

**The Double-Edged Sword: How Co-optive Measures
Have Influenced the Rise of the Radical Right in
Russia**

An Honors Thesis for the Department of International Relations

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Introduction

In this paper I explore how and why the radical right movement in Russia has been able to increase its visibility in the country in the post-Soviet era. Russia, being neither Western nor Eastern European, has experienced the emergence of a unique radical right movement that is intent on ensuring the preservation of Russian culture as the country progresses from its Soviet past. The nature of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 presented Russia with the daunting task of completely reinventing itself. The manner in which Russia undertook this endeavor has both given life to a radical right movement in the country, and fundamentally shaped its evolution.

There are two sets of questions upon which the ensuing research is based:

First: What explains the notable increase in the visibility of the radical right movement in the country since the fall of the Soviet Union? The 1990s were a decade of disorder in Russia as the country attempted to make its political and economic transitions smoothly. The conditions that these transitions brought about in the country greatly heightened levels of frustration among Russian citizens, as the economy was in tatters and the political situation was far from stable. Social distress in the 1990s prompted citizens to look increasingly to the extreme right for answers to problems that the ruling liberals were not providing. With the turn of the century, President Yeltsin handed power over to Vladimir Putin, and the ensuing decade bore witness to remarkable change in the status of the radical right movement in the country, a development that leads into my second set of questions.

In the first part of this thesis I thus examine the primary factors that influenced the emergence of the Russian radical right movement in the 1990s. The conditions in Russia in the 1990s as it attempted to transition from a communist, authoritarian superpower to a much-

weakened capitalist, democratic country laid the groundwork for extremist views to gain a foothold in the country. The country did not fully democratize and the economic transition was far from smooth. In addition, corruption took root; a failed war in Chechnya embarrassed the country; immigration into Russia increased dramatically; and Western influences were ever more evident. Citizens were frustrated and scared, and as a method of coping, both nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment among the population intensified.

Moreover, throughout the 1990s, and continuing today, Russia has been struggling with its national identity. The country is at its smallest size since the 18th century; many ethnic Russians were left outside of the new borders, and in foreign countries; and many non-ethnic Russians were left inside the new borders. Amidst this upheaval, a revitalized Russian nationalism has gained appeal as different movements try to assert their definition of what it means to be ‘Russian’ today.

My second set of questions arises from my first question: How has the government handled radical right activity? Why has it been handled in this manner? How have governmental policies influenced the development of the radical right in the country? The focus for this set of questions lies primarily on the Putin and Medvedev years, since the year 2000. It is no secret that under Putin and Medvedev, Russia has become increasingly authoritarian, shifting away from a democratic tradition that never quite took hold in the country. Governmental policy has both embraced certain ideological components of the radical right, and at times has also worked to suppress the movement. The effects of Putin-era policies and his response to the phenomenon will be examined in-depth in the second half of this paper.

In the second section of this thesis I focus on how the Putin administration has shaped the radical right movement throughout the 2000s. Since Vladimir Putin’s arrival to the presidency,

and continuing through the Medvedev years, the Russian government has taken a seemingly ambiguous position in dealing with radical right elements in society. Putin and Medvedev have combated such groups by passing anti-extremist legislation, and outlawing certain groups from political participation. However, they have also welcomed radical right ideology to influence Russian national politics. The government's inconsistent response to the phenomenon has fundamentally altered the nature of the radical right movement in Russia today. Putin administration policies have effectively co-opted the political radical right, and by consequence, have pushed the relevance of the movement to the extra-parliamentary arena.

Vladimir Putin's approach to dealing with radical right elements in society is especially important today, as it appears now that he may be in power until 2024. His imminent return to the presidency signals even more movement toward authoritarianism, a development that will further shape the nature of the radical right in Russia. Putin's return has prompted the Russian people to more publicly express their frustrations with the conditions in the country. The mass protests in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and many other cities across the country following the elections on 4 December 2011, and the most recent ones on 4 March 2012 demonstrate the very prevalent discontent with the country's current direction. This research paper is important because it shows how radical right groups have been able to first build upon citizen frustration, and later, exploit governmental policies to acquire a significant amount of influence within Russia today. As long as conditions do not change, the citizen frustration remains and grows, and the ruling elites continue their ineffective countermeasures, the radical right may be able to seize on the opportunity to steer the country down a path much scarier than the one Putin and Medvedev have the country on now. In this thesis I argue that the radical right movement in Russia has been effectively shut out from the political arena and forced to operate primarily as an

extra-parliamentary phenomenon due to the increasingly anti-democratic and co-optive measures employed by ruling elites since the middle of the 1990s. The radical right movement has subsequently been able to exploit these policies to experience their most visibility in the country today since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Theorizing the Radical Right

According to existing research, the contemporary radical right can generally be classified by its strong nationalist/nativist views, its authoritarian inclinations, and its populist (mainly antiestablishment) rhetoric. In his book, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe (2007)*, Cas Mudde offers a comprehensive definition of what he terms the populist radical right. He notes that the idea of ‘the nation’ lies at the core of radical right ideology. The nationalism of radical right parties always includes a combination of ethnic and state nationalism, and it promotes internal homogenization while excluding external forces. However, not all nationalists are radical in nature. The nationalism espoused by radical right groups, especially as one examines post-Communist European countries, is better termed as nativism. This nativism is “an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state.”¹ In essence, nativism is a combination of nationalism and xenophobia, and this element plays a central role in the groups and parties of the radical right.

On top of this nativism, Mudde adds that radical right groups are also authoritarian and populist. Authoritarianism is defined as “the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which

¹ Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 19.

infringements of authority are to be punished severely.”² He defines populism as an “ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people.”³ Finally, in using the terminology of ‘radical right’ to describe such groups, Mudde notes that ‘radical’ indicates an “opposition to fundamental values of liberal democracy” and ‘right’ infers a “belief in a natural order with inequalities.”⁴

In his book, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (2011), David Art uses ‘far right’ as an all-encompassing term referring to political parties, voluntary associations, and extra-parliamentary movements that distinguish themselves from the more mainstream political right. All of these groups view ethnic differences as “basic, immutable, and impervious to political projects that seek to change them.”⁵ Most of these groups espouse an ethnopluralism, which while not advocating for a racial hierarchy, argues against the mixing of ethnic groups on the grounds that such circumstances create for society problems impossible to overcome. A handful of these groups promote a biological racism as part of their ideology, effectively asserting the inherent superiority of some ethnicities over others. This ideological tenet often becomes aggravated by immigrant influxes into countries. As such, many groups of the radical right position themselves as strongly anti-immigrant. The anti-immigrant stances of radical right groups are furthermore supplemented by sentiments of anti-globalization and anti-European integration.

Art’s definition further draws from Hans-Georg Betz’s book, *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe* (1994), in which Betz explains that far right parties “reject individual and

² *ibid.*, 23.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Art, David. 2011. *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*. (New York: Cambridge University Press), 11.

social equality, oppose the integration of marginalized groups, and make xenophobic appeals.”⁶ Finally, these groups oppose core features of a liberal democracy, such as pluralism and checks on executive authority.

In Russia, the radical right movement has been forced to operate primarily as an extra-parliamentary social movement. In their article, *Conservative and Right-Wing Movements (2010)*, Kathleen M. Blee and Kimberly A. Creasap note that right-wing social movements are known more for what issues and phenomena they oppose, and not for what they support. They employ strategies of imposing fear and threat on others, and exploiting vulnerability. These movements are importantly further shaped by their interactions and relations with the state. In Russia, this fact is playing out in a manner unique from Western countries, as Russia reverts increasingly into an authoritarian, non-democratic state.⁷

In her paper, *Can We Measure the Influence of Social Movements? (2002)* Sandra Grey presents a framework (heavily influenced by others) whereby one can measure a social movement’s success. The article outlines three forms of political influence that a social movement strives to attain: participatory gains, material gains, and discursive gains. Participatory gains entail the ruling elite’s acceptance of the social movement as legitimate. This progress by the social movement results in a heightened willingness on behalf of the administration to weigh the movement’s initiatives, and place them on the political agenda. Concrete manifestations of this influence may include the creation of a new agency for the movement to influence politics, or its acceptance in the formation of public forums and political parties.⁸

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Blee, Kathleen M. , and Kimberly A. Creasap. “Conservative and Right-Wing Movements.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36, (2010), 269-287.

⁸ Grey, Sandra. “Can we measure the influence of social movements?” in *Jubilee Conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association* (Canberra: Australian National University, 2002), 7.

Material gains entail the new advantages gained by the social movement for its members, and constituencies. These gains may include the ruling administration's willingness to enact legislative and policy changes, its adoption of altogether new legislation set forth by the movement, and the effectiveness in which the legislation is enacted. Most basically, this measurement gauges the degree to which the ruling administration "alleviate[s] the grievances of the protest group."⁹

Finally, one can look to discursive gains made by a social movement to measure its influence. This approach seeks to determine if and to what extent a social movement has been able to change the frames used by other actors, in particular, the state. Such progress conditions the state to conduct its business so that it falls more in line with the social movement's goals. In essence, social movements succeed in effecting the change they strive for by adjusting the official language used by the state. However, the state can also strategically counter the rise of a social movement's influence, primarily through co-option. Ruling elites seek to co-opt a movement's discourse in order to prevent its further growth.¹⁰

The above theories provide the foundation for understanding the radical right movement in Russia today. Where the radical right movement in Russia diverges somewhat from these above theories is in the nature of its opposition to Vladimir Putin and his ruling coalition in Moscow. Because of the administration's anti-democratic consolidation and its increasing acceptance of radical right ideological tenets, many considered to espouse radical right views actually support Putin and his policies. This successful co-option has left only the most extreme actors in the radical right field in opposition to the regime. The movement's political significance has been absorbed by the Putin-era reforms. In its stead has emerged an extra-parliamentary

⁹ *ibid*, 8.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 9-11.

movement that has benefited from governmental policies in the 2000s to increase its visibility with each passing year.

The radical right in Russia has experienced the success outlined above since its emergence in the 1990s. Applying this framework, the radical right in the country has forced the political establishment to: take its political parties seriously, incorporate significant elements of its ideology; and adopt radical right rhetoric in everyday use. The movement, despite being effectively co-opted in national politics, has thrived in its new space as an extra-parliamentary phenomenon. On the whole, the Putin administration's policies have unintentionally served to legitimize and strengthen the radical right movement. The movement today enjoys more visibility than it has since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Russia's regression into an authoritarian, non-democratic state has caused inconsistency among the Russian leaders in their handling of radical right activity, and especially its violence. In his paper, *How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right: Understanding the Rise in Far-Right Militancy in Russia*, author Mihai Varga describes four government-created factors for mobilization of the radical right. These four include: failure to consistently enforce the law on radical right violence; failure to punish instigators of hate-crimes in addition to the perpetrators; collaboration between government organizations and the radical right; and the government's own ethnocentric policies and actions. The Russian government violates all four of these factors, and the radical right in turn benefits. Varga even goes so far as to declare that in Russia: "activities of organizations created by the government that allow dialogue with right-wing extremists, show that in principle the government does not consider right-wing violence a problem."¹¹ The Russian government, in addition to its successful co-option of the radical right as a political

¹¹ Varga, Mihai. "How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right: Understanding the Rise in Far-Right Militancy in Russia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 4 (2008): 573.

movement, has inadvertently influenced the strengthening of the radical right as an extra-parliamentary phenomenon. In this work, I examine further in-depth how the government's relationship with the radical right has played a key role in the movement's success today.

Methodology: Measuring the Visibility of the Radical Right in Russia

In my efforts to gather data on the visibility of the radical right movement in Russia, I first turned to the website of the SOVA monitoring organization, founded by Alexander Verkhovsky in 2002. SOVA has compiled data on radical right activity—murders, vandalism, victims, demonstrations, etc.—and it has also published many extensive reports annually, seasonally, and even monthly, analyzing the trends and providing an overall assessment of the current state of the movement. To supplement this data, I have consulted newspaper articles and scholarly works. I have also turned to the non-governmental research organization, the Levada Center, for polling data and publications in order to evaluate levels of popular sentiment in the country.

An analysis of the 1990s in Russia provides crucial background context for how and why the radical right has been able to formulate a strong presence within the country today. By consulting various scholarly works, I pinpoint what exactly caused the citizen frustration, and in turn, why this frustration has caused citizens to turn to the radical right for answers.

The ambiguous state of the Russian national identity today is well articulated in papers and books by a handful of scholars. In addition, I examine the agendas and rhetoric of various prominent radical right groups and activists to gain insight into the radical right perception of what the 'true Russian' entails, and how this conflicts with the official state position on the 'Russian question.'

The question of Russian national identity yields more than a few competing arguments. Radical right groups promote a vision of a nation for ethnic (*russkii*) Russians and/or Slavs. On the flipside, the state is officially in support of a civic (*rossiiski*) nation, although its inconsistent behavior may lead one to question the authenticity of this position. The unresolved nature of the ‘Russian question’ today lies at the heart of the radical right phenomenon.

The strength of the radical right movement in Russia is evident in election results, its influence on national politics, and its increasingly prominent grassroots activity across the country. As a starting point, I take a look at the success that the country’s most prominent political party of the radical right, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) has experienced in parliamentary, and to a lesser extent, in presidential elections. An interpretation of a successful radical right party, put forth by Art, is one that has managed to accumulate at least 5% of the vote in three successive national parliamentary elections.¹² In the first State Duma elections since the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1993, the LDPR emerged hugely victorious, winning 23% of the vote. In the State Duma elections that have followed, (the next one being in 1995, and all others following every four years), the LDPR has lost support, but has in each and every election to secure at least, and in most cases well over, 5% of the vote. In the most recent election in December 2011, the LDPR earned 12.5% of the vote, thus clearly demonstrating the attractiveness of the party’s ultranationalist platform among Russian citizens.¹³

While examining election results is one means of identifying the success of the radical right, much of the strength of the radical right in Russia can be observed in how the movement has shaped political discourse since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and especially since Vladimir Putin was handed power in 2000. It is no secret that since Putin assumed power

¹² Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*, 4.

¹³ "Russia country update - European Forum - for Democracy and Solidarity." European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. <http://www.europeanforum.net/country/russia> (accessed April 30, 2012).

Russian national politics has drifted into a more authoritarian state, espousing increasing amounts of nationalist rhetoric. I thus analyze this nationalist rhetoric as well as notable related actions such as the creation of national holidays and state-funded youth groups to promote nationalist sentiment among citizens. That the Putin regimes have adopted ideological tenets of the radical right throughout the 2000s can be partially explained by Putin's desire to remain in power. The government's increasingly nationalist and ethnocentric actions are furthermore a testament to the growing potency of popular nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment in Russia that groups of the far right have taken a hold of to promote their respective agendas.

Finally I further assess the visibility of the radical right by examining the movement's grassroots activity on the streets of cities and towns throughout Russia. There has been an appreciable growth in violent acts and vandalism by radical right groups directed primarily at minorities. In addition, demonstrations and marches have become more of the norm across the country, and have drawn increasing numbers of supporters.

Chapter Outline

The first body chapter of this thesis is broken down into two sections. The first provides an historical background of Russian nationalism. This is intended to provide the reader with an understanding that nationalism in Russia did not just arise with the fall of the Soviet Union, but it has a very long history attached to it. This examination starts back several centuries with the Slavophile-Westernizer debates and follows with an overview of the ultranationalist Black Hundreds movement that operated in the beginning of the 20th century. While the Soviet years on the whole mark a general lack of radical right activity, by the 1980s, in the final years of the

Soviet Union, extremist groups began to gain more influence and establish an initial identity for themselves.

This historical examination leads into the second part of the chapter: an overview of contemporary radical right ideology. Two major branches emerged in the 1990s—the neo-Eurasianist and the ethnocentric—and they have since largely converged as the movement has evolved. Both have heavily influenced both radical right groups and the Kremlin alike, and as such a basic understanding of the ideology is essential for this paper.

The second chapter analyzes conditions in Russia in the 1990s as the country attempted its transition from a communist, authoritarian state into a capitalist democracy. I give a brief recap of Yeltsin-era democratization and economic policies, and the national identity crisis that took root. This chapter also draws on other developments such as the war in Chechnya, immigration into the country, and the threat of fragmentation, that exacerbated the already-existent social distress. These conditions provided fertile ground for the emergence of a radical right movement in Russia.

My third chapter is an analysis of the nature of the radical right movement during the Yeltsin years. Behind the efforts of the charismatic Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, his political party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), made a momentous splash in Russian politics with its breakthrough in the 1993 parliamentary elections. This development altered the course of national politics, as by the middle of the decade the Yeltsin administration began to incorporate an agenda more in line with that of the radical right. We thus witness Kremlin collaboration not just with the LDPR, but also with the most visible extra-parliamentary group of the radical right during the 1990s, the Russian National Unity (RNE).

My fourth chapter documents the advent of Vladimir Putin to the presidency, and his immediate efforts to consolidate political power in the country. Conditions in the country had improved since the disastrous 1990s, but this progress was accompanied by ever more anti-democratic reforms and Putin's successful consolidation of power in a parliamentary ruling coalition. His policies nullified any possible political competition, including that which may come from the radical right, and they set the stage for the shift in his ideological platform that occurred in the middle of the 2000s.

The fifth and final chapter in this work analyzes the radical shift in Putin administration policies that worked to co-opt much of the radical right ideology. This development has both absorbed the political relevance of the phenomenon, while also legitimating the discourse and initiatives of the extra-parliamentary movement left behind. My analysis focuses on the discourse of the ruling elite, as well as specific policy initiatives implemented throughout the 2000s. These include the government-created Day of National Unity; government-sponsored ethnocentric campaigns; nationalists appointed to prominent positions in the Kremlin; and the creation of pro-Kremlin youth groups. I follow this analysis with an account of perhaps the most prominent radical right group in the country in the 2000s, the NBP. I next evaluate how specific anti-extremist measures implemented by the government have proven counterproductive in containing the radical right's influence. I follow this with an assessment of radical right violence, and the emergence of the DPNI, the group that has been the most effective in recent years in spreading the movement's agenda. I conclude this with my assessment of the reasons behind Vladimir Putin's inconsistent response to the radical right phenomenon, and what this means for the movement today.

I. Nationalism in Russia

A Brief History

The breakup of the Soviet Union brought with it the need to reinvent the Russian state. The reformulation of the Russian state consisted of more than just concurrent transitions to democracy and capitalism. It also necessitated the determination of what it means to be ‘Russian.’ The nature of the disintegration of the Soviet Union greatly complicated this task however, and as such, the dilemma of the Russian national identity remains unresolved to this day.

Ruling elites in Russia have been continually at odds with how to lead the country forward. Because of Western Europe’s earlier development and industrialization, there has always existed a natural inclination among government actors and influential members in society to look that way for guidance. However, this tendency to look to the West has elicited backlash among conservatives in the country who view this conduct with suspicion. They believe that Western influence inherently compromises the true Russian identity, and that it attempts to keep Russia weaker, and thus forever dependent upon the West.

The roots of the modern identity crisis in Russia can be traced back to the reforms of Peter I in the late 17th century and into the 18th century. Looking to modernize Russia, Peter I looked to Western European countries for guidance. Up until this point Russia was largely isolated from the rest of Europe and had fallen behind politically, culturally, and socially.¹⁴ Peter I thus implemented his Western reforms to catch his country back up with the rest of Europe. While many look upon the years of Peter I with much admiration and respect (hence his nickname Peter

¹⁴ Laqueur, Walter. 1993. *Black hundred: the rise of the extreme right in Russia*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers), 3.

the Great), others consider his modernization efforts to have compromised the true spirit of the Russian nation.

This conflict of opinion split many Russians into one of two camps—Westernizers or Slavophiles. Westernizers were those who approved of modernization modeled after Western progress, while Slavophiles were those who believed that “true Russianness” was being removed from the country with Peter I’s reforms. Slavophiles, in breaking with the modernizing agents in Russian society, accentuated Russia’s unique characteristics as the essence of the Russian nation. Slavophiles glorified the Eastern Orthodox religion of the Russian people, and believed that autocratic rule was “little better than a necessary evil.”¹⁵ Among the Slavophiles there also existed a deep suspicion of the West. This Western Russophobia believed that Western Europeans were involved in a conspiratorial plot against Russia. Slavophiles furthermore believed that the sheer size of the Russian country necessitated autocratic rule. Whereas troubles encountered by monarchies are able to be overcome in the short-term, those experienced by republics persist for much longer, and thus are much more detrimental. Finally, Slavophiles believed that the history of Western Europe was fundamentally harsher than that of Russia, thus its model of progress is not one worth following.¹⁶ (Tolz, 63, 85) Slavophile thought is perhaps the earliest precursor to the ideology of the modern radical right movement in Russia.

Westernizers, on the other hand, placed themselves firmly in support of Peter I’s reforms, and in general, of welcoming Western influences to assist in guiding the country’s development. The Westernizers criticized serfdom and the autocratic regime in Russia. They looked upon Britain’s constitutional monarchy, French republicanism, and the American Revolution and idea of freedom with high esteem, and believed that the country should welcome these influences

¹⁵ *ibid*, 7.

¹⁶ Tolz, Vera. 2001. *Russia*. (London: Arnold), 63, 85.

moving forward.¹⁷ In contemporary Russia, this debate remains, albeit in a new style, having evolved to be relevant to the present day.

The Black Hundred movement emerged at the turn of the 20th century and lasted until the Revolution of 1917. This movement refers to a handful of extreme right-wing groups in the country that were operating in the country at the time. These groups were strongly anti-Semitic, and they played a prominent role in the pogroms of 1905-1906 that wiped out Jewish communities across the country.¹⁸ The Black Hundreds promoted the paranoid notion that Russia was the target of a ‘Judeo-Masonic’ plot to weaken the country. (Masonic refers to the Western world).¹⁹

As Russia veered toward revolution in 1917, the Black Hundred groups used their anti-Semitism to play off the discontent in the population. Jews were made scapegoats for many failings in the country. They were blamed for inciting the pogroms, as well as for the country’s embarrassing defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. For the Black Hundreds, “the Jew was the Anti-Christ, absent and yet omnipresent, a powerful myth helping to mobilize ignorant masses.”²⁰

The communist takeover of the country worked to further confuse how the Russian people self-identify. Since the Revolution of 1917, Russian nationalism experienced an inconsistent, up and down relationship with Soviet state structures. This relationship at first suppressed Russian culture in favor of minority nationalities, but later, with the onset of World War II, Russian culture was once again promoted to rally the people. Yet, the institutional limits

¹⁷ *ibid*, 61.

¹⁸ Laqueur, *Black hundred: the rise of the extreme right in Russia*, 26.

¹⁹ Tolz, *Russia*, 117-118.

²⁰ Laqueur, *Black hundred: the rise of the extreme right in Russia*, 26.

on Russian culture (i.e. the absence of a Russian national territory or Communist Party within the empire) remained.

The Revolution of 1917, needless to say, brought fundamental changes to the Russian nation. In becoming the primary partner within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Russia began a new chapter in the inconsistent relationship between the Russian nation and the state. Most consequentially at first, many aspects of the Russian identity were suppressed in favor of an “affirmative action empire.” To this end, the new Bolshevik leadership created tens of thousands of regions within the Soviet empire based on minority nationalities. Within each of these regions, national elites were trained and given prominent positions in the government, schools, and businesses. In addition, each territory declared its own national language as the official government language, which sometimes even required the creation of new written languages where they did not exist. The government funded the large-scale production and dissemination of books, journals, newspapers, movies, etc. in the languages of the national minorities.²¹

This affirmative action initiative was accompanied by an inherent discrimination against the Russian nation. The Bolsheviks embarked upon this course because of their fear of backlash against the perception of Russian imperial chauvinism. The Bolsheviks intended to rule as a dictatorship, and to advance radical social changes, and this direction could be viewed as Russian imperialism. Moreover, the nationalism of the country’s minorities was viewed as ‘defensive response’ to such Russian dominance. Thus, the ‘affirmative empire’ was an effort to downplay the ruling elites’ Russianness; the Kremlin would not be identified as Russian. Of all the nationalities within the Soviet Union, only the Russians were not apportioned their own territory

²¹ Martin, Terry. 2001. *The affirmative action empire: nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1-2.

and their own Communist Party. The Russians were instead asked to support the newly formed empire without possessing equal rights as the minority territories. The Russian culture and by consequence its people, were suppressed for the good of the empire.²²

This suppression of Russian identity however was only maintained in the immediate transition to communism. With some time, perhaps out of inevitability, and the desire to rebuild a strong country, Russian nationalism reappeared in political discourse, this time under the guise of ‘Soviet patriotism.’ Russian traditions and values were restored; heroes of Russian history were once again given to admiration, and non-Russians in government were gradually replaced by Russians (with the notable exception of Joseph Stalin, who nevertheless espoused avid nationalistic views). In addition, by 1938, the study of the Russian language was made mandatory throughout the Soviet Union.²³

The outbreak of World War II cemented the reemergence of Russian nationalism within the Soviet Union. The increase in nationalism assisted the government in mobilizing the country for all-out war against Nazi Germany—Slavic solidarity was emphasized, and the Orthodox Church once again made an ally. Because of the grand scale of the war, Russians have dubbed World War II the “Great Patriotic War.” In addition, Stalin declared that it was thanks to “the great Russian people” that the Soviet Union had outlasted the Germans in the conflict.²⁴

Skipping ahead several decades, the opening of the political system and society in the 1980s leading up to the fall of the Soviet Union finally opened up an avenue for Russian ultranationalist thought to gain a more widespread audience in the country. The Russian radical right has since been able to exploit both the miserable conditions of the 1990s and the

²² *ibid*, 19-20.

²³ Laqueur, *Black hundred: the rise of the extreme right in Russia*, 62.

²⁴ *ibid*, 63.

inconsistent governmental response to their activity to become an influential actor in contemporary Russian society.

Contemporary Radical Right Ideology

The ideologies of the contemporary radical right in post-Soviet Russia have evolved along two basic ideological interpretations of the ‘Russian idea.’ One camp within the radical right movement advocates an ethnocentric nationalism: they emphasize Russian ethnicity as the fundamental factor of the Russian identity. The ethnocentrists are isolationist in practice. They advocate the development of the country from within, and place much reverence in the country’s rural communities. They are furthermore, as the name suggests, promoters of a monoethnic, russified Russia, and they consider any foreigners, and those who do not fit their ideal of the ‘true Russian’ to be the country’s enemies.

This camp may subscribe to one of three ethnic interpretations of what the Russian country should be. The first of these is that Russia should be a nation of ethnic Russians. As such, ethnic Russians would possess a privileged status in the country as compared to the many other ethnicities that comprise Russia. Those who support this model believe that Russians were disadvantaged both during the Soviet Union as well as after its collapse. For instance, the federal Soviet Union used ethnicity to divide the country into many different regions. However, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was the only republic that had no policy or institutions that attended to the cultural rights of ethnic Russians. The Soviet Union was a union of many ‘nation-states’ and the government “granted a specific status to all major Soviet nationalities save the most numerous and dominant—the Russians.”²⁵

²⁵ Tishkov, Valeriĭ Aleksandrovich. 1997. *Ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union: the mind aflame*. (London: Sage), 231-232.

The 25 million ethnic Russians left outside the new country borders have influenced support for this nation-building model. There exists the perception that Russians have become a ‘divided people’ and thus they should be permitted to unify once again. Supporters of the ‘ethnic Russian’ theory promote the centralization of power in a unified state as opposed to a federal structure.²⁶

A second ethnic nation-building model advocates the reunification of Belarus and Ukraine with Russia. This ‘Eastern Slavic’ identity considers these “three brotherly Slavic peoples” to share a common history rooted in the medieval Kievan Rus’ period, and thus their merger into one state is the most desirable scenario.²⁷

The third ethnic model envisions a state comprised of Russian speakers. This model refers primarily to Slavic Russian speakers, in particular those who identify as Russian. While this interpretation may appear more inclusive at first glance, there still remains the dilemma of those who do not look the part, yet still speak Russian.²⁸ It is unlikely that a person of darker complexion, or of non-Slavic appearance be accepted as wholly Russian as someone who is both ethnically Russian in appearance and speaks the language as well.

Above all, however narrow or inclusive the definition of the ethnic Russian proffered by individual groups of the radical right, the fundamental feature of this ethnocentrism is the intrinsic superiority of the Russian people. The ethnic Russian is supposed to play a leading role in the international arena in the future, and perhaps even to russify the world. A Russian Aryanism of sorts is endorsed, in many ways analogous to that of the Third Reich in Germany.

²⁶ Shevel, Oxana. "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?." *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 2 (2011): 186-187.

²⁷ Tolz, Vera. "Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia." *Slavic Review* 57, no. 2 (1998): 275.

²⁸ Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?" 188.

Ethnocentrists furthermore place much emphasis on the threat posed by internal enemies. Russia must be defended from non-Russian and especially the Jewish alien forces within the country. Ethnic purges are often promoted to deal with these perceived threats.²⁹

The second major branch of Russian radical right ideology stresses the geopolitics of the country, desiring a return to empire. Those who operate within this camp may be identified as great power nationalists, statist, Eurasianists, or today perhaps most aptly, neo-Eurasianists. The neo-Eurasianists promote expansionist policies as they glorify the multinational Russian empires of old, including that of the Soviet Union. They view the United States and Western civilization in general as Russia's chief enemies. Of the utmost importance for neo-Eurasianists is their goal to regain for Russia a dominant position in the international arena. In order to attain this goal, they promote a non-Western, uniquely Russian (or Eurasian) path.³⁰

The neo-Eurasianists promote a conception of the Russian state that may be termed the 'union identity.' This is an imperial civic model, as supporters of the union identity desire a return to the borders of the former Soviet Union. This line of thinking places emphasis on the conception of Russians being a distinct Eurasian civilization. Those who support this view would like to see a return to a large-spanning empire that fulfills a manifest destiny in the region.³¹

At the root of neo-Eurasianism is the idea that there is an ongoing, centuries old battle between maritime, or Atlanticist civilizations, and continental, or Eurasianist civilizations. Today, the United States is the preeminent maritime power in perpetual opposition to Russia,

²⁹ Parland, Thomas. 2005. *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*. (London: RoutledgeCurzon), 77, 161.

³⁰ *ibid*, 76.

³¹ Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?" 189.

which acts as the heartland for the Eurasianist empire. The two geopolitical entities are culturally irreconcilable, with opposing geostrategic interests.³²

The maritime societies are fundamentally comprised of merchants, concerned most of all with commercial and economic interests. They are democratic, tolerant, individualistic and open to change (i.e. technological). For Atlanticists, economics takes precedence over politics. Meanwhile, the continental civilizations are at their core comprised of ‘heroes.’ In contrast to the merchant who is concerned primarily with becoming wealthy, the Eurasianist hero embraces the goal of being a brave soldier. As such, the Eurasianist cultures are essentially military-authoritarian in their make-up. They operate under authoritarian rule; they are collectivist; and they believe in firm social traditions and in absolute value systems. For Eurasianists, politics trumps economics.³³

Neo-Eurasianist thought advances the notion that the Russian people are the unifying force for the Eurasianist civilization. While historically Eurasianism has distanced itself from ethnocentric impulses such as this in its support of a multiethnic, multicultural state, the newer ideology has placed increased emphasis on the importance of the ethnic Russian to the envisioned future superpower state. For neo-Eurasianists, to be Russian above all necessitates one be an imperialist. This belief recognizes that Russia must remain comprised of the many different peoples that it is today. However, it does not promote the coexistence of their cultures. Instead, neo-Eurasianists set forth the argument that their Eurasianist civilization should be grounded on ethnic Russian values. The ‘authentic’ Russian must be preserved: Russian

³² Allensworth, Wayne. 2009. "Dugin and the Eurasian Controversy: Is Eurasianism "patriotic?"" In *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. ed. Marlene Laruelle. (New York: Routledge), 108-109.

³³ Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 122-123.

civilization is considered superior to Asian civilization, and at the same time it desires to maintain its individuality from the spreading influence of Europe and the United States.³⁴

The common features that unite both the ethnocentric and the neo-Eurasianist tracks within contemporary Russian radical right ideology, however, form a stronger bond than do the differences cause divergence within the larger movement. Most significantly, both tracks support the rejection of Western influence within the country, and both are anti-Semitic. They both advocate the development of the country along a uniquely Russian, non-Western path, and promote the heightened importance of the ethnic Russian to the country. As such, they reject the Western liberal and democratic ideals that have unavoidably seeped into the country with the opening of the borders in 1991. Radical right groups within the country have seized upon both ethnocentric nationalism and Eurasianism to appeal to the Russian people.³⁵

³⁴ Shnirelman, Victor. 2009. "New Racism and Russia." In *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. ed. Marlene Laruelle. (New York: Routledge), 135.

³⁵ Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 76.

II. Russia in the 1990s: A Country in Turmoil

The traumatic conditions in Russia in the 1990s increased the appeal of extremist ideology to Russian citizens. The break-up of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought with it the need to fundamentally reconstruct the Russian state. For the first time in 74 years, Russia was not just the primary partner in a multi-national Soviet Empire, but its own sovereign nation-state. Russia was no longer a Communist, totalitarian entity, but instead was preparing itself to embark down a path of democratization and privatization. The development of Russia in the decade following the break up of the Soviet Union in December 1991 laid the foundation for the emergence of a strong radical right movement in the country, one that has strengthened and grown more complex throughout the course of the 2000s. The incomplete and inconsistent democratization and economic policies that the Yeltsin administration implemented during the 1990s left the majority of Russian people in worse conditions than they lived under during the Soviet Union. Furthermore, many Russians were left simply destitute and seemingly neglected, as country leaders were intent on righting the ship as quickly as possible, no matter the social consequences.

Democratization

The erratic democratic rule that Russians experienced under Boris Yeltsin lay at the root of the country's multitude of crises in the 1990s. Yeltsin became the Russian Federation's first popularly elected president in June 1991, and upon surviving the attempted August Coup, he embarked upon a course of radical economic revolution and power consolidation that divided the government and left much of the population impoverished.³⁶

³⁶ Shevtsova, Lilia. 1999 *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality*. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 17.

Boris Yeltsin's first two years in power, from 1991 to 1993, are characterized as the years of dual power, as the executive and legislative branches of the new government were constantly vying for power.³⁷ While this period was intended to be just that—a period in which the president would govern hand in hand with the legislature, this did not happen. The Russian government, thanks to the heavily amended existing Constitution, was both a parliamentary and a presidential system; both branches of government possessed significant executive power, and with governmental duties not clearly defined, conflict was inevitable.

At first the legislative branch, comprised of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet, supported Yeltsin's move to strengthen the power of the president. With the country preparing to transition from a Communist, totalitarian entity to a capitalist democracy, ruling elites were in agreement that the country needed a strong executive to push through reforms. The legislature thus initially supported Yeltsin's desire for the granting of additional power to the president. Effective for one year, Yeltsin was approved the power to appoint leaders of local governments in the country's oblasts, and he was also given the authority to override existing laws, and even to reorganize the government without parliament's approval.³⁸

Following the early support that Yeltsin received from the legislative branch, the country's democrats began to experience a divide. Yeltsin's increased power was intended only for one year, and considering the utter disaster of 1992, parliament was in no mood to see Yeltsin continue his predominant rule. Those following Yeltsin's lead however sought to maintain the president's extra power. These democrats were drifting toward a liberal authoritarian system of government that relied on a strong personality in Yeltsin himself. Those who found themselves increasingly in opposition to the president continued to push for the truly democratic government

³⁷ Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 42.

³⁸ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality*, 22.

that many envisioned from the start in 1991. This rift among the democrats played out in a prolonged power struggle between the legislative and executive branches of government.³⁹

The power struggle came to a head on 21 September 1993, when Yeltsin issued Decree No. 1400. This decree was an attempt to dissolve parliament and effectively introduce presidential rule. Yeltsin had his sights set on creating a new, more clearly defined Russian Constitution in which he could formally consolidate power in the presidency; this objective was of course in opposition to the legislature's desires. In issuing this diktat, Yeltsin sought to bypass the legislature altogether and finally push past the stalemate in government regarding the drafting of a new Constitution.⁴⁰

In response to President Yeltsin's bold proclamation, the Supreme Soviet impeached Yeltsin, and within two weeks, the conflict had become bloody. On 4 October, Yeltsin ordered the army to open fire on the White House, where the Russian parliament was stationed. Unable to contend with the military fire, parliament soon gave up its fight, and Yeltsin had come out on top, ready to push forward with his new Constitution.⁴¹

In the wake of this near break down to Civil War in the country, Yeltsin drafted his new Constitution, which effectively dissolved the existing parliamentary structures, and created in their stead the Federal Assembly, consisting of the State Duma (lower house) and the Federation Council (upper house). The new Constitution indeed granted the executive branch increased power; the president was now effectively the head of state and guarantor of the constitution and the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens.⁴² He also possessed the right to appoint the Prime Minister and all other ministers, among other expanded powers. The 1993 constitution placed so

³⁹ *ibid*, 33.

⁴⁰ Bressler, Michael L. 2009. *Understanding contemporary Russia*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers), 97.

⁴¹ *ibid*, 98.

⁴² Kuchins, Andrew. 2002. *Russia after the fall*. (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution), 47.

much power and flexibility in the executive branch that: “There was serious concern that any new leader who might succeed Yeltsin could use the new constitution to build a dictatorial regime.”⁴³ Freedom House democracy rankings demonstrate the decrease in the legitimacy of the inexperienced Russian democracy.

Freedom house Democracy Rankings for Russia 1991-1999

Year	Political Rights	Civil Liberties
1991	3	3
1992	3	4
1993	3	4
1994	3	4
1995	3	4
1996	3	4
1997	3	4
1998	4	4
1999	4	5

1 = Most Free; 7 = Not Free⁴⁴

With the new constitution successfully approved in December 1993 by the Russian people, Yeltsin had won out in his power struggle with parliament. However, the consequences of the protracted struggle were still to be dealt with.

The Economic Transition

⁴³ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality*, 94.

⁴⁴ "Russia | Freedom House." *Freedom House*. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 May 2012.

<<http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/><<http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/russia>

Yeltsin's economic reform team, headed by Yegor Gaidar, was responsible for leading the privatization measures in the country. Under Gaidar's supervision, the Yeltsin administration implemented its "shock therapy" reforms to lead the country out of its Communist past. The primary goals of this "shock therapy" were essentially to facilitate as quickly as possible the privatization of government-owned properties within the state and to allow for the formation of free market prices of goods in the economy. However, this policy initiative fell markedly short of what the government expected. While initial hardships for the Russian people were anticipated, they were expected to largely subside by the first nine months of the implementation of the initial reforms. This did not happen. In fact, the economy struggled mightily until 1998, when the country's financial bubble burst.⁴⁵

Contrary to the expectations of the Gaidar reform team, by the end of 1992, the primary goals of their economic reforms were as yet unfulfilled. Market liberalization had not progressed to its desired level, and many regions still had not rid themselves of state control over prices and distribution of goods. Moreover, the reforms had the country in a state of utter disaster. Official figures recorded inflation in the country at the exorbitant levels of between 350% and 400% in early 1992. (And independent experts even contended that the actual numbers were 150%-200% higher than the official figures).⁴⁶ By the end of the first year of the implemented shock therapy, inflation had risen to higher than 1,500%.⁴⁷

The figures at the end of 1992 presented an image of a country still languishing in failed economic reforms. Prices had jumped by 1300% in the last ten months, and production was diminished by 18% compared to the state's 1991 output. In addition, a government report

⁴⁵ Bressler, *Understanding contemporary Russia*, 147-152.

⁴⁶ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality*, 44.

⁴⁷ Bressler, *Understanding contemporary Russia*, 149.

released in October 1992 showed that one out of every three Russians lived below the poverty line. These citizens were earning the equivalent of less than five dollars a month.⁴⁸

The privatization process opened the door for significant corruption and criminalization in the Russian economy. An initial phase of this process called for the implementation of voucher privatization; every Russian citizen received vouchers worth ten thousand rubles (roughly fifty dollars). With this money it was expected that management and employees of organizations band together to acquire the majority of their company at a discounted price. This policy was confusing at best, and it largely left the old management in control of companies, and it primarily benefited the political and economic elite. The majority of the population did not understand how to use their vouchers effectively; many sold their vouchers in the wake of the high rate of inflation, and crooks, seeking to exploit the system, scammed others. This corruption manifested itself primarily among the government bureaucracy and economic higher-ups.⁴⁹

Corruption continued through the ensuing phase of privatization, in which Yeltsin applied his “Loans for Shares” program. This program allowed for a small group of the economic elite to gain ownership of valuable enterprises in exchange for loaning money to the government. These economic elites also spent large sums of money backing Yeltsin during his 1996 presidential campaign. This collaboration among the politically and economically powerful resulted in the creation of the well-known Russian oligarchs. These oligarchs would continue to exploit the period of economic transition, grabbing whatever properties they could at lower prices than market value. Through various manipulative strategies, the oligarchs proved able to accumulate tremendous quantities of wealth at the expense of the rest of the population.⁵⁰ As the majority of the Russian people languished in the economic turmoil of the decade, a handful of the most well

⁴⁸ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality*, 57.

⁴⁹ Bressler, *Understanding contemporary Russia*, 149-151.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, 151.

connected in economic and political circles essentially robbed their fellow citizens and created an immense wealth gap in the country.⁵¹

Outside of the small circle of oligarchs that emerged amidst the economic transition, the shock therapy and privatization reforms were devastating for the majority of the Russian population. The country's GDP fell so drastically that the country "experienced a more devastating decline in the 1990s than did the United States, Britain, or Germany during the Great Depression of the 1930s."⁵²

Table 5.1 Basic Economic Indicators (percent change)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Gross domestic product	-14.5	-8.7	-12.7	-4.2	-3.6	1.4	-5.3	6.4	10.0
Industrial production	-18.8	-14.6	-20.6	-3.0	-3.5	1.9	-6.6	11.0	11.9
Agricultural production	-9.0	-4.0	-12.0	-8.0	-5.1	0.1	-12.3	2.4	3.0
Consumer prices	2,650	940	320	131	22	11	85	37	21
Real disposable income	-41.0	14.0	-8.0	-13.0	5.0	2.5	-13.8	-15.1	9.0 ⁵³

The country's economic woes came to a head with the bursting of the financial bubble in 1998. The government devalued its currency, defaulted on its outstanding debt, and was now bankrupt. The value of the ruble was greatly reduced, and the Russian people lost almost all of their savings.⁵⁴ Only after Russia had hit rock bottom with the bubble burst of 1998 did the economy begin to turn around and develop in a positive direction.

⁵¹ Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 51.

⁵² Bressler, *Understanding contemporary Russia*, 152.

⁵³ *ibid*, 153.

⁵⁴ *ibid*.

The National Identity Crisis

The fundamental consequence of the turmoil of the 1990s was the attack on the Russian national identity that many in the country sensed was occurring. Russia was no longer nearly synonymous with the Soviet Union, one of the world's two superpowers. The new nation was instead a fledgling democracy attempting with much difficulty and hardship to transition to a capitalist democracy. Amidst the social distress generated by the democratization and economic reforms, several more factors in the country exacerbated citizen frustration through their attacks on the vitality of the state, and in turn, engendered heightened receptiveness of the radical right agenda. These included: the threat of further fragmentation of the country; the humiliating conflict with Chechnya; a tremendous influx of immigrants into the country; and amplified Western influence.

The power struggle ongoing in Moscow and overall perception of weakness in the Russian government also worked to foster desires for sovereignty in the different regions within the country, a situation that threatened to fragment the nation. By year's end in 1991, every autonomous republic and oblast, as well as half of the national districts, respectively had declared sovereignty.⁵⁵ The 89 different regions within the country took advantage of the Kremlin's weakened power to assert their own claims on sovereignty and heightened autonomy. To quell such demands, Yeltsin conceded much authority to the republics through a series of bilateral treaties. In so doing, he created a volatile situation within the country that placed the legitimacy of the Russian constitution into question, and threatened the very existence of Russia as a unified nation-state. The aforementioned economic and political crises that Yeltsin faced in the early years of the new Russia effectively denied him much leverage in negotiations with the different regions. The military no longer acted as a unifying force for the country, and federal

⁵⁵ Kuchins, *Russia after the fall*, 43.

authorities had lost control over many local branches of state agencies. Not even could the state profess to have a consistent foreign policy, as the regions often conducted relations with foreign countries on their own. In essence, the influence and capacity of regional authorities had increased in relation to the federal center. A segmented regionalism had taken root that undermined the country's central authorities and diminished the ability of the state to act as a singular entity.⁵⁶

While most of these cases were eventually resolved by 1993 with the different regions acquiring more autonomy in exchange for remaining within the Russian Federation, the most volatile situation in Chechnya remained unresolved.

Unlike the other grabs for more autonomy among Russia's different regions, Chechnya sought full-scale independence. This objective was pushed along by the election of Dzhokar Dudayev to the Chechen presidency in the fall of 1991. He immediately declared Chechen independence, which provoked Yeltsin to declare Dudayev's actions illegal, and to impose martial law in Chechnya. As the Dudayev regime grew progressively problematic both within the territory and for Russia, the Russian government drifted ever closer to waging war on Chechnya. Dudayev was proving himself to be increasingly authoritarian and criminalistic, and Chechen gangster activity had spread into southern Russia, with a series of hostage-taking episodes and bus hijackings rattling the Russian population. Yeltsin finally called for the military to intervene, and they invaded Chechnya in December 1994. This decision proved disastrous; whereas the government expected this military mission to be a quick and decisive action, the war became drawn out for over a year and a half, eventually coming to an end with a truce agreement in August 1996. By all accounts, Russia had lost the war.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Sakwa, Richard. 2004. *Putin: Russia's choice*. (London: Routledge), 132-134.

⁵⁷ Bressler, *Understanding contemporary Russia*, 210.

The Chechen war was a humiliation for Russia, and it further contributed to the perception of weakness and instability in the nation. If there was any question before the war broke out, there was no question afterward that Russian military power had been severely compromised with the fall of the Soviet Union. On top of this, the mere fact that this war was lost to a republic of Central Asian Muslims made the scenario that much worse. A people that was no doubt viewed as inferior to the true Russian race had proven themselves capable of exerting their will, and furthering their quest for independence at the expense of the Russian state, a development which, should it come to fruition in the future, would only contribute to the perception of Russian diminishing power and relevance. As it was, the war was a humiliation for Russia, and it contributed further to the perception of weakness and instability in the nation.

The fall of the Soviet Union also brought with it a tremendous spike in immigration to Russia. Many non-Russians from post-Soviet states immigrated to Russia because of the relative economic superiority in Russia. By the last 15 years of the Soviet Union, net migration into Russia from the non-Russian Soviet republics averaged around 160,000 people per year. After the collapse, immigration into Russia rose significantly, reaching in 1994, a net migration of 809,614 into the country. Of these immigrants, over 50% have hailed from the Central Asian states.⁵⁸

The demographic changes brought about by the tremendous spike in immigration caused an increase in ethnic and racial tensions in the country, especially in Russia's two foremost metropolises, Moscow and St. Petersburg. By 2002 Moscow had grown by over 16% since the 1989 census. Even more indicative of the impressive increase in the city's population is that Moscow's population relative to the rest of the country is at its highest since Russia's first census

⁵⁸ Bressler, *Understanding contemporary Russia*, 242.

in 1897.⁵⁹ The Russian people were not only suffering greatly, but they bore witness to a huge influx into their cities of people who did not look like them, were not ethnically Russian, and in many cases were Muslim, and not Eastern Orthodox. Unsurprisingly, it is these two cities that first began to witness an increase in nationalist sentiment, and which today serve as the primary hotbeds of ultranationalist activity.

The search for a national identity in the new Russian state has been furthermore complicated by a series of factors. First, the fact that 25 million ethnic Russians were left outside the newly formed Russian borders has created a thorny set of circumstances for the country's government officials in their approach to rebuild the country. Second, the diversity of the emerging Russian state in terms of its multinational and multiethnic character has further complicated the Russian quest for self-identification. The encouragement of the different nations and ethnicities within the country during the Soviet era influenced secessionist sentiments among a handful of regions after the break-up of the Soviet Union that threatened to further fragment the already much-reduced Russian state. Third, there have existed feelings of humiliation and insecurity among ruling elites in regard to the country's diminished power, territory, and overall global influence. Not since the middle of the 18th century has Russia been so insignificant on the world stage. The country throughout the 1990s relied upon the West for assistance in recovering from the Soviet Union's break-up. This dependence on the West in turn more readily welcomed the influence of Western culture into the country, adding further to the insecurity of the Russian elite. In essence, Russia had lost not only its superpower status, but its reliance on the West also compromised its independence to an extent.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 246.

III. The Emergence of the Radical Right in Post-Soviet Russia

The national identity crisis that emerged in Russia in the 1990s engendered an increase in extremist attitudes among the Russian population. Levels of xenophobia in the country were on the rise, as were attitudes of national chauvinism. Marlene Laruelle's study of xenophobic attitudes in Russian society demonstrates the notable increase in such sentiments throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.

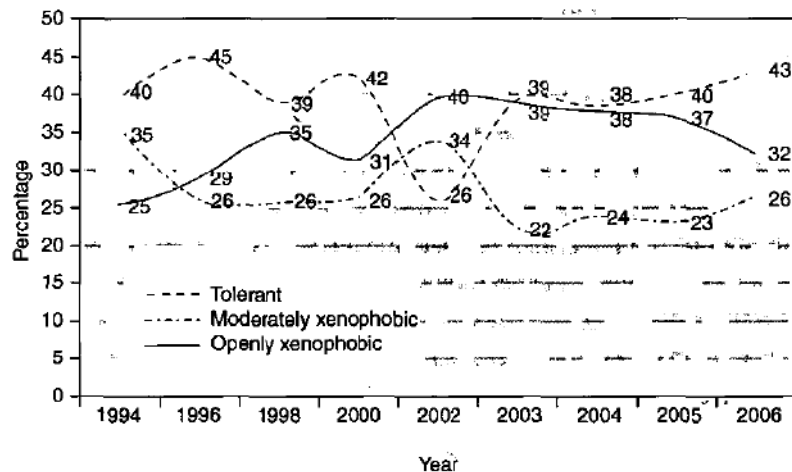


Figure 8.2 Typology of xenophobic attitudes, 1994–2006.

60

The heightened level of xenophobic sentiment in the country manifested itself in the growing prominence of radical right groups. Most visibly, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), led by the charismatic Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, experienced an electoral breakthrough in the 1993 parliamentary elections. This initial political success forced the ruling elites to begin to incorporate radical right ideology into their official policies. Other manifestations of the growing xenophobia in the country include the appearance of more radical

⁶⁰ Leonova, Anastassia. 2009. "Electoral Choice, Electoral Capital." *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. ed. Marlene Laruelle. (New York: Routledge), 149.

right social and political organizations throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, as well as a shift toward increasingly xenophobic platforms of the organizations themselves.

The nationalist sentiment in society can best be demonstrated by looking at polling data. In a February 1995 survey, 43 percent of respondents supported the idea of a Russia being primarily a state of ethnic Russians, as opposed to a multiethnic state. 38 percent opposed this view, and 19 percent remained indifferent or undecided.⁶¹ Midway through the 1990s, the uncertain status and future of the Russian nation and state influenced desires for a return to more predictable times and a move toward a Russian state governed primarily by ethnic Russians.

Russian nationalists took a hold of these growing sentiments in the country to become one of the three primary political forces in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the other two being communism and liberalism. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, communism largely fell out of favor. Meanwhile, the ruling elites were liberals, but their reforms were far from successful. As such, the nationalists were able to increase their influence and appear on the political scene. The nationalist bloc has rejected the rule of the liberals in power, as they seized upon the rampant discontent in society brought about by the country's fall from grace and the subsequent inconsistent economic and political reforms implemented in the 1990s. The ruling liberals' frustrating leadership compromised faith in their initiative to rebuild the country as a civic entity. This contributed to the creation of conditions in the country ideal for a turn toward more extreme views infused with more fervent nationalism and xenophobia among the Russian population.

The Extra-Parliamentary Radical Right

⁶¹ Tolz, "Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia," 291.

It was not until the 1980s—leading up to and during the years of the perestroika—reforms that the first official radical right group, Pamyat, appeared. Pamyat was founded in the early 1980s, but it did not become an influential factor in the country until the arrival of Dmitri Vasiliev in 1984. As the movement’s new leader, he quickly worked to politicize the organization. Under his tutelage, Pamyat “became overtly pro-monarchist and Orthodox, taking as its example the Black Hundreds of the early twentieth century.”⁶² The Russian Orthodox religion was considered the true spiritual foundation linking the state and the nation, and Pamyat doctrine promoted the conception of Russia as an ethnic-based empire that reincorporated both Belarus and Ukraine. The movement was furthermore strongly anti-Semitic, and it considered the evils that plagued the country to be the result of a global Zionist-Masonic plot that targeted Russians.⁶³

Ideological and organizational rifts within the movement eventually caused it to split apart in 1990. It proved unable to seize upon the opportunity to become a significant player in the newly opened Russian political scene. As such, Pamyat’s primary significance lies in the fact that many of its members moved on from the organization to found their own successful radical right organizations, and fundamentally influence the direction of the movement in the post-Soviet era. Most notably, after spending some time in the higher ranks of Pamyat the two figures, Aleksandr Dugin and Aleksandr Barkashov, both moved on to strongly influence the future direction of the radical right movement in Russia.

Aleksandr Dugin has been the most influential neo-Eurasianist thinker in the post-Soviet era. For Dugin, Russia existing in any form other than as an empire is inconceivable. He thus

⁶² Laruelle, Marlene. 2009. "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation." In *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. ed. Marlene Laruelle. (New York: Routledge), 19.

⁶³ Tishkov, *Ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union: the mind aflame*, 235.

promotes the return of Russia to its former great power status, and he rejects the Atlanticist hegemony of the United States that has existed since the Soviet Union split apart. In addition, while he upholds the conviction that Russia is naturally more linked to its territory, he believes that the Russian nation should hold a predominant role in the multinational state that will emerge in the future as an empire once again. He furthermore believes that this empire will have three strategic blocs: the western Moscow-Berlin axis; the southern Moscow-Tehran axis; and the eastern Moscow-Tokyo axis.⁶⁴

Dugin's neo-Eurasianist philosophy has influenced prominent groups across the political spectrum in Russia, including both the Yeltsin and Putin regimes. In 1990-91 Dugin founded the Arctogaia Association, which would become a think tank for Eduard Limonov, the leader of the radical right National Bolshevik Party (NBP). After briefly working with the nationalist-minded Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), Dugin became the chief ideologue of the NBP in 1993, where he remained until 1998.⁶⁵

In 1997, Dugin penned his influential work, *The Foundations of Geopolitics: Russia's Geopolitical Future*. This work became very successful and has become a mainstay in academic and political circles. The book allowed him to penetrate the country's mainstream politics, and thus begin to successfully exert his influence more directly on the Kremlin. In 1998 he became an adviser to Duma spokesman Gennady Seleznev, and in 1999 he was appointed chairman of the geopolitical division of the Duma's Advisory Council on National Security, of which the LDPR was the predominant player. In addition, Dugin began to regularly circulate his writings

⁶⁴ Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 122-125-137.

⁶⁵ Laruelle, Marlène. 2008. *Russian Eurasianism: an ideology of empire*. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press), 107-109.

on official government websites, and in the military newspaper, *Zvezda*.⁶⁶ His works have furthermore been incorporated in school curriculums and they have become mandatory for those receiving military educations.⁶⁷

Dugin's influence on Russian national politics intensified when Vladimir Putin took office in 2000. Dugin warmed to Putin as a political figure from the start. This is explained by Dugin's appreciation of Putin's emphasis on prioritizing state interests and national security. In April 2001 Dugin founded his Eurasia (*Evrasiia*) movement, which in 2002 became a political party. The group participated in elections as part of the pro-Putin coalition. The purpose of this movement was not to come to power, but instead to influence the ruling elites. Several years later, after having become disillusioned with the unwillingness of the Putin administration to adopt an outright Eurasianist rule, Dugin founded his Eurasian Youth Union (ESM). He did so in the wake of the colored revolutions, effectively seizing upon the anti-Western sentiment that the revolutions provoked in Russia.⁶⁸ This movement has played an active role in the organizing of the annual ultranationalist Russian Marches, to be discussed later in this paper.

Aleksandr Barkashov departed from Pamyat in August 1990 after having ascended to second-in-command in the organization, and in October of that year he created the Russian National Unity (RNE). Barkashov and others in Pamyat had become frustrated with the apparent ineffectiveness of their former group, and thus their creation of the RNE was done with the expectation that the new organization would prove to be more capable and active in promoting

⁶⁶ *ibid*, 110.

⁶⁷ Pain, Emil A. "Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors." *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 5 (2007): 896.

⁶⁸ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: an ideology of empire*, 112-114.

its radical right agenda. The RNE's ultimate goal was "the restoration of Russia as a national state and the rebirth of the Russian nation."⁶⁹

The RNE operated as a virulently xenophobic group that often made explicitly racist appeals and advocated a fervent biological racism.⁷⁰ The RNE is noteworthy for its use of Nazi symbols such as the swastika, the Hitlerian salute, and a paramilitary attire for its members.⁷¹ The RNE strongly promoted the Russian racial identity, which included Ukrainians and Byelorussians, in its support of an ethnic-Russian national state within the borders of the former Soviet Union. Non-Slavic ethnic minorities would be forced to respect the decisions made by those in control.⁷² Within these conditions, the country should furthermore rebuild its military, run a closed autarkic economy, and quell any 'weakening' forces in society, such as drugs, alcohol, interracial marriages, sexual perversions, among other such phenomena.⁷³

The RNE was a radical right movement that exerted its influence on Russian society outside of the political arena. Throughout the 1990s, the RNE was very disciplined and mobilized, and it retained a membership of roughly 15,000.⁷⁴ The organization was primarily dedicated to the use of violence to spread its message and RNE activists devoted much effort to the military training of their recruits (often teenagers), even receiving state support on the matter. Presidential decree 727, "On Measures of State Support for Public Organizations Carrying Out Work for the Military-Patriotic Education of Youth," signed by Yeltsin in May 1996, officially legitimized the state's collaboration with such pre-draft military training. The RNE experienced

⁶⁹ Shenfield, Stephen. 2001. *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe), 123.

⁷⁰ Allensworth, Wayne. 1998. *The Russian question: nationalism, modernization, and post-Communist Russia*. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield), 232.

⁷¹ Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation," 30.

⁷² Shenfield, *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*, 120, 124.

⁷³ *ibid*, 126.

⁷⁴ Bowden, Zachary. "Tomatoes and TNT: Neo-fascism in contemporary Russian politics and culture." *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (2007): 87.

even more cooperation from the state in their volunteer policing initiatives. Exploiting their positions as volunteer police patrols, RNE members would direct their force toward illegal immigrants, and other non-Russian-looking peoples. The movement was moreover involved in everyday violent tactics, often directed against those of Central Asian descent.⁷⁵

Finally, by the second half of 1998 the Yeltsin government undertook to put an end to the RNE's troublesome actions. Whereas the RNE found its ideology more closely in agreement with Kremlin policies throughout the 1990s, and thus welcomed cooperation with the state, the Kremlin recognized that the RNE ultimately envisaged an overthrow of government. The collaboration with the Yeltsin regime was a short-term policy with the intention of promoting the group's development. Once strong enough, the RNE would seize upon the opportunity to achieve power. As Shenfield notes, "any but the most short-sighted of Russian politicians" would have recognized the RNE's ultimate ambitions.⁷⁶ The federal government, in tandem with Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, thus initiated an Anti-RNE Campaign that lasted a year, and that finally swept the momentum out from under the feet of the organization. By 2000, the movement split apart, and has never been the same since.⁷⁷ The Yeltsin regime thus finally wised up to acknowledge the double-edged nature of their co-optive measures. They prevented the RNE from continuing to strengthen and infiltrate national politics, and successfully weakened the movement.

By this time, however, the group had already been around for a decade, and the successes that they had experienced outside the political realm foretold to an extent the development of the extra-parliamentary radical right in the 2000s under Putin. The RNE benefited from the government's incoherent response to their activity, and when Yeltsin finally decided that the

⁷⁵ Shenfield, *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*, 137-140.

⁷⁶ *ibid*, 179.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, 181, 186.

movement needed to in fact be repressed, an all-out effort was required to extinguish the flame (for the time being). With the advent of Vladimir Putin to the presidency in 2000, governmental policies toward the radical right became more pronounced in nearly every manner. Yet, the implementation of this policy has remained inconsistent, and by consequence, far from effective. The RNE was the most visible precursor to the brand of radical right groups that have evolved in the 2000s to exert an increasing amount of impact on Russian society, outside of the political arena. It was in the political arena, however, where the radical right was its most influential at first, in the immediate aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The Political Radical Right: The Case of the LDPR

Russian ultranationalists experienced a momentous breakthrough in the 1993 parliamentary elections: Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) received 22.8% of the vote, more than any other political party received. Even the pro-presidential party, Russia's Choice, despite Yeltsin's victory, was able to garner only 15% of the vote.⁷⁸ The LDPR's success was reflective most of all, of the population's dissatisfaction with the country's progress under the democrats in power; Zhirinovsky presented an alternative direction to the predominant strains of political thought at the time, rejecting both the pro-Communist sentiment, and Yeltsin's liberal radicalism.

In the wake of the political and economic disorder of the 1990s, it is not surprising that a party of the radical right was able to take advantage of the opportunity to assert itself in national politics. To better understand this success, it is necessary to take a look at the party's political platform, and why it proved able to attract support amidst the unstable conditions in the country.

⁷⁸ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality*, 101.

The ultranationalism espoused by the LDPR is heavily influenced by Eurasianism. Before the electoral breakthrough, Zhirinovskiy's principal vision for Russia was one in which the country's borders would extend to the south, allowing for Russia to effectively rule over its true geopolitical position in the world. Zhirinovskiy declares that he will peacefully return the country first to its Soviet-era borders, and once this is complete, the country will expand southward.⁷⁹ This endeavor would entail the re-annexation of former territories of the Soviet Union, as well as Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey.⁸⁰

The LDPR furthermore promotes the idea of the West as the country's chief enemy. The party perpetuates the paranoid sentiment that the West is plotting to prevent Russia from realizing its true potential, and thus it keeps Russia forever dependent on the West.⁸¹ Zhirinovskiy has attributed the misfortunes to hit Russia in the twentieth century, such as the 1917 revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union, to Western conspiratorial influences. He has charged the West with working to destabilize Russia through its alien ideas, religions, and life-style. In particular, Zhirinovskiy stresses the effects of Western cosmopolitanism as harmful to the country. Finally, he advances the notion that Russia's fall from its status as one of the world's two superpowers to merely a regional power, and the economic and political instability that ensued were machinations carried out by the West and Jews.⁸²

The LDPR advocates a revamping of the country's federalism via the eradication of the ethno-territorial-based federal system with a system comprised solely of territorial provinces. The party believes that Russia should exist as a multi-ethnic nation with ethnic Russians serving

⁷⁹ Allensworth, *The Russian question: nationalism, modernization, and post-Communist Russia*, 197.

⁸⁰ Umland, Andreas. "Zhirinovskiy's Last Thrust to the South and the Definition of Fascism." *Russian Politics and Law* 46, no. 4 (2008): 35.

⁸¹ Shenfield, *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*, 90.

⁸² Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 122-120-121.

as the country's backbone.⁸³ The party endorses the idea that the country should be bound together by a common language, law, and civic citizenship.⁸⁴

Zhirinovskiy tailored his ideology to exploit the social distress experienced by much of the population following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For each segment of the suffering population, Zhirinovskiy promised to right their misfortunes. He swore to return the money that citizens had lost because of the rampant inflation, assured everyone a comfortable life, and promised to double the current earnings of the Russian people.⁸⁵ He also made xenophobic calls to purify the country of the alien elements on the rise in the country, such as Caucasians and Central Asians.⁸⁶ The polls below demonstrate the disillusionment of the Russian people in the early 1990s that enabled Zhirinovskiy's message to garner such strong support.

Table 14.5

How satisfied are you with the material status of your family?

	1991 VI	1994 III	1995 III	1996 III	1997 I	2000 II	2005 I	2007 I	2009 I
Quite satisfied	2	1	0	1	2	7	8	7	7
Rather satisfied	17	6	7	14	11	18	24	28	26
Rather dissatisfied	49	36	38	38	33	36	40	44	43
Absolutely dissatisfied	24	56	52	43	51	39	27	20	23
Difficult to answer	8	2	3	5	2	1	1	1	2

N=1600

⁸³ Shenfield, *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*, 90-91.

⁸⁴ Allensworth, *The Russian question: nationalism, modernization, and post-Communist Russia*, 200.

⁸⁵ Solov'ev, Vladimir, and Elena Klepikova. 1995. *Zhirinovskiy: Russian fascism and the making of a dictator*. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley), 151.

⁸⁶ Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation," 28.

Table 2.1

**What feelings emerged or became stronger in people
around you over the past year?**

	1990	1991	1993	1999	2003	2008	2009
Hope	13	20	17	10	30	41	29
Tiredness, indifference	45	35	54	52	40	27	42
Loneliness	4	5	10	5	8	7	11
Fear	29	25	26	29	15	9	19
Self-respect	3	4	6	3	11	18	8
Resentment	15	19	15	26	18	11	16
Confusion	23	27	22	24	18	12	22
Envy	-*	-*	-*	8	8	13	12
Despair	28	26	18	37	14	8	17
Confidence in tomorrow	6	6	4	3	11	15	7
Feeling of freedom	-*	6	7	4	14	13	7
Bitterness, aggression	46	32	30	37	18	15	19
Responsibility for what is happening in the country	8	5	3	2	4	4	4
Pride in their nation	3	6	3	2	4	8	6
Difficult to answer	9	8	9	3	11	13	2
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>2500</i>	<i>2800</i>	<i>1800</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>1500</i>	<i>1600</i>

-* the option was not given
N=1600

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Russians in the 1990s were a poverty-stricken people whose families' economic standing had plummeted because of the Gaidar reforms. They had lost their jobs, their money had plummeted in value, and as a result they turned to Zhirinovskiy and his ambitious guarantees to right their wrongs. The influx of immigrants into the country aggravated the turmoil and provided the people with an easy scapegoat upon whom to blame their misfortunes. As the table below demonstrates, the bulk of immigrants into Russia throughout the 1990s hailed from the former Soviet Central Asian republics; these people looked clearly different from the traditional Slavic Russian, and as such they were easily identifiable.

⁸⁷ Levada, Yuri . "Russian Public Opinion 2009." *Levada Analytical Center*. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 May 2012.

<en.d7154.agava.net/sites/en.d7154.agava.net/files/Levada2009Eng.pdf>.

TABLE 2.6. Migration from the Former Soviet Republics to and from Russia and Ukraine, 1992–2009

	To Russia	From Russia	Net Migration	To Ukraine	From Ukraine	Net Migration
<i>Western CIS</i>						
Belarus	280,811	305,362	-24,551	58,535	87,843	-29,308
Moldova	242,409	87,273	155,136	124,101	63,991	60,110
Russia	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,248,425	1,512,158	-263,733
Ukraine	1,726,079	1,118,279	607,800	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	2,249,299	1,510,914	738,385	1,431,061	1,663,992	-232,931
<i>Baltics</i>						
Estonia	75,643	11,779	63,864	10,453	1,380	9,073
Latvia	123,503	14,055	109,448	20,801	3,022	17,779
Lithuania	60,019	15,455	44,564	10,810	3,611	7,199
Total	259,165	41,289	217,876	42,064	8,013	34,051
<i>Caucasus</i>						
Armenia	361,145	30,425	330,720	34,669	4,829	29,840
Azerbaijan	439,526	75,972	363,554	41,750	9,360	32,390
Georgia	432,792	43,544	389,248	46,522	7,425	39,097
Total	1,233,463	149,941	1,083,522	122,941	21,614	101,327
<i>Central Asia</i>						
Kazakhstan	2,249,657	486,520	1,763,137	88,780	30,162	58,618
Kyrgyzstan	467,151	75,476	391,675	12,564	3,415	9,149
Tajikistan	423,565	34,631	388,934	24,744	2,998	21,746
Turkmenistan	175,229	25,890	149,339	16,058	4,687	11,371
Uzbekistan	969,053	116,106	852,947	135,191	16,770	118,421
Total	4,284,655	738,623	3,546,032	277,337	58,032	219,305
Grand Total	8,026,582	2,440,767	5,585,815	1,873,403	1,751,651	121,752

Sources: Calculated from the following sources. For Russia, for 1992–1999, Goskomstat Rossii, *Russiskii statisticheskii iezhegodnik. Statisticheskii sbornik* (Moskva: Goskomstat Rossii, 1999), p. 201; for 2000, Goskomstat Rossii, *Chislennost' i migratsiia naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2000 godu* (Moskva: Goskomstat Rossii, 2001), p. 52; for 2001–2009, Goskomstat Rossii, *Chislennost' i migratsiia naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, annual editions. For Ukraine, for 1992–1997, Derzhavnyi Komitet u spravakh natsional'nosti i mihratsii, "Mihratsiina situatsiia v Ukraini," *Bizhenisi ta mihratsiia: Ukrain'skyi chusopys prava i polityky*, vol. 2, no. 3–4 (1998), pp. 207–21; for 1998–2009, State Statistical Committee of Ukraine annual reports "Rozpodil mihranciv za natsional'nistiia ta kraïnamy v'izduvvyzdu" (in author's archive).

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In addition to its already appealing political platform to a suffering population, the LDPR benefited from Zhirinovskiy's shrewd political maneuvering to experience its electoral success in 1993. The struggle to draft a new constitution prompted strategic cooperation between Yeltsin and Zhirinovskiy on the matter, which Zhirinovskiy was able to use to his advantage in the elections. In exchange for Zhirinovskiy's support of his inflammatory Decree No. 1400, which dissolved parliament, introduced presidential rule, and led to the opening of military fire on the White House, Yeltsin worked to block other nationalist parties from participating in the 1993

⁸⁸ Shevel, Oxana. 2011. *Migration, refugee policy, and state building in postcommunist Europe*.

elections. The only other alternative at the time was the Communist Part of the Russian Federation (CPRF), which as the post-Soviet continuation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), was not such an intriguing option for Russian citizens.⁸⁹ The LDPR was thus in possession of a near monopoly on the ultranationalist platform heading into the 1993 elections (the CPRF is often considered to be ultranationalist in its own right, but its identity as the continuation of the former CPSU, and the existence of ‘Communist’ in the party name misleads voters). With their appealing extremism given the times, the LDPR was thus primed for success.

The LDPR however has never since repeated the success that they experienced in the 1993 Duma elections. This is partly explained by the tremendously unpopular Chechen War that the LDPR threw its unreserved support behind. In addition, the opening up of the political system to more nationalist actors chipped away at the LDPR’s monopoly on nationalist and xenophobic sentiment. Finally, the party’s diminished popularity can be explained by the co-option of the party’s platform that President Yeltsin undertook in the wake of the LDPR’s electoral breakthrough. Yeltsin did not anticipate such a strong showing by the LDPR in the 1993 elections and he reacted by working to incorporate the radical right party’s platform into his own agenda. The LDPR’s electoral success demonstrated that nationalism and xenophobia had become potent sentiments in the country. Already viewed unfavorably because of his unsuccessful democratization and economic reforms, Yeltsin began to adopt much of the LDPR’s professed great power chauvinism in order to remain relevant to the Russian people.

Nationalist influence on Yeltsin administration policies is reflected in the shift in its state-building initiative. Russian politics under Yeltsin thus began to converge toward what Marlene Laruelle dubs, ‘patriotic centrism.’ A reaction to the country’s flirtation with further

⁸⁹ Allensworth, *The Russian question: nationalism, modernization, and post-Communist Russia*, 203.

fragmentation, this ‘patriotic centrism’ facilitated the statist model of strengthening the Russian state through centralizing power and promoting the Russian national identity.⁹⁰

The initial governmental policy in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union was to rebuild Russia within its new territorial boundaries, adhering to the conception of Russia as a civic nation-state. A civic nation-state operates as a collection of citizens of different backgrounds within the country borders, all of whom possess equal standing no matter their lineage, and allegiance to the political institutions forms the basis of how the country conceives itself.⁹¹ For example, Yeltsin at the time supported the independence of the Baltic states, as well as the desires of other republics to secede from the union.⁹²

The success of the LDPR, however, forced Yeltsin to shift course. The Eurasianist-infused ideology of the LDPR compelled Yeltsin to begin to conceive of the Russian state in more imperial-minded terms. For instance, in 1995 Yeltsin passed legislation entitled “Strategic Policy of the Russian Federation towards CIS Member States,” “which clearly underlined Moscow’s intention to reestablish its political supremacy on the territory of the former USSR.”⁹³ A year later the regime’s 1996 Conception of State Nationality Policy promoted a vision of the country as a collection of ethnic groups with ethnic Russians forming the backbone.⁹⁴ By the 1996 presidential campaign every major candidate was in favor of the ‘union identity.’⁹⁵

Perhaps the Yeltsin administration’s most significant demonstration of its heightened nationalism was its decision to invade Chechnya in 1994. Chechen secessionist desires

⁹⁰ Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation," 24.

⁹¹ Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?" 180.

⁹² Tolz, "Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia," 284.

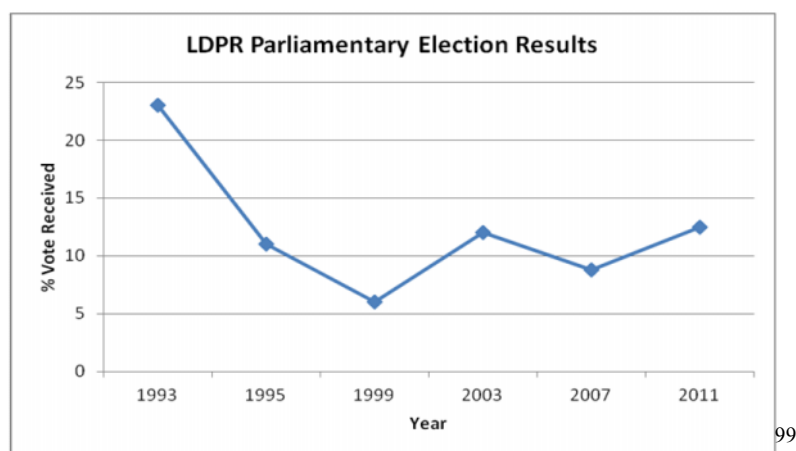
⁹³ *ibid*, 284-285.

⁹⁴ Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?" 181.

⁹⁵ Tolz, "Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia," 285.

threatened the further weakening of the Russian state, which should they come to fruition would be another blow to the country's imperial course. The military venture fell in line with Zhirinovskiy's often-militaristic rhetoric, and as such the LDPR unconditionally supported Yeltsin's foray into the secessionist republic. The LDPR was the only political actor to offer such strong support for the Chechen War.⁹⁶

Yeltsin's incorporation of LDPR ideological tenets worked to bring the group more in line with his administration. Although still operating under the pretense of being an opposition party, the LDPR almost always voted in unison with the ruling administration.⁹⁷ Despite this, however, the Yeltsin administration never completely absorbed the political relevance of the LDPR. Zhirinovskiy's party continued to speak out against, among other issues, the Kremlin's continued pro-Western foreign policy.⁹⁸ With the arrival of Vladimir Putin to the presidency in 2000, the Kremlin more wholly absorbed the LDPR, and the radical right movement by consequence was more definitively pushed out of the political arena and forced to refocus its initiative as an extra-parliamentary phenomenon.



⁹⁶ Parland, *The extreme nationalist threat in Russia: the growing influence of Western rightist ideas*, 91.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, 92-93.

⁹⁸ Umland, "Zhirinovskiy's *Last Thrust to the South* and the Definition of Fascism," 33.

⁹⁹ "Russia country update - European Forum - for Democracy and Solidarity." European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity.

Nevertheless, the LDPR has maintained at least a formidable electoral presence in national politics. They have consistently received more than 5% of the vote in parliamentary elections since, and Zhirinovskiy remains a well-known figure in Russian politics. The co-option of the party platform that was occurring in the 1990s under Yeltsin's watch was executed out of political necessity. The increasingly nationalist-infused Kremlin policies in the 1990s worked to merge the LDPR platform with that of the mainstream politicians. This development proved to be a precursor to the more aggressive strategy of co-option undertaken by the Putin administration in the 2000s. Since the turn of the decade, the party has become well absorbed by Vladimir Putin's ruling apparatus, and as a result its political significance has been all but nullified.

IV. The Early Putin Years: Consolidation of Power

Vladimir Putin became president of Russia on 31 December 1999. Under his watch, the country has stabilized in comparison to the 1990s, but it has also simultaneously developed even more into a centralized, authoritarian state. Putin has sacrificed further democratization in favor of stabilizing the country and reasserting its presence on the world stage. Many of the conditions that contributed to a fertile environment in the country for a radical right movement to take root and evolve actually improved in the 2000s. The economy regained its footing following the economic crisis of 1998, and for the first time since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the country even began to experience economic growth. After initial pro-Western foreign policy, the country has furthermore been more willing and able to assert itself in international politics, as it has reverted to a more anti-Western, independent position. Immigration decreased significantly since the 1990s, and the second war with Chechnya was more successful and popular than the humiliation of the first Chechen conflict.

Yet, despite the stabilization of the country and the improvement of many conditions within, the radical right movement has nevertheless proven able to increase its visibility in the country. The movement, however, has shifted its strength from the political realm to the extra-parliamentary arena. The Putin administration's reforms are the primary cause for this shift in arena, and for the subsequent growth in visibility of the radical right. The political success in the 1990s of the most visible radical right political party, the LDPR, has been effectively absorbed and co-opted by Putin's anti-democratic reforms, political finesse, and increasingly legitimized nationalistic and ethnocentric political discourse. As a result, the LDPR has evolved from

opposition party to simply an occupier of the extreme right wing of the pro-Putin parliamentary coalition.¹⁰⁰

As the political arena has been effectively shut off to all potential competition, power concentrated in the Kremlin, and the most politically successful parties effectively maneuvered into line with the Putin administration, the radical right's impact has shifted to the grassroots level, acting more as a social movement and less as a political one. Within this new arena, the radical right has been able to exercise an increasing influence on Russian public life. Following Putin's anti-democratic reforms and successful political tactics, the government's ineffective implementation of its anti-extremist legislation and its nationalistic- and ethnocentric-infused policies have inadvertently allowed for a refocused radical right to exploit the enacted measures to become its most truly visible since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Upon his election in March 2000, Putin immediately set about strengthening his political power. A first step in this process was his exploitation of the fear and insecurity among the population in the aftermath of several terrorist attacks and the continued social distress. In August 1999, 300 Russians were killed in terrorist bombings that occurred in Moscow and other cities across the country. As a result, the Kremlin's decision to move troops into Chechnya once again in late September received strong support from the start from the Russian people. In comparison to the 1994 military foray into Chechnya, which received 27 percent support by the following year from the population, a 1999 poll boasted an approval rating of between 61 and 70 percent for the second military venture into the region. "The Chechen invasion prompted in Russian citizens the very feelings that are vital for the formation of a new type of order—fear and a sense of vulnerability."¹⁰¹ In his first years in office Putin was able to exploit citizens' fear

¹⁰⁰ Umland, "Zhirinovskiy's Last Thrust to the South and the Definition of Fascism," 33.

¹⁰¹ Shevtsova, Lilia, and Antonina W. Bouis. 2005. *Putin's Russia*. Nouvelle éd., revue et augmentée. ed.

and insecurity, and use the momentum generated from a much more popular Second Chechen War to consolidate power in a one-party system, a development that absorbed the LDPR, and pushed the radical right activity to the extra-parliamentary arena.

Having drummed up popularity through his military action in Chechnya, Putin set about a series of political reforms aimed at consolidating his political control. He began with his *2001 Law on Political Parties*. This legislation entailed that all parties must retain a membership of at least 10,000 people, with a minimum of 100 members in 45 of the country's regions respectively, and 50 members in each of the other 44 regions. This stipulation replaced the *1990 Law on Civic Associations'* condition that party membership be at least 5,000 people in order to be registered as an electoral association. In essence, Russian politics would from here on out be comprised of fewer parties, all national in scope. The *Law on Political Parties* additionally prohibits the existence of single-issue parties. Parties are not allowed to evolve around just one single pursuit, i.e. associations promoting a specific religious, ethnic, racial, or professional agenda.¹⁰² This legislation has caused a number of political parties to dissolve, and many others to struggle to simply remain afloat, and establish themselves amidst the new provisions. These higher barriers have pushed many parties out of the political arena, and have prevented many others from entering national politics.

The Putin regime has also established measures that have reduced the influence of parliament in relation to the president. He ensured that the Kremlin would oversee the appointment process of members to the Federation Council, and he successfully created a friendly majority in the Duma. He moreover set up parallel consultative bodies to those of

(Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 36, 39.
¹⁰² Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's choice*, 115.

parliament, such as the State Council in 2000 and the Public Chamber in 2005, which have diminished the constitutional monopoly of the Federation Assembly.¹⁰³

Such measures have prompted many to continue to question the “superpresidential” nature of the still-evolving Russian democracy. Despite the passing of the 1993 Constitution and subsequent reforms throughout that 1990s that created a more centralized democracy, with power more readily concentrated in the presidency, Yeltsin’s rule exuded a weakness in the executive branch. Power was dispersed among the country’s regions, and the federal center was increasingly subject to conflicting actions by regional leaders. Putin, however, has taken advantage of the flexibility inherent in the constitution to build up his power, as he has taken Russia further down the road to authoritarianism. This backsliding is demonstrated in the Freedom House democracy rankings below.

Freedom House Democracy Rankings for Russia 2000-2011

Year	Political Rights	Civil Liberties
2000	5	5
2001	5	5
2002	5	5
2003	5	5
2004	6	5
2005	6	5
2006	6	5
2007	6	5
2008	6	5
2009	6	5
2010	6	5

1 = Most Free; 7 = Not Free¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Herspring, Dale R. 2003. *Putin's Russia: past imperfect, future uncertain*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield), 54-55.

Putin's political tact further enabled him to consolidate power around the presidency through his implementation of essentially one-party rule in the country. He did so by first establishing a ruling coalition with the merger of the already pro-Putin Unity faction in the parliament and the former rival Fatherland faction in late 2001. With this backing, Putin was able to pass through virtually any legislation he set in motion. The merger of these two political factions created the new United Russia movement. This union was paralleled in the Federation Council. Putin had successfully formed for himself friendly majorities in both the Duma and the Federation Council.¹⁰⁵

This formation of a stronger political faction was accompanied by legislative acts curbing political opportunities for potential opposition, as well as pressures on officials across the country to align with United Russia. Putin also worked effectively to divide the support that the Kremlin's chief opponents, such as the CPRF, were receiving. These machinations contributed to significant success in the 2003 parliamentary elections.¹⁰⁶

Putin also set about undoing the diffusion of Russian sovereignty to the country's republics, and to rectify the legitimacy of central power in Moscow. In response to this situation, Putin embarked on a course of many reforms that counteracted the instability that had been created during the Yeltsin years. However as we shall see, the Putin reforms swung the pendulum too far in the other direction, creating a strong one-party system that excludes any potential opposition. His reactionary policies stabilized the state as a unified entity with power

¹⁰⁴ "Russia | Freedom House." *Freedom House*. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 May 2012.
<<http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/russia>

¹⁰⁵ Shevtsova, Lilia, and Antonina W. Bouis. 2005. *Putin's Russia*. Nouvelle éd., revue et augmentée. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 182.

¹⁰⁶ Herspring, *Putin's Russia: past imperfect, future uncertain*, 54-55.

concentrated at the top, yet at the same time, they have hindered the country's democratic evolution.

Putin most of all desired a strong center of power, with the constitution acting as the supreme document binding the country together as a single entity. He recognized the asymmetric federalism that had emerged in Russia as a serious obstacle to the country's strength, and its ability to progress. Putin wanted to have the federal constitution and legislation universally accepted and adhered to by all the republics. In so doing, all Russian citizens would possess the same rights and standing within the country.¹⁰⁷ He proposed a constitutional federalism to replace the problematic segmented regionalism that had emerged in the country.

In June 1999, before he had been appointed as prime minister, Putin helped draw up the law, 'On the Principles of Dividing Power between the Russian Federation Government and the Regions,' which sought to remedy the asymmetric federalism that was plaguing the country. This law entailed that all new federal and regional legislation was to adhere to the stipulations of this legislation, and all past laws were to be revamped to ensure that they did not continue to contradict federal legislation. The law further laid down conditions ensuring that further legislation be more transparent, prohibiting secret clauses and sub-treaties.¹⁰⁸

On 13 May 2000 Putin created seven federal districts within the country to act as intermediaries between the federal center and the regions. These regions were to be led by presidential envoys appointed by the president himself. These envoys report directly to the president, and they also select chief federal inspectors for each region. Putin granted each envoy

¹⁰⁷ Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's choice*, 137.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, 133.

a seat on the Security Council, which plays an influential role in formulating governmental policies. Putin later gave the envoys a role in governmental meetings with the prime minister.¹⁰⁹

Not by accident, the newly created federal districts lined up by and large with military districts. The envoys that Putin selected to head the districts were furthermore primarily members of “power ministries” in the country, such as the police, military, prosecutors, and the FSB (the state security organization). In addition, the chief federal inspectors chosen by the envoys for the most part also hailed from these institutions.¹¹⁰ On 7 June 2000 the Constitutional Court officially decreed that the claims of sovereignty made by many of the country’s republics were unconstitutional. (Sakwa, 139) In essence, in creating the federal districts in the manner he did, Putin secured a convincingly authoritative control over the regions.

On 1 September 2000, Putin created the State Council, a development that diminished the viability of the Federation Council. This new institution is a consultative body comprised of regional leaders, and is essentially “a consolation for the regional bosses” as concerned their loss of sovereignty due to the many other centralizing reforms.¹¹¹ In 2005, the Public Chamber and the Council for the Realization of Priority National Projects were created. These new quasi-governmental bodies with whom Putin consulted instead, compromised the constitutional monopoly and relevance of the existing structures. Putin had succeeded in guaranteeing himself unconstrained power, to rule as he wished.¹¹² Many began to view the country now as a ‘managed democracy,’ one in which the Kremlin had so expanded its authority, that the other governmental institutions merely became puppets in the political process.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Herspring, *Putin's Russia: past imperfect, future uncertain*, 82.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, 84-85.

¹¹¹ Shevtsova and Bouis, 2005. *Putin's Russia*, 123.

¹¹² Herspring, *Putin's Russia: past imperfect, future uncertain*, 55.

¹¹³ Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's choice*, 122.

5. Vladimir Putin and the Radical Right: Aggressive Co-option

The radical right in Russia in the 2000s has undergone a marked shift in its relevance in the country. Whereas the previous decade provided fertile ground for the emergence of the movement, most significantly in the form of the politically successful LDPR and its charismatic leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the Putin years have notably altered the course of radical right organizations in the country. No longer should the radical right be considered primarily a political movement. In fact, its political weight has been effectively nullified by Putin administration policies. Instead, the movement has successfully adapted to become an influential extra-parliamentary phenomenon in Russian society today.

The current success of the radical right in the country is inextricably linked to the inconsistent policies of the Putin administration. As has already been illustrated, the anti-democratic reforms enacted by Putin allowed him to consolidate power in a one party system that has effectively cut out any and all opposition from the political field. This development of course makes it difficult for any opposition party, radical right groups included, to mount a serious challenge to Putin's administration, both in parliamentary and in presidential elections.

The second manner in which Putin has successfully mitigated the political relevance of the radical right is by co-opting much of the radical right ideology. The political success of the LDPR in the 1990s sent a clear message that Putin was not going to ignore: to stay in power, it would be wise to enact policies that reflect the Russian people's heightened nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment. The government's movement toward the right was seen to an extent toward the end of Yeltsin's rule, and Putin has both continued and intensified the trend. The government has employed nationalistic rhetoric and policy to rally the country around its efforts

to rebuild within, and to reassert itself on the world stage. In many instances, this nationalistic rhetoric and policy is infused with ethnocentric content.

Putin's closer ideological affiliation with the radical right movement in tandem with his political maneuvering have worked to completely absorb the political independence of the LDPR, a development which, more than any other, has forced the radical right to consolidate their influence as an extra-parliamentary force. Yet, despite this initial success, Putin's policies have since encountered formidable opposition in the form of a refocused radical right movement. The movement has embraced its exclusion from politics to become a formidable extra-parliamentary phenomenon in the country. The radical right has successfully exploited government initiatives to advance their own agenda, and they have furthermore benefited tremendously from the lack of a coherent response to their grassroots activity, including their marches, publications, and violence.

Co-opting of the Radical Right Movement

Throughout the 2000s, Putin's rhetoric and policy have been increasingly guided by nationalist and ethnocentric beliefs. Putin's policies have reflected the increase in nationalistic and xenophobia in Russian society, sentiments that increased throughout the 1990s as a result of Russian citizens' social distress. Above all, there was a pervasive uncertainty among the population about the future of both the country, and by consequence, their personal fates. Amidst this uncertainty, the Putin administration undertook an increasingly anti-Western, anti-liberal course. While the government benefited from the improved economic conditions since the 1998 financial crisis, Putin bolstered his power by constructing the West as the country's primary external enemy. The West made for a particularly easy target given its close rapport with the

ruling liberals who failed to guide the country smoothly during the 1990s as it attempted to transition to a capitalist democracy. Putin's increasingly anti-Western stance, and his intention to reassert Russia on the world stage fall in line with the goals of the neo-Eurasianist branch of Russian radical right ideology: the desire to re-establish the country to its 'rightful' position in the world as a prominent power spanning much of Eurasia.

The government's neo-Eurasianist leanings have placed much emphasis on the idea of the country progressing as a "sovereign democracy." This model of the country's political course discredits foreign nations' right to judge the democratic legitimacy of the Russian regimes.¹¹⁴ Establishing this barrier against the inevitable criticisms from the West regarding the country's anti-democratic direction, the country has furthermore aligned itself with non-Western powers. In 2005, the country conducted its first-ever military exercises with China and India; the Kremlin hosted Hamas leaders after the United States and the European Union cut off communication with the Palestinian group; and Russia has objected to placing sanctions on Iran for its nuclear energy program, and has continued its energy cooperation and arms trade with the Iranians. Russia has furthermore placed more priority on its post-Soviet neighbors in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹¹⁵ This defiant position toward the West has continued to the present day. In the past year, amidst the tumult of the Arab Spring, Russia positioned itself in opposition to NATO's military campaign in Libya, and to Western efforts in Syria.¹¹⁶

In order to rally the population to realize this ambition, Putin made repeated appeals to the Russian people invoking such phrases as "Great Power," "motherland," "fatherland,"

¹¹⁴ Sestanovich, Stephen. "Putin's Invented Opposition." *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 2 (2007): 124.

¹¹⁵ Trenin, Dmitri. "Russia Leaves the West." *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2006): 92.

¹¹⁶ Meyer, Henry, and Ilya Arkhipov. "Putin Ratches Up Anti-U.S. Rhetoric as Kremlin Race Grows." *Businessweek* (Moscow), January 27, 2012. <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-01-27/putin-ratches-up-anti-u-s-rhetoric-as-kremlin-race-grows.html> (accessed April 30, 2012).

“empire,” and “preservation of the nation” in reference to Russia.¹¹⁷ The government has also made claims of reforming a “strong Russia,” and has utilized Orthodox symbols, and militarist rhetoric. The Kremlin’s chief ideologue, Vladislav Surkov, has moreover increasingly invoked notions of “Russianness” and “nationhood.”¹¹⁸

Ethnocentric rhetoric on behalf of the government is evident in several instances. For example, during the ethnocentric campaigns that the Putin administration has waged (which will be explained in further detail later on), the government has utilized discourse usually employed by the radical right movement. Such discourse frequently invokes the ethnic Russian as a rallying point, and often derides immigrants. For instance, such phrases as “violation of the ethnic balance,” “army of barbarians,” and “cultural incompatibility” have seeped their way into use by public officials in the Kremlin in regard to the immigrant presence in the country. In addition, government officials talk of the “cultural incompatibility” and “aggressive potential” when referring to the Central Asian and Caucasian immigrants from the “alien South.” This rhetoric, that creates an enemy out of people that do not look like the prototypical ethnic white Slavic Russian, has proven effective and popular, and thus continues to be used by Kremlin politicians.¹¹⁹ In addition, throughout the course of the 2006 Anti-Georgian Campaign, the government employed such phrases as ‘Georgian thieves’ and ‘illegal immigrants’ to push their agenda.¹²⁰ Government officials have furthermore increasingly employed statist-infused rhetoric as Putin has tried to rally the country behind rebuilding a ‘Great Russia.’ They have referred to

¹¹⁷ Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation," 25.

¹¹⁸ Varga, "How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right: Understanding the Rise in Far-Right Militancy in Russia," 576.

¹¹⁹ Shnirelman, "New Racism and Russia," 140.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, 575.

Russia as a “Great Power,” and they speak of the preservation of the nation, of empire, and of “statehood.”¹²¹

A second example of the Russian government’s ethnocentric discourse is the January 2005 anti-Semitic ‘Letter of 500’ that made considerable headway in the Duma. 19 MPs supported the initiative, which sought to ban all Jewish organizations within the country. While Putin did officially condemn the proposed initiative, the controversy arises in the halfhearted manner in which he did so: he waited a full two weeks before officially denouncing the legislation. In addition, his condemnation was made while he was abroad in Poland, and thus it was directed primarily at the international community, and not the Russian citizens. Around this time, the country experienced a noteworthy rise in anti-Semitic activity.¹²²

In February 2007, the ruling United Russia party commenced its ‘Russian Project,’ which sought to further break into the radical right movement’s control of ethnocentric discourse. The ‘Russian Project’ was an initiative designed to raise discussion over what it means to be an ethnic Russian, and it was strategically inaugurated leading up to the 2007 Duma elections. The very title of the campaign—‘*russskii proyekt*’ as opposed to ‘*rossiiskii proyekt*’ suggests its ethnocentric foundation.¹²³ Understandably, many experts were concerned that a government-sponsored campaign on this premise would legitimize ethnocentric and ethno-nationalist discourse at the governmental level. Their worries proved justifiable: many radical right actors supported and even collaborated with the government on the campaign. Most notable

¹²¹ Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation," 25.

¹²² Kozhevnikova, Galina . " SOVA Center for Information and Analysis." Radical nationalism and efforts to oppose it in Russia in 2005. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹²³ Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?" 190-191.

of the known nationalist figures who expressed his support for the campaign was Aleksandr Dugin and his Eurasian Youth Movement.¹²⁴

Most recently, in January 2012, Putin proffered a proposal, published in Russian newspapers, entitled "Russia: The Ethnicity Issue." In this essay, Putin touts "the dominance of Russian culture." He asserts that the country's ethnic minorities should assimilate further into the country by becoming 'more Russian.' Putin even proposes a 100-book canon that Russian students will be required to have read by the time they graduate. These books would promote true Russian cultural values, and in their final exams, students would be required to write an essay on one of them.¹²⁵

The Putin administration's ethnocentric and statist rhetoric has been supplemented with policy initiatives, many of which have served only to give the radical right new life as an extra-parliamentary movement. Whereas the Putin administration's drift further to the right of the political spectrum was a shrewd political step designed to take advantage of the increased nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment in Russian society, many of the government's policy initiatives toward this end have proven to be limited in their efficacy. These policies have worked to legitimate radical right ideology, and they have also provided radical right groups with more visible avenues through which to exert their influence and build the movement.

Day of National Unity and the 'Russian March'

¹²⁴ Kozhevnikova, Galina. "SOVA Center for Information and Analysis." Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in 2007. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2008/03/d12849/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹²⁵ Nazaryan, Alexander. "Vladimir Putin would like you to read a book: Why his proposal for a "Russian canon" is scary as hell." *New York Daily News*, January 25, 2012. <http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/pageviews/2012/01/vladimir-putin-would-like-you-to-read-a-book-why-his-proposal-for-a-russian-canon-> (accessed April 30, 2012).

The creation of the Day of National Unity by Putin in 2005 has provided the most visible vehicle to date for the radical right to exploit to spread their message. The holiday replaced the Soviet holiday marking the anniversary of the 1917 revolution. National Unity Day, held on 4 November, is intended to mark the day Moscow was freed from Polish occupation in 1612.¹²⁶ The holiday was created in the wake of the colored revolutions in several post-Soviet countries, including most notably (and recently) the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004.

Although the Putin administration has officially maintained its vision of a Russia based on a civic identity, the creation of this holiday has obscured this distinction. The very nature of the holiday lends itself to exploitation by ultranationalist forces. Putin has described the event as one more attached to the celebration of ethnic ‘Russianness’ as opposed to its civic identity. For instance, in reference to the holiday Putin has employed such phrases and keywords as “the historical, genetic memory of the people,” and “the motherland.”¹²⁷ The newly created holiday further confuses official governmental policy toward the state-building project, and as such, it has fostered the rise of annual marches across the country by radical right groups. These marches have only grown in number and prominence over the years.

The annual ‘Russian Marches’ that have taken place every year on National Unity Day since the holiday’s inception in 2005, are the radical right movement’s most public manifestation of their influence. These rallies, as a result of the holiday’s ideological affinity with radical right ideas, come as a “logical consequence” of the newly created nationalist-minded holiday.¹²⁸ Except for the first few years, the marches have drawn an increasing number of participants, and they have spread to an increasing number of cities across the country.

¹²⁶ Morozov, Viatcheslav. "Sovereignty and democracy in contemporary Russia: a modern subject faces the post-modern world." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11 (2008): 166.

¹²⁷ Bowden, "Tomatoes and TNT: Neo-fascism in contemporary Russian politics and culture," 64.

¹²⁸ Kozhevnikova, "Radical nationalism and efforts to oppose it in Russia in 2005."



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The Eurasian Youth Union (ESM), the brainchild of prominent Eurasianist thinker Aleksandr Dugin, received legal permission to organize the first Russian March in 2005. Having drawn 3,000 skinheads to the event in Moscow, the group set the precedent for all future marches.¹³⁰ In subsequent years, the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) and the

¹²⁹ Kozhevnikova, Galina, and Alexander Verkhovsky. "SOVA Center for Information and Analysis." Racism and Xenophobia. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹³⁰ Varga, "How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right: Understanding the Rise in Far-Right Militancy in Russia," 574.

National Power Party of Russia (NDPR) have spearheaded the marches. The biggest march takes place in Moscow, yet almost every year has witnessed an increase in the number of cities holding Russian Marches across the country. Lack of, and faulty coordination between the different radical right groups organizing the events are the primary reason for the dips in numbers seen from 2006-2008. Yet the overall numbers trend impressively upward. The first march was held in just one city (Moscow), and by 2011, similar events, including marches, rallies, or picket lines, were held in 39 other cities as well. In addition, the last two National Unity Day events have attracted 5,500 to 6,000 participants to the Moscow marches, compared to the early years of no more than 3,000 attendees.¹³¹

The Marches have become such a massive demonstration of ultranationalism that the Russian authorities have been forced to enact damage control. The sheer magnitude of the very first Russian March in 2005 instilled fear in the Putin administration. The Kremlin's newly-created, nationalist-infused holiday had been successfully hijacked by the country's ultranationalists from the start, and as a result, the government has had to enact damage control every since. For instance, in 2007, nationalist leaders were detained and radical right activists were held by security services and interviewed in the lead-up to the Russian March.¹³² In addition, police presence in Russian cities is significantly augmented in anticipation of the Marches, and authorities thoroughly analyze information that comes in from different regions across the country regarding the demonstrations, "as if during wartime."¹³³

¹³¹ Kozhevnikova, Galina , and Alexander Verkhovsky. "SOVA Center for Information and Analysis." Racism and Xenophobia. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹³² Morozov, "Sovereignty and democracy in contemporary Russia: a modern subject faces the post-modern world," 166.

¹³³ Pain, "Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors," 896.

The Russian Marches, in addition to the impressive numbers of activists they draw, are also frightening because of their content. The demonstrators arrive on the scene with xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and anti-Immigrant signs in tow.¹³⁴ They wear medical masks and balaclavas, give the Nazi salute, and chant slogans such as “Russia for Russians” and “Migrants today, occupiers tomorrow.” They appeal to ethnic Russians to “take back” their country, and they often shout anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic vulgarities. In recent years, the manifestations have furthermore taken on a decidedly more anti-administration bent. At the 2011 March, influential anti-Putin blogger, Alexei Navalny rallied the crowd to chant such catchphrases as: “Down with United Russia! Down with the party of crooks and thieves!”¹³⁵

The state intended for National Unity Day to serve as a holiday commemorating the Russian nation. Like many other Putin-era policies, this holiday was inherently infused with Russian nationalism. However, while the Kremlin expected the holiday to stimulate some nationalistic sentiment in the population, the extent to which it has been commandeered by radical right groups indicates how severe an oversight establishing the holiday may have been for the Putin administration. The Putin administration has walked a fine line in attempting to co-opt aspects of the radical right movement agenda necessary to remain relevant, without inadvertently supporting ultranationalist objectives. In this case, the latter scenario has transpired. National Unity Day has become the radical right movement’s most influential means of marking their territory in the country. Judging by the growth in the size and scope of the Russian Marches in the last several years, the movement’s relevance appears strong and on the rise.

¹³⁴ Morozov, "Sovereignty and democracy in contemporary Russia: a modern subject faces the post-modern world," 166.

¹³⁵ Mirovalev, Mansur. "Thousands of Russian nationalists march in Moscow." *The Cortez Journal* (Moscow), November 4, 2011. <http://www.cortezjournal.com/article/20111104/API/1111040633/Thousands-of-Russian-nationalists-march-in-Moscow> (accessed April 30, 2012).

Nashi

The Nashi youth group in Russia epitomizes the Putin administration's incoherent approach to the radical right phenomenon in the country. Nashi was created in February 2005 as a replacement for the pro-Putin youth group, Marching Together, which had been in existence since 2000.¹³⁶ Marching Together, however, had veered off course when its campaign to ban harmful books and purge Russia of pornography lost itself the Russian people's esteem. As a result its founders worked to produce a replacement youth group.

Nashi was conceived in response to the colored revolutions that shook several post-Soviet countries in previous years. The colored revolutions witnessed opposition to the political status quo in the respective countries rise up in the form of young people organizing protests and rallies on city streets in order to influence pro-democratic change. The Kremlin recognized that "whoever controlled the streets potentially controlled the future of Russia."¹³⁷ Thus, the creation of a more formidable pro-Putin youth group was felt to be of firm necessity in order to attract the Russian youth before opposition forces could draw the youth for their coup-minded purposes.

As a result, Nashi was created as a pro-Kremlin and anti-opposition organization, and as such, it has experienced close ties with the Putin administration since its inception.

Vasily Yakemenko founded Nashi, but only after he previously headed the Marching Together youth group, and worked in the Putin administration in the Department of External Relations.

While working for the Putin administration, Yakemenko established important connections to high-up Kremlin insiders, most notable of whom were: Vladislov Surkov, the Deputy Chief of

¹³⁶ Buchacek, Douglas Robert. "Nasha Pravda, Nashe Delo: The Mobilization of the Nashi Generation in Contemporary Russia." *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (2006): 4.

¹³⁷ Ambrosio, Thomas. 2009. *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Pub. Co., 63.

Staff of the Presidential Executive Office and Aide to the President; and Gleb Pavlovsky, a veteran Kremlin political elite influential in the formation of the pro-Putin United Russia political party.¹³⁸ Surkov is furthermore the Kremlin's chief ideologue.¹³⁹

Surkov and Pavlovsky have been outspoken in their guidance of Nashi's objectives and desired conduct. They have identified the West, with its capacity to manipulate Russian citizens to rise in revolt, as Russia's primary external enemy. 'Fascists,' a term that includes the radical right groups discussed in this paper, are defined as the state's foremost internal enemy. The Kremlin employs this vocabulary because of the connection that can be made with the Nazis of World War II, who are very much despised by Russians for obvious reasons. In order to combat these threats, the Kremlin insiders urged the use of violence by the Nashi youth. Pavlovsky has, in the past, criticized Nashi for not more directly suppressing opposition forces, and he insisted that the group be allowed to resort to violence in the future.¹⁴⁰ Nashi thus regularly uses violence, and often holds hostile counter-rallies to counteract anti-Kremlin activity. Nashi's ultimate goal is to preserve the status quo in the country.¹⁴¹

As a vehemently pro-Putin organization Nashi logically is very much infused with nationalist ideology. In addition to preventing insurrectionary forces from mobilizing on city streets, the groups seeks to help Russia recover its true standing in the international arena, "at the center of world culture and civilization."¹⁴² Nashi draws largely on the Russian experience in World War II (or as the Russians call it, the Great Patriotic War) to revive nationalism among the citizens. For instance, the group rallies around such occasions as Victory Day on 9 May—the

¹³⁸ Buchacek, "Nasha Pravda, Nashe Delo: The Mobilization of the Nashi Generation in Contemporary Russia," 3-4.

¹³⁹ Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*, 62.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 63-64

¹⁴¹ Bowden, "Tomatoes and TNT: Neo-fascism in contemporary Russian politics and culture," 75-76.

¹⁴² Buchacek, "Nasha Pravda, Nashe Delo: The Mobilization of the Nashi Generation in Contemporary Russia," 3.

anniversary of Russia's triumph in the Great Patriotic War. In 2005, the group successfully gathered over 50,000 people to participate in a rally to commemorate the day. This rally was christened the "Our Victory" rally, and it also worked to equate Russia's modern day enemies as similar to their foes during WWII.¹⁴³ Much like the Soviet Union encouraged nationalistic sentiment in the face of the Nazi threat, the Putin administration has done so in order to combat penetrating Western ideas.

In order to effectively mobilize its youth in concert with Kremlin ideology, Nashi furthermore holds annual summer camps. At these camps, Nashi members are indoctrinated with pro-Kremlin, pro-Russia ideology, and they are trained on how to effectively organize and conduct themselves in support of said ideology, and in the face of Russia's principal enemies—Western forces from abroad and fascists from within. The Seliger-2005 camp was the first of these camps to be held, for two weeks in July of that year with the purpose of preparing the higher-ups within the organization for future political participation, as well as for how to guide the rest of the Nashi youth. 3,000 Nashists from 45 cities across the country attended this camp, replete with over 870 hours of lecture in addition to 400 separate classes, seminars and workshops.¹⁴⁴

Membership in Nashi grew quickly from the moment the group was established. By late 2007, Nashi laid claim to roughly 120,000 young activists between the ages of 17 and 25.¹⁴⁵ Nashi attracts its members by running annual recruiting camps throughout the country, and the perks of joining the movement are clear: members benefit from free admission to institutions of higher education to study government, business, or public relations. They are also presented with

¹⁴³ *ibid*, 5.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, 38, 40.

¹⁴⁵ Harding, Luke. "Welcome to Putin's summer camp...." *The Guardian* (London), July 23, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/24/russia> (accessed April 30, 2012).

prominent internships in large state enterprises like Gazprom, in state-controlled television stations, and in the Kremlin.¹⁴⁶

The Nashi youth group's efforts to stem the growing influence of opposition groups in the country, has succeeded only in increasing the visibility of radical right groups. For instance, Nashi regularly engaged in violence on the streets against the National Bolshevik Party (NBP) (described below), activity that strengthened the NBP's position in Russian society.¹⁴⁷ In addition, Nashi's activity at the same time provides radical right groups with an enemy on the streets around which to bolster their initiative, while it also legitimizes the violent and disruptive behavior that radical right groups have increasingly undertaken to impose their agenda. If the state employs such tactics, then opposition groups will feel empowered to do the same.

Government-sponsored Ethnocentric Campaigns

The Putin years have also been marked by a growing approval within the government of ethnocentric policy initiatives. One such project was the Anti-Georgian Campaign of 2006, implemented in response to the decline of Russian-Georgian relations over the expulsion of Russian diplomats. The campaign was directed against Georgian citizens and ethnically Georgian Russian citizens, and had as its intent the co-option of "speaking for the *russkie*" from nationalist groups.¹⁴⁸

The Rose Revolution that occurred in Georgia in November 2003 set the stage for the next several years of deteriorating relations with Russia that eventually resulted in the 2006 Anti-

¹⁴⁶ Matthews, Owen, and Anna Nemtsova. "Young Russia Rises." *The Daily Beast (New York)*, May 27, 2007. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2007/05/27/young-russia-rises.html> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁴⁷ Bowden, "Tomatoes and TNT: Neo-fascism in contemporary Russian politics and culture," 116.

¹⁴⁸ Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic, or Purposefully Ambiguous?" 190-191.

Georgian Campaign. The Rose Revolution was the first of the colored revolutions in the post-Soviet space. The Orange Revolution that transpired in Ukraine in 2004 signaled to Russian authorities that their regime could be the next to topple. As a result, Kremlin relations with both countries turned hostile.

Over the course of 2005 Russian authorities decried the Rose Revolution as an undemocratic coup that should be prevented from happening in their own country. 2005 also witnessed controversy between the two countries surrounding Russian supply of natural gas to Georgia, Russian military bases, and the Russian-supported secessionist provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. Russian officials disregarded Georgian jurisdiction over these provinces. Under the guise of peacekeeping operations, they would travel to and from these provinces without applying for Georgian visas, and that issued Russian visas, and granted Russian citizenship to many residents of the two regions. They furthermore proclaimed that South Ossetia and Abkhazia should have the right to self-determination.¹⁴⁹

Georgian authorities responded to this challenge to their sovereignty by expelling the Russian peacekeepers. Several months later, in September 2006, Georgian officials detained four Russian military officers and twelve Georgian citizens on spying charges. They also encircled Russian military forces at their Tbilisi headquarters.¹⁵⁰

It is in response to this significant deterioration of relations that the Kremlin implemented its Anti-Georgian Campaign. The Kremlin evacuated most of its embassy personnel, including its ambassador, and their families, from Georgia. They furthermore continued their restrictions on Georgian imports such as wine and mineral water; closed a Georgian-associated casino in Moscow; cut off transport measures to Georgia; refused to issue visas to Georgians; prevented

¹⁴⁹ Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*, 139-141.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, 141.

Georgian émigrés from sending mail and transferring money back home; and even expelled Georgians from Russia for often seemingly no reason. Later, Russia even imposed banking and immigration controls on Georgians.¹⁵¹

The following year, in the spring of 2007, the Kremlin launched its Anti-Estonian Campaign. This initiative came in the wake of a vote by the Estonian government to remove the Soviet-era Bronze Soldier monument from the center of the Estonian capital city, Tallinn. Whereas Russians in Estonia (left outside of the newly drawn borders) regarded this statue as a connection to their homeland, Estonians viewed it as a stark reminder of Soviet control over their country. Upon the removal of the monument from the city center, and its relocation to a military cemetery, riots broke out in the streets of Tallinn, and the police crackdown resulted in the death of a Russian citizen.¹⁵²

The Russian government responded with a campaign reminiscent of its Anti-Georgian campaign of the previous year. The Russian government was outraged by the Bronze Soldier's relocation and initiated an overwhelming cyber-war on Estonian news agencies, banks, and government offices, as well as private Estonian websites. The billions of e-mails sent to the websites of these establishments caused servers to go down, and burst bandwidths.¹⁵³

Within Russia, Nashi and other pro-Kremlin youth group activists stormed a press conference that was being held by the Estonian ambassador, and the ambassador's bodyguards had to use Mace on the assailants to weather the attack.¹⁵⁴ Pro-Kremlin youth group members also blockaded the Estonian Embassy in Moscow for over a week.¹⁵⁵ In other Russian cities there

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 97.

¹⁵³ Matthews and Nemtsova. "Young Russia Rises."

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Ambrosio, *Authoritarian backlash: Russian resistance to democratization in the former Soviet Union*, 100.

occurred isolated anti-Estonian incidents that local authorities declined to react to altogether. This ethnocentric project was much less consequential than the previous anti-Georgian one, but once again the campaign evolved into one promoting xenophobic propaganda and discrimination.¹⁵⁶

Ultrationalists in the Putin Administration

Vladimir Putin has made several noteworthy appointments of known ultrationalists to prominent government positions. These appointments demonstrate additional effort by the Putin administration to co-opt to a certain extent radical right ideology. By appointing known leaders of radical right groups, past or present, the Kremlin sends a clear message to the people that, as concerns the radical right movement in the country, it is not the movement's ideology that the government is at odds with, but it is the threat that the movement poses to the political status quo that strikes fear in the government. Incorporating ultrationalist leaders into his own government absorbs a significant aspect of the external threat, and in so doing moves the Kremlin even farther right on the political spectrum.

Two notable appointments to prominent government positions stand out. The first occurred in 2004 when Vladimir Putin selected a leader of the radical right National Great Power Party of Russia (NDPR), Alexander Sevastyanov, to be a parliamentary expert on the nationality dilemma. Sevastyanov has an unsettling resume of activity. Firstly, his group, the NDPR, has been a foremost player in the radical right movement since 2006. Secondly, in 2004 Sevastyanov expressed his approval of the well-publicized murder of St. Petersburg scientist, Nikolay Girenko. Girenko had written several expert studies dealing with leaders of the radical right

¹⁵⁶ Kozhevnikova, Galina. "Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in 2007."

movement in Russia, and the nationalist organization, The Russian Republic, had owned up to the incident.¹⁵⁷

Thirdly, in his position as co-chairman of the NDPR, Sevastyanov has promoted an ethnicity policy in Russia whereby one's bloodline would be analyzed to determine who truly belonged to the Russian nation. This genetic lineage would be traced back three generations to ensure its purity. (ibid, 905) Finally, as parliamentary expert on the nationality dilemma for the Putin administration, Sevast'yanov helped organize a country-wide essay contest for school children, providing the prompt: "What it means to be Russian today." On this initiative, Sevastyanov even received cooperation from the State Duma Committee on Culture and Tourism.¹⁵⁸

Putin's second notable governmental appointment occurred in November 2007 with his appointment of Dmitri Rogozin to the post of Russian representative to NATO. Rogozin is the highest-profile Russian nationalist in the Putin government. He is the former leader of the Rodina party, a Kremlin-created political party that later fell out of favor with the Kremlin because its agenda was deemed too extremist. The Rodina party was disqualified from Moscow city council elections following a video advertisement that the court deemed racist. Before Rogozin and the Rodina party experienced this setback, however, the party performed well in the 2003 parliamentary elections, behind guarantees of protecting the interests of ethnic Russian citizens.¹⁵⁹ Rogozin officially stepped down in 2006 when Rodina merged with two other political parties to form a new party, A Just Russia.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Pain, "Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors," 900.

¹⁵⁸ ibid, 899.

¹⁵⁹ Faulconbridge, Guy. "Putin appoints firebrand as Russia's NATO envoy." *Business & Financial News* (Moscow), January 10, 2008. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/01/10/us-russia-nato-idUSL1013337420080110> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁶⁰ *The Moscow Times*, "Dmitry Rogozin," April 1, 2011.

Rogozin has also in the past helped organize the 2006 Russian March, and he has furthermore collaborated with, among others, Alexander Belov, the leader of the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI).¹⁶¹ In 2007 he joined forces with Belov to create a new political party, Great Russia. The party's ideological platform is anti-Liberal, anti-Western, and it advocates that Russia progress along its own unique path.

Thus, based on his past, one can easily interpret Rogozin's appointment to the important foreign policy position as Russia's representative to NATO as additional acceptance of radical right principles by the Kremlin. Rogozin's policies in his new position are influenced by his view that that Russia needs to bolster its forces to offset the threat from the West. This will also work toward regaining Russia's great power status. Rogozin has furthermore led Russia's oppositional stance toward American plans to construct a missile shield in Eastern Europe.¹⁶²

The National Bolshevik Party (NBP)

The National Bolshevik Party provides a helpful case study that illuminates how governmental policies during the Putin years have affected the radical right movement in the country. is an opposition party first, and a party of the radical right second. Founded in 1993 by Eduard Limonov and Aleksandr Dugin, the NBP grew to a size of 6,000 to 7,000 members by 2001.¹⁶³ By the middle of the 2000s, membership reached the notable number of roughly 20,000 activists.¹⁶⁴ Dugin, the renowned Eurasianist, is responsible for the group's ideological underpinnings. Similar to the other parties of the radical right, Dugin's program lists liberalism,

¹⁶¹ Verkhovsky, Alexander . "Future prospects for nationalism." In *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. ed. Marlene Laruelle. New York: Routledge, 2009. 97-98.

¹⁶² Faulconbridge, "Putin appoints firebrand as Russia's NATO envoy."

¹⁶³ Shenfield, *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*, 190.

¹⁶⁴ Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian nationalism: Historical continuity, political diversity, and doctrinal fragmentation," 31.

democracy, and capitalism as undesirable forces in Russian society. The NBP insists on centralized power, a one-party state, and for society to be disciplined, “bellicose,” and committed to work.¹⁶⁵ In the eyes of the NBP, to be ‘Russian’ is to be loyal to the state, regardless of religion or ethnic origin. An autarkic economy is desired, and of course, the West constitutes Russia’s primary external enemy. The NBP also subscribes to statist nationalism, as it longs for the Russian state to span from Vladivostok in the east to Gibraltar in the west. Finally, the group believes that separatist pushes from ethnic minorities in the country should be strongly suppressed.¹⁶⁶

Nevertheless, the NBP’s anti-Putin positioning in the 2000s led it to become the “most important and most popular opposition force in Russia” by the middle of the decade. The organization regularly engaged in activity directed against the state, such as occupying government buildings, assaulting state officials, and joining up with any anti-Kremlin demonstration. Because of their unruly behavior, the NBP was declared an illegal organization in 2005, and many leaders have been imprisoned.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, because of the 2001 Law on Political Parties, the NBP was never allowed to participate in elections.¹⁶⁸

The NBP’s ideology clearly falls within the realm of the radical right. However, since Aleksandr Dugin left the movement in 1998 the movement has placed more emphasis on opposing the state, rather than on adhering strictly to its core principles. As such, people both from within, and from outside the movement, consider it to have drifted away from the extreme right of the political spectrum. This led to an identity crisis, and caused a split within the group,

¹⁶⁵ Shenfield, *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements*, 211.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, 212-214.

¹⁶⁷ Bowden, "Tomatoes and TNT: Neo-fascism in contemporary Russian politics and culture," 91-92.

¹⁶⁸ Varga, "How Political Opportunities Strengthen the Far Right: Understanding the Rise in Far-Right Militancy in Russia," 571.

in which a faction from within joined Aleksandr Dugin's new organization, the Eurasian Youth Union (ESM), claiming to be the 'true' National Bolsheviks.¹⁶⁹

The Putin administration pulled out all the stops to suppress the growing NBP influence in the country. The state used anti-democratic measures to preclude the organization from participating in elections, and by drifting more to the right of the political spectrum, Putin's policies worked to co-opt NBP ideology, forging a split within the group. While the government proved effective in containing the NBP from becoming too influential, the radical right groups that have emerged in its wake have proven more adept at resisting government crackdown, and at asserting their influence through more effective, albeit disturbing, means.

Anti-Extremist Legislation

The anti-extremist legislative measures that Putin has enacted during his time in office have assisted in making the state a concrete enemy around which the radical right movement can mobilize. Putin's anti-extremist legislation and its enforcement have been ambiguous at best, and often inconsistent. The erratic application and enforcement of the anti-extremist measures have only contributed to the increase in the visibility of the radical right within the country. Although the Kremlin has passed increasingly stringent legislation to counteract extremist elements in society throughout the 2000s, its implementation has been inconsistent, and as a result, ineffective at containing radical right groups.

The fundamental legislation guiding Kremlin policy in its handling of extremism in the country is the Federal Law on Combating Extremist Activity, put into force on 30 July 2002. This law has been amended over the years, yet it remains too vague and too poorly enforced to serve as a formidable instrument to combat the radical right. According to legislation, the

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*

government's definition of extremism is as follows: "the activities of 'organizations of physical persons in planning, organizing, preparing and carrying out acts aimed at inciting national, racial or religious hatred.'"¹⁷⁰ The RNE was the first organization to have the 2002 Law implemented against them. The organization had several chapters closed, with their use of Nazi symbols being a primary reason for the action.¹⁷¹

On the whole however, the legislation has been poorly enforced. Often, authorities refuse to prosecute, and as a result very few convictions materialize, and many cases get dropped. Measures in the law remain very broad, allowing much flexibility in their punitive capacity. However, the broad nature of the legislation has worked to direct the state's actions against only those who present the most effective opposition. Additionally, in most cases that should indeed call for disciplinary action, such as calls for pogroms, or the organizing of gangs to carry out such actions, the law has not been administered. As a result, the primary targets (extremist, anti-constitutional groups) of the 2002 Law had, by the middle of the decade, remained unscathed.¹⁷²

Judicial Ban on Extremist Materials

The 2002 Law also includes measures for the creation of a federal list of judicially banned extremist materials. The list is to be released to the public on a regular basis. The list however, has been faulty from its inception. To start, it offered two separate definitions of materials that can be subject to judicial ban. Several years into the legislation no court had found any materials or publications associated with known extremist groups to be extremist, and no such list had ever been published, prompting

¹⁷⁰ Pain, "Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors," 895.

¹⁷¹ Verkhovsky, Alexander, and Galina Kozhevnikova. "Three Years of Combating Extremism." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁷² *ibid.*

many to question its existence. Even more glaring, after dissolving several regional chapters of the RNE, other chapters of the organization continued to circulate the same materials as those closed for extremist activity.¹⁷³

14 July 2007 was the first time that the federal list of banned materials was published, and yet it was incomplete, only comprised of 14 materials.¹⁷⁴ From one extreme to the other, by SOVA's 2011 report on the matter, the monitoring organization deemed the list "completely unusable" because of "its size, repetitions and grave bibliographic errors." The list had swelled precipitously, to 467 by 2010, and then in 2010, 27 updates to the list inflated the number of banned materials to 748.¹⁷⁵

As of 2011, SOVA reports that the population has lost complete faith in the government's anti-extremist measures. They are too broad in design; anyone can be considered extremist, and the government uses this to its advantage to suppress any oppositional forces within society. The design of the legislation also allows the government to bolster its official numbers on combating extremism in society. Finally, the spotty enforcement of the legislation, including most notably the increase in the administering of suspended sentences, has only assured perpetrators that their offenses are worth the minimal costs.¹⁷⁶

Radical Right Violence

The poor implementation of the government's anti-extremist legislation has influenced an increase in the use of racist violence by extremist groups. This development is the most troubling

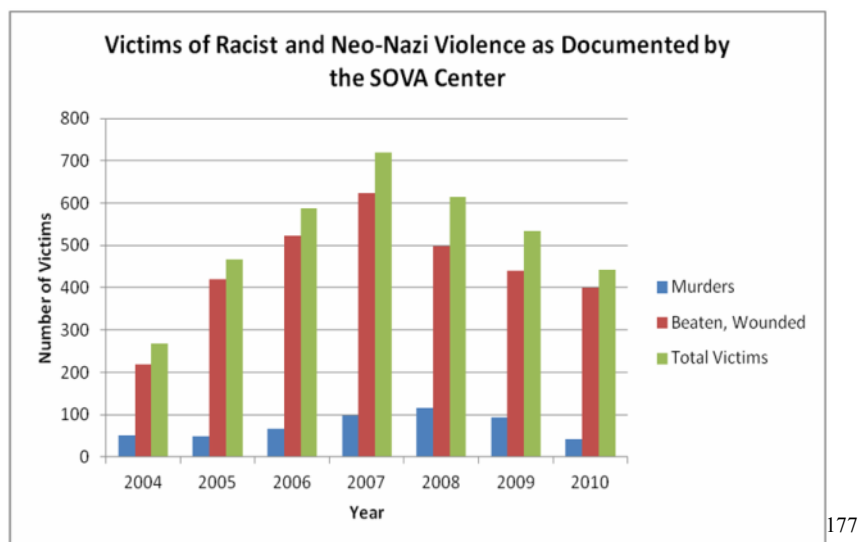
¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Verkhovsky, Alexander. "Anti-Extremist Legislation and Its Enforcement." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁷⁵ Rozalskaya, Maria. "Inappropriate enforcement of anti-extremist legislation in Russia in 2010 ." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

consequence of Putin's handling of the radical right in the 2000s. The policies of the Putin administration have co-opted the more moderate actors of the radical right, leaving behind the more extreme and more militant players. The data compiled by the SOVA monitoring group demonstrates the upsurge in racist violence in the country since 2003:



*Because of the erratic manner in which racist and neo-Nazi violence is both defined and reported, the data for the more recent years will most likely increase with time.

Many radical right groups have employed racist violence to assert themselves on city streets. A majority of this violence has, not surprisingly, been directed toward opposition youth group members, as well as Central Asians and Caucasians. In addition, Moscow and St. Petersburg have experienced the brunt of this racist violence, primarily a result of the fact that these urban centers have attracted a large majority of the country's immigrants. Still, many of the country's other oblasts, republics and krays have also endured notable amounts of racist violence.

¹⁷⁷ Kozhevnikova, Galina, and Alexander Verkhovsky. "SOVA Center for Information and Analysis." Racism and Xenophobia. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

The Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI)

The Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) in particular has used violent tactics to become the radical right's most prominent organization since 2006. The DPNI rallies members around its anti-immigration rhetoric, for lack a more comprehensive ideology. The group has used the annual Russian Marches to increase its visibility, and it also benefited from the notorious Kondopoga riots in August 2006 to gain popularity. In this case, the DPNI organized a successful pogrom against Chechen residents of Kondopoga following a bar fight, in which the Chechens were successfully forced out of town.¹⁷⁸ The pro-Putin media described the riots as "the long-awaited rise of the Russian national spirit."¹⁷⁹

Radical right activists have organized similar, though less successful, actions since the Kondopoga riots of 2006. In 2010 for instance, riots sprung up in Hotkovo and in Moscow's Manezhnaya Square. The events in Hotkovo, a small city near Moscow, came about in the aftermath of another bar fight, this time between local Russians and Tajik guest workers. In the ten days following this incident, radical right activists performed a series of anti-immigrant acts in the hopes of rekindling a Kondopoga-like scenario (as they have many times since August 2006). The activists were able to rally the local residents, and even the town mayor, to drive out the Tajik workers. Despite their incendiary actions, no radical right activist or local resident faced any repercussions.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Verkhovsky, "Future prospects for nationalism," 96.

¹⁷⁹ Pain, "Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors," 907.

¹⁸⁰ Verkhovsky, Alexander, and Galina Kozhevnikova. "The Phantom of Manezhnaya Square: Radical Nationalism and Efforts to Counteract It in 2010." SOVA Center for Information and Analysis. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

The Manezhnaya Square riots that occurred in December 2010 are significant because of their location in the heart of Moscow. These events once again materialized following a brawl between an ethnic Russian and a person of Central Asian descent this time around. A protest scheduled for a few days after the scuffle quickly escalated and descended on Manezhnaya Square. Several thousand radical right activists hijacked the operation, violence ensued, and at least 40 people were badly injured, and one killed as a result. The riots furthermore influenced similar unrest in other Russian cities, and once again, very few, if any extremist activists were held accountable by the law.¹⁸¹

The 'Why?' Behind the Putin Administration Policies

Given the already-successful co-option of the radical right movement by the early part of the 2000s, Putin's increased pandering to radical right ideology throughout the rest of the decade begs further scrutiny. Upon becoming president in 2000, Putin intensified the co-optive policies that the Yeltsin administration had been implementing for half a decade. Like Yeltsin, Putin correctly recognized that both nationalism and xenophobia were on the rise in the country. To ignore these sentiments would be dangerous for anyone who aspired to power in the country.

The LDPR's success in the 1993 elections very effectively demonstrated this reality to the ruling elites. The LDPR's platform however is of the statist brand first and foremost; its ethnocentrism is of secondary concern, and is often veiled under its statist appeals. As a result, the Yeltsin administration more noticeably welcomed nationalist influence into its policies. This political tactic was undertaken out of necessity in the 1990s, and Yeltsin was able to remain in power because of his incorporation of more statist influences. His measures had brought

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

Zhirinovskiy and his party in line with his own policies and by the first few years of the Putin administration, the LDPR had become well established as merely the extreme right sector of the pro-Kremlin ruling faction in the Duma. While the LDPR continues to hover around 10% of the vote in parliamentary elections, a figure that experts usually consider successful for radical right groups, this number is for all intents and purposes negligible in this case.

Despite the absence of a political threat presented by the country's radical right movement, the Putin administration has intensified its adoption of the radical right agenda. The reasons behind his more aggressive co-option are best explained by examining Vladimir Putin's own political ideology, and the nature of his reforms.

Putin is first and foremost a statist. He believes that Russia is meant to exist as a world superpower. In line with neo-Eurasianist thought, he believes that to be Russian necessitates that one be an imperialist. Putin's initial policies upon assuming the presidency illuminate this point. He immediately set about consolidating popular support by reigniting a second Chechen conflict, effectively exploiting the fear and anxiety instilled rampant in society to do so. From here, Putin worked to centralize power in Moscow under a one-party system, and he enacted reforms designed to prevent any potential future opposition from challenging his rule. Putin's neo-Eurasianist policies upon entering office built upon those implemented during the Yeltsin, and they successfully provided him with a comfortable position firmly in control of the country's political course. Putin has from the start been naturally inclined to authoritarian and great power chauvinism. It is his adoption of ethnocentric discourse that seems especially superfluous given his already-consolidated political power.

By the middle of the decade, one witnesses a marked increase in Putin's ethnocentric appeals and policies. This development, as I have illustrated, has inadvertently strengthened the

radical right movement in its new form as a primarily extra-parliamentary phenomenon. The impetus for this intensified ethnocentrism lies in the colored revolutions that took place in three post-Soviet countries from 2003-2005. The effects of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution were especially palpable for the Putin administration in Moscow. The rigged presidential elections had come under heavy opposition, both from within the country, and from the West. In the end, the establishment and Kremlin-backed candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was defeated and Putin had consequently lost the political influence he desired in the neighboring country.¹⁸²

The outcomes of the colored revolutions clearly rattled the Kremlin as Putin's subsequent ethnocentric-inspired policies attest to. Kremlin officials feared that a similar rebellion could occur in Russia. The Kremlin had taken note of the Western influence in the revolutions, and in response, he began to more firmly position the country in opposition to the West, and also more fervently promote the vitality of the ethnic Russian for the country. It is thus logical that Putin's ethnocentrism more aggressively rears its head beginning in 2004. From this year on, Putin began to appoint ultranationalists to high posts in his government; he created the Day of National Unity; he waged his ethnocentric campaigns directed against Georgians and Estonians; and he threw his wholehearted support behind the creation of the pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi. Putin's ethnocentrism arose out of a fear of insurrection in the middle of the decade in order to preempt the possibility of domestic unrest from surfacing in Russia. Whether this fear was truly justified is not within the scope of this paper; however, the impact of Putin's alarm caused him to miscalculate the side effects that his co-optive policies would have in the country. This assessment has played out most notably and alarmingly in the revitalization of the radical right movement.

¹⁸² Tsygankov, Andrei P.. "From Belgrade to Kiev: Hard-line nationalism and Russia's foreign policy." In *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. New York: Routledge, 2009. 187-202.

That Russia never endured a similar colored revolution on its own soil perhaps speaks to the success of Putin's increased ethnocentric rhetoric and policies. However, as regards the radical right movement in the country, Putin's policies have proven shortsighted and naïve. While they have successfully co-opted much of the movement's ideology, they have also simultaneously worked to legitimate the phenomenon. Putin's fear of a potential colored revolution in Russia that would topple his power so colored his judgment that he miscalculated and underestimated the capability of the radical right movement in the country. He did not fully understand that his co-option was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, his policies have weakened the radical right in national politics by employing many tenets of their ideology. On the other hand, co-option has also led to the legitimization of the radical right movement's agenda. Such groups as a result have been able to take advantage of the Putin reforms to increase their visibility in the country, albeit outside of politics. In addition, certain Putin-era developments, such as the creation of Nashi and the Kremlin's attempts to suppress especially active radical right groups, have also served to position the Kremlin as the radical right movement's chief enemy on the streets, a development that has worked to further strengthen the resolve of the radical right.

With the Day of National Unity, the radical right has their most visible vehicle to date for propagating their message. While the intention was to "consolidat[e] the people," against dangerous Western influences, the initiative has backfired and forced the Kremlin to attempt to suppress the scale of the annual Russian Marches. (Pain, 906-7)

The Nashi youth group is both the Kremlin's most adversarial tool used to suppress the activity of the radical right as well as its most blatant attempt at co-opting the movement's activity. The ideological closeness of Nashi to groups of the radical right works to steal potential

members of the opposition movement. However, its violent activity on the streets, especially when directed at radical right activists, has created an enemy for the radical right around which to mobilize, and it has also legitimated the use of similar violent tactics by the extremist opposition groups.

The official anti-Georgian and anti-Estonian campaigns have furthered the Kremlin's drift toward the right of the political spectrum in its quest to solidify the country in opposition to the West. Finally, Putin's appointments of ultranationalists to high-up government positions have signaled an attempt to incorporate the most successful components of the radical right movement in its bolstering of power against potential rebellious forces.

It is not the movement's ideology that the Kremlin finds fault with. Instead, it is the oppositional nature of the movement that could rally support among the population given the levels of nationalism and xenophobia prevalent in the country. This is why the Kremlin has only cracked down on extremist behavior when it has been deemed a legitimate threat to political stability, such as with the well-attended Russian Marches.

The anti-extremist legislation is yet another measure implemented by the Kremlin that has inadvertently served to strengthen the movement. This legislation further illuminates the how the Putin administration has never fully comprehended the threat that the radical right movement in the country poses. The vague nature of the legislation, as well as its inconsistent application suggest that the Kremlin has devised this legislation as a means of suppressing, first and foremost, potential opposition. This opposition only at times intersects with suppressing extremist activity. The legislation and its implementation on the whole have proven quite ineffective in stifling extremist activity, especially in its initial years. The anti-extremist measures have instead informed groups and activists of the radical right of two things: one, that

their activity is not completely disapproved of by the state; and two, that they can continue with their unruly activity without needing to truly fear the rule of law. The anti-extremist legislation enacted by the Putin regime and its subsequent inconsistent enforcement have thus compounded the effects of the Kremlin's attempted co-option of the movement, and influenced the rise in visibility that the radical right has experienced throughout the 2000s.

Conclusion

The contemporary radical right in Russia has successfully adapted to the rapidly changing political climate to become a very visible oppositional force in the country today. The fall of the Soviet Union created prime conditions for extremist groups to gain a receptive audience with the Russian population. Citizens were coping with the disastrous consequences brought about by the transition to a capitalist democracy, and those in command were performing poorly in remedying the social distress brought about by their reforms. As a result, the Russian people began to look increasingly to the extreme right for solutions to their woes.

This development influenced the breakthrough of the radical right in the 1993 parliamentary elections. The LDPR, behind its charismatic leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, successfully took advantage of the growing nationalism and xenophobia in the country to gain a surprising 22.8% of the vote. This triumph fundamentally altered the course of Kremlin policy in the nearly two decades since. The Yeltsin administration recognized what the LDPR accomplishment signified for the country: nationalism and xenophobia were potent and on the rise, and to ignore the two currents would be naïve for any actor looking to remain in, or rise to, power.

Yeltsin thus began to incorporate elements of the radical right ideology espoused by Zhirinovskiy and the LDPR throughout the rest of his rule. Yeltsin thus set about implementing more nationalistic-minded policies; the goal was to return Russia to its rightful position in the international arena as a major world power. Yeltsin's drift to the right of the political spectrum even influenced him to collaborate to an extent with the leadership of the extra-parliamentary radical right group, the Russian National Unity. Yeltsin's co-optive measures and their consequences were a precursor to the much more aggressive course of action that Putin has

adopted since coming to power in 2000.

Putin's relationship with the radical right movement and its ideology has been both inconsistent and shortsighted, as the movement has proven able to exploit his measures to become its most visible in the post-Soviet era. Putin has succeeded in consolidating near-unchallenged power in the government structures. His policies have shut off the political arena from any potential opposition, including that presented by the radical right. In addition, his nationalistic-minded reforms in the first few years of his rule worked to completely absorb the political significance of the radical right's most prominent political party, the LDPR. By the first few years of Putin's rule, the radical right's political weight had been fully absorbed.

The colored revolutions that toppled regimes in three post-Soviet countries from 2003-2005 are what indirectly have allowed for the radical right movement to revive itself as an extra-parliamentary phenomenon. The colored revolutions instilled in the Putin administration a strong fear that a similar uprising could very well occur in Russia. Putin's concern over this possibility prompted his adoption and implementation of ethnocentric discourse and policies in efforts to preempt any domestic unrest from mobilizing against him. Thus, beginning in the middle of the decade Putin: appointed ultranationalists to important governmental positions; employed more nationalistic, ethnocentric, and often anti-Western rhetoric; created the nationalistic holiday, Day of National Unity; threw his support behind the avidly pro-Kremlin Nashi youth group; and launched ethnocentric campaigns targeting ethnic minorities in Russia. These measures co-opted much of the ideology espoused by the radical right in the country, but they have also backfired on the Putin administration. What Putin did not account for in his embracing of such ethnocentric and nationalistic ideology was that this course of action would also serve to legitimize, and in

turn strengthen the radical right movement in the country. He did not foresee the double-edged nature that his co-optive measures would take.

Putin's anti-extremist legislation has also served to strengthen the radical right in the country. This legislation was devised so vaguely that it allows the Kremlin to suppress virtually any opposition that might arise. In drafting this legal framework, Putin never truly feared the threat posed specifically by the radical right, but instead desired a tool to suppress any potential anti-Kremlin forces. As a result, more often than not, troubling extremist behavior goes unpunished and unmonitored because law enforcement agencies are not overly concerned with, nor do they seemingly disapprove of such conduct. This reality perpetuates itself, leading to an overall increase in the activity of the radical right in the country.

The radical right in Russia today is thus more visible than it has ever been in the twenty-plus years since the fall of the Soviet Union. Racist violence has risen tremendously in the last ten years; the organized marches and demonstrations occur more frequently and are much better attended than in the past; and the movement has even succeeded in organizing pogroms against ethnic minorities in the country. The ineffectual response to this activity by the Kremlin illuminates the fact that the ruling elites are not entirely against such troubling behavior; in fact the Putin administration has often employed similar tactics to further his own agenda.

The Kremlin's co-optive measures since the middle of the 1990s have blurred the distinction between the radical right and mainstream politics in the country. While this development could have resulted in the complete absorption of the radical right into governmental structures, and its subsequent reduction to insignificance, this has not been what has transpired in Russia. Instead, Putin's paranoia of losing power, and his underestimation of

the competency of the radical right movement have helped shape and position the movement as a very visible and menacing extra-parliamentary phenomenon in the country today.

With Putin's return to the presidency this year amidst much unrest and protest on Russian city streets, one should keep an eye on how radical right groups position themselves in opposition to the government. Putin's dictatorial plans have not sit well with the population, and thus the Kremlin is experiencing its most instability in years. Ultranationalists have already joined in street demonstrations expressing their discontent with the Putin administration and should the government continue to inadvertently foster their growth, the radical right may very well soon have an opening to seize upon to maneuver themselves back into political relevance.

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