maybe, abandon Chechenisation (Melvin, 2007). The power struggle of Kadyrov is quite complex as he benefited from a strong Chechen base built by his father, especially through the creation of his personal armed forces, loyal to the leader and to Moscow. On the other hand, Kadyrov was granted trust and power through Putin after the loss of his father. This combination of powers from Chechnya and Russia scared Putin's advisors that Kadyrov had accumulated too much of it resulting in Moscow giving him power and shortly after, take some back in order to avoid a new insurgency.

Eventually, after reaching the legal age, Ramzan Kadyrov becomes the president of Chechnya in February 2007, intensified the re-islamisation of the country and ran it as

his personal fiefdom (Russell, 2011). Nonetheless, Kadyrov proved his loyalty to Putin and his regime brought stability to Chechnya. The influence of Putinism appeared as authoritarianism at the national level bolstered authoritarianism in the regions (Ross, 2011). Referred to as Putin's little Saddam, Russia is using its soft power rather than its hard power in order to keep control over the powerful leader: economic aid, subsidies, development schemes to help sustain a pro-Moscow government (Cohen, 2014). Moscow retains its control over the Chechen economy, oil and gas for example and it supports and controls the reconstruction of Chechen society by building mosques (Matejova, 2013). Moscow needs the respect and influence of Chechen elites in order to keep his control over it and in the long-term, the success of Chechenisation may depend on Moscow's capabilities to retain control over Kadyrov and, Kadyrov's capabilities to curb extremism (Matejova, 2013).

The most striking influence of Putinism which can be found in the case of Chechnya, is Ramzan Kadyrov's attempts at copying his every move. In opposition to the Ukrainian case where there was a more confrontational relationship between the two leaders, the case of Chechnya relies on a neo-patrimonial relationship, as of father-son. Some even refer to Chechenisation as 'Ramzanization' of Chechnya (Dannreuther & March, 2008), reminding us of the concept of 'Putinism'. As much as Putinism would not exist without Putin, some describe that Chechenisation would not be feasible without Ramzan Kadyrov, creating the term Ramzanization and Putin has referred to it as buying them off with autonomy and money (Anderson, 2019). Russell (2011), explains that Ramzan Kadyrov has a potential to keep order in Chechnya due to three main characteristics: his authoritarian style, his charisma and his Chechen ethnicity. These three characteristics can be found in the above description of Putin and undeniably link the two heads of states with disturbingly similar leading styles. It is hard to deny that Putin is transferring his leading style onto a leader who has the capabilities to take his authoritarianism further. Putin has been very effective in finding a balance between a controlled independence while maintaining a certain sovereignty on border controls, the Kadyrovtsy and foreign relations. Rumor has it that Putin even let Kadyrov conduct real-estate business in Moscow: lucrative business ventures and criminality helps keeping Kadyrov's regime under Kremlin control while maintaining Moscow's domination over the region. Kadyrov in Chechnya, as Putin in Russia, is using a nationalist narrative that

uses national history and tradition in order to simulate a rebirth of national pride (Cohen , 2014).

However, Kadyrov did make it clear that he was more of a Putin's man rather than a President of Russia man. This was a worry of Moscow when Medvedev took office in 2008 and feared that Kadyrov had accumulated too much power under Putin and that he would be capable and willing to turn the pro-Moscow government around. Yet, these accusations were not funded and no indications showed that Kadyrov would do so. Although Kadyrov, later, had clearly voiced his support for Putin's actions in Crimea, he had never done so regarding Medvedev's actions in Georgia. Medvedev's insistence on the respect of human rights in Chechnya did not help his case (Russell, 2011). However, Medvedev gave sign to keep peace with Kadyrov, but the same worry remains: Does Chechnya's success result from the cooperation between Kadyrov and Putin? (Dannreuther & March , 2008). Kadyrov is clear: he wants money in exchange of his loyalty and Moscow will comply as he is key to the success of Chechenisation. Kadyrov represents a "medieval warlord and a Saudi playboy prince": he will go as far as he can in order to obtain what he wants (Russell, 2011). Nevertheless, the federal government put into place effective socio-political and politico-economic measures to work as checks and balances, keeping Kadyrov under Moscow's control. These measures are, as mentioned above, the control of oil revenues and the participation in the reconstruction of Chechen society.

