

This thesis investigates the Russian domestic political context of the escalation of relations. It verifies the claim that the Ukrainian issue has served the Russian political leadership over the past two decades to gradually consolidate internally Russian society, caught off guard by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the Russian elite's use of anti-Ukrainian historical narratives can therefore be interpreted as a tool to stabilize post-Soviet Russian identity in a form that suits the current interests of the Russian power centre. What role historical politics has played in the use of the Ukrainian issue for Russia's internal consolidation is explored in this thesis through an analysis of the argumentation of the Russian Federation's leaders towards Ukraine, from the rise of Vladimir Putin to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This examination presupposes a detailed theoretical argumentation, to which I devote the first half of the thesis. Subsequently, I apply the theoretical-methodological findings in the second part of the thesis in the analysis of the speeches of Russian representatives, which I divide into the following main analytical units: the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations based on the performances of Russian presidents, the Ukrainian theme and narrative of the legacy of the *Great Patriotic War*, and Russia and Ukraine as a *common cultural space*. The results of the thesis research confirmed the use of the Ukrainian theme by key leaders of the Russian Federation for the internal consolidation of Russian society. Russian historical politics played a significant role in this. Speeches by Russian presidents, articles published on the website of the state foundation Russkiy Mir and speeches by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church clearly instrumentalised the Ukrainian theme and history in the interests of the internal consolidation of the Putin regime. They did so throughout the period under review, with the exception of Putin's first presidency.