

## Prologue

-within a discussion of post-Cold War trends, introduces the concepts of *the politics of inevitability* and *the politics of eternity*

-during the Cold War there were competing versions of *the politics of inevitability*: “a sense that the future is just more of the present, that the laws of progress are known, that there are no alternatives, and therefore nothing really to be done” (American version history brought the market leading to democracy, which led to happiness; European version history produced the nation, which brought about integration and prosperity; the Soviet Union saw nature producing technology, which led to social change and revolution, ending in utopia)

-with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US and Europe took the lesson to be that their version of inevitability was true but the failures of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century showed this not to be the case and gave rise to *the politics of eternity*

-following section is directly from the book:

The collapse of the politics of inevitability ushers in another experience of time: *the politics of eternity*. Whereas inevitability promises a better future for everyone, eternity places one nation at the center of a cyclical story of victimhood. Time is no longer a line into the future, but a circle that endlessly returns the same threats from the past. Within inevitability, no one is responsible because we all know that the details will sort themselves out for the better; within eternity, no one is responsible because we all know that the enemy is coming no matter what we do. Eternity politicians spread the conviction that government cannot aid society as a whole, but can only guard against threats. Progress gives way to doom.

In power, eternity politicians manufacture crisis and manipulate the resultant emotion. To distract from their inability or unwillingness to reform, eternity politicians instruct their citizens to experience elation and outrage at short intervals, drowning the future in the present. In foreign policy, eternity politicians belittle and undo the achievements of countries that might seem like models to their own citizens. Using technology to transmit political fiction, both at home and abroad, eternity politicians deny truth and seek to reduce life to spectacle and feeling.

Perhaps more was happening in the 2010s than we grasped. Perhaps the tumbling succession of moments between the Smolensk crash and the Trump presidency was an era of transformation that we failed to experience as such. Perhaps we are slipping from one sense of time to another because we do not see how history makes us, and how we make history.

Inevitability and eternity translate facts into narratives. Those swayed by inevitability see every fact as a blip that does not alter the overall story of progress; those who shift to eternity classify every new event as just one more instance of a timeless threat. Each masquerades as history; each does away with history. Inevitability politicians teach that the specifics of the past are irrelevant, since anything that happens is just grist for the mill of progress. Eternity politicians leap from one moment to another, over decades or centuries, to build a myth of innocence and danger. They imagine cycles of threat in the past, creating an imagined pattern that they realize in the present by producing artificial crises and daily drama.

Inevitability and eternity have specific propaganda styles. Inevitability politicians spin facts into a web of well-being. Eternity politicians suppress facts in order to dismiss the reality that people are freer and richer in other countries, and the idea that reforms could be formulated on the basis of knowledge. In the 2010s, much of what was happening was the deliberate creation of political fiction, out-sized stories and medium-sized lies that commanded attention and colonized the space needed for contemplation. Yet whatever impression propaganda makes at the time, it is not history’s final verdict. There is a difference between memory, the impressions we are given; and history, the connections that we work to make—if we wish.

-says that this book is an attempt “win back the present for historical time, and thus to win back historical time for politics”

-going to do so by examining one set of interconnected events that centre around Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014, which should have been a reality test for the European Union and the US but most people chose to believe Russia’s propaganda, encouraging Russia to exploit further

What has already happened in Russia is what might happen in America and Europe: the stabilization of massive inequality, the displacement of policy by propaganda, the shift from the politics of inevitability to

the politics of eternity. Russian leaders could invite Europeans and Americans to eternity because Russia got there first. They understood American and European weaknesses, which they had first seen and exploited at home.

For many Europeans and Americans, events in the 2010s—the rise of antidemocratic politics, the Russian turn against Europe and invasion of Ukraine, the Brexit referendum, the Trump election—came as a surprise. Americans tend to react to surprise in two ways: either by imagining that the unexpected event is not really happening, or by claiming that it is totally new and hence not amenable to historical understanding. Either all will somehow be well, or all is so ill that nothing can be done. The first response is a defense mechanism of the politics of inevitability. The second is the creaking sound that inevitability makes just before it breaks and gives way to eternity. The politics of inevitability first erodes civic responsibility, and then collapses into the politics of eternity when it meets a serious challenge. Americans reacted in these ways when Russia's candidate became president of the United States.

-points out that we have moved from things flowing from the West to the East to the West taking on the trends happening in Russia, including politics of spectacle and creation and cry of fake news to discredit journalism as a whole

-“Russia in the 2010s was a kleptocratic regime that sought to export the politics of eternity: to demolish factuality, to preserve inequality, and to accelerate similar tendencies in Europe and the United States. This is well seen from Ukraine, where Russia fought a regular war while it amplified campaigns to undo the European Union and the United States. The advisor of the first pro-Russian American presidential candidate had been the advisor of the last pro-Russian Ukrainian president. Russian tactics that failed in Ukraine succeeded in the United States. Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs hid their money in a way that sustained the career of an American presidential candidate. This is all one history, the history of our moment and our choices.”

-the book's chapters are organized around a particular event and a particular year of importance within the 2010s: the return of totalitarian thought (2011); the collapse of democratic politics in Russia (2012); the Russian assault upon the European Union (2013); the revolution in Ukraine and the subsequent Russian invasion (2014); the spread of political fiction in Russia, Europe, and America (2015); and the election and presidency of Donald Trump (2016–)

By suggesting that political foundations cannot really change, the politics of inevitability spread uncertainty as to what those foundations really are. If we think the future is an automatic extension of good political order, we need not ask what that order is, why it is good, how it is sustained, and how it might be improved. History is and must be political thought, in the sense that it opens an aperture between inevitability and eternity, preventing us from drifting from the one to the other, helping us see the moment when we might make a difference.

As we emerge from inevitability and contend with eternity, a history of disintegration can be a guide to repair. Erosion reveals what resists, what can be reinforced, what can be reconstructed, and what must be reconceived. Because understanding is empowerment, this book's chapter titles are framed as alternatives: Individualism or Totalitarianism; Succession or Failure; Integration or Empire; Novelty or Eternity; Truth or Lies; Equality or Oligarchy. Thus individuality, endurance, cooperation, novelty, honesty, and justice figure as political virtues. These qualities are not mere platitudes or preferences, but facts of history, no less than material forces might be. Virtues are inseparable from the institutions they inspire and nourish.

An institution might cultivate certain ideas of the good, and it also depends upon them. If institutions are to flourish, they need virtues; if virtues are to be cultivated, they need institutions. The moral question of what is good and evil in public life can never be separated from the historical investigation of structure. It is the politics of inevitability and eternity that make virtues seem irrelevant or even laughable: inevitability by promising that the good is what already exists and must predictably expand, eternity by assuring that the evil is always external and that we are forever its innocent victims.

If we wish to have a better account of good and evil, we will have to resuscitate history.