The main point of this relationship is that it is based on loyalty and dependency. This relationship Putin hold with Kadyrov, is a very much different form of Putinism that was found with Viktor Yanukovych. Putinism in Chechnya, instead on being based on the formerly mentioned four criteria and fear such as in Ukraine, it is based on these similar criteria, and trust. Although Yanukovych feared Putin's authoritarianism, conservatism, populism and stability, and the use he would make of it in his foreign policies with Ukraine because he knew he could not equal it, Kadyrov embraces the same characteristics. Some even describe it as a "hostage relationship between Putin and Kadyrov in which both leaders are captive to the other" (Ratelle & Souleimanov , 2016, p. 1304). On a post of the social media platform *Telegram*, Ramzan Kadyrov dedicated a text to Putin in which he expressed his wish that "our President, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, will have a long-life rule. We will always faithfully serve him and solve all the tasks at the highest level", and goes as far as referring to him as "a

superhero” (Kadyrov, 2018). Additionally, Kadyrov appears to only rarely give interviews or only publishes very scripted profile where he appears on white horses and describes how amazing life is in Chechnya all while displaying the brand new (and empty) skyscrapers of the capital Grozny.

The loyalty between the two leaders has led to assuming that the ultimate goal of Putinism in Chechnya worked: Chechenisation is a success and Putin has won (Russell, 2011). Chechenisation has helped Putin to make the difference between ‘the good and the bad Chechens’; those that are loyal, and those trying to take advantage of Moscow. Not only Chechenisation is a success as it ensured the loyalty of Kadyrov to Putin, and therefore ensuring the pursuit of Putinism but, it also brought structure and legitimization to the political changes introduced by Putin; centralization of power and promotion of authoritarian state structures (Dannreuther & March, 2008). Putin had taken full responsibility in the Chechen campaign, in the appointment of Kadyrov as President, and the success of Chechenisation has been critical in Putin’s consolidation of power, and of Putinism. On the other hand, although Chechenisation brought Chechnya back into Russia’s constitutional framework, it also, as much as Putin’s rule, consolidated the personalistic regime of Kadyrov (Ratelle & Souleimanov, 2016).

After a couple years of pure devotion and loyalty to Putin, Kadyrov has been installing his own Islamic republic and laws, without respect to federal rules. In 2017, Putin and Kadyrov appeared on television in a common interview which brought up the formerly mentioned issue: Has Kadyrov accumulated too much power and, is he now turning his back on Moscow? During the interview, the topic of repression of homosexuals in Chechnya surfaced. Although Putin described it as “merely a defamation”, he also proceeded to give “Kadyrov a trademark death stare” (Arutunyan, 2017). The image viewers received from this interview was: Putin has no leverage over Kadyrov and Russian laws do not apply in Chechnya. Moreover, in the past couple years, accusation against Chechnya and its persecution of homosexuals has majorly increased but is very hard to prove or investigate, under Russian law.

Therefore, there are two outcomes possible as to which extent Putinism influenced Kadyrov: either Kadyrov has accumulated power in the shadow of Putin in order to gain his trust and in the future, acts as he wishes without consequences, therefore diminishing the influence of Putinism and that of Moscow. The other possible outcome is that, Putin has managed to build a leader like him and through him, pursue

