

# **Transformative Features of the Wartime Period: The Impact of the Second World War on the Soviet Union's Political and Economic System**

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This essay evaluates the impact of the Second World War on the Soviet Union's political and economic system up to the death of Stalin. It is divided into three components. In the first part, the essay discusses the three dominant historiographic paradigms that have been used to interpret the Stalinist period: the totalitarian, revisionist, and post-revisionist models. In the second part, the essay explores the ways in which the war impacted the Soviet Union's economic system up to the death of Joseph Stalin. It focuses on four transformative features – the conversion to war production and the focus on heavy industry; the eastward shift of the industrial centre of gravity; the demographic impact of World War II; and wartime relaxations. In the third part, the essay explores the ways in which the Second World War affected the Soviet Union's political system until Stalin's death in 1953. The analysis concentrates on three dominant themes – the Soviet Union's focus on foreign policy in the post-war period; the idea of Stalin as the architect of Soviet victory and the entrenchment of the Stalinist system in post-war society; and political concerns over post-war disloyalty of national minorities and wartime returnees.

## **I.**

### **The Stalinist period: different ways of interpretation**

Evaluating the impact of the Second World War on the Soviet Union's political and economic system up to the death of Stalin leads – by extension – to an inquiry into the concept of Stalinism and its political and economic institutions and practices. There are three dominant historiographic paradigms that have been used to describe and interpret the concept of Stalinism

– the totalitarian, revisionist, and post-revisionist models. Each of these models is based on its own underlying assumptions. The totalitarian model, which was dominant during the Cold War, provides a top-down interpretation of Stalinism (Tucker, 1977a, p. xii). This paradigm conceptualises the Stalinist regime as an all-powerful system and regards Soviet citizens as somewhat passive victims of a dictatorial state machine (Hoffmann, 2003, p. 2).<sup>1</sup> Revisionist scholars of the 1970s and 1980s challenge this top-down interpretation of Stalinism and explore the Stalinist system ‘from below’ (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 83). Instead of looking at the coercive elements of the Stalinist system such as terror and propaganda, revisionist scholarship tends to focus on questions of social support for the regime (Kershaw & Lewin, 1997, p. 10).<sup>2</sup> In a move away from revisionist social history, post-revisionist scholarship makes use of what Sheila Fitzpatrick (2007, p. 87) calls a ‘theory-informed cultural and intellectual history.’ One trend within the post-revisionist model is to explore the concept of Stalinism in terms of cultural practices and discourses (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p. 3).<sup>3</sup> Another important direction that this body of literature has taken is to place Stalinism in an international comparative framework (Hoffmann,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Friedrich, C. J., & Brzezinski, Z. (1956). *Totalitarian dictatorship and autocracy*. Harvard University Press. In this publication, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1956, p. 21) provide six basic features of a totalitarian dictatorship: ‘an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy.’

<sup>2</sup> Below we will see this revisionist point of view particularly represented in the work of Ronald G. Suny (1997) who argues that – contrary to the totalitarian view – Stalin’s power diffused to the lower levels of Soviet government, emphasising some degree of agency within the lower echelons of the Stalinist bureaucracy. I also draw on a somewhat similar argument about Stalinist decision-making structures by Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004) in which they illustrate how Stalin delegated some of his powers to specialised committees in the post-war period.

<sup>3</sup> In my analysis, for example, I draw on Gail Warshofsky Lapidus’s (2003) work on the role of women in the Second World War. In this study, Lapidus (Ibid.) looks at the Stalinist gender order and official socio-economic discourses on gender performance in the war and post-war period.

2003, p. 5).<sup>4</sup> In my analysis of the impact of World War II on the Soviet Union's political and economic system, I draw especially on insights from the revisionist and post-revisionist models.

