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MANAGED NATIONALISM

CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN NATIONALISTIC MOVEMENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOVERNMENT

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SUMMARY

This paper argues that nationalist movements in Russia can have a certain role to play in the Kremlin's management of nationalism in the country, despite the fact that they might promote a very different form of nationalism than the state leadership itself.

The aim is to show with the help of regime management theories that the existing nationalist movements are beneficial for the regime either by promoting values favourable to the regime or by forming a certain outlet for dissent, which is then easier for the regime to monitor. This does not mean that the movements selected for analysis couldn't be self-sustainable and original, but the alternative they offer ideologically is rather shallow.

Additionally, the paper aims to show how the management of the selected example movements can help to define and draw the limits of state nationalism: which ideas are supported, which are repressed, and which perhaps replaced? By way of a conclusion, it is suggested that the selected example movements represent the vast field of contemporary Russian nationalism that is managed by the regime, which combines ethnic and civic features of nationalism and uses it as an ideological tool.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Russian leadership has recently adopted nationalistic features in both domestic and foreign policies, which can be seen as a part of the so-called conservative turn[1] that followed the electoral protests in 2011–2012 and Vladimir Putin's third term in presidential office. Some argue that the conservative change had already begun when its aim was to stabilize the country,[2] and, indeed, in many respects the conservative rhetoric followed the pattern that the Russian leadership had already adopted after the first cycle of so-called colour revolutions in the mid-2000s. At that time, the conservative values served as a counter-element to liberal Western values, which were presented as a threat to Russia.[3] Even though any clear starting point is perhaps impossible to trace, it is clear that the conflict in Ukraine did not create conservative and anti-Western discourses in Russia, but served to intensify them. The nationalistic rhetoric is an essential part of the conservative mindset.

Much has been said about Russian nationalism, but in order to understand its nature, one needs to accept the complexity of the concept. When discussing it at the level of political activity, Russian nationalism today can refer to the official rhetoric, so-called state nationalism[4], or to the various nationalistic actors and movements that have been formed around or against it. This paper approaches the actors of Russian contemporary nationalism in both meanings by means of a specific case study concentrating on the relationship between the state and selected movements of the nationalistic field.

Emphasis is placed on two different nationalistic movements, namely the Eurasian Youth Union (EYU), a pro-government movement that identifies itself as neoconservative and neo-Eurasian, and the community surrounding the Russian March, an annual anti-government nationalistic event. The Russian March draws various radical nationalist groups together, for which the common denominators are primarily the anti-government position and xenophobia. The motivation for choosing these two movements is that they represent different forms of Russian contemporary nationalism, which is not to say that they would cover the whole field. Additionally, as will be shown below, they

1 See for example Laruelle, Marlène: Conservatism as the Kremlin's New Toolkit: an Ideology at the Lowest Cost. *Russian Analytical Digest* No 138, November 2013; Rodkiewicz, Witold & Rogoża, Jadwiga: Potemkin conservatism. An ideological tool of the Kremlin. OSW Centre for Eastern Studies, *Point of View*, Number 48, February 2015; Engström, Maria: Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 35:3, 356–379.

2 Laruelle, Marlène (ed.): *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia*. Routledge, Oxon 2009(A), 5; Persson, Gudrun: Vilka är vi? Rysk identitet och den nationella säkerheten. Nordisk Østforum 28 (3) 2014, 199–214.

3 Horvath, Robert: *Putin's preventive counter-revolution. Post-Soviet authoritarianism and the spectre of Velvet Revolution*. Routledge, Oxfordshire & New York, 2013, 208–209.

4 In this paper I will use the concept 'state nationalism', but in previous research literature the concepts of official nationalism and official nationality are used for the same purpose. See e.g. March, Luke: Nationalism for Export? The Domestic and Foreign-Policy Implications of the New 'Russian Idea'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 2012, 64(3): 401–425; Verkhovskii, Aleksandr – Pain, Emil: Civilizational nationalism. The Russian version of the 'special path'. *Russian Politics and Law* 2012; 50 (5 Sep–Oct): 52–86.

are both influential to some extent, regardless of their small size in actual numbers. The hypothesis then is that since the emergence of conservative values in the state leadership and the tightening control towards dissent and political contention within the regime, the EYU would face less repression from the state, whereas the Russian March would be coerced by the state. The time frame of the study extends from 2011 until the spring of 2015, which is deemed to ensure that the conclusions will have a certain historical perspective.

One of the assumptions of the study is that the state has its own interpretation of nationalism, and that it seeks to gain hegemony over the various ways in which the concept is applied. Official nationalism as such is briefly discussed in this paper, but its characteristics become visible mainly when studying the relationship between the selected example movements and the state authorities. What needs to be noted is that the official nationalism of the Russian state has been inclusive by definition, and one of its key functions is to keep ethnic confrontations to a minimum. However, the division between the ethnic and civic interpretation of nationalism in the official rhetoric has not been clear-cut.[5] This is precisely why a case study can help to map the official nationalism. The aim is to show with an empirical study which features of nationalistic thinking are supported by the current regime, which are repressed and which, perhaps, have been replaced by introducing new actors into the field.

1.1 Research design and data used

Theories concerning political contention within the regime are useful when mapping the relationship between the state and the selected example movements. Regime management research became very popular after the so-called colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space in the mid-2000s. This protest cycle, which in many cases led to a change of leadership, reminded the remaining regimes, including Russia, of the potential power of dissent. Therefore, in many cases, new means were adopted to coerce and channel it.[6] They included, for example, stricter control over the opposition and NGOs on the one hand, and the mobilization of loyal patriotic organizations on the other.[7] These means were put on the table again after the massive electoral protests in Russia during 2011–2012, after which they gained fresh impetus following the Maidan movement that emerged in Kiev in the winter of 2013–2014.[8]

5 Rutland, Peter: The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia. In Newton, Julie & Thompson, William (eds.): *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire 2010.

6 Robertson, Graeme B.: *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia*. Cambridge University Press, New York 2011, 201.

7 Robert Horvath refers to this as Putin's preventive counter-revolution. See Horvath 2013, 9.

8 In March 2015, the Russian media reported that the scientific council of the Security Council of the Russian Federation sees the prevention of colour revolutions as one of its main tasks. See e.g. "S 'tsvetnyh revolutsii' hotyat snyat' kamuflyazh", *Kommersant'* 4.3.2015, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2679357; accessed 6.5.2015.

In this study I will apply Graeme Robertson's theory, which combines analysis on organizational ecology, state mobilization strategies and elite competition in order to explain the patterns of protest in hybrid regimes. His main argument is that all these factors have an impact on the protest, whether it materializes into action or not. The theory is based on the notion that in hybrid regimes the volume of protest follows the dynamics of competition between political elites. Even if the organizational ecology is dominated by the state and the competition between the elites within the state is low, there is still room for protest, but those protests are likely to remain short-term if they cannot develop their organizational structure.[9] This is exactly what happened in Russia in 2011–2012: the protests emerged, but they could not form a sustainable alternative to the organizational ecology. Moreover, the authoritarian regime is often capable of safeguarding its longevity through legislation,[10] a process that also took place in Russia after the election protests.

Robertson points out that the 'hybrid regime' concept applies to a diversity of cases – hybrid regimes can, for example, facilitate various forms of protest and political contention.[11] This does not mean that the concept wouldn't have much to deliver, but rather that it functions as a reminder that there is a vast landscape between open democracies and closed authoritarian regimes. Both the hybrid and authoritarian regime concepts have been applied to contemporary Russia, and there are arguably grounds for either: despite turning more authoritarian in recent years, the Russian leadership still needs to seek legitimation for its power through elections.

Previous research on a regime's strategies for managing dissent and political contention can also shed light on the measures taken by the regime when managing nationalism. Theories about protest in hybrid or authoritarian regimes are also helpful. The Russian March could actually be described as protest movement since it is anti-government in nature, but the Eurasian Youth Union does not fit the definition of protest as such. The example movements need to be seen in a broader context of organizational ecology where they occupy certain niches, which is duly useful for the regime that aspires to control this sphere.

In previous research on nationalistic movements there has been a clear link to the field of youth studies, and there are several reasons for this. One of the most obvious is pointed out by anthropologists Elena Omelchenko and Hillary Pilkington: patriotic education in Russia is deliberately targeted at the young generation.[12] Additionally, it has been shown that among the politically motivated groups, the nationalists are younger than

9 Robertson 2011, 200–202.

10 This is the case especially when the regime can cooptate its challengers by involving them in the legislative process. See Reuter, John Ora & Robertson, Graeme B.: Legislatures, Cooptation, and Social Protest in Contemporary Authoritarian Regimes. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (January 2015), pp. 235–248.

11 Robertson 2011, 8–9.

12 Omelchenko, E. L. & Pilkington, H.: Lyubit', gordit'sya, uezhat'? Rossiyskaya molodezh' v patrioticheskom labirinte. In Omelchenko, E. L. & Pilkington, H. (ed.): *S chego nachinaetsya Rodina: molodezh' v labirintah patriotizma*. Ulyanovskiy gosudarstvennyy universitet, Ulyanovsk 2012, 8.

others[13] and that it has been young people in particular that have expressed the highest rates of xenophobia.[14] In this paper the movements are not approached purely as youth movements – even though it would not be far-fetched to do so because the majority of their members are young, and the EYU also embraces this aspect in its name – as the conclusions of the study are thought to be applicable in a wider context than youth studies as such.

The motivation for the time frame stems from three notions: first, the government's tolerance towards political contention and even small-scale social movements decreased markedly after the mass demonstrations during the winter of 2011–2012, the so-called Bolotnaya protests.[15] Second, at the beginning of Putin's third term, a conservative approach was adopted in the Russian leadership in domestic as well as in foreign policy. This is what Maria Engström calls a "re-ideologization of Russian domestic, foreign and security policy".[16] Third, this time frame encompasses the escalating crisis in Ukraine that has further fuelled the nationalistic rhetoric – and actions – that were first adopted as a part of the conservative turn in Putin's third term. All of these changes have affected the field of Russian contemporary nationalism.