certain policies that he would not be able to conduct himself in Russia, making Kadyrov his puppet. In the frame of this research, the outcome is that, Putinism has so massively influenced Kadyrov that the latter built a leading style similar to that of Putin. In 2019, Putin awarded “Hero of Russia” to Ramzan Kadyrov for his personal involvement in fighting insurgents (Putin, 2019). In recent news, Kadyrov has been accused of masterminding a murder plot against a Georgian TV host who insulted Putin, displaying that strong bond once again (2020). As mentioned before, Kadyrov has developed similar characteristics to Putinism: his authoritarian style, his charisma and his Chechen ethnicity (Matejova, 2013). Nonetheless, Kadyrov does not have the same mediatic coverage as Putin and therefore, has more room to lead his policies without being constantly judged by the public eye. That privacy has allowed Kadyrov to conduct illegal actions, such as the repression of minorities and to protect Putin by taking the blame. As a result of this research, and after analysis of certain interviews and videos that cannot be portrayed in this thesis, Kadyrov takes the blame when he does appear in public with Putin in order to cover that Putin supports his policies. The conclusion of this chapter is consequently that Kadyrov has been extremely influenced by Putinism as he displays the same leadership style and will do whatever it takes to please the president of the Russian Federation. Kadyrov is an extension of Putin himself in the North Caucasus and rules over an ever more authoritarian state where repression, torture and despotism roams free.

6- Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to assess the extent to which Putinism had influenced the policies of Viktor Yanukovich and Ramzan Kadyrov. In order to answer this question, an in-depth analysis was conducted: a literature review which presents the existing academic literature around Putinism, its different angles, characteristics as well as varying opinions as to what its process and goals are. Next, was issued a research design which aimed at explaining the research process of this thesis through its case selection, data collection, analysis method and last but not least, the limitations of the research. Moving on, two chapters of analysis: Ukraine and Chechnya. Both these chapters present a chronological timeline of events that are key to the understanding of influence of

Putinism on the policy of these countries. Lastly, this conclusion will touch upon all the above-mentioned chapters to summarize them, highlight the key findings and overall, conclude this thesis.

The thesis revolves around Putinism, a concept that I have defined as a combination of an autocratic, conservative, populist and stable leading style that has forged the assertive foreign policies of the Russian Federation, under Vladimir Putin (as President and Prime Minister) and its rejection of the unipolar model which decreased the prestige and influence of Moscow. It was very hard to create a full definition that would embody all the characteristics of Putin and the manner in which it influenced other leaders. Although the literature on Putinism is rather broad, every author presents a short version of the concept to either give it a positive or negative connotation, but never a combination. Therefore, when presenting the concept in this thesis, I deemed important to englobe all facades and although Putinism is mostly seen as negative, it is essential to show what the Russian voters took away from Putin's policies.

Authoritarianism is presented as the first characteristic of Putinism as it is the one that is the most found in the literature and also, because it is the image the public (national and international) has of him. Putin rules Russia as an illiberal democracy and a one-man rule. Nonetheless, Putin represents the opposition of the old regime which granted him massive popular support, and as seen in the polls, Russian citizens are more focused on the stabilization of the country rather than democracy. Secondly, conservatism was introduced as a key characteristic of Putinism. Despite the lack of modernism in the field of human rights (women, LGBTQ+), Putin leading style is very much focused on Russia's historical roots and restoring the Russian prestige such as during the Empire. However, the main point of the argument is that, Russians are attached to strong leaders as it is what they know. It is a conservative leading style in the sense that Russia has cultural predispositions towards strong personalized leaderships.

The third characteristic to be introduced is populism. This point is where there were the most contradictions in the literature and therefore, the hardest characteristic to describe. Some authors described Putin as a populist because of his wide reach of popular support whereas other authors claimed that it was due to the fact that Putin was never afraid of losing support, despite unpopular policies. What is summed up is that, Putin's popularity, therefore populism, is driven by the masses that were not allowed to emerge before 1991-93 and which are now coming to life in Russian society.

Putin is their leader and most importantly, leader of the opposition to the old regime. Lastly, stability is the final characteristic to be touched upon. Russia has had a very instable political past, torn between an Empire, a revolution and the fall of the USSR, Putin has aimed at bringing a status quo for Russians. Putin has become the President of hope in his attempt to eradicate poverty, stabilize the country and modernize it through logical reforming. Overall, Putinism was not an easy concept to work with due to the many interpretations there are of it and the very strong and sometimes biased opinions there are about Putin in general. However, once the working definition was established, it was really helpful to guide the research, in the chapters on Ukraine and Chechnya.