## II.

### **War production and heavy industry**

Harrison (1994, p. 243) illustrates how the Soviet Union's civilian economy functioned as the base upon which the superstructure of the Soviet war production rested. At the outset of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had two demanding tasks – to compensate for the losses of soldiers and military equipment as the German forces invaded and occupied its western regions, and to supply the ever-growing demand for resources as the Red Army nearly quadrupled in size from 1.1 million to 4.2 million soldiers between 1937 and 1941 (Bonwetsch, 1997, p. 185; Harrison, 1994, p. 240). Military production of arms, munitions, and machinery had to be increased accordingly and to meet this demand, civilian industries were converted to war production (Harrison, 2010, p. 15). The conversion process often required factories to acquire new technological expertise, to replace machinery, and to obtain new inventory (Barber & Harrison, 1991, pp. 133–135).<sup>5</sup> This process varied widely between civilian sectors. The iron and steel sector and the (petro)chemicals industry, for example, were directed towards the production of armaments, explosives, and high-grade fuels (Ibid.). Low priority sectors, such as light industry and agriculture, on the other hand, were expected to produce their pre-war output, albeit with

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<sup>4</sup> Below we see this post-revisionist approach in Amir Weiner's (2003) work on Stalinist nationality policies in the war and post-war years. Weiner (Ibid, p. 273) places the 'Soviet purification drive' in a wider European context, arguing that this radical form of interventionism was 'rooted in the modern secular state's assumption of responsibility for the [...] well-being of its subjects.'

<sup>5</sup> Barber and Harrison (1991, pp. 133-135) illustrate how the Soviet Union's Defence Committee had drawn up civilian emergency responses in the years leading up to the war. Through these contingency plans, many civilian industries were able to swiftly convert to war production at the outset of the Second World War – it was thus that a children's bicycle factory in Moscow, for example, began to produce flame-throwers and a former paperclip factory started manufacturing parts for anti-tank grenades (Ibid.).

less support from the rest of the economy. Sapir (1997, p. 231) speaks of a 'hyper-intensive channelling of resources into heavy industry.'

Though necessitated by wartime demands, the process of conversion to war production eventually went too far and attention had to be redirected towards restoring the civilian economy (Ibid.). The industrial progress made during the war primarily benefitted such branches as the iron and steel industry, but other sectors – particularly the consumer goods industry and the agricultural sector – were highly neglected (Davies, 1998, p. 69). What took place in the post-war period was a swift reconversion of war factories to civilian production. Nove (1992, pp. 287–288) argues that the Soviet Union made considerable achievements in restoring and re-equipping civilian industries in the post-war years. The Soviet victory, however, gave a 'halo of legitimacy' to pre-war economic policies with their focus on heavy industry (Barber & Harrison, 2006). This was clearly reflected in the reconstruction priorities of the post-war period (Linz, 1985, p. 17). Nove (1992, p. 290) illustrates that 87.9 per cent of industrial investments made between 1945 and 1950 were directed to the producers' good sector. The war experience, furthermore, strengthened the militarised character of the Soviet economy (Barber & Harrison, 2006). In the post-war years, Stalin maintained a high level of economic preparedness in case further military conflicts would arise, and prioritised military spending over other much needed investments (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 209).

### **Eastward shift of the industrial centre of gravity**

Another transformative feature of the wartime period was the eastward shift of the Soviet armaments production. The western region, occupied by the German forces until November 1941, was home to two-fifths of the Soviet population and housed over 85 per cent of the pre-war aircraft factories, 70 per cent of the metallurgical plants, 60 per cent of the factories for making armaments and explosive powder, and over 40 per cent of the Soviet Union's capacity for electric power (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 127; Linz, 1985, p. 13). Under the threat of enemy

occupation, the Soviet Union was forced to evacuate its factories to the Urals, the Volga region, Western Siberia, and Central Asia (Erickson, 1983, pp. 223–224; Harrison, 1994, pp. 252–256). Sapir (1997, p. 217) illustrates the destabilising effects this evacuation had on the civilian economy and the Soviet workforce – 2,593 enterprises and 5.9 million workers were relocated to the eastern regions of the Soviet Union. Although the ‘fortresses in the rear’ were ultimately able to provide the military equipment needed for the Soviet victory, the evacuation placed enormous strains on the pre-existing enterprises of the interior (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 132).<sup>6</sup>

