IN THE NAME OF THE NATION

Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia

MARLÈNE LARUELLE

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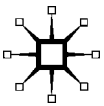

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INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, Russia was depicted in the western media as a country in the midst of major social upheaval owing to its transition to a market economy. The image was one of Mafioso businessmen and oligarchs getting rich at the expense of a society that was wracked by misery, undermined by corruption, prostitution, and drug abuse, and that had abandoned its children and elderly persons. In the first decade of the twenty-first century Russia's image – no longer one of pity – continues to be simplified: the country wields oil and gas as a weapon, is full of racist skinhead violence, has a KGB-successor security service with growing influence, and has returned to the Cold War.[1] These images, while not false when taken separately, are nonetheless incomplete. Moreover, their juxtaposition is arbitrary and does not allow for an accurate understanding of the past two decades of development in Russian society. With the western media portraying Russia as a country struggling with its old imperialist demons, it pays to return once again to a detailed examination of the question of nationalism in politics.

The appeals once made by the former First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Mikhail Gorbachev, in favor of parliamentary democracy and the European model, would, after the Putin years, seem to have been relegated to the status of a mere accident in an historical *longue durée* otherwise stamped by authoritarianism. The failure of the transition paradigm, and of its teleological principles, has contributed to the revival of culturalist explanations according to which Russians, having been immersed in centuries-long cultural traditions entirely foreign to western conceptions, are not yet "ready" for democracy. But this sort of discourse merely plays into the hands of leaders, who, in the name of a supposed "cultural exception" lauded from Asia to Africa, seek in reality to preserve their own particular interests.

Neither do notions that certain populations have atemporal features predisposing them to accepting authoritarian regimes, nor considerations concerning the incompatibility between democracy and Russian traditions, provide, on whichever level, a relevant frame for reading the political dynamics that have been unfolding in Russia. Political regimes, in the West as in the East, are by no means immutable givens but instead evolving structures that are subject to perpetual renegotiation.

Russian society has profoundly changed over the last two decades. Dmitri Trenin, among others, maintains that the country has never been as open to the West and the rest of the world as it is today, in spite of the impression the Kremlin has been giving in recent years of wanting to close off.[2] Indeed, a new Russian middle class has emerged that thinks of itself as having, through education and hard work, earned its money legitimately and is keen to take advantage of its leisure time to consume, make holidays abroad, and buy new technology.[3] They want to wear their status proudly and are concerned about living in a "normal" country. This concern for normality shows up in sociological studies: Russian citizens claim that what the country needs is more political order, in the sense of more government ability to enforce laws, and more security for gaining and maintaining social status. For some years now, the proportion of Russians who think that their society is more or less normal has been increasing. The prevailing sentiment seems to be one of optimism: a large majority of them state that Russia will be more developed economically and more democratic in 2015 than it is today. Those who consider that the weight of the past and of national traditions prevent the country from changing are becoming increasingly fewer.[4]

This quest for "normalcy" turns out to be the central element in the nationalist frenzy that seems to have taken hold in Russia, notwithstanding the apparent paradox of wanting at once to be like others and to proclaim one's difference. In this book, I attempt to demonstrate that, contrary to the claims made by the majority of works devoted to it, Russian nationalism does not merely spell extremism, marginalization, radicalism, or opposition to power but in actual fact marks a return to social, political, cultural and emotional normalcy. As an interactive process, nationalism functions to integrate citizens and legitimate the power of the elite, all the while ensuring social cohesion in a period of significant disruption. Taking this hypothesis as a point of departure, this study examines the place of nationalism in Russian political life, analyzing it as a way of achieving national reconciliation in the wake of the profound divisions produced by perestroika and the reforms of the early 1990s. Requested as much by its citizens as by political authorities,

the normalization of the country demands that a consensus be established, and the notion of the motherland (*rodina*) is alone apt to achieve this: there is no other symbol which, traversing all divisions, generates as broad an adhesion as that of the nation.

Russian Nationalism as Object of Study

To study Russian nationalism does not require the construction of specific theoretical tools, but instead an examination of the historical, political, and ideological moments that make nationalism at once a paradigm shared by all countries and a uniquely distinctive experience for each one. Contrary to discourses claiming since the eighteenth century that Russia has pursued its own *Sonderweg*, the country's path has been one of modernization and globalization, processes to which it has responded in ways not dissimilar to the rest of the world.[5] To posit the exceptional nature of Russian nationalism does no more than play into the hands of a certain Russian tradition according to which all cultures have their own internal, organic natures with which outsiders can do no more than empathize.

For starters, every consideration of nationalism requires a definition of the phenomenon under observation. Persistent characterizations of it as vague or complex often only reveal a lack of properly calibrated analytical instruments. Nationalism, like racism, is notable for the diversity and number of arguments and policies made in its name.[6] Some researchers, such as John Hall, argue that the sheer heterogeneity of nationalism makes providing a theory of it impossible.[7] But nationalism is not an "explanatory theory; instead it is a universal, normative concept to be used for interpreting entire series of explanatory hypotheses."[8] On this basis I start out from the assumption that a definition is no more than an instrument, and that all preliminary, overly restrictive definitions of nationalism only work to posit in advance the organic nature of the phenomenon being studied.[9]

The present study does not participate in the "nation-building" school, which is primarily focused on understanding the birth and development of the nation-state.[10] While taking into account the theoretical contributions of authors such as Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawn, and more recently, Benedict Anderson, my emphasis does not bear on the construction of national consciousness by the state, or on other explanations for the birth of national sentiment, such as the modern economy, or the spread of education and communications

technologies.[11] The focus of the study is not on national sentiment but on nationalism in the sense defined by Lloyd Faller, that is as "the part of the culture that actively works to establish and defend a structured set of beliefs and values."[12] What nationalism does is to provide a basis on which to decide between several contradictory loyalties and to hierarchize them by according one of them priority. In this way, I attempt to conceptualize nationalism both in terms of its political and cultural output as well as an ideological practice with identifiable actors.[13]

Born of conflicts of interest, nationalism cannot be confined to economic, social, or material issues. Nor can it be interpreted as a mere ploy devised by Machiavellian elites seeking to mobilize the masses for their own personal interests, even though the social promotion of new national elites is an important element in explaining it. Neither can this "symbolic strategy," as Clifford Geertz puts it,[14] be analyzed as a one-way transfer of arguments from a country of origin to a recipient country or epigone. Nationalism is not a mechanical device imported from the West; it is something produced by the indigenous elite in the wake of an initial event broadly definable as a confrontation with an other and the entry into symbolic rivalry. As Anthony Smith explains, in managing the tensions produced between traditional culture and the pressures of the modern state, colonial or otherwise, the intelligentsia has several options at its disposal: a rejection of modernity (traditionalism), total acceptance of it, or a combination of the two, which results in advocating the societal transformation and a resistance through self-reformation.[15]

As John Plamenatz explains, nationalism is "fundamentally mimetic and competitive".[16] It seeks to emulate a system that it rejects by increasing so-called national values and advocating an apparent return to the past. Owing to this mimetic desire, it turns out that resentment is a key driving force of nationalism, making it part of what Marc Angenot calls the "ideologies of resentment."[17] Feelings of inferiority indeed motivate processes of the transmutation of values: The other's acquired superiority in the existential world supposedly indicates its internal baseness and reciprocally points to the greater soul of the victim nation. Notions of the other that robs a nation of its identity and fears of the outsider who ruptures national unity then call for the reassertion of the cultural resources at hand, including language, religion, territory, history, and folklore. In a bid to maintain self-esteem, these resources or checklists are selectively reorganized to form a discourse and construct an identity.[18] This process therefore cannot be conceptualized in primordial terms; identity is not a given, but is constantly re-elaborated, and employs a variety of symbolic constructs which change over time.

Studies on Russian nationalism seldom think of it in terms of socio-cultural reform or as a strategy to give meaning to highly symbolic, affective conflicts of interest.[19] Rarely placed in a global theoretical or comparative context, Russian nationalism is still largely presented as a specific phenomenon, deriving from reasons internal to Russian history. On this view, its study would seem to comprise a domain separate from the rest of political science. This has resulted in a situation where specialists on the far right are only minor participants in debates on Russia's political development, while numerous books on Russian political life ignore questions of national identity. In addition, the majority of works on Russian nationalism generally do not contribute to providing impartial readings of the phenomenon. Instead it is crucial to endorse the view that "the critical examination of theses that one seeks to overturn can do without judgments based on mere intent and demonizing condemnations."[20] Painting nationalism as a disease against which society must be inoculated or seek a remedy, or as an irrational reaction, does not aid a scientific analysis of the phenomenon. Alarmist appraisals of nationalism are also rejected: the reader will not find here anticipations of extremists taking power or descriptions of catastrophic scenarios modeled on parallels between post-Soviet Russia and Weimar Germany, a theme running through many studies of the Russian radical right.[21] Lastly, as I am convinced that nationalism is a product of modernity, this analysis does not support post- or supra-national viewpoints that present it as a shameful, archaic relic.[22]

Instead of ending with the disappearance of Soviet rule, the politically biased nature of some western analysis merely shifted focus. Current studies seem by and large focused on defining the "red-brown" menace,[23] the exponential growth of "fascism,"[24] or even the "Nazification" of post-Soviet Russia.[25] However, such notions presuppose that an entity called ultra-nationalism has an ontological reality independent of society and the country's political development. These accounts are based mostly on typological definitions and classifications that fail to take into account historical context and cast nationalism as invariant from perestroika thru to Vladimir Putin. By ignoring developments in Russia's global history over the past two decades, they continue to dissociate "radical" nationalism from "non-radical" nationalism, and thus risk missing the central issue, which concerns its interaction within the society. A similar trend emerges in many works published in Russian written by figures involved in anti-fascist movements or human rights associations (*pravozashchitniki*.) Under current political conditions in Russia, those with the courage to combat the rise of xenophobia and oppose

the state by asserting their right to different political views are to be lauded; notwithstanding, their analyses of the nationalist phenomenon are often non-heuristical. They combat nationalism in the same terms that they study it, and thus tend to equate it solely with quantifiable expressions of violence (skinhead activity, racist attacks, and hate speech), again artificially isolating extremist groups from a more global cultural context.[26]

Russian Nationalism as a Political and Social Norm

In this book, I seek to deconstruct equations between Russian nationalism and the extreme right; nationalism is in fact spread right throughout the country and cannot be viewed as a phenomenon confined to the margins of society. Moreover, I reject interpretations that view Kremlin-backed patriotism simply as a fascist trend involving a rapprochement between political authorities and the extreme right. A simplistic analysis of such coexisting phenomena fails to address the basic question of social consensus and the inherent relationship between national identity and citizenship. Instead, I attempt to underscore the intersection of the various socio-political phenomena classified as xenophobic, nationalistic, or patriotic, through an analysis of their terminological usage, their interactive overlapping, and the social impact of their combination. Excessive focus on the most eccentric and marginal currents in the nationalist spectrum prevents a holistic view of the phenomenon in its two dominant expressions, namely the wide diffusion of xenophobia throughout society and the emergence of patriotic centrism in politics.

Studies on nationalism are often based on the hypothesis that the phenomenon is twofold in nature. On the one hand, the French Revolution is presumed to have developed a model of political nationalism in which one who participates in the process of political construction thereby becomes French; on the other, in compensation for the absence of a unified state, Germany is presumed to have given birth to a cultural nationalism in which the national is defined organically. But this division is inaccurate on a theoretical and practical level. The German model is not devoid of a political element and contemporary German elaborations of the idea of constitutional patriotism are confirmation of the point. And the French model, as for it, has never succeeded in erasing all the references to its long history of culture based on royal tradition. These two concepts, then, are not antagonistic, and certainly do not represent the views of nationalists themselves. This division has also been

turned into a geographical divide where political nationalism is deemed to be specific to Western Europe and cultural nationalism to Central and Eastern Europe, and indeed sometimes to the entire "East",[27] but such analyses are rather unhelpful.

Today the persistence of this binary division lives in the opposed concepts of civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. But as Alain Dieckhoff notes, the addition of the adjective complicates rather than clarifies the logic of this division, since no nationalism, even Flemish or Catalan, can be defined as strictly ethnic.[28] In addition, all nationalisms, even the most so-called political ones of France and the United States, make minimal references to a common culture in which every citizen must share in order to exercise his or her rights. A political project always mobilizes some kind of identity and no political objective can be achieved without reference to specific cultural symbols. The challenge here is therefore not to explore this division between civic and ethnic nationalism as two diametrically opposed archetypes, but instead as a dynamic in which the two aspects are always more or less present, varying in accordance with historical periods and political circumstances.

The term nationalism arouses almost endless controversy. This study, however, does not attempt to capture an *essence* or absolute nature of Russian nationalism, but instead focuses on the *dynamic* of nationalism in a given historical and political context – that of post-Soviet Russia. The aim is not to provide a systematic classification of the various expressions of nationalism, which very often combine ethnic or ethnocultural arguments with civic allusions, nor to formulate this nationalism according to a left-right political axis, which is not germane to Russia.[29] Similarly, I reject notions that the nationalism/patriotism binary, currently in vogue in Russia, can be defined in a meaningful way. This arbitrary division, positing two distinct phenomena with defined borders, is in fact an instrument in the hands of the Kremlin, which attributes to itself the "good" so-called patriotic nationalism and condemns the "bad" or extremist nationalism of its opponents. In fact the patriotism advocated by the presidential administration is a specific version of Russia's traditional state nationalism: it is neither ethnic, inasmuch as it points to Russia's multinational nature, nor civic, inasmuch as it does not encourage its subjects to think of themselves as citizens. Instead, it seeks to emphasize the historical and cultural markers that, directly or indirectly, work above all to define Russia as a *state*. Therefore, if one wants to demonstrate that nationalism is an operational category offering a relevant framework for studying contemporary Russia, it must be conceived in terms of heterogeneity, hybridization, fluidity, and oscillation.

The evolution of nationalism in Russia over recent decades is very often presented as a movement from the shadows to the light. Portrayed in Soviet times as an underground and dissident movement, nationalism is generally held to have moved to center stage in the 1990s as part of the political opposition to Boris Yeltsin's liberalism, and then emerged as part of officialdom under Vladimir Putin. This analysis suffers from significant gaps, however. The relationship between nationalists and the authorities was just as ambiguous in the Soviet Union as it is in post-Soviet Russia. Moreover, nationalists have always maintained several lines of connection with the Kremlin. In fact, the widely-used opposition of the 1990s between "nationalists" and "Westerners" presupposes a political divide that is just as lacking in relevance as the supposed nineteenth-century division between "Westerners" and "Slavophiles". During the Soviet era nationalists were instrumentalized to combat the liberals, who were considered to be far more dangerous for the socialist order. In the 1990s, Boris Yeltsin consciously magnified the dangers of "returning to the past" in an attempt to mobilize Russian citizens who had found little inspiring in the elections; in similar fashion, he beat the drum of the "red-brown" threat to gain western approval for his policies. In the 2000s, Putin's Kremlin has also repeatedly sought to fuel the fear of "extremism", producing many media broadcasts on skinhead violence, the aim of which has been to push through tougher legislation to restrict political and associative freedom.

These oppositions ought to be qualified, but it is essential to take the importance of terminological issues into account. Concepts have an impact that is not purely theoretical, but rather cognitive and normative, since they are the strategic tools that actors use to create their senses of self. The manipulation of the lexicon thus becomes part and parcel of the established logic of nationalist rhetoric. During the years of perestroika, the intellectual scene was dominated by memorial debates over the Soviet past and the rediscovery of the "Russian Idea", which, along with environmental concerns, played a key role in the emergence of public opinion. The Russian Idea (*russkaia ideia*) conventionally refers to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century debates in the Russian intellectual world, centered on the notion that the essence of the Russian nation could be characterized by certain timeless features including messianism, Orthodox spirituality, and a sense of symphony or community (*sobornost'*). However, the concept of the Russian Idea has been gradually expanded to encompass all debates on identity, extending from those among the first Slavophiles of the early 1830s to contemporary doctrines on how the nation can re-assume a sense of its mission.[30]

The vocabulary of Russian nationalism is also stamped by expressions borrowed from Western Europe. So, while the term populism, for example, is used in its Slavic version to refer to nineteenth-century popular movements (*narodnichestvo*), the contemporary phenomenon is referred to with a term borrowed from western languages (*popiulizm*). A similar thing has occurred for patriotism. Despite the Russian language's having, like German and English, two words for the "motherland/fatherland" – place of birth (*rodina*) and paternal filiation (*otechestvo*) – it is the Latinate term *patriotizm* that is most widely used. This latter has been used to refer both to those so-called radicals outside parliament, who in the 1990s identified themselves as the "patriotic camp" (*patrioticheskii lager'*), and to the official patriotism established by the Kremlin as a symbol of political correctness. Until recently, the term nation (*natsiia*), which is unusual in Russian, was largely in the hands of so-called radical groups. To speak of a *russkaia natsiia* (Russian nation) as opposed to the traditional terminology of *russkii narod* (Russian people) implied an ethnic or racial vision. Borrowing from western usage has further changed the situation, adding to the terminological confusion, since the "nation" can now also be used to imply a sense of civic duty. Another significant terminological issue concerns the use of the concepts of Russian (*russkii*) and Rossian (*rossiiskii*). Whereas the first defines Russian identity ontologically in terms of culture, language or ethnicity, the second implies that all citizens, regardless of nationality (or ethnic origin), have a civic membership in the Russian state. The use of the latter term, promoted in the 1990s, has recently faded, while the former has reacquired a multifaceted cultural and political significance. We will encounter these discursive games throughout the book, since they are an essential part of the current debates in Russia.

The aim in this study is to analyze the various ideological but also social realities in which nationalism is manifest in present-day political life in Russia. In the first instance, I will retrace the political course the country has taken since the Soviet Union's disappearance in 1991. Russian nationalism is part of a traumatic context which is as much political and economic as territorial and affective, a context that still weighs heavily after two decades. Then, after briefly presenting the evolution of the Russian political regime and the weight of foreign policy in the crystallization of Russian resentment, I delve further into the significant social background formed by the rise of xenophobia. Indeed, if a kind of social consensus appears to have emerged around the theme of xenophobia, it is because it provides a fertile ground and is prevalent right throughout the whole society. In Russia, a fear of migrants, especially of people from

the Caucasus and Central Asia, has come to define otherness and in this respect is a major focus of current processes of reconciliation. Far from dividing people into social classes, ideological influences, and cultural circles, xenophobia creates unity.

In this context, nationalism has come to dominate the whole of the political spectrum and constitutes the common denominator of political correctness. Political space is saturated with it and public figures are unable to acquire legitimacy, whatever their duties, unless that justify their choices in terms of the overriding national interest. Nationalism is the driving force behind the so-called extremist movements that I have preferred to define as extra-parliamentary, but also that of the populist protest parties formed by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Zhirinovski's party and the former Rodina. More, nationalism is the ideological matrix of the presidential party, United Russia, which is continuing the process, initiated by the Kremlin and the presidential administration in the second half of the 1990s, of appropriating the national narrative. The more the political authorities have made the theme of the nation their own, the more the oppositionalist forms of nationalism have been deprived of their power of contestation. The spread of nationalist themes therefore turns out to be proportional to the restriction of the political spectrum, not in the sense that an alleged essence of nationalism would prove incompatible with an equally artificial essence of democracy,[31] but because nationalism allows the authorities to political legitimacy. By appropriating discourse on the nation, the Kremlin has managed to develop what I have referred to as patriotic centrism, that is a hegemony over the spectrum of political belonging which places the unity of the nation, and therefore the unity of its political representation, under the unique banner of the presidential party.

Lastly, I view nationalism as a new social contract proposed by authorities to society. In order to establish its political, economic and cultural domination, the Kremlin needs to build consensus after the violent fragmentation of the 1990s and the diversification of lifestyles among Russian citizens. Aware that its long-term political project cannot succeed without mobilizing citizens to its own advantage, the Kremlin is desperately seeking to reconnect with society, trying to both depoliticize and re-politicize it. This reconciliation must tap into symbolic cultural repositories. The topic of the nation creates useful standards and tools for identification and constructs a representation of the national beyond the political and ideological divisions of Russian society. By re-appropriating all available cultural resources – Soviet nostalgia, the Tsarist past, the

Orthodox Church, the army, world leadership, discourse on the Russian Idea, as well as acceptance of the changes Russia has experienced since perestroika and the theme of globalization – the regime hopes to reconcile various segments of society and their contradictory memories. It remains to be seen whether the rehabilitation of patriotism in the name of reconciliation will result in the formulation of a doctrine, that is of a system of ideas to be taught as true and perceived as legitimate, leading to new indoctrination, or whether it quickly dissipates as other rival national narratives emerge.

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CHAPTER ONE

Nationalism: A Means of Taking up the Challenges?

The example of Russia urges us to reconsider the supposed "death of the nation": today the nation-state is still the only force proposing to heterogeneous populations that they mutualize their risks and build a minimum of solidarity in the name of a certain community of political culture. It seems difficult to refer to nation as an outdated entity, inasmuch as in Russia it constitutes a unifying slogan. Nationalism thus spans a large social spectrum stretching from the racist violence of skinheads and the population's massive but vague xenophobia, to the elite's affirmation of cultural and material satisfaction and the middle classes' beliefs in a better future. The process of reinventing the nation is all the more fundamental as Russia has been confronted over the last two decades with changes of unprecedented radicality: the loss of its empire, the shrinking of its borders, a change of political regime, social transformations on a major scale, and its opening up to the world. The national narrative therefore conjugates Russia's coming out of an authoritarian regime with a process of opening up to globalization, which in turn motivates the discourse to take root in the national territory and history. The widely prevalent feeling in Russia of belonging to a specific civilization thereby fits easily with contemporary culturalist theories and the discourse on the right of peoples as a legitimation of anti- or alter-globalization. As Jean-François Bayart notes, at this point in time "the identitarian illusion"[1] constitutes one of the privileged modes of responding to globalization, meaning that Russia is part of phenomena that are more global in nature and by no means specific to it.

A Specific Historical Context: Russia Since 1991

To understand the driving role played by the nationalist theme in contemporary Russia, regardless of how it is expressed, it is first important to recall the political, economic, social, and symbolic context in which it has taken shape. The feeling of humiliation and disillusionment that Russia has suffered since the Soviet Union's demise and Gorbachev's reconciliation with the West weighs heavily and has often contributed to provoking the misinterpretations. The transitologic convictions (the process of change from a Communist regime to a democratic one) found in Western discourse of the 1990s were not devoid of ulterior motives and derived from the entrenched belief that a quasi-perfect "democratic model" exists, and that the European or North American parliamentary systems are its embodiments.[2] This mythical idea must nevertheless be brought into question: it glosses over many age-old historical processes, not to mention numerous contemporary drifts, and it disregards current discussions about pushing beyond parliamentarism through the creation of a more "participative" form of democracy.

In this schema, Russia is placed in either the category of countries that exasperate the West by their recurrent incapacity to make this famous "model" their own, or the category of states that are in the process of catching up, separated from the West by a simple temporal barrier. These two hurdles are at loggerheads with one another: on the one hand, the essentialist approach according to which Russia is in principle unable to adopt the West's values, and, on the other, the linear approach according to which it is only a matter of time, that Russia is only lagging *behind* in developing a model of society construed as unique and atemporal. The issue here is not an attempt to deny the difficulties or the specificities of Russian political life since the demise of the Soviet Union, nor to avoid considerations concerning the weight of history. It is fully justified to point out that the first fruits of the Western European model date back to the Middle Ages, that the urban bourgeoisie played a major role in the transition of demands from medieval *liberties* to political *liberty*, and that Russia, which never really experienced Western-style feudalism, has always lived under an autocratic political regime. It is just as correct to recall that Russian philosophy since the nineteenth century has distinguished between the individual as one conceived outside of a totality and the person (*lichnost'*) as realized only in symphony (*sobornost'*) with an organic collective entity. However, these explanatory elements cannot conceal the importance of the historical context in which the

"democratic issue" has been raised in Russia and the socioeconomic impact of Russian reformism.

Russia's Complex Political Agenda in the 1990s

In the early years of the 1990s, the quest for identity was part of an ambient Russian discourse in favor of establishing a *normal* country. This effort involved trying to "catch up" on what was seen as a lag and to put a stop to the Soviet Union's specific path of development by taking Western Europe as a model. The conservative putsch of August 19, 1991, which ejected Mikhail Gorbachev from office for a period of three days,[3] did not receive the population's assent and in large part delegitimated the supporters of the Soviet status quo. Among the pro-Western concert at the time, only two voices of dissent strove to make themselves heard: the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) that emerged from the ruins of the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Moscow Patriarchate, who urged reflection upon what they regarded as the specificity of Russian civilization. However, as early as 1992-1993 broad popular support for a twofold Westernization—the introduction of the market economy and the establishment of a parliamentary system—sharply fell away. The economic situation was catastrophic, plunging a large majority of the population into poverty, while the state no longer had the budgets to mitigate the social impact of its reforms. The surge in prices, the vanishing of savings accumulated in the Soviet era, the collapse in living standards, the mass closures of factories and businesses, the elimination of benefits to the poor, particularly pensioners, and the nonpayment of state employees' salaries, all worked to shatter the pro-Western consensus.

Facing this brutally impoverished society, the privatization of major industrial corporations gave rise to a privileged class of entrepreneurs close to the government, namely the oligarchs, as well as to economic circles based on control over the shadow economy. Their displays of wealth deeply shocked a population accustomed to uniformity in life. As a result of these unprecedented changes, the term "democrat" gradually came to take on negative, and even insulting, connotations, and to define a category of politicians who refused to recognize the pillaging of the country's wealth. The discourse on the necessity of the country's "de-ideologization" also appeared contradictory: the presence of Western donors made it seem like the economic reforms were Western dictates and liberalism a new ideology imposed by force. Moreover,

as in Central and Eastern Europe, the main agent of transition to the market economy was the Communist *nomenklatura* itself: whereas former dissidents were totally absent from the post-Soviet political scene, former Party members reaped the benefits of privatization, creating the sentiment that the USSR's disappearance had been programmed and plotted by elites in betrayal of the egalitarian ideals of the Soviet regime. Accordingly, Europe was partially erased as a reference point, democracy equated with the ravages of capitalism and the cleptocracy of the ruling elites, and political rights seen as secondary when compared with the challenges of individual survival.

A first political shock undermining the young Russian political system came in the fall of 1993, after Boris Yeltsin barely won a referendum to continue the reform policies (he received 58 percent of the vote, but only 53 percent of the population participated). The president presented a draft constitution that the then Communist-dominated parliament rejected. Yeltsin decided to dissolve the Duma, which, in response, voted to impeach the president. A state of emergency was declared on September 24 and troops loyal to the president stormed parliament on October 4, resulting in more than 150 deaths.[4] This bloody event plays an important role in post-Soviet Russian memory. For many citizens at the time, the country was teetering on the edge of civil war. The project for democratization had ended in armed struggle and in a rapid presidentialization of the regime. Backed by Western countries, the Russian "democrats" and "liberals" encouraged Yeltsin in his struggle for executive power and sought to demonize the Communist opposition, spreading the notion that Russia, if it is to march toward the West, must rely on an authoritarian regime with little popular support.

The second shock, related not to politics sensu stricto but to the building of the independent state, was caused by the loss of the Soviet spatial identity and the fear that the new Russia, under pressure from the claims of its ethnic minorities, might also suffer the same centrifugal fate.[5] Russia's regionalization and the negotiations between Moscow and the national republics, in particular Tatarstan, gave rise to an asymmetrical federation in 1992-1994 and created a pit of anxiety about the future of the Russian state, which was heightened by the situation in Chechnya. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this small republic in the North Caucasus demanded independence and, taking advantage of the disinterest of the federal center, it operated virtually independently of Moscow until 1994, with its economy caught in a process of criminalization (attacks, kidnappings) marked by significant intra-Chechen rivalries. In 1994, for reasons mainly related to the balance of power inside the

Kremlin, Russia decided to launch a military invasion of Chechnya.[6] The largest such operation organized by Moscow since its intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, the war was a military and humanitarian failure, and a quagmire for the Russian troops. In 1996, a peace agreement in Khasaviurt allowed Chechnya, renamed the Islamic Republic of Ichkeria, to obtain de facto self-government in exchange for a promise to postpone independence talks.[7] The peace agreement was perceived as a deep humiliation in Russia, with Chechnya becoming a focal point of Russian fears, in particular of a repeat breakup of the Soviet Union. Since this date, the topic of imperiled national unity has been one of the authorities' key leitmotivs.