## Chapter One: Individualism or Totalitarianism (2011)

- discusses the revival and popularity of the writings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin within Putin's government
- Ilyin argued that the purest existence was found within God and the details of the world of man were a corruption brought about by our corporeal desires, that the Russian state was a part of God that remained unblemished and was always under attack from the forces of man trying to mar its purity
- he saw all politics as defense against enemies and predicted that a strong redeemer will pull Russia from the mire, lead as dictator while maintaining political parties only to help ritualize the elections that the human ego in its corrupted state of individualism still has a sense of needing
- important to protect this leader is that society operates as an oligarchy, rule by the wealthy few, and the middle class through which people can rise and fall be crushed at the bottom below everyone else so that social mobility is excluded, and inequality is seen as a righteous expression of the divine
- key to this is understanding that the weakness of the state to change things for the general populace is seen as a mirror of the divine's relationship to the flawed world of man
- “Rather than governing, the leader produces crisis and spectacle. Law ceases to signify neutral norms that allow social advance, and comes to mean subordination to the status quo: the right to watch, the duty to be entertained.”
- it is the duty of the masses to suppress individual reason in favour of national submission since the leader is the reflection of the pure divine and they are just cells in a greater organism, therefore their social immobility is helping the great body move as it needs to
- Ilyin explicitly saw Ukraine as a natural part of the Russian body and any attempt of it not being such as just a corruption from the divine
- “In the 2010s, Ilyin's ideas served post-Soviet billionaires, and post-Soviet billionaires served them. Putin and his friends and allies accumulated vast wealth beyond the law, and then remade the state to preserve their own gains. Having achieved this, Russian leaders had to define politics as being rather than doing. An ideology such as Ilyin's purports to explain why certain men have wealth and power in terms other than greed and ambition. What robber would not prefer to be called a redeemer?”
- Ilyin came out of a Hegelian style of trying to resolve the difference between what is and what should be that was familiar to Russians during the Soviet era (although Ilyin opposed the Soviet communist philosophy as a distraction from the divine, siding instead with fascist philosophies)
- Russians were also familiar from the Soviet era the trend of a small group dictating the policies for the whole, saying that each person held the position they did to benefit the greater cause, and the idea that the government was protecting the last beacon of hope for humanity
- “Soviet communism was a politics of inevitability that yielded to a politics of eternity.”
- the last decades of Soviet communism (turning from the idea of Russia as a beacon for the world to the image of Russia as a victim of mindless hostility) prepared Russians for Ilyin's view of the world
- “The only thing that stands between inevitability and eternity is history, as considered and lived by individuals. If we grasp eternity and inevitability as ideas within our own history, we might see what has happened to us and what we might do about it. We understand totalitarianism as a threat to institutions, but also to selves.”
- we need to hold onto individualism and an understanding that politics involves responsible consideration and choice, working with other individuals who are also working on responsible

consideration and choice, seeing that there is nothing eternal or inevitable but that there is “a constant selection among many irreducible passions”

## **Chapter Two: Succession or Failure (2012)**

-the core of Ilyin’s (and other fascist philosophies) is a lack of concern for political endurance, the focus is instead on the eternal without worry about how the state apparatus could allow leadership by other individuals or the need to adapt to another set of circumstances

-“Functional states produce a sense of continuity for their citizens. If states sustain themselves, citizens can imagine change without fearing catastrophe. The mechanism that ensures that a state outlasts a leader is called the principle of succession. A common one is democracy. The meaning of each election is the promise of the next one. Since each citizen is fallible, democracy transforms cumulative mistakes into a collective belief in the future. History goes on.”

-after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Americans made the mistaken assumption that when the Russians took on private capitalism that the institutions and laws of market economy and democracy would naturally follow (inevitably)

-however, oligarchy took hold and no democratic form of succession ever happened in Russia: Yeltsin became the first president because he was the president of the Soviet Russian Republic and, when he started to decline in health, the Yeltsin oligarchs hand-picked Putin (via Operation Successor, which polled Russian citizens as to their favourite fictional hero and then the oligarchs modelled their choice after this character), installed him as prime minister, and manufactured a crisis (Second Chechen War) to fuel his popularity so that he was seen as the natural successor and a manipulated election made him President

-this was the beginning of “a new kind of politics, known as ‘managed democracy,’ which Russians would master and later export”

-this was the creation of Vladislav Surkov, a public relations specialist who pioneered the stage management of democracy and continued to use it to help Putin throughout his first two presidential terms

-as Russia did away with political positions such as elected regional governors, Surkov argued (citing Ilyin) that Russians did not know how to vote, that the non-democratic Russia was superior to other post-Soviet states in its sovereignty, and that none of the non-Russian nations of the old Soviet Union were capable of statehood

-Surkov said that Russia was taking on “sovereign democracy” instead of implementing true democratic forms of succession, saying that the chosen leader Putin was a redeemer, a representative of the people, a “democratic dictator”

-“Citing Ilyin, Surkov concluded that the Russian people should have as much freedom as they were ready to have. Of course, what Ilyin meant by ‘freedom’ was the freedom of the individual to submerge himself in a collectivity that subjugated itself to a leader.”

-when the Russian constitution required that Putin step down in 2008 after two 4-year terms, his selected successor took office and then the constitution was changed to extend successive Presidential terms to 6 years and to allow Putin to take the office again in 2012 and 2018

-Putin had maintained power relatively easily in the 2000s due to strong economic growth but the global financial collapse of 2008 led to stagnation in Russia and a majority of the people did not wish to vote for his party to remain in power and return him to the role of President

-when the vote and the entire electoral system was proven to be false, Putin admitted to it and insisted that Russia did not need a true one: “Killing the political future forced the political present to be eternal; making an eternity of the present required endless crisis and permanent threats.”

-“The politics of eternity requires and produces problems that are insoluble because they are fictional.” – in the 2000s the main focus was on Chechnya, after 2012, the fictional problem became the designs of the European Union and the United States to destroy Russia

-returning back to Brezhnev’s enemy ‘the decadent West,’ Putin took it one step further and said that it was ‘agents of global sexual decadence’ (homosexuals) who were threatening the Russian organism and that the spread of gay rights was a deliberate policy intended to turn Russians into a ‘herd’ easily manipulable by the global masters of capitalism, a global neoliberal conspiracy

-“Human sexuality is an inexhaustible raw material for the manufacture of anxiety. The attempt to place heterosexuality within Russia and homosexuality beyond was factually ludicrous, but the facts were beside the point. The purpose of the anti-gay campaign was to transform demands for democracy into a nebulous threat to Russian innocence: voting = West = sodomy. Russia had to be innocent, and all problems had to be the responsibility of others.”