The industrial production in the rear was primarily focused on the manufacturing of armaments. In the immediate post-war years, reconstruction of civilian heavy industry in the liberated regions in the west prevailed over further industrial development in the east (Linz, 1985, p. 17). Many workers and enterprises relocated back to the liberated territories after the war (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 96). In spite of this movement westward, however, the military industrial plants in the rear were maintained. The factories in the east were gradually transformed into ‘giant, vertically integrated production complexes’ (Barber & Harrison, 2006, p. 242). The locational shift of the Soviet armaments production was one of the most profound impacts of the Second World War on the Soviet Union’s economic system (Millar, 1985, p. 288).

### **World War II and the Soviet workforce**

The Second World War had a devastating impact on the demographic composition of the Soviet Union. More than 12 per cent of the pre-war population – 26 million Soviet citizens – suffered premature death (Harrison, 1994, p. 238). At the same time, the Soviet war efforts demanded more than 11 million new workers to be employed in the defence industry (Ibid, p. 256-260). This brought radical changes to the composition of the Soviet workforce and patterns of

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<sup>6</sup> Barber and Harrison (1991, p. 132) illustrate how local enterprises had to provide resources for the relocated factories. The lack of dispersal of the pre-war industrialisation drive made this an exceptionally difficult task – communities in the rear were often forced to undergo second and even first industrial revolutions in an incredibly short period of time (Ibid.).

employment within the Soviet Union. Among other things, it led to a significant increase in the share of women in the Soviet labour force (Davies, 1998, p. 68; Harrison, 1994, p. 259; Pennington, 2010, pp. 104–109). Red Army losses at the beginning of the war called for a massive mobilisation of women and girls for employment in the arms industry and the agricultural sector (Conze, 2001; Higonnet, 1987, p. 8). Through industrial training women were introduced to various new professions in the fields of engineering, transportation, and power generation (Erickson, 1993, p. 53). In the agricultural sector, female labour rose from 40 per cent in 1940 to 91.7 per cent in 1945 (Ibid, p. 56). Lapidus (2003, p. 217) illustrates how the recruitment of women into the Soviet workforce during the Second World War was driven by an ‘instrumental desire to mobilise women’s manual and reproductive labour.’ Though retrospectively framed as a move toward gender equality, Lapidus (2003, pp. 217–223) argues that the employment of women was in fact a ‘strategy of industrial development in which women were [treated as] shock absorbers of [...] economic and social modernisation.’<sup>7</sup> The increased share of women in the workforce became a permanent feature of the Soviet economic system (Davies, 1998, p. 68).

The Second World War and the expansion of the Red Army also had a considerable impact on the agricultural sector and urban-rural distribution patterns within the Soviet Union. Harrison (1994, p. 249) speaks of a ‘crisis of excessive mobilisation’ during the wartime period – the recruitment of millions of young men into the armed forces starved non-priority industries and the agricultural sector of their workforces. More than 60 per cent of the Red Army was recruited from rural areas (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 99). The countryside was therefore deprived of the fittest part of its labour force (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 99; Nove, 1992, p. 288). After the

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<sup>7</sup> Lapidus (2003, p. 233) illustrates how the late-Stalinist period was characterised by a shift in socio-economic discourses surrounding female participation in the workforce. In an attempt to increase birth rates and to compensate for population losses caused by the war, Stalinist policies emphasised women’s reproductive duties. This significantly increased the double burden of domestic labour and paid work outside the home that many women in the Soviet Union faced. For a similar argument, see Reina Pennington (2010, p. 114) on the ‘snapback’ effect of World War II on gender equity.

Second World War came to an end, demobilised soldiers often chose to settle in urban areas (Barber & Harrison, 1991, pp. 99–104). The war thus influenced rural-urban distribution patterns within the Soviet Union and accelerated a retreat from the countryside (Linz, 1985, p. 19). Late-Stalinist policy, with its on-going focus on heavy industry, further starved the agricultural sector of investment, which widened the urban-rural gap even more (Millar, 1985, pp. 288–289). The shortage of manpower in the countryside became a major economic problem in the early post-war period (Nove, 1992, p. 296).