A third turning point took place in 1998. Following the crisis in Southeast Asia, the Russian economy collapsed in the space of a few weeks, reversing the first efforts to stabilize the middle class. The sentiment that young Russian capitalism was in reality a trompe l'oeil spread quickly through the population, accentuated by the fierce critiques of the opulence and omnipotence of the bank oligarchs close to Boris Yeltsin (*semirbankishchina*).[8] In 1999, the domestic situation again focused on Chechnya. In August, Chechen warlords announced their intention to establish an Islamic state in Dagestan. A few days later, several attacks in apartment buildings in Moscow—attributed by the Kremlin to secessionists but whose real sponsors are still unknown—led to the deaths of more than 300 people and served as a pretext for Moscow to start a second war in Chechnya. The security discourse began to dominate public space, transforming xenophobia, rampant Islamophobia, and the "war against terror" into the engines of public action. This situation clinched the domestic consensus among the political class, marginalizing extreme liberals and Communists alike.[9] Even the Union of Right Forces supported the second war in Chechnya, in marked contrast to its predecessor, the Democratic Choice of Russia, which had been very critical of the first one.

The 1999 parliamentary elections revealed the first broad political consensus on taking a specific path of development. Even the parties regarded as pro-Western focused not on the need for reform, but on the need for order. All called for a "patriotic jolt" to prevent the country from rushing headlong down a dead-end street. Even the "liberals" saw the country's situation at the end of Boris Yeltsin's second term with the same critical eye. Domestically, the 1998 economic shock called into question the soundness of Russian capitalism and revived the idea of a welfare state. Profoundly discredited, the Russian state was no longer perceived as the regulator of the public thing (*res publica*) but as a predator

in the service of the ruling elites. The central government, embodied by an ailing president and by the incapacity of the Prime Minister to govern (five followed each other between 1996 and 1999), was effete; central authority was virtually nonexistent; and the laws were openly flouted. Regional governors, who felt increasingly more powerful than the center, created their own genuine fiefdoms, endangering the very unity of the Federation. This led all political parties to reaffirm the need for a strong Russia, if it wanted to be heard on the international scene.

The supposed "democratic" Russia, as it emerged in the 1990s, seems to have failed on three counts. First, while the population really and truly did expect the regime to evolve, it did not desire the disappearance of the Soviet state. The USSR's implosion and the birth of new states were experienced as something imposed both from without and from within. A large part of the Russian elites had no hesitation in presenting these events as a plot hatched against the great Russian power. Instead of providing a rational reading of the collapse and of their role in it, they played into the hands of those opposing evolution. Second, the Yeltsin elites fought tooth and nail for ultraliberal principles for several years, leading to a massive pauperization of the population. The upshot of this situation is that democracy continues to be negatively identified with the market economy. Third, the Russian regime did not hesitate, with the support of Western countries, to scorn openly the social concerns of the average individual and repeatedly behaved in a blatantly antidemocratic manner, thus contributing to a discrediting of the term of democrat in public opinion. The traumas of the 1990s—whether Chechnya, the economy, or the political "civil wars"—have had a lasting impact on the contemporary situation. They contribute even today to the discrediting of so-called democratic or liberal parties: Yabloko, or the Union of Right Forces, are still criticized for having failed to provide a mea culpa for their role in the 1990s crisis.

Vladimir Putin and the So-called Revival of the State

Facing a democracy disloyal to its principles and with little going for it, Vladimir Putin has managed the tour de force of associating, in the minds of his fellow citizens, the authoritarian grabbing of power, the economic revival of Russia, and the return to a minimal social stability, even if this linkage proves in reality to be conjectural since it is almost exclusively grounded in the increase in oil and gas prices. The first vote in favor of Vladimir Putin in December 1999 symbolized the end of the period

of revolution and reforms. The focus shifted to stabilization, restoration, and state efficiency, and was built around two slogans, "vertical of power" (*vertikal' vlasti*) and "the dictatorship of the law" (*diktatura zakona*). The Chechen syndrome, accentuated by the hostage crises at the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in October 2002[10] and at the school in Beslan in September 2004,[11] prompted the presidential party to make statements concerning the need to return to a constitutional order on the whole national territory.

Vladimir Putin's first mandate (2000-2004) was organized around the stabilization issue. The first two Russian presidents developed strategies based on divergent logics. Boris Yeltsin refused to form a presidential party with a majority in the Duma and circumvented the parliament by engaging in direct negotiations with the regional governors, who, as of 1995, were elected by direct universal suffrage and had the right to sit on the Federation Council. The Kremlin thus arranged its voting on legislation through a system of personal negotiations between deputies and executive senior officials. These relations were constantly up for renegotiation, always uncertain, and they diminished the powers of the central state. For his part, Putin, inspired in part by the model of the CPSU, preferred to establish a structured and hierarchical machine of partisans in order to control the parliamentary institution from the inside and not to let legislation be decided by chance-ridden situations and relationships out of his control.

The Kremlin sought first and foremost to recentralize the country by doing away with the asymmetrical federalism that emerged in the 1990s. In order to get rid of governors who, from their regional fiefdoms, sold their support in exchange for political or economic advantages,[12] the authorities established, in 2000, seven superdistricts. Intersecting with the military regions, they are led by the president's plenipotentiary representatives, overlapping the Federation's administrative entities (called "subjects") and reaffirming the supremacy of Moscow over the regions. In 2001, it was decided to limit the autonomy of the Federation Council (upper house of parliament): the head of the executive (the governor) and the president of the regional assembly, who had their right to sit on the Council, were removed and replaced by appointed administrative delegates. In 2002, the republican charters and constitutions were revised in order to eliminate the large space of autonomy that had been granted to the subjects of the Federation.

Restrictions were also placed on political party registration. In 2001, a bill modified registration requirements with the aim of reducing the number of parties, deemed to be too high (more than a hundred).

Amended in 2002, the text stipulated that, to be able to participate in elections, parties must have more than 50,000 members and more than 45 regional sections, thereby excluding regionally based parties.[13] The Kremlin also embarked on an offensive against those oligarchs reluctant to accept the new rules of the game. The media, a veritable political arm, was brought under the control of the presidential entourage, and those who expressed even vague opposition liable to damage the president had their empires dismantled. Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinski went into exile, while Mikhail Khodorkovski was arrested in 2003.

In the parliamentary elections of December 2003, declared "free but not fair" by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the presidential party confirmed its supremacy: United Russia won 37.6 percent of the votes, or 222 seats in the 450-member Duma, far ahead of CPRF, the LDPR, and Rodina. The liberals were eliminated for not having passed the 5 percent required minimum.[14] United Russia's results must all the same be qualified: despite the intense media hype in favor of the presidential party, the latter succeeded in scoring only slightly more than the joint score of Unity and the Fatherland - All Russia coalition in 1999. To get its majority in the Duma, United Russia thus required the backing of the deputies elected in the single-mandate districts, as well as that of some small co-opted parties.[15] In March 2004, Putin's popularity got him reelected with 71 percent of votes in the first round, in a campaign notable for the absence of the country's historic leaders—Ziuganov, Zhirinovski, and Yavlinski—who chose not to run, leaving only insignificant figures to stand against the incumbent president.[16]

Putin's second mandate (2004–2008) aimed to be more offensive. The selective coercion and intimidation of opposition forces was accompanied by increased control over the mass media and a broad manipulation of associations and civil society. In 2001, the Kremlin, denouncing general social demobilization, has played host to a civic forum made up of approximately 4,000 co-opted nongovernmental organizations.[17] For their part, opposition associations defending human rights, the environment, and the rights of soldiers rejected the initiative, which stipulates that the state give financial and institutional support only to NGOs that are cooperative. The introduction of a "vertical of power" between the Kremlin and the associative world was confirmed in March 2005 by a federal law that created a third chamber, called the Public Chamber (*Obshchestvennaia palata*), whose role is to shape an appropriate way for society to approach politics. Lacking any decision-making authority, the chamber functions only as a completely subordinate bureaucratic body.[18]

The members of the Public Chamber are held up as representatives of civil society, and include academics, artists, company directors, association presidents, and various individuals. They play an important role in refocusing public discourse on patriotism, presenting it as a request emanating from below rather than a process driven from above.

United Russia's control over the main levers of the parliamentary institution also increased: only three members of the Duma Council were not part of United Russia (Vladimir Zhirinovski for the LDPR, Valentin Kuptsov for the CPRF, and Dmitri Rogozin for Rodina). The 29 Duma committees were all in the hands of United Russia members. In addition, Duma speaker and former Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov was appointed the chairman of both the United Russia party and its parliamentary faction. The vice-chairman of the Duma, Viacheslav Volodin, was also appointed secretary of the United Russia Presidium and vice president of its parliamentary faction. The regional elites, who defied the central authorities during the 1990s, have largely rallied to him, generating a membership wave for United Russia in 2004.[19]

With the Duma under control, the presidential party tasked itself with co-opting the regional elites, especially those authoritarian leaders with control over their republics, the aim being to weaken the autonomy of the latter, but also to procure allies in the regional electorates. This strategy worked to shore up regional votes for United Russia since it gave them access to the "administrative resources"[20] under the control of the governor or president of the autonomous republics. Although United Russia formed as a party of the president, it rapidly became the party of governors: in the 2003 elections, some 30 regional leaders were presented as candidates on the party lists. In September 2004, some days after the hostage taking in Beslan, the president announced a modification in the terms of legislative election—henceforth all deputies would be elected according to a system of proportional representation (thereby suppressing the system of election by single mandate districts).[21] He also decided to reduce again the powers of the governors, who would from then on be elected not by universal suffrage but by the regional assembly subject to the president's recommendation, permitting him to displace reluctant figures. This massive administrative recentralization culminated in 2006–2008 with the merging of some of the Federation's subjects, changing the number of administrative entities from 89 to 83.

United Russia has also chiefly achieved a broadening of the power of the presidential administration, which was created out of the ruins of the CPSU's Central Committee apparatus, and includes about 2,000 employees in Moscow and 2,000 in the regions, attached to the

superprefects.[22] It makes it possible to give important positions to figures from the private sector or from specific domains such as the security services, without their having to go through an elective function. In this way, one and the same person can simultaneously hold an elective post (deputy positions are particularly sought after owing to parliamentary immunity), a bureaucratic post (acquiring status within the presidential administration), and an entrepreneurial one (as a member of the administration councils of the main Russian companies). The Kremlin, displaying its goodwill by offering oligarchs administrative posts, has thus attempted to turn them into notables, which makes it possible to establish a cause-effect relation between their loyalty to the president and the maintenance of their economic empire. Last, a new class of technocrats from the economic ministries has taken control of the large companies, reinforcing the link between the state, the sectoral corporations, and the domain of finance.[23]

This collusion between the public function and the private sector is by no means specific to Russia, nor new to it. Under Yeltsin's presidency, the oligarchs were integrated into what was commonly called the "Family," that is to say the former president's group of influence, uniting his daughter Tatiana Diachenko; the former head of the presidential administration, Alexander Voloshin; the reformer Anatoli Chubais; and oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky.[24] These influence groups or inner circles, in which public and private interests, corporate and patrimonial benefits, friendships and family relations all entangle, have persisted under Putin's presidency. Nevertheless, while Yeltsin sought to play on intergroup rivalry, Putin has undertaken to submit all groups to his authority, marking the passage from an "oligarchic Cesarism" to a "bureaucratic Cesarism," according to the terminology employed by Jean-Robert Raviot.[25] Despite this pyramidal restructuring of relations, the Kremlin remains divided among several clans, which have every interest in staying in United Russia and in maintaining a status quo that is currently to their advantage. Putin, former KGB collaborator and director of its successor the Federal Security Service (FSB) from 1998 to 1999, has intensified the entryism of the security services into high-profile public functions and large companies, a situation that has led some observers to denounce the "FSB-ization" of the Russian state.[26] However, despite their points of opposition, these influence groups have every interest in remaining part of United Russia and in maintaining the status quo so long as it is favorable to them.

On the economic level, once stabilization was attained, the objective was to revive the country, in particular by means of a progressively

"administered" or "state capitalism."[27] Buoyed by its income from oil and gas, the Russian state made known its strategy of economic voluntarism, returning to industrialization and retaking control of the main companies privatized in the 1990s. It encouraged the birth of large sectoral corporations (oil and gas, nuclear, metallurgy, aluminum, electricity, transportation, telecommunications, the industrial-military complex), which developed either with the state's financial backing in the case of public companies or with the tacit agreement of the political authorities in the case of private companies. The renationalization of the economy was secured by a virulent discourse that charged oligarchs and foreign economic actors with stealing assets, and with having taken advantage of the weakness of the Yeltsinian state to fleece the Russian people of its wealth. This recentralization has been facilitated by the global upturn in the Russian economy: since 2000, Russia has experienced growth of about 6 percent each year, and in 2007, gross domestic product once again returned to its 1990 level. With its external debts paid, between 2002 and 2007 Moscow doubled spending on education and tripled spending on health. Recentralization has enabled the Kremlin to show that it controls Russia's natural resources, has sway over the companies necessary to exploit them, and can provide welfare to the social classes most in need.

Managing Contradictory Logics: Charismatic Leader or Party Legitimacy?

Throughout the 1990s, Western political scientists almost systematically analyzed Russian voting according to a pro- or antireformist split. This divide, however, seems somewhat artificial. The reformist discourse in its most radical form had already ended halfway through the decade. Moreover, the excessive importance accorded to partisan formations as supposed reflections of political life and civil society is the result of seeing things through a Western prism that is not necessarily pertinent for Russia.[28] The strengthening of presidentialism in the 1993 constitution actually rendered the representative Duma largely irrelevant. The electoral method partially distorted the system of representation by favoring the major parties,[29] a tendency that was reinforced after the voting reforms that were put in place for the December 2007 elections. If the 1990s were presented as years of ideological polarization, the subsequent decade has been seen as one of the "defragmentation" of Russian political life.[30] The recentralization of the political spectrum around the

presidential party and the monopolization of power by the state apparatus are the two most marked features of Vladimir Putin's terms in office.[31]

The Russian regime has generated many attempts at defining it. Western political scientists have construed it as a "managed democracy," in which the state apparatus utilizes its various administrative, financial, and media resources exclusively in favor of its own candidates. Others describe it as a "Potemkin democracy"[32] in which the parliamentary opposition is actually loyal to the Kremlin and content to function as an accessory to the channeling of discontent.[33] Others have evoked, some already in Boris Yeltsin's second mandate, the concepts of "electoral monarchy," of "constitutional electoral autocracy,"[34] of "Cesarism,"[35] and of "superpresidentialism."[36] Vladimir Putin's success as a leader at once endowed with democratic legitimacy and with a nondemocratic practice of power is explained as a "rallying to an elective autocracy."[37] Others prefer to look for the elements of explanation in history, analogizing the regime with "feudalism,"[38] with "Tsarism,"[39] or with the idea of "restoration."[40] Many researchers also subscribe to the concept of "illiberal democracy," of "managed pluralism,"[41] and further still of "competitive authoritarianism,"[42] meant to indicate that the Russian state implements practices considered as authoritarian with the aim of mediating and of balancing divergent interests. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the plebiscitary dynamic of the Russian regime is not a unique case, that many other countries in the world have experienced or are experiencing this dynamic, which is also clearly present within the so-called established democracies of Western Europe and the United States.[43]

The absence of a representative and parliamentary political life in no way signifies a lack of popular legitimacy.[44] Boris Yeltsin, who was elected president in a more technically "democratic" fashion than Vladimir Putin, suffered very weak support, whereas the heights to which his successor soared in the polls can be explained only by the existence of real, popular support and not solely by a controlled media and the absence of credible opposition. Despite the occasional slight drop in his popularity in the opinion polls, such as during the sinking of the Kursk nuclear submarine in 2000, Putin enjoys broad public support. Between 60 and 80 percent of people say they approve of his actions both as president and as Prime Minister.[45] These good results do not mean that the respondents support his specific decisions or believe that the president, or now the Prime Minister, has actually influenced the future of the country. On the contrary, many remain skeptical about the politicians and institutions, but they endorse Putin's ability to make

decisions, whatever they are, and appreciate his image as a man who is determined and uncompromising.[46]

In view of what must be recognized as a political success, the question of the representativeness of the electoral body seems a marginal luxury that does not respond to the immediate expectations of Russian society.[47] A very large majority of the population do not consider the right to vote a fundamental one and do not believe that elections guarantee any influence over power whatsoever. Russian citizens do not believe in their institutions: with the exception of the presidency under Putin, all the other symbols of power, in particular the parliament, the courts, and the police, are considered to be instruments serving the personal interests of the elite; political parties themselves are systematically ranked at the bottom of the scale. People think that they have even less influence over politics now than in the Soviet era.[48] Sociological surveys conducted on values commonly seen as democratic confirm just how little support they muster, with respondents reacting most favorably to ideas of a "master" or "manager" (*khoziain*).[49] In the polls, whereas notions like power are negatively perceived, those of homeland, state, and puissance carry positive connotations. In the political field, power is apprehended as something that is naturally personalized: the president's domination of the parliament does not elicit any particular concern.[50] The presence of high-level employees from the so-called "power ministries" (Defense, Interior, secret services) in the state apparatus is no longer condemned by those surveyed, who view these latter not as a clan defending its own interests but as one of the main reserves of professional cadres with the ability to get the country back on its feet.[51]

The Kremlin's success is Vladimir Putin's own personal feat. Indeed he has generated an increasingly visible cult of personality, which is marked by a proliferation of photos, portraits, busts of the head of state, and endorsements in opinion polls and the literary world as being not only the father of the nation, but also the ideal husband.[52] Sociological surveys show that, unlike for political parties, support for the president is a reliable mirror of Russian society. His supporters are to be found in equal proportion among the sexes and various age brackets; are diverse in social status, level of income and education, and perceptions of the previous regime; and are as likely as not to be former members in the CPSU.[53] Because of his past in the security services, Putin may indeed be seen as a politician who remained faithful to the management model of the former regime. At the same time, having worked in the liberal administration of Anatoli Sobchak (1937–2000) in Saint Petersburg, he may also be looked upon as a modernist and as Boris Yeltsin's rightfully

appointed heir. As Yuri Levada aptly noted, Vladimir Putin "is a mirror in which everyone, Communist or democrat, sees what he wants to see and expects."[54]

The personalization of power tends to promote an identification of the president's popularity with that of the state. Vladimir Putin cultivated a direct relationship with the nation based on the use of modern communication technologies.[55] His personal Web site lists all his speeches, his schedule, and many of his personal activities. He receives thousands of letters, the subject of a weekly column on his site, which, in addition, has a special section for school-age children[56] presenting the president's merits and the greatness of Russia in a playful way.[57] Each year since 2001, he has convened an annual meeting with citizens in the form of a live television broadcast that runs for several hours, during which he answers prepared questions submitted by citizens from all over Russia. In 2008, although Prime Minister, he continued to administer this ritual in Dmitri Medvedev's place, a confirmation of his will to embody the contract between state and society in person.

Even if the Russian elections are considered by international institutions to have been rigged and nondemocratic, they remain essential for the legitimacy of the political authorities.[58] During the 2007–2008 electoral cycle, the Kremlin hoped to mitigate the traditional distrust of Russian citizens toward the country's political apparatuses and to provide United Russia with a score that measured up to the personal popularity of the head of state. In presenting the president as the embodiment of the state and United Russia as the embodiment of the president, the campaign for the 2007 legislative elections was therefore run on the basis of a twofold slogan: "United Russia realizes Vladimir Putin's Plans" and "Putin's Plan is Russia's Victory."[59] Despite its omnipresence in the media campaign and the virtual absence of other parties, United Russia's score—64 percent of the vote—is difficult to consider a success. The party's leaders themselves acknowledged that they expected to get higher than 70 percent.[60] Though United Russia obtained more seats at the Duma by comparison to 2003, in reality it did no more than incorporate into it deputies that were formerly independent, and who, due to the electoral law changes, were obliged to run under the label of the presidential party. After the 2007 election United Russia still had control of "only" two-thirds of the parliament (315 seats out of 450). The much-awaited plebiscite did not eventuate.

In addition, United Russia's score involved, apart from the accusations of fraud and vote rigging, the excessive utilization of "administrative resources" in certain republics of the Volga-Urals and the North

Caucasus, where the presidential party attained 98 or 99 percent of the vote. *A contrario*, its bad results in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (about 50 percent of the vote) confirm that sections of the middle classes are not convinced that the current elite has the ability to properly manage the country's development. Moreover, Putin's will to respect the letter but not the spirit of the constitution in refusing to seek a third mandate constituted a considerable challenge for United Russia in its bid to maintain its leadership. The prospect of Putin's leaving the presidency in 2008 was of great concern, as United Russia was no longer able to found its legitimacy on the sole slogan of being the president's party. The Kremlin perfectly orchestrated its victory in the presidential elections of March 2, 2008. Vladimir Putin's official heir, Dmitri Medvedev, was elected president with over 70 percent of the votes. The new president was inaugurated on May 7, and at the Duma the following day Putin was nominated Prime Minister, receiving 392 votes for and 56 against (mostly the Communists).

This unexpected political situation suddenly accentuated the importance the party attributed to strengthening not just the presidency, but the partisan machine as well. United Russia, despite continuing to play up themes of personal and charismatic legitimacy, can no longer limit itself to exulting Putin's personality. His arrival as Prime Minister has therefore accelerated a process begun in the 2000s, that of reinforcing the party-based political system, which could well lead to greater pluralism in coming years.[61] However, the new importance given to parties ought to be qualified. With the additional creation of the Security Council and the State Council, the presidential administration has come to constitute a form of second public service at the disposition of the president. It parallels the majority of the government's prerogatives and permits the president to exercise a direct influence over decision-making processes.

This strategy is evidence of what Richard Sakwa has called the Putin regime's para-constitutionalism: the seven districts affiliated to the presidency, the State Council (which parallels the Federation Council), the Presidential Council for the realization of national projects (which parallels the government), the Public Chamber, and last the Medvedev-Putin diarchy, which has resulted in the transfer of some executive powers to the office of the Prime Minister; all have contributed, in the space of a decade, to creating new organs of power competing with those allowed for in the constitution.[62] Moreover, Putin has been accused by United Russia members of refusing to share his authority with the party, and Medvedev himself actually ran for the presidency as an independent.

In addition, as Vladimir Gel'man remarks, if the parties have become legitimate actors in the electoral game in the 2000s, and if the major political figures are all members of United Russia, nonetheless the "key Kremlin officials served as extra-party rulers, who controlled strategic decision-making."[63]

Despite this omnipresence in the political field, the Kremlin remains weak, and with it the entire regime it has built since the beginning of the 2000s.[64] United Russia's long-term stranglehold on the political spectrum is not assured. Russian citizens remain largely dissatisfied with their institutions and politicians, even when they approve of Putin and vote for United Russia.[65] Even with its control over the media and the whole electoral process, United Russia has not really succeeded in inspiring the expected political confidence. The party faces a fundamental contradiction: on the one hand, it functions according to the logic of the dominant party, insisting on its bureaucratic legitimacy; but, on the other, it is based on a logic of personalized power revolving around the figure of a charismatic leader.[66] United Russia has tried to maintain these two sources of legitimacy and their underlying evolutions in parallel. This balance is an unstable one, however. Russia, with no tradition of diarchy (*dvoevlastie*), is now a country with two centers of political power. This two-headed system could prove to be a dangerous instrument, especially since the power relationship between the country's two strongmen remains to be negotiated. And while Medvedev continues to show deference to Putin, it remains unclear when and if he will attempt to wrest the reins of power from his predecessor.

In addition, multiple signals serve as reminders of the continuing fragility of the country. In Chechnya, the Kremlin, unable to find a solution to the conflict or an exit from the impasse, has argued that the small republic is now "pacified." This coercive normalization, imposed through violence, guarantees the impunity of the co-opted Mafioso political forces led by Ramzan Kadyrov. Moscow has successfully transformed a war of decolonization into an intra-Chechen conflict that undermines the stability of neighboring republics in the North Caucasus. On the demographic question, the government has also failed to meet the challenge posed by Russia's collapse. The high number of violent deaths confirms that the lives of Russian citizens do not constitute a high state priority.[67] Male life expectancy does not exceed 60 years and Russia's population will fall by approximately 17 million people by 2025, leading to a slowdown in growth. Unless a proactive immigration policy is rapidly implemented, Russia's population might fall to about 100–110 million inhabitants by 2050.[68]

The illusion of normalization is also evident in the economic sector. The Kremlin had set a strategy of rapid economic development until 2020, to allow it to make up for the lag in technological innovation accumulated over the last two decades and to free itself from its dependency on hydrocarbons. Nevertheless, the Russian economy remains based on the rising prices of oil, gas, and precious metals, which creates high corruption, endemic social inequality, and hard-to-manage inflation. It has not promoted economic diversification, nor has it invested in other sectors, thereby creating prospects of sharp downturn in its growth when the pipeline economy reaches its limits. The 2008 world economic crisis risks changing the state of play over the long term. Russia's plan to become an energy superpower has suddenly suffered a major setback, and the situation could jeopardize social stability: the authorities' contract with the population, which has accepted an authoritarian regime in exchange for increased standards of living and consumer spending, could be quickly challenged. Should the current political regime, seen as the engine of modernization, recovery, and the normalization of the country, enter into conflict with the needs of society and its new middle class, the Kremlin risks being seen as vulnerable and unstable. In this context, the nationalist agenda has come to constitute the fundamental element of the contract between the state and the society.

The Fluctuations of Russian Foreign Policy

The weight of foreign policy in the structuring of contemporary Russian nationalism ought to be briefly mentioned. Russian interests on the international scene have significantly altered since the end of the Cold War. The past two decades can be divided into three phases. In the first, which stretches from the fall of the Soviet Union to the midway point of the 1990s, the Kremlin had no clear foreign policy, not even one for the rest of former Soviet space. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was construed as a mechanism to procure a "civilized divorce" and not as a means to maintain Russian leadership over the rest of the former empire.[69] The reasons for Russia's sudden disinterest in the former Soviet space were multiple, at once ideological, political, and economic. Ideologically, Egor Gaidar's and Viktor Chernomyrdin's governments were inspired by American-style liberalism and considered that Russia's strategic interests were the same as the West's. Still harboring the Gorbachevian idea of the "European common house," many of the ruling elites expected a rapid integration into

European space, a relatively unproblematic transition to a market economy, and the establishment of Western democratic norms. They decried what they saw as Russia's centuries-long "diversion" from the European path by the imperial legacy and the Soviet experience.

In this logic, Boris Yeltsin built his political legitimacy around the delegitimization of Mikhail Gorbachev: in the wake of his election in 1990, the first Russian president played heavily on anti-Soviet sentiment. He criticized the weight of the southern republics, deemed economically "backwards" and politically conservative, for having halted Russia's modernization, urging the national republics to seize "maximum sovereignty," and suggested that the first country to quit the Soviet Union ought to be the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR). Moreover, Russia's shock therapy affected the country's economic capacity, since the rapidly privatized large companies no longer played any structural role in foreign policy. The brutal collapse of living standards for the vast majority of the population also prevented Moscow from providing the other republics with subsidies to influence their development. Last, Russian interventionism abroad suffered a major setback: after the traumatic failure of the Afghanistan invasion, the prevailing slogan was "never again."[70] Such convictions completely contradicted possible desires to maintain control over the former Soviet space. Nor did Moscow seek to develop the human and cultural potential that the Soviet regime had created. On the cultural level, Russia appeared indifferent: it did not defend the sizeable Russian minorities in the former Soviet Union, which amounted to nearly 25 million people in 1989,[71] nor did it invest in the Russophone structures (schools, universities, the media, etc.), so crucial to preserving cultural influence.[72]

Russia's relations with some of the former republics rapidly began to deteriorate. Its latent tensions with the Baltic countries over discriminations against Russian minorities and with the Ukraine over the question of the Crimea were successfully kept in the diplomatic domain, without provoking confrontations on the ground. Further to the south, however, the situation was more violent, and military conflicts erupted between 1992 and 1994 in Transnistria (Moldova), South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Adjaria (Georgia), in which Moscow overtly supported the secessionist minorities against the central authority of the independent republics. However, whereas Moscow flexed its muscles against the former western Soviet republics, it ceased to think of itself as the motor of integration in Central Asia. In 1994 Russia dismissed Nursultan Nazarbaev's proposal to create a Eurasian Union to maintain a high degree of

economic integration but without the ideological references to Communism. More, Russia barely reacted to NATO's Partnership for Peace, which integrated the former Soviet republics. It was not until September 14, 1995, that Russia finally decreed the CIS to be "a space of vital interest," meaning that Moscow wanted to reserve a right of inspection over the external borders of the former Soviet Union.

