

Defending historical truth to save the nation: Russia's youth and the securitisation of history

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ABSTRACT

The Kremlin extensively uses the Great Patriotic War to legitimate its 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine. Focusing on youth militarisation in Putin's Russia, this article explores Moscow's securitisation of wartime memories and the involvement of Russian patriotic youth groups to defend the state's version of history. Using discourse analysis of material produced by the Victory Volunteers, one of Russia's largest state-sponsored youth groups, the article argues that these young people are not passive recipients of the state's securitising messages but instead actively participate in the process of protecting the state's 'historical truth' and conveying it to future generations. In so doing, the article contributes to our understanding of the role of audiences in non-democratic settings in the securitisation process. It focuses on the Victory Volunteers' annual St George Ribbon action that forms part of the celebrations to commemorate the Great Patriotic War victory. This action demonstrates that Russia's youth participate in a complex, state-directed social process designed to shore up popular support for the war in Ukraine in the short term and to lay the foundations for the longer-term project of ensuring society will continue to regard war as a normal and necessary condition of Russia's existence.

KEYWORDS

Securitisation; Russia; youth; memory; history

Today, the West is trying to discredit our history, the history of the Great Patriotic War. We, the younger generation, are obliged to preserve the historical truth about the events and war heroes and pass it on to the next generations. The most important national holiday - Victory Day - is approaching! Get together on this day with the whole family, leaf through family photo albums, remember your relatives who participated in the Great Patriotic War, this will be your contribution to the preservation of historical truth! Wear the St. George ribbon with respect and pride, because we are the great-grandchildren of victorious people! ('On the eve of May 9' 2024).

Every year on 9 May Russia celebrates 'Victory Day', marking the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War. Patriotic Russians wear orange and black striped St George's Ribbons as a symbol of respect for the sacrifices made by Soviet soldiers and civilians alike to achieve that victory. Many wearing the ribbon received it from a member of Victory Volunteers, one of Russia's largest patriotic youth groups.

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Victory Volunteers are the Russian state's official partners in leading the St George's Ribbon action: an annual campaign to distribute ribbons in Russia and abroad prior to Victory Day (Kolstø 2016). As the quotation above indicates, wearing the St George's Ribbon is regarded as more than a gesture. It is a contribution to the preservation of historical truth itself, which, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin and other state officials, must be protected from hostile forces that seek to erase the past and, in so doing, pose a threat to the very existence of Russia as an independent, sovereign state (2020). Maintaining the Kremlin's version of the past, and especially the Great Patriotic War, is even more important since Russia launched its mass invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and intensified efforts to draw parallels between Nazi Germany as the enemy of the 1940s and Ukraine as today's enemy. Russia's youth are asked to play a vital role in preserving and defending state-sanctioned versions of history as part of the wider practice of using the Great Patriotic War memory to legitimate the 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine. Victory Volunteers are in the front lines of that battle.

This article argues that Putin's Russia is engaged in a process of securitising the state's approved interpretation of the Great Patriotic War and that an important feature of this securitisation process is its appeal to a specific audience: young people. By explicitly assigning the role of protecting history to Russia's youth, the state identifies young people as a 'significant audience' (in the language of securitisation theory) who must accept the state's claim about the nature of the threat for its securitising move to be successful. Our research examines the Victory Volunteers' role in protecting history for the benefit of the state, society and future generations. We apply discourse analysis to the material produced by this group about its activities, especially the St George's Ribbon action, in the first three years since Russia's mass invasion of Ukraine.

The article makes empirical and conceptual contributions. First, our in-depth examination of Victory Volunteers' role in the St George's Ribbon action expands and enriches our understanding of youth militarisation in Russia, and the contribution of this group to that process. While it is one of the largest patriotic youth groups in Russia, Victory Volunteers are relatively neglected in academic research addressing Russia's military patriotic education, patriotic youth groups and youth militarisation. Second, our examination of Russia's securitisation of Great Patriotic War memory contributes to the literature on the securitisation of history by deepening our understanding of Moscow's use of history to justify its construction of threats to the Russian state and the role of youth in this process. Third, by arguing that Victory Volunteers are not simply passive recipients of the state's securitising message but actively engage in the process of defending 'historical truth' by celebrating it and sharing it with others, we contribute to research on the role and importance of audiences in the process of securitisation in non-democratic states. Our research emphasises the significance of actions, and especially repeated actions, as forms of meaningful participation in the process of securitisation, even in non-democratic settings, and provides evidence of how this can work in practice.

We begin by describing our sources, methods and briefly introducing Victory Volunteers. We then outline securitisation theory before identifying the specific aspects that we apply to our empirical material: the role of audience, especially in non-democratic states, and the securitisation of history as a form of ontological security. We explain the Kremlin's use of the Great Patriotic War to make securitising moves,

demonstrating how this specific use of history is embedded not only in the state's efforts to justify the current, mass invasion stage of Russia's war in Ukraine but also in the context of its efforts to control important historical memories. With this context established, we examine key aspects of pre-Putin practices of patriotic education and the militarisation of youth in Russia and set Victory Volunteers in that context. We then turn to our analysis of the group's participation in commemorating the 'truth' of Great Patriotic War history during the three years of our study to demonstrate the engagement of this community of young people with the Kremlin's securitising discourses.

Methodology

Securitisation theory tells us that the speech act drives the process of securitisation forward, using the 'grammar of security' (Markhortykh 2020, 1065) to move everyday political concerns into the sphere of national security and legitimate extraordinary measures to address the new security threats. And 'the way to study securitisation is to study discourse' (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 25). We identify and analyse discourses that are accessed through the words and actions attributed to the Russian patriotic youth group Victory Volunteers as described in the press releases on that organisation's website. We would have preferred to conduct interviews with members of this group, invite them to describe their views and actions in their own words and apply discourse analysis to their statements. However, involving Russian citizens in research projects conducted by Western academics raises significant ethical and methodological issues. First and foremost, such interactions would put Russian research participants at considerable risk due to the political climate in Putin's Russia, where close contact with citizens of countries deemed to be hostile to Russia could make them the subject of various forms of pressure by officials of the state, including intimidation, investigation or even prosecution. Even if such risks could be satisfactorily mitigated, we could not be confident that the research participants would be able to express their opinions freely, especially if those opinions could be interpreted as discrediting the armed forces – an action that was criminalised by Russian legislation passed in March 2022 (President of Russia 2022). Although we cannot assume that the words attributed to members of the Victory Volunteers on the group's website provide a full and accurate account of their views, the website does provide important information and insights into the scope and nature of key activities of the group that can form the basis of analysis of audience responses to securitising moves. As we will discuss further below, actions are an important means of audience participation in securitising processes in non-democratic countries such as Russia.