Another way through which the Second World War and the expansion of the Red Army impacted and reshaped the Soviet workforce became especially apparent in the post-war years. The war introduced the Soviet Union's economic system to a new demographic group: veterans. The number of demobilised soldiers was as high as 8.5 million within three years after the war came to an end (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 135). For a number of veterans, the Second World War facilitated some form of upward social mobility – demobilised soldiers who joined the Communist Party during the war were sometimes able to obtain administrative positions and former peasants often moved into the urban workforce (Ibid, pp. 136–137). Overall, however, the reintegration of veterans into the Soviet economic system appeared to be an arduous task. Demobilised soldiers often needed to be (re-)trained for industrial labour – if they were able to find work at all (Nove, 1992, p. 292; Zubkova, 2003, p. 284). In the city of Tyumen, for example, 59 per cent of the able-bodied returning veterans were unemployed in January 1946 (Zubkova, 2003, p. 284). Veterans who were injured in combat faced particular hardships and were often left to survive on exceptionally limited pensions (Ibid, p. 285). Apart from the difficulty of finding work, demobilised soldiers – as well as other Soviet citizens – often experienced problems in finding living space, especially in the western regions that suffered severe damage wrought by the war (Ibid.). After the war ended, demobilised soldiers and other returnees moved en masse to the cities. Urban living conditions, however, lagged far behind modern hygiene and sanitation norms (Filtzer, 2010, pp. 1–21). According to Filtzer (Ibid.), the hazardous urban living

standards following the Second World War were emblematic of the economic logic of Stalinism, which preferred the restoration of heavy industry to the social and economic rehabilitation of veterans and other wartime returnees.

### **Wartime relaxations**

Sapir (1997, pp. 233–235) illustrates how a range of relaxations were authorised throughout the Soviet economic system from 1942 onwards. The Soviet war efforts necessitated extensive economic reforms in two respects: first, the Second World War required a withdrawal of state intervention in the agricultural sector and, second, it gave rise to the increased autonomy of regional administrative authorities (Ibid, p. 234). As the Soviet government focused its attention on the production of arms and the evacuation of high-priority industries to the rear, regional party organs often gained independence in decision-making processes of local industries (Hough, 1969, p. 218). In low-priority sectors, the Soviet government became dependent on market forces and the individual initiative of regional authorities (Sapir, 1997, p. 234). In the agricultural sector, the Soviet government similarly permitted a range of relaxations and, during the war, control over the operation of collective farms somewhat receded (Nove, 1992, p. 296). The state temporarily allowed some degree of private production and often turned a blind eye to informal economic activities (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 102).<sup>8</sup>

In the post-war period, there was a general wish for further relaxations of the command economy (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 209; Nove, 1992, p. 292). After the hardships of war, the Soviet population expected some degree of liberalisation and, as Nove (1985, p. 87) argues, there was hope for reform of the kolkhoz system. Rather than loosening control, however, the Soviet government tightened its grip on economic affairs in the years immediately following the war

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<sup>8</sup> Barber and Harrison (1991, p. 102) illustrate how, especially for those peasants living on collective farms, the cultivation of private plots became a means of survival during the Second World War. The cultivation of private plots caused a momentary revival of the market – peasants regularly sold their surplus to the urban population or bartered it for other basic necessities, such as fuel (Ibid.).



(Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 129). Wartime relaxations were thus short-lived. In the post-war period, the Stalinist regime strengthened its control over production and procurement within the agricultural sector (Nove, 1992, p. 296). Based on the decree 'on measures to liquidate breaches of the kolkhoz statute,' Soviet authorities banned the cultivation of private plots (Nove, 1985, pp. 87–88). Similarly, the Stalinist regime reasserted its primacy in industrial decision-making (Hough, 1969, p. 218; Sapir, 1997, p. 234). As Sapir (Ibid.) illustrates, the post-war years were characterised by a 'brutal return to Stalinist practices.' In this period of reconstruction, the Soviet government demanded continued sacrifice from its citizens in order to build an economic framework that would sustain the Soviet Union's newly acquired status as a military and political superpower (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 129; Millar, 1985, p. 287).