In the second half of the 1990s, changes in Russia's domestic situation led to the birth of a second phase of Russian foreign policy. According to the Primakov doctrine, Russia's attempt to win back its international status entailed regaining its role as a center of influence over post-Soviet space. The formulation of this strategy, however, remained ambiguous, since official discourse continued to call for the creation of a Euro-Atlantic alliance that included Russia. In addition, the means for Moscow's return were lacking: first, due to the fact that most large companies had been privatized, the Russian state had no finances; second, it was having problems pulling itself out of its economic crisis; third, it seemed unable to resolve the domestic issues linked to the Chechnya war; and, last, it was being undermined by the ongoing oligarchic clan warfare being waged around its then ageing and ill president. Finally, the Russian elites were divided over the end goals of this new foreign policy: although everyone was unanimous about regaining the country's status as a great power, many thought that Moscow could do so without having to reinvest in the post-Soviet space.

Nevertheless, the Kremlin was beginning to manifest more concern about international evolutions. The stances taken by Western countries in the Yugoslav wars and the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 in response to the Kosovo crisis crystallized the resentment of Russian citizens, who pushed for a pan-Slavic or pan-Orthodox solidarity with Serbia. Even the pro-Westerners were shocked that Moscow's views had not been taken into account. The so-called unilateralism of the United States and Europe exacerbated the former second world power's feelings of geopolitical loss. The formation of an anti-Russian axis uniting the Ukraine and Georgia, and NATO's eastward expansion, reinforced an old sense of humiliation over Russia's diminishing influence in the post-Soviet space. The need to be respected on the international stage and reaffirmation of its great-power status became recurring official themes. They were reinforced by the degenerating situation on Russia's southern borders. Despite the 1997 peace agreements to end the civil war in Tajikistan, the situation in Central Asia appeared increasingly fragile. Kabul fell under Taliban control with the defeat of the Northern Alliance in 1996, drug trafficking was rife throughout the region, and

in 1999–2000 Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan came under direct challenge from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[73]

Even if more pressing discourses on Russia's "natural" role in post-Soviet space were emerging, Moscow continued to lack the means to implement such policies. At the institutional level, Russia had the ability to function on a bilateral level, thanks to friendship and cooperation treaties, but it had no effective multilateral policies at its disposal. Nor was there any collective political will on the strategic level, a fact confirmed by the insufficient amounts of funding that CIS member countries allocated to the organization's structures. The Kremlin's room for maneuver on its former territory was drastically reduced: the United States was busily encouraging the establishment of an anti-Russian axis, namely GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova), financing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, and setting up the Ukraine and Georgia as the bridgehead of Western influence in its face-off with Russia. The European Union was also taking up its eastward calling by agreeing to integrate the Baltic states. Last, many new economic actors became firmly established in former Soviet space during this time—the United States and the European Union, but also China, Turkey, Iran, and Japan—thereby preventing Russian companies from gaining a firm foothold in the local markets, the sole exception being in the hydrocarbon sector.

The third phase of Russian foreign policy is linked to Vladimir Putin's coming to power. Upon his assumption of duties, Russia's new strongman formulated a new foreign policy, which recognized Russia's limited capacities and the need to make a certain amount of geopolitical concessions. It gave priority to Russian investments in the CIS states[74] and to developing active diplomatic relations with strategic partners such as India, Iran, and China.[75] In the course of a few years, Putin's Russia succeeded in strengthening the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in order to confront Islamist threats in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and in regaining control of the region's energy resources, particularly those in the Caspian Sea.[76] The events of September 11, 2001, had the effect of sharply reinforcing Moscow's desire to step up its involvement in Central Asia. After having practically vanished from Central Asia's field of vision, Russia made a return to the region as a legitimate strategic and political ally, appreciated for its economic pragmatism.[77]

Moscow also began to develop an awareness of its cultural potential in post-Soviet space and of the human resources represented by the Russians of the Near Abroad. Even so, it is permanently torn between two competing logics: one foreign policy logic calls for supporting the

"diasporas" in their countries in the hope that they become one of the levers of Russian influence in the region; a second entails the massive and organized "return" of these Russians to a Federation in full demographic crisis. This latter option, for a long time the sole province of national milieus in the 1990s, seemed in recent years to have found a voice in the ruling circles. The 2006 first State Program for the repatriation of the Russians from the Near Abroad confirmed this evolution as well as the Kremlin's recognition that the country cannot afford to forgo additional labor power. The decree announcing 2007 as "the year of the Russian language" also made provision for favorable measures as regards maintaining the Russian language in the post-Soviet states, signaling the authorities' awareness of the reserves of cultural influence, hitherto largely ignored, that the Russian language represented.

However, during the two Putin mandates, the CIS ceased to exist as a geopolitical entity: Moscow successfully set up logics of political and economic integration with Belarus and Central Asia, partly also with Armenia, but relations with the Ukraine and Georgia hit an impasse.[78] In autumn 2006, after several local clashes between Russian forces, the Georgian army, and minority militias in the secessionist zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, there was a sharp deterioration in relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. This led to a Russian embargo on all Georgian products that strangled the economy of the small republic, and to unprecedented levels of political suspicion toward Georgians settled in Russia and Russian citizens of Georgian origin.[79] The relations with Kiev, for their part, have fluctuated with the upheavals in Ukrainian domestic politics and the games of alliance between the political forces of Viktor Yushchenko, of Viktor Yanukovich, and of Yulia Timoshenko. Despite these difficulties, Moscow has never broken off negotiations, not even with the most pro-Western Ukrainian governments, and instead has sought to set up mechanisms of economic coercion (over the gas issue) that guarantee its close relations with the enemy-brother, but without military conflict.[80]

With Russia's progressive reassertion in the international arena, the relations between Moscow and the West have become more tense. Despite the support that Putin gave to Washington after the attacks on September 11, 2001, Russo-American relations began to deteriorate after 2002 over a multitude of issues: the United States' announcement that it was withdrawing from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; the integration of the three Baltic states into NATO; the impact of the "colored revolutions" in Tbilisi and Kiev, interpreted by Moscow as direct American interference in the Russian sphere of influence; Washington's

heavy-handed lobbying for NATO membership for the Ukraine and Georgia; the installation of an antimissile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, allegedly to safeguard against a possible Iranian attack but understood by Russia to be directly targeted at it; and, of course, the Russo-Georgian conflict over control of South Ossetia in August 2008. The relations between the European Union and Russia have also been complicated by the Russo-Ukrainian "gas wars" of 2006 and then of 2009,[81] while London and Moscow seem to have fallen out for the long term due, among other things, to the Litvinenko affair.[82]

Facing growing isolation from the West, the Kremlin has implemented an offensive policy of multilateralism[83] with the great rising powers, in particular with China in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It has also become more prominent in new theaters, such as conservative countries of the Middle East (Saudi Arabia),[84] and in the former bastions of Soviet foreign policy—Moscow has for instance sought a reinforcement of military and economic cooperation with India, and the development of friendly relations with countries virulently critical of so-called American unipolarism, like Hugo Chavez's Venezuela. Putin thus succeeded in attracting growing support from numerous countries that approve of Russia's return to power and appreciate the calmness with which it opposes American interests.[85] For several years, Russian leaders have openly made known their disillusionment and frustration with their European and American partners and have drawn strength from the rise in world energy prices to claim they no longer need the West.[86] As of 2007, both Putin and Medvedev have even more insistently pressed home claims that Russia has outgrown its inferiority complex and now intends to be counted as a great power that is part of the global decision-making process.[87]

Western works devoted to Russian foreign policy often tend to classify opinion artificially in a binary schema—with pro-Westerners/democrats on one side, and imperialists/nationalists on the other—and use it to interpret the regime's economic and political evolution and foreign policy decisions according to one and the same schema. However, the ideological reality turns out to be a lot more complex. In his numerous works, Andrei Tsygankov has defined four main schools of foreign policy thinking: the *integrationists* emphasize Russia's similarity with the West, the *nationalist hardliners* define Russia in opposition to the West, as an "anti-West." However, both of these groups comprise small minorities and are excluded from decision-making instances. The ruling elites are actually either *balancers*—that is, endorsers of the view that Russia should be a geopolitically and culturally distinct entity with a mission

to stabilize relations between the East and the West—or *great-power normalizers*.[88] Today, the latter are in the dominant position and they insist that Moscow's foreign policy must remain essentially nonconfrontational: for them, to be a great power does not necessarily mean being anti-Western.[89] Despite these nuances, it seems that the mutual incomprehension between the West and Russia largely contributed to sharpening Russian resentment and to creating an ideological breeding ground favorable to the development of different forms of nationalism, whether it is expressed in the domain of foreign policy or in domestic issues.

Xenophobia: A Mass Phenomenon in Russia

The international, political, and economic context in which Russia has found itself for the last two decades has impacted heavily on Russian society, which is struggling to find its bearings and is expecting the authorities to provide it with a medium- and long-term stability. In this context of massive historical changes, social traumas are liable to provoke a crisis of political identity. This crisis manifests itself, among other ways, in the rise of xenophobia: a perceived need to identify enemies of the nation, a sense of national grievance and of oppression at the hands of ethnic groups has made it possible to formulate the general ill-being in terms accessible to everyone.[90]

Sociological studies on xenophobia carried out in Russia are rarely as detailed and as developed as those done in Western European countries. This difference can be explained as much by the lack of training and institutional framing caused by the long Soviet ban on sociology as by the current political context in which such analyses, today undertaken only by a few academic centers, are formulated. The information obtained under these conditions remains partial and is often formulated in an ambiguous manner, making it difficult to get a picture of the current state of xenophobia that is as precise as that available for Western Europe. This notwithstanding, all of the studies conducted show that only about a quarter of the Russian population regard the country's multinational character and the arrival of new migrants as unthreatening, while two-thirds think the contrary and are anxious about these phenomena in one way or another.

The Russian sociological approach to xenophobia is influenced by many intellectual traditions at loggerheads with one another. Schematically, there are two main opposing camps: the first is that of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, in particular the research

group on interethnic relations led by Leokadia Drobizheva. This group subscribes to a primordialist vision of collective identities and conducts surveys on questions of tolerance and enmity between ethnic groups construed as innate. The second camp comprises those who support a constructivist approach to the phenomenon. It includes the former Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTSIOM) founded by sociologist Yuri Levada (1930–2006) whose surveys were far broader in scope than the single issue of xenophobia; associates of the director of the Ethnology and Anthropology Institute of the Academy of Sciences, Valeri Tishkov, particularly the Network for Ethnic Monitoring and Early Warning (EAWARN); the Center for Independent Social Research in Saint Petersburg linked to Viktor Voronkov and Oksana Karpenko; and several independent researchers.[91]

The capacity to conduct independent sociological studies elicits anxiety among the authorities, as illustrated by the attacks carried out on VTSIOM in summer 2003, only some months before the legislative elections. The Kremlin took control of the center and forced the departure of the director and most of his fellow researchers, who ended up creating their own institute, the Levada Center. In summer 2007, a series of further attacks were orchestrated against the Network for Ethnic Monitoring and Early Warning, which was vehemently denounced by *Zavtra* and the Eurasianist Union of Youth. Having received Western financial backing, the Network came under attack for playing a negative role in resolving ethnic tensions in Russia: it was accused of exacerbating conflicts, of reinforcing anti-Russian sentiment among minorities, and of spying for Westerners.[92] In this way, sociological studies dealing with identity questions often find themselves beset by key political and ideological issues, making access to information and the analysis of these questions all the more difficult, even within Russian scientific milieus themselves.

Assessing Popular Support for Nationalist Radicalism

Surveys conducted in the 1990s, as well as after 2000, on the popularity of extra-parliamentary nationalist parties confirm that the latter are not well known in a society that is largely depoliticized. Indeed, of Russian citizens, less than half have heard of Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity, the best known of all. Between 3 percent and 5 percent of those surveyed sympathize with it and about 0.5 percent state that they are willing to support it.[93] Statistically, neither are the skinheads well

known: according to a survey conducted in December 2005, nearly two-thirds of respondents claimed not to know who they were, despite their being the best known of all the youth organizations, ahead of both the National Bolshevik Party and the propresidential movement (34 percent compared with 25 percent and 13 percent respectively).[94]

The situation is similar for the Movement Against Illegal Immigration: in a survey conducted in 2006 following the widely broadcast events in Kondopoga, Karelia, two-thirds of respondents claimed not to know of the movement, whereas equal but small numbers of people (7 percent) defined it either as a "patriotic Russian organization" or as a "pro-fascist extremist organization."[95] Kondopoga marked a turning point in the treatment of acts of racist violence in the Russian media. Following a brawl between people identified as Russian and Caucasian that led to the deaths of two people, riots involving more than 2,000 individuals were organized against Caucasians in the town. The Chechens were brutalized, their stores looted and burned, and inhabitants demanded their expulsion; the police force was slow to intervene, while the local authorities seemed pleased about the "cleansing" of their town.

If the level of support registered for movements that overtly proclaim their racism is meager, this in no way reveals an absence of massive popular xenophobia in Russia. This xenophobia is characterized by several features whose roots are well implanted in the Soviet past and that thus require an explanation of terminological and cultural matters. In the first place, racist violence is minimized in current Russia, as during the Soviet period when the phenomenon was officially nonexistent, and it does not elicit much empathy for victims. The ideological background of these violent acts is often denied: for example, murdering foreigners continues largely to be interpreted as criminal but not as racist.[96] As a result, the majority of people surveyed, agreeing with comments made in the media and organs of justice, regard skinheads either as youths who do not know what to do with themselves, or simply as delinquents (30 percent for each), whereas only a quarter think that these groups propagate nationalist and/or fascist ideas.[97] In addition, only a quarter of those surveyed said they feel sorry for victims of pogroms, while a third feel neither pity nor hatred, and a quarter consider the victims themselves to be the ones responsible for what has happened to them.[98]

In the second place, surveys that directly refer to violent acts (e.g., physical attacks, pogroms, assassinations) obtain largely negative reactions: the immense majority of those surveyed (about 80 percent) condemn such violence, not to mention references to Nazism and fascism, and, if the question is directly put to them, about half of

respondents regard themselves neither as bearers nor as victims of "ethnic hostility."[99] Hence, this xenophobia does not have any clear-cut ideological character: few of those surveyed would call themselves racist or xenophobic, in view of the negative connotations these terms carry. Instead, xenophobia has a situational and instrumental character and so goes unacknowledged in everyday life. A survey conducted in 2003 showed this paradox well: 81 percent of those surveyed considered nationalism to be something bad, but 53 percent of them approved of the "will to maintain the purity of the race" (*stremlenie k chistote rasy*). Apart from the size of this latter figure, what these numbers show is that about a third of those surveyed see the question of racial purity as unrelated to nationalism.[100]

In the third place, and most importantly, surveys bear out the fact that public opinion defines as a racist only one who employs historically fascist or Nazi symbolism, and not one who endorses the exclusivism of Russians or praises their national superiority.[101] This is why a large number of those surveyed regard the skinheads as patriots who are simply a bit more violent than others. In a survey conducted in 2006, 21 percent of the population stated that they actually regard the skinhead movement as active in "defending the interests of Russians."[102] The term "patriotic" then, seems to be used when one wants to qualify a partially legitimate movement, while "fascist" defines the reproved ones. This highlights the public's difficulty in identifying as racist a movement that neither uses fascist terminology nor displays its symbolism (swastikas, etc.).

Finally, universalist discourses that imply a rejection of discrimination in principle are poorly diffused in Russia. Soviet ideology asserted that the Union was driven by the friendship of peoples within its borders and by internationalism abroad, and that it knew no racial discourse. A "bourgeois ideology," racism was a phenomenon specific to capitalist countries, as evidenced by segregation in the United States and the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, the Soviet friendship of peoples was not based on the principle of the universality of man, but rather on the idea of a common historical destiny that brought together the peoples of the Eurasian space to coexist while respecting their national individuality. This vaunted tolerance is therefore not seen as an abstraction, but is assumed to be a historical fact unique to Russia. As Mischa Gabowitsch persuasively explained, "The anti-racist or anti-nationalist message [. . .] is never understood as a universalist message of total neutrality toward nationality and skin color: it is always meant to highlight the hospitality of the Russian (or Soviet) people, who welcome the outsiders *despite* their otherness."[103] Corollary to this discourse,

the institutionalization of ethnic communities in the Soviet administrative logic, visible even in passports, led to an ontologization of peoples. Its assumptions are not based on physical considerations, but on arguments of historical continuity, language, and ethnicity, which over time contributes to making national entities seem natural and legitimizes a primordial approach to the phenomenon of nationhood.

Marked with these contradictions, Russian society, as studies by the Levada Center demonstrate, has been saturated with the slogan "Russia for the Russians" (*Rossiia dlia russkikh*), formerly the sole province of skinhead circles and the extra-parliamentary parties. At the beginning of the 1990s, this slogan enjoyed the support of merely 15 percent of those surveyed, but it rapidly reached a figure of 43 percent in 1998 and 59 percent in 2004. In the first semester of 2007, a further survey was conducted to investigate the content of this broadly imprecise claim. Asked what is to be understood by the expression "Russia for the Russians," 47 percent of those asked replied state support for Russian culture; 31 percent, reducing numbers of foreigners in the country; and 25 percent, giving official preference to ethnic Russians for important positions.[104] Moreover, 14 percent of interviewees thought it is time to implement this idea "without limits," and 41 percent wished it would be put into practice "within reasonable limits."[105] It is interesting to note that those who do not support this slogan and treat it as fascist have been in steady decline since 1998 (going from 32 to 23 percent). However, the slogan remains too vague to know what is to be understood by the term "Russian": for some it refers to an ethnic definition of Russianness that excludes all national minorities, while others define it as equivalent to a Russian citizen as opposed to migrants. An ethnicization of the term "Russian" nevertheless seems to be on the rise: 51 percent of those surveyed feel it necessary to have a law defining the specific status of the Russian people as the eponymous people of Russia, whereas in only a third did this idea elicit opposition.[106]

A Sociological Given on the Rise

There are no sociological surveys on xenophobia for the Soviet period, but testimonies from the time all seem to indicate that it was an important element in Soviet public life, particularly in the self-identification of individuals, and in state policy toward all national groups. In 1989, a first survey revealed that xenophobic sentiments were prevalent in 20 percent of the Soviet population, but the figure was much higher in

the conflict zones of the Caucasus and Central Asia.[107] At that time, the level of xenophobia in the Russian Federation was lower than the overall average for all the republics, with half of the RSFSR's citizens viewing assertions of ethnic enmity negatively. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, the available statistics showed that individuals belonging to national minorities, and in particular to the peoples of the Caucasus and the Volga-Ural region, seemed more unsatisfied with what in Russian are called "interethnic relations" (*mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia*) than did those persons who identified themselves as Russian.[108]

However, this situation has quickly reversed: since 1993–1995, xenophobic convictions have become more pronounced among so-called ethnic Russians than among the national minorities who see themselves as its victims. Xenophobia increased in jumps, in particular toward the West, then it lessened in 1996–1998, before returning brutally in 1999, in the wake of the financial crisis and the start of the second war in Chechnya.[109] It reached a new peak in 2002: during this year only one-quarter of the population could be classified as tolerant. Subsequently, xenophobia has continued to increase slowly but regularly: since 2003–2004 all conducted surveys show that about two-thirds of the Russian population express some kind of ethnic phobia, albeit to varying degrees of radicality and toward various objects.[110] Only anti-Semitism appears to have reduced, by virtue of the proliferation of new enemies, although more than a third of those interrogated would still like "restrictions to be placed on the number of Jews in the cultural and political spheres."[111]

The dominant form of xenophobia at the start of the 1990s was anti-Chechen sentiment. This sentiment is rooted in old stereotypes stemming from the Caucasian wars of the nineteenth century, but current conflicts have recently intensified it: for every terrorist act committed in Central Russia or the North Caucasus (explosions at marketplaces, in trains, and at metro stations, violent physical attacks against the police forces, etc.), polls record a rise in xenophobia. Hostage takings are especially badly received: those in Budennovsk in June 1995 and in Kizliar-Pervomaiskoe in January 1996, but even more so those at the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in 2002 and at the school in Beslan in 2004, worked as a spur to the assimilation of Chechens to terrorists. People surveyed no longer distinguish between the multiple actors involved in the conflict—the civil population, independentists, or Islamists come to promote international jihad—as they also seem quite unaware of Moscow's role in aggravating the conflict.[112] Surveys designed to ascertain how Russians feel about the state of their relations to various other

peoples thus reveal that Chechens are systematically ranked the worst, far below other post-Soviet populations, Africans, or Jews.[113]

In recent years, this anti-Chechen sentiment has turned into a sort of generalized "Caucasophobia" (*kavkazofobiia*): taken as a uniform category, "Caucasians" are ranked just behind Chechens. What this all-encompassing term permits is an effacement of the dissociation between Russian citizens (Chechens, Dagestanis, Balkars, etc.) and citizens of independent states of the South Caucasus (Azeris), and thus construes the former as migrants and foreigners. Moreover, no longer is there any existing contrast, as there was in the nineteenth century, between peoples of Christian tradition (Armenians and Georgians) and populations of Muslim tradition.[114] On top of the construction of this Caucasian grouping, other terms are used with the added effect of reifying all enemies into one large group without distinction: "southerners" (*iuzhane*), "shepherds" (*chabany*), "blacks" (*chernye*, *chernokozhie*), and so forth. Thus, when prices rise at the markets, when the media echo a conflict between mafia groups or tensions between Moscow and one of the post-Soviet republics, surveys record an increase in xenophobia. The result is that the "blacks," whether they be Caucasians, Central Asians, Chinese, or Africans, become victims of harassment by the skinheads, but also by the security organs or the local authorities, in particular in the capital.[115]

This xenophobia is not directed only at foreigners in the legal sense of the term, but equally at the country's national minorities. Thus, in 2004, nearly half of those surveyed (47 percent) considered that "the national minorities have too much power in the country."[116] This term, "national minority," nonetheless remains obscure and actually implies the Caucasian peoples. When the same question is formulated in relation to the Tatars, the Yakuts, or the Buriats, the results are different and less critical. In point of fact, in surveys that ask people to rank other peoples in terms of their "social distance" to Russians, peoples from the Volga-Ural region and from Siberia are ranked just behind so-called brother peoples, that is, the Ukrainians and Belorussians, and do not elicit negative reactions.[117] Hence, the populations of the Caucasus are not perceived as Russian citizens but rather as foreigners in terms of identity, thereby showing that in the imaginary of many Russians the Caucasus no longer forms part of the identity of the Federation.

These past years have also witnessed the emergence of a new reified category, that of Muslims (*musul'mane*). Until recently, Islamophobia was not common in Russia: a centuries-long cohabitation with Muslim populations, a positive vision of Russia's supposed imperial mission,

and an underscoring of ethnic rather than religious belonging, all rendered fear of Islam virtually inoperative. But since the beginning of 2000, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has been rapidly developing. The role that the ruling powers have played in this phenomenon seems undeniable: whereas during the first war in Chechnya Russian authorities denounced Chechen combatants as separatists, since the second war they have labeled them Islamists. This change in direction became even more marked in the discourse of the authorities and that of the media following the events of September 11, 2001. Vladimir Putin felt warranted to employ U.S. rhetoric about the war on terror and to present Russia as a victim of international Islamist terrorism.[118] Subsequent to this, the so-called Wahhabite threat has become a key point of fixation, working to assimilate all Caucasians, indeed all the Russian Muslims, into one large reified group of fundamentalists. The acclaim that Samuel Huntington's clash-of-civilizations thesis has known in Russia has no doubt facilitated the process.[119]

The media play a central, indeed matricial, role in constructing all of these various essentialized entities and positing them as the enemies of the Russian people. Since 2001, several associations for the defense of human rights, such as the SOVA Center, the Helsinki Group Moscow, the Funds of Defense of Glasnost, Panorama, and the Center for the Defense of Democracy and Human Rights, have conducted monitoring of hate speech in which they have systematically examined a large number of both regional and federal dailies and weeklies, from official governmental issues to popular tabloids. Heading the hate-speech list is the *Moskovskii Komsomolets* (The Moscow Komsomolets), followed by *Moskovskaia Pravda* (The Truth of Moscow), *Argumenty i fakty* (Arguments and Facts), and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* (The Komsomol Truth),[120] although during the events in Kondopoga in 2006 all the Russian media showed an increase in racist speech.[121] Defamatory remarks, whether they are discreetly implied or legally culpable, are most commonly aimed at Chechens, Caucasians, and Tajiks, followed by the Chinese and the blacks. Plays on language, which are as a rule multiform and endless, and which enable xenophobia to be expressed without legal sanction, are also developed via the media fashion of scandal stories, which fill the newspapers as they do television programs.

Many linguistic subtleties contribute to popularizing the above-mentioned reified entities: generalizations are made by linking a deprecatory term to a national adjective ("Chechen bandits," "Dagestani fundamentalists"); equivalences are rendered between the merely illegal (a person not having registered his or her place of residence with the

appropriate authorities), mafia activities, and the criminal; contrasts are recurrently made between an "us" and "them"; and metaphors are used, such as "indigenous population" (*korennoe naselenie*) or the "behavior" (*povedeniia*), understood to be inappropriate, of migrants.[122] Finally, one should also mention the current use of a discourse, very prominent in Soviet times and widespread in post-Soviet space, on the relationship between the "master of the house" and "guests" (*khoziain/gost'*): the use of house, as metaphor of the nation, implies that the guests, or occupants, must recognize that the landlord, who is at home, takes precedence when it comes to deciding cultural and social rules, and that he only accepts the guests out of his own goodwill. The importance granted to this opposition "master of the house/guest" is based on a widespread rejection of miscegenation in private life: even when those surveyed say they are not opposed to migrants coming, they still exclude the possibility of someone close to them marrying someone defined as foreign, and would not wish migrants to settle in their building or suburb.[123] Mixophobia (fear of miscegenation) is thus even more obviously prevalent than xenophobia (fear of the other).

Xenophobia in Political and Social Milieus

Xenophobic feelings have not only increased quantitatively throughout Russia, they also affect an increasingly wide range of social and political milieus. At the beginning of the 1990s, xenophobia could be seen to be closely correlated to voting patterns, but lately this link has disappeared: as of 2000, no longer is there any direct relation between expressions of xenophobia and political sympathies. This analysis bears out the decline of political competition in Russia, not to mention the attempt by the presidential party to capture and exploit the dissemination of xenophobic sentiments throughout all layers of society.

At the Duma elections in December 1993, those who voted for Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR had the highest scores on xenophobia, while Communist sympathizers and supporters of the democratic party Yabloko scored relatively low, and voters for the presidential party Choice of Russia were average. The correlation of political vote and xenophobia seemed thus to correspond to the ideological sensibility of electors. However, after the Duma elections of December 1995, research showed a sudden increase in xenophobia in all political groups, particularly within the Communist Party and Yabloko, the two parties that previously had the lowest scores.[124] In 1996, Communist voters displayed

levels of xenophobia 1.5 times higher than that of liberal and centrist parties voters, but in the following years the difference between them became negligible.[125] At the 1999 legislative elections, this globalizing tendency continued to grow: while the LDPR remained ahead of them statistically, the other parties, regardless of their ideological orientation, all tended to attract a similar—and elevated—number of xenophobic voters. At the 2003 elections, all four parties seated at the Duma experienced an increase of ethnic phobia among their supporters, although the number of voters for United Russia and the CPRF claiming to be internationalist also increased. What this suggests is some form of nationalist/antinationalist polarization, but one in which the former exceeds the latter by a wide margin.[126]

Studies that approach the question of xenophobia by looking at how it affects different social strata confirm that it is widespread and occurs independently of the social situation of the citizens. The common conception is that the poorest or most pauperized milieus are most likely to express xenophobic tendencies, construed as a form of releasing social tension and of symbolic compensation. It seems, though, that this approach is valid only for the most extremist movements. The social base of Russian National Unity in the 1990s and of the skinhead movement in the 2000s assuredly is the youth living in small and middle-sized towns, whose secondary or specialized education made finding work difficult. And persons from the same social milieu are also present, albeit slightly older, in the LDPR and Communist Party: while voters of the former live in the suburbs of small to medium-size towns located in regions whose economies are in crisis and dependent on a single industry, the latter recruits from among rural milieus and the elderly, groups that recorded the highest rates of xenophobia in the first half of the 1990s.[127]

But the hypothesis of an existing correlation between xenophobia and pauperization is valid only for the most radical parties and for the years immediately following the disappearance of the USSR. Surveys conducted by the Levada Center during the second half of the 1990s soon proved the correlation invalid: xenophobia had increased in a parallel manner in all social strata, and with particular rapidity in those that were previously quite resistant to it, that is to say strata made up of citizens with a higher education, in a tertiary-sector job, living in big cities, and having regular cultural activity—businesspeople, private sector employees, senior executives in administration, and the intelligentsia.[128] From the start of the 2000s, the richest and most cultivated social milieus have statistically shown themselves to be as xenophobic as the pauperized

milieus; indeed they surpass them insofar as they are more politically active than the latter, who are largely depoliticized. The slogan "Russia for the Russians" is therefore defended by equal numbers of those who support Russia going its own specific way and of former liberals, who defended economic reforms in the 1990s and are beneficiaries of the market economy.[129]

Further, owing to the greater use of the term "Rossian" (*rossiian*) as opposed to "Russian" (*russkii*) for self-identification, it would appear that privileged milieus tend to distinguish between a civic identity and an ethnic identity, where the latter is dominant among elderly persons, rural milieus, and individuals without professional qualification. However, here again, this apparent difference in self-definition does not refer back to a difference in the degree of nationalism but only to the reprise of the politically correct discourse about the identity of the Russian Federation. Indeed, those surveyed who define themselves as Russian citizens (*rossiane*) have exactly the same vision of Russia as those who present themselves as simply Russian (*russkii*): more than 50 percent think that ethnic Russians ought to have preeminence over the other peoples of Russia; more than 60 percent believe that ethnic Russians have worse living conditions than other peoples in Russia; and 80 percent state that ethnic Russians suffer from the violence inflicted upon them by Caucasians.[130] Thus, once again, the key xenophobic themes reveal a large social consensus that pays no heed to political orientation, social class, level of education, income, or ability to appropriate the official discourse on the nation.

