

Forged in war

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Résumé ou extrait : A masterful history of how war and insecurity, both real and perceived, have driven Russia's destiny for centuries, including the disastrous invasion of Ukraine. Putin retains his stranglehold on his position in Russia despite an almost ruinous invasion of Ukraine. The answer as to how and why can be found in Russian history. With no naturally defensible borders, and environmental factors constraining its economy, Russia has been pitched against the pre-eminent military powers of the age across the centuries, and often at a technological disadvantage. To respond to these challenges, it has had to sit heavily on the backs of its people, and so war, and the need to be able to fight it, has shaped its evolution, from tsars to commissars and presidents. The national identity has been forged in the furnace of war. From the medieval kingdom of Rus battling against Scandinavian princes and Mongol emperors, to its own empire-building conflicts in 19th-century Asia, to the formative wars of the 20th century which saw Russia pitch from Tsarist empire to communist state and defender against Nazism, all these conflicts stained the lands of Russia red with blood. A weak post-Cold War Russia then turned to Putin, who created a new mood for martial triumphalism which led directly to the Ukrainian war. Packed with contemporary accounts, Forged in War strips away the myth to give an insider's view on Russia's past and present.

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