### **III.**

#### **Imperial Communism**

One of the most significant political changes caused by the Second World War and the Soviet victory was the global recognition of the Soviet Union's position in international affairs. In the post-war period, foreign policy became predominant in the mind of the Soviet government. Zubok and Pleshakov (1996) distinguish different phases in the Soviet Union's foreign policy up to the death of Stalin. Immediately after the war, Stalin actively sought cooperation with those he considered his political counterparts: the leaders of Great-Britain and the United States (Ibid, p. 25). Zubok and Pleshakov (Ibid.) point to an important 'psychological motive' – after having been betrayed by Hitler in June 1941, the Yalta Conference in 1945 and the post-war partnership with Roosevelt and Churchill helped 'soothe Stalin's ego.' The partnership not only confirmed the Soviet Union's position as a global power but also recognised Stalin as its ultimate leader (Ibid, p. 33). The death of Roosevelt and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, however, caused a shift in the Soviet Union's foreign policy approach (Ibid, pp. 36-40). According to Zubok and Pleshakov (Ibid, p. 45), these events signalled a return to the pre-war 'revolutionary-imperial

paradigm' through which Stalin, on the one hand, sought to expand the Soviet Union's sphere of influence through the promotion of revolutions abroad but, on the other hand, put forward the doctrine of 'socialism in one country.' Tucker (1973, p. 403) illustrates how Stalin's interpretation of this doctrine actively promoted what he calls the spirit of 'Russian Red patriotism.' The devastation of World War II along with the Soviet victory reinforced an atmosphere of great power nationalism and increased the militarist undercurrents already present in the Soviet Union's political system before the Second World War (Tucker, 1977b, p. 105). The wish for international cooperation that characterised the immediate post-war period was now transformed into an aggressive and expansionist political strategy that, according to Barber and Harrison (1991, p. 209), presented peace as 'so all-important that everything [should] be sacrificed to it, including the sovereign rights of the smaller nations of eastern Europe.'

### **The entrenchment of the Stalinist system**

The triumph over Nazism turned into an important source of political authority during the post-war period (Sunny, 1997, pp. 50–52). The Soviet victory became part of a key legitimising narrative that was used to both emphasise Stalin's personal prowess and the reliability of the Stalinist system and its political institutions as a whole (Ibid.). The figure of Stalin became synonymous with the notion of invincibility (Zubkova, 2003, pp. 292–293). As the 'architect of Soviet victory', Stalin drew comparison with figures of imperial Russia such as Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible, as well as other 'modernising statesmen' such as Otto von Bismarck and Napoleon (Barber & Harrison, 1991, pp. 207–208; Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996, p. 15). Stalin was not only celebrated as the creator of a new socialist reality, but also as the legitimate successor of the Russian empire (Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996, p. 16). In the post-war period, up to Stalin's death in 1953, this personality cult – which combined czar-like attributes with the principles of Soviet socialism – served as an important unifying element in Soviet society (Brandenberger, 2005, pp. 249–250). The Soviet victory provided the Stalinist system with an aura of unassailability, and the

figure of Stalin turned into a symbol of ideal behaviour (Suny, 1997, p. 52). Through this cult of personality, Stalin could surpass both the former czars in their imperial qualities and Lenin in his egalitarian ideals (Brandenberger, 2005).