The chapter on Ukraine aims at showing the influence Putinism had on the policies of Viktor Yanukovich, president of Ukraine between 2010 and 2014. The beginning of the chapter however, starts in 2000, Putin's accession to power. It is important to mention as one of Putin's most valued policy is to make alliances with the west and bring back stability. Putin's view of stability is also to re-establish strong links with its former Soviet Republics to develop their economies and of course, for Russia to strengthen its international authority. Putin's new policies are described as assertive and are taken up by Medvedev when he takes power in 2008, continuing Putinism after Putin. Under Medvedev, Russia opens itself to the world and he attempts at modernizing the country through trade with the EU. Russian negotiations with the EU become very strategic as Ukraine was laying in the middle. After the Orange Revolution, Ukraine's will for democratic institutions and the rule of law pushes it to engage with the EU. However, Yanukovich is elected president of Ukraine in 2010 and set the clocks back on the progress that had been made in the country. It is very noticeable from the beginning of Yanukovich's term that he is biased by Russia when he directly renews the basing rights of the Russian black sea fleet in Sevastopol or when he engages with advantageous gas contracts, to please Putin.

However, the EU is a serious competitor when Putin comes back to power in 2012, he therefore accelerates measures in order to keep Ukraine under its influence. The EU offers Ukraine to finance its progress towards democracy as well as future advantages with the EU such as a visa-free agreement. On the other hand, Russia threatens Ukraine that if it makes deals with the EU, Russia will build gas pipelines that bypass Ukraine. Things take a new turn when the Tymoshenko trial starts. The EU gives an ultimatum to Ukraine: either the trial is conducted fairly to European standards, or

we cancel the association agreement. This gives Russia the chance to give Ukraine new options as well: join a customs union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan which is not compatible with the European Association Agreement. Instead of helping Ukraine make a move either eastward or westward, it gives it bargaining power to ramp up its demands to the EU. This is where the influence of Putinism is the most observable in the case of Ukraine. Russia could not let go of the idea that it had to control Ukraine and that letting the latter democratically improve itself in partnership with the EU was a sign of weakness. Although the EU could have cancelled that Association Agreement when the trial went ahead (unfairly) but Russia's offer gave them no choice but to pursue Ukraine. Eventually, Yanukovich is the one to cancel the agreement after meeting with Putin. Putin made use of his multiple characteristics (authoritarian, conservative, populist and stable) in order to build assertive foreign policies and manipulate Yanukovich to his advantage. Authoritarian as he used his power and charisma to scare Yanukovich by using a stick and a carrot with him. Conservative as the overall objective is to keep control over Ukraine, traditionally attached to Russia. Populist as he used national support and ethnically Russian Ukrainians to justify the ends. Lastly, stable as Putin aims at bringing back what was familiar to Russians: a strong country with a strong influence on its neighboring countries.

Chechnya on the other hand, has had a very different track record with Putin nonetheless, the chapter aimed at analyzing the same thing as the latter: the influence of Putinism on the policies of its leader. It was firstly important to set out a background of Russo-Chechen history which is a gladiatorial one as the two countries fought several wars against each other. In 1996, Russia lost against the Chechen insurgency and led Boris Yeltsin, Russian president, to sign an independence agreement. A new war breaks out in 1999 in Russia's attempt to counter-terrorism in the North Caucasus.

Putin arrived to power in December 1999 after Yeltsin resigns and Putin has to run for official elections in early 2000. His objectives: reshape the federal government and end the Chechen war. In order to achieve peace, Putin started his policy of Chechenisation which means, to pick a pro-Moscow Chechen leader who will nullify the separatist threat. Akhmad Kadyrov, a former insurgent, is therefore appointed interim head of government and builds a strong relationship with Moscow, especially with Putin. He created his own special forces, the Kadyrovtsy, in order to turn as many insurgents as possible. However, Akhmad Kadyrov is assassinated in 2004 by an Islamist Chechen

rebel. It is at that moment that Putin took Ramzan Kadyrov under his wing. Eventually, the latter became president of Chechnya in 2007, still under the scope of Chechenisation.