Victory Volunteers is one of the largest state-affiliated patriotic youth groups in Russia, with more than one million members across the country's 89 regions as of April 2026 ('Victory Volunteers Today' n.d.). We define youth in accordance with the United Nations categorisation, as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years old ('Youth', United Nations website n.d.) Victory Volunteers members are predominantly young adults: the minimum age of a group member is 18 and the average age is 21. The group also welcomes members who are much older, especially those who are middle aged or elderly and well past any definition of 'youth', with the oldest Volunteer 98 years old ('All-Russian Public movement "Volunteers of Victory" charter'. 2015, 8). Our decision

to focus on this group was determined in part by its size and geographical spread, which enables its activities to reach substantial numbers of young people in Russia, including non-members who are the recipients of its outreach efforts. Much of the work of Victory Volunteers is aimed at schoolchildren to ensure that future generations of Russians hear and understand the official version of the Great Patriotic War. Finally, our interest in this group lies in its self-defined mission, which makes it an ideal target audience for the state's efforts to securitise history. As one of the group's press releases states:

Victory Volunteers are responsible for our country's history. We fight against the falsification [of history] and do not allow residents of modern society to forget the exploits and names of our heroes who courageously stood in defence of their homeland during the Great Patriotic War. ('Victory Volunteers held a campaign "No Statue of Limitations"' 2022).

We focused our data collection on press releases using the search term 'St George's Ribbon' on the Victory Volunteers website during the first three years since Russia's mass invasion of Ukraine. In total we examined 156 press releases: 66 from 2022, 43 from 2023 and 47 from 2024.¹ We read the material in Russian and translated the excerpts quoted in this article. We used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to identify securitising discourses in the texts, including statements attributed to the Victory Volunteers or their leaders. We chose discourse analysis because of its emphasis on understanding language use as a form of constructing meaning, while CDA directs our attention to understanding texts and discursive interactions in their contexts. This focus on context encompasses the creators' identity, the texts' intended audiences and the power relations between them, as well as the purposes of the texts' messages, such as the production or reproduction of values or ideologies (Ramanathan and Bee Hoon 2015, 57–58). Importantly for our study, CDA recognises that language and text go beyond spoken or written words, and includes signs, symbols, images, music, performances and actions. This multimodal aspect of CDA helps us to interpret Victory Volunteers' responses to the state's efforts to securitise Great Patriotic War history (Cameron and Panović 2014). Kress and Bezemer (2023) claim that in a multimodal CDA, the 'textual "threads" are many and materially diverse: *gesture, speech, image* (still or moving), *writing, music*'. (2023, 140 emphasis in original). They argue that these various threads come together to form *ensembles*, that rest 'on the agentive semiotic work of the maker of such texts' (Kress and Bezemer 2023, 140). Though Kress and Bezemer (2023) refer to scripted performances and a school project as ensembles, other studies (see Edwards 2021) have used multimodal CDA to explore commemorative practices. We see this approach as applicable to Victory Volunteers' activities, which are coordinated nationally and comprehensively directed by the group's leaders. The Victory Volunteers press releases provide responses to the state's securitising moves as unattributed commentary, descriptions of actions, and quotes from the group's leaders. Sometimes the young people's responses are relayed through their own reported speech, however, more often the discourse is developed through their actions: their participation in preserving, protecting and disseminating the history of the Great Patriotic War. Far from being the passive recipients of the state's messaging, we argue that the evidence demonstrates that Victory Volunteers are actively engaged in dialogues with the state and its messages. this process of co-construction gives the securitisation of history in Russia its power and, potentially, its durability.

Putin's Russia and the securitisation of history

Securitisation theory in critical International Relations scholarship has expanded our understanding of security beyond the use of military force. It also identifies a process through which issues are presented and accepted as posing security threats. Key securitisation theory scholars Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde (1998, 21–25) argue that issues can be recast as security threats, or securitised, if they are successfully presented as a threat to the very existence of a specific referent object, such as a state. Securitisation is therefore ‘an essentially intersubjective process’ (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 30), requiring meaningful interaction between actors. More specifically, the process requires individuals or groups with sufficient power to perform the speech act. Provided a ‘significant audience’ (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 27) for the securitising move is persuaded by the validity of the claim, then the imposition of extraordinary or emergency measures to address that security threat are legitimised and securitisation has been achieved. An important insight from securitisation theory (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 32) that is visible in the Russian case is that security arguments are about the future: how will security be undermined if the appropriate action is not taken, and how will the recommended steps address the threat and maintain security? In these respects, Putin and other state officials are clear: if the truth of Russia’s history is allowed to be erased, Russian society will lose its sense of identity, and a cohesive state will cease to exist.

We contribute to three distinct developments in securitisation theory in our study of the securitisation of the Great Patriotic War memory in Putin’s Russia. The first is the significance of audience responses in legitimising the securitising move. Second is the focus on the applicability of securitisation theory – and particularly identifying audience responses – to non-democratic states. And the third is the work that has been done to apply securitisation to historical memory.

The importance of audience responses to securitising moves has developed into a significant strand of research on securitisation. While the earliest formulations of securitisation placed greater emphasis on the role and agency of the securitising actor in elevating an everyday issue to a security threat, other scholars examine the importance of audience and the wider context in this process. Balzacq (2005, 171–172) argues that it is more useful to think of securitisation as discursive techniques, the success of which depends on the acceptance of the audience ‘based on what it knows about the world’. Similarly, Eric Van Rythoven’s work on emotions and securitisation draws attention to the greater likelihood of success for securitising moves that ‘resonate with pre-existing meaning in the local audience’s security imaginary’, noting that ‘audiences fear threats because they represent phenomena they have already learned to fear or imaginably foresee fearing’ (2015, 467). The significance of pre-existing attitudes in securitisation also features in the work of Pradeep Krishnan, who emphasises that even in undemocratic contexts, ‘the *receptivity* of an audience, or the degree to which an audience positively engages with a securitizing argument . . . is a key precondition for the success of a securitizing move’ (2024, 184 emphasis in original).