While social, political, and cultural criteria do not permit us to differentiate between those milieus prone and those resistant to xenophobia, age still seems to be a decisive factor, but in a way that is contrary to the case in the countries of Western Europe. Here again, all the surveys underscore the same evolution, which corresponds to the data detailed above. In the first half of the 1990s, levels of xenophobia were reported to be lowest among the youth (less than 25 years), considered the class most open to change and to Western influence. In the second half of the decade, this tendency underwent a reversal that has only increased in magnitude: since the year 2000, all surveys consistently show that youths have the highest rates of xenophobia, even ahead of elderly persons, the group formerly considered to be most nostalgic for the autocracy of the previous system.[131]

Youth has the highest level of support for the "Russia for the Russians" slogan, the greatest desire to ensure the preeminence of ethnic Russians in the country, to restrict immigration, and thinks that migrants

are responsible for the violence committed against them. A survey conducted in 2003 among students living in the capital confirms this general tendency: a majority of respondents asserted that non-Russians cannot be considered Muscovites even if born in Moscow. They claimed to be against the social competition posed as much by Russians from other regions coming to study in the capital as by migrants coming to fill positions at the bottom of the social ladder. According to this survey, 88 percent of the Muscovite students surveyed claimed that there are too many ethnic groups in Moscow, and more than 40 percent that ethnic Russians no longer feel at home in their own country.[132]

Xenophobia among youths happens not only to be more widespread, it is also more radical. Several surveys show that among teenagers and young adults, criteria of identification are more marked by notions of race and blood. A survey by the Public Opinion Foundation has found that, since 1995, 16- to 25-year-olds are more likely to define Russianness in terms of blood rather than of culture.[133] In 1999, another study conducted in schools found that 20 percent of students from lower-class backgrounds, still barely politicized, claimed that they were racists, a traditionally radical and little-used term, and that they were opposed to mixed marriages.[134] In a study conducted in 2005, V. D. Soloviev, an expert from the Gorbachev Foundation, reported that discourses about the white race and about solidarity with Slavic brothers were very much in fashion among students.[135] In 2002, only a third of the Moscow youths surveyed were interested in the migrant issue, but soon afterward they became much more politicized in relation to it, since in 2005 two-thirds of them showed concern about it and expressed support for the slogan "Moscow for the Muscovites."[136] Since the turn of the decade similar attitudes have also been evident in university student milieus.[137] The developing skinhead phenomenon in Russia thus constitutes only the tip of a still poorly defined iceberg, that of the nationalist radicality of the youth.

Economic and Symbolic Issues of Xenophobic Sensibilities

As in other parts of the world, sociological studies conducted in Russia confirm the importance of economic issues to the unprecedented rise in xenophobia. At the start of the 1990s, xenophobia was mostly to be found in the so-called peripheral milieus: the pauperized classes that had no access to the new wealth, and rural towns in total economic meltdown. Today, however, xenophobia is more prevalent in urban milieus,

in which only 15 percent of the population say they are happy about the presence of migrants.[138] The dissatisfaction is clearly dominated by questions of material well-being and social advancement: the notion that ethnic Russians are poorer than the other nationalities of the country is widespread.[139] These conflicts express themselves symbolically in the marketplace, in keeping with the old Soviet tradition of accusing Caucasians of speculating on the price of basic foodstuffs. A survey conducted right after the Tsaritsyno pogrom at the end of 2001 showed that less than 10 percent of those surveyed approved of the presence of migrants at bazaars, while 72 percent opposed it.[140] Another survey conducted in 2006, in the middle of a polemic over restrictions on foreigners in small business, confirmed that a majority of those surveyed (63 percent) believe that Caucasians deliberately hinder ethnic Russians from trading.[141]

As regards the population's expectations, sociological studies focusing on state migration policy adduce unambiguous responses. A large majority (between 60 and 70 percent) of those surveyed would like migration to be limited by legislation and for illegals to be deported. This figure has been steadily increasing since 2002 and concerns all nationalities, from Caucasians and Central Asians to the Chinese and Vietnamese.[142] Another important percentage of people (between 40 and 50 percent) would like to see Caucasians prohibited from certain towns or regions, or confined to living in their own eponymous republic. The figures continue to be particularly high in Moscow: two-thirds of those surveyed, irrespective of how the question is formulated, would like to have fewer Caucasians in the capital and restrictive measures to be taken against them. Another survey by the Levada Center conducted at the end of 2006 confirmed that those who approve of a partial prohibition on migrants at markets are also happy with their material situation, while the poorest worry that the evacuation of migrants would result in an increase in prices.[143]

The benefits brought by cheap and menial labor (servants, cleaning ladies, baby-sitters, home repairers, etc.) are almost never mentioned, or, when they are, they are used to justify the necessity of having an enslaved population reserved for the insecure jobs that no Russian would accept (construction workers, garbage collectors, checkout assistants, janitors, etc.). Hence, less than 10 percent of those surveyed recognized that Russia has any need for migrants, on a temporary or a permanent basis, in order to respond to the economic demands.[144] The most xenophobic professions are often those that are not in competition with migrants, such as militias, military personnel, public administration, and

intelligentsia.[145] Feelings of social competition are therefore not the only explanation respondents give when asked why there is an increase in xenophobia. In fact, all the surveys confirm that more and more often xenophobia is grounded not in the economic success of migrants but in their "non-compliance with the traditions of the Russian people," in their misplaced "behavior," their desire to "humiliate" Russians, and so on.

In 2006, in a survey by the Levada Center, people no longer justified the increase in Russian nationalism by reference to terrorist acts (this explanation went down from 32 percent in 2004 to 16 percent in 2006) but by saying that migrants do not respect Russian national traditions (the figure is up from 20 to 30 percent).[146] Another survey conducted the same year supports this analysis: 44 percent of those surveyed thought that migrants were responsible for the xenophobia they provoked because they conduct themselves in a way that is disrespectful to Russians. Of Muscovite students, 40 percent concur with the idea that skinhead attacks are "normal reactions" from citizens in response to the terrorist acts perpetrated in the country.[147] Another survey conducted in 2006 raised the question in a direct manner and obtained an even straighter response: 63 percent of the population responded positively to the question "Are you of the mind that the negative attitude toward migrants of the CIS can be partly explained by their own behavior?"[148] This opinion was reinforced by the events in Kondopoga, at a time when the idea spread far and wide that the direct causes of the pogrom were the behavior of Caucasians and their will to humiliate Russians.

Such a perception, by definition imprecise and essentialist, is rooted in an old discourse on the kind character of the Russian people, itself the would-be victim of its own hospitality to other peoples. The conviction, voiced in Soviet times that the friendship of peoples worked to the detriment of, and only of, the Russians, who alone were obliged to efface their national sentiment while that of other peoples was officially exalted, is a commonplace of sociological surveys about xenophobia and national feeling.[149] This attitude partially explains what sociologist Lev Gudkov called a "form of consolidation by the negative" and is a corollary of the feelings of apathy, atomization, and passivity that he thinks prevail in Russian society.[150] These elements will come up repeatedly throughout the course of this study and form at least part of the explanatory basis for the place of nationalism in Russian political life.

CHAPTER TWO

Nationalism as Opposition: The Extra-parliamentary Camp

In this chapter I start out from the idea that a part of Russian nationalism, usually defined as radical nationalism, ultranationalism, the extreme right, extremism, and so forth, can be more rigorously defined as extra-parliamentary. All attempts to classify these nationalist movements according to doctrine seem to me to be doomed to failure. While it is possible to specify the singularity of each movement through its unique combination of ideological elements and the political trajectory of its leader over the last 20 years, it is difficult, if not impossible, to place them systematically using global criteria such as right/left or ethnonationalism/imperialism. In theory all the conceptual combinations are possible, which means that neither the choice of political regime (monarchism or republicanism), the conception of nationhood (culturalist or racialist), nor the special focus or otherwise on the Jewish question or on religious beliefs (Orthodox, neopagan, or indifferent) enable any meaningful classification. Moreover, the development of new, less ideological forms of radicality with more developed social bases has slowly rendered such classifications inappropriate, signaling a new phase in the evolution of extra-parliamentary politics in Russia. Finally, some political parties and politicians in power espouse doctrines that are just as radical as those evoked here, but they have an acquired legitimacy that enables them to escape being classified as extremists.

It therefore seems to me more justified to define this nationalism by its place on the contemporary Russian political spectrum, that is to say as extra-parliamentarism: all of these movements refuse to get involved in democratic representation; they never or almost never stand for elections;

they have no presence in the Duma; and they exult in street action. In Russia in the 1990s the term "patriotic camp" (*patrioticheskii lager'*) was widely used to describe these groups. However, by encompassing the extra-parliamentary parties as much as parliamentary forces like the Communist Party, this term does not seem really significant for an academic analysis. Moreover, in this chapter the term "party" has to be understood in its nonjuridical sense; Russian legislation has been made particularly restrictive in relation to the registration of political forces, and none of the parties dealt with here have that status: they are either illegal, registered as an association, or registered as a social movement. It is also worth recalling that the Kremlin's desire to eliminate uncontrolled opposition and independent webs of associations has resulted in increasingly vague legislation; the fight against extremism has actually become the presidential power's main argument for the reduction of public liberties. The terminological issues involved in defining this extra-parliamentary nationalism are therefore important because they may well entail legal consequences.

The So-called Radical Right: A Multifaceted Reality

From Soviet times till now the extra-parliamentary camp has been split, unable to transcend the multiple doctrinal disputes and personal conflicts dividing its key charismatic figures.[1] Yet, in spite of or perhaps because of these internal difficulties, its history is one of a long quest for reconciliation: since perestroika, it has almost exclusively been animated by the search for a path to unification, by attempts to found unifying parties and to construct consensual doctrines.[2] It has experienced many difficulties in dealing with the violent turning points of the Russian political scene in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s, from the disappearance of the USSR and the bloody events of autumn 1993 to Vladimir Putin's arrival in power and the war with Georgia in August 2008. If the ideal goal of unity remains unattainable, a symbolic breakthrough occurred with both the 2002 birth of the Movement Against Illegal Immigration and the 2005 launching of the Russian Marches. Even if these two events ultimately did not have the hoped-for reconciliatory impact, the migrantophobia presently dominating the country has paved the way for a generation of young nationalist leaders who have little time for their predecessors' debates over doctrine and have consciously latched onto a racism that is "self-evident," that does not require high-level ideological articulation.

The First Institutions of Post-Soviet Reconciliation

From the moment of Russia's independence, the key figures of the extra-parliamentary camp have been in search of structures capable of unifying them beyond their doctrinal differences. In the midst of trying to overcome internal ideological conflict, three events took place that led to fundamental changes in their worldview: the failed conservative putsch of August 1991; the banning of the CPSU; and the Soviet Union's dissolution in December of the same year. Built on the ruins of the CPSU, several Communist currents emerged in an attempt to link together Marxist principles and Russian nationalism: this was the case, for example, of the Party of Bolsheviks founded by Nina Andreeva as well as of the Communist Workers' Party of Russia led by Albert Makashov, Viktor Anpilov, and Viktor Tiulkin. When the liberal reforms instigated by Egor Gaidar's government led to brutal social and economic changes, the nationalists attempted many times to gather their forces into a single institution capable of reconciling movements on the extreme right and the extreme left of the political spectrum. This "red-brown" coalition was immediately labeled a "fascist threat" and besieged by media hype in Western Europe as well as in Russia itself. This served as a means of furthering the Kremlin's aims to portray its political and economic commitments as the country's only realistic path.

Of the numerous formations in the "red-brown" coalition, only two institutions enjoyed any real success. First, the Russian National Assembly, which emerged in February 1992, included among its most recognized members former KGB general Alexander Sterligov, who was the assistant of the then Russian vice president Alexander Rutskoi; the Communists Gennadi Ziuganov and Albert Makashov; "village prose" writer Valentin Rasputin; and the leader of Russian National Unity, Alexander Barkashov.[3] Second came the Front for National Salvation, which was founded in October 1992. It regrouped Communists such as Viktor Anpilov and, once more, Gennadi Ziuganov, but also Orthodox monarchists such as Igor Shafarevich, and Nikolai Lysenko's National Republican Party, as well as more liberal figures like the leader of the Democratic Constitutional Party Mikhail Astafiev and even former dissident Vladimir Osipov,[4] who was then president of the Union of Christian Rebirth.[5] At this time, the nationalist movement set out on its search for an ideology of reconciliation: General Alexander Lebed issued a call for a major national reconciliation of Sovietophile and Sovietophobe nationalists through a proposal to simultaneously inhume Nicholas II and Lenin.[6]

In this atmosphere of reconciliation, the monarchist currents, whose hour of glory came in the latter years of perestroika, were swiftly marginalized and reduced to no more than a minority within a minority. Examples here include Alexander Shtilmark's Black Hundred, the Union of the Russian People, and the Pan-Russian Party of the Monarchic Center, which sought to reconcile the supporters of a councilary monarchy (where the Tsar is elected by a council) and the legitimist defenders of Great Prince Kirill Vladimirovich Romanov. This party tried to rebuild in 1998 as the Party of Orthodox Rebirth but then disappeared from the political scene.[7] The currents issuing from Pamyat (Memory), a notorious anti-Semitic organization that unified all the diverse expressions of Russian nationalism in the first half of the 1980s and during perestroika, were similarly unsuccessful: Dmitri Vasiliev's National Patriotic Front, which endorsed a form of Orthodox fundamentalism, had no social foothold, while the Pamyat of its neopagan competitor, Valeri Emelianov, also remained fairly inactive before disappearing altogether with the death of its leader in 1999. All these monarchist currents portrayed themselves as spiritual heirs of nationalist movements from the early twentieth century and the interwar emigration. However, in spite of the high account in which this heritage is held, Republican convictions and a consensual perception of the Soviet experience managed to hold sway over the immense majority of the extra-parliamentary camp.

The Distribution of the Ideological Field in the 1990s

The bloody events of autumn 1993 triggered a radicalization of the extra-parliamentary camp: the Kremlin's use of violence against a defiantly oppositional parliament crystallized the extra-parliamentary nationalists' will to organize themselves better in a bid to resist liberal reforms. Nevertheless, once again, they were unable to overcome their internal conflicts, which were made more acute by their opposed stances at this time of major crisis: while Gennadi Ziuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovski, and Nikolai Lysenko did not directly participate in the parliament's defense, others like Albert Makashov, Viktor Anpilov, Alexander Barkashov, and Sergei Baburin fought at the sides of insurgents and therefore are still well reputed in so-called radical movements. Though each current tried to find itself a specific and stable social niche, the extra-parliamentary camp was still subject to extreme splintering: in 1995 the Panorama association counted over a hundred organizations it classified as "nationalist."[8]

Among the parties that enjoyed a certain notoriety at the time, the National Republican Party of Russia led by Nikolai Lysenko, a former epizoologist, was one of the first to leave behind Pamyat's conservative rhetoric and to ask its partisans to resign themselves to the Soviet Union's collapse. Directly inspired by the positions of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, he called for the birth of a state that would encompass Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus, and the North of Kazakhstan. With around 3,000 members, the party established a Russian National Legion so it could send militias into conflict zones such as Transnistria and South Ossetia.[9] In the December 1993 elections, Lysenko succeeded in getting elected as an independent candidate in a small town close to Saratov, but suffered a major schism the following year when Yuri Beliaev, a former militiaman who held more anti-Semitic and neopagan views, left to found his own movement. In 1995, Lysenko entered the media spotlight for tearing a cross from the neck of celebrated priest and former dissident Gleb Yakunin. Arrested in 1996, he was freed the following year, but in 1998 his party was refused re-registration by the Ministry of Justice. Lysenko then forged ties with Baburin and briefly figured as a candidate on the list of the latter's Russian Pan-National Union.[10]

Among the other radical movements, the People's National Party, founded in 1994 by Alexander Ivanov-Sukharevski, a film director by training, and Aleksei Shiropaev, was also quick to gain attention. Inspired by Italian fascism, the party portrayed itself as a defender of Orthodoxy with contacts in the Moscow Patriarchate and backing from Cossack movements. This Orthodox appearance led former dissident Vladimir Osipov to join the movement only to quit it in 1995. The party promulgated an ideology it called "Russism" (*russizm*), which was a combination of populism, racial and anti-Semitic mysticism, national-ecologism, Orthodoxy, and monarchist nostalgia.[11] Even though it had only a few thousand members, it influenced the extra-parliamentary scene in Russia through well-known newspapers such as *Ia–russkii* (I am Russian), *Nasledie predkov* (The Heritage of Ancestors, which is directly inspired by its Nazi forerunner, the Ahnenerbe Stiftung), and *Era Rossii* (the Era of Russia). However, the party soon experienced legal problems for inciting interethnic hatred and managed to have only a few members elected in the 1995 local elections. Its newspaper *Ia–russkii* was eventually banned in 1999 and Ivanov-Sukharevski was sentenced to several months in prison. After being freed, he tried to relaunch his party's activities, but with little success. Wounded in 2003, he fell from his place in the extra-parliamentary nationalist scene but has remained an important figure in circles close to the Russian Writer's Union as well as in certain

skinhead groups. Today the party's Web site is full of unambiguously neo-Nazi imagery calling for the double worship of Nicholas II and Adolf Hitler. Ivanov-Sukharevski also participates in the activities of a racist group called "White World" (*Belyi mir*).[12]

The third largest institution, the Russian National Union, was created in 1993 by Aleksei Vdovin and Konstantin Kasimovski. A paramilitary organization that made known its readiness for violent action, it was one of the most radical parties in its views on racial theories and its rehabilitation of Hitler.[13] It combined references to the monarchy, the Black Hundred, and to Orthodoxy but also appealed to a non-Marxist kind of socialism and the restoration of a "pagan order." It drew attention to itself by committing violent acts against religious groups it considered to be sects. The movement waned in 1997 first due to Vdovin's departure and then to the Ministry of Justice's refusal to authorize the publication of its newspaper, *Shturmovik* (The Storm Trooper). In 1998, Kasimovski tried to launch the National Front along with neopagan leader Ilia Lazarenko, and Andrei Saveliev, who at the time led a small group called the Gold Lion, but without any success. Last, another figure who turned out to be important for the crystallization of the extra-parliamentary nationalist camp in the 1990s was Viktor Korchagin: he was the founder of the Russian Party in 1991, and even though he left it in 1996, he has continued to occupy a notorious position through his numerous publications, including *The Catechism of a Jew in the USSR*, the newspaper *Russkie vedomosti* (The Russian Times), and the almanac *Rusich* (The Russian). Sentenced for anti-Semitic remarks in 2004 and released from prison in 2005, he is considered as a cult figure among some so-called capitalist neopagan movements.[14]

The legislative elections of December 1995 and the presidential elections of March 1996 confirmed once more the extra-parliamentary camp's severe splintering and inability to make uniform ideological choices. Indeed, not one member of these parties managed to gain a seat in the Second Duma. Nikolai Lysenko's failed bid for reelection lost the nationalists a deputy seat. Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity obtained only one deputy seat in the regional assembly and did not field a list of candidates at the legislative elections, declaring it was preparing its supporters not for the democratic system issuing from the West but for civil war and ideological entryism.[15] The extra-parliamentary camp proceeded in fragmented fashion at the presidential elections of March 1996. Some, such as Yuri Beliaev's new party backed a call to support the candidacy of Gennadi Ziuganov, while others, such as Dmitri Vasiliev's Pamyat, and Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity (Barkashov

ran in the first round, but without any success) mobilized in favor of Boris Yeltsin, arguing for the need to support the authorities in their war in Chechnya.

The Leading Movements of Political Radicalism: The RNU and the NBP

In the kaleidoscope of extra-parliamentary nationalist currents, two major parties left their influence on the 1990s due as much to the relative sophistication of their doctrines as to the number of their members. These were Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity (RNU) and Eduard Limonov's National Bolshevik Party (NBP). They embodied the two main ideological orientations of the extra-parliamentary camp that we shall be dealing with from hereon in: the first combines allusions to Italian fascism and German Nazism, espouses racist ideas, and has a conservative vision of society; the second is inspired by National Bolshevism, bases itself on references that are as nationalist as they are socialist, and presents itself as inherently revolutionary.[16]

Russian National Unity was one of the first parties to form after Pamyat's slump. Barkashov joined the Pamyat movement in 1985 and was one of its principal figures together with Dmitri Vasiliev.[17] Nevertheless, in March 1990, the two men went their separate ways. Barkashov rejected Pamyat's Orthodox and Tsarist nostalgia and denounced its "brasserie patriotism" (*kvasnoi patriotizm*). His own movement borrows many of its symbols from Nazism—the swastika; the Hitler salute; the paramilitary uniforms for members—and makes multiple references to the program of the National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei (NSDAP), including to a mixed economy and eugenic theories. Russian National Unity's difference with respect to other extra-parliamentary parties resided in its clearly racist definition of the Russian nation, as illustrated in its handbook *The ABC of a Russian Nationalist,* which Barkashov published in 1992. The party considered linguistic and religious elements to have little relevance compared to blood filiation; it thought the interests of the nation superior to those of the state, which it wanted to become an ethnic entity at the service of a titular Russian people; and it called for the banning of mixed marriages. The party espoused its belief in an anti-Russian world cosmopolitan plot, refused to condemn Christianity while cultivating a neopagan innuendo, and tried to demonstrate Christ's Aryanness.[18]

The success of Russian National Unity, whose slogan "One Nation, One People, One State" was widespread at the time, is largely due to the October 1993 conflict. During the combat, the RNU went on patrol at the sides of insurgent parliamentarians and controlled entry to the Supreme Soviet. Its militias were integrated into those troops of the Defense Ministry that remained loyal to the parliament. Two of its members were killed, the movement was temporarily banned, and Barkashov was forced to evade the police for many months before finally being arrested and imprisoned. When he was set free in February 1994, his prestige within the extra-parliamentary nationalist movement was at its apogee, buoyed by the participation of RNU volunteers in the conflicts in Transnistria and South Ossetia. Russian National Unity was considered at the time to be the foremost radical nationalist organization and the best organized: it included 350 regional organizations, of which 100 were officially registered, making it the fourth-largest party in the country after the Communist Party, the presidential party Democratic Choice of Russia, and Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR.[19] Its newspaper *Russkii poriadok* (Russian Order) had a circulation of several tens of thousands and dominated the nationalist media market along with a weekly newspaper *Den'* (Today), which was renamed *Zavtra* (Tomorrow) after a ban was placed on it in October 1993. In some regions in Russia, local sections of the RNU were registered as sporting clubs or centers for military preparation whose members went on patrol alongside state militias.

From 1993 to 1996, the RNU, which was then at its peak, portrayed itself not only as a political party, but also as a mass movement ready to defend Russian interests against hostile elements. It had a considerable territorial network and was particularly strong in the Stavropol and Krasnodar regions. Its internal structure was very centralized and hierarchized: membership in the movement involved several levels that could be entered only after intensive training. Once training was successfully completed, the newly trained partisans (*soratniki*) led small groups of about ten persons that were in turn integrated within a larger pyramidal structure. The party offered members the chance either to engage in a volunteer militia, itself often involved in mafia business, or to work with the security forces of businessmen close to the party. RNU was specialized in paramilitary training (handling of weapons, martial arts, hand-to-hand combat, parachute jumping) and had training camps in several regions throughout Russia, which were well-equipped with all-terrain vehicles, trucks, boats, weapons supplies, and so on. A large number of its members worked in the security organs, and it also

recruited street kids to swell its ranks. During the 1990s, RNU ostensibly had between 50,000 and 200,000 supporters as well as the implicit support of approximately 10 percent of the population.[20] The party militia incited several racist incidents and appeared to have infiltrated certain key ministries, such as the Ministry of the Interior.[21] It regularly collaborated with regional military units and, with the unobtrusive backing of the authorities, imposed order in the streets, notably in Voronezh and Stavropol.

The National Bolshevik Party aimed to occupy the opposite pole of the ideological spectrum to Russian National Unity. Yet like the latter it also wanted to maintain a radical stance and refused to get involved in representative institutions. In 1992, countercultural partisans close to Vladimir Zhirinovski created a new extra-parliamentary party, the Revolutionary Opposition. It was led by the poet and author of best-selling novels Eduard Limonov, who left the Soviet Union in 1974 and returned to resettle in 1992. Limonov has never received unanimous support in the Russian extra-parliamentary world, and many nationalists criticize him for his writing of decadent texts with homosexual allusions.[22] Similar to Russian National Unity, the National Bolshevik movement also crystallized in the events of October 1993: while the conservative putsch against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991 triggered the resistance of countercultural milieus, the 1993 conflict brought them out into the streets, this time at the sides of insurgents against Boris Yeltsin. At the beginning of 1994, Eduard Limonov, accompanied by neo-Eurasianist theoretician Alexander Dugin[23] and rock singer Egor Letov, quickly transformed the Revolutionary Opposition into a National Bolshevik Party, which combined their cultural demands with a glorification of the Soviet past.

The party is inspired by so-called third-way ideas: it asserts that national revolution and social revolution emanate from one and the same principle, and that the extremes, left and right, should join forces to form a common front in the name of a "general principle of uprising."[24] The development of an avant-gardist National Bolshevik doctrine owes much to the theoretician Alexander Dugin. Basing himself on anarchism and terrorism, Dugin developed the idea of forming an alliance between the revolutionary radicalism of the left and the right, and proffered an exalted romantic vision of action and death.[25] The National Bolshevik Party distinguished itself from other radical movements by its ideological reference points on the left, but also by its more cultivated social base, and its lack of interest in anti-Semitism. The movement claimed that the key solution was to form a new Great Imperial Russia: it accordingly managed to gain the attention of authorities in Latvia and the

Ukraine, who were anxious about its members' activities on their territories, and in Kazakhstan it fomented attempted "uprisings" alongside Cossack circles.[26]

The aesthetic cult of anarchist heroism endorsed by the party was promoted in youth circles via Egor Letov's activism and the music magazine *Russkii rok* (Russian Rock), which was one of the first countercultural trends to take a decidedly nationalist orientation. The party also financed the publication of the main Russian heavy metal newspaper *Zheleznyi Marsh* (The Iron March), and has developed close ties with well-known rock groups such as Grazhdanskaia Oborona (Civic Defense), Korrozia Metalla (Metal Corrosion), Nikolaus Kopernik, and with the singer Sergei Kuriokhin, who died in 1996. The party newspaper, *Limonka*, had a large circulation, which varied from between 12,000 and 50,000 copies. In the space of a few short years, the NBP became the political organization most connected to Russian youth counterculture.[27]

Restructuration of Extra-parliamentary Nationalism in the 2000s

By the end of the 1990s most of the extra-parliamentary parties of the decade's start were moribund. After several schisms, Russian National Unity underwent an internal coup d'état in 2000. Several regional leaders decided to exclude Alexander Barkashov from his position as leader of the party, splitting up into multiple factions, none of which was able to step in to play a unifying role. Some tried to reconstitute a new so-called National-Socialist Party of Old Russia in 2006, but its registration was refused. Barkashov, who had legal troubles for "hooliganism" in 2005, created a new party bearing his name in December of the following year but had no real success.[28] The majority of activists from the former Russian National Unity, as well as those of the National Republican Party, the People's National Party, and the Russian National Union, splintered into new organizations. Divisions in the extra-parliamentary nationalist camp continued during the 2000 presidential elections: Vladimir Putin's candidacy was backed by Yuri Beliaev and Nikolai Lysenko, but not by Alexander Barkashov (who was a candidate in the first round but did not run a campaign), Eduard Limonov, or Alexander Ivanov-Sukharevski.