Ramzan Kadyrov re-intensified the Islamisation of the republic and ruled it as his personal fiefdom. The Chechen leader proves his loyalty to Putin and his regime stabilizes the country. Kadyrov is actually so loyal to Putin that he attempts at copying his leading style. He makes use of his authoritarianism, charisma and Chechen ethnicity to rule, much similar to Putinism in the Russian Federation. Overall, Kadyrov's fan attitude towards Putin had led to think that Chechenisation and Putinism has won. Kadyrov has been extremely influenced by Putinism as he displays the same leadership style and will do whatever it takes to please the president of the Russian Federation. Kadyrov is an extension of Putin himself in the North Caucasus and rules over an ever more authoritarian state where repression, torture and despotism roams free.

Overall, Ukraine and Chechnya were two cases that were very interesting to compare. As mentioned in the research design, these two cases represent a most different systems design. It means that both cases only share a certain political outcome (loss of influence to Russia) and one explanatory factor (Putinism). Even though both countries went through very different processes, both Ukraine and Chechnya have undergone massive influence of Putinism: Putin's authoritarianism, conservatism, populism and stability that helped him build assertive foreign policies that have influenced the policy-making decision of Yanukovich and Kadyrov. On one hand, Yanukovich in Ukraine has mostly appeared to be in a submissive position towards Putinism. Yanukovich feared Putin and the characteristics that help him build his political persona as he cannot equal it and cannot afford to go against it. Putinism has managed to interfere between Ukraine and the EU as it was losing its sphere of influence. Putin's creation of a customs union was a very strategic policy to make at that point in time. As the EU gives an ultimatum to Ukraine to become more democratic, Russia offers an alternative that would bring economic benefits to the country without having to become more democratic. Even though Ukraine had some bargaining power between the EU and Russia, Putinism manipulated Yanukovich's decision in such a way that it ended up without an association agreement with the EU and without being part of the Eurasian customs union.

On the other hand, the relationship between Russia and Chechnya can be described as father-son like. The main difference in comparison to Ukraine is that

Kadyrov had a leverage on Putin the entire time: he can turn the insurgents back against Moscow. Therefore, instead of using a carrot and stick policy like he did with Yanukovych, Putin gifted Kadyrov with more trust, more admiration, more money, and more assets to play with in Moscow. Moreover, Putin's and Kadyrov's relationship is a strategic policy-making tool. Putin is constantly in the public eye whereas Kadyrov enjoys quite some mediatic freedom which allows him to maneuver illegal actions, in peace. That privacy has allowed Kadyrov to conduct illegal actions, such as the repression of minorities and to protect Putin by taking the blame. Kadyrov has been extremely influenced by Putinism as he imitates the leadership style of the Russian leader. Kadyrov is a puppet and ally of Putin who runs his Islamic fiefdom as he pleases. Although Putin needed to scare Yanukovych to obtain what he wanted, Kadyrov only needed to be bought.

It is important to highlight that both these republics would be very different today without the input of Putinism. The non-signing of the association agreement with the EU, triggered by Putinism in Ukraine, led the Euromaidan Revolution: a popular movement of pro-Europe Ukrainians. The Revolution engendered Yanukovych to resign and flee to Russia. Putinism won when Russian forces walked into Crimea and annexed the Ukrainian region until it led a referendum to make it Russian territory again. In the case of Chechnya, Putin taking Ramzan Kadyrov under his wing saved Chechnya and Russia from suffering any longer from the insurgency and terrorist attacks. Ramzan Kadyrov being a former warlord, could have led his forces against Moscow and the North-Caucasus could be still fighting a war which destroys both countries' economies and soldiers.