The primary data for the study consist of the systematic reading of Internet material provided by the movements themselves between 2011 and 2015. The webpages have been read with the help of the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, which provides access to websites that might no longer exist elsewhere.[17] I have compiled a set of webpages that represent the ideological side of the movements and which also comment on topical questions on a regular basis. These include the official homepages of both movements as well as the blogs of influential figures, such as Valeri Korovin, leader of the EYU, Dmitri Demushkin, head of the Russians (Russkie) movement, and Konstantin Krylov from the

13 Pain, E. A. & Prostakov, S.A.: Mnogolikiy russkiy natsionalizm. Ideyno-politicheskie raznovidinosti (2010–2014). *Polis*, no. 4, 2014.

14 Laruelle Marlène: *In the name of the nation: Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia*. Palgrave MacMillan, Series in International Relations and Political Economy, New York 2009(B), 45.

15 At the same time, it should be noted that this was not the only consequence of the demonstrations. Richard Sakwa has argued that the protests were followed by a three-phase process of liberalisation, coercion and deconcentration, all of which aimed at strengthening the "Putinite" system. The use of repressive means nevertheless intensified after February 2014. Sakwa, Richard: Questioning Control and Contestation in Late Putinite Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 67, No. 2, March 2015, 200–204.

16 Engström, 1.

17 The official main pages and relevant blogs were accessed through the Wayback Machine portal (https://archive.org/web/) at least once every three months during January 2011 – February 2015. See list of specific pages in the bibliography.

National-Democratic Party (NDP), the latter two being visible leaders of the Russian March.[18]

It should be noted that the relationship between the online and offline activities is far from linear – online participation is not always carried through offline. That is why after exploring the ideological presentation of the movements according to the online material I will take a look at some key events that took place "offline", that is, in real life. To do so, newspaper material has been collected within the same time frame, using the main publications of the central press.[19]

The attempts to control the Internet sphere by legislative means have increased since 2011 as one consequence of the electoral protests.[20] As Robertson states, the Putin administration has put effort into developing techniques for channelling protest, one of the key elements being control over the major electronic media.[21] This idea has been echoed by Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, who stress the significance of information for "modern-day dictators". They claim that information manipulation is more decisive for authoritarian rulers than any form of violence. By controlling information, the incumbent leaders can safeguard their future, as long as the economic conditions do not deteriorate too rapidly and too deeply.[22]

1.2 Concepts and structure of the paper

In this paper the definition of nationalism as a political concept is crucial. The term is commonly used in the meaning of emphasizing nationalistic values, that is, stressing nationhood and its distinguished characteristics. When nationalism becomes an instrument of politics, certain aims are motivated by these characteristics. In this study I approach nationalism in the broader sense of the word, mainly meaning "acknowledging or emphasizing the significance of a nation", and at this stage not yet determining whether the emphasis is placed on the civic or ethnic features. Also, it is worth pointing out that in the case of Russia, nationalism (broadly understood) is rather all-encompassing not only in politics, but also in other layers of society – as Marlène Laruelle has put it, "… in the Russian Federation today, nationalism comprises the

18 The National Democratic Party was organized in Moscow in 2012 on the basis of two organizations, the Russian Societal Movement (*Russkoe Obshestvennoe Dvizhenie*, ROD) and the Russian Civil Union (*Russkiy Grazhdanskiy Soyuz*, RGS). The party has not yet succeeded in collecting the required number of signatures to officially register: http://rosndp.org/ accessed 6.5.2015; Belomestnov, D., Belonuchkin, G., Pribylovskiy, V.: *Koordinatsyonnyy Sovet Rossiyskoy oppozitsii. Kto est kto*. Tsentr Panorama, Moskva 2013, 97–102.

19 News reports were collected by making relevant searches in the Integrum database. The final collection included about 120 pieces of news from January 2011 to March 2015.

20 Kramer, Mark: The Clampdown on Internet Activities in Russia and the Implications for Western Policy. *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 350, September 2014.

21 Robertson 2011, 174.

22 Guriev, Sergei M. & Treisman, Daniel, *How Modern Dictators Survive: Cooptation, Censorship, Propaganda, and Repression* (February 19, 2015). Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=2571905.

common denominator, the constitutive element of social consensus and of 'political correctness'".[23]

In the field of nationalism studies, the ethnic and civic interpretations of nationalism are often presented as being distinct. The Russian state leadership needs to emphasize the civic interpretation of nationalism for the simple reason that there are over 190 nationalities living in Russia,[24] and stressing the inclusive interpretation of the nation is a way to keep ethnic conflicts to a minimum. But recently the leadership has started to apply ethnic nationalist rhetoric, for example by referring to Russians (russkie) instead of citizens of Russia (rossiyanin).[25] This, sometimes referred to as the state "flirting with nationalism",[26] makes the definition of contemporary Russian nationalism more complicated. It also confirms that the leadership understands the populist appeal of ethnic nationalism among the public at large and tries to manage the thinking related to it.[27] Combining elements of civic and ethnic nationalism in the official rhetoric is not entirely new,[28] but it has definitely become a powerful instrument in uniting people of different ethnic backgrounds at a time of crisis, such as the one that Russia is currently experiencing.

The movements that serve as examples of Russian contemporary nationalism promote different forms of nationalism, but there is no disputing the fact they can both be described as nationalistic according to the interpretation above. The Eurasian Youth Union emphasizes the significance of nationality, but connects it rather to 'civilization', that is, cultural and geographical denominators. Their take on ethnic nationalism is more diverse, and will be discussed further below.

The groups associated with the Russian March are clearly promoting ethnic nationalism, but they also find it challenging to define Russianness. As Thomas Parland has noted, both the neo-Eurasian (or 'statist', gosudarstvenniki) and the ethnocentric nationalistic currents are a form of the same type of modern Russian nationalism. The main difference is that the former emphasizes the primacy of the state, or the multinational empire, whereas the latter emphasizes the primacy of ethnos. Parland notes that the Russian idea unites the currents nevertheless: "They [ethnocentric and statist nationalists] hold out

23 Laruelle 2009A, 1.

24 According to the census of 2010: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm; accessed 23.4.2015.

25 One clear example is Vladimir Putin's speech after the annexation of Crimea: http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/20603; accessed 23.4.2015.

26 For example Jarzyńska, Katarzyna: Russian nationalists on the Kremlin's policy in Ukraine. *OSW Commentary*, Number 156, 24.12.2014.

27 According to opinion polls conducted in Russia in October 2014, over 50% of respondents gave either full or partial support to statements with a nationalistic emphasis, such as "Russia for Russians" and "Stop feeding Caucasus". The support had decreased slightly from the previous year, but still remains relatively high: http://www.levada.ru/26-08-2014/natsionalizmksenofobiya-i-migratsiya, accessed 23.4.2015.

28 Laruelle 2009B, 7.

a separate non-Western path of development, reject the Western liberal and democratic models of political culture, and are more or less anti-Semitic".[29] Here, I want to point out that even though I approach the Russian March as largely an ethnocentric movement, there are also groups in the community that value the Western democratic model and wish to apply it to Russia.

I deliberately refer to both the Eurasian Youth Union and the Russian March community as movements, but this needs qualifying. The EYU could feasibly be described as the youth wing of a greater Eurasian movement, officially called the International Eurasian Movement (Mezhdunarodnoe Evraziyskoe Dvizhenie; MED).[30]

Even if the links between the EYU and the "parent organization" MED are close and not always clear-cut, the EYU does have its own leaders and its own agenda, and it is organizing events that are distinctly labelled as EYU events. Moreover, the Russian March as a movement is somewhat peculiar because it consists of numerous smaller groups that can vary in terms of ideology and membership strata, but which have already gathered for a decade in a joint event that has its own aims and manifesto. Hence, in both cases, defining them as movements is perhaps not definitive but functional in terms of the study.

The paper consists of two main parts, followed by a concluding chapter. First, I will place the selected movements in the historical context of Russian nationalism and elaborate on the ideology they promote. In the second part, the relationship between the movements and the current leadership is discussed through some selected events. Here, I apply the research on contention management measures that regimes like Russia have adopted during the 2010s. In the concluding section I will argue that the selected movements have been useful for the current regime in certain ways in its attempt to manage nationalism, and that the measures the regime has applied help to define the limits of state nationalism in Russia today.

29 Parland, Thomas: *The Extreme Nationalist Threat in Russia. The Growing Influence of Western Rightist Ideas.* RoutledgeCurzon, Oxon 2005. 75–76.

30 See the movement's website: http://evrazia.info/; accessed 23.4.2015.

2 THE IDEOLOGY OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

In this chapter the aim is to contextualize the two selected movements historically, as well as to describe their ideology and concrete political demands. Both the Eurasian Youth Movement and the Russian March tradition emerged formally around the year 2005. The emergence of the EYU was part of the "counter-Orange wave", the activation of conservative and pro-government movements that followed the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004. According to Anton Shekhovtsov and other scholars, the EYU was one of the top-down organized movements such as the Nashi youth movement.[31]

However, even if the movement had initially enjoyed direct support from the leadership, it does not mean that it was completely orchestrated from above – and what is more, this sort of connection is hard to confirm. As Jussi Lassila has argued, the link to the establishment does not preclude the youth movements having their "own voice" and own communication strategies.[32]

In 2004, a new public holiday, the Day of National Unity, was introduced to celebrate the end of the Polish invasion in 1612. The holiday was quickly adopted by the nationalists, while the official celebrations were organized only in later years, after the first Russian Marches had already been held.[33] The new holiday was a good opportunity for the nationalists to "conquer" public space and attention. It is also interesting to note that the first march was at least attended if not primarily organized by the Eurasian Youth Union. Some EYU members have attended the march on subsequent occasions, but officially the movement doesn't take part in the event anymore. The Russian March is rather exceptional in the sense that it is one of the few annually occurring forms of dissent that has taken place for over 10 years.

Both movements are small in terms of attendance. The Russian March attracts a few thousand participants every year in Moscow, but in other regions the events have remained modest. Attendance at the 2014 march in Moscow was also poor. In the virtual sphere the engagement is complicated to measure, of course, but one indicator could be the social network Vkontakte.ru, where the EYU's community page has about 10,700 members and the Russian March about 23,500. In a poll conducted by the Levada Centre in October 2014, 23 per cent of respondents had heard about the Russian March,[34] which, I would argue, is a relatively high proportion. This is related to the fact that the march

31 Shekhovtsov, Anton: Putin's Brain? *New Eastern Europe* (4 Sep–Oct): 2014, 72–79; Horvath, Robert: Russkii Obraz and the politics of "managed nationalism". *Nationalities Papers*, 42:3, 2014, 469–488; 470.