In a somewhat similar vein, the Second World War contributed to the entrenchment of the Soviet governing elite. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk (2004, p. 3) argue that Stalin's behaviour followed a 'clear political logic' after the Second World War. They describe the late-Stalinist political system as 'neo-patrimonial' (Gorlizki, 2002; Gorlizki & Khlevniuk, 2004). This neo-patrimonial system relied both on the discretionary use of power by the *vozhhd'* himself and the pragmatic use of 'rational-legal forms of administration' at the lower echelons of the decision-making structure (Ibid, p. 9-10). Through a 'hybrid mode of administration', Stalin maintained a central position in the political system but simultaneously accepted certain innovations – such as the delegation of authority to specialised committees – to make the administration more efficient (Gorlizki, 2002, p. 703; Gorlizki & Khlevniuk, 2004, p. 165). Contrary to what is presumed in more totalitarian readings of Soviet history, Suny (1997) illustrates how – especially in the post-war period – Stalin's power dispersed over the lower levels of Soviet government. The demographic impact of the war and the immense loss of Soviet citizens around the age of conscription prevented the entry of a new ruling elite in the post-war years (Millar, 1985, p. 209). The absence of a younger leadership cohort allowed the ministerial and party elites who had managed the Soviet war efforts to remain in power until long after World War II ended (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 208). This contributed to what Millar (1985, p. 209) refers to as the 'petrification' of the Soviet Union's political system.

### **Concerns over post-war disloyalty**

The Second World War became a 'redemptive vehicle' for cultural and ethnic minorities who had previously been isolated and marginalised in Soviet society (Weiner, 2003, p. 257). Joining the war efforts gave members of marginalised groups an opportunity to 'prove their worth' to society and

as a reward, the families of these conscripts were often rehabilitated (Ibid, p. 258).<sup>9</sup> As a result, the war period saw a huge upsurge in mass rehabilitations. In the post-war period, however, Stalin's deep suspicions returned, and entire nationalities and social groups were attributed guilt by association with the German forces (Barber & Harrison, 1991, pp. 112–116). This idea of collective guilt for collaboration with the Germans was specifically directed towards national minorities such as the Crimean Tatars and small nationalities from the Northern Caucasus (Barber & Harrison, 1991, pp. 112–116; Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 132).

As Sheila Fitzpatrick (Ibid.) illustrates, the years following the war were characterised by the brutal repression of non-Russian minorities. In this respect, Weiner (2003) speaks of the 'ethnicisation of the Soviet purification drive.' The Nazi-Soviet pact and the subsequent removal of Volga Germans from the Western regions of the Soviet Union provided the Stalinist regime with a precedent for relocating entire ethnic groups (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 132; Weiner, 2001, pp. 257–258). The Second World War amplified the Stalinist drive to remove so-called 'anti-Soviet elements' from society and, moreover, caused a shift in purge policies – instead of targeting specific individuals or groups in the border regions, the post-war purges targeted national minorities in their entirety (Smith, 2010, pp. 234–235; Weiner, 2003, p. 258). The official post-war narrative presented the war as a necessary outcome of historical processes and those ethnic groups accused of collaboration with the Nazis were framed as 'eternal enemies' of the Soviet Union (Weiner, 2001, pp. 149–154, 2003, p. 258). Thus, as Weiner (2003, p. 258) illustrates, 'their destruction was [...] not merely [seen as] an act of defence but [as] the execution of the Will of History.'

Another group that attracted heightened levels of suspicion in post-war society were veterans who had fought abroad (Zubkova, 2003). The Second World War had given many Red Army soldiers a chance to observe some of the democratic traditions of their Western allies (Ibid, p.

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<sup>9</sup> Amir Weiner (2003, p. 257) illustrates, for example, how the State Defence Committee passed a resolution in April, 1942, which allowed former kulaks to join the Red Army. The families of former kulaks who entered military service were released from internal exile. This group comprised of 102,520 people in 1943 alone (Ibid.).

285). In analogy to the revolts of 1825 following the Napoleonic wars, veterans returning home were regarded as potential 'neo-Decembrists' (Ibid.). Zubkova (Ibid, p. 289) speaks of an intentional campaign through which the Stalinist regime attempted to eliminate any and all possible benefits that these veterans could inherit from the victory. After all, while acknowledging the efforts of the Soviet people and the Red Army, the ultimate triumph over Nazism was to be ascribed to Stalin himself (Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996, p. 27). Especially those veterans who had been held as prisoners of war by the German forces were considered to be suspicious (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 135). Upon their return to the Soviet Union, many were sent to labour camps (Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996, p. 37). Overall, the Soviet Union's political system up to the death of Stalin was characterised by an ever-present hostility towards foreign influences, which was intensified by the war experience. This xenophobia translated itself into a pervasive politics of suspicion.