The audience’s contextual knowledge is important in securitisation in the Russian case. Claims about Russia’s glorious past and its success in war in ensuring Russia’s role as a great power today are deeply entrenched in Russian society. Russia’s extensive

experience of war occupies a special place in the pantheon of historical narratives that Putin reinterprets to justify the war in Ukraine. The Russian state has appropriated the Soviet Great Patriotic War experience as Russia's own crowning achievement, marginalising or even completely erasing the contributions and sacrifices of other nationalities in the USSR, especially the Ukrainians, who are depicted as Nazi collaborators. This war was fought against an enemy whose malign nature and intent is beyond question, in which Soviet citizens endured immense suffering but achieved a victory that benefitted the wider world and the Soviet Union. As Malinova et al. (2017, 43) highlights, the Great Patriotic War enjoys 'high level[s] of social acceptance' within Russia as an important episode in a shared past. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian state has employed the Great Patriotic War as a historical metaphor to link the Soviet struggle against Nazi Germany with the Kremlin's claims that Russia is engaged in a struggle against the Nazis' modern-day equivalent: Ukrainian Fascists who are committing genocide against ethnic Russians in the Donbas (Markhorthykh 2020; Pearce and Yuchshenko 2018). Elizaveta Gaufman (2015) notes that history can play a valuable role in justifying conflict, especially in constructing an enemy image. She refers to those who would shape history this way as memory entrepreneurs, arguing, 'If securitising actors need to "sell" a particular policy through threat narrative that would buttress this framing, memory entrepreneurs select a specific collective memory reference that would fit their line of argument' (Gaufman 2017, 14).

The importance of choosing recognisable examples for successful securitisation reflects the argument that audiences can – and indeed, must – do more than passively accept the securitising move. Instead, they provide the securitising actor with moral support and a mandate to act (Balzacq, Léonard, and Ruzicka 2016, 500). But much of the research that focuses on audience responses to securitising moves is concerned with democracies, where elites and the public alike enjoy political freedoms that allow them to express their views and act on their convictions without significant barriers or fear of retribution. This specific context makes the task of determining audience acceptance a relatively straightforward one. Researchers can gather evidence of audience engagement with securitising moves (including their acceptance or rejection) by examining, for example, the results of elections, opinion polls and public debates, which can include protest actions. Further, the understanding of securitisation as an intersubjective process (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 32) means that audience responses to securitising moves can and do go well beyond the stark dichotomy of acceptance or rejection. The securitisation literature includes research that explores processes of negotiation and contestation between audiences and securitising actors in democracies (see for example: Côté 2016; Polko 2026; Roe 2008; Slater 2008). Through these processes, the securitising move can be subjected to minor amendments or even radical reshaping by the intervention of the significant audience. As these studies show, the securitising actor in a democratic country has a real incentive to engage with audiences in good faith, not only to achieve acceptance but also to gain legitimacy for the securitisation.

The issue of audience responses to securitising moves is more complex in societies governed by non-democratic political systems, such as Russia. Here, the balance of power in the securitisation process is heavily weighted in the state's favour. And when officials in non-democratic states make securitising moves, they do so with the full force of the law, the judicial system and the security services behind them. Freedom

of speech and action by ordinary citizens, non-state actors and even some elites is, at best, constrained. Access to information is restricted by the absence of a free and independent media, which makes it difficult to challenge the logic and evidence put forward by the securitising actor. Citizens know that if they express opposition to the state, they risk penalties that can include arrest, fines and imprisonment. Formal processes such as elections are subject to manipulation and provide little or no opportunity for society to reject a candidate or a political party with state backing. One might even ask whether it is possible to speak of meaningful securitisation in non-democratic states, if that process relies on the ability of an audience to accept a securitising move without coercion.

A strand of securitisation literature has taken on this challenge and makes the case that an intersubjective process of securitisation involving meaningful audience responses is indeed possible in non-democratic settings. For example, in her work on securitisation in Kyrgyzstan, Wilkinson (2007, 12) argues that we should look beyond speech for evidence of audience participation, pointing to Eurocentric assumptions underpinning securitisation theory that result in 'the privileging of speech over other means of expression'. Her research into Kyrgyzstan's 2005 Tulip Revolution reveals the importance of physical action as a means of citizens expressing their views on security issues.² Krishnan's work on a failed securitisation effort by the government of Singapore (2024) highlights the significance of the pre-existing attitudes of audiences in shaping their receptivity to securitising moves, and especially on a society's core values. Similarly, Juha Vuori's study (Vuori 2008) of the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to securitise student protests in 1989 and Falun Gong in 1999 shows the importance of audience participation in securitisation to provide political legitimacy for the actions of the regime – echoing the position taken by Balzacq, Léonard, and Ruzicka (2016) and placing it firmly in a non-democratic setting. For Vuori, persuasion and coercion are the equivalent processes in non-democratic states to the negotiation and contestation that takes place during securitisation in democracies. Vuori joins Wilkinson in emphasising the significance of action by audiences, pointing out that 'people are truly convinced after they are willing to take action' (Vuori 2008, 71).

Most scholars examining audience participation in securitising processes in non-democratic states use examples of resistance to the state's securitising moves. For while it can be difficult and risky for audiences in non-democratic settings to resist or oppose the state, such acts are identifiable as demonstrations of choice and agency. The more challenging task is to interpret audience *support* for securitising moves. Vuori addresses this issue, asking how we might identify evidence of audience agency in a context where there is considerable formal and informal pressure to conform. How can we judge whether the audience supports the securitising move because it accepts and agrees with the state's framing of the issue as a security threat or because it seeks to avoid penalties for resistance – or indeed hopes to reap some benefits from public compliance? Vuori agrees that public compliance is important, but notes that even a facsimile of audience acceptance is valuable for the state, arguing that while 'authoritarian systems may not support genuine interaction, they do require people to participate in the 'ritual of conformity' (Vuori 2008, 71). Vuori also introduces the concept of 'active passivity' (2008, 70) to demonstrate that citizens in non-democratic states can choose to do the bare minimum and avoid taking additional steps to demonstrate support. In such contexts, the absence

of public demonstrations of support can reflect opposition or at least resistance to the state's securitising move. Finally, Vuori shares Krishnan's view on the importance of core values in the securitising process, arguing.