32 See Lassila, Jussi: *The Quest for an Ideal Youth in Putin's Russia II. The Search for Distinctive Conformism in the Political Communication of Nashi, 2005–2009*. Ibidem, Stuttgart 2012, 19.

33 Zuev, Denis: The Russian March: Investigating the Symbolic Dimension of Political Performance in Modern Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:1, 2013, 102–126.

34 Of those who knew about the march, 31% supported its ideas at least partly: http://www.levada.ru/31-10-2014/otnoshenie-k-russkim-marsham. For the sake of comparison, it could be mentioned that in a similar poll, conducted in January 2015, 50% of respondents knew who Aleksey Navalny is: http://www.levada.ru/05-02-2015/rossiyane-ob-aleksee-navalnom, both accessed 20.3.2015.

Table 1. Participants in the Russian Marches in Moscow, November 4, 2011–2014.
Sources: "'Russkiy marsh' obernulsya horovodom", *Kommersant'* 7.11.2011; Migranty poprosili Sobjanina otmenit 'Russkie marshi'", *Izvestiya* 6.11.2012; "'Russkiy marsh' prinyali za maskarad", *Kommersant'* 6.11.2012; "Mitingi. Den treh marshei", *RBK daily* (Moskva), 5.11.2014; News of the SOVA Center, http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2014/11/d30580/.

Year	Event	Turnout	Note
2011	Lyublino	7 000	The organizers anticipated 15 000 participants. According to *Kommersant'*, the turnout was similar to the previous year.
2012	Lyublino	6 000	Demushkin had stated that around 30 000 participated in the march, but according to an Izvestiya reporter, there were approximately 10 000. Both figures are a lot bigger than the official figures of Moscow City Police, published by Kommersant'.
2013	Lyublino	8 000	Permission was applied for and granted for up to 15 000 persons.
2014: A*	Lyublino	1 800 – 2 000	Demushkin stated in the *RBK daily* news that there were around 10 000 participants on the march, which was, according to him, less than the year before.
2014: B*	Oktjabrskoe pole (M)	1 200	March following Igor Strelkov, under the title 'Russian March for Novorossiya'.

* On the same day in 2014 an official counter-march in the centre, in Pushkin Square and Tverskoy Boulevard, 'My ediny', drew 75 000 participants.

has been around for a decade, so it is already something of a tradition, and is covered annually at least in the online and print press.

The Eurasian Youth Union organizes mostly small-scale events such as seminars, lectures and summer schools. It participates in mass events, but rarely stages them itself. It could be argued that the EYU is primarily trying to educate (future) elites with these actions, and this also chimes well with the broader picture of the Eurasian movement, which has sought more structured channels of communication with the state leadership. For example, both Valeri Korovin and Alexander Dugin, the leader of the MED, are members of the Izborskiy Club, a conservative "think tank" or discussion group that sees its task as providing advice for the political leadership.[35]

35 The exact formulation can be found on the Club's website: http://www.dynacon.ru/opr/izborsk-c.php, accessed 6.5.2015.

Much has been written about Alexander Dugin and his connections with the state leaders. He is said to have had close ties with the state leadership at the end of 1990s,[36] namely during Boris Yeltsin's era, but that may no longer be the case. Shekhovtsov has stated that his current influence is most likely indirect.[37] The EYU has also had a link to Moscow State University, where it has participated in the work of the faculty of sociology.[38] The link with the university was more visible on the EYU websites in 2011–2012, when many events were organized either on the university premises or in cooperation with its lecturers, but those linkages have been less frequent of late.

The Eurasian movement also has a connection to the All-Russian National Front (Obsherossiyskiy natsional'nyy front, ONF), a pro-government platform that emerged as a United Russia-backed project in 2011, but which has since become more independent of the party. Formally, there is a Eurasian National Front functioning within the ONF. The aim of this faction was originally to strive for Eurasian integration, one of the key goals of the regime in 2011.[39] According to Lassila, the ONF was supposed to serve as an institution that legitimizes the power of the regime.[40]

The pro-government movements seem to be well interconnected, and new groups with various names emerge in this arena rather quickly. Some figures from the Eurasian movement are well connected to these projects, such as to the National Liberation Movement (Natsional'no-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie; NOD),[41] headed by Duma deputy, Evgeni Fedorov. This tendency for new movements to dynamically emerge does not necessarily imply that they acquire audiences, and in many cases the member strata remain small and disengaged, which can then lead to fresh attempts to gather an audience by forming other new forums or renaming the previous ones. In short, activities surrounding conservative and pro-government platforms have been energetic of late, and the Eurasian movement at large has been involved in at least some of the projects.

Both the Russian March and the Eurasian Youth Union have already taken root in the organizational ecosystem of Russia, even though the movements seem to be constantly re-evaluating their "niches" within this complex. Neither of these movements is a mass movement, but I argue that they can and do have an influence despite their size. As Robertson has pointed out, in hybrid regimes the sheer number of protesters is not the most decisive factor when evaluating the influence of the movement, as it largely

36 Parland, 121–122.

37 Shekhovtsov 2014.

38 For example, Valeri Korovin states on his website that he's been the leading expert (*vedushiy ekspert*) of the Center of Conservative Studies within MSU since 2008.

39 See e.g. *Izvestiya* 16.10.2011: http://izvestia.ru/news/504015, accessed 23.4.2015.

40 Lassila, Jussi: Yleisvenäläinen kansanrintama ja hybridin hallitsemisen dilemma. *Idäntutkimus* 1: 2015, 36–54.

41 The first archived websites of the NOD are from July 2013. Internet archive, www.rusnod.ru; accessed 23.4.2015.

depends on the nature of the regime whether a movement can be seen as influential or not.

Hence, I will concentrate on the relationship between the selected movements and the regime, and deprioritize the relationship between the movements and the wider Russian public. The choice is motivated by Robertson's note that in hybrid regimes, where reliable political information is scarce, the incumbent rulers are vulnerable to instability and even subtle signs of regime weakness. It is therefore inconsequential whether or not the movements are able to attract wide public support because, from the point of view of the regime, they can nevertheless increase the instability without it.[42]

2.1 The Eurasian Youth Union and the Russian March as examples of nationalism

There are various ways to categorize the contemporary nationalist movements. The different possible categories or division lines within the nationalistic field are not the main topic of this study, but some observations need to be made. Thomas Parland has elaborated on Russian nationalism and the divisions between political left and right, extreme and moderate, as well as old and modern nationalism. All these divisions make sense only when they are placed on a historical continuum, which Parland is also ready to do.[43] As already noted, according to Parland, it is crucial to understand that both ethnocentric and statist nationalists (such as the Eurasianists) share many common characteristics as they represent two currents of modern nationalism.

As Laruelle has pointed out, Russian contemporary nationalism is often approached as if it was a new phenomenon, although nationalistic thinking in various forms already existed before and during the Soviet era.[44] This is also the case with the two selected examples: their ideologies have contributed to a long tradition even though the movements themselves are relatively young. The anti-government, ethnic nationalism that is promoted today and exemplified in the Russian March is clearly rooted in the classical Slavophilism that emerged in the 1830s. It emphasized the so-called Russian idea, according to which Russia needs to define and follow its own path and not give in to the onslaught of Western modernization. By definition, therefore, the Russian idea as well as Slavophilism were counter-reformist and stressed the significance of the Orthodox faith.[45] But, as Parland explains, the secularization of Slavophilism happened gradually, when the religious emphasis was pushed into the background by the "non-religious theories of Western extraction".[46]

42 Robertson, 168–169, 185.

43 Parland, 73–101.

44 Laruelle, 2009A, 2.

45 Yanov Alexander: *The Russian Challenge and the Year 2000*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1987, 19–37; Parland 108.

46 Parland, 108.

Even if the roots of the ethnocentric nationalistic movements of contemporary Russia are embedded in early Slavophile thought, they have come a long way since then. Emil Pain describes these movements as representing the "new nationalism" that emerged in the early 2000s. Earlier, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russian nationalistic movements had mainly been leftist ones, at least in the sense that they cherished the Soviet system, whereas in the early 2000s the rightist nationalists grew stronger.[47]

Indeed, the Russian March is often described as a right-wing nationalist event, but even if there were grounds to approach it as a right-wing movement, the right-left axis would not be the most appropriate in this case. There are features in the official march programme that are clearly not rightist, such as calls for free elections and stronger representative democracy in the regions and within the court system. Moreover, the groups taking part in the march are very diverse, and some of them emphasize more leftist ideas together with their ethnic nationalism, such as questions related to social justice.

The Russian school of Eurasianism developed in the 1920s and 1930s on the basis of geopolitical tradition and didn't disappear entirely during the Soviet era although it was officially prohibited. It wasn't until the 1990s that Eurasian thinking experienced a "boom" in Russia.[48] Alexander Dugin, who has been one of this school of thought's most influential figures in Russia, often called neo-Eurasianism, bases his thinking on geopolitical dualism, originally formulated by Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer and Carl Schmitt, which assumes that there is eternal antagonism between the land and the sea, namely between the continental and maritime powers.

According to Mackinder's theory, those who control the "heartland" will control the whole world. In the neo-Eurasian view, Eurasia represents the "heartland", the ultimate continental power, and the United States together with Great Britain represents "Atlanticism", the maritime powers.[49] In his book *Osnovy geopolitiki* (1997), Dugin clearly links his geopolitical thinking to the classical and naturalistic school of thought, where geopolitics is understood and described as a "state of things" that just exists, and cannot be questioned.[50] He explains that a human being is inevitably connected to a place (prostranstvo),[51] which means that civilizations as such should be understood in these terms. For the "Eurasian nations", therefore, the natural place is the Eurasian continent.

Whereas Dugin emphasizes the "imperialistic" interpretation and geopolitics, these are not the only priorities within contemporary Eurasian thinking. Lev Gumilev, one

47 Verkhovskii, Aleksandr & Pain, Emil: Civilizational nationalism. The Russian version of the "special path". *Russian Politics and Law* 2012; 50 (5 Sep–Oct): 52–86; Laruelle 2009B, 58–60.

48 Mäkinen, Sirke: *Russian Geopolitical Visions and Argumentation. Parties of Power, Democratic and Communist Opposition on Chechnya and NATO, 1994–2003.* Academic Dissertation, University of Tampere 2008, 36–38, 41.