#### **IV.**

#### **Conclusion**

In this essay I evaluated the impact of the Second World War on the Soviet Union's political and economic system up to the death of Stalin. The first part of the essay focused on the dominant historiographic paradigms that have been used to interpret the Stalinist period – the totalitarian, revisionist, and post-revisionist models. In my analysis I largely drew on insights from the revisionist and post-revisionist paradigms. In the second part of the essay, I explored the ways in which the war impacted the Soviet Union's economic system until 1953. I focused specifically on four transformative features of the wartime period. First, the conversion to war production and the focus on heavy industry. Although war factories swiftly reconverted to civilian production in the post-war years (Nove, 1992, pp. 287-288), the emphasis on heavy industry remained an important feature of the late-Stalinist economic system (Linz, 1985, p. 17). Second, the eastward shift of the Soviet armaments production (Harrison, 1994, pp. 252–256). Even though many

workers and enterprises relocated back to the liberated territories after the war, the military-industrial ‘fortresses in the rear’ maintained a prominent role in the Soviet economy (Barber & Harrison, 2006, p. 242; Millar, 1985, p. 288). Third, the composition of the Soviet workforce and patterns of employment within the Soviet Union. In this context I focused specifically on the increased share of women in the Soviet labour force (Erickson, 1993; Warshofsky Lapidus, 2003), rural-urban distribution patterns (Linz, 1985, p. 19; Millar, 1985, pp. 288–289; Nove, 1992, p. 296), and veterans as a new demographic group in post-war society (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 135; Zubkova, 2003). Finally, I explored how a range of relaxations were authorised throughout the Soviet economic system from 1942 onwards, concentrating on state intervention in the agricultural sector and autonomy of regional administrative authorities during the war (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 102; Hough, 1969, p. 218; Sapir, 1997, pp. 233–235). I examined the ways in which the Soviet government retightened its grip on economic affairs in the years immediately following the war (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 129). In the third part of this essay, I explored how World War II affected the Soviet Union’s political system until Stalin’s death in 1953. I concentrated on three dominant themes. First, the ways in which the Soviet victory reinforced an atmosphere of great power nationalism which was translated into an aggressive foreign policy strategy (Barber & Harrison, 1991, p. 209; Tucker, 1977b, p. 105; Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996). Second, the entrenchment of the Stalinist system and its political institutions (Brandenberger, 2005, pp. 249–250; Suny, 1997, pp. 50–52). And finally, the ‘ethnicisation of the Soviet purification drive’ in the post-war years during which entire nationalities and social groups were attributed guilt by association with the German forces (Fitzpatrick, 1985, p. 132; Weiner, 2003, p. 257). The goal of this essay has been to shed light on a variety of ways in which the Second World War impacted the Soviet Union’s political and economic system until Stalin’s death in 1953. Although I aimed to discuss a wide range of transformative features of the wartime period, an exhaustive answer to the research question would require a more in-depth analysis than this essay could offer. Some

transformative features of the wartime period have inevitably remained underexposed.<sup>10</sup> In summary, however, we can note a few general trends. The Soviet victory gave a ‘halo of legitimacy’ to the Stalinist regime. The Second World War consolidated and, often, strengthened conservative tendencies already visible in the Soviet Union’s political and economic system before the war. On the whole, World War II provided the Soviet authorities with a narrative that validated the Stalinist policies of industrialisation and collectivisation and, above all, reinforced the militarised character of the Stalinist regime.

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<sup>10</sup> One such feature is that of wartime flexibility in relation to the Russian Orthodox Church and the concordat of September 1943. See, for example, Alexander Werth, ‘Stalin ropes in the church,’ in *Russia at war, 1941-1945* (London, 1964); Richard Bidlack, ‘Propaganda and Public Opinion,’ in D. R. Stone (Ed.), *The Soviet Union at war, 1941-1945* (Barnsley, 2010).

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