As mentioned above, there are limitations to this conclusion. Putinism is a very broad concept that has surfaced a lot in academic debates over the last two decades. Putinism is such a broad concept that there are many interpretations available to it. Therefore, the outcome of this research may be altered if a different definition of Putinism is used. I do believe that the working definition of Putinism in this thesis is the most complete one available as it has borrowed ideas and concepts from all sides of the academic debate. Moreover, this topic remains relevant and deserved to be improved and reviewed as time go by. In June 2020, Vladimir Putin announced a referendum to be held from June 25 to July 1st 2020 to vote constitutional changes for Putin to be able to run as president again, after his current term. If the Russian people let it go through,

Putinism and its influence on other heads of state will be a relevant topic at least until 2036.

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8- Annexes

Annex 1 (2016)

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (*multiple answers*)

	Dec.99	Dec.15
Stabilization of the country's political and economic situation	50	53
Social protection	34	51
On-time payment of wages and pensions	48	51
Job security	47	48
Personal safety	41	45
Strengthening order in the country	52	34
War on crime	56	26
Access to education	19	16
Protection of personal property	14	15
Freedom of speech, religion, movement, association, etc.	11	9
Continuation of reform	8	7
Democracy	8	7
Freedom of entrepreneurship	7	7
Other	1	2
It is difficult to say	1	3

Annex 2 (2015)

IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH IS CURRENTLY MORE IMPORTANT FOR RUSSIA: ORDER OR DEMOCRACY?

	Feb. 98	Nov. 99	Feb. 00	Apr. 00	Jun. 01	Dec. 04	Dec. 05	Nov. 07	Dec. 09	Dec. 10	Mar. 15
Order – even if achieving this means that some democratic principles are violated and personal freedoms are limited	71	77	72	81	75	75	69	68	59	56	61
Democracy – even if following democratic principles sometimes means granting freedom to destructive and criminal elements	14	14	13	9	8	13	18	18	18	23	21
It is difficult to say	16	8	15	10	17	11	13	15	22	21	18

Annex 3 (2017)

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT VLADIMIR PUTIN? (*open question: respondents named characteristics THEMSELVES and could name more than one*)**