49 Parland, 115–125.

50 See e.g. Mäkinen, 23.

51 Dugin, Aleksandr: *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe buduschee Rossii.* Moskva, Arktogeya, 1997, 11–14.

of the most well-known figures of the Eurasianist school, based his philosophy on the concept of "ethnogenesis" and explained that civilizations are born, develop and perish like living organisms. Hence, civilizations are bound to time and place. According to Gumilev's thinking, the nations in Eurasia are deeply interconnected: he stressed the meaning of a Eurasian "super-ethnos", a civilization that compasses the nomadic peoples of the steppes and the Russians.[52] Gumilev's theories are held in high esteem in certain circles and, for example, the idea of the destructive West is widely cherished by Eurasianists as well as nationalists in contemporary Russia.[53] It is not possible to discuss these notions at length in this study, but it should be borne in mind that Russian Eurasianism is not a unified school of thought, but rather embraces various ideas.[54]

As I will attempt to map the relationship between the current leadership and the selected nationalistic movements, it makes sense to briefly summarize how I approach "state nationalism" in contemporary Russia. The official interpretation of nationalism has stressed the significance of the state, its leadership, and state symbols instead of Russianness as an ethnic feature. However, as Rutland points out, Russian state nationalism has not been "civic" in the sense that it would emphasize the participation of citizens and their individual rights.[55] Unlike Boris Yeltsin, for example, Putin has not felt obliged to apply state-related concepts of rossiyskiy or rossiyan instead of russkiy in his public speeches.[56]

Symbolic representations of nationalism are often connected to the Orthodox Church, and the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in this configuration is crucial. Even if the Russian Federation is constitutionally a secular state, the relationship between the Church and the Kremlin has intensified considerably in recent years.[57] Beth Admiraal has described the significance of religion to the current leadership in the following terms: "For Putin, Russian is Orthodox and Orthodox is Russia, depending on his audience. The first proposition provides cover from external domination; the second proposition coaxes unity and, when necessary, motivates imperialism".[58] Thus, without delving too deeply into the linkage between religion and the state, it seems that emphasizing the role of religion serves at least partly the same purpose as official nationalism: to unify the country from within.

52 Parland 117–118; see also Alexander Yanov's online essay on Gumilev's "enlighted nationalism": http://imrussia.org/en/society/613-split-science, accessed 11.5.2015.

53 Parland, 118.

54 For a more comprehensive picture of Russian Eurasianism, see Laruelle, Marlène: *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2008.

55 Rutland, 124.

56 Rutland, 125.

57 Jarzyńska, Katarzyna: The Russian Orthodox Church as Part of the State and Society. *Russian politics and law*, vol. 52, no. 3, May–June 2014, 90–91.

58 Admiraal, Beth: A religion for the nation or a nation for the religion? Putin's third way for Russia. In Laruelle, Marlène (ed.): *Russian nationalism and the national reassertion of Russia*. Routledge, Oxon 2009, 215.

One of the problems with official nationalism in contemporary Russia is that the position of ethnicity within the state is not defined. National minority politics has been relegated to a reactive level, and as there is no consensus on strategies, there is no comprehensive legislation on integration.[59] As Verkhovsky writes, the lack of consensus on ethnicity politics makes it less likely that the situation would change under the current regime.[60] Caress Schenk argues that despite the evident need for workers, the Russian state has imposed restrictive migration legislation specifically because of the xenophobic attitudes of the public at large.[61] Katrin Uba and Sophia Tipaldou write that the restrictive migration policies tightened even further after the ethnic conflicts in 2007 and 2010, even though a direct causal relationship is hard to prove.[62]

The absence of consistent legislation on minority and migration issues combined with the fact that a high percentage of Russians exhibit xenophobic feelings[63] says a lot about the twin problems of state nationalism: on the one hand, ethnic divisions need to be avoided, but on the other hand, nationalist manifestations have a certain popular appeal that makes them tempting to use as a resource. As Peter Rutland described the dilemma during Putin's second term in presidential office: "The state did not want to use the ethnic nationalist tool for itself – but it did not want anyone else using it, either."[64] Today, this phrase could be reformulated thus: the state leadership would indeed want to use the ethnic nationalist tool in order to harness the power it holds – but at the same time, the state has not forgotten the risk inherent in this tool.

2.2 The example movements' ideas as presented today

Having provided a short introduction to the traditional currents of Slavophilic and Eurasianist thinking, it is easier to contextualize the ideological appeal of the selected movements. Here, the ideologies are traced from the Internet material provided by the movements themselves.

It is worth pointing out that both the EYU and the Russian March conduct activities throughout Russia as well as in certain locations abroad. The EYU has regional offices in 16 cities in Russia and contact with partner organizations in Europe, and in some other

59 See for example Gorenburg, Dmitry: The Adaptation of Migrants in Russia (Editor's Introduction). *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 52, No. 6, November–December 2014, 3–7, and the related articles in the same issue.

60 Verkhovsky, Aleksandr: Etnopolitika federal'noj vlasti i aktivizatsiya russkogo natsionalizma. *Pro et Contra*, January–April 2014, 19, 30–31.

61 Schenk, Caress: Open Borders, Closed Minds: Russia's Changing Migration Policies: Liberalization or Xenophobia? *Demokratizatsiya*, 1/2010; 18(2):101–121.

62 Tipaldou, Sofia & Uba, Katrin: The Russian Radical Right Movement and Immigration Policy: Do They Just Make Noise or Have an Impact as Well?, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66:7, 2014, 1080–1101.

63 Gorodzeisky, A., Glikman, A. & Maskileyson, D.: The nature of anti-immigrant sentiment in post-socialist Russia. *Post-Soviet Affairs* Vol. 31, no. 2, 2015, 118–119.

64 Rutland, 127.

post-Soviet countries. The Union was also active in Ukraine, but in August 2014 the EYU official homepage announced that the movement's Ukrainian activists would work underground henceforth. The internationality of the Eurasian movement at large is tied to its ideology, which stresses the common features of the Eurasian continent. This is why the Eurasian movements also support initiatives enhancing Eurasian integration, be they economic, political or cultural. The Russian March has regional committees organizing its events. In August 2013, the list of organizational committees included more than 60 cities across Russia and Ukraine. It's hard to ascertain how active these committees actually are, but what could serve as an indicator is that in 2014 the Russian March was organized in 34 regions.[65]

The Eurasian Youth Union relies heavily on the legacy of Alexander Dugin's thinking in its online material as well.[66] The website promotes Dugin's publications, various web projects, his essays and videos, but the leader of the EYU, Valeri Korovin, is also well represented on the webpages. At least within the time frame of this study, Korovin has not challenged Dugin's teachings, even though his emphasis is different. Korovin's latest publications concentrate on "network war" (setevaia voina) in its different forms. Simply put, the concept refers to the aggression of the United States towards Russia, and how it is implemented through the networks.[67] In addition to Dugin and Korovin, there are various other active authors within the community who write news reports and express opinions on the official site.

Whereas the EYU seems to be mainly a portal to produce and share information, the Russian March community uses its online presence, firstly, to mobilize people to attend the marches, and secondly, to disseminate information about them in the social media. As Zuev has pointed out, it is extremely important for the Russian March to heighten its visibility,[68] so photos, banners and other material are actively disseminated.

One of the most visible and persistent groups participating in the Russian March is the "Russians" ethnopolitical movement (Etnopoliticheskoe dvizhenie "Russkie"). The movement makes no secret of the fact that it is a predecessor of the previously banned organizations, the Movement against illegal immigration (Dvizhenie protiv nelegal'noy immigratsii, DPNI) and the Slavic Union (Slavyanskiy Soyuz). The leaders of these organizations, Alexander Belov (né Potkin) and Dmitri Demushkin respectively, do not try to conceal the connection to the banned organizations – in many cases quite the opposite. The movement is ideologically based on the notion that the Russian people

65 According to information published on the official Russian March homepage.

66 One example is the address of the official EYU webpage, entitled rossia3.ru. The name is said to be a synthesis of Russia-1 and Russia-2, the first being Putin's Russia with the power vertical, followed after 2004 by "Orange Russia" or Russia-2, meaning the more liberal and West-oriented politics. Both of these appeared to be weak formations, but Russia-3 is a "project" that will herald the Russian Empire and the "Holiest of the Holy". Such language and theorization is very typical of Dugin.

67 The networks in Korovin's writings refer not only to social networks or networks based on the Internet, but also to the connections between states, movements, and organisations. Korovin, Valeri: *Tretya mirovaya setevaya voyna*. Piter, Sankt-Peterburg 2014, 22–25; 31–33.

68 Zuev 2013.

have never had the privilege of a nation state, and have historically been an exploited nation in their own country.[69]

Today, the suppression of Russians is related to the presence and inflow of migrants as well as the ethnically non-Russian parts of the Russian Federation, mainly Northern Caucasus. The latter component is a common denominator for the Russians movement and the National-Democratic Party, which is also one of the most active groups that traditionally participates in the Russian March. The NDP prides itself on having come up with the slogan "Stop feeding Caucasus". The party stresses the need for democratic decision-making and free and fair elections, which are thought to ensure the formation of a Russian nation state, where "discrimination against ethnic Russians" would no longer occur.

Throughout its existence, the Russian March has sought to balance between right-wing "hooliganism" and "normal nationalism". Thus, the public image of the movement has two faces. Laruelle points out that the first Russian March was officially called the Right-Wing March (Pravyy marsh) by its organizers, but that the name was changed to the Russian March the following year to encourage more people to attend, to diminish the ideological differences between the groups attending the event, and to avoid a fascist label.[70]

One interesting example of the attempts to normalize the xenophobic nationalism has been presented by opposition figure Aleksey Navalny, who attended the Russian March up to 2011 but has not done so since. In an interview conducted by the online newspaper *Lenta.ru* he states that the only way to make the Russian March "look better" is to participate oneself.[71] According to him, "normal people" should start attending nationalistic events in order to diminish the impression that only "hooligans" care about migration issues, and he described the Russian March as a platform for this sort of discussion.[72] The need to "normalize" nationalism, as Moen-Larsen describes the phenomenon, reveals that both the nationalists themselves and the people who share their ideas recognize the stigma that is attached to the Russian concept of a nationalist (in comparison with the clearly positively charged "patriot").[73] This is why it is crucial for the march to exercise caution when seeking new ways to promote the event, so as

69 This view has been promoted by previous ethnocentric Slavophilists such as writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who thought that the Russian nation had "sacrificed itself for the benefit of others", referring to both the tsarist empire and the Soviet Union. See Parland, 150–151.