The new movements emergent at the start of the 2000s aired increasingly radical slogans on religious and political issues. Yuri Beliaev, who created the Freedom Party in 2001, is himself regularly accused of inciting interethnic hatred, and he tried unsuccessfully to present his candidacy for the mayorship of Saint Petersburg. The party's registration

was revoked in 2006 when Beliaev was sentenced for having approved the assassination of a Congolese student.[29] Things went similarly for the Social National Democrat Movement of neopagan theoretician Alexander Sevastianov. The party had been in existence since 1995 but only at the start of the 2000s did it come to enjoy some notoriety. It joined up with the so-called "raciologist"[30] current which published two journals, *Nasledie predkov* and *Atenei* (Athenaeum),[31] as well as a collection called the "Library of Racial Thought," comprising a reedited series of Russian and Western texts of racial anthropology from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sevastianov, who was editor in chief of small radical newspapers, enjoyed some success in 2001–2002 in his attempt to create a party called the National Party of the Great Power of Russia, which combined neopaganism and Stalinism. He was joined in his efforts by the leader of the Officer's Union, the neopagan Stanislav Terekhov, and the leader of the Union of Slavic Journalists, Boris Mironov.[32] According to its founders, the party's objective was to unify all Russian nationalists, but in 2003 the Ministry of Justice refused its registration. Since then Sevastianov has become one of the most prominent figures of the extra-parliamentary movement, and his unofficial party is one of the most visible.

In the 2000s, the most radical groupuscules issued repeated assassination calls. In 2004, a group called Russian Republic claimed responsibility for the assassination of ethnologist Nikolai Girenko.[33] The movement called for ethnic Russians to foment secession from the Federation, which they suspected of being in the hands of national minorities, and demanded a court be set up to put the country's leaders on trial for "genocide of the Russian people."[34] In the same vein, Dmitri Rumiantsev's National-Socialist Society became known in 2005–2006 for the publication on its site, *Russkaia volia* (Russian Will), of a long list of "enemies of the Russian nation." It provided their addresses and phone numbers, and sometimes included a photocopy of their passports. Among the accused were journalists such as Anna Politkovskaia, defenders of human rights such as Svetlana Gannushkina, and university academics such as Emil Pain and Valeri Tishkov, all of whom were charged with being theoreticians of "State Russophobia."[35] In spite of Anna Politkovskaia's assassination on October 7, 2006, the FSB has refused to consider these lists as constituting calls to homicide or to open an enquiry into them.[36]

Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s these extra-parliamentary parties have run for election only rarely, and almost never in the legislative or presidential elections. Their candidates have sometimes won a few unimportant seats in regional and municipal elections.[37] Most often

they get elected on the tickets of other parties, in particular on that of Zhirinovski's LDPR or of Rodina, which precludes reading these votes as being votes for their ideas.[38] In any case, the majority of these movements refuse to play the electoral game and ask their supporters to favor street action over political representation. In addition, all have had regular legal problems for incitement to racial hatred, fiscal fraud, or the illegal possession of arms. They often have close links to mafia networks and undertake lucrative commercial activities, in particular private security services. Some conceal their criminal or mafia activities underneath their political activities. Like all radical movements, their main aim is to get into the media spotlight with the least expense (so the Internet is a key tool[39]) and therefore to gain a level of visibility greatly superior to their sociological representativeness.

Seeking Social Mobilization: The Skinhead Phenomenon

All extra-parliamentary parties must contend not only with multiple doctrinal schisms and regular excommunications, but equally with their lack of social base. Very often they gather no more than a few thousand, or indeed a few hundred, members, have no visibility outside of the capital or the provincial towns whence they emerge, and struggle to recruit new members. To make themselves heard on the public stage, they compete with each other to attract the highly prized youth, which is their only possible means of gaining quantitative depth. However, Russian youth is largely dismissive of the large majority of parties mentioned, especially those of monarchist and Orthodox ideology. Only the RNU in the 1990s and the NBP in the 2000s, which each had some tens of thousands of sympathizers, had any real social base to call on. In this regard, these two parties may be considered precursors to the social movement embodied by the skinheads, who have come to take an increasingly important role in the extra-parliamentary nationalist spectrum.

At the beginning of the 2000s the skinhead movement was catapulted into public visibility. This effectively enabled the extra-parliamentary parties to dismiss criticisms that cast them as mere unrepresentative groupuscules and to affirm the existence of a numerically significant social base that is sympathetic to their convictions. More, for them the skinheads are emblematic of the warrior-like heroism they have long sought, and of the dream of taking power by controlling the streets. The

skinheads also make it possible to reject discourses casting Russian youths as individualists chiefly motivated by material success. That skinheads have no interest in theory and prefer violent action has also partially erased the divisions in the extra-parliamentary nationalist scene caused by recurrent ideological splits.

Birth, Structuration, and Politicization of the Skinhead Movement

Born in Great Britain in the 1960s before spreading to the rest of Europe, and particularly Germany, the skinhead movement was, at the outset, divided into several radically contrasting tendencies: first, the neo-Nazi tendency called Bonehead; second, the anarchist-inspired Redskins who carry the movement's original internationalist tradition; and third, a depoliticized strain called SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudices). This latter group rejects the racism of the Boneheads as much as the leftist references of the Redskins, and limits itself to expressing its counterculture through music, clothing, and a community mode of life. In Russia there are very few Redskins: the only groups that can be identified with them are the few NBP groups that, sporting Lenin or Che Guevara T-shirts, specialize in the fight against neo-Nazis, and the other militant antifascist groups that seek out confrontation with skinheads. Instead the neo-Nazi boneheads constitute the immense majority of today's Russian skinheads.[40]

The skinhead movement appeared in Baltic countries at the end of the 1980s among youth who claimed to be fighting the "Soviet occupation." It then developed in Russia, principally in Moscow, where there were only some few hundred adherents. Between 1991 and 1994, the skinheads mainly agitated in football stadiums, provoking brawls between supporters, and at skinhead music concerts called *oï*, the Anglo-Saxon version of *Heil!* They marched in small groups of 10–20 persons bearing slogans such as "Russia for the Russians," and "Moscow for the Moscovites." Though initially largely informal and decentralized, the skinhead movement became more organized during the second half of the decade. Around 1996 two powerful associations appeared, the Moscow Skin Legion and the Russian section of Blood & Honor, which acted in numerically substantial groups of around 200 persons. In 1998, they were joined by the 88 United Brigades (OB 88), born of the grouping of several small movements through their integration into the Russian section of the international Hammerskin Organization. Similar to Western skinhead movements, the Russian groups are mostly made

up of men. A first female association, the Wolves, appeared in 1997 but was slowly eclipsed by new groups such as the Russian Women and the Steel Magnolias.[41]

Halfway through the 1990s, many small extra-parliamentary parties with little popular support set out to attract skinheads. The first party to factor them in was Konstantin Kasimovski's Russian National Union, whose now banned newspaper, *Shturmovik*, used to specialize in glorifying the violent exploits of skinheads. Kasimovski himself led a small skinhead group called Russian Action.[42] The Russian National Union, however, was rapidly eclipsed by Alexander Ivanov-Sukharevski's National People's Party, which managed to form close ties to Saint Petersburg skinhead groups through the dissemination of its newspaper *Ia–russkii*. The skinhead leader Semion Tokmakov joined the ranks of the National People's Party and transformed his group, Russian Objective, into a youth movement attached to it. Russian National Unity also organized several joint actions with skinhead groups. Yuri Beliaev's Freedom Party maintained close links to various Saint Petersburg skinhead groups and disseminated among them an Aryanist and racist discourse on the greatness of the Russian people and the white race. The politicization of skinheads was also intensified thanks to the activism of several Western organizations that, starting in 1997, came to Russia to provide their organizational experience and diffuse their ideological convictions: this was the case of the German Vikings (which were banned in the FRG) and of American members of the Ku Klux Klan, whose leader, David Duke, went regularly to Russia and had two of his books translated into Russian. One of them, a propaganda booklet called *The ABC of Slavic Skinheads*, was published in 2000 and has been widely disseminated in provincial towns and on the Internet.[43]

Today theories about the defense of the white race are prevalent among Russian skinheads, many of whom confess to a neopagan religion inspired by Vladimir Bezverkhi's Venets.[44] The Union of Venets in fact also has at its disposal its own youth skin organization, Swastika, led by Artiom Talakin. Since 2000 in particular, newly emergent skinhead groups have tended to adopt names with increasingly explicit references to an identity that is white and Russian: Russian Objective, Russian Attack, Russian Kulak, but also White Patrol (founded by Beliaev in 2005), White Hunters, and so on. The best organized and most politicized skinhead organization continues to be the Slavic Union, whose Russian abbreviation is SS. It is headed by Dmitri Demushkin, a former member of RNU who decided in 2000 to start his own movement and has since been very successful in attracting the media spotlight for

his federating of several skinhead groups. He has been arrested on many occasions, notably in 2004 for poisoning a human rights campaigner, and in 2006, on suspicion of having participated in a bomb attack on an Islamic prayer house in a Moscow suburb. The politicization of the Slavic Union is particularly marked: Demushkin has himself referred to as the Führer, borrows his ideological precepts from those of RNU, and proclaims that only National-Socialism can save Russia from the Judeo-Masonic threat.[45]

Some skinhead groups make direct reference to their Western counterparts, for example to the Hammerskins and Blood & Honor. On an ideological level, they have adopted the promotion of the racist and exterminatory theories of historical Nazism, and draw their inspiration from the discourse of the American White Power movement. Other groups prefer to emphasize more specifically Russian or Slavic traditions, and on their street demonstrations march under the imperial Russian flag (white, yellow, black). Notwithstanding some ideological nuances, all the skinhead movements share the same culture, typified by 1990s newspapers such as *Pod nol'* (No Hair Left) and by current newspapers such as *Beloe soprotivlenie* (White Opposition), *Otvertka* (Screwdriver), and *Zheleznyi marsh*. All dress in a manner akin to Anglo-Saxon skinheads, and sport swastikas, Celtic crosses, SS initials, and the Totenkopf of the Nazi armies.[46] Music is a key form of identification for this youth: groups such as Totenkopf and Terror National Front are very popular among them. Reciprocally, some skinhead singers, such as Sergei Zharikov and Andrei Arkhipov, who were close associates of Vladimir Zhirinovski at the start of the 1990s, today profess to Neo-Nazism. Two other groups, Kolovrat (Swastika) and Vandal (Vandale), have song lyrics referring to Aryan ideas and do not conceal their sympathies for Alexander Barkashov.[47] Clashes between fans of different types of music therefore became rather frequent, as skinhead followers of "white rock" seek conflict with fans at concerts of rap, reggae, and punk music.

A Sociological Approach to Skinhead Milieus

Although there are no reliable available statistics, it seems that there are about 50,000 skinheads today spread across a hundred towns throughout Russia. Initially the Ministry of the Interior acknowledged the existence of around 20,000, then the procurer of Russia, in a speech in 2005, indicated that there could be as many as 40,000; human rights associations, however, claim that there exist between 60,000 and 70,000

individuals.[48] Regardless of the precise figure, which can be only approximate as certain delinquent youth groups are not easy to include in a category with political connotations, Russia now has the largest number of skinheads of any country in the world.[49] However, there are very few sociological or anthropological studies on Russian skinheads on hand to enable us to better define the milieus that are prone to this form of violent social mobilization.

The few surveys that do exist all converge in their assessment that the movement is rapidly evolving. In the 1990s, the skinheads mostly recruited very young teenagers (12–14 years of age) from the social classes weakened by post-Soviet changes and residents in the suburbs of large cities in the midst of complete economic crisis. It thus appears that the main breeding ground of the skinhead phenomenon was the former Soviet middle classes (qualified workers and engineers[50]), followed by the families of militiamen and of military personnel, two milieus that underwent drastic falls in living standards and saw their social prestige evaporate in the space of a few years.[51] Many of the skinhead recruits have been street kids who had not even completed secondary school, had no career prospects, and no other chance of economic survival than delinquency. Football stadiums and concerts were their basic space of expression, more so even than racist attacks.

As of 2000, the part of the movement that inhabits large cities appears to have become more bourgeois: new recruits have largely come from the sections of the middle classes that gained from Russia's economic boom after the crisis of summer 1998. This new skinhead generation is made up of slightly older adolescents (15–20 years of age) and of a more politicized elite in their 20s and 30s, which serves as an intermediary between the masses and political milieus.[52] Links between these skinheads and extra-parliamentary parties now appear more pronounced, and their allusions to fascism and Nazism more polished. No longer do they consider their enemies simply to be "foreigners"; they are now also cultural opponents such as punks, rappers, supporters of the National Bolshevik Party, anarchists, alter-globalists, homosexuals, and so on. The skinheads of large cities are wealthier, wear more expensive clothing, have greater access to technological fashions (mobile telephones, etc.), and are more Westernized in their daily life. They can also be distinguished by the fact that they call for economic protectionism: as the children of small business owners, they object to the labor competition they allege is caused by immigrants.

According to researcher Alexander Tarasov, the skinhead movement is becoming increasingly marked by strong regional differences. In the

large cities skinheads issue from the middle classes, are wealthier, older, and more politicized, whereas in the small towns, which were affected by the phenomenon only later, skinheads are younger and poorer, and compose something like a youth subculture marked by depoliticization.[53] These latter mostly refer to themselves using the Russian name for skinheads (*britogolovnye* or "shaved heads") and not the Anglo-Saxon one (*skinkhedy*). The few associations that work with the skinheads all note that many of them, particularly when joining the movement, are not out looking for a politicized message, but simply desire an affective framework, which in this case is made possible by group belonging and a refusal of adult society. The skinhead phenomenon affecting small towns in Russia thus chiefly gathers youths whose political consciousness is little developed, but who instead see in delinquency a mode of identity or a means of concealing illegal activities under political cover.[54]

Radicalization of Violence in the 2000s

Parallel to their greater degree of organization, skinheads have been engaging in violent actions of increasing scale. At the start of the 1990s, the first racist attacks were organized in the area of the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University, which has hosted foreign students since Soviet times, in particular from sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Asia. The skinheads also regularly gathered in areas around the center of Moscow at the Arbat or in front of the S. P. Gorbunov Palace of Culture, which was formerly also Pamyat's main meeting place. They first portrayed themselves as "Moscow's street cleaners" (*chistil'shchiki moskovskikh ulits*) principally targeting gypsies and people of color, not to mention the homeless, in attacks that were then spontaneous. However, they rapidly began to plan larger-scale actions, which they filmed and then broadcast on the Internet. They have also demonstrated higher levels of logistical efficiency and their Web sites provide advice on handling weapons and methods of attack.[55] Beginning in 1998, they also made their attacks regularly coincide with specific anniversary dates, in particular Adolf Hitler's birthday on April 20. In that year, they attacked or murdered several people of color, but only following the death of an African American member of the security service of the United States Embassy and under pressure from Washington did the political authorities begin to react.

In March 2000, a new step was taken with the first mass actions. Several hundreds of skinheads burst their way into the Dynamo sports palace

to oppose a meeting convened to promote the candidacy of the leader of the democratic party Yabloko, Grigori Iavlinski, for the presidency. Pogroms were organized in the capital: at the Vietnamese University residence on October 21, 2000, in an Armenian school on March 15, 2001, and against kiosks owned by "foreigners" at the Yasenevo market on April 21 of the same year. On October 30, 2001, the most murderous pogrom took place at the market at Tsaritsyno metro station: close to 300 skinheads attacked owners of small kiosks and market stalls, killing four people and wounding nearly a hundred more. In subsequent years, all human rights organizations have recorded regular increases in the violent and often mortal acts committed against Caucasians and Central Asians. Police reports also note the higher degree of preparation involved in these acts, with skinheads from other towns sometimes being called in to provide reinforcements.[56] In 2006, acts of racist violence continued to multiply. Some skinhead groups employed even more radical means, such as homemade bombs like those that exploded at the Cherkizov market in Moscow, leading to the deaths of 13 people. The largest pogrom of 2006, in Kondopoga, emboldened the skinhead movements. They viewed it as a heroic act of self-defense by the Russian people and were able to gauge the large measure of support they enjoy when they focus their actions on economic and migratory questions.

Associations for the defense of human rights counted a total of 270 racist attacks (including 47 mortal) in 2004; 461 attacks (including 47 mortal) in 2005; 539 (including 54 mortal) in 2006; 632 (including 67 mortal) in 2007; and 515 (including 96 mortal) for 2008.[57] Saint Petersburg has numerous groups of well-organized skinheads totaling between 10,000 and 15,000 persons and is often presented by the Russian and Western media as the capital of racism. However, Moscow and the surrounding region remain well in front in the statistics on racist attacks. The origin of the peoples targeted seems to change: Galina Kozhevnikova, working at SOVA Center, reports that skinheads have become mainly obsessed with Caucasian and Central Asian migrants, whereas attacks against Asians and Africans (students and diplomats) have dropped slightly.[58] Defenders of human rights have also recorded an increase in anti-Semitic crimes. In the 1990s, the skinheads "restricted" themselves to putting tags on the walls of synagogues and desecrating Jewish tombs. Since 2005, however, the number of direct attacks with bladed weapons against persons identified as Jewish has drastically increased, signaling a higher degree of politicization. In addition, more and more Russian citizens belonging to national minorities, particularly to Siberian peoples, have also been attacked. Whereas previously the

latter might have been traditional victims of mockery or humiliation, they were not subject to physical attacks.

The Ambiguous Attitude of the Political Authorities

The increasing popularity of the skinhead movement over the last ten years is due to the conjunction of several factors, which are social as much as legal and political, and it has come to enjoy the more or less tactful support of part of the political class. For instance, several figures from the LDPR, among whom are the deputies Alexander Khristoforov and Aleksei Mitrofanov, do not hide their support for skinhead actions, deeming them to be simple acts of defense by ethnic Russians under attack from foreigners. The same goes for Sergei Baburin's party, which even welcomed skinhead leader Semion Tokmakov into its ranks during the 2003 legislative elections. The neopagan doctrinaire, Alexander Sevastianov, for his part, publicly rejoiced at the assassination of Nikolai Girenko in 2004 without attracting any legal problems.[59] The parliamentary group Rodina, which was fixated on the alleged threat that migrants pose to the country, enthused over the events in Kondopoga.

The presidential party itself is not excluded from this generalized permissiveness. In 2006, commenting on the assassination of an African student, the film director, Saint Petersburg deputy, and member of United Russia Alexander Nevzorov declared that "foreigners are not saints. They can get into brawls, insult people, and seduce the women of others. Why must this [assassination] immediately be perceived as racism? Racism is not typical of Saint Petersburg, everyone knows that."[60] For all the official critiques of the xenophobic attitudes of the skinheads, the discourse upheld by the presidential party turns out to be based on the same negative stereotypes toward migrants and the same clichés about the need to respect Russian national traditions. In a book published by United Russia's almost official publisher, Evropa, the author asserts that "the basis of the conflict [in Kondopoga] resides in the behavior of some Caucasian nationals, mainly Chechens who have come recently to the town, [who] have not taken the norms and behavioral rules of the indigenous population into account, have humiliated it and endangered its health."[61]

Several Russian researchers specializing in these questions have collected data showing that local authorities, particularly in Krasnodar, Stavropol, and Pskov, have knowingly used skinheads as a street militia. It also seems that the municipality of Moscow has allowed these

movements to "cleanse" the capital of populations deemed undesirable for many years, with the implicit support of the mayor, Yuri Luzhkov.[62] This leniency with respect to skinheads is also present, on an even larger scale, within the security services. These services concentrate their efforts on the fight against the criminal activities of migrants and not against skinhead violence. The skinheads indeed benefit from a large amount of impunity: the militia and the special forces of the Ministry of the Interior (OMON) discreetly support them on occasion, and have been restrained when intervening in skinhead attacks. A survey organized by the Levada Center revealed that, of the professional categories interrogated, state employees from the Ministry of the Interior have the highest rate of xenophobia (73 percent). Militiamen are also largely well-disposed toward violence against migrants and often consider skinhead acts as legitimized by the slogan "Russia for the Russians."[63]

Associations for the defense of human rights also note that many skinhead groups are directly trained by militiamen or by the OMON, and that the successive presidential youth movements, Together (*Idushchie vmeste*) and then Ours (*Nashi*), both participated in training skinheads for attacks in Tsaritsyno.[64] It was not until the Yasenevo pogrom in 2001, which ended in 50 arrests, and also the Tsaritsyno pogrom of the same year, that the first violent clashes took place between skinheads and the forces of order, and that the municipality of Moscow decided to create a special section to fight against youth extremism. Vladimir Putin's speech calling for the militias to combat extremism and xenophobia during celebrations of the Day of Security Services Workers on December 19, 2005, was thus perceived by associations for the defense of human rights as a provocation from the Kremlin: far from playing a protective role, the police constitutes one of the principal dangers facing people identified as foreigners because it often takes the sides of the attackers and not those attacked.[65]

An Absence of Judicial Response

Finally, this skinhead culture benefits from effective judicial impunity and, for the most part, lies outside the field of legislation that has been introduced for the fight against extremism. In 1995, the Russian state put forward an ambiguously worded bill on "measures guaranteeing the concerted action of state organs in the fight against fascist phenomena and other forms of political extremism in Russia." Throughout the decade, many other "antifascist" bills were put forward that came to

nothing. In 2001, Vladimir Putin decided to implement a state program for the promotion of tolerance whose principal objectives were defined in a text called the "Formation of conditions for a consciousness of tolerance and prophylaxis of extremism in Russian society." In spring 2002, after international reprobation for the preceding year's pogroms and the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States, the Kremlin decided in a precipitous manner to put to the vote a bill on the struggle against extremism. It was broadly adopted by the Duma, the only ones to vote against it being the Communist Party, as well as some members of Yabloko and of the Union of Right Forces. Although at the time of the vote the presidential administration orchestrated a large media campaign against skinhead groups, the law is above all directed against the institutionalized movements that tried to register at the Ministry of Justice, and not against the actions of informal groups such as skinheads.

This new piece of legislation was roundly criticized by associations fighting against xenophobia, who questioned the need for a new law when there were several already existing decrees that had yet to be implemented. The bill of 2002, which provides for heavier sanctions than the previous ones, magnifies the specter of political extremism as large as possible. In a legal wooliness denounced by associations such as Amnesty International and the International Federation of Human Rights, it includes under xenophobia both terrorism and any affirmation of religious superiority, even when not acted upon. Moreover, the Russian judicial system has no legal tradition that would allow a framework to be set up to implement these laws. At the end of 2003, Article 282 of the Penal Code concerning the incitement to interethnic hatred (*razzhiganie mezhnatsional'noi rozni*) was also revised: the prescribed punishment was made more severe, the text was reworded to target the media and the Internet, and no precise definition of propagating hatred was provided. This article also stipulates that hatred can be directed against a social group, making it possible to prohibit criticisms of militiamen, oligarchs, or state employees.[66] The 2006 and 2007 amendments to the article, which aim at NGOs, among others, made the definition of extremism even vaguer, such that now even verbal attacks against a state employee, of whatever status, can be interpreted as an attempt to undermine the constitutional order.

As practice quickly confirmed, the law against extremism and the new version of Article 282 are rarely used against skinheads or extra-parliamentary parties, but instead are instrumentalized by the authorities to fight against movements that trouble them. In the political field, the principal targets are the National Bolshevik Party, and in the religious

field, the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which was banned in 2003 for being an Islamist terrorist organization.[67] The political authorities are thus using the law against extremism as a political instrument, as for example when they liquidated the Russo-Chechen Friendship Society in 2006 by judicial decision. Its leader Stanislav Dmitrievski was sentenced for extremist activities, and accused of publishing articles by two Chechen leaders, Aslan Maskhadov and Akhmed Zakaev. These articles were certainly critical of the Kremlin's policies, but they by no means constituted an incitement to interethnic hatred. In the same year, a Mari pagan priest (the Mari are an ethnic group of the Volga region) was charged under Article 282 for having criticized the members of the government of the autonomous republic Mari-El, a decision that associations for the defense of human rights viewed as politically motivated.

The immense majority of racist attacks are classified by the Ministry of Justice and the Procurature as acts of hooliganism (Article 213 of the Penal Code), the pretext for which is property damage, and not as incitements to interethnic hatred. Moreover, authorities often give perpetrators conditional sentences only. Prior to 2004, less than a hundred legal cases were filed annually within the framework of Article 282, and only 11 people were sentenced pursuant to it between 1997 and 2004.[68] The assassination of Nikolai Girenko was not recognized as a political crime motivated by racist principles. The eight teenagers who assassinated a nine-year-old Tajik girl, Khursheda Sultonova, in 2004 were accused of hooliganism and cleared by the court of the motive of racial murder. Since this date, however, legal practice seems to be slowly changing: while 10 people were sentenced under Article 282 in 2004, the number was 40 in 2005 and nearly 100 in 2006.[69] The authorities' desires to curb the explosion of racial violence therefore seem to have compelled the courts to call for disciplinary measures, which are reported to have led to a very slight decrease in violent acts in 2008.[70]

The ambiguities of the Russian justice system with regard to racist violence are nevertheless still numerous, in particular in the field of expertise. The practice established in Soviet times is for the Procurature to call experts to the bar in order to confirm or invalidate an accusation of incitement to interethnic hatred. Many of these experts, who are chosen by the Procurature and not by the lawyers dealing with the case, are well known for impeding the classification of acts committed as racist crimes. In addition, monitoring carried out by the organs of justice on the questions of racist crimes is very predominantly formulated in essentialist terms, which makes defining interethnic hatred more complex.

They consider that the nation is an objective reality and not a social construction and, therefore, that "interethnic tensions" between groups are natural, since each one defends the identity and values specific to it. The state's objective, then, is alleged to consist in managing those tensions and identities, in putting forward measures for learning tolerance, and in condemning only extreme expressions of national differences, but not in considering the assertion of cultural and religious traits as something that belongs to the individual private sphere. The lack of juridical response to racist violence is therefore not solely to be explained by inadequate legislation, but also by an overarching cultural context stamped by essentialism, which has its repercussions in the strategic field of judicial expertise: here again, nationalist groups are able to succeed in skirting legislation by asserting that they are only defending the "values" of their collective entity, whose identity had been attacked by others.[71]

Anti-immigration: The Long-Awaited Ideological Consensus?

The state becoming to appeal regularly to the national feeling reduced the protest role that extra-parliamentary nationalist parties can play. These latter therefore undertook to recenter around a new theme, the only one able to efface doctrinal divisions and offer a larger consensual base: migration. Disapproval of migrants is as easy to formulate in an intellectual manner (consideration of the de-Russification of Russia and the inevitable character of the so-called clash of civilizations) as in a practical manner (organization of pogroms against migrants), which thus works to unite doctrinaires as much as skinheads. This long-awaited ideological consensus on migration has entailed major reorganizations. The NBP, which was already isolated from the rest of the extra-parliamentary world, has kept on with forging itself a unique political path, joining a new camp, the anti-Putin one spearheaded by former chess champion Garry Kasparov. The Movement Against Illegal Immigration, which largely contributed to giving media coverage to the neologism "migrantophobia" (*migrantofobiia*), tried to become the missing link in the chain stretching from the most marginal milieus to some nationalist deputies, the security organs, and the Kremlin. As of the Russian March, it has been construed, with limited success, as the symbol of reconciliation between the most radical and the more moderate nationalists, and between the doctrinaires of nationalism and its skinhead "practicians."

The state organs' fight against so-called extremist movements is organized according to flexible principles, which are signs that the authorities are attempting to instrumentalize the issue.[72] Alexander Barkashov's RNU, for example, after having enjoyed much benevolence on the part of regional authorities, was violently critical of the Khasaviurt agreements that put an end to the first war in Chechnya, and suddenly became a target of the Kremlin's attacks. In 1998 it was the victim of a widespread campaign against the "fascist threat" orchestrated by the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, who banned the party from holding its congress in the capital.[73] Subsequent to this, the Duma passed various bills against political extremism enabling the federal state, at the republican and regional levels, to wage legal attacks on RNU and the NBP, whereas almost never did it accuse the other extra-parliamentary organizations of anything, nor even mention them. Hence, some of the most radical groups' calls to murder, like those issued by Russian Republic or the National Socialist Society, did not attract any legal sanction, while at the same time the Ministry of Justice has put the regional branches of the National Bolshevik Party under continual harassment.