All types of political orders securitize their core values . . . Securitization [can identify and define] threats to these core values and their protection can be considered a special type of politics, even in non-democratic systems. (2008, 69).

In contemporary Russia, Putin's regime presents the Great Patriotic War as a core state and societal value, as the basis of national identity, and a story of Russia's greatness (Edwards and Rabbia 2022). McGlynn (2023, 13) argues that the Kremlin narrates these noble past actions as 'if they were innate Russian characteristics'. But Putin's Russia goes beyond using key historical narratives and shared memories as evidence of Russia's greatness and to legitimise its actions. Russian authority figures claim that their interpretation of history is central to the continued existence of the state itself. In other words, they equate challenges to shared historical memory – especially that of the Great Patriotic War – with threats to Russia's security and to the existence of the state.

Russia is not unique in depicting threats to history as posing existential, or ontological, threats, and scholars have increasingly examined the connection between key historical memories, the identity of societies and the security of states. Maria Mälksoo describes memory as 'a vital self-identity need as it is invoked to constitute the central narrative of a state about its past in order to form a core part of its consistent sense of the self in the present' (Mälksoo 2015, 224). Faye Donnelly and Brent J. Steele highlight the importance of identifying the master narrative invoked when history is securitised, emphasising the power created by passing down stories in 'active processes of (re)telling' (Donnelly and Steele 2019, 221–222). The reiteration of a compelling master narrative helps explain why certain historical stories take root in our collective consciousness and become associated with a community's identity. Mälksoo's work also highlights the nature of the threat posed by alternative interpretations of the past, 'whereby "our" narrative is seen as being viciously misunderstood and misrepresented by other(s), whose vision of the past is existentially endangering for our existence as "us"' (Mälksoo 2015, 222).

Among scholars who have analysed the securitisation of history in Putin's Russia, Bækken and Due Enstad (2020) emphasise the role of elite actors in identifying the sources of attack on Russia's national identity through attacks on its history. A typical example is a statement from Vladimir Shapovalov, Deputy Director of the Institute of History and Politics at the Moscow State Pedagogical University. He placed responsibility for attempting to erase the historic achievements of Russia on the West, claiming, 'In European Culture, the "alien" must be destroyed, and if that doesn't work, then it must be abolished. Russia could not be destroyed, so they are trying to abolish it, discredit it, and forget it' ('The West is trying to cancel Russia' 2023).

Though efforts to defend Russia's historical memory have intensified since February 2022, they have been underway since archives were opened during the Gorbachev period and historians began to produce revisionist accounts of Soviet history. These 'new historians' were criticised for 'blackening' the history of the war, amid calls for a new patriotic education system (Edwards and Rabbia 2022, 76). The move to defend Russia's history against scholarly attacks later expanded to encompass its protection against 'falsification' from any source. In 2009, then

President Dmitry Medvedev established the Commission to Counteract Attempts to Harm Russia's Interests by Falsifying History (Weiss-Wendt 2020, 43). Although the Commission only existed for three years and accomplished little, it was one of the state's first initiatives to address the threat from the falsification of history to Russia's national interests (Bækken and Due Enstad 2020).

The campaign against this threat has gathered momentum since Putin returned to office in 2012. The Kremlin's ability to rally support to counter historical falsifications relies on the securitising move of establishing a link between the legacy of history and state survival, and on identifying those who distort history as Russophobes (McGlynn 2023, 107–108). In a 2012 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin equated history with national identity and state integrity, warning, 'If the nation is unable to preserve and reproduce itself, if it loses vital references and ideals, it does not need an external enemy because it will fall apart on its own' (quoted in Bækken and Due Enstad 2020, 329–330). The 2014 'Revolution of Dignity' in Ukraine that set the country on a path towards greater integration with the West provided renewed impetus to Russian claims that history was being distorted to undermine Russia. As McGlynn (2023, 105) points out, there were 'near-weekly fulminations against other countries' alleged mistreatment of the memory of Soviet soldiers'. Putin's speech at the 2020 Victory Day parade described Russia's duty to perpetuate the 'pure truth' of the Soviet Victory of the Great Patriotic War (Edwards 2021, 303). The speech was followed by the introduction of a new 'historical truth' clause into the Russian constitution, forbidding 'diminishing the significance of the people's heroism in defending the Fatherland' ('How the Constitution will protect historical memory' 2020)

Since Russia's mass invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Kremlin continues to insist that Russian history is under threat. Looking ahead to the first Victory Day celebrations after the launch of the 'Special Military Operation', then-Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu explicitly identified measures to combat the threats posed to the truth of history:

Several military-patriotic projects will be implemented against attempts to falsify history and distort the truth about the Soviet Union's decisive contribution to the defeat of fascist Germany. (11,500 actions planned for the Victory Day celebration's 2022).

When Putin spoke on Victory Day that year, he framed revisionist interpretations of the Soviet Victory as an attempt to diminish the Russian state. He noted 'the West seems set to cancel these [Russia's] millennia-old values. Such moral degradation underlies the cynical falsifications of World War II history, escalating Russophobia, praising traitors, mocking victims' memory, and crossing out the courage of those who won the victory through suffering' ('Victory Parade on Red Square' 2022). By September 2023, Putin warned that Russophobia, anti-Semitism and the glorification of Nazi criminals were increasing and that history was being weaponised ('Meeting of the Organising Committee "Victory" 2023). As we will explore below, the Victory Volunteers actively respond to these securitising moves.

Youth militarisation in Russia: setting Victory Volunteers in historical context

Youth militarisation in Russia is not a unique phenomenon of the Putin regime, or even of the post-Soviet Russian period. The militarisation of Russia's young people can be traced back to the Tsarist regime, where leaders of Imperial Russia such as Anna I (1730–1740) and Catherine II (1762–1796) founded military educational institutions like the Noble Cadet Corps and the Artillery and Engineer Noble Cadet Corps (Menning 2002), establishing military training for boys to prepare them for eventual service in the armed forces. This practice was developed in the mid-19th century, when the Russian leadership expanded the cadet corps and military academies (Ray 1961). Odom (1976) notes that by 1850 around 30% of elementary level school children were enrolled in military education. These educational spaces engaged students in training and academic study, ensuring those enlisted were physically and mentally prepared for war. The number of military-educational institutions in Tsarist Russia continued to grow, with many of those who graduated from these sectors moving directly into military service. Youth militarisation expanded under Soviet leadership to include informal, extracurricular and 'voluntary' militarised spaces specifically for youth.

Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, Fainsod (1951) explains that the Bolsheviks did not have a separate organisation for the younger generations. The Komsomol – an organisation for young people between the ages of 14 and 18 – was not established until 1918, during the Russian Civil War, while the Vladimir Lenin All-Union Pioneer Organisation (Young Pioneers) for children between the ages of 10 and 15 was founded in 1922 (Stonkuvienė 2014). Both organisations were created to provide ideological support for the regime and to prepare the next generation to enter the Communist ranks themselves. Militarised youth also made significant contributions to important milestones in Soviet history.

Fainsod (1951, 21) argues that the Komsomol played a key role in the Civil War, 'where they functioned as agitators, commissars, and shock troops, to provide leadership and inspiration for the less dependable conscripts'. Pilkington's (1994, 58) work on Russian youth culture shows that young people in the Soviet Union were integral to the first Five-Year Plan, in which 'Stalin formally assigned the Komsomol the task of socialist construction'. This mass mobilisation of youth was accompanied by an increase in the practice of referring to Komsomol members in military terms, with newspapers 'filled' with 'combat jargon' and describing young people as 'steeped in military discipline' (Pilkington 1994, 58). For the 20th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War victory in 1965, the Komsomol took part in historical events linked to the military, including visiting former battle sites and meeting with war veterans (Hornsby 2017).

In the years leading up to the Great Patriotic War, the Young Pioneers also took on a more militarised character. As DeGraffenried (2009, 17) points out, 'military language permeated the entire Pioneer organisation: members were divided into troops and detachments; they were encouraged to struggle on various "fronts" ... wore uniforms and marched in parade formation'. One example of the type of militarised language that entrenched the everyday included the discourse that bad schoolwork not only impeded a child's personal development but also contributed towards the weakening of the Soviet Union. Kucherenko (2011, 38) notes: 'As a result, many – especially the younger ones –

saw good progress as their civic duty and when the war started, genuinely believed that through high marks and discipline they contributed to the war effort'.

In 1951, the Soviet state established DOSAAF (*Dobrovol'noye Obshchestvo Sodeystviia Armii, Aviatsii i Floti*). Like Komsomol and the Young Pioneers, the organisation was considered 'voluntary' but in contrast, required a membership fee from every Soviet student and employee (Simes 1981–1982). Alongside learning how to abseil and parachute, DOSAAF members were required to wear a uniform and made an oath to the nation (Odom 1976). Unlike Komsomol and the Young Pioneers, the Soviet state established DOSAAF as a programme that would train young people specifically for the military.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the teaching of history in Russia's schools reflected the economic and social chaos of the time. Historians published revisionist interpretations of Soviet history, including Stalin's role in the Great Patriotic War; however, young children were unlikely to become exposed to these ideas in their education as budgetary constraints meant that schools continued to use outdated textbooks. Finally, from 1994 to 1995, State Duma representatives condemned the emerging research questioning Stalin's success and instead called for a renewed curriculum that restored a military patriotic education. In 1994, Russia's Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin created a draft programme dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War and included the education of youth to 'love ... the motherland' as an actionable outcome (Chernomyrdin, 1994). Thus, the foundations for what would become a patriotic military education in the post-Soviet period were laid in Yeltsin's time.

Youth militarisation under the Imperial, Soviet and early post-Soviet regimes therefore formed the foundations for the militarisation of young people in Russia today. Sanina (2017) identifies important continuities with the Soviet period, with teachers providing a key role in passing on values and practices that they experienced in their youth. We also see some very similar patterns from the Soviet-era approach to youth militarisation in Putin's Russia – for example, the emphasis in militarising youth is not only focused on teaching them skills to prepare them for military service, although this is undeniably an important goal for the state. In Putin's Russia *Yunarmiya* or Youth Army is an organisation that serves this purpose, as DOSAAF did in the Soviet period, with *Yunarmiya* even going so far as to dress its child members in military-style uniforms. The activities of Victory Volunteers, however, more closely align with those undertaken by the Komsomol and Young Pioneers, particularly in their contributions to the state and support of the war in Ukraine. Victory Volunteers direct their activities towards civilian society, including and especially children, to encourage respect for Russia's history of victory in war and raise awareness of the need for support and sacrifice on the part of all of society to ensure future victories. The notion of sacrifice is important in the context of patriotic education. In Putin's Russia, patriotism does not simply infer a love of the nation, but a love so deep that Russian citizens – even children – should be willing to sacrifice themselves for it (Edwards and Mathers 2025). Putin's move to rid Russia's history of perceived contradictions with a 'single-track, unified version of Russian history' and a constitutional amendment prohibiting negative interpretations of the Great Patriotic War in recent years, together with calls to 'protect' and 'defend' historical truth, demonstrate the importance of youth military-patriotic education to the Putin

regime (Brandenberger et al. 2015, 192; Such unique times are rare in History 2023; Suslov 2018; The State Duma 2020).

Victory Volunteers: protecting the ‘truth’ of Russia’s past

Young people in Putin’s Russia are surrounded by state-approved messages about the importance of love for their homeland. There has been a distinct upsurge in the pervasiveness and intensity of these messages and accompanying militarising practices since the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in the Donbas in 2014, which extends to the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine (Matviyshyn 2019). They permeate school lessons and extracurricular activities, popular culture, museum exhibits and public events such as those marking important holidays – Victory Day most of all. History occupies a special place in these efforts to socialise Russia’s youth through a patriotic-education system that is delivered inside and outside the school system (Edwards and Mathers 2025). Moreover, state officials identify a vital role for youth to defend historical memory. In May 2022, Russia’s Education Minister Sergei Kravtsov announced a new initiative for schoolchildren to ‘defend and promote historical truth’ (‘The Ministry of Education turns to senior pupils to defend “historical truth”’ 2022). And Putin himself encouraged young people to preserve the Great Patriotic War memory to counter Western efforts at distorting the past. Speaking to a youth forum in 2023, he warned that ‘the enemy [will win in the information sphere] if we sit and do nothing ourselves [to counter it]’ (‘Meeting with representatives of public patriotic and youth organizations’ 2023). Patriotic youth groups offer an opportunity for young people to answer this call to action, with Victory Volunteers in the forefront of efforts to protect the ‘truth’ of Russia’s past.

Victory Volunteers are closely aligned with the Russian state. Founded in 2015 with the support of Vladimir Putin himself and led by Olga Zanko – a deputy in Russia’s Duma (parliament) and a member of the ruling United Russia party. Victory Volunteers was established following efforts by the All-Russian Volunteer Corps to preserve historical memory for the Great Patriotic War’s 70th anniversary celebrations (‘How it all began’ n.d.). As discussed in the Methodology section above, the group has a strong association with and commitment to the preservation of the memory of Russia’s wartime past and especially the Great Patriotic War. This commitment is on public display in the distinctive clothing that its members wear: pale blue sweatshirts with a white dove and St George’s Ribbon.

There is no easy answer to questions of whether Victory Volunteer participants genuinely support the state’s efforts to securitise Russia’s wartime memory. In contemporary Russia, an individual’s decision to take a public position on such a heavily politicised topic as wartime memory is bound up with a host of pressures and incentives. Even the decision to join Victory Volunteers may be a response to social expectations from parents, teachers or other authority figures. There are certainly some rewards on offer – for example, participation in Victory Volunteers activities is recognised by the state as voluntary work and makes members eligible to receive points towards university admission (Naumova, n.d.). However, we should not entirely discount youth agency. Hoban (2022, 109) finds agency even among children in Russian-occupied Donbas, who are subject to more intense scrutiny and intrusive control than their counterparts in the

Russian Federation. The participation of Donbas children in commemorative acts in schools is sought by the authorities, who encourage the children to share responsibility for organising and conducting them. It is useful to return to Vuori's (2008) notion of active passivity as a way of exercising agency. In other words, young people can choose not to join a patriotic youth group at all: membership in patriotic youth groups is voluntary, and millions of young people in Russia do not belong to any such organisations. For those who either want to join or feel pressured to do so, there is a sufficient range of groups with different remits to select one that reflects their interests. The style and character of the Youth Army, for example, with its uniforms and activities such as shooting, orienteering and military-style outings, is very different from Victory Volunteers, which support veterans and look after sites of historic significance. It is also possible that membership and participation in Victory Volunteers activities can contribute to a change of mindset, making the young person more receptive to the state's securitising argument. Garner (2023, 104–105) cites the case of 'Irina', a teenager from a small, remote town whose worldview changed markedly through membership in Victory Volunteers and engaging with the group and its activities through social media. Such a finding is consistent with the several of the arguments made in the securitisation literature that we discussed earlier. Namely, that by evoking something significant that the audience knows about the world and that resonates with them on an emotional level (e.g. the memory of the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War), the securitising actor can increase the chances of the audience's receptivity to the message (Balzacq 2005; Krishnan 2024; Van Rythoven 2015).

Our examination of the press releases on the Victory Volunteers' website reveals three clear patterns that we identify as 'responses' to the state's securitising 'calls'. First, descriptions of actions, unattributed commentary and statements made by group leaders tend to address the substance of securitising calls more directly, sometimes using the same terms and phrases. This practice is visible in this description of plans to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory Day offered by Sergey Andriyano, Executive Director of Samara Region's Victory Volunteers:

We will hold large-scale events together, pay special attention to the heroes of our time – our veterans, and place a significant emphasis on *preserving and protecting history from falsification*. ("Together we are preparing to celebrate the 80th anniversary' 2024 emphasis added).

Founder and Victory Volunteers leader Olga Zanko frequently echoes key securitising messages, such as in this address to young members participating in a 'Wall of Memory' to display photographs of Great Patriotic War participants:

The action "Wall of Memory" displays gratitude to our veterans, understand today's present as the result of our ancestors' heroic efforts. We must preserve the historical truth, pass it on from generation to generation, so that terrible pages of the past will never be repeated. Now, as then, Russia faces new challenges . . . The events in Ukraine, the special military operation, protect our national interests, security and the future of our citizens. ('The Victory Museum hosted the grand opening of the All-Russia action "Wall of Memory"' 2024).

Here, Zanko links the importance of historical truth and making young people aware of their nation's past with the war in Ukraine, and the need for a proper understanding of history to correctly interpret actions such as the 'Special Military Operation'. She was explicit about the causal connection between a lack of respect for the 'truth' of history and

the devastation of war when talking to an online forum about the importance of engaging youth in history: ‘Today, in the example of Ukraine, we see what ignorance and distortion of history lead to’ (“Victory Volunteers” and “United Russia” again held the most massive online game about the events of the Great Patriotic War for schoolchildren’ 2023).

The second pattern of responses comes in quotations attributed to the youth members themselves. These remarks address the securitising calls in ways that focus on the youth’s perspectives, feelings and experiences. The young people are described as expressing their respect for those who contributed towards the victory and explaining what the war memory means to them. This is the case for Daria Kolomiets, a young Victory Volunteer from Moldova. After participating in an action that invites young people to test their Great Patriotic War knowledge, she is quoted as saying:

In Moldova, [the falsifiers] rewrite history, substitute concepts and falsify facts about those times. The ‘Dictation of Victory’ event make it possible to preserve the Great Patriotic War memory and not allow them [the falsifiers] to destroy it. (‘More than 20,000 Victory Volunteers’ 2024).

The third pattern of Victory Volunteers’ responses to the state’s securitising calls comes in the form of actions: participation in activities that commemorate historical ‘truth’, sharing it with their fellow citizens – especially other young people – and, in so doing, defending it from falsification. Victory Volunteers participate in actions that apply the state’s securitising calls to preserve, cherish and celebrate the ‘truth’ of the Great Patriotic War defy those who would deny that truth. For example, the ‘May Playground of Kindness’, which took place in Kaluga, involved a range of public facing activities by local Victory Volunteers, including the ‘Letter of Victory’ initiative where Kaluga residents wrote letters congratulating Great Patriotic War veterans (‘Victory Volunteers took part in celebration of Victory Day Kaluga’ 2022). In Sevastopol, Victory Volunteers carried out an action aimed at raising the residents’ awareness of an important event in their local history: distributing more than 30,000 leaflets about the Soviet soldiers who participated in Sevastopol’s liberation from Nazi occupation (‘Their feat is not forgotten’ 2024).

Following Côté, we argue that Russia’s youth have their most important and meaningful engagement with securitisation through their actions. We cannot know whether the quotations attributed to young people accurately represent their words. It is possible that some or even all these quotations were invented by the group’s organisers to present the desired impression of unity and consistency with the state’s messaging. But through their participation in these activities, Victory Volunteers are, individually and collectively, answering the call to preserve and protect history. Through their practices – and, even more importantly, their repeated practices (such as handing out the St George Ribbon on numerous occasions over several weeks each year) – these young people bring the defence of history into their everyday lives. Youth mobilisation throughout the country is not only an audience response to a securitising move. It is also one of the extraordinary measures that securitisation justifies: taking historical memory and elevating it from a subject for school lessons to an issue that requires action. By taking that action, Victory Volunteers complete, and indeed co-construct, the cycle of securitisation. But does participation in actions such as distributing the St George Ribbon constitute

meaningful agency on the part of Victory Volunteers? As we acknowledge above, with the price of dissent so high in Putin's wartime Russia, youth have every reason to appear to agree with the state's dictation. McGlynn (2022, 232), the state's promotion of officially sanctioned historical memory discourages reflexive and critical engagement with the past. However, in addition to exercising the decision to join Victory Volunteers, which suggests a young person's interest in history and receptiveness to the state's efforts to securitise historical memory, we draw attention to the nature of the group's activities, which require active engagement on the part of its members. The Victory Volunteer is encouraged to share their understanding with the public. This public-facing dimension of the group's activities – including the St George Ribbon action – means there are opportunities for spontaneous discussion and encounters that offer the young person chances for judgement and reflection. In contrast to the carefully scripted and choreographed historical recreations that are a school pupil's experience of engaging in historical memory preservation (McGlynn 2022), the Victory Volunteer participating in a St George Ribbon action cannot predict exactly how the public will respond to them, what questions they might be asked or what details a war veteran might choose to share from their experiences. As Laruelle (2015) notes, young people who join Russia's patriotic youth groups might have distinctive and different understandings of key concepts such as patriotism than the organisers of these groups and indeed the state. Victory Volunteers might interpret the Great Patriotic War memory in subtly different ways from the state but nevertheless share a common sense of pride in their ancestors' fortitude and achievements and a desire to preserve that memory for future generations. For all these reasons, we should not assume that they are passive victims. Instead, we argue that Victory Volunteers do exercise choice, agency and represent a meaningful audience for the state's securitising moves.

Tying a ribbon to protect the past

The St George's Ribbon action is central to the Victory Volunteers' efforts to remember Victory Day. This action goes beyond group members wearing the ribbon. It involves a mass outreach campaign, with Victory Volunteers distributing the ribbon in towns and cities around the country. The orange and black striped ribbon was initially a military decoration in 18th century Imperial Russia and used in the Soviet period and subsequently to indicate respect for the achievements of the Great Patriotic War. In Putin's Russia, the St George ribbon now also indicates support for the 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine and protecting 'historical truth' (McGlynn 2023). The ribbon's close association with victory and heroic wartime sacrifice gives many Russians an emotional attachment to it. The symbolic links between the ribbon, the historical memory of the Great Patriotic War and the Russian state itself means that any threat to the ribbon's status – for example, efforts to ban displaying or wearing it – can easily be presented as a threat to history and to Russia. The state's renewed emphasis on the St George ribbon in this context has effectively securitised the ribbon. As Robert Aston (23 May 2016) notes, a material object associated with history and national identity can become 'a totem; a condensed object, invested with magical powers – rich in symbolic and political connotations'. Like the American flag, the St George ribbon has been state-sanctioned and largely accepted as an important symbol in Russian society. While

enormous St George's ribbons decorate buildings and billboards, it is more common to see it as an actual ribbon: a small object that anyone can wear to show their respect for the Great Patriotic War and its veterans and now, also for the soldiers and veterans of the 'Special Military Operation'.

The press releases on the Victory Volunteers website describing the St George's Ribbon actions follow the same three 'response' patterns to the state's securitising 'call' that we identified above. In the first, leaders of Victory Volunteers are more explicit in addressing the state's securitising move. We can see this in the quotation attributed to the Donetsk Victory Volunteers leader Irina Makarenko:

The St. George Ribbon for [Donetsk] residents, not only means valour and glory, but it is also a symbol of freedom. This symbol of Great Patriotic War victory is an integral symbol of the struggle for truth. [Donetsk] received refugees [every day] from the former territory of Ukraine – meaning the ribbons that the Victory Volunteers distribute may end up in their hands. This is especially important for us, because for 8 years our people were forbidden to wear it. Now they are free and on Victory Day will be able to safely go out with the St. George Ribbon on their chest. ('Victory Volunteers present St George Ribbons around the world' 2022).

The second response pattern uses quotations attributed to the young people to translate the official, securitising messages into terms that relate more directly to the everyday experiences and feelings of the youth themselves. A good example is at the beginning of this article: 'Wear the St. George ribbon with respect and pride, because we are the great-grandchildren of victorious people!' ('On the eve of May 9' 2024). Young Victory Volunteer Zlata Terptsova expresses an age-appropriate response to the state's securitising call:

St George's ribbon is a symbol of Victory Day, [and] our respect for the people who stood their ground and won in the Great Patriotic War. This is our memory, this is our relationship with events which took place from 1941 to 1945. ('Victory Volunteers in Samara region start St George's Ribbon action' 2023).

As does this quotation attributed to Victory Volunteer Anna Plyusnina as part of a description of her involvement in distributing the ribbon to state employees in the Kirov region:

It is very valuable for me to see people who are not indifferent [to history], for whom it is important to know, remember and preserve the truth of our symbol. ('A symbol of victory for the state employees in Kirov region' 2023).

After the annexation of four regions of Ukraine in 2022, the Victory Volunteers began reporting on the St George's ribbon actions from these territories, emphasising the communities' enthusiastic participation in this practice. The press releases include quotations attributed to local Victory Volunteers members, such as this one from Veronika Gorshkova in occupied Zaporizhzhia:

For me, the St George's Ribbon is more than an action. It is a symbol of the Russian people's victory over Nazism. It has become a big project, which united people across our great country. In Zaporozhsky region it was prohibited to wear the ribbon since 2014 ... This year, 25 April in Zaporozhsky region the St George Ribbon has begun. And we as Victory Volunteers are undoubtedly glad about it. We are glad that people can wear this

symbol over their hearts. ('Victory Volunteers began the All-Russia St George's Ribbon action' 2023).