70 Laruelle 2009B, 80–82.

71 "Ushchemlennyy russkii", 4.11.2011: http://lenta.ru/articles/2011/11/04/navalny/; accessed 6.5.2015.

72 Moen-Larsen, Natalia: "Normal nationalism": Alexei Navalny, LiveJournal and "the Other", *East European Politics*, 30:4, 2014, 548–567; 557–558.

73 This aspect has been discussed by Aleksei Zinovev in his study of sport-oriented nationalists. Zinovev, Aleksei: Russian run. Published as a part of the MYPLACE project on January 31 2014, available online: http://www.fp7-myplace.eu/documents/D7_1/Cluster%201%20Right%20Wing%20and%20Patriotic%20movements/MYPLACE_WP7.1REPORT_Region_Russian%20Run%20(Russia).pdf, accessed 18.5.2015.

not to attract only radical elements excited by the heavy police presence, but also new audiences who would identify more closely with the masses.

2.3 EuroMaidan, Crimea, and "Novorossiya"

During 2014, the field of Russian nationalism was seriously contested by the EuroMaidan movement in Kiev, the annexation of Crimea and the escalating conflict in Eastern Ukraine. As a consequence, the nationalistic movements became more fragmented than ever. Even when the demonstrations against the Ukrainian leadership and their decision to turn down the EU's Association agreement began in Kiev in November 2013, the Russian nationalistic field had very diverse takes on the situation. Some of the democratic nationalists supported the EuroMaidan protesters in Ukraine, for two reasons: firstly, they could lend their support to those who demanded democratic rights, and secondly, by doing so, they could demonstrate their disapproval of the Russian regime.[74] The EYU was obviously against protests of this sort, and it condemned the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich, which was the official Russian standpoint as well.

It seems that even though the demonstrations in Kiev provoked various reactions, the annexation of Crimea was initially approved by all actors within the nationalistic field. The EYU published news about the annexation in enthusiastic, even poetic, tones, as was to be expected: for them, it marked the close ties between Russia and Ukraine – and a step towards the Eurasian empire, which would include both of these territories (at least).

After the annexation of Crimea, Kosovo became a point of comparison for the conservative thinkers. The Neo-Eurasianist movement at large has, since its emergence, spoken about Yugoslavia and the fate of Serbia in particular.[75] Throughout 2011–2014 Kosovo was discussed on their website from different perspectives, and there has also been a banner with the slogan "Kosovo is Serbian" on the official homepage. The logic behind the comparison is to highlight "Western double standards": according to this view, international law was offended during the process that led to Kosovo's declaration of independence (which has not been acknowledged by either Russia or Serbia). Coupled with the Kosovo argumentation is the claim that the Crimea annexation was carried out according to the principles of international law, making the Western countries appear hypocritical.

What is perhaps surprising is the fact that the democratic nationalists seemed to welcome the Crimea annexation at first. As opinion polls in Russia have shown, the

74 Alperovich, Vera & Yudina, Natalia: Ukraina sputala natsionalistam karty. Report by the SOVA Center, originally published online by polit.ru on July 11 2014: http://polit.ru/article/2014/07/11/sova/, accessed 18.5.2015.

75 This question is discussed, for example, in *Elementy*, a publication of the Eurasian school. A special issue came out in 1992 including several articles concentrating on Serbia and Croatia. See for example "Serby protiv 'novogo mirovogo poryadka'", *Elementy* No 2, 1992, 10–13; "Serby – vragi Evropy", *Elementy* No 2, 1992, 14–15; "Geopolitika Yugoslavskogo konflikta", *Elementy* No 2, 1992, 20–25.

support in general for the annexation is very high (88% in March 2015),[76] and the nationalist movements are no exception in this respect. It is interesting to see how Krylov, for example, who has also voiced concerns about the future of Crimea, explains that the peninsula was never truly a part of Ukraine. In a blog entry, written in April 2014, he states that even though the annexation process was not carried out in the best possible way, the events developed in the right direction. The reasoning here tallied with the wishes of the Crimean inhabitants, and the Crimean status referendum was thus approved by the democratic nationalists.

The escalating conflict in Eastern Ukraine was (and still is) a more complex phenomenon. The EYU was quick to adopt the political innovation of "Novorossiya", and started to organize events under that name. At the same time they supported the separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and championed the Russian volunteers. From February 2014 onwards, it became clear that the Eurasian Youth Union activists were also coordinating aid and volunteers to Eastern Ukraine across Russia.[77] In terms of discourse, the EYU has called for more "decisive" measures in Eastern Ukraine, and they do not hesitate to speak about war and the need for it.[78] This is related to the quest for an empire within neo-Eurasianist thinking: embedded in their ideology is the fundamental conflict between the Eurasian continent and the Atlantic powers, which will ultimately materialize into a war between them. In their view, this war between the continents, "Endkampf",[79] is both justified and necessary.

The anti-government nationalists were more critical towards the conflict and, in particular, towards the way in which the official Russian media reported the events. As the conflict progressed, the democratic nationalists discussed the costs of the situation for Russia – something that hardly seemed to bother the EYU.

It should be noted at this juncture that the intensified information war, or disinformation campaign, clearly affected the way in which the representatives of the movements contributed to the discussion in general. For example, Krylov wrote in January 2015 about his experiences while travelling in the Donetsk region, emphasizing that he would only talk about things he had seen himself, and not what he was told by others. A similar attitude – namely a lack of trust in any information channels – is not unheard of as far as other actors in the field are concerned either.

76 Ukraina, Krym, sanktsii – press release by the Levada Centre, 6.4.2015: http://www.levada.ru/06-04-2015/ukraina-krym-sanktsii, accessed 30.4.2015.

77 See e.g. "Tyazhelaya kontuziya", *Novaya Gazeta* 26.2.2014; "Dobrovol'tsy iz Rossii gotovy vyehat' na pomoshch' vostochnoy Ukraine", *Izvestiya* 27.2.2014; "Poslantsy bratskogo naroda", *Novaya Gazeta* 19.3.2014.

78 In this respect, Dugin has been the most outspoken, but the EYU is actively supporting his views. See, for example, Dugin's take on the Russian Spring: http://rossia3.ru/politics/russia/rusvesna2015 ; published 22.2.2015, accessed 13.3.2015.

79 Dugin, Aleksandr: *Ukraina: moya voyna. Geopoliticheskiy dnevnik*. Tsentrpoligraf, Moskva, 2015, 152.

2.4 General notes on the Internet presence

The Internet sphere harbours some very concrete signals that indicate the official status of the selected movements. The EYU, for example, publishes the names and contact information (e-mail addresses or phone numbers) of its representatives on its website, whereas the nationalist movements use impersonal e-mail addresses for this purpose. Real names are rarely published on any of their websites, let alone any direct contact information – with the exception of the leaders, who can be considered celebrities of sorts in the nationalist movements. It is also interesting to note that the EYU-connected actors use Russian domains, but the Russian March as well as individuals and groups related to it use various international domains. The choice might be technical – if international domains are easier to acquire, for instance – but it can't be ruled out that this is pure coincidence, even though it appears to be systematic.

What is interesting about the nationalists' online behaviour is that if a page is closed, new ones are put up instantly. This was the case, for instance, when the Slavic Union was banned by a court decision: on the banned Slavic Union website there was an announcement – with a picture of the leader, Demushkin – redirecting the audience to the recently opened website of the Russians movement. This, together with similar examples, is either indicative of the half-heartedness of the repressive measures in the online sphere or the ability of anti-government nationalists to evade such measures.

Also, and perhaps surprisingly, the representatives of the Russian March organizations have been able to voice their views in the media.[80] For example, the leader of the Russians movement, Dmitri Demushkin, has commented repeatedly in major Russian newspapers on topics related to migration policies.[81] It goes without saying that the Russian March definitely benefits from having their leader quoted as an expert, but I would argue that this is also useful from the point of view of the regime, because the ethnic (extremist) nationalists then serve as an antipode to state nationalism in the public arena.

2.5 The ideological basis of the movements

In conclusion, the common denominator of these movements is that they both lack an ideological basis that would be at once comprehensive, constructive and concrete. By constructive I mean views that would have something to offer: not only pointing out the flaws of the present day but also making suggestions on how to correct them. By comprehensive I mean that the views the movements promote should form a certain whole that could be called an ideology. For this comprehensive set of views to serve as a programme, the ideas should also be presented at a concrete, practical level.

80 Aleksandr Verkhovsky has made a similar observation; see Verkhovsky 2014, 19.

81 The topics were usually related to legislative changes concerning migration. Demushkin is interviewed in the following articles as an expert: "Russkih sirot predlagayut dat' v kavkazskie sem'i", *Izvestiya* 13.12.2012; "CPCh predlagaet schitat' byvshih zhiteley RSFSR rossiyanami", *Izvestiya* 18.12.2012; "Strategiya i karapuzy", *Argumenty Nedeli* 27.12.2012; "Potomkam poddannyh Rossiyskoy imperii vydadut pasporta RF", *Izvestya* 31.1.2013; "Deputaty predlagayut vvesti moratoriy dlya migrantov", *Izvestiya* 24.5.2013.

This is where the EYU fails, for instance: their ideology is indeed comprehensive, but by no means concrete. Their proposals pay no attention at all to the practical requirements of putting such an ideology into practice. For instance, the costs of large-scale war in Eastern Ukraine are not considered because the justification for the war is unquestionable – this relates to the Eurasianist tradition where economics is understood as being subordinate to politics. The Russian March community, for its part, eagerly presents very concrete proposals – such as a visa regime, strengthening the democratic electoral processes and making certain legislative changes – but their ideas are not comprehensive, and often lack constructiveness as well.

This is obviously related to the way in which the movements are formed. The EYU is a youth organization based on neo-Eurasian thinking as formulated by Alexander Dugin, who could be described as more of a philosopher than a politician. The Russian March is an annual demonstration of discontent, and a platform for different groups and movements, none of which is involved in party politics – thus far at least. They are usually formed around charismatic figures who can mobilize the nationalistic mood into a movement, giving the participants a feeling of togetherness. As a result, the future of the movements is highly dependent on their leaders.