With RNU's disappearance in 2000, the NBP became the biggest party in the extra-parliamentary movement in terms of both public visibility and its number of activists (between 10,000 and 20,000 members, with local sections in 40 of Russia's 83 federal subjects and in some of the former Soviet republics[74]). First registered in 1997, the party was stripped of official recognition in 1998 and has had its applications systematically rejected ever since. From this date, which also coincides with the split between Eduard Limonov and his theoretician Alexander Dugin, the NBP has specialized in street actions in the manner of alter-globalists. Some members left after it adopted this change of tactics, seeking a more intellectualized approach to National Bolshevism, and a dissenting branch, the National Bolshevik Front, more loyal to the authorities, emerged in 2006. However, the change increased the party's success among youths. The NBP gives its street demonstrations a style even more distinct than that of the RNU. The use of Molotov cocktails against state buildings is now one of the movement's hallmarks. Personally, Eduard Limonov has little by little become closer to the socialist movements, has demonstrated at the sides of the Communist Party on several occasions, and along with the latter supports strike movements in industrial sectors.[75] The NBP distinguishes itself from the quasi totality of extra-parliamentary organizations on three points: its

virulent critiques of Vladimir Putin, its refusal to engage in any tactical rapprochement with the Kremlin, and its lack of interest in the question of migration.

NBP's anti-Putin radicalism has earned it the wrath of the regime. First arrested in 2001 for the illegal possession of arms, Limonov then spent 15 months in prison before being freed in July 2003. However, his absence at the head of the party did not slow down street activities, which became more and more directed against representatives of power. In July 2005, the Court of Justice banned the NBP from the entire Russian territory, a confirmation of the surprising repression that the party has attracted. Previously, when the authorities were settling scores with parties judged troublesome, they considered it sufficient to reject their registration at the Ministry of Justice. The banning of the NBP has demonstrated the Kremlin's ability to silence dissident organizations that refuse to play the game of managed democracy. The party lodged a complaint at the European Court in Strasbourg, but despite this in 2007 the Procurature of Moscow renewed its classification of the NBP as an extremist party and thus its ban on carrying out activities in Russia.[76] Hereafter, NBP members have presented themselves as "Limonov supporters" (*Limonovtsy*) rather than as National Bolsheviks, so as to avoid having any legal action brought against them.

The Limonov movement has participated with increasing frequency in alter-globalist actions, opening up new prospects for building ties with the NGOs for the defense of human rights and the promotion of democracy, which are also targeted by Russian legislation. Limonov took the demonstrations against the G8 summit held in Saint Petersburg in July 2006 as an occasion to participate in the founding of the Other Russia movement—a bid to unify all of Vladimir Putin's opponents. Its objective was to organize targeted protests, taking the NGOs that participated in the "colored revolutions" of the years 2003–2005 as a model, with a view to demonstrate the existence of an organized Russian civil society that would be capable of becoming a structured political opposition. Neither the liberal parties Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces, nor the Communist Party agreed to participate in it, even though they were invited to do so. The Other Russia gathers figures of heteroclite ideological standing: Garry Kasparov and his movement Russia Without Putin, the former liberal Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov, numerous NGOs, as well as Viktor Anpilov's Working Russia, at least initially.[77] Since that date, Limonov and Kasparov have continued to collaborate in the framework of the United Civic Front and the National Assembly, an "alternative parliament" that brings more than 80 opposition

organizations together. For Limonov's supporters, participating in the democratic opposition's "Marches of the Discontented" responds to the logic of the movement's radicalism, which is above all to attack the symbols of state and the interests of oligarchs. It reinforces them in their will to make the revolutionary theme and its anarchist components prevail over the nationalist topic, and to shun the xenophobic discourses that dominate the other extra-parliamentary parties.

Formulating a New Strategy: The Movement Against Illegal Immigration

As the NBP realigned itself with the democratic opposition, the spectrum of extra-parliamentary nationalism experienced other recompositions that have been just as profound, though opposite to those of Eduard Limonov. Following several violent clashes between persons identified as migrants and ethnic Russians at Krasnoarmeisk and Novosibirsk, the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) was created in July 2002. It is led by Alexander Potkin, a young engaged politician born in 1977 and today known under his giveaway pseudonym Alexander Belov (the White). For several years, Belov worked as a press attaché with Dmitri Vasiliev's Pamyat National Patriotic Front. When the latter died in 2003, he became leader of the movement, but was excluded from it in 2005 following an internal coup d'état. Despite Pamyat's symbolic prestige, Alexander Belov promptly turned away from this groupuscule to invest himself, and with far greater success, in his own Movement Against Illegal Immigration.

The DPNI had its greatest success during the Kondopoga riots, where it was able to demonstrate its organizational capacity. Not only did its actions in Karelia make great waves in the media, but it could then boast of results, since most of the Caucasians incriminated left the small town after the pogrom. In November 2006, citing the famous Article 282, the Procurature of Karelia charged Belov with inciting interethnic hatred for his active participation in the Kondopoga events, but he was cleared in May 2007 due to lack of evidence. However, he continues regularly to have legal proceedings brought against him. Though the slogan "Russia for the Russians" has been common to all extra-parliamentary movements since the 1990s, the DPNI is undeniably the one that has most contributed to spreading it throughout society.

The DPNI's unprecedented success can be explained by its refusal to provide a well-elaborated ideology, on the grounds that this would

provoke schisms between doctrinaires and scare off potential supporters. Alexander Belov appears to be very explicit about the reason why previous extra-parliamentary groups continually failed: recruitment by means of indoctrination makes the process of social anchoring more complex. Appealing to xenophobia, however, and more precisely, to migrantophobia, is sufficient in itself to garner popular support. To bolster this xenophobic logic the most persistent clichés are used: it is claimed that migrants take advantage of the goodness of the Russian people, that they are responsible for the arrival in Russia of the mafia, of terrorism, of drug- and arms-trafficking, and that they caused the resurgence of crime and rape, the decrease in purchasing power of citizens, are responsible for the low quality of products and adulterated vodka, and so on. They also stand accused of trying to outbreed Russians so that the next generation of migrants will be able to rule the country, of taking work from citizens, and of sending large sums of money to their country of origin at the expense of the Russian people.

The vocabulary used in the DPNI's propaganda texts and in discussion forums between members leaves no room for doubt as to how they interpret the migration phenomenon: the most salient terms are hordes, flood, invasion, and occupation, by which reference is made to the alleged "silent war" being waged against the Russian people. The DPNI's Internet forum site has a rubric called "popular uprising" that contains a systematic listing of all the diverse facts relating to the conflicts between so-called migrants and ethnic Russians.[78] Though they define migrants in terms of ethnic belonging, the use of ambiguous terminology stemming from Soviet times reveals the deeply rooted nature of these xenophobic apprehensions: the movement often speaks of diasporas (*diaspory*) without adjective, as a way of implying that the very fact of having a diaspora (Jews, Armenians, Chechens) in one's country is harmful to the "guest people." In addition, the DPNI site contains analytical articles that rehash the recurrent themes of Russian nationalist doctrines, according to which the Russians, by contrast to the other peoples of the Soviet Union and of the Federation, were unsuccessful in preserving their national identity, since they assimilated theories of national defense to fascism, leading to the suicide of a nation that has lost self-awareness.[79]

The DPNI's program has as its main objective "the deportation of all illegal migrants outside of Russian territory."[80] Several measures are proposed to achieve this goal: toughening migration legislation; abolishing the system of circulation without visa operative within the CIS; placing Cossack troops on the southern borders of the country; setting Russian

language and culture exams for migrants that arrived after 1991; debarring anyone who has been in the country for less than 15 years from all administrative positions; and prohibiting migrants from receiving any social benefits. The movement also calls upon the authorities to "stop the physical and spiritual degradation of indigenous peoples of Russia and to defend traditional values."[81] In this vein, it wants a law to organize the massive repatriation of Russians living in the Near Abroad back to Russia and the implementation of overtly pro-birth policies (financial aid for large families and the return of women to the home) in order to redress the country's demographic weakness. This discourse's focus on the menace of migration enables the DPNI to display clearly and loudly its pro-Western stance: it thinks that the Russians are part of Europe, of the West understood as white world, and that Moscow ought to unite with other white capitals, including Washington, to fight against the invasion by peoples of color. The DPNI, then, does not share the anti-Western references of some movements in the extra-parliamentary scene, since it states that such references are outdated and unable to confront reality, that is, the "yellow peril" and the "Islamist threat."

The movement portrays itself as an ally to the state, to which it can offer services, including consultations with the organs of power on the subject of migration policy, the creation of local councils for monitoring the organization of the fight against immigration, and denunciations of illegal migrants to the police. At the end of 2006, the DPNI also created the first voluntary militia brigades, which all have paramilitary training. Its members are encouraged to possess hunting weapons, an obligatory extra for anyone wanting to enter the brigades, and the movement is relentless in calling for the legalization of firearms in the name of the Russians' right to self defense.[82] These brigades also apparently offer their services to state security organs in the same way that the Cossacks and the militia of Russian National Unity did at the start of the 1990s. Whenever it enters the streets to demonstrate its force, the social base of the DPNI shows itself to be largely made up of skinheads as well as of Cossacks, who are well organized in the southern regions of the country.

If the DPNI presents itself as a social movement and not as a political party, one of the reasons is that it wants to become a commercial enterprise, at least partially. In fact, the movement encourages Russians to organize themselves without waiting for help from the state, somewhat paradoxically basing itself on the example of migrants and diasporas. On its Web site it asks for people to "recall the economic success of many of the diasporas that have settled in Russia: they help their compatriots to earn money, use their own services, and only buy from

among themselves."[83] It therefore invites ethnic Russians to support one another, to lend financial and legal aid to Russian entrepreneurs, to buy things only in shops owned by Russians, to employ Russians only, and so forth. Alexander Belov himself often mentions the fact that he is an entrepreneur managing two small private companies. A rubric on the DPNI's Internet site, "Russians, aid your Russian brothers," helps people who require various types of service to get in contact with one another. The movement also offers legal help for ethnic Russians who request it. Not only is this strategy openly borrowed from the much-maligned type of solidarity between migrants, but it also encourages Russians, paradoxically, to consider themselves a minority: although statistically they form the majority in Russia, they are asked to think of themselves as an oppressed minority or as a diaspora living in a foreign state.

Until 2007 the movement adopted the same strategies as Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR: it repeatedly decried the political elites for betraying the nation at the same time as, in its daily practice, it acted to support state organs and even hoped to become their armed wing. The DPNI complained, for instance, about the corruption of the militia by the money of the diasporas, and denounced the "migrantocracy" (*migrantokratiia*) that dominates Russian political life: for Alexander Belov, the new laws being drawn up to promote large-scale migration confirm that the country is being ruled by an "anti-Russian ethnocracy," made up of oligarchs who are only interested in their own personal enrichment.[84] He systematically defends ethnic Russians charged with committing crimes against migrants and presents them as "political prisoners" for whom he is raising funds. However, beyond this hard-line populist rhetoric, the DPNI has also functioned for many years as a loyal supporter of Putin's policies: Belov indeed presented himself as a political advisor with the ability to influence men of power and as perfectly positioned to play the role of advisor to the prince.[85]

The DPNI's success can be explained by the originality of its strategy: it has refused to become institutionalized as a political party. In preserving the flexible structure of an association, it has tried to avoid the multiple schisms that have occurred with the extra-parliamentary parties, has been able to form diverse political alliances in each region, and does not place itself in direct confrontation with central power. Until 2007 the DPNI's propaganda texts were devoid of any ambiguity on this question. They claimed that the political party system in Russia was ineffective: as Alexander Belov explained in person, even if the movement transformed itself into a party and managed to get over the 7 percent threshold required for entry into the Duma, its deputies would

not be able to counter the legislative influence of the presidential party. Elections are therefore not the way to change politics. Bolstered by this conclusion, the DPNI began to extol the virtues of ideological entryism and regarded itself as an informal electoral milieu, promising to lend support to those candidates who advocate the most severe migration policies, regardless of party affiliation. On account of this strategy, the DPNI, which claims to be pursuing its goals by purely legal means, has not encountered any difficulties in registering at the Ministry of Justice (it has sections in more than 40 subjects of Russia).

The situation suddenly changed at the end of 2006 during Alexander Belov's rapprochement with former Rodina leaders such as Dmitri Rogozin and Andrei Saveliev, after which he joined the Congress of Russian Communities and the Great Russia party (cf. Chapter 3). Part of the DPNI had refused this turnabout and withdrew its support for Belov's statements about the need to end street politics and become a political party. After several low-impact schisms, the internal opposition became more organized, criticizing Belov's entry into dissidence as well as the participation of certain DPNI leaders in the "Marches of the Discontented" at the sides of liberal opponents like Garry Kasparov. A DPNI splinter group led by Dmitri Zubov seceded in summer 2008, while Alexander Belov announced a new shift in his strategy by moving away from radicalism to transform the DPNI into a "respectable nationalist movement with European tendencies," on the model of the French Front National or Jörg Haider's Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich).[86] The most radical members contend that Belov has been bought by the Kremlin and the secret services with the aim of dismantling the DPNI.

The movement has therefore been unable to establish a stable social niche for itself and, after several relatively consensual years, to avoid the recurrent divisions of extra-parliamentary movements. Despite this outcome, the DPNI marks a turning point in the history of extra-parliamentary nationalism and xenophobia in Russia. In its discourse and practices, it endorses the notion that the popular masses support vertical power, and validates the reorientation of citizens away from the field of political engagement sensu stricto. It also contributes to the ethnicization of political logics by encouraging so-called ethnic Russians to conceive of themselves as a minority that has been discriminated against in a state that has become foreign to it. It also works toward effacing the distinction between legal and illegal immigrants. Although the DPNI officially says it is against only illegal migrants, its discourse targets all people identified as foreigners, whether they are Russian citizens or citizens of

another country, whether they have a work permit or not. By means of this strategy, the DPNI has become the intermediary between the most radical movements, the skinheads in particular, certain political parties seated in the Duma, and some high-level state employees and members of the power structures convening over migration issues. It has therefore played a key role in reorganizing the spectrum of extra-parliamentary nationalism around the unifying theme of xenophobia.

Reconciliation Embodied? The Phenomenon of the Russian March

Starting in 2005, the extra-parliamentary nationalism reorganized around the media event known as the Russian March, a phenomenon that the Kremlin has sought to instrumentalize just as it did the so-called red-brown menace in the 1990s. Whereas the meetings of liberal parties normally succeed in attracting only a few hundred individuals, the Russian March gathers together several thousands of people in ostentatious displays. The Russian March first appeared after the great debates that rattled the political class during the institutionalization of the new public holidays in 2004. To prevent the demonstrations of November 7 from showing the unity of supporters of the Communist opposition, the Kremlin decided to choose a new commemoration date that would keep the Soviet tradition alive but that would simultaneously be free of any reference to the October Revolution. After multiple discussions and propositions, the authorities decided that the People's Day of Unity be held on November 4.

Beginning in the following year, the extra-parliamentary movements took this date as an occasion to organize a demonstration called the Right-Wing March (*pravyi marsh*). The initiative for this march can in large part be attributed to the Eurasianist Union of Youth, which is associated with Alexander Dugin's International Eurasianist Movement. Created in 2005 and led by Pavel Zarifullin, the Eurasianist Youth was born of the will to constitute what it calls an anti-orange front, as well as to defend Russia's supporters in the Near Abroad, principally in the Ukraine, and to combat attempts to organize a "colored revolution" in Russia. The movement's activism is built on promoting a political program named Russia-3, which is as opposed to Vladimir Putin's "first Russia" as to the "second Russia" endorsed by the Westernizers.[87] The Eurasianist Union of Youth is specifically concentrated on the Near Abroad: it has branches in Kazakhstan, in Tajikistan, and in Moldavia, but is officially prohibited in the Ukraine, its main field of action.

Through it, Alexander Dugin seeks to continue the original National Bolshevik tradition, hoping as much to be a respectable theoretician whose ideas appeal to political power as a man with links to youth counterculture fringes.

Although the Right-Wing March was principally organized by the Eurasianist Youth, there were also other participating movements: the DPNI, Alexander Sevastianov's and Stanislav Terekhov's National Party of the Great Power of Russia, skinheads, and monarchists from diverse institutions heir to Pamyat. In 2005 the Right-Wing March brought about 5,000 people into the streets of Moscow, including numerous skinheads, who distinguished themselves by their Hitlerian salute. Just a year after the revolution in the Ukraine, the event was interpreted by Russian and Western media foremost as an "anti-orange" demonstration. But despite the united façade, the participants of the first march were very divided: Alexander Belov criticized the neo-Eurasianists on several occasions for their wanting to reconstitute a unified post-Soviet space and efface state borders. He argued that opening up to the south would allow illegal immigrants and Afghani drugs to overrun the country.[88] The young neo-Eurasianists responded to this charge by dissociating themselves from those they call "the pogrom nationalists" (*pogromnye natsionalisty*): for them, only the reconstitution of the empire, and not xenophobia, will allow Russia to become a great power once again.[89]

Pleased with the previous year's success, the extra-parliamentary movements decided to repeat the operation in 2006, this time calling it the Russian March (*russkii marsh*). The change of adjective is revealing of the demonstration's attributed meanings: first, to overcome ideological divisions; second, to avoid its being perceived as an extreme right or "fascist" event; and, third, to insist, by way of contrast, on the Russian national feeling shared by all participants in a bid to reach out to the greatest number of people. However, this change of name also revealed a change of direction: this time the DPNI succeeded in taking control of the event and has held control of it ever since. The organizing committee for the 2006 March was run personally by Alexander Belov and included well-known figures such as Igor Shafarevitch, as well as several deputies from Rodina, the National Party of the Great Power of Russia, Dmitri Demushkin's Slavic Union, and several small monarchist movements, such as the Pamyat Patriotic National Front and the Saint-Serge Union of Russian People.[90] Several Orthodox associations, including Leonid Simonovich's Union of Orthodox Banner-Carriers, accused the DPNI of wanting to bring discredit to the idea of Russia by flying Nazi flags and promoting neopaganism.[91] The Eurasianist

Union of Youth also refused to participate in the 2006 March and tried to organize its own so-called Imperial March. On this occasion, Alexander Dugin accused the DPNI of sabotaging the president's and the government's initiatives, which he claimed were aimed at lifting the patriotic spirit of citizens, and contrasted the negative "nationalism" of the DPNI to the positive "patriotism" of the neo-Eurasianists.[92]

After the scandal provoked by the events in Kondopoga and the Western media's portrayal of Russia as a fascist country, the Kremlin decided to prohibit the March, not on political grounds, but with arguments about traffic jams and other urban organizational problems. The DPNI tried to obtain authorization directly from the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, who first hesitated and then refused. However, he did grant Sergei Baburin's party, National Will, permission to organize its own meeting. The success of the 2006 March was therefore paradoxical: in the lead-up it was widely broadcast in the Russian press, but the expected success did not eventuate, since a mere thousand people turned up to Sergei Baburin's meeting. Yet, despite its meager success in the capital, the March was illegally organized in ten large cities throughout the country, including Saint Petersburg, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk, and Vladivostok, attracting a total of more than 10,000 persons.[93]

The 2007 Russian March was held with the permission of the authorities. The DPNI, accompanied by its allies such as Alexander Sevastianov's National Party of the Great Power of Russia and Dmitri Demushkin's Slavic Union, gathered around 3,000 persons, mainly young skinheads, and, thanks to the presence of American and British White Power at the demonstration, issued a call to defend the "Whites." At the same time, the dissident march of the Orthodox and monarchists, led by the Union of Orthodox Banner-Carriers, gathered only about a hundred people, averring the poor echo their message has compared with other parts of the nationalist movement: compared with the DPNI's declaredly modern approach and youthfulness, the idea of returning to a Tsarist past just does not appeal. However, this time it revealed the complex situation in which the extra-parliamentary parties find themselves, since they are being dispossessed of their initiative by associations linked to the Kremlin. Not keen on leaving the field to the extra-parliamentary groups, the pro-presidential youth movements (*Nashi* and *Molodaia Gvardiia*) took control of the street, giving it a festive ambiance that marginalized the political demonstrations (10,000 teenagers gathered at the November 4 evening concert).[94] In 2008, the Kremlin once again authorized Sergei Baburin's Russian March, but banned that of the DPNI and the monarchist movements. About 2,000

DPNI youths nevertheless gathered in Moscow at Arbat and clashed with police, leading to the arrest for a few hours of nearly 500 militants.

Despite its promising start as a matrix of reconciliation among the extra-parliamentary camp, the Russian March has not succeeded in putting a stop to the recurrent schisms: Alexander Sevastianov publicly withdrew his support for Alexander Belov; Sergei Baburin continues to organize his own demonstration; and certain monarchist movements still refuse to march alongside the DPNI's skinheads. In addition, even though it now seems to have become an institution to be repeated annually, the Russian March has not succeeded in achieving its principal goal, namely the appropriation by the extra-parliamentary camp of the November 4 date. Since 2007, the demonstrations and festivities have been turned into an official event organized by pro-Kremlin forces. Finally, the authorities seem determined to bring more severe sanctions against the DPNI's Russian March, especially since Alexander Belov has cast himself in an anti-Kremlin role, although he still seems to have support inside state organs.

Since perestroika, the extra-parliamentary camp has been driven by a constant search to reconcile the kaleidoscope of groups composing it, something it has not managed to achieve. Doctrinal debate has been shunned: the movements most stamped by ideology, such as the monarchist currents, are thus the most marginal in terms of adherents. The skinheads and the Movement Against Illegal Immigration lead the way on this front, confirming that a turning point has been reached: it signals the awareness that social embedding is possible only by putting doctrinal debate to one side and prioritizing everyday xenophobia. Indeed, immigration is the only issue that satisfies the two necessary conditions for developing the spread of such oppositionalist nationalism. The first condition consists of finding a common language with a society that is largely depoliticized, has little interest in ideological debate, nor any confidence in the country's politicians and institutions, but is traversed by strong xenophobic tensions and manifests a certain social discontent. The second condition involves circumventing the Kremlin's monopoly over political expression. To achieve this, some of the new nationalist movements have tried to avoid presenting themselves as rivals to the presidential party, or as undermining the symbolic legitimacy of the authorities. Instead, they have tried to manifest a new willingness to support political power in its efforts to establish a "vertical" relation with society.

There has nonetheless been an overall doctrinal evolution in extra-parliamentary nationalism since 2000: its rapid Europeanization—itself

an outcome of its fear of migrants, of the "yellow peril" and the "Islamist threat." Even if resentment of the West continues to be a driving force of the Russian national narrative the sentiment of belonging to an endangered white world, which includes Western Europe and the United States, paints the picture of a white/European Russia allied with the West in a huge "war of civilizations." Although this Europeanization is not totally and easily admitted by all the movements, it nonetheless sets the tone and confirms the fact that certain young leaders, such as Alexander Belov, are cognizant of the potential respect they stand to gain by presenting themselves as a Russian Berlusconi, Le Pen, or Haider. This then raises a crucial question: have the extra-parliamentary nationalist milieus really succeeded in infiltrating the ruling parties and infusing them with their conceptions, or it is the latter who have succeeded in dispossessing the former of the right to speak about the nation? Whatever the response, one conclusion seems ineluctable: the extra-parliamentary nationalist milieus have by and large lost the battle of words. The terms that were initially defining of the extra-parliamentary camp have been completely integrated into public life and can no longer be associated with any supposed political radicality: in today's Russia, terms such as great power (*derzhavnost'* or *velikoderzhavnost'*), statehood (*gosudarstvennost'* or *gosudarstvennichestvo*), preservation of the nation (*sberezhenie natsii*), empire (*imperiia*) and homeland (Motherland—*rodina* or Fatherland—*otechestvo*) have become the most banal ideological labels.

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CHAPTER THREE

Nationalism as Populism: The Protestation Parties

After analyzing extra-parliamentary nationalism, it pays to turn our focus to the nationalist strategy and political trajectory of the parties that present themselves as part of the opposition but participate in the legislative game and sit at the Duma. There are three such parties: the Communist Party, Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR, and the Rodina formation, the latter having been partially replaced by Fair Russia. I define their nationalism as populist and argue against the label "fascist" that is sometimes applied to them. Populism here means political currents that base their legitimacy on an appeal to the people. Populist movements worldwide (Boulangism, Peronism, Poujadism, the French Front National, or Jörg Haider's Alliance for the Future of Austria) criticize representative democracy and argue against the elite for betraying the interests of the people and privileging its own. Nevertheless, every democracy, whether it is plebiscitary or participatory, regards itself as representative and includes the appeal to the people as one of its consubstantial elements. Political parties in democratic systems therefore seem to contain populism, albeit to various degrees, as an inherent element. Populism is traditionally divided into two trends. The first, protest populism, gives priority to the mouthpiece function and opposes the *demos*-people to the "affluent"; the second, identity populism, prefers the nationalist perspective and presents the *ethnos*-people as locked in struggle against "foreigners."[1]

The political projects of the three Russian parties are all in the lineage of populist thought. They criticize the elites, in particular the oligarchs, whom they accuse of being indifferent to Russia's rebirth and to the

difficulties experienced by the more modest classes; they denounce the Western parliamentarism; and they endorse a personalized regime in which the head of state acts as the father of the nation. Their doctrines are conservative, not revolutionary; authoritarian, not totalitarian. They call for a limitation of democracy but not the suppression of its principles. They want neither a militarization of society nor mass indoctrination, but instead respect for values such as order, hierarchy, and social and religious morality. Finally, their doctrines call for the Russian people to be given priority over foreigners, in particular migrants, and for Russia to regain its great power status and respect in the international arena. Far from pertaining only to the extra-parliamentary opposition, the nationalist theme constitutes one of the main elements of the parliamentary populist parties: their mouthpiece function props themselves up on nationalist rhetoric.

The "Constructive Opposition": The CPRF and the LDPR

Until the parliamentary election of December 2003, studies on nationalism in Russian politics were traditionally limited to two "historic" parties, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). Both have had permanent parliamentary representation since the beginning of the 1990s and have shared the same mouthpiece function. Although they make up part of the political establishment and have led numerous parliamentary committees, they present themselves as outsiders and as torchbearers of social protest. In this way, both seek to distinguish themselves from the authorities, despite having become their auxiliaries—purposefully in the case of the LDPR, and involuntarily in the case of the CPRF. This façade of democracy is perfectly embodied by Vladimir Zhirinovski's party: its being called an "opposition party" actually indicates its complete integration into a political process led by the Kremlin. The Communists occupy a more paradoxical role, since they have become the faithful lieutenants of presidential power against their will. In fact, at the beginning of the 1990s the CPRF was the only credible political alternative to Yeltsin's policies, putting up vigorous arguments for a stop to the reforms. But under Vladimir Putin it was compelled to tone down its opposition: loyalty to the Kremlin having become a precondition for all political participation, it has been obliged to assume the image of a "constructive" opposition, which entails making concessions to the authorities.[2]

Rebirth, Structure, and Weakening of the Communist Party

After the hard-line putsch in August 1991, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was banned. Meanwhile, a new party, the Communist Party of Russia (CPR), had been founded in June 1990, the result of a short-term merger between orthodox Marxists led by Viktor Tiulkin and nationalists led by Gennadi Ziuganov and Alexander Rutskoi. During this period of prohibition, the numbers of Communist partisans greatly declined, but more than a dozen factions claimed to be the successors of the CPSU. Faced with the CPR's nationalist narrative, a second, more Marxist-based organization called the Communist Worker's Party of Russia (RKPR) was formed, led by Viktor Anpilov and Viktor Tiulkin. This organization was affiliated to two associations, Working Moscow and Working Russia, which each claimed about 100,000 members at the time.[3] The Communist Party's ban was lifted in November 1992, allowing the CPR to take the role as leader of the group at the expense of its main competitor, the RKPR. In February 1993, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation held a renaissance congress to reunify the Ziuganov-led nationalist bloc and the Valentin Kuptsov-led Marxist moderates; both groups were seeking to block the more conservative Marxists, such as Anpilov and Tiulkin, from power. In their refusal to merge with the dynamics of the CPRF, the latter were quickly marginalized, as were all the internationalist movements, including Trotskyites, anarchists, unionists, and so forth, none of whom now carry any political weight.[4]

The former ideological secretary of the CPR responsible for relations with the nationalist intellectuals, Gennadi Ziuganov, was elected leader of the CPRF ahead of his competitor Valentin Kuptsov, whose proximity to Mikhail Gorbachev during the early years of perestroika had made him widely unpopular within the party. The election of Ziuganov confirmed the victory of a dynamic inspired by the transformation of the Serbian Communist Party of Slobodan Milošević into a nationalist movement. The new leader pursued a unifying strategy by refusing any overly ideological discussions, especially on the sensitive issue of whether or not the CPRF ought to claim the heritage of the CPSU. He called for Communists to come together in a pragmatic union around a consensual discourse on "defending the Motherland" in order to win over as many voters as possible, but he was careful not to make reference to the previous regime. The events of autumn 1993 confirmed this tactical caution. While Albert Makashov and Viktor Anpilov supported the occupation of the Ostankino television tower by troops loyal to the parliament,

Ziuganov called for compromise. This measured attitude allowed the CPRF to keep its registration, while other radical parties were banned from politics. As such it was also able to participate in the December 1993 parliamentary elections, which Ziuganov decided not to boycott in order to gain popular legitimacy.[5]

Receiving 12 percent of the vote (48 seats), the party became the third-largest political force in the country. This result was notable considering the anti-Communist atmosphere of the time, and was made possible on account of its image as a martyr of the Yeltsin regime. In the 1995 parliamentary elections, the CPRF received 22 percent of the vote (157 seats), twice as many as it did in 1993 and twice as many as its main competitor, Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR. It then became the embodiment of opposition to the Yeltsin government, since the Agrarians and the LDPR had been partially discredited for having consistently supported Egor Gaidar's and Viktor Chernomyrdin's liberal reforms. However, the Communist Party suffered a stinging defeat in the 1996 presidential elections. Buoyed by the 32 percent of votes he won in the first round, Ziuganov was confident of his chances of victory in the second, but obtained only 40 percent of the vote against an incumbent Boris Yeltsin. In the 1999 legislative election, the CPRF's support stabilized at just under 25 percent of the vote (113 seats). But the party failed again in the March 2000 presidential elections against Vladimir Putin, who won the first round with nearly 53 percent of the vote as compared to the Communist candidate's 29 percent.

Throughout the 1990s, the CPRF played a paradoxical, dual, partly involuntary role. It was unrelenting in its condemnation of the liberal regime, but became one of its pillars by systematically avoiding any decisions that might change the status quo. For example, it failed to vote against Viktor Chernomyrdin in 1997, decided not to block the confirmation of Sergei Kirienko as Prime Minister in 1998, and was unable to establish a procedure to bring articles of impeachment against Boris Yeltsin in 1999.[6] The president's constant threats to dissolve the Duma worried the Communists and, since they were little interested in the upcoming elections, they preferred instead to hold onto the positions they had acquired in the parliament, so their compliance was easily bought. The CPRF's policies were incomprehensible to its electorate, and Ziuganov attracted criticisms from the most radical members, who did not accept his refusal to endorse overturning the established order. During Vladimir Putin's first mandate, the CPRF was ready to collaborate closely with the Kremlin in the hope of constituting a left/right binomial, but the Communist deputies were rapidly marginalized. In

the 2003 legislative elections, for the first time in the post-Soviet history of the country, the Communist Party was no longer near the front of the elections. It suffered a real defeat, receiving only 12.7 percent of the vote (52 seats) and losing half of its electorate.[7] Ziuganov actually decided not to run at all in the March 2004 presidential elections, where the CPRF candidate, Nikolai Kharitonov, received only 13.7 percent of the vote.[8] The 2007 legislative elections confirmed the CPRF's odd status as a hardly plausible "constructive" opposition as well as its standing as the country's second-largest party. Even so, it received a mere 11 percent of the vote (a score weakened by Fair Russia's competition) as compared with the presidential party's 64 percent. In the presidential elections of March 2008, Ziuganov came in second behind Dmitri Medvedev, winning about 17.7 percent of the vote.

Along with United Russia, the CPRF is the only party to have a solid partisan structure, a countrywide network inherited from the former CPSU (close to 500,000 members in the 1990s).[9] It also enjoys the benefits of having a substantial press network, including among others *Sovetskaia Rossia* (Soviet Russia), *Pravda Rossii* (The Truth of Russia), and *Pravda* (The Truth). However, the central institution exerts little influence over regional governors affiliated with the CPRF. These latter often work independently, above all on the basis of local strategic alliances, and they advocate ideological beliefs that do not always correspond to the party line. The party's social base has remained relatively modest in the northern regions of the country, especially in rich cities like Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and mostly comprises voters from poorer, southern regions. As a result, the CPRF is well established in the agricultural and industrial regions in crisis, the so-called red belt. This belt is composed of the central, black earth regions, a part of the Volga, and Russian areas in the Caucasus,[10] where the population relies heavily on state subsidies. The local Communist *nomenklatura* thus built its support on its ability to co-opt the central organs and obtain financial benefits for the regions.[11]

This red belt has largely eroded since the 2003 elections. In many regions, especially rural ones, the Communist vote has been halved by support for Putin or the Agrarians. The few, new electoral successes of the CPRF in Siberia were not sufficient to offset its collapse in areas of traditional support.[12] This geographical legacy is clearly marked by Soviet tradition, as is the electorate of the CPRF. It consists mostly of low-ranking state employees and professionals who lost much of their prestige in the 1990s (engineers, technical specialists, health care personnel, and teachers). Members of the working class are very few,[13]

but the party does enjoy the support of several "red bosses" who contribute significantly to maintaining its financial viability.[14] In addition, the CPRF's electorate is relatively old: 45 percent of Communist voters are older than 60.[15] The party and its youth structures, inspired by the Komsomol (which itself had never recovered from its 1991 ban), were joined by very few young people. Without the capacity to renew its social base, the CPRF is destined to suffer major electoral disappointments—it has already lost close to half of its members since 2000—and that fact has been compounded by the destabilizing strategies that the Kremlin is using to undermine it (negative media coverage, pressure on pro-Communist governors, and splitting of the electorate).

The Difficult Building of "Neo-Communism"

On the ideological level, the Communist Party quickly comprehended the importance of doctrinal consensus and was the first to reconcile the Soviet legacy with older debates over the "Russian idea." Since its establishment in 1993, it has split into several ideological factions, which can be broadly grouped into three main categories: first, a nationalist movement headed by Ziuganov that is sympathetic to rapprochement with the Orthodox Church and comprises the statistical majority of the party members who are in the central organs and at the summit of the Muscovite apparatus;[16] second, a group of Marxist reformers led by Valentin Kuptsov and Gennadi Seleznev, some of whom advocate a Russian version of Scandinavian social democracy (a mixed economy, a welfare state, atheist or agnostic discourses, and ideas similar to those of the early Gorbachev era); third, the more orthodox Marxist-Leninists like Nikolai Bindiukov and Richard Kosolapov, as well as the "red patriots." The latter, which include Viktor Iliukhin and Albert Makashov, want the CPRF to claim a legal and ideological continuity with the CPSU and are at the bottom of the main scandals to have rocked the Communist Party.[17]

Since 1993, the CPRF has taken National Bolshevism as its inspiration at the instigation of Ziuganov. This has allowed for the formation of a consensual ideology combining a positive vision of the Soviet past, traditional Slavophile and Orthodox references to Russian nationalism, and some political modernity in its recognition of the independent, modern Russian state. The party's definition of Communism remains imprecise. Internationalism is no longer accepted, allusions to Marxism-Leninism are residual, the interpretation of the Stalin period is positive

but discreet, and its focus is on the unifying aspects of the Soviet past, like the Second World War. The alliance between the different Communist factions is based on their negative perception of issues arising throughout the past two decades: rejection of Gorbachev and Yeltsin; denunciation of capitalism, globalization, and the West; conservatism as a response to the social and cultural changes of the 1990s–2000s; sharing of conspiracy theories to explain the Soviet Union's disappearance; and a sense of collusion between the internal and external enemies of Russia, which has resulted in an "Us versus Them" discourse.

Beyond some doctrinal differences, the party is also split in terms of electoral tactics. The debate pits those who give priority to the opinions of apparatchiks and party members on doctrinal questions, a preference dominant among the more radical, against those who seek pragmatic strategies to attract a broader electorate, a preference widespread among moderates. The CPRF attempted to maintain this dual logic by creating electoral blocs, which included other, smaller parties. It also tried to erase disputes based on the theme of class conflict by focusing on patriotism. The largest internal debates were held between 1993 and 1995. The party's success in the 1993 parliamentary elections led it to lend support to the constitution and to respect the popular vote, thereby eliciting criticism from the most radical Marxists, who rejected the presidentialization of the regime. However, after the 1995 elections, the party's congress was no longer considered the appropriate forum for confrontation between the two factions. The discussion focused exclusively on tactics and strategies.

Despite this unanimous façade, the ideological divisions were merely frozen and far from resolved. In public, the party leadership tried to separate itself from rhetoric steeped in Marxism, focusing instead on patriotism. The platform for the 1995 parliamentary elections made no reference to Marxism-Leninism. The 1996 slogan for the presidential election, "Russia, the Motherland, the People," also refrained from making reference to any form of socialism. However, the Communist defeat that year contributed to the desire to revisit doctrinal debates. After most Marxist members began to retaliate around 1997, party texts again started to mention class struggle. The CPRF's growth crisis intensified after the poor showing of the Communist candidate for the 2000 presidential election. Party leadership and Ziuganov himself recognized that Vladimir Putin's rise to power had profoundly changed their circumstances. By his numerous patriotic references, Putin managed to gain control of electoral niches previously occupied by the CPRF, forcing the latter to redirect its speech to social issues. These internal debates

gave rise to the publication of the *Missions in the Agenda of the CPRF*, which insisted upon class struggle and the need to wrest authority from the hands of the oligarchs.[18]

The communism advocated by the party is primarily that of organizational ideology: members' loyalty, democratic centralism, and a leadership cult allow the CPRF to avoid the multitude of schisms and purges that had weakened the other nationalist parties. The Movement for the Support to the Army, created in 1997 by Lev Rokhlin, Albert Makashov, and Viktor Iliukhin, unsuccessfully attempted to present a separate electoral list in the 1999 elections before returning to the party fold. However, the reform policy promoted by Putin proved to be a new, fertile ground for divisions. In order to regenerate the party, Gennadi Seleznev decided in 2000 to create his own movement, Rossiia, which he described as a center-left party inspired by the social democrats. Rossiia attempted—with little success—to disrupt the binary opposites Putin versus Ziuganov, and provoked virulent reactions from both sides. In 2002 the Duma decided to reduce the number of committees chaired by the Communists, and the CPRF asked Seleznev to leave his post as deputy speaker. Along with other social democrats,[19] he left the party and later became leader of a small Party of the Rebirth of Russia.[20]

After its drastic drop in support in the 2003 elections, the CPRF found itself racked by a new internal crisis caused by Gennadi Semigin. A former protégé of Ziuganov and president of the Industrial Finance Group of Russia, he had been one of the CPRF's main financiers since the second half of the 1990s and was the appointed Duma vice-spokesperson from 1999 to 2003. The "red oligarch," very critical of the party leadership's policy choices, attempted to organize an alternative congress and hoped to present himself, rather than Nikolai Kharitonov, as a candidate in the March 2004 presidential election. Denounced by Ziuganov as an "agent of the Kremlin" and excluded from the CPRF, Semigin organized a new partisan formation, Patriots of Russia, that obtained its registration in July 2005. The Patriots now compete with the Communist Party for the latter's traditional electorate,[21] and even have the support of several of the CPRF's regional leaderships.[22] But for all this it has not gained in public visibility, receiving less than 1 percent of the vote at the December 2007 elections. After this schism, the party leadership set itself the key objective of achieving internal consolidation in a bid to overcome the tensions coming from the orthodox Marxists as well as from those groups tending more toward social democracy. For 15 years now, Ziuganov's strategic flexibility has enabled him to maintain

authority over the central structure of the party and to avoid schisms between nationalists, social democrats, and Marxists.

The CPRF's Ideological Matrices: State and Orthodox Symphony

The CPRF's ideological structuring is due largely to Ziuganov's closeness to extra-parliamentary nationalists and his willingness to endorse many of their ideas. Among those who have influenced the doctrine of the CPRF, the most famous remains Alexander Prokhanov, editor of the weekly *Zavtra* and coauthor of some books with Ziuganov, such as *Power*, published in 1994.[23] The newspaper's editorial board is often presented as the main think tank of the party and has direct access to CPRF leadership. Through *Zavtra*, Ziuganov also merges with Alexander Dugin, whose neo-Eurasianist theories greatly influence his vision of Russian geopolitics. His book, *Geography of Victory: The Foundations of the Geopolitics of Russia* (1999), draws specifically Duginian reflections on the unique nature of Russian geopolitical science and the role of Russia as the guarantor of stability in the Eurasian space.[24] Ziuganov has also borrowed from Dugin the idea that Russian nationalism is not contrary to the expression of minority nationalism, which permits him to present the CPRF as a defender of national sentiment in the republics.

Since the first half of the 1990s, Ziuganov has published numerous theoretical books about his vision of Russia, in which he attempts to combine diverse but very disparate influences. He makes reference to a "Russian *ethnos*" on the model of Lev Gumilev (1912–1992), is inspired by the notion of "historical-cultural types" to be found in the work of Nikolai Danilevski (1822–1885), as well as by Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, and invokes the geopolitical idea, based on the classic formula of Sir Halford Mackinder (1861–1947), that Russia is a *Heartland*, that is, the embodiment of the continental principle. As the CPRF's main thinker, Aleksei Podberezkin was the one who inspired this eclectic collection. A former member of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Podberezkin has acted as an intermediary between Ziuganov and the extra-parliamentary nationalist movements since the August 1991 putsch. In 1995 he founded his own think tank, Spiritual Heritage, and his newspaper, *Obozrevatel'* (Observer), which were both financed by his company, RAO-Corporation. He organized an electoral bloc called the National Patriotic Union of Russia in support of Ziuganov for the

1996 presidential elections. The main figures of this bloc, the writers Alexander Prokhanov and Valentin Rasputin, claimed that the CPRF was the only party capable of unifying all of the patriotic forces of the country and of reestablishing a strong state based on the "Russian Idea."

Until 1999, Spiritual Heritage presented itself as the conceptual center of the Communist Party and several of its members were elected to the Duma on party lists. However, Podberezkin refused to officially join the CPRF, behavior that was unappreciated by other party leaders who worried about his influence on Ziuganov. In 1998, the two men were divided in their opinion on the new government of Sergei Kirienko, with Podberezkin in favor and Ziuganov opposed. Spiritual Heritage decided to present a party list independent of the CPRF for the 1999 parliamentary elections, but received less than 1 percent of the vote. Podberezkin also ran for president in 2000, winning 0.13 percent of the vote. After splitting with the CPRF, he slowly moved away from the opposition and entered administrative functions, such as that in the Presidential Committee for the Development of Civil Society Institutions. He also led a small social democratic party called the United Socialist Party of Russia (SEPR) from 2002 to 2006.[25]

Podberezkin was much influenced by one of the major conservative, interwar émigré thinkers, Ivan Il'in (1883–1954). More religious and less marked by Communist rhetoric than Ziuganov, Podberezkin convinced the Communist leader to expand his patriotic appeals on the specificity of Russian culture to wider audiences. CPRF propaganda very quickly started to deny that the October Revolution constituted a break with Russian culture. Diverging from Marxist views of this event, it claimed that the Revolution was a continuation of Russian culture and a symbol of Russia's essence. From Podberezkin, Ziuganov also borrowed the idea of a return to the Byzantine tradition of a symphony of powers. In this sense, the tradition of Orthodox conciliation (*sobornost'*), formulated by the Slavophiles, is viewed as the forerunner to Communist collectivism and as inherent to the Russian people. Echoing the idea promoted by Alexander Prokhanov and Sergei Kurginian in 1990, Ziuganov defined communism as a metareligion synonymous with the motherland and symbolic of national spirituality. According to this definition, communism is not a mere mode of organizing society, but also the only ideology compatible with the "Russian idea."[26] Ziuganov went even further than his predecessors: in his desire to effect a rapprochement between communism and Christianity, he claimed that both share a common definition of the goals of humanity, and that Jesus Christ was actually the first Communist.[27]

The instrumental nature of the CPRF's reference to the church is very apparent: Orthodoxy is rehabilitated because it lends its support to Russian state power. The CPRF instrumentalizes the concept of Moscow as a third Rome to activate Russia's messianic traditions, in keeping with the image of the Soviet Union's mission of worldwide revolution. The idea that there can be no strong Russian state without a spirituality inspired by the Orthodox Church became one of the CPRF's major creeds, and so it appropriated for itself Sergei Uvarov's famous slogan, "Autocracy, Nationality, Orthodoxy," itself actually a mark of nineteenth-century conservative Russian thinking. While in the 1990s the neo-Eurasianist references to the main "traditional" religions of the country (Orthodoxy, Islam, and Buddhism) were still important in party rhetoric, they were partly eliminated when Ziuganov began his more overt appeals to Orthodox voters. To this end, he published several brochures on Orthodoxy as a core of Russian spiritual renewal that he disseminated in eparchies in the lead-up to the 1999 and 2003 parliamentary elections.[28] His willingness to benefit from the public support of the Moscow Patriarchate was well-received by various Orthodox movements in such newspapers as *Rus' pravoslavnaia* (Orthodox Russia), whose own vision is a hybrid called "Russian Orthodox Socialism."[29]

The conciliatory ideology endorsed by Ziuganov attempts to be simultaneously "imperialist" and "ethnocentric." The Communist leader, for example, has refused to use the distinctive terms for ethnic and civic Russians, and speaks of Russian civilization rather than of the Russian nation in order to avoid taking a position on ethnic, racial, or cultural definitions of Russianness. He calls for a unified state to be reestablished across the Soviet territory, provided that the successor states vote in its favor. Yet he condemned the proposal of his rival, Vladimir Zhirinovski, who wanted to impose reunification by force in recalcitrant countries. The CPRF's proposed reunification, Ziuganov argued, must take place around the Russian people, conceived as the keystone of the empire, rather than on behalf of a "friendship of the peoples" in which all would be legally equal. The supremacy of ethnic Russians, respect for the Russian language, and superior legal rights accorded to the Orthodox Church are affirmed as the core of the new Eurasian empire-in-the-making.

The CPRF's vision of the "Jewish question" is also complex. Officially, the party does not endorse anti-Semitic literature, although it often denounces Jews and Caucasians, who are cast as Russia's traditional enemies, and it equates capitalism and oligarchy with "Jewish tradition." Although Ziuganov's nationalist supporters do not target Jews

as such, the party hosts figures who are very clearly anti-Semitic. Nikolai Kondratenko, for instance, who was the governor of Krasnodar until 2001, was known for his anti-Semitic, homophobic, and conspiratorial antics, while the leaders of the Movement for the Support to the Army, Albert Makashov and Viktor Iliukhin, uttered some scandalous remarks, in fall 1998, about "Yids." The CPRF then put itself in the embarrassing situation of neither sanctioning nor punishing their speech.[30] Indeed, the more xenophobic that official discourse in Russian political life is becoming, the more the Communist Party seems to radicalize, although its voters are not the most xenophobic. Demonstrations emblematic of the CPRF, like those celebrating May 1 or the victory over Nazi Germany on May 9, sometimes play host to members of the Movement against Illegal Immigration.[31]

The LDPR: Scope and Limits of Populist Protest

Much has been written about Vladimir Zhirinovski's personality, especially after his brilliant election results in 1993, although one can only bemoan the imprecise terminology often used against him, especially the label of "fascism."[32] Founded in spring 1989, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia was, alongside the CPSU, the only party registered at the Soviet Ministry of Justice before the regime's demise. During the presidential elections of 1991, the LDPR had already managed third place behind Boris Yeltsin and the Communist candidate Nikolai Ryzhkov, winning 7.8 percent of the votes, and between 10 percent and 13 percent in its bastions in the Far East.[33] Circumspect with regard to the authorities, Zhirinovski made no commitment to the insurgents in the fall of 1993 and supported Yeltsin in his desire to impose a new, presidentialist constitution. In the elections of December 1993, the LDPR reached its highest levels of success, gaining 22 percent of the vote (59 seats), which handed it the title of Russia's third-largest party. At this peak of its existence, the media raised the alarm throughout Russia and Western Europe, fueling fears that the LPDR and its leader represented a new "fascist threat."

Zhirinovski's party is distinguished by its very irregular results; its good scores must be put into perspective by its near incapacity to get deputies elected at single-candidate ballots. In the 1995 elections, it found itself in a state of crisis. The party's electorate was cut in half, resulting in a mere 11 percent of the vote (51 seats). In the presidential elections of 1996, Zhirinovski received only 5.76 percent of the vote, even less

than in 1991. The party's collapse seemed to have been confirmed in the 1999 parliamentary election, at which it gained less than 6 percent, or 19 seats, and again at the 2000 presidential election, with 2.7 percent. However, in the legislative elections of 2003, the party again achieved good results, gaining 11.8 percent of the vote (36 seats), and as much as 15 percent in its Far Eastern strongholds. It has thus again become the third-largest force in Russian politics, on the heels of the Communist Party. In addition to its stable niche in the Far East, which has been secured by its fueling of fears of a Chinese "flood," the LDPR also won votes in the Communist red belt, as well as in regions of the North Caucasus and the Volga, probably due to widespread concerns related to interethnic tensions.[34] Like Ziuganov, Zhirinovski preferred not to run in the 2004 presidential election against Putin, presenting instead a fairly unknown candidate, Oleg Malyshkin, who won only 2 percent of the vote. At the 2007 legislative elections, the LDPR obtained 8.6 percent of the vote, or 40 seats, and at the 2008 presidential elections, Zhirinovski managed 9.3 percent of the ballots.

These uneven results are due in large part to the LDPR's pro-authorities policies and, in turn, to the Kremlin's largesse toward Vladimir Zhirinovski's eccentricities. While all electoral analyses confirm that its social base has steadily eroded following its initial successes in 1993, the good results the party achieved in 2003 can be put down to its favorable media coverage. Zhirinovski's results were also boosted by the anti-oligarch rhetorical niche that he had carved out for himself only a few months after the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovski. In terms of numbers, however, the success of the LDPR is only relative. In comparison to the 3 million people who declared themselves in its favor in 2003, 12 million and 7.5 million did so in 1993 and 1995, respectively. With a base consisting of workers and the urban lower-middle classes, the LDPR has experienced difficulties in gaining support from wider segments of the population and continues to recruit primarily from protest voters such as the unemployed, low-level state employees, and the military.[35]

Furthermore, although it ranks third or fourth in gross numbers, the LDPR has no real faction in the Duma and lacks a coherent legislative strategy. Its deputies mostly vote with the presidential majority—and occasionally but rarely with the Communist opposition—in accordance with their personal choices or in return for the favors of other factions. The internal logic underlying Zhirinovski's political engagement—he has never attempted to hide his cultivation of a "puppet" image—remains ambiguous. In addition, the LDPR has presented itself for a long time, and with a certain sense of self-derision, as "LDPR Limited,"

to signal the commercial character of its political enterprise.[36] Indeed, the party is constituted of a conglomerate of disparate political personalities who are united not by common political objectives but by personal loyalty to Zhirinovski. Within the party, he has established a cult of personality, reproduces a paternalistic conception of power, is systematically reelected by a unanimous vote, and appoints party candidates in regions according to his mood.[37]

The LDPR is distinguished from the CPRF by its almost unconditional support for the political establishment, whether Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s or Vladimir Putin in the following decade. The party supported the liberal Sergei Kirienko's appointment to the prime ministership in 1998, attempted to oppose that of Evgeni Primakov a few months later, and then in exchange for its support was awarded a ministry position—Sergei Kalashnikov in the Labor Ministry—as part of the latter's government. During Putin's two terms, the LDPR's leadership has made numerous statements in support of presidential policies while also continuing to play the card of popular protest. It is therefore necessary to speak about Zhirinovski as having more a *style* than a *doctrine*; he is the archetypical representative of populism defined as a "political style likely to utilize diverse symbolic elements and settle in multiple ideological locations."[38] All the classic elements of populism are present in LDPR: popular personal appeal, denunciation of cosmopolitan elites, charisma, antitax protests, demands for referendums, and calls to rid the country of those who are allegedly unable to be assimilated, which in the Russian case are Caucasian and Central Asian populations.

Vladimir Zhirinovski or Assumed Imperialism?

Vladimir Zhirinovski's cultivated eccentricities and his refusal to adopt an at least minimally structured political ideology make any analysis of a "Zhirinovski doctrine" difficult. His thundering speeches, which aim to generate scandal, continually attract the attention of the media, without which his presence on the political scene would have been quickly lost. Yet the LDPR does provide some discernible, doctrinal elements. Although he sometimes vacillates between advocacy of the welfare state and neo-liberal principles, Zhirinovski primarily prefers to defend small businessmen and artisans, as well as economic liberalism, which significantly separates him from the statist arguments of the Communists. In addition, he is much more markedly anti-Communist than

his competitor and advocates an openly imperialist, xenophobic policy that does not have the CPRF's doctrinal background and logic.

In the early 1990s, after his unexpected success in the legislative elections, Zhirinovski gave many interviews in which he employed tactics of political provocation. For journalists from *Izvestiia*,[39] he expounded a positive reading of National Socialism and indicated that he would "act as Hitler in 1933" were he to become president.[40] However, he decided to pursue legal action against Egor Gaidar in 1994, after the latter called him "the most popular fascist leader in Russia," and he won the trial; the accusation "fascist" was legally recognized as an insult.[41] Thereafter, Zhirinovski has continued to hold radical views but has eliminated his positive allusions to the model of 1930s Germany, probably due to awareness that this kind of ideological radicalism loses him votes. Hence, a LDPR propaganda booklet published in 2007 called *The History of the LDPR: Sources and Facts* upholds the party as a model of openness to European liberal and democratic values, and presents it as the heir of the liberal, even libertarian, tradition of Russian intellectual circles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[42]

Yet Vladimir Zhirinovski also repeatedly calls for the creation of an authoritarian regime, arguing that authoritarianism and leader worship are central to the Russian people's "sense of state." He puts forward violent anti-Semitic arguments, denounces the October revolution as a Jewish conspiracy against Russians, and presents post-Soviet oligarchs as the modern incarnation of those former plotters. He also sets himself apart by his radical anti-Caucasian and especially anti-Chechen comments; he denounces these groups, in his provocative style, as "shepherds," a derogatory term for "southerners."[43] This xenophobia is accompanied by statements espousing remilitarization, the restoration of prestige for the armed forces, the need to return to the arms race, and the establishment of a ministry to fight terrorism—an idea that has long enjoyed substantial support in the military.[44] Originally from Kazakhstan, Zhirinovski also focuses on the rights, according to him excessive, of nonnative peoples. He states that ethnic Russians were sacrificed for the economic and cultural development of Central Asians and Caucasians, who subsequently claimed their independence. Concerned lest this also occur in the Russian Federation, he supports the abolition of the country's federal character, which he claims privileges the national republics at the expense of Russian regions, and demands the recognition of Russians as Russia's eponymous people.[45] The LDPR Duma faction therefore regularly tries to pass bills asserting the "Russian people's right to self-determination."

However, despite these calls for a more ethnocentric Russia, Zhirinovski presents himself in the public arena primarily as a great defender of the empire. In the 1990s, he sought the restoration of the imperial borders of 1900, which covered a part of Poland and Finland and, due to an alliance with the Austro-German Empire, would have also included the Orthodox Balkans and the rest of Central Europe. In his famous pamphlet published at the height of his popularity in 1993, *The Last Thrust to the South*, he urged Russia to expand across Asia, and called on Russian soldiers to "dip their boots in the Indian Ocean."[46] Zhirinovski constantly denounces the allegedly negative role of the main rival to what he sees as the Russian mission in Eurasia, namely Turkey, and has written several works about the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and the "Turkish threat."[47] He is also one of the major critics of Western influence in Russia, having condemned the "colored revolutions," which, according to him, were orchestrated by the United States; and he supports the idea that Russia replicate NATO enlargement through the creation of a new joint military structure in post-Soviet countries.

The LDPR cannot be legitimately classified as an "imperialist" or "ethnonationalist" movement. Although Zhirinovski has repeatedly argued that the former Soviet republics be brought back into the Russian fold, and that the empire be rebuilt within the borders of the late Soviet Union, he also simultaneously campaigns for a self-sufficient regime in which ethnic Russians would enjoy legal primacy. He refuses, however, to provide a racial definition of Russianness, emphasizing instead a linguistic and cultural sense of belonging to a Russian world. This relative ideological flexibility is generally attributed to the fact that his father was Jewish, which, despite his own recurring anti-Semitism, has earned him some enmity among the most radical anti-Semites. Zhirinovski therefore combines imperialist with isolationist arguments and states his determination to defend the "little guy" against the oligarchs, the Russians against foreigners, and the real country against a corrupt parliamentary system, which he presents as having lost touch with society's aspirations. He has thus successfully established himself on two populist archetypes, protest and identity, entailing an assimilation of the people to the nation.

The LDPR plays a strategic role as the experimental arena of a pseudonationalist opposition, whose radical narrative is inversely proportional to its legislative submission to the authorities. While not all LDPR members are as nationalist as their leader, the party is known for harboring radical figures like Nikolai Kurianovich. Vladimir Zhirinovski himself has continued successfully to mediate between the

extra-parliamentary parties and the deputies. However, in 2006 he excluded Kurianovich, one of the leaders of the skinhead Slavic Union, for having actively participated in the Russian March whereas the LDPR held a separate meeting. In the 2007 elections, the party revived its specific combination of nationalism and provocation with the slogan "what is good for a Russian is good for everyone" (*khorosho russkim—khorosho vsem*).[48] It nominated three candidates, Zhirinovski himself, his son and leader of the LDPR's parliamentary faction, Igor Lebedev, and Andrei Lugovoi, suspected of involvement in the poisoning death of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko in London, in an attempt to generate criticism from the Western and Russian media.

The restriction of the Russian political arena in recent years has accentuated the growing differences between the CPRF and the LDPR. The latter, whose style is geared to its various political influences, can perfectly accommodate the presidentialization of the Putin regime, and is in its turn allowed a wide space for public maneuver. Because the LDPR presents no political danger, the presidential party and the media subservient to it are fully satisfied with Zhirinovski as an "opposition candidate" who does not threaten the status quo. As for the CPRF, insofar as it has been obliged to "let doctrine yield to tactics,"[49] it has had to develop more complex strategies. Its transformation into a dummy, opposition party has not gone without fomenting discontent arising from the difficulty of justifying the Communists' legislative inconsistencies at the Duma. The Kremlin continues to place the CPRF under much more direct attack than the LDPR, confirming that even in its weakened state it is still perceived by many in power as their main competitor. Last, and above all, the CPRF is still viewed by a part of Russian society as one of the only parties that sticks up for the poorest classes, retirees in particular, and that struggles to keep alive the meaning of social equality as it prevailed in the Soviet period.

The CPRF and the LDPR both share a number of doctrinal elements related to populism. First and foremost, they both conflate the *demos*-people and the *ethnos*-people into a single entity in need of defending against a variety of conspiratorial enemies, embodied mainly by oligarchs, Jews, Westerners, and migrants. The advantage of this conflation is that they can insist on both a nationalist and a social political agenda. However, the CPRF and the LDPR electorates do not share similar views on economic liberalism or on the state's role in social regulation. The ideological foundations of the two parties also differ. Though the two leaders have refused to decide on whether to take a racial or cultural definition of Russianness, the CPRF places less emphasis

on xenophobia, especially against Caucasians—whereas for the LDPR it is the bread and butter of its platform—and strives to be more reasoned in its desire to reestablish a post-Soviet unity. The Communists have also developed a far more sophisticated doctrine on the Orthodox-Communist "Russian idea," which appears to enjoy support from parts of the Russian population. Its advocacy of notions according to which the Russian state is in essence a great power is rooted in old doctrinal tendencies, giving the CPRF a prestigious intellectual heritage that the LDPR utterly lacks.

Rodina: The New Face of Right-Thinking Nationalism

In the 2003 parliamentary elections, a new political formation appeared on the Russian scene, Rodina (Motherland). Initially, the movement benefited from the authorities' extensive goodwill, but it quickly divided into multiple factions, splitting between those who advocated building closer ties with the Kremlin and those who wished to become opposition leaders. Despite its recurrent schisms, Rodina symbolized a turning point in the political history of the country. While it was defined as "leftist," it had no popular base and, unlike the CPRF, did not try to cultivate one through the organization of social activities. Its success demonstrates that the members of the state apparatus (*chinovniki*) have achieved a certain level of reinforcement and that the political arena has become monopolized by the central administration lobbies, confirming that this opposition is a merely internal one devoid of any real connection to society's demands.

Through Rodina, for the first time figures from marginal nationalist circles came to form an alliance and to transform a rhetoric once seen to be radical into a politically correct doctrine. The party succeeded in joining radical and moderate nationalist movements, highlighting one or the other depending on the circumstances, and grounding their arguments in an analysis that would be accepted on the contemporary political scene. While the CPRF has consistently underestimated the anticommunism of some nationalists, Rodina found its niche in electoral environments sensitive to patriotic rhetoric and in search of a "third way" between the economic liberalism of the presidential party and the CPRF's all too distinctive socialist references. The party therefore promoted doctrinal vagueness regarding its economic and social objectives as well as its vision of Russian identity. It thus shared the same logic of

patriotic centrism as the presidential party, a logic based on a search for consensus and bridging of differences of opinion.

A Complex Political Journey: Loyalty or Opposition?

In September 2003, the creation of a new electoral bloc named Rodina was announced at a press conference. It was composed of three small, fairly unknown parties: the United Socialist Party of Russia (SEPR), led by Alexander Vatagin, of which Aleksei Podberezkin was a member; Sergei Baburin's National Will Party; and the Party of Regions of Russia, which was formed in 1998, and whose head was Dmitri Rogozin and second-in-command was Sergei Glazev. In the 2003 parliamentary elections this bloc produced a surprise by winning 9 percent of the votes, or about 5.5 million voters. It was the last party to cross the 5 percent threshold needed to sit at the Duma, and almost overnight Rodina had become the country's fourth-largest party after United Russia, the LDPR, and the CPRF, and the third-largest parliamentary fraction, with 39 deputies, behind United Russia and the Communist Party. However, as soon as the legislative elections were over, the new political formation found itself divided over the strategy to adopt for the presidential elections. Glazev, who had Baburin's support and that of part of the United Socialist Party, announced his candidacy for president, while Rogozin wanted the bloc to support Putin. In February 2004, Rogozin managed to transform the Party of Regions of Russia into the Rodina party and, by seizing the momentum created around the Rodina electoral bloc, prevented two competitors from emerging—Glazev as a presidential candidate, and Baburin as a parliamentary faction leader.

Even its institutionalization did not save the party, born of an electoral coalition, from being continually rocked by regular schisms caused by conflicting personal ambitions as much as by choices of political strategy, not to mention the pressures coming from the Kremlin. Glazev quickly left the party and founded a new, more social democratic movement called For a Dignified Life, thus enabling him to run as a candidate for the 2004 presidential election; he collected 4.1 percent of the vote, which was a decent result for an opposition candidate with no access to the media. Baburin, for his part, sought to strengthen his power by relying on his past as a "true" nationalist to attract the most radical voters, who were dissatisfied with Rogozin's image as a Kremlin submissive. Rogozin was accused of giving priority to the Rodina - Party

of Regions of Russia to the detriment of its two allies, National Will and the Unified Socialist Party. In June 2005, Baburin, the then deputy speaker at the Duma, was controversially excluded from the parliamentary faction for conducting "secessionist activities" and challenging Rogozin's authority. With his developed parliamentary contacts, he succeeded in registering his own faction despite not having the required minimum number of members. So, for more than a year, two branches of Rodina coexisted in the Duma, that of Rogozin, formally known as the Rodina—Party of Regions of Russia, with about 30 deputies, and that of Baburin, formally known as the Rodina—National Will and Unified Socialist Party, with a dozen deputies.

In February 2005, Baburin's party initiated a rapprochement with both Glazev's faction and the Patriots of Russia coalition headed by the former Communist Gennadi Semigin. The alliance, however, was short lived. No sooner had it split into two parliamentary factions than Glazev moved closer to Rogozin and reinstated his faction, of which he was appointed vice president, but did not rejoin the Rodina party. The alliance between the various internal coalitions underwent further changes in the spring of 2006. In April, Rogozin suddenly announced his departure from his party post, officially for purposes of working on his program, "Preservation of the Nation," which targets issues of demography, migration, and repatriation. The program, launched amid great fanfare by Rodina's political leadership, was presented as a program of national rehabilitation to be implemented after the upcoming elections.[50] Rogozin, however, indicated on several occasions that he resigned under pressure from the Kremlin. He was replaced in the party and parliamentary leadership by Alexander Babakov, a businessman relatively unknown to the general public whose subdued, centrist discourse seemed to satisfy the authorities.

These struggles between Rogozin, Glazev, and Baburin embody the readjustments within the Russian political spectrum caused by Rodina between its initial appearance in 2003 and its end in 2006. There has been much talk indicating that Rodina was actually a Kremlin creation, orchestrated by two members of the presidential administration, Vladislav Surkov, who was in charge of relations with the political parties, and Igor Sechin, who is regarded as being representative of the "Petersburg Chekists" close to Putin.[51] The party also had the support of the oligarch Oleg Deripaska, head of the powerful aluminum company RusAl, and of Alexander Lebedev, director of the National Bank of Russia. In supporting this leftist nationalist party, the Kremlin's aims were to impede the emergence of Glazev as a potential presidential

competitor, to undermine the Communist Party, and to prevent Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces from attaining the 5 percent needed to enter parliament. A sociological analysis of Rodina's election results seems to confirm a correlation between areas where the party performed best and those where the CPRF and liberals lost votes. The bloc won many votes in Moscow and surrounding regions (where it got more than 15 percent), in the traditionally more liberal Saint Petersburg, and in CPRF bastions, namely the regions of Krasnodar, Voronezh, Rostov, and Krasnoyarsk.[52] Rodina's best results, however, were achieved among a social stratum in decline: the over-45 age bracket of those with a high level of Soviet education.[53]

Rodina's behavior vis-à-vis the political authorities was ambivalent. Rogozin always demonstrated his fidelity to Putin, so as to suggest that once elected his deputies would quietly support the Kremlin and that thanks to them, United Russia would in principle be able to rely on getting the two-thirds majority necessary to make changes to the constitution, if it wished to do so. In its beginnings, Rodina was essentially a nationalist movement with a double face. One part of it, represented by Baburin, was in opposition alongside the CPRF, while the other part, represented by Rogozin, supported the Kremlin in its parliamentary initiatives. Rodina thus played a mouthpiece role: it never ceased to denounce the authorities, which it generally regarded as too liberal, but neither did it ever directly attack Putin. At the time Rogozin stated, for instance, that he practically always agreed with the president and that "the Rodina faction and its bloc can become Putin's 'reserve of cadres' [and] need to work in this direction."[54]

It appears, however, that the situation became more complicated at the beginning of 2005. In January, the state eliminated many material benefits for the most impoverished Russians, especially pensioners, in exchange for cash, setting Rodina on a collision course with the authorities. The bloc's main leaders, including Rogozin, began a hunger strike near the Duma in protest against the law, setting them in active opposition to United Russia. Glazev's return to the faction in summer 2005 and the signing of a friendship agreement with the CPRF confirmed this change in the party's direction. In its parliamentary practice throughout 2005–2006, Rodina mostly allied with the Communist Party, in validation of the fact that it was no longer continuing to pursue loyalist strategies in the manner of Zhirinovski's LDPR. It seems even that Rodina's and the CPRF's most virulent nationalists came together to form an informal group in the Duma headed by Nikolai Kondratenko. In addition, Rogozin went on television along with the National Bolshevik

leader Eduard Limonov to defend a "popular referendum" initiative that would have validated the accession of new subjects to the Russian Federation, drawing the Kremlin's wrath.

As Rodina became a more distinctly oppositional party, the authorities decided to disallow it from participating in regional elections, citing various administrative or legal reasons. After having obtained 21 percent of the votes in Voronezh, Rodina was disallowed from registering for seven of the eight regional elections held in 2006. The party, however, was able to run for the elections in the Altai, winning 10 percent of the vote, which placed it second after the presidential party. In November 2005, Rodina lost its authorization to participate in Duma elections in Moscow. The polls estimated its support to be close to 25 percent, which would have placed it second to United Russia. However, Rogozin's eviction from the party leadership in spring 2006 made it possible for Rodina to return to the ranks of the loyal opposition and to the Kremlin's fold.

After the mass demonstrations against benefit monetization and Rodina's unexpected electoral success, the Kremlin realized that the opposition's social niche was on its left. As a result, it set about trying to capture this electoral space by creating a political formation composed of a part of the ruling elites. Rodina's change of attitude with respect to the Kremlin, announced by the dismissal of Dmitri Rogozin, was confirmed in October 2006 after it merged with two other loyalist parties, the Party of Life and the Pensioner's Party. The new political formation, Fair Russia, is headed by Sergei Mironov, who had been head of the Federation Council since 2001 and is close to the "Petersburg clan." Mironov officially ran for president in 2004, but only so that multiple candidates were fielded. In the March 2007 elections for regional assemblies, Fair Russia won more seats than even the Communist Party, which would have been impossible without the Kremlin's gracious provision of "administrative resources." However, its results at the 2007 legislative elections did not meet the high hopes of its leaders; Fair Russia only managed to cross the 7 percent threshold needed to sit at the Duma.

Rodina's merger with two parties that are firmly in the grip of the presidential administration eliminated its protest potential. As leader of the new party Fair Russia, Mironov announced that it would work in opposition to United Russia, but support policy initiated by the president. At the March 2008 presidential elections, his party launched a call to vote for Dmitri Medvedev and backed Vladimir Putin in his new role as Prime Minister. Fair Russia's program cleverly makes demands on issues of social justice and maintains a relatively moderate stance on national themes. It calls for a tightening of laws against racist acts, affirms the civic identity of Russians, emphasizes the country's multinational

nature, and wants the Ministry of Nationalities to be reinstituted.[55] On the migration issue, Fair Russia supports the Kremlin's policy of stricter laws against illegal immigration and of encouraging legal immigration, but only if the latter "does not destroy ethnic balance and cultural traditions."[56] To maintain this balance, it argues that priority should be given to compatriots, that Russian citizenship should be issued only with the passing of exams in Russian language and culture, and that the state should limit the concentration of migrants in certain regions or cities. In this way, Fair Russia is supposed to represent the leftist version of the presidential party, being more social than the latter, but less overtly nationalist than Rodina.

While Fair Russia presented itself as the legitimate heir to Rodina, the ousted members of the new pro-presidential party tried to reorganize themselves. In December 2006, Rogozin relaunched the former Congress of Russian Communities, which despite its virtual disappearance from politics since the 1995 election, still enjoyed a certain prestige in nationalist circles. Initiated by Rogozin, the Congress wanted to promote new radical personalities like DPNI chairman Alexander Belov and Slavic Union leader Nikolai Kurianovich in order to take advantage of the current waves of anti-immigrant sentiment. In May 2007, influential members of the Congress of Russian Communities founded a new party, Great Russia, which has laid claim to Rodina's legacy. Rogozin and Belov were members of its steering committee, but the party was officially headed by Andrei Saveliev, the only Rodina deputy who opposed its transformation into Fair Russia. Great Russia presented itself as the party of "the Russian way and national conservatism," aiming to "break the liberal/social divide perpetuated by the authorities and to impose the only true divide, that opposing national and anti-national forces."[57] Accused by the Kremlin of receiving financing by Boris Berezovsky, Great Russia did not obtain its registration in June 2007, officially due to an insufficient number of members and legal inconsistencies in its statutes. Despite his dissident stance, however, Dmitri Rogozin continued to have supporters within the presidential administration and was actually named Russia's ambassador to NATO at the beginning of 2008.

The Ideological Kaleidoscope of Rodina and Its Multiple Subgroups

The leaders of the Rodina bloc had multiple intellectual and political affinities with the extra-parliamentary camp. The party was a large nationalist conglomerate within which four main currents can be

defined: first, the lobbies for the protection of the Russians of the Near Abroad; second, those nostalgic for the Soviet Union and "left-wing" activists who do not identify with the CPRF; third, defenders of political Orthodoxy; and fourth, supporters of Sergei Baburin.

The group that defends Russians of the Near Abroad is represented by Rogozin, who has built a large part of his career on the question of the Russian "diaspora." In 1993, he joined the Union for the Rebirth of Russia, which was defined as "the union of young center-right party leaders,"[58] before finding a more stable niche in the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO). In 1994, the Congress gathered 1,800 deputies representing almost 50 associations from various post-Soviet republics. Registered by the Department of Justice in 1995, the KRO transformed itself into a political party, chaired by Yuri Skokov. Among its leaders were General Alexander Lebed, Konstantin Zatulin, and Sergei Glazev. While relatively powerful, the Congress stood for election in December 1995 as part of the Union of the Russian People's bloc, which was led by Yuri Skokov and Alexander Lebed, then at the height of his influence. Nevertheless, the movement did not win the 5 percent needed for representation in the Duma.[59]

The Congress did not support a project of Soviet restoration but focused particularly on the Crimea, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, and wanted the Cossacks to form a cordon sanitaire between Russia and Central Asia. The KRO's program statement called for "the Russian nation's unification in one state on its historical territory, the revival of the power of the motherland, and the well-being and development of all the peoples of Russia."[60] The ideology of the Congress was formulated in two texts, namely *Manifesto of the Rebirth of Russia* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Compatriots*, both adopted at the movement's second congress in January 1994. Through its ability to formulate policy objectives focused on the "diaspora," the Congress of Russian Communities has played a key role in the crystallization of a political environment dedicated to the protection of the so-called compatriots.[61]

In the second half of the 1990s, Rogozin left the marginal environment in which he was operating and moved closer to decision-making circles. He was appointed vice-chairman of the Committee for National Policy in the Duma and dealt mostly with the sensitive issue of the Russian North Caucasus. Reelected to parliament in 1999, he became part of the People's Party parliamentary faction and directed the Duma Committee for International Affairs, as well as the Duma's permanent delegation to the Assembly of the Council of Europe. In July 2002, in recognition of his loyalty to the Kremlin, Putin appointed him chairman

of the Committee for Problems of the Kaliningrad Region due to the Expansion of the European Union to the East. Thanks to the friendship between Skokov and Rogozin, milieus sensitive to the "diaspora" issue contributed to the rapprochement between the Party of Regions of Russia and Baburin's National Will, which was also known for its defense of Russians of the Near Abroad. The combination of political figures such as Rogozin, Baburin, and Viktor Alksnis (cf. *infra*) within Rodina was thus an embodiment of the more general process by which these lobbies for the defense of the "diaspora" were institutionalized. Born among monarchist and Orthodox circles as well as among those nostalgic for the Soviet construction these lobbies have succeeded in the 2000s in penetrating the state institutions and in moving closer to the presidential administration.

Sergei Glazev led the second Rodina subgroup which represented that part of the Russian left that did not recognize Ziuganov's CPRF, that advocated less markedly nationalist policies, and that was closer to Western social democracy than to Marxism or Soviet nostalgia. An economist by training, Glazev quickly made his support of economic reforms known and was first appointed deputy Minister and then Minister of External Economic Relations in Egor Gaidar's government, but he resigned after Boris Yeltsin's coup de force against the parliament. Between 1995 and 1999, Glazev worked at the Council of the Federation and moved closer to Alexander Lebed, who appointed him director of the economic section of the Security Council. During those years, Glazev reneged on a portion of his liberal principles and began to advocate interventionist policies in economic matters. Becoming a supporter of a strong state presence in the economy, Glazev moved closer to the Communists, but never went so far as to call for a return to the Soviet model; in 1999, he even entered the Communists' parliamentary faction but never actually joined the party. In the initial preelectoral negotiations in 2003, the Rodina bloc cast itself as the ostensible representative of the non-Communist left and as disinterested in nationalist rhetoric; however, Rogozin and Baburin soon redirected it, succeeding in placing nationalism at the heart of the party agenda.[62]

In 2003, Glazev conducted negotiations with Alexander Dugin, the leader of the small Eurasia party, who claimed to be interested in the combination of socialist ideas and nationalism embodied by Rodina. The discussions between the two men, however, quickly died due to personality struggles. In addition to his neo-Eurasianist sympathies, Glazev is also vice president of the Union of Orthodox Citizens and is considered a loyal partner of the Moscow Patriarchate. Two well-known

Orthodox clerics, Andrei Kuraev and Vladislav Sveshnikov, who were both participants in the Movement for a Dignified Life, tried to anchor Glazev's social demands in the idea that the renewal of the Orthodox consciousness is the only possible salvation for the Russian society. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Rogozin has collaborated as much as Glazev with Orthodox political movements. For both men, the interest in Orthodoxy is not a purely religious one; instead they consider that faith represents only one element of national identity as well as a way of ensuring moral and patriotic conformity.

This proximity to the Church has enabled them to maintain important personal networks in political Orthodox circles, constituting a third Rodina subgroup. Thanks to Glazev and Rogozin the political analyst Natalia Narochnitskaia, who played an important role in the Pan-Russian National Council in the first half of the 1990s, joined Rodina.[63] A researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations and a well-known Orthodox publicist, Narochnitskaia systematically supports the claims of the Moscow Patriarchate, especially concerning the notion of a specific "Orthodox civilization" based on the predominance of ethnic Russians and marked above all by its anti-Western stance; she stood out in the public arena with her pan-Slavist rhetoric in favor of Yugoslavia and was unwavering in her support for the two Chechen wars. In that same Orthodox environment, Rodina also recruited Alexander Krutov, editor of the newspaper *Russkii dom* (Russian House) and of a television broadcast of the same name (which was cancelled in the fall of 2003), and Alexander Chuev, who was the former president of the Christian Democrats and vice-chair of the Duma Committee for Religious and Social Organizations.[64]

The fourth and final Rodina subgroup is that of Sergei Baburin. A nationalist politician popular with the extra-parliamentary camp, Baburin has nonetheless managed to preserve his deputy seat throughout the years 1990–2000. In 1991 he founded the Russian Pan-National Union, along with other politicians who refused to recognize the Belovezh Agreements that dissolved the Soviet Union. The movement became a political party in 1994, with 50,000 members and a newspaper, *Vremia* (The Times).[65] Very committed to the former Soviet structure, it called for a combination of social democracy and imperial nationalism, sought reconciliation between "Whites" and "Reds," and claimed to adhere to democratic values, which earned it the support of Mikhail Astafiev and Viktor Aksiuchits. The Pan-National Union's strategy consisted in attacking the Communist Party on its own terrain by setting up splinter groups in various electoral blocs, but this was largely unsuccessful

(the party received 1.6 percent in the 1995 election). In 2001, Baburin founded a new movement called National Will, which included the Pan-National Union and three other small movements: the Union of Realists; the party of Russian Rebirth, headed by the pagan-inspired neo-Nazi Valeri Skurlatov; and Spas, led by Vladimir Davidenko, who put Alexander Barkashov at the top of his electoral list in the 1999 elections. Baburin has sat on several Duma and presidential committees, participating, for example, in the Council for the Realization of National Priority Projects and Demographic Policy.[66]

National Will also includes another important personality of the Russian nationalist spectrum, namely Viktor Alksnis, a Russian native from Latvia and former military engineer of the Baltic fleet. Since the 1990s, he has participated in numerous political alliances promoting the restoration of the Soviet Union and the defense of Russians in the Near Abroad. In December 1991, he was involved in the founding congress of the Pan-National Union and became one of the main leaders of the Front for National Salvation. In September 1993, he took a stance in favor of parliament against Boris Yeltsin, and then joined Alexander Rutskoi's Derzhava movement, of which he was elected National Committee secretary. In 1996, he joined Baburin's party again and, for a time, contributed to Alexander Dugin's neo-Eurasianist publications. A deputy in the third Duma, in 2001 he decided to join Baburin's new party, National Will, was appointed its vice president, and was again elected in the December 2003 parliamentary elections. Whereas Baburin is a doctrinaire nationalist whose primary conviction is that Russia has an ethnic, not a civic, character, Alksnis epitomizes Soviet nostalgia and advocates an imperialism devoid of ethnic allusions in which Russia is above all defined as a military and geopolitical power.

Rodina also enjoyed the direct and indirect support of two well-known ideologues, the first one embodying 1990s Russian nationalism, the second one that of the 2000s. The first was none other than Alexander Prokhanov, who has been a key figure since the early 1980s and is currently the editor of *Zavtra*. Long seen as the unofficial organ of the CPRF, the newspaper gradually shifted toward Rodina due to the rapprochement between Prokhanov and Rogozin, who made their alliance public at the end of 2005.[67] Within Rodina, Rogozin also received assistance from Andrei Saveliev, who long remained in the shadow of his mentor but is now increasingly emerging as an independent actor on the political scene. Like Rogozin, Saveliev joined the Union for the Rebirth of Russia and the Congress of Russian Communities, for which he wrote the *Manifesto for the Rebirth of Russia*, before

following Rogozin to Kaliningrad. Upon being elected to the Duma in 2003, Rodina's number two was appointed to the Committee for Constitutional Legislation and the Construction of the State, and made vice president of the Duma Committee for CIS Relations and Compatriot Affairs. In 2005, he attracted attention for verbally attacking Zhirinovski, who sued him despite a joint attempt by Rodina and the CPRF to strip the LDPR leader of his function.

In addition to this career as the main Rodina ideologue, Saveliev is known for his central role in the "raciologist" movement. He manages the "Library of Racial Thought" alongside Vladimir Avdeev and has published many works with telling titles, such as *The Last Century of the White World, The Racial Meaning of the Russian Idea*, and *The Image of the Enemy, Racial and Political Anthropology*.[68] According to him, "race accounts for much of the lifestyle, character, and psyche of a man, imposing specific limits on his will and judgment. That is why there are no boundaries between the social and the biological."[69] He calls for a return to an imperial state based on the supremacy of ethnic Russians, Orthodoxy, and an autocratic political system. Saveliev also appears to be the linchpin of the rapprochement between Rogozin and the Movement Against Illegal Immigration, which started in late 2006. In October of that year, he was the first deputy to officially join the DPNI. He participated in the Russian March's organizing committee, with Alexander Belov as his personal advisor, and defended the latter when he was arrested in Karelia and Stavropol.[70] His analysis of the Kondopoga pogrom was unambiguous: he presented it as "the birth of a nation" and welcomed the fact that ethnic Russians have finally become aware of the need to organize resistance against the yoke of migrants.[71]

Rodina's Programmatic Discourse and Parliamentary Activities

During its brief existence, Rodina sought to criticize its two competitors, the CPRF and the LDPR, all the while borrowing from them their successful elements, which involve a combination of protest and identity populism. The latter was represented by Rogozin and Baburin, and characterized by nationalistic objectives, while Glazev personified the protest faction, which was focused mainly on social issues.

As a mouthpiece party, Rodina called for the redistribution of natural resources, especially oil revenues, among the people to rid the economy of the "dictatorship of the oligarchy."[72] This protest aspect was

particularly visible during the benefit monetarization crisis in January 2005, which allowed Rodina to gain strength in social topics formerly dominated by the Communists. Thereafter, a major component of Rodina's activities consisted in taking the fight up to the oligarchy. Thus, in the wake of massive electricity cuts in Moscow in June 2005, it launched a campaign to demand that the executive salaries of major Russian companies be made public, especially those of the public electric company RAO-UES and its director Anatoly Chubais. Such social demands are traditionally combined in the Russian political spectrum with a desire for Soviet rehabilitation. Although Rodina did not play up Soviet nostalgia as sharply as the CPRF, its claims were no less symbolic, for instance to have Volgograd called by its former name of Stalingrad. Rodina managed to attract many high-ranking officers, most notably General Valentin Varennikov. Varennikov, who was a backer of the August 1991 coup against Mikhail Gorbachev and president of the Russian Association of Heroes of the Soviet Union, was elected to parliament in 1995 on the CPRF's list. Rogozin indeed never hid his desire to conquer the space that the Communists had hitherto occupied, particularly after the split between Ziuganov and Seleznev, saying repeatedly that Rodina would welcome "all the patriotic forces on the left" into its ranks.

However, Rodina's protest populism was but a small element by comparison with its focus on identity. In Rodina's doctrine, "imperialist" and "ethnonationalist" theories were intrinsically linked, so that there seemed to be no distinction between them. Its political program aimed at restoring Russian influence over the Near Abroad and at creating a suprastate encompassing Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, as well as the pro-Russian secessionist regions of Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.[73] In March 2005, the Rodina faction pushed for a vote on amendments to a bill called "Accession to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects Within It," which was rejected. Proposed by Rogozin, Saveliev, and Narochnitskaia, the amendments would have made it easier for the autonomous regions of the other CIS states to accede to Russia without constituting a violation of the international treaties recognizing post-Soviet borders. Rodina's ultimate goal was thus to provide legal means for South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria to join Russia, and so euphemistically to point up the fact that the present borders of the new post-Soviet states were "artificial." Finally, Rodina also actively participated in the various debates on foreign policy that shook the Duma, particularly on relations with CIS countries, and it strongly supported the Kremlin's decisions in its conflicts with the Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

Rogozin and his interest in the issue of Russians of the Near Abroad have left their imprint on the section of Rodina's program devoted to migration policy. The party demands that Russian law recognize that the post-Soviet borders had divided the Russian people (*razdelennost' russkogo naroda*) and it encourages the authorities to make legal provisions to facilitate the repatriation of the "diaspora." Both Rