

PUTIN'S REGIME AND THE IDEOLOGICAL MARKET: A DIFFICULT BALANCING GAME

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At a time of economic stagnation, the Russian state is in need of social consensus and popular support behind the figure of President Vladimir Putin. After feeding an anti-Western atmosphere during the first year of the Ukraine crisis, the regime deliberately decreased its nationalist rhetoric, sidelined some of the nationalist actors who had become too prominent and not reliable enough, retired some of Putin's old friends, and brought some more liberal figures back to the political game. The Kremlin continues to advance a diverse ideological repertoire, combining several isms and historical narratives that seem contradictory, all under a broad and blurry rubric of conservative values. While the presidential administration has been able to successfully manage this doctrinal diversity, it remains a difficult balancing act in some respects, especially on the issues of more or less Russian nationalism and mobilization potential for or against the political status quo.

THE KREMLIN'S IDEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE: EXPLICIT CONSERVATISM, IMPLICIT DOCTRINAL PLURALITY

During Putin's first term as president (2000–2004), the presidential administration denied any need for a state ideology. Putin cast himself as nonideological, claiming to be working solely in line with technocratic objectives.¹ In 2003, the authorities discussed the creation of a council for national ideology (*Sovet po natsional'noi ideologii*) to convene major intellectual and cultural figures, but the project never led to anything concrete and aroused little enthusiasm within state bodies.² This nonideological narrative found itself challenged by the color revolutions, especially the

2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine: the regime decided to move toward a more coherent ideological posture in order to avoid any revolution in Russia itself. Boris Gryzlov, then chairman of the State Duma and leader of the presidential party, United Russia, expressed the counterrevolutionary nature of this paradigm shift: "The support provided to the middle class and the actions undertaken in the interest of that class, which has no need of a revolution of any kind whether financial, economic, cultural, political, orange [that is, the color revolutions], red [communist], brown [fascist] or blue [homosexual]."³

The new ideology promoted by the presidential administration was labelled, as early as 2005, as conservatism, sometimes

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associated with qualifiers such as social conservatism or Russian conservatism.⁴ With this term, the Kremlin meant to define its centrist ideology as opposing both forms of extremism—liberalism and communism—and it lambasted the principle of revolution, charged with causing Russia heavy damage and slowing down its modernization in the 1910s and 1920s as well as the 1990s.

With Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, the presidential administration moved forward and made this conservative posture more official. It set about commissioning works on conservative ideology from several think tanks tasked with elaborating a certain set of reference points. The Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Research (ISEPR) became the main umbrella group engaged in elaborating ideas of conservatism, publishing an almanac (*Notebooks on Conservatism*, or *Tetradi po konservatizmu*) and organizing the Berdyaev Readings.

Putin himself has mentioned conservatism on several occasions. At the 2013 G20 Summit, he defined himself as “a pragmatist with a conservative perspective” who always has taken “lessons from the distant and recent past into consideration.”⁵ A few months later, he argued that

The point of conservatism is not that it obstructs movement forward and upward, but that it prevents the movement backward and downward. That, in my opinion, is a very good formula, and it is the formula that I propose. There's nothing unusual for us here. Russia is a country with a very profound ancient culture, and if we want to feel strong and grow with confidence, we must draw on this culture and these traditions, and not just focus on the future.⁶

While widely referenced, this conservative doctrine remains largely unelaborated. Indeed, the presidential administration has not focused on producing a new doctrine in the style of defunct Marxism-Leninism, but has focused instead on shaping the population's worldviews by controlling media, especially television, print media, and, increasingly, the Internet. This worldview is more implicit than explicit and more visual—for example, the glamorized branding of Putin's personality—than doctrinal. It aims at marginalizing and delegitimizing those who challenge the regime, but remains vague enough that a vast number of people will subscribe to it.

It thus plays the role of the lowest common denominator—pride for the country's revamped international status and patriotism based on shared, but diluted, Soviet values. It provides a large repertoire for collective consumption: One can be nostalgic for the Soviet Union or the Tsarist Russian Empire, and consider Ivan the Terrible, Nicholas II, Pyotr Stolypin, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, or Yuri Gagarin to be the most important hero of the country's history. One can desire that Orthodox Christianity become the state religion or be glad about the secular nature of state institutions and celebrate the country's religious diversity. One can see Russia as the country of ethnic Russians in a permanent struggle for survival against minorities or celebrate the country's multicultural harmony. One can endorse the most complete isolationism or exalt Russia's commitment to creating a multipolar world with its allies. One can wish for the resurrection of pan-Slavism among Orthodox Slavic brothers or Eurasianism with Turkic-speaking countries, the so-called Russian world's embrace of Russian diasporas, or a model based on the Byzantine Empire or present-day China.⁷

The presidential administration therefore succeeded in developing an *explicit* but blurry narrative of conservatism—embodied by anti-Westernism, anti-liberalism, and the promotion of so-called traditional moral values—and in offering an *implicit* ideological diversity available for collective consumption. These doctrinal products are elaborated by different groups of ideological entrepreneurs who have room to act, to determine their preferences, and to cultivate their own networks. Their fragile entrepreneurship must work in permanent negotiation and tension with competing groups and the presidential administration itself. Just as the oligarchs' empire is not secure and remains dependent on individual loyalty, the empire of these ideological entrepreneurs is also unstable and can be challenged and dismembered.

The range of products available on the ideological market can be schematically summarized in two main categories. A “red” agenda, which includes elements borrowed from the Soviet past, references to Eurasianism, and relatively anti-Western positioning, works under the patronage of the military-industrial complex (long overseen by Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service Sergey Naryshkin) and the

energy sector (supervised by Rosneft Executive Chairman Igor Sechin).⁸ The second competing group promotes a so-called White agenda, which is shaped by references to Tsarist Russia, Orthodox Christianity, and the White emigration, and is advanced by the Moscow Patriarchate, Orthodox businessmen such as Vladimir Yakunin and Konstantin Malofeev, and public figures such as film director Nikita Mikhalkov.⁹ Both groups are powerful: The military-industrial complex is better structured and integrated into the state administration. By contrast, the so-called White nostalgics are less institutionalized and rely mostly on personal connections and affinities, but they have powerful patrons and have gained visibility in the past few years.

The flexible character of the Kremlin's ideological offerings confirm the fundamentally instrumental character of ideology for the Russian leadership: the authorities want to avoid tying themselves to an overly rigid concept that could limit their freedom of action—they prefer to be able to shift from one register to another without having to account for it. The Kremlin can therefore manipulate the wording of the so-called Russian world to speak to Russian diasporas and justify the annexation of Crimea, while promoting a Eurasian agenda for the Central Asian states without any contradiction. Both narratives are advanced by different figures inside the regime, target different audiences, and speak to different levels of Russia's foreign policy, representing multiple perspectives on what Russia's soft power can be.

THE UNKNOWN GIVEN OF RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

In this broad doctrinal diversity, one issue remains sensitive for the Kremlin: Russian nationalism. Nationalism is only one doctrinal element that the authorities can promote but have so far been very cautious to nurture.¹⁰ Fostering conservatism provides a much easier ideological framework, as it raises concerns only for a very small minority of liberals, who are largely marginalized from the rest of the society and mostly located in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Russian nationalism is a more risky tool that can generate stronger reactions from the 20 percent of the population that doesn't consider itself ethnically Russian and belong to a national

minority,¹¹ and it can become a mobilizing slogan against the regime for some ethnically Russian grassroots movements.¹²

So far, the Kremlin has succeeded in its balancing game. It has always played with parallel notions, promoting the multinationality of the Russian nation and simultaneously exalting the Russianness of Russia's cultural and historical symbols. In the 2000s, the revival of state-sponsored patriotism was based on Soviet symbols—mostly, but not only, those of World War II—and therefore spoke to both ethnic and non-ethnic Russians. However, the progressive reintegration of the Tsarist past, the growing number of commemorations of specifically Russian heroes (such as Dmitri Donskoy or Alexander Nevsky), the unveiling of Russia's first statue of Ivan the Terrible, and the visibility of the Russian Orthodox Church have created some malaise among non-ethnic Russians.

Some historical commemorations resulted in openly conflictual memories—for instance, those celebrating the so-called peaceful joining of a people to the Russian Empire, while local historiographies see in it evidence of Russian colonial expansion. The preeminence given to Orthodox Christianity gave rise to more ambivalent responses. The Muslim leadership is divided: Some, such as the Ufa-based Spiritual Board of Muslims, support Orthodox supremacy as long as Islam is given the status of a secondary religion and can replicate the Patriarchate's access—or attempts to gain access, albeit not all successful—to schools, the army, and the judicial system at the level of Muslim-majority republics. Other institutions, such as the Moscow-based Council of Muftis, do not hide their more critical stance, asking for greater respect of state secularism and simultaneously pushing for the Muslim community to self-organize (for instance, around the growing business of halal products).

To date, the Kremlin has succeeded in its strategy of maintaining this precarious equilibrium. With some rare—and always localized—tensions, ethnic minorities do not contest the supremacy of symbols of Russianness in the public space, and they have enough room to maneuver (both as individuals and as collective groups) and navigate among contradictory identities, identify with those they consider

representative of Russia as a whole, ignore those seen as too ethnically Russian, and locally promote their own.

Several reasons explain this success. First, Russia's ethnic minorities do not represent a unified interest group. If they share the concern for dissociating what is *ruskii* (Russian in an ethnic and linguistic sense) from what is *rossiiskii* (Russian in a civic and state-centric sense), and remain the last to call for greater use of the notion of *rossiiskii*, their unity stops here. Siberian ethnic groups share little in common with Tatars and Bashkirs, and even less with North Caucasians. The latter form a specific political body in Russia, from which other ethnic minorities feel estranged to the same degree as ethnic Russians. Second, sociological data show that ethnic minorities do not constitute a proper political entity; on the contrary, they embody Russia's average citizen.¹³ Because ethnic republics maintain a stronger hold on administrative resources than many regions without an ethnic affiliation, especially Moscow and St. Petersburg, they are the most reliable source of votes for United Russia and they consolidate the conservative consensus around the Kremlin. Ethnic minorities vote more in favor of the regime's candidates than the ethnically Russian middle class, and they widely supported Crimea's annexation, seeing it as revenge for the collapse of the Soviet Union, not as evidence of Russian ethnic nationalism.¹⁴

For the Kremlin, a potential challenge in terms of nationalism is therefore coming not from non-ethnic Russians but from the ethnic Russian majority. Since the early 1990s, ethnic Russian nationalist movements have been limited to the margins of society. They often have been linked to fringe political movements, too radical in their ideology to raise any popular support. Even those using Russian-centric references—such as the Black Hundred, the anti-Semitic and pogrom movement of the early twentieth century—could not get any consequential support, and those who referred to the European fascist experience received even less.

Things changed in the 2000s when nationalism shifted from being an *ideology* with restrictive doctrinal content to being a *behavior*, expressed mostly through xenophobic statements and sometimes interethnic violence. This can be explained both by the popular reaction to changes in the local social fabric brought about by massive labor migrations, and by the arrival of a new generation of nationalist leaders who

refused to engage in overly obscure doctrinal debates and gave preference to a consensual anti-migrant narrative. Xenophobic violence was embodied by the rise of skinhead groups, with up to 50,000 followers, in the mid-2000s.¹⁵

However, the 2006 ethnic riots in Kondopoga (in the Republic of Karelia), which emboldened nationalist movements celebrating the long-awaited “awakening of the Russian people,” and the rise in skirmishes between skinhead groups and security forces resulted in the authorities adopting a gradually more repressive policy. They abandoned the *laissez-faire* attitude toward skinhead groups that prevailed among the special services and police, and they improved the legal tools at their disposal—particularly Penal Code Article 282 on the incitement of interethnic hatred. Racist violence declined considerably, especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg.¹⁶ However, although skinhead violence declined, interethnic skirmishes between young groups defined as ethnic Russians and North Caucasians increased and several riots shook the country between 2010 and 2013.¹⁷ Since then, anti-migrant riots have been on the decline too, due to the combined effects of the authorities' more repressive policy and the shift in Russian public opinion from anti-migrant to anti-Western sentiments since the 2014 Ukraine crisis.

This violent expression of Russian ethnonationalism poses a double challenge to the Kremlin. First, it creates dividing lines among the population with potential for secessionism; for the Russian leadership, as for the rest of society, secessionism is a lasting trauma associated with memories of the Soviet breakup. Second, there is the challenge of a potential mobilizing force that could turn against the status quo. The first challenge is quite limited. Social resentment among Muslim populations now tends to be expressed through Islamism and no longer through postcolonial calls for partition and independence.¹⁸ If there are drivers that could propel a fragmentation of Russia, they are more likely to be shaped by economic realities—for instance, by the Russian Far East's economic interactions with China, Japan, and South Korea—rather than by ethnic issues.¹⁹ In case of a collapse of the central authority in Moscow, economic and political decentralization would not necessarily lead to territorial partition.²⁰

The second challenge is far more serious, as it threatens the regime itself. Indeed, xenophobia is just the tip of the

iceberg of a larger social malaise linked to socioeconomic transformations, a diffuse feeling that living standards are no longer on the rise, and a growing resentment against the state's systemic inefficiency.²¹ During the 2010–2013 interethnic riots, demonstrators complained that migrants make the laws and locals no longer feel at home—two common formulations of xenophobic sentiments elsewhere in the world. But they have also come to criticize corruption among the security forces and municipal authorities.

This critical trend was already visible in the November 4 Russian Marches, which, since 2010, have advanced more structured slogans against Putin's political system ("Putin, leave," "End the power of KGB," "Down with sovereign democracy," "Down with the police state," and "Freedom to political prisoners").²² In 2011, the Russian March, with the presence of anti-corruption lawyer and prominent political activist Alexey Navalny, unintentionally became a sort of announcement for the December protests. It demonstrated the power of the so-called national democrats, Russian nationalists who side with liberals against the Putin regime and call for Russia to follow a European, democratic model of development. Before the national democrats, the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI)—disbanded by the authorities in 2011—had tried to capitalize on the wave of xenophobia by structuring a new political organization to compete with the presidential party. The DPNI advanced a far-right populism inspired by those in Western Europe, calling for a new Russian nationalism, "not with a beard and enormous boots, but in a suit and tie."²³

The Kremlin's relationship with Russian ethnonationalism is complex and is founded on permanent hesitation between mobilizing and demobilizing the population. Demobilization appears to be the easiest political strategy to maintain the status quo, based on the implicit contract of letting elites manage politics while citizens manage their own lives without (too much) state intervention. This social contract still functions today: sociological surveys from the Levada Center show a high level of popular distrust toward state institutions and politicians—Putin is not considered part of the political landscape; he is a symbolic, iconic figure of the nation, and therefore rides high in the polls—and the broad feeling is that politics is a corrupt and dirty world, which it is better to stay away from. Yet the authorities are also in need of mobilization.

The Kremlin hopes for a vanguard to show the right path—citizens actively engaged in defending the regime's values—to the rest of society. This vanguard could be celebrated and exhibited as a positive, uplifting element in what otherwise looks like a cynical and detached relationship between the state and society. So far, the Kremlin has succeeded in consolidating a passive patriotism—passive support for the regime and the marginalization of contesting forces—but not an active one.

Instrumentalizing Russian nationalist groups has, therefore, been a tempting option for the Kremlin. After the Orange Revolution, the presidential administration decided to invest in young people and mobilize them in favor of the regime, led by Nashi (Ours), the most visible pro-presidential youth movement in the domestic and international arena with, at its peak around 2008, about 100,000 supporters and 8,000 regular activists.²⁴ The Kremlin let Nashi and other youth movements, such as United Russia's Young Guard, play ambiguously with feelings of protest and generational conflict among middle-class youth and with xenophobic topics related to labor migrants.

The presidential administration and some sections of the security services have also been shadowy patrons of more radical nationalist groups, including skinheads, creating groups such as *Russkii Obraz* with the hope of channeling potential discontent and keeping control over street dynamics. By promoting the revival of Soviet-style paramilitary patriotic education, the Russian authorities have also implicitly validated a vigilantism movement that combines radical nationalist groups that train youth for warfare, mixed martial arts clubs, and Orthodox street patrols. These groups tend to act in a law enforcement capacity without legal authority, disrupting public meetings of their perceived opponents, from liberals to pride parades, and trying to install a moral order in Russia's public spaces.

The same ambivalence toward the mobilization potential of Russian ethnonationalism was noticeable during the first months of the Ukraine crisis, when the Kremlin left a gray space for volunteer fighters to engage in the Donbas insurgency before involving professional troops. The dynamic created by the Ukraine crisis demonstrated both the success and the failure of the Kremlin's attempts to

channel Russian nationalist groups: it took advantage of their grassroots mobilization capacity, but the Kremlin rapidly found itself obliged to hamper them, as their agenda was too revolutionary and uncontrollable for the authorities' goals. The Russian nationalist groups have not hidden their disappointment in the Kremlin's strategy, which they see as being too hesitant and stopping midway, while the authorities risk being outmaneuvered at their own game of unleashing radical groups that could potentially threaten their legitimacy in return.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

The current Russian regime is not static in terms of ideology. It was able to activate intense nationalist sentiment during the Ukraine crisis and calm it down later, without undermining Putin's personal legitimacy and popular support. With the economic crisis, and the state's disengagement from many public services, the Kremlin has reintegrated some figures with a more economically liberal agenda, such as former minister of finance Aleksei Kudrin, who was asked by Putin to draw up a new economic strategy for Russia and named deputy head of the president's economic council, as well as Sergei Kirienko, who, after ten years at the head of Rosatom, became deputy head of the presidential administration. Putin has also decided to clean up his old team by replacing some previously immovable figures, such as Sergey Ivanov and Vladimir Yakunin. Other personalities from a younger generation have emerged, such as Vyacheslav Volodin, the first deputy chief of staff of the presidential administration. Putin's regime is, therefore, anything but static: it demonstrates enough flexibility to replace older generations with younger ones—only partially compared, for instance, with China's massive turnover of elites and generations—and to reintegrate liberal figures after having cultivated a nationalist atmosphere. Both of these visions are indeed compatible, as one could imagine a neoliberal economy functioning hand-in-hand with a more nationalist ideology.

However, one wonders if the new generation that seems to have emerged at the top of the political pyramid will pursue the same ideological strategy of maintaining the diversity of doctrinal products offered to Russian society. Will some ideological artifacts become more rooted and structural, or

will flexibility still be the guiding principle? It is probable that the conservative brand elaborated by the regime will remain the cornerstone of its ideological tool kit. It allows the country's social consensus to be founded on relatively implicit mechanisms and values, which is all the more necessary in a time of economic stagnation, when society's passivity and its refusal to engage in politics are central to maintaining the regime's status quo.

Moreover, Putin's conservative trademark has been real success in foreign policy, which has allowed Russia to find a common language with many non-Western countries and gain soft power in Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States. The blending of conservative values with distrust toward international institutions and the so-called liberal world order seems to be destined to shape part of the international scene in the coming years, with Russia suddenly gaining influence and recognition by both criticizing the liberal West and sympathizing with the conservative West.

Beyond conservatism, will some doctrinal products be given greater recognition by the regime? That seems unlikely, as it would create tensions among elites and the groups they support, and it would accentuate divisions within Russian society at a time when unity is needed. The diversity of ideological offerings will therefore probably remain the norm. The 2017 commemorations of both the fall of Tsarism and the February and October Revolutions are good test cases to analyze how the regime manages multiple narratives aimed at different audiences while maintaining the diversity, and even contradiction, of memories.

The White nostalgics ideology has been gaining greater acceptance, with the influence of the Orthodox Church growing thanks to a general emphasis on morality and values. Patriarch Kirill did not attend Putin's speech on the occasion of the annexation of Crimea, in order to preserve the Moscow Patriarchate's status over its Ukrainian parishes, but the focus on Crimea and the need to legitimize its annexation as the cradle of Christianity in Russia suggest greater reliance by the Kremlin on this Christian repertoire. Both Putin and Kirill attended the unveiling of a huge statue of Saint Vladimir just outside the Kremlin walls in November 2016. Still, this White repertoire is unlikely to displace the wide consensus around a rebranded Soviet nostalgia.

Moreover, if the two narratives contradict each other in some of their interpretations of the past, especially regarding the Bolshevik Revolution, they can also paradoxically complement each other. This is the case, for instance, with the memory of Stalinism: the growing role of the Orthodox Church in every commemoration of the Stalinist past and the rejection of liberal civic organizations, such as the human rights NGO Memorial, make it possible to develop an acceptable narrative of Stalinism as the peak of Russia's great-power status, while at the same time mourning the state violence committed against citizens at that time. While the liberals' condemnation of Stalinism implies an indirect critique of the current regime, the church's approach not only avoids reproach but, on the contrary, celebrates the regime for its superior moral values.

So far, the Kremlin has skillfully managed the multiples isms it has played with. While outside observers tend to wonder about the political cohesion of the Russian state, a more refined approach would be to treat the plurality of isms as a regime strength. Because of its size, its ethnic diversity, and very diverse social realities, any kind of a uniform narrative can endanger the current regime. The conservative narrative is unifying, while the nationalist one is divisive.

However, in the medium term, Russia's demographics could play in favor of rising Russian ethnonationalism²⁵: as in Europe, the narrative about a white, Christian Europe having to protect its values and declining demography from migrants and Islamism could become a dominant frame of discourse for the Russian population. It will thus have to be accommodated, one way or another, by the political leadership. In case of new anti-Putin protests, Russian nationalists could play a critical role in offering the ideological glue necessary to build a coherent anti-regime discourse: they could link state corruption, ethnic criminality by minorities and migrants, and the endless thirst for public subsidies to the North Caucasus into a single story about the regime not caring enough about the Russian ethnic majority and its needs.

Can ethnonationalism also play in favor of the current regime? How might the probable growth of grassroots nationalism, shaped by xenophobic sentiments, interact with the regime's quest for popular support? One plausible scenario could be the rise of a figure inside the establishment, such as Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who would be able to

prevent the polarization of Russian ethnonationalism into an anti-regime narrative and capitalize on some of its slogans and leaders, in order to gradually channel the official narrative toward a more state-controlled nationalism. In this sense, ethnonationalism would become a support for the Kremlin. But in return, it would probably accelerate the identification of the nominally Muslim minority with Islam, drawing a symbolic dividing line between ethnic Russians and Muslims.

Since the nineteenth century, the story of Russian nationalism is a story of co-optation by the state authorities of topics and leaders, and of mutual interactions with some segments of the population. Yet whoever succeeds in capturing the mobilization potential of Russian ethnonationalism will, once in power, have to maintain a state-centric approach as its cornerstone. Only a focus on the state as the embodiment of Russia's multiple identities allows a centrist position that avoids a too-radical ethnonationalism that would destroy the unity of the country, and preserves the consensual storyline of Russia as a great power having the right to a say on the future of the world.

NOTES

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8. More in Marlene Laruelle, "The Izborsky Club, or the New Conservative Avant-Garde in Russia," *Russian Review* 75, no. 4 (2016): 626–644.

9. On Malofeev, the most complete biography (in Russian) is available at “Spravka: Malofeev Konstantin Valer’evich,” Komitet Narodnogo Kontrolia, <http://comnarcon.com/444>. In English, see Ilya Arkhipov, Henry Meyer, and Irina Reznik, “Putin’s ‘Soros’ Dreams of Empire as Allies Wage Ukraine Revolt,” Bloomberg, June 15, 2014, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-06-15/putin-s-soros-dreams-of-empire-as-allies-wage-ukraine-revolt>.
10. For a recent discussion on the topic, see Paul Goble, “Russian National Identity and the Ukrainian Crisis,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 1 (2016): 37–43.
11. Paul Goble, “2010 Census Shows Fewer Russians, More Non-Russians, and Many Who No Longer Declare an Ethnic Identity At All,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9, no. 223 (December 6, 2012): <https://jamestown.org/program/2010-census-shows-fewer-russians-more-non-russians-and-many-who-no-longer-declare-an-ethnic-identity-at-all/>.
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15. Semen Charny, *Rasizm, ksenofobiia, antisemitizm, etnicheskaia discriminatsiia v Rossiskoi Federatsii v 2005* (Moscow: Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, 2006).
16. This drop should be interpreted with caution. Reports of such incidents, especially among migrants who do not want to attract the attention of the police, remain low and many acts of racist violence are still classified as hooliganism.
17. In 2010, around 5,000 nationalists with racist banners occupied Moscow’s central Manezh Square, an incident sparked by the killing of a soccer fan. Public opinion over the stabbing of a victim identified as ethnically Russian by a group of perpetrators identified as Caucasian ignited xenophobic riots in Sagra (a small village near Yekaterinburg) in 2011, and Pugachev (a small town in the Saratov region) and Biryulyovo (one of Moscow’s workers’ dormitory districts) in 2013.
18. See, for instance, Alexey Malashenko’s research at the Carnegie Moscow Center.
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23. Ibid.
24. Ekaterina Levintova and Jim Butterfield, “History Education and Historical Remembrance in Contemporary Russia: Sources of Political Attitudes of Pro-Kremlin Youth,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43, no. 2 (2010): 158.
25. The reproductive rate of ethnic Russians is slow compared to the demographic boom of the nominally Muslim population, especially North Caucasians, and the naturalization process of hundreds of thousands of migrants, mostly from Central Asia.

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