It can be argued that formulating a political programme or comprehensive ideology is not the primary task of the movements, since they are operating in the non-parliamentary field. But since both movements undoubtedly want to shift the politics in their desired direction, it is reasonable to assume that they would have something to offer. This, however, is certainly a topic that would require a study of its own, preferably with an additional collection of data. My aim here is to show that the nationalistic movements I have followed seem to have very limited ideas about the future at a concrete and constructive level. They are unable to deliver an alternative that could help the country in a time of crisis – a sentiment that resonates well with Alexander Yanov's remark that nationalistic thinking in Russia has traditionally been a current of counter-reform rather than a reforming power. As he describes the Slavophiles of the Nicholas I era in the Russian empire: "[T]hey knew quite precisely what they sought to do away with but only very vaguely what they wished to set up in its place".[82]

82 Yanov, 32.

3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE NATIONALISTS

In this chapter I will concentrate on events that aptly depict the coercive and channelling measures of the regime towards the nationalist groups during the last few years. This approach is designed to broaden the understanding of the actions and statements the movements took and made, and how the government subsequently reacted to them. I have chosen to look at electoral protests in 2011–2012 and the ethnic riots of 2013, together with more recent examples provided by the Russian March in November 2014, and the Antimaidan demonstration in Moscow in February 2015. I will briefly outline the events and link them to the framework of regime management measures, the most important ones being channelling and coercion. The cases I discuss in this chapter all took place in Moscow. A comparison of the regime's management measures in the central and regional context would no doubt be fruitful, but was beyond the scope of this paper.

3.1 Electoral protests 2011–2012 – the "Bolotnaya case"

The massive electoral protests[83] that started in December 2011 marked a time of high tension and anticipation in Russia's political sphere. The demonstrations were eventually triggered by widely reported fraud in the Duma elections held on December 4, but the discontent was already present before the actual election day, stemming from the United Russia Party conference held in September 2011, where Putin announced his intention to run for a third term.[84] One of the novelties of these mass protests was that the mobilization happened to a large extent through the social media, which is one reason why commentators were eager to link the demonstrations to the broader context of the colour revolutions.[85] In this chapter I will concentrate on the direct consequences of the protest movement for the EYU and the Russian March community.

The protests continued until the following summer, gradually diminishing in size particularly after the presidential elections in March 2012. During late spring, it was revealed both to the protesters and the media that the enthusiasm had diminished. This was due in part to the repressive means taken by the government shortly after Putin's inauguration, which imposed harsh penalties for violations during street protests, for

83 The biggest demonstration drew around 100,000 participants on December 24: Greene, Samuel A.: *Moscow in Movement: Power and Opposition in Putin's Russia*. Stanford University Press, Stanford 2014, 212; in the press the estimates varied between 30,000 and 120,000 participants. See "Miting protivopolozhnostey", *Izvestiya* 27.12.2011.

84 Still, the electoral demonstrations should be seen as a continuation of longer-term tendencies, and various manifestations of discontent had also been present in society earlier in the 2000s. See Robertson, Graeme: Protesting Putinism: The Election Protests of 2011–2012 in Broader Perspective. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 60:2, 11–23 and Greene, 202–204.

85 Yanitsky, Oleg: From civic protest to political reform: the case of Russia. Center of Studies on Politics and Society – WP series, vol 3, issue 1, 2013, pp. 1–27; Wolchik, Sharon L.: Putinism under Siege: Can There Be A Color Revolution? *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 23, Number 3, July 2012, 1–9; White, Stephen & McAllister, Ian: Did Russia (Nearly) have a Facebook Revolution in 2011? Social Media's Challenge to Authoritarianism. *Politics*, Volume 34, Issue 1, February 2014, pp. 72–84.

example.[86] But the more significant reason was probably that the protest movement had become more sporadic over time: in the beginning it was clear that the protesters opposed Putin, but as the movement was not able to produce a commonly agreed alternative, its public manifestations slowly faded.

At first, there were some signs that the nationalists did not see the demonstrations as appropriate for their cause. Or, to be more precise, the nationalists blamed the liberals for not welcoming them to the events.[87] Despite these complaints, Krylov, Demushkin and other nationalists from the Russian March participated in the demonstrations, and invited other nationalists to join as well. Even though the nationalists joined the movements for the sake of a common cause, they still distanced themselves mentally from the liberals, who occupied the organizational committee of the protests and who, mutually, looked askance at the nationalists. But, as long as the protests lasted, both Russian March leaders and liberal opposition leaders were represented.

The electoral demonstrations provoked unreserved acts of support for the regime. Among these were the mass events staged by the youth movement "Nashi", which was originally created to resist the "colour revolution" tendencies in Russia by occupying the public space, and thus got the opportunity to perform these functions again. The EYU was actively mobilized, but didn't join the pro-Putin demonstrations without hesitation. For example, at the end of March 2012, they organized an event called "Russia after Putin", which was marketed to those who support conservatism, but do not belong either to the pro-Putin camp or to the liberals camp. The EYU opposed the liberals, who were characterized as an embodiment of US espionage. On other occasions, the EYU demonstrated with the pro-Putin demonstrators, so there was clearly no strict or unified political line within the movement.

The Bolotnaya demonstrations did not necessarily change the nationalistic field, but they clearly highlighted the challenge it faced. There were too many obstacles between the anti-government nationalists and the liberal opposition to be overcome merely by venting their frustration about the elections together. Even though both parties opposed Putin's return, they could not produce any viable alternative to him. The Russian March found its place among the liberal opposition although it did not blend in with it, whereas the Eurasian Youth Union strongly opposed the liberals' initiatives. The EYU was ready to welcome Putin back into office – partly because they regarded Medvedev as too liberal. However, the electoral protests and the counter-movements revealed that the EYU did not support Putin unconditionally.

86 Greene, 216.

87 See, for example, Demushkin's complaints that the nationals would have been ready to march with the liberals but not vice versa: "Natsionalisty peredumali provodit' miting 24 dekabrya", *Izvestiya* 16.12.2011.

3.2 Ethnic riots in Moscow in 2013 – the "Biryulevo case"

2013 saw an increase in ethnic crime in Russia, especially in the capital cities. The victims of those crimes were for the most part of Central Asian origin.[88] Two cases were especially striking. The first happened on July 7 in a town called Pugachev, where two young men, an ethnic Russian and an ethnic Caucasian started a fight in a restaurant, and as a result the Russian youngster was stabbed to death. The events escalated into a riot, where ethnic Russians of the city demanded Caucasians be deported from the region, and violent attacks broke out. Riots soon erupted in other cities as well, and nationalist activists travelled to Pugachev to take part in the "cleansing" of the town. Later, on October 10, another incident took place in Biryulevo, a Moscow suburb, where a young Russian man was killed in a street brawl by another man originally from the Caucasus, who was arrested a few days later. The case provoked violent riots targeted at businesses and individuals of "non-Russian appearance", and were not confined to the Moscow area.[89]

The geographical spill-over was characteristic of both events, but tragic pogroms of this sort had already been witnessed earlier. Both events employed so-called "Kondopoga tactics", which had been used by nationalists since 2006.[90] The term refers to a situation where nationalists participate in an ethnic outburst, try to profit from it and in some cases fuel the conflict by spreading the word and organizing new gatherings. This pattern emerged in the small town of Kondopoga in August 2006 when violent rioting was triggered by a fight between an ethnic Russian and a Caucasian. Similar riots ensued in other cities and regions, and a crucial role was played by the nationalist movements in particular. In the Kondopoga case, the main actor was the radical nationalist group called the Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI), which was quick to generalize the case and stated that migration creates a security threat to ethnic Russians.[91] After a similarly motivated conflict in Moscow's Manezh Square in December 2010, the authorities banned the DPNI.[92]

During the Biryulevo riots, the Russian March community acted in a relatively cautious manner. It is clear that they had learned the lesson of the DPNI, and wanted to avoid giving the authorities grounds for prohibiting the movement. This is not to say that they were passive, however. Both Demushkin and Krylov invited their blog readers and Vkontakte followers to show their support for arrested nationalists and subsequently

88 Alperovich, Vera & Yudina, Natalia: The Ultra-Right Shrugged: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract them in 2013. In Verkhovsky, Alexander (ed.): *Xenophobia, Freedom of Conscience and Anti-Extremism in Russia in 2013*. Reports by the Sova Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow 2014, 8–9.

89 "Itogi Biryulevskogo pogroma", *Novaya Gazeta* 13.10.2014, http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/65684.html; accessed 11.5.2015.

90 Tipaldou, Sofia & Uba, Katrin: The Russian Radical Right Movement and Immigration Policy: Do They Just Make Noise or Have an Impact as Well?, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66: 7, 2014, 1085.

91 Tipaldou & Uba, 1086–1087.

92 Tipaldou & Uba, 1088.

to participate in the court proceedings, but it is hard to say whether they took part in any riots themselves. During the aftermath of the case in the press, Demushkin said that many nationalists had been interrogated, but that there were no accused or witnesses among his movement.[93] In another interview, he stated that all big nationalist movements promote "political nationalism", meaning that they do not incite violence.[94]

It seems that the leaders of the movement in particular felt that they needed to refrain from publicly provoking any violent actions. This obviously goes some way towards denying responsibility for spreading aggressive messages, which did not let up during or after the Biryulevo events, and even increased. The difference between these and previous ethnic riots was that in 2013 the leaders of the movements distanced themselves from the actual riots and gatherings, and sought to promote their message when ethnic clashes became topical.

Interestingly, unlike previous ethnic riots, the Biryulevo case did nothing to change the reality on the ground. It did not provoke any significant governmental actions towards the nationalists, mainly because the nationalist groups that had been active during the riots were also quick to channel their energy into the approaching Russian March, which, as I argue, is a relatively 'safe' form of demonstration from the point of view of the regime. In 2013, it is interesting to note that the march was allowed to take place, even though the topics it promoted were very explicitly linked to the ethnic divisions within the country. A possible interpretation of this behaviour is that the march was thought to form an outlet for such feelings at this time in particular. On the other hand, the atmosphere was heated, and denying the organizers the right to stage the march even in a suburb could have created serious problems for the regime. Even though the march broke participation records that year,[95] the success enjoyed by the anti-government nationalists did not carry much further. As Krylov described the mood in his blog on the following day: it was as if the regime, liberals, as well as the nationalists themselves were "breathing freely again" now that the march was over. Krylov criticized the movement for limiting its actions to the march, and hinted that the nationalists lacked ambition since they, too, felt relieved after the annual demonstration, and took no further action.[96]

The Eurasian Youth Union, it seems, did not pay much attention to the Biryulevo case. In the few articles dealing with it, the blame was put on the national democrats but also on the regime. The eagerness of the national democrats to demand a visa regime for Central Asian migrants was said to be not only unrealistic but also against Eurasian integration, although in another article Korovin stated that unlimited migration, not to mention any concept of a "world citizen", did not belong to the Eurasian world view.[97] In one article the blame was squarely put on the leadership: the failures in "Biryulevo and Ukraine"

93 "Biryulevo beznakazannoe", *RBK daily*, 18.2.2014.