-next he turned his attention to saying that the protestors were working for a foreign power that was under the leadership of a female: Hillary Clinton, claiming that she told the protestors what to do as well as funding them

-there was no evidence of interference from the West and they posed no threat, many European politicians supported Putin and Obama was relaxing NATO military presence in the Europe

-however, the fiction of this threat was needed to justify suppression of the protestors and to paint democracy as an immediate and permanent threat

-Putin sided closely with the Orthodox church and began to talk about the Soviet era as just another chapter in the circular pattern of Russia under attack attempting to defend itself (groups that worked to maintain historic perspective were labelled as ‘foreign agents’)

-in January 2012, Putin started to describe Russia as not a state but a spiritual condition that existed beyond and above nations, saying that its mission “is to unify and bind civilization” and the first step being to recognise the entirety of Russian civilization as naturally including Ukraine, saying that that they can never be divided and only through Russian civilization could Ukrainians understand who they truly were

-“When Putin threw down that gauntlet, in January 2012, no one in the West was paying attention. The issue in the headlines was that of Russian voters and their discontents; no one in Europe, America, or Ukraine was considering Russian-Ukrainian relations. And yet Putin, moving very quickly, had formulated a politics of eternity that transformed Russians’ protests against his fake elections into a European and American offensive against Russia in which Ukraine would be the field of battle.”

-Ukraine had been growing closer with Russia, with Russia and US strategist Paul Manafort’s help, Viktor Yanukovich had legitimately won the 2010 Ukrainian presidential election and began his term by offering Russia essentially everything that Ukraine could give, including basing rights for the Russian navy on the Crimean Peninsula until the year 2042 (making it impossible for Ukraine to join NATO for at least three decades)

-in 2012, when Putin started to spread his idea of Russian civilization that naturally included Ukraine, support for Yanukovich dropped and the seeds of revolution were planted

-“Asked by students of history to name a historical authority, Putin could only think of one name: Ivan Ilyin. Now, Ilyin was many things, but he was no historian. If Ilyin’s timeless regularities could replace historical time, if identity could replace policy, then the question of succession could perhaps be delayed. In his first address to the Russian parliament as president in 2012, Putin described his own place in the Russian timescape as the fulfillment of an eternal cycle: as the return of an ancient lord of Kyiv whom Russians call Vladimir. The politics of eternity requires points in the past to which the present can cycle, demonstrating the innocence of the country, the right to rule

of its leader, and the pointlessness of thinking about the future. Putin's first such point was the year 988, when his namesake, an early medieval warlord known in his time as Volodymyr or Valdemar, converted to Christianity. In Putin's myth of the past, Volodymyr/Valdemar was a Russian whose conversion linked forever the lands of today's Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine."

-the historic person Volodymyr had belonged to a clan of Vikings known as the Rus and they had worked their way south along the Dnipro River in order to sell slaves at southerly ports, making Kyiv their main trading post and eventually their capital (Kyivian Rus territory laying roughly over the area of present-day Ukraine and Belarus)

-goes through Volodymyr's life, death and the fighting over succession that took seventeen years and was complete only after ten of his sons were dead: pointing out that true history shows him as a lesson in the importance of a solid principle of succession

-"No doubt the Russian state can be maintained, for a time, by elective emergency and selective war. The very anxiety created by the lack of a succession principle can be projected abroad, creating real hostility and thus starting the whole process anew. In 2013, Russia began to seduce or bully its European neighbors into abandoning their own institutions and histories. If Russia could not become the West, let the West become Russia. If the flaws of American democracy could be exploited to elect a Russian client, then Putin could prove that the world outside is no better than Russia. Were the European Union or the United States to disintegrate during Putin's lifetime, he could cultivate an illusion of eternity."

### **Chapter Three: Integration or Empire (2013)**

-the independent nation-state is not a successful thing in European history: prior to WWI the continent consisted of empires in which citizens had economic advantage over subjects and when they attempted to build nation-states in the interwar period the leadership gave way to communists and fascists

-this taught the European nations that, without some larger structure, small political units expressing themselves as sovereign nation-states are untenable

-after WWII, they went the way of integration through the European Community, which became the European Union a few months after the Soviet Union ceased to exist, giving the previous communist states of eastern Europe a secure destination to aim for after their time in empire

-in the 1990s three principles of membership were established: market economies able to handle competition; democracy and human rights; and the administrative capacity to implement European laws and regulations

-by 2013, the EU had expanded to include eight post-communist states and three former Soviet republics, but it had not yet extended to territory that was a part of the original 1922 borders of the Soviet Union, but Ukraine was negotiating an association agreement with the EU that would most likely lead to membership

-Ukraine was the axis between the new Europe of integration and a revival of empire that Putin was putting forward in his call for a Eurasian Russian presence, the former based in economic equality while the latter on central power and colonial domains

-at the same time, people who did not understand the true history of Europe (having been taught a national history that said that the EU was the considered choice of a mythical wise nation-state rather than the necessary step coming out of empire) started to argue that they could make it without integration and Chinese and Russian investment as an alternative route

-Russia was the first European power to explicitly reject integration and did it to deny the possibility of sovereignty, prosperity, and democracy to others (prior to Ukraine they had done cyberattacks on Estonia and Georgia and a conventional assault on Georgia to dissuade their integration)

- the key issue for Russia was that its oligarchic system could not survive attempting to conform to the legal structure and demands that the EU set out
- Putin attempted to convince the EU to accept working with Russia without the need for reform but, when that didn't work, he set out to make Europe more Eurasian, creating a Eurasian Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan and proposing a Eurasian Union as an alternative to the EU, a group that would not require free elections, rule of law, or open market for its members
- addressing parliament in December 2011, Putin spoke of a coming catastrophe that would commence a new era of colonial resource wars, that Russia would have its "great Russian spaces" and due to their "passionarity" they would thrive in amidst global chaos
- the term "passionarity" was created in the 1960s/70s by a Soviet writer Lev Gumilev, who argued that great nations and empires arose from a burst of cosmic rays and had a life span of one thousand years and their special leaders were in possession of the "passionarity" that would draw vast regions together; he believed that it was Russia's era and argued that Eurasia was their natural land to rule, warning that the Jews of the West fed off of the burst of rays of others and would try to destroy Russia's destiny
- the Eurasia concepts that emerged in 2010s Russia was a mixture of Gumilev and a younger Russian fascist Alexander Dugin, who argued that the US had become a dangerous hotbed of abstract (Jewish) culture as well as that democracy was hollow, the middle class was evil, Russians needed to be ruled by a 'Man of Destiny,' America was malevolent, and Russia was innocent
- "Concepts from the three interflowing currents of Russian fascism—Ilyin's Christian totalitarianism, Gumilev's Eurasianism, and Dugin's "Eurasian" Nazism—appeared in Putin's discourse as he sought an exit from the dilemma he created for his country in 2012. Fascist ideas burst into the Russian public sphere during the Obama administration's attempt to 'reset' relations with the Russian Federation. The dramatic change in Russia's orientation bore no relation to any new unfriendly action from outside. Western enmity was not a matter of what a Western actor was *doing*, but what the West was portrayed as *being*."
- this shift to grand narratives about the way the world is allowed leaders to ignore facts about the success of the European Union and the failures of the Russian state
- highlights several quotes from the popular Izborsk Club (founded by one of Putin's allies) that put forth the argument for Russia's purity, the natural union between the "Red" (Soviets) and the "White" (Orthodox) under this new resurrection of the Russian empire, and the raising of arms to ensure that Russian sovereignty is maintained
- goes over more people in the Putin government that focused on these ideas, pointing out that it moved the focus from having a goal of prosperity to the defence of abstract values (Russian prosperity was in a dismal state, especially in comparison to the EU)
- the official Foreign Policy Concept of 2013 characterized the future as chaos and global competition and called for "the preservation and extension of a common cultural and civilizational heritage" and made clear that the process of supplanting the EU with Eurasia was to begin immediately, saying that if Ukraine wished to negotiate with the EU, it should accept Moscow as its intermediary
- "Because the EU is a consensual organization, it was vulnerable to campaigns that raised emotions. Because it was composed of democratic states, it could be weakened by political parties that advocated leaving the EU. Because the EU had never been meaningfully opposed, it never occurred to Europeans to ask whether debates on the internet were manipulated from outside with hostile intent. The Russian policy to destroy the EU took several corresponding forms: the recruitment of European leaders and parties to represent the Russian interest in European disintegration; the digital and televisual penetration of public discourse to sow distrust of the EU; the recruitment of