But, as we indicated in the discussion above, we argue that it is the third type of response that is even more important than articulating their respect for the St George Ribbon and what it represents: the young peoples' actions in distributing the ribbon. The mass actions undertaken by Victory Volunteers across Russia (and beyond) do not simply involve handing out the ribbons to the public. The young people must explain the ribbon's history and its significance as a symbol of Great Patriotic War victory. Victory Volunteers also demonstrate how to wear it (over the heart) and even help the public tie the ribbon in a bow or make it into a simple loop and attach it to their clothing. The Victory Volunteers' press releases describe the ribbon actions as youth engaging with the public. They also stress that the young people are entrusting this valued symbol of historical truth to the care of people who want it. Note the emphasis on the personal aspects of distributing the ribbon in this description of the action's launch in 2023:

This year, millions of ribbons will be passed *from hand to hand* in Russia and abroad by the Victory Volunteers. Also, ribbons will be distributed during festive events dedicated to Victory Day, in squares. This year, the action has a special meaning, because quite recently, on December 29, 2022, the St. George ribbon was equated to the symbols of military glory, thus we protected our history from distortion and desecration! ('Victory Volunteers in Samara region start St George's Ribbon action' 2023 emphasis added).

Victory Volunteers are assiduous in their efforts to reach as many people as possible, to ensure that Russians everywhere can display a ribbon and show their appreciation of their country's history. They distribute ribbons to other young people, and many of their activities take place at schools and universities. For example, on 9 May Victory Volunteers visited schools and universities across Volgograd to distribute ribbons and explain their symbolic importance as a show of gratitude and respect to veterans, while also encouraging students they met to participate in the action ('St George Ribbon International Campaign Continues in Volgograd' 2022; 'Volgograd Universities hosted St George Ribbon International Campaign' 2022). Victory Volunteers distributed the ribbons in Krasnodar (Krasnador 2022), at railway stations ('On April 29, the action "George's Ribbon" was held at a railway station' 2022); and at the 'Immortal regiments' marches, when ordinary citizens carry photographs of family members who participated in the Great Patriotic War ("Immortal regiment" passed through the Berezovsky district of Krasnoyarsk Territory Krasnoyarsk 2022).

The choices made in constructing the press releases that are the main source of data for this article bear out our emphasis on the significance of action. Quotations attributed to youth Victory Volunteers members are not found in every item of publicity about the St George's Ribbon. And although those with leadership roles in the group are quoted far more frequently than the young people, it does not seem to be compulsory to include statements from leaders either. But a description of the action of distributing the ribbon, explaining its significance and demonstrating how to wear it appropriately and respectfully is a recurring and almost essential component of the press releases that we examined. As Olga Zanko herself argues, actions are those occasions 'when you not only express your love for the country in words, but also do something real for its development' (quoted in Garner and Edwards 2026). The action *is* the message, and it is

through their actions that Russia's youth can do their part to save the nation by defending history.

Conclusion

In Putin's Russia, state representatives have taken the Great Patriotic War history from the realm of the ordinary and securitised it: transforming it through discourse into an urgent issue that requires extraordinary steps to preserve and protect it. This historical event is not simply a subject to be studied or debated in formal education, nor a matter of personal or community remembrance. Instead, the history of the Soviet defeat of the Nazis is equated with the identity of modern-day Russia and with its very existence as a sovereign, independent state. According to the securitising discourse articulated by the state, history is in danger from distortion and falsification by those who hope to destroy Russia itself. Among the extraordinary measures that are justified by this securitising move is the mobilisation of the nation's youth to be the country's saviours, by defending the state's historical 'truth' and perpetuating it into the future. Russia's young people are charged with protecting the common memories of great deeds and a shared understanding of what it means to be Russian, forged in the fires of the Great Patriotic War. As a member of Victory Volunteers proudly states at the beginning of this article, 'we are the great-grandchildren of victorious people!'

Our research into the activities of Victory Volunteers demonstrates that youth is not only a significance audience for the Russian state's securitising moves but an active participant in the securitising process. Young group members go well beyond passively accepting key securitising discourses and instead co-construct them through words and actions. Youth do not simply parrot discourses articulated by authority figures about the security threats posed by the 'falsification of history' and efforts to diminish the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War; young people take action to diminish the 'threat'. The young people's active participation in perpetuating these securitising discourses is itself an indication of audience acceptance, representing a form of dialogue between the state and young people that suggests a process of co-construction. To be sure, we cannot know whether the young people who participate in distributing the St George's Ribbon and other Victory Volunteer-organised actions to commemorate the Great Patriotic War believe they are defending history and therefore protecting Russia itself. But by repeating, celebrating and sharing the official 'truth' of this historical event, they are bringing these practices into everyday life, making them part of the lived reality of the next generation of Russian citizens.

We would like to close by raising the question of what the active collaboration of Russia's young people in these securitising discourses might mean for the future. The St George's Ribbon action aims to guard the 'truth' of history and disseminate it as widely as possible and represents just one case study within a truly vast ecosystem of Russian patriotic historical education. The aim of each action is not simply to enlist or persuade a young person of the correctness of the state's historical narrative but to ensure a self-perpetuating cycle: today's youth becomes tomorrow's parent, teacher, local official and so on. As Donnelly and Steele (2019) remind us, just a securitisation is a process, so too is its opposite: de-securitisation. But even if, at some point in the future, a new political

leadership comes to power that has the desire to extract history from the realm of national security, how easy will it be to persuade a generation to relinquish a role that they have been encouraged to believe is their special mission to perform: to safeguard the past for the nation's benefit?

Notes

1. The search term used to generate these results included the root of the Russian word for 'ribbon' without any case endings. Seeing the sharp drop in numbers after 2022, we also conducted searches using the same term for the two previous years (56 results for 2021; 55 results for 2020) and found that 2022 was the outlier, with the spike probably the result of the mass invasion of Ukraine.
2. Indeed, Andrew Côté (2016) also emphasises the importance of action, including repeated action, as part of a shared securitising discourse even in democratic states.

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