94 "V Sovfede prosyat glavu MVD proverit ultrapravyh", *Izvestiya* 22.10.2013.

95 Alperovich & Yudina 2014, 31.

96 Krylov's blog entry "O Russkom Marshe", 5.11.2013, Internet Archive access 29.4.2015.

97 EYU homepage: "Evraziistvo vs. national-demokratiya", 29.10.2013, Internet Archive access 30.4.2015.

were attributed to Putin's inability to ensure the future of Eurasian integration.[98] The limited interest towards Biryulevo can be partly explained by the fact that divisions between the EYU and "pogrom nationalists" had already been established earlier. After the first Russian March in 2005, this was the principal ideological difference that made the EYU quit the march[99] and which has been the dividing factor ever since, at least in the rhetoric of the EYU.

The regime's response – or lack thereof – after the ethnic riots in 2013 is a very clear indication of the limits of state nationalism. Even if the state emphasizes an inclusive interpretation of nationalism, concrete measures to defend this interpretation at a practical level are – and have remained – few and far between.[100] The absence of a direct reaction is significant because it shows that the regime did not want to put the blame on existing nationalistic movements, or even try to do so. Whether the leaders of those movements really had a role in exacerbating the riots is not the key issue here, but rather it is the opportunity to condemn ethnic nationalism both in word and deed, which was not taken by the regime. The events of 2013 along with the overall increase in ethnic crime did not threaten the position of existing nationalistic movements.

3.3 Russian Marches in Moscow in 2014

The series of events surrounding the above-mentioned Russian March in 2014 provide a case in point when discussing the coercion and channelling tactics of the current regime. The coercive measures were aimed at keeping the march led by anti-government nationalists manageable in terms of attendees and under the control of the police. This section examines the marches in Moscow, but there were also smaller events in other Russian cities and abroad; according to the Russian March movement itself, a total of 34 marches were held altogether.

Some pre-emptive measures were adopted, one of them being the arrest of Aleksandr Belov, which occurred on 15 October, roughly two weeks before the anticipated Russian March. The charges were related to embezzlement of funds.[101] As Alexandr Verhovski put it in an interview, the accusations were hardly fabricated, but the arrest was

98 This could have been an individual view, as not all EYU activists are likely to have been ready to criticize Putin. EYU homepage, "Biryulevo i geopolitika", 22.10.2013, Internet Archive access 30.4.2015.

99 Allensworth, Wayne: Dugin and the Eurasian Controversy. Is Eurasianism "patriotic"? In Laruelle, Marlène (ed.): *Russian nationalism and the national reassertion of Russia*. Routledge, Oxon 2009, 104.

100 Verkhovsky 2014, 21.

101 See e.g. "Nichego natsionistichnogo, prosto biznes", *Kommersant'* 16.10.2014. On a separate note, this pattern has been applied not only to nationalists but also to other activists opposing the regime, such as Alexey Navalny.

likely precipitated by the fact that Belov had publicly opposed the "Russian Spring".[102] Moreover, what had already become a yearly tradition continued that year: the nationalists wanted to organize the march in central Moscow, but the authorities did not give their permission, so the event took place in the suburb of Lyublino. The authorities cannot prevent the march from taking place – actually, as I argue below, they do not even want to do so – but they can specify its location.

The march itself passed off calmly, under heavy police surveillance, as has been the case in recent years. There were about 1,800–2, 000 participants on this occasion, making it considerably smaller than previous years.[103] At least 20 persons were detained during the course of the march, but released shortly after the event. Detentions are not uncommon during anti-government demonstrations of any description, and the Russian March has traditionally been prepared for repressive measures during the event by providing "legal assistance" (usually in the form of a hotline mobile number that is circulated among the social networks beforehand) for the participants.

The most visible counter-measure to the anti-government nationalists' march was the pro-government mass event called We [are] united.[104] Although hard evidence is difficult to come up with, there are two clear reasons to assume that this march was an example of an ersatz movement, an event that is organized from above in order to demonstrate support for official policies.[105] First, the sheer number of people speaks for this explanation. According to media sources, there were 75,000 participants.[106] Second, the information about the march came out relatively late: the event was not mentioned in the central press until the end of October, only a week before the march was scheduled to take place. A Vkontakte group page was put up at the same time. This is certainly too short a time to draw such a large number of people genuinely interested in the issue. It was also the first time that a mass event had been arranged in the city centre.

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102 The expression "Russian Spring" has been widely used in the political discourse to describe Russia-minded actions taking place in Ukraine, and support for the same in Russia. It refers to the idea of spring as a metaphor for revolution, as in the "Arab Spring". "Marsh ne v nogu", *Ogonek* 3.11.2014. At the end of November, Belov's arrest was extended until the end of February 2015: "Sud prodlil arest natsionalistu Aleksandru Potkinu do 28 fevralya", *Kommersant*' 28.11.2015: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2622160, accessed 18.5.2015.

103 SOVA Center report on marches in Moscow, 4.11.2014: http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2014/11/d30580/, accessed 1.4.2015.

104 My ediny, https://vk.com/den_narodnogoedinstva (Community page on Vkontakte, first post on October 28, 2014), accessed 8.5.2015.

105 Robertson, 194–197.

106 "Okolo 75 tyc. chelovek prinimayut uchastie v shestvii v tsentre Moskvy", *Kommersant*' 4.11.2015: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2603353, accessed 1.4.2015; "Shestvie 'My ediny' 4 noyabrya 2014 g.", *Vedomosti* 4.11.2014: http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/gallery/2014/11/04/shestvie-my-ediny-4-noyabrya-2014-g##1; accessed 1.4.2015; "V shestvii 'My ediny' na Tverskoy prinyali uchastie vse parlamentskie partii", *RBK* 4.11.2014: http://top.rbc.ru/politics/04/11/2014/5458b5a4cbb20f582ce4c3b7; accessed 1.4.2015.

There was one more peculiarity connected with the Day of National Unity demonstrations in 2014. The former defence minister of the "Donetsk Republic", Igor Strelkov (né Igor Girkin), organized his own event under the name "Russian march for [the sake of] Novorossiya", in another Moscow suburb, near the Oktyabrskoe pole metro station. This event drew 1,200 participants.[107] Strelkov, since he was removed from his post in Eastern Ukraine, has been coordinating his own Novorossiya movement, which presents itself more as a social organization than a political movement.[108] Whether this is an ersatz movement – which it may well be – is hard to say, but it is nevertheless clear that the movement, and its alternative Russian march in particular, were drawing potential or at least previous attendees from other marches, mainly the "original" Russian March. Strelkov commands respect from many Russian nationalists, especially those who appreciate his military image.

When it comes to the Moscow march at least, the leaders of the Russian March, such as Dmitri Demushkin, Alexander Belov and Vladimir Tor (né Vladlen Kralin), are well known beforehand, and they are the ones who negotiate with the regional authorities.[109] What is interesting is that the leaders have remained unchanged for several years: even though they occasionally face repression, they have been able to stay in charge of their movements for a long time. This also says something about the regime's repression strategies: the well-known and "established" leaders are easier to monitor and then arrest, if need be – as was the case with Belov. It is rather surprising how freely the anti-government nationalists can express their views even after some coercive actions have been taken: their websites are allowed to have clear linkages to previously closed ones, their movements are able to reorganize, and the leaders of previously banned movements are allowed to perform as leaders of new movements.

During spring 2015, the leading figures of the Russian March were subjected to some repressive measures. At the end of March, the homes of Dmitri Demushkin and Vladimir Tor were searched.[110] On April 27, Demushkin was arrested for eight days for "hooliganism", having been accused of organizing a meeting to celebrate Hitler's birthday on April 20. The case seems to be a clear example of pre-emptive coercion on the part of the regime. Demushkin has been coaching knife-fighting for years, and such training was also taking place on that particular day. No secret has been made of the training, and even without having legal expertise, I assume that many of his earlier writings and speeches could have been interpreted as extremist if the authorities had so

107 SOVA 2014.

108 The official homepage of the movement: http://novorossia.pro/, accessed 17.3.2015.

109 "Natsionalistam ukazali na mesto", *Nezavisimaya gazeta* 29.10.2014: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2014-10-29/1_nazi.html, accessed 8.5.2015; "Moskovskaya merija razreshila 'Russkie marshi'", *Kommersant*' 27.10.2014: http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2599155, accessed 22.5.2015.

110 See e.g. "Ukraina razkolola russkih natsionalistov", *gazeta.ru*, 26.3.2015: http://www.gazeta.ru/social/2015/03/25/6614029.shtml, accessed 8.4.2015; "Natsionalista Demushkina otpustili pod obyazatel'stvo yavit'sya v sud", *Interfax* 21.4.2015: http://www.interfax.ru/russia/437642, accessed 23.4.2015.

wished. However, the detention, together with the arrest of Belov,[111] ultimately led to the failure of the "Russian May Day", traditionally organized by the Russians movement on May 1.[112]

In conclusion, it can be said that the Russian March is not only monitored but also carefully managed by the state. Before and during the 2014 Russian March in Moscow, coercive measures were taken, but more resources must have been invested in the mobilization of the ersatz event, which turned out to be very impressive in terms of figures. It can be argued that the Russian March in its present form is useful for the authorities: the event is small enough to control, the leaders are known and can be negotiated with, and the march can be directed to a certain location, where it is easy to control and less visible to the wider public. Staging an ersatz meeting ensures that the media can concentrate on positive, pro-government means of celebrating the holiday.[113] In short, it can be said that the Russian March is a laboratory for the potentially destabilizing nationalistic mood. By allowing the march and monitoring the slogans, participants and turnout, the regime can easily keep track of its popularity.