extreme nationalists and fascists for public promotion of Eurasia; and the endorsement of separatism of all kinds.”

-details Russian support in the form of finances and media/internet manipulations of Le Pen in France, Trump in the US, Farage in Britain, and Hofer in Austria

-much of the internet campaigns spearheaded in Russia were aimed at undermining confidence in the electoral system and mistrust in the national institutions as a whole

-“Four hundred and nineteen Twitter accounts that posted on Brexit were localized to Russia’s Internet Research Agency—later, every single one of them would also post on behalf of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. About a third of the discussion of Brexit on Twitter was generated by bots—and more than 90% of the bots tweeting political material were not located in the United Kingdom. Britons who considered their choices had no idea at the time that they were reading material disseminated by bots, nor that the bots were part of a Russian foreign policy to weaken their country.”

-in November 2013, Ukrainian president Yanukovich did not sign the association agreement with the EU but he also did not bring Ukraine into Eurasia, and, in February 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine

-“Because they failed to understand the stakes of the conflict in Ukraine, Europeans proved to be more vulnerable to Russian attack than Ukrainians. Because Ukrainians were aware that their own state was fragile, many had no trouble seeing the EU as a precondition for a future with law and prosperity. They saw Russia’s intervention as cause for a patriotic revolution, since they understood EU membership as a stage in the construction of a Ukrainian state. Other Europeans had forgotten this connection, and so experienced the political problem posed by Russia’s war in Ukraine as cultural difference. Europeans proved vulnerable to soporific Russian propaganda suggesting that Ukraine’s problems showed its distance from the European mainstream.”

-Putin was able to play on this lack of understanding of history by saying that Ukraine was not a wise nation-state, and since other European nations thought this was their base, they did not see the common predicament that they had with Ukraine

#### **Chapter Four: Novelty or Eternity (2014)**

-Putin repeatedly presented Russia and Ukraine as one people in 2013 and 2014

-“It is also possible to see in the thousand years since the baptism of Volodymyr/Valdemar of Kyiv a history rather than a story of eternity. To think historically is not to trade one national myth for another, to say that Ukraine rather than Russia is the inheritor of Rus, that Volodymyr/Valdemar was a Ukrainian and not a Russian. To make such a claim is merely to replace a Russian politics of eternity with a Ukrainian one. To think historically is to see how something like Ukraine might be possible, just as something like Russia might be possible. To think historically is to see the limits of structures, the spaces of indeterminacy, the possibilities for freedom.”

-there’s lot of history since Volodymyr that went into making Ukraine what it is today, including Mongol invasions, Lithuanian rule, Polish management, Ottoman and Cossack actions

-when Muscovy turned westward after long focusing on the east (it was originally founded by the Mongols), Kyiv had existed for about eight hundred years without a political connection to Moscow, through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, as a European metropolis

-part of Ukraine fell under Muscovy in 1667 due to a unification of Muscovy and the Cossacks, but it wasn’t until the end of the eighteenth century that the Russian Empire partitioned the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth out of existence, with the help of Prussia and the Habsburg monarchy

-when Muscovy took over the area, Kyiv became the intellectual centre of the empire and the seat of eastern Orthodoxy, up until the Russian defeat in the Crimean War and the Polish uprising



shortly after that, when Ukrainian culture was banned and institutions moved to Moscow (at this time, many Ukrainian intellectuals, writers and activists moved to Galicia, a section of Ukraine held by the more liberal Habsburgs and it is the children and grandchildren of these men that became Ukrainian national activists)

-Ukraine attempted to have its own nation-state after the Bolshevik revolution but it was not possible without the support from other European nations

-“Ukrainian history brings into focus a central question of modern European history: After empire, what? According to the fable of the wise nation, European nation-states learned a lesson from war and began to integrate. For this myth to make sense, nation-states must be imagined into periods when in fact they did not exist. The fundamental event of the middle of the European twentieth century has to be removed: the attempts by Europeans to establish empires within Europe itself. The crucial case is the failed German attempt to colonize Ukraine in 1941. The rich black earth of Ukraine was at the center of the two major European neoimperial projects of the twentieth century, the Soviet and then the Nazi. In this respect as well, Ukrainian history is hypertypical and therefore indispensable. No other land attracted as much colonial attention within Europe. This reveals the rule: European history turns on colonization and decolonization.”

-between Hitler’s attempt at colonization of Ukraine and Stalin’s colonization, some ten million Ukrainians were killed

-the Soviet leaders never denied that Ukraine was a nation, they believed that nations would achieve their full potential under Soviet rule, and then dissolve once communism was achieved

-in the summer of 1991, when Yeltsin took Russia out of the Soviet Union, a referendum showed that 92% of the inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine voted for independence

-goes through the rise of Yanukovich, including the coaching and remake of his image by American strategist Paul Manafort, who changed his politics to reflect a sort of “Southern strategy” that focused on politics of being rather than doing, emphasizing cultural differences as the focus

-when he got to power in 2010, he attempted to make over Ukraine to be like Russia’s oligarchy, but Ukrainians had already pushed for and won a right to fair democratic elections and were overwhelmingly seeing the EU as an instrument to support rule of law and their sovereignty

-when, in November 2013, Yanukovich declared that he was not going to sign the agreed upon association with the EU, thousands of Ukrainians protested in the Maidan (Independence Square) in Kyiv and attempts by riot police throughout November and December to clear the protestors just led to more people showing up

-on January 16, 2014, Yanukovich illegally passed legislation (that was copied from the Russian version from 2011/2) that criminalized the Maidan protests (saying that they were funded by foreign agents) and legalized his own use of force

-this legislation, as well as the shooting of protestors, brought out Ukrainian citizens that had previously not supported the protests, arriving in Kyiv in large numbers from all over the country

-the bloodshed made the continuation of Yanukovich in power untenable for Ukrainians, but it also caused the US to try to work out a way he could stay in power and form a new government and gave Russia an excuse to send in its army

-“For those who took part in the Maidan, their protest was about defending what was still thought to be possible: a decent future for their own country. The violence mattered to them as a marker of the intolerable.”