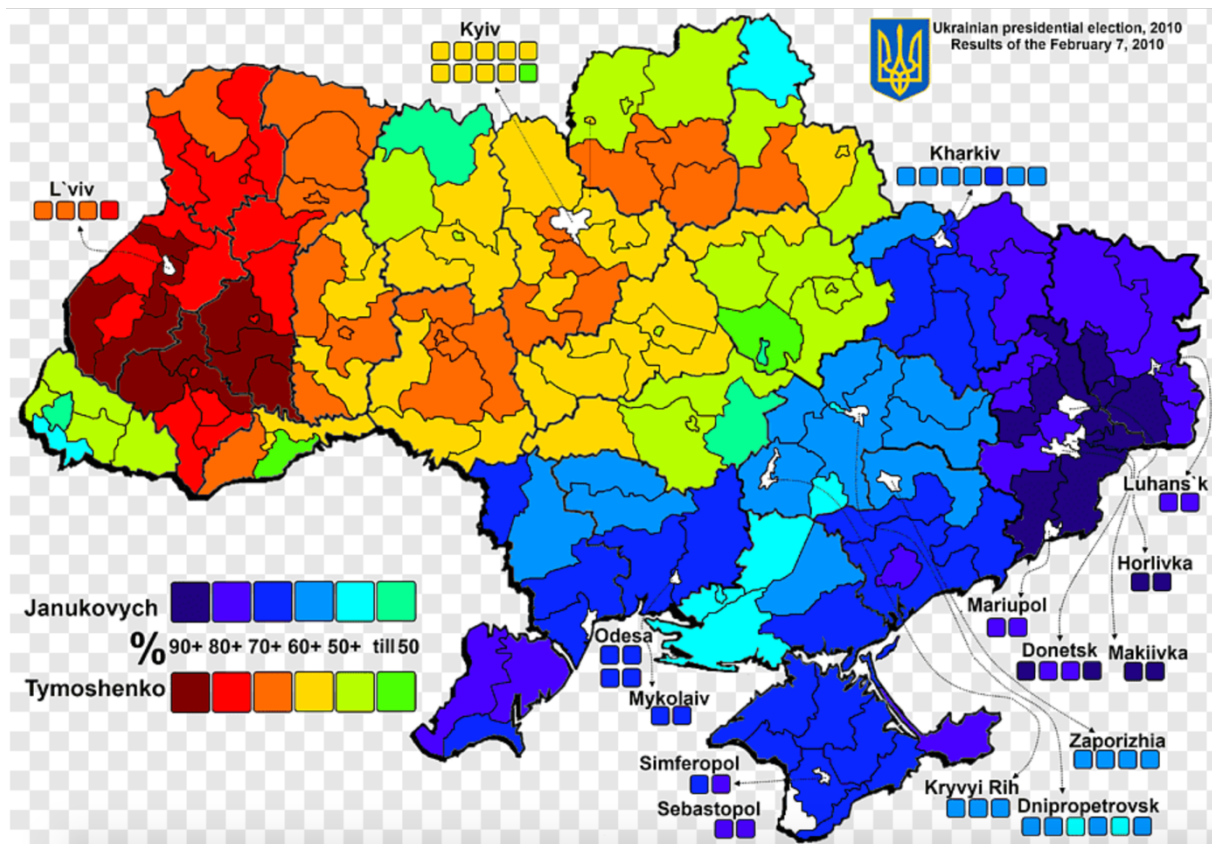
	Oct. 17
Decisive, manly, firm, strong-willed, strong, calm, brave, clear-cut, self-confident, a real man	19
Foreign policy, defending against the West, respected around the world, doesn't let others push him around, is supported by the military, maintains a high status	18
Experienced politician, manager, strong leader, a professional, competent	16
Smart, educated, intelligent, cultured	15
Charming, well-spoken, sense of humor	9
Respectable, just, honest, conscientious	7
Active, able to work, energetic, businesslike, hardworking, industrious, busy, works to the point of exhaustion	7
Visionary, strategist, goal-oriented	7
Physical appearance, good-looking, doesn't drink, athletic, leads a healthy life	6
Maintained stability, improved the economy, our lives have improved while he has been here, pensions are paid on time	5
Responsible, authoritative, gets to the point, reliable	5
Looks out for the Russian people, supports the country and its people, does everything for the people	5
Open, democratic, communicates with people	4
Patriot, loves Russia	4
Consistent, keeps his promises, a man of his word	3
Returned Crimea to Russia	2
Other	1
Fights corruption	1
I don't like anything about him	8
I like everything about him	3
It is difficult to say	13

Annex 4 (2016)

WHAT KIND OF DEMOCRACY DOES RUSSIA NEED?

	Oct.11	Aug.13	Sept.14	Nov.15
That of developed European countries, the United States	19	26	13	16
That which existed in the Soviet Union	14	17	16	19
A completely special kind that is appropriate to Russia's national traditions and unique characteristics	49	34	55	46
Russia does not need democracy	7	8	5	5
It is difficult to say	11	16	11	15

Annex 5 (2010)



Annex 6 (2020)

Approval	Dec., 2019	Jan., 2020	Feb., 2020	Mar., 2020
Putin V.V.	29.8	30.6	29.0	28.3
Shoygu S.K.	13.2	16.3	15.5	13.3
Lavrov S.V.	10.6	14.3	14.2	12.1
Ghirinovskiy V.V.	9.6	8.3	8.2	8.0
Mishustin M.V.			5.0	7.9
Zyuganov G.A.	5.3	4.4	4.4	4.4
Medvedev D.A.	6.9	6.1	3.6	3.0
Grudinin P.N.	3.5	3.0	2.8	2.9
Sobyanin S.S.				2.4
Navalnyy A.A.	1.9	1.4	1.6	1.7
Mironov S.M.	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.5