3.4 "Antimaidan" and the Russian Spring

When it comes to the Eurasian Youth Union, the relationship with the regime is even less straightforward. The members of the EYU had previously supported the government initiatives, but during 2014 their views turned more radical, which was no longer in the interests of the regime. Previously, when the government was prioritizing the idea of Eurasian integration, the Eurasian movement in general seemed appropriate. It is debatable, of course, whether the motivation for EYU members to support integration is different from that of the Russian leadership, which stresses integration as an economic project, not a political one. Nevertheless, the Western sanctions and the Russian counter-sanctions have diminished the significance of Eurasian economic integration.

One possible way to evaluate the relationship between the EYU and the regime is to take a look at the mass event in spring 2015 which, on the surface, chimed well with the ideology promoted by the EYU – namely the Antimaidan march that was organized in the centre of Moscow on February 21. In February 2015, news about a pro-government march under the name of Antimaidan started to circulate. This march was meant to actively demonstrate that Russia would not accept a Maidan-like movement on its territory, and slogans such as "[We] won't forget, [we] won't forgive" were heard. The event closely followed the pattern of an ersatz movement, drawing around 40,000–

111 "Zapret na aresti predprinimateley doshel do Evropeyskogo suda", *Vedomosti* 11.5.2015: http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2015/05/12/zapret-na-aresti-predprinimatelei-doshel-do-evropeiskogo-suda; accessed 12.5.2015.

112 "Natsionalist Demushkin poluchil 8 sutok posle 'vecherinki v chest' Gitlera'", *Ria Novosti* 27.2.2015: http://ria.ru/incidents/20150427/1061189987.html, accessed 11.5.2015; Sova analysis of the nationalists' May Day celebrations 2015: http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2015/05/d31918/, accessed 11.5.2015.

113 This was indeed the case. The Channel 1 news on November 4 reported on the *We are united* demonstration at length, but did not mention the Russian March or the Russian march for Novorossiya.

50,000 participants.[114] According to the media coverage, the most visible factions were the motorcycle gang the Night Wolves, along with their leader, Aleksandr Zaldostanov, and people waving Chechnyan flags and posters supporting President Ramzan Kadyrov. The EYU also took part in the Antimaidan demonstration. Their representatives marched bearing banners declaring "Fight for Novorossiya". The Antimaidan movement as such was handled somewhat critically on the EYU webpage, with some writers deeming it useless, unconstructive or preoccupied with the wrong threats.

In February 2015, the leading opposition figures, mainly Aleksei Navalny and his team, started to promote an "anti-crisis" demonstration under the name of Vesna, Spring, that would take place on March 1. The aim was to express discontent with the current leadership and its inability to solve the economic (and political) crisis in particular.[115] Tragically, the murder of one of the organizers, Boris Nemtsov, on February 27, transformed the march into a public outpouring of grief. Depending on the medium consulted, estimates of the number of people participating ranged between 20,000 and 50,000.[116]

It might be worth noting that a year after the annexation of Crimea, on 18 March 2015, a celebration concert "We [are] together" (My vmeste) was organized in the centre of Moscow and attended by between 45,000 and 110,000 people, depending on the source consulted. This mass event was organized mainly with the support of parliamentary parties and organizations such as the National Liberation Movement.[117] In general, the concert very much resembled the official celebrations on November 4, the "We [are] united" march. On the EYU webpage an activist from Luhansk wrote that even though the annexation of Crimea was indeed a cause for celebration, as long as the Donbass "genocide continues", the celebrations would be greeted with cynicism.[118]

The regime seemed to rely on actors other than the EYU when organizing the Antimaidan. After the EYU adopted the hard line position concerning the Ukraine crisis, they were no longer trusted by the regime (if indeed genuine trust had ever existed). Instead, possibly violent but – at least thus far – loyal groups of motorcyclists and other activists were invited to stage an imposing demonstration. I would argue that these groups, including Igor Strelkov with his "charity-project" Novorossiya, NOD and other

114 "V Moskve proshel miting dvizheniya 'Antimaidan'", *Kommersant*' 21.2.2015, http://www.kommersant.ru/gallery/2673350; accessed 23.4.2015.

115 The name of the event can be interpreted as a symbol of democratization, as in the case of the "Arab Spring", but also as an antipode of the "Russian spring"; see footnote 102; "1 marta. Antikrizisnyy marsh 'Vesna'", 27.1.2015: https://637.navalny.me/p/4089/; accessed 24.4.2015.

116 "Zaderzhannyh uchastnikov traurnogo marsha v Moskve prigovorili k arestam i shtrafam", *Interfax* 2.3.2015: http://www.interfax.ru/moscow/427453, accessed 24.4.2015.

117 See reports on the concert: "Godovshchina prisoedineniya Kryma. Miting-kontsert 'My vmeste'". *Novaya Gazeta* 19.3. 2015: http://www.novayagazeta.ru/tv/topics/67707.html, accessed 18.5.2015; "Miting-kontsert 'My vmeste' nachalsya na Vasil'evskom spuske", *Rossiyskaya gazeta* 18.3.2015: http://www.rg.ru/2015/03/18/miting-anons.html; accessed 18.5.2015.

118 "Russkaya vesna. God spustya." EYU official page, 18.3.2015, accessed through Internet Archive 18.5.2015.

newly engaged actors, are filling the niche within the organizational ecosystem which, in theory, could have been occupied by the Eurasianists. This did not happen because the EYU is not capable of mobilizing the masses either online or offline, and nor has this been their aim. In addition, the fact that they have presented aggressive views could have called their loyalty into question.

Therefore, it can be said that the Russian March represents an example where the regime uses repressive measures, whereas the Antimaidan is a clear example of pro-government mobilization.[119] In the frame of this study it is noteworthy that the existing and formerly pro-government movements, such as the Eurasian Youth Union, were not fully exploited when mobilizing the event, and that new actors were engaged.

119 Robertson, 33.

4 CONCLUSIONS: MANAGED NATIONALISM – HOW IS IT ACHIEVED?

Following the two example movements of contemporary Russian nationalism has confirmed that the state leadership manages the movements through both coercive and mobilizing measures. Electoral protests were met with repression from the government, but also mobilizing measures were taken. The ethnic riots provoked hardly any visible reaction within the regime management schema. During the conflict in Ukraine, mobilizing and channelling strategies have been very actively applied by the government, for example in the form of various ersatz movements and new state-backed organizations.

At the same time, the anti-government nationalists have faced repressive measures such as arrests. The control over the movements is not total, however. On the contrary, it is useful for the regime to maintain established opponents of sorts, even in the field of anti-government nationalists; they serve as a visible side of the largely invisible, latent attitudes. I would argue that the anti-government nationalist sentiments also serve the regime by their sheer existence – not willingly, but structurally. In hybrid regimes, reliable information on political attitudes is not easy to acquire, so sensors like these are useful for the regime.

What the management measures also reveal is that the government is aware of the resonance of xenophobic attitudes among the greater public. The nationalistic mood, so to say, is being managed so that the unity of society will not be endangered, while the energy and power of the nationalistic sentiments could be harnessed. It seems that certain ideas of the nationalistic movements are, by turns, repressed, supported and even replaced according to the situation, not necessarily following any systematic strategy. An ersatz campaign stressing the unity of the people on the same day that ethnocentric nationalists were gathering is a case in point: it shows the desired form of nationalism, which is multi-ethnic. I would say that the nationalism of the Russian state is primarily instrumental: it is used as a political tool and is therefore changing. Certain features of the nationalistic mood are embraced, and then channelled so that they support the unity and stability of society rather than pose a threat to it.[120]

The original hypothesis was only partly confirmed. It was assumed that the Eurasian Youth Union, knowingly pro-government in nature, would have been supported or at least tolerated by the regime, while the anti-government Russian March would have faced more repression in the face of their actions. This holds true for the Russian March: it had indeed faced repressive measures. However, when it comes to the EYU, two aspects of the assumption require revising. Firstly, the EYU is not as clearly pro-government as assumed. It is true that the movement has some links to the establishment and that it has supported many official initiatives. Moreover, there are certain questions where the EYU line seems to comply well with the state line – such as deeper Eurasian integration, anti-Western rhetoric at large or resistance towards the "unipolar" world. Still, the EYU had already tried to distinguish itself from the Putin administration back in 2011. Secondly, as anticipated, the EYU has not been subjected to coercive measures by the regime, but the reason for that might be related not to the political line of the

120 Laruelle stated as early as 2009 that Russian nationalism had a stabilizing effect on society. E.g. Laruelle 2009A, 5.

movement but to its repertoire of actions. The EYU has not been active in organizing visible mass events, but rather small-scale gatherings and educational activities.

The management of the information sphere is closely linked to the management of nationalism. Today's ersatz movements are no longer organized only to occupy the streets, but also to occupy the online arenas: social media mobilization has increased in significance lately. Looking at the mass events of 2014 and early 2015, their online presence and reports about them in the online media have been rather extensive.

A further question relates to whether the nationalistic movements pose a challenge to the current regime by presenting a credible alternative. Even if a political challenge from their side might have been possible quite recently, the nationalists have become so fragmented during the Ukraine crisis that their possibilities to unite as political parties, for example, are almost non-existent. This results not only from the sporadic field of differing, competitive movements, but also from the fact that their ideological basis is not comprehensive or concrete enough. Both the EYU and the Russian March lack a realistic political programme. Furthermore, what is perhaps more decisive is that both movements are highly dependent on their leaders. This became clear during the spring of 2015 when the "Russian May Day" event was cancelled due to the arrests of both Dmitri Demushkin and Aleksandr Belov.

In short, I argue that at the time of writing the nationalist movements described here pose no political challenge to the regime from the point of view of mobilizing the nationalistic mood in the country. They might enjoy the support of the majority for some of their ideas, but they cannot form any movement powerful enough to mobilize this support in a form that would be influential or socially acceptable. As long as the leaders remain the same, the wider public will perceive them as extremists and hooligans. But, it is important to note that, for the Kremlin, the management of these and similar movements requires resources that are now scarcer than before. The real question then is whether and for how long the regime can afford the efficient management of nationalist movements – both online and offline.

This paper and its title set out to address one crucial question, namely whether nationalism can be successfully managed or not. As has been shown, nationalistic movements in contemporary Russia are managed, but this is not to say that the nationalistic mood can be controlled. Including ethnic features in the state nationalism is risky if the power to define them no longer remains in the hands of the regime. In other words, if the aim is to make a distinction between "us" and "them", there is no guarantee that the regime would have a monopoly over the definition of "them". In particular, as the economic situation in the country deteriorates, the risk of interethnic tension cannot be excluded.

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