-the protestors fought the politics of eternity by finding new ways to organize themselves, bringing about four forms of politics: the civil society, the economy of gift, the voluntary welfare state, and the Maidan friendship

- the main goal of the protest was to protect the rule of the law and they worked on building a civil society within themselves that had no relationship to political parties, self-organization of politics in response to the dysfunction Ukrainian state
- the protests and their organization were maintained by gifts of cash, food, and other provisions and they turned the generosity of Ukrainian citizens into a spontaneous welfare state
- 88% of the hundreds of thousands of people who protested in Kyiv were from outside of the city, only 3% came as representatives of political parties and only 13% as members of nongovernmental organizations, 86% saying that they had made up their own minds to come, and the violence they faced created a bond between the various individuals, and they grew to trust each other as "Maidan friends" because they faced it together
- the protestors on the Maidan "were not thinking of the enduring problem of Russian political philosophy: how to generate a spirit of law in an autocratic system. And yet, by their actions on behalf of a vision of law, they were addressing the very problem" and setting themselves up as an example to how Russian citizens could do it too
- as soon as the protests started, the Russian media did the same tactic that they had done with their own protests of 2011/2, making it all about Russian national purity (Ukraine being a natural part of Russia) and being attacked by an insidious homosexual agenda
- when Yanukovich refused to sign the deal with the EU he also did not agree to join the Eurasian Union, saying that both Europe and Russia wanted Ukraine and each needed to pay him for it
- Russia obliged on December 17 with a package of \$15 billion in bond purchases and reduced prices for natural gas, given with the condition that Yanukovich clear out the protestors, for which Russia also sent twenty-seven of their people specialised in the suppression of protests
- when violence against the protestors increased the level of protest, Russia decided that Yanukovich was done and that they needed to invade Ukraine in order to protect Russian business interests as well as a supposedly oppressed Russian minority, at the same time as defining opponents of the Russian invasion as fascists, and characterizing the invasion as a civil war stoked by the West
- Yanukovich agreed to leave office on February 20 and on February 24 Russian military invaded Ukraine from their bases in the Crimea, annexing off that section for the Russian Federation and justifying the action by saying that the Ukrainian state had fallen and was no longer sovereign
- Putin presented the annexation of Crimea as a mystical personal transformation, an exultant passage into eternity, saying that Crimea had to be part of Russia because the leader of ancient Rus, Volodymyr, had been baptized there a thousand years before
- Russian politicians further put forward the argument that the annexation of Crimea meant the 'resurrection and rebirth' of Russia and the West bringing up international law to object was a matter of double standards: "This common Russian argument made of law not a general principle but a cultural artifact located among non-Russian peoples. Because Western states do not always follow every law, it ran, law had no validity. Russia, too, might violate laws; but since Russia did not accept the rule of law, this was not hypocritical. Since Russia was not hypocritical, it was innocent. If there are no standards, went the reasoning, then there are no double standards. If Europeans or Americans mention international law during a time of such Russian innocence as the invasion of Ukraine, this makes them a spiritual threat. And so references to international law only demonstrated Western perfidy."
- after Crimea, Russia worked to mimic the attack in other Ukrainian regions and launched cyberattacks against Ukrainian state institutions and companies as well as the institutions of the EU
- details the Russian fascist use of "schizofascist protocol" in which everyone who attacks their nation and its policies are to be labelled as fascists

-they also spread the argument that the Americans wanted a third world war because of high national debt and they had installed and were backing the Ukrainian Nazis who were resisting the Russian invasion

-“Putin defined Ukrainians who resisted Russian invasion as fascists. Speaking of the chaos that Russia had brought about by invading its neighbor, Putin claimed on March 18 that ‘nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and antisemites executed this coup. They continue to set the tone to this day.’ This claim had a certain schizofascist ring. Russian foreign policy in 2014 bore more than a passing resemblance to certain of the more notorious moments of the 1930s. The replacement of laws, borders, and states with innocence, righteousness, and great spaces was fascist geopolitics.”

-points out how fascists from all over Europe came to fight for Russia and were trained by the Russian army to carry out a sort of subversive warfare that they could use in their own homelands

-in April 2014, insinuations and individuals close to the Kremlin organized Russia’s fascist friends into a branch of the *Rodina* party called the “World National-Conservative Movement” and argued that “only a united far Right could save Europe from gay Satan” (in 2015 this group threw its support behind Trump)

-“The schizofascist lies displaced the events in Ukraine and the experiences of Ukrainians. Under the weight of all of the contradictory concepts and hallucinatory visions of spring 2014, who would see or remember the individual on the Maidan, with his or her facts and passions, his or her desire to be in history and make history?”

-“One can record that these people were not fascists or Nazis or members of a gay international conspiracy or Jewish international conspiracy or a gay Nazi Jewish international conspiracy, as Russian propaganda suggested to various target audiences. One can mark the fictions and contradictions. This is not enough. These utterances were not logical arguments or factual assessments, but a calculated effort to undo logic and factuality.”

-“The Maidan began as Ukrainian citizens sought to find a solution for Ukrainian problems. It ended with Ukrainians trying to remind Europeans and Americans that moments of high emotion require sober thought. Distant observers jumped at the shadows of the story, only to tumble into a void darker than ignorance. It was tempting, amidst the whirl of Russian accusations in 2014, to make some kind of compromise, as many Europeans and Americans did, and accept the Russian claim that the Maidan was a ‘right-wing coup.’”

-lays out how the Ukrainian revolution was not a right-wing coup

-the new government signed the association agreement with the EU in June 2014 and it went into force in September 2017, Ukrainian civil society had defended itself and the Ukrainian state persisted

-the Russian invasion of Ukraine coincided with a spike in popularity of the literature of the “accidental time traveller,” a Russian genre in which individuals, groups, weapons, and armies loop back and forth in time in order to correct the overall picture and outcome

-also at the same time, Russian law made it a criminal act to suggest that the Soviet Union had been anything but non-aggressive in its pact with Hitler’s Germany or to say that they had invaded Poland, occupied the Baltic States, or committed war crimes between 1939 and 1941

-for many Russians, the intervention in Ukraine echoed the remembered glory of the defense of the USSR from Nazi Germany in 1941

-“The war in Ukraine was not a contest of historical memories....The Russian war against Ukraine was something more profound: a campaign of eternity against novelty. Must any attempt at novelty be met with the cliché of force and the force of cliché? Or was it possible, along with the Ukrainians of the Maidan, to make something new?”

## Chapter Five: Truth or Lies (2015)

- “Russia arrived first at the politics of eternity. Kleptocracy made the political virtues of succession, integration, and novelty impossible, and so political fiction had to make them unthinkable.”
- “To end factuality is to begin eternity. If citizens doubt everything, they cannot see alternative models beyond Russia’s borders, cannot carry out sensible discussions about reform, and cannot trust one another enough to organize for political change. A plausible future requires a factual present.”
- it was put forward that if citizens can be kept uncertain by the regular manufacture of crisis, their emotions can be managed and directed
- Russia also put a great deal of money and effort toward media that was fed to European and American audiences, sowing doubt in the leaders of those nations
- “A modest affair in military terms, the Russian invasion of southern and then southeastern Ukraine involved the most sophisticated propaganda campaign in the history of warfare. The propaganda worked at two levels: first, as a direct assault on factuality, denying the obvious, even the war itself; second, as an unconditional proclamation of innocence, denying that Russia could be responsible for any wrong. No war was taking place, and it was thoroughly justified.”
- puts forward the idea that Putin was creating a system that might be called *implausible deniability*, by denying what everyone knows, he was creating unifying fictions at home and dilemmas in European and American newsrooms (points out that the older idea of *plausible deniability* was fashioned by the American strategist Lee Atwater in the 1980s who pointed out that you couldn’t openly attack people of colour any longer so you talk about things like forced busing and state rights so you can deny you were talking about blacks specifically)
- Putin’s outright refusal to admit that there were Russian soldiers on Ukrainian soil when there obviously were created dilemmas in European and American newsrooms that were in the habit of presenting both sides: “The adage that there are two sides to a story makes sense when those who represent each side accept the factuality of the world and interpret the same set of facts.”
- when Putin did say that he had invaded, he claimed innocence and said that it was a righteous rebellion of an oppressed people against an overpowering global conspiracy headed by the US
- discusses the failed attempts by Russia to lead coups in other areas of Ukraine in spring of 2014 and, as the Ukrainian army tried to drive Russians from areas that they occupied, the Russians drew back and left Ukrainian cities to be shelled by their own army, leading the people there to believe the Russian story that their army was a genocidal collective working against their interests
- in the summer of 2014 control of the conflict was handed over to a strategist who specialized in Russia’s form of “frozen conflict” in which they occupy small parts of a nearby country and then present their own occupation as an internal problem that prevents this country from having closer relations with the EU or NATO
- in July, Russians started shelling Ukrainian bases from Russian soil while all the while denying that it was happening
- the day after the shelling began, Russian media reported on an entirely fictional crucifixion of a three-year-old Russian boy by Ukrainian soldiers
- when Russian weapons shot down a civilian aircraft (MH17), they created several very implausible stories, all of which painted them as the victim and distracted from the real story
- in early August the Russian nationalist biker gang Night Wolves held a large theatrical ‘bike show’ in the Russian occupied Crimean region in which they graphically presented Russia as a pregnant virgin whose enemy was the giant black penis of Satan (Obama was president) whose orgasm would have “the black sperm of fascism splashed upon Kyiv, the mother of all Russian cities”

-“The cruci-fiction (July 10), the MH17 cacophony (July 17), and the ‘bike show’ (August 9) were only three examples of the televised propaganda to which Russians were exposed in the summer of 2014. This creative ignorance invited Russians into a sense of innocence. It is hard to know what effect all of this had on Russian citizens in general. It certainly persuaded men to travel to Ukraine to fight.”

-details the arrival of Russian troops, regular and volunteer, in Ukraine throughout August 2014 and how the Russians still denied the invasion, even inventing stories of how soldiers died when reporting it to their families

-social media posts show that Russian families mocked the denial of their soldiers’ presence in Ukraine while at the same time believing that the mission was to defeat “killers of children”

-details the various cyber-attacks from Russia on Ukraine throughout 2015, including attacks on media companies, the railway system, the power grid, seaport authority, treasury, and various ministries

-“The underlying logic of the Russian war against Ukraine, Europe, and America was *strategic relativism*. Given native kleptocracy and dependence on commodity exports, Russian state power could not increase, nor Russian technology close the gap with Europe or America. Relative power could however be gained by weakening others: by invading Ukraine to keep it away from Europe, for example. The concurrent information war was meant to weaken the EU and the United States. What Europeans and Americans had that Russians lacked were integrated trade zones and predictable politics with respected principles of succession. If these could be damaged, Russian losses would be acceptable since enemy losses would be still greater. In strategic relativism, the point is to transform international politics into a negative-sum game, where a skillful player will lose less than everyone else.”

-discusses the results of the Ukrainian invasion: that it served to unite Ukrainian citizens against Russia and it made Russia dependent on China as economic partner without forcing the Chinese to do anything in return

-discusses the Russian use within Europe of cyberattacks as well as propaganda that fuelled fear of Muslims during the increase in refugees, working to support far right candidates, while at the same time bombing civilian areas of Syria that increased the flow of refugees

-“Russia supplied not just the refugees themselves, but also the image of them as terrorists and rapists.” (recounts the Russian falsified and widely-publicised story of the German teen who said she had been raped by a gang of refugees)

-goes through some details of the rise of a pro-Russian government in Poland, which happened through falsification and propaganda aided by Putin’s group

-“If Russians believed that all leaders and all media lied, then they would learn to dismiss Western models for themselves. If the citizens of Europe and the United States joined in the general distrust of one another and their institutions, then Europe and America could be expected to disintegrate. Journalists cannot function amidst total skepticism; civil societies wane when citizens cannot count on one another...”

-cites several examples of American and British politicians and journalists supporting Russian invasion of Ukraine while using Russian media sources as evidence to back their position (even including arguments that the US was behind it all) while at the same time Russian propaganda accounts and bots were flooding social media with the same message (normalizing it)

-“When a presidential candidate from a fictional world appeared in the United States, Ukrainians and Russians noted the familiar patterns, but few on the American Right or the American Left listened. When Moscow brought to bear in the United States the same techniques used in Ukraine, few on the American Right or the American Left noticed. And so the United States was defeated,

Trump was elected, the Republican Party was blinded, and the Democratic Party was shocked. Russians supplied the political fiction, but Americans were asking for it.”

### **Chapter Six: Equality or Oligarchy (2016)**

-Putin’s “grandest campaign” was a cyberwar to destroy the US through the election of Trump, someone the Russians openly stated would “lead the Western locomotive right off the rails” as well as “trample American democracy and damage if not destroy America as a pillar of stability” (both statements made by Russian foreign ministers)

-“The politics of eternity are full of phantasmagoria, of bots and trolls, ghosts and zombies, dead souls and other unreal beings who escort a fictional character to power. ‘Donald Trump, successful businessman’ was not a person. It was a fantasy born in the strange climate where the downdraft of the American politics of eternity, its unfettered capitalism, met the rising hydrocarbon fumes of the Russian politics of eternity, its kleptocratic authoritarianism. Russians raised ‘a creature of their own’ to the presidency of the United States. Trump was the payload of a cyberweapon, meant to create chaos and weakness, as in fact he has done.”

-this was done in three stages: (1) Russians transformed a failed real estate developer into a recipient of their money and capital, (2) then he was made to portray a successful businessman on American television, (3) then Russians intervened with purpose and success to have him win the 2016 presidential election

-the courting of Trump by Russian ‘businessmen’ began in the 1980s when several Russian gangsters began to launder money by buying and selling units in Trump tower and he was brought to Moscow as a celebrated guest

-the Russians kept Trump afloat during his several massive bankruptcies and his businesses became charades covering up Russian illegal activities, eventually the Russians building the properties while Trump’s name was put on the building, and he was given 18% of the profits (although he put no money into the project himself)

-after Russians bailed him out and set him up with earnings that he had to do nothing to maintain, Trump spent his time portraying a ruthless oligarch on TV

-in 2010, Russians started to broadcast the idea that Obama had not been born in the US, a fiction designed to appeal to racist Americans, and Trump became the spokesperson for this campaign in 2011, using his television popularity to spread the fiction and gain the support of the people who wanted to believe it

-the fictional character won the 2016 election largely “thanks to votes meant as a protest against the system, and thanks to voters who believed paranoid fantasies that simply were not true”

-“The Russian war against Ukraine was always an element of the larger policy to destroy the European Union and the United States. Russian leaders made no secret of this; Russian soldiers and volunteers believed that they were engaged in a world war against the United States—and in a sense they were right.”

-in June 2015, when Trump announced his candidacy and more than a year before he won, Russia’s cyberwar arm, the Internet Research Agency, was expanded to include an American Department and added ninety new employees to work on-site while sending even more on missions to the US

-in 2017, Putin openly admitted that Russia had made cyberwar against the US with the intention of getting Trump into the presidency

-“American exceptionalism proved to be an enormous American vulnerability. The Russian ground offensive in Ukraine proved to be more difficult than the concurrent cyberwar against Europeans and Americans. Even as Ukraine defended itself, European and American writers conveyed Russian propaganda. Unlike Ukrainians, Americans were unaccustomed to the idea that the internet might

be used against them. By 2016, some Americans began to realize that they had been duped about Ukraine by Russian propaganda. But few noticed that the next attack was under way, or anticipated that their country could lose control over reality.”

-in cyberwar, an ‘attack surface’ is the set of points in a computer program that allow hackers access and, if the attack is on a society, then contact needs to be made with the mind of the enemy and, for Russia, the attack surface was Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Reddit, 9GAG, and Google

-right before the election of November 2016, Facebook shut down 5.8 million fake accounts and about a million of those were using a tool that allowed them to artificially generate tens of millions of ‘likes,’ thereby pushing certain items, often fictions, into Americans’ newsfeeds (later Facebook estimated that as many as sixty million accounts were fake)

-the Internet Research Agency ran 470 Facebook sites that purported to be those of American political organization or movements, six of which had 340 million shares each of content on Facebook, which adds up to billions of shares

-right before the election, Russians placed three thousand advertisements on Facebook and promoted them as memes on Instagram and was able to do so without having to make a disclaimer about who had paid for the ads, leaving Americans with the impression that foreign propaganda was actually American discussion

-all this was done with access to people’s online information and internet habits so that the information could be tailored and focused to people who would most likely believe it to be true

-in the weeks before the election, bots on Twitter accounted for about 20% of all American conversation about politics

-3,814 Twitter accounts were able to be directly traced back to Russia’s Internet Research agency and they had put out around three million tweets

-several Russian Twitter bots targeted African American audiences fraudulently encouraging them to save time by voting by text and flooded the platform with negative comments about Clinton

-right before the Democratic National Convention, Russia revealed the contents of 22,000 hacked Democratic emails, which worked undermine their ability to choreograph their choice of candidate and present a united front to their constituents (instead hyping up strife between supporters of Clinton and supporters of Bernie Sanders)

-thirty minutes after the tape was made public of Trump revealing his view that powerful men should sexually assault women, Russia released emails of Clinton’s campaign chairman and then flooded the internet with stories about his link to a pizza pedophile ring and Satanic practices

-the strategic release of private emails did away with the line between public and private and “it was a foretaste of what modern totalitarianism is like: no one can act in politics without fear, since anything done now can be revealed later, with personal consequences”

-“Of course, citizens play their part in creating a totalitarian atmosphere. Those who chose to call and threaten were in the avant-garde of American totalitarianism. Yet the temptation went broader and deeper. Citizens are curious: surely what is hidden is most interesting, and surely the thrill of revelation is liberation. Once all that is taken for granted, the discussion shifts from the public and the known to the secret and the unknown. Rather than trying to make sense of what is around us, we hunger for the next revelation. Public servants, imperfect and flawed to be sure, become personalities whom we think we have the right to know completely. Yet when the difference between the public and the private collapses, democracy is placed under unsustainable pressure.”

-Putin defended the practice of revealing hacked emails saying that he did not create the content, but his people did obtain it, carefully selected what to use, and created the context in which it would be received (also fully omitting any leaks from the other political party)

- this manipulation of the American election put the sovereignty of the US under visible attack
- discusses the very close ties that Trump's campaign manager Paul Manafort had with Russia, including the history of getting Russia's preferred candidates elected president of a country
- details the work of Manafort's replacement, Steve Bannon, who was the head of a large digital company that put forward the most extreme-Right ideology available in the mainstream and was the president of Cambridge Analytica, which was found to use illegal tactics to target American voters in the 2016 election
- points out that Trump's son-in-law Kushner, whose company Cadre held a large investment from a Russian whose companies had channeled a billion dollars to Facebook and \$191 million to Twitter to support Russian interests, and Kushner had arranged meetings with Russians to discuss strategy, including smuggling the Russian ambassador into Trump Tower in a freight elevator for talks about how to set up a secret channel of communication between Trump and Putin
- goes through several other close connections between Trump's people and Russia (both during campaign and once in office), including many foreign policy speech writers and advisors and his choice for national security advisor and Secretary of State
- once in office, Trump refused to enforce the sanctions that had been placed on Russia for interfering in the election and then fired officials, including the director of the FBI, who were undertaking an investigation in Russia's attack on American sovereignty
- reports from multiple CIA intelligence agents concluded that Trump was "actually working directly for the Russians" and was "wholly in the pocket of Putin"
- Russia was able to do what it did partly because American media had lost its connection to true reporting and was concentrated into large commercial enterprises concerned with making money, which means more entertaining and shocking than truth telling
- for television producers, the Trump campaign was a near endless source of entertainment and received hugely disproportionate coverage
- "According to one survey, 44% of Americans get their news from a single internet platform: Facebook. The interactivity of the internet creates an impression of mental effort while impeding reflection. The internet is an attention economy, which means that profit-seeking platforms are designed to divide the attention of their users into the smallest possible units that can be exploited by advertising messages. If news is to appear on such platforms, it must be tailored to fit a brief attention span and arouse the hunger for reinforcement. News that draws viewers tends to wear a neural path between prejudice and outrage."
- although Facebook and Twitter are major news sources, they are not treated or regulated as such, instead assuming that the free market of tweets will lead to truth
- goes through several examples of Russian accounts flooding Facebook and Twitter with false news
  - In 1976, Stephen King published a short story, "I Know What You Need," about the courting of a young woman. Her suitor was a young man who could read her mind but did not tell her so. He simply appeared with what she wanted at the moment, beginning with strawberry ice cream for a study break. Step by step he changed her life, making her dependent upon him by giving her what she thought she wanted at a certain moment, before she herself had a chance to reflect. Her best friend realized that something disconcerting was happening, investigated, and learned the truth: "That is not love," she warned. "That's rape." The internet is a bit like this. It knows much about us, but interacts with us without revealing that this is so. It makes us unfree by arousing our worst tribal impulses and placing them at the service of unseen others.
  - Neither Russia nor the internet is going away. It would help the cause of democracy if citizens knew more about Russian policy, and if the concepts of "news," "journalism," and "reporting" could be preserved on the internet. In the end, though, freedom depends upon citizens who are able to make a distinction between what is true and what they want to hear. Authoritarianism arrives not because people say that they want it, but because they lose the ability to distinguish between facts and desires.



-“Democracies die when people cease to believe that voting matters. The question is not whether elections are held, but whether they are free and fair. If so, democracy produces a sense of time, an expectation of the future that calms the present. The meaning of each democratic election is promise of the next one. If we anticipate that another meaningful election will take place, we know that the next time around we can correct our mistakes, which in the meantime we blame upon the people whom we elect. In this way, democracy transforms human fallibility into political predictability, and helps us to experience time as movement forward into a future over which we have some influence. If we come to believe that elections are simply a repetitive ritual of support, democracy loses its meaning.”

-one key problem for Russia is the absence of a succession principle and it is working to employ strategic relativism: Russia cannot become stronger, so it makes others weaker

-another sign of a strong government is its ability to enforce law and control violence, another thing Russia is working to undermine by both encouraging violent outrage, directly supporting American gun lobbies, and using their social media accounts to put out calls for Americans to purchase guns  
-due to gerrymandering, election funding laws, the electoral college, voter suppression, American democracy was already weakened and when Trump won with a minority of the votes in a rigged system his chance at future victory did not depend on pleasing the majority but upon further limitation of the franchise and polarising his supporters

-“In June 2016, Paul Ryan, the Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, was discussing Russia with his fellow Republican congressmen. Republican majority leader Kevin McCarthy expressed the belief that Donald Trump was paid by Russia. Ryan reacted by asking that such suspicions be kept ‘in the family’: an embarrassment within the party was more important than the violation of the sovereignty of the country. The possibility that a Republican candidate for president (who was not yet the party’s nominee) was the creation of a foreign power was less worrisome than an awkward press conference at which Republicans would tell citizens what they suspected themselves. This level of partisanship, where the enemy is the opposing party and the outside world is neglected, creates a vulnerability easily exploited by hostile actors in that outside world. The next month, Russia began to release the hacked emails of Democratic politicians and activists. If Moscow’s calculation was that Republican leaders would not immediately defend their Democratic colleagues from foreign cyberattack, that was correct. As Republicans realized that Russia was attacking the United States, the fury of partisanship became the desperation of denial and then the complicity of inaction.”

-“The road to unfreedom is the passage from the politics of inevitability to the politics of eternity. Americans were vulnerable to the politics of eternity because their own experiences had already weakened inevitability.”

-“It is easy to see the appeal of eternity to wealthy and corrupt men in control of a lawless state. They cannot offer social advance to their population, and so must find some other form of motion in politics. Rather than discuss reforms, eternity politicians designate threats. Rather than presenting a future with possibilities and hopes, they offer an eternal present with defined enemies and artificial crises.”

-for it to work, citizens must “accept that the meaning of politics lies not in institutional reform but in daily emotion”

-discusses the vast economic inequality in Russia (in 2016 said to be the most unequal country in the world) and how the US is following suit, losing all the gains of the 1950s and 60s

-“Oligarchy works as a patronage system that dissolves democracy, law, and patriotism” and US oligarchs have more in common with their Russian counterparts than they do with their own populations

-goes through America's economic crisis, health care crisis, and opioid crisis and shows how those areas that were hardest hit, the areas that had lost hope, were the regions that Trump won by the greatest margin

-Trump lifted Putin's strategy of blatantly lying without apology while at the same time saying that it was journalists who were lying and could not be trusted, they were an "enemy of the American people" and were producing "fake news"

-"In the Russian model, investigative reporting must be marginalized so that news can become a daily spectacle. The point of spectacle is to summon the emotions of both supporters and detractors and to confirm and strengthen polarization; every news cycle creates euphoria or depression, and reinforces a conviction that politics is about friends and enemies at home, rather than about policy that might improve the lives of citizens. Trump governed just as he had run for office: as a producer of outrage rather than as a formulator of policy."

-says that Trump's "America First" was a slogan taken from those Americans who were supporting racial and social inequality and the adoption of the Nazi cause in the 1930s, the America they and Trump were referencing is White America (goes through several racist and anti-Semitic moments in the Trump presidency)

-an American politics of eternity creates the myth that economic inequality is rooted in racial inequality

-"The politics of eternity works as a negative-sum game, where everyone but the top 1% or so of the population does worse, and the resulting suffering is used to keep the game going. People get the feeling of winning because they believe that others are losing."

-says that Trump was a sort of "sadopopulist" in that he dismantled the health care system for the poor, increased the tax burden on the working and middle classes, and defunded domestic programs: instead of proposing politics to increase opportunities for the masses as a populist would, he did the exact opposite

-"On one level, a poor person, unemployed worker, or opioid addict who votes away health care is just giving money to the rich that they do not need and perhaps will not even notice. On another level, such a voter is changing the currency of politics from achievement to suffering, from gain to pain, helping a leader of choice establish a regime of sadopopulism. Such a voter can believe that he or she has chosen who administers their pain, and can fantasize that this leader will hurt enemies still more. The politics of eternity converts pain to meaning, and then meaning back into more pain."

-when people are looking to their government for the administration of pain and pleasure, the daily outrage or triumph, for supporters and opponents alike, the experience of politics becomes an addictive behaviour

-"To break the spell of inevitability, we must see ourselves as we are, not on some exceptional path, but in history alongside others. To avoid the temptation of eternity, we must address our own particular problems, beginning with inequality, with timely public policy. To make of American politics an eternity of racial conflict is to allow economic inequality to worsen. To address widening disparities of opportunity, to restore a possibility of social advance and thus a sense of the future, requires seeing Americans as a citizenry rather than as groups in conflict."

## Epilogue (20--)

To experience its destruction is to see a world for the first time. Inheritors of an order we did not build, we are now witnesses to a decline we did not foresee.

To see our moment is to step away from the stories supplied for our stupefaction, myths of inevitability and eternity, progress and doom. Life is elsewhere. Inevitability and eternity are not history but ideas within history, ways of experiencing our time that accelerate its trends while slowing our thoughts. To see, we must set aside the dark glass, and see as we are seen, ideas for what they are, history as what we make.

Virtues arise from the institutions that make them desirable and possible. As institutions are destroyed, virtues reveal themselves. A history of loss is thus a proposal for restoration. The virtues of equality, individuality, succession, integration, novelty, and truth depend each upon all the others, and all of them upon human decisions and actions. An assault upon one is an assault upon all; strengthening one means affirming the rest.

-rest of the conclusion is showing how these virtues are interconnected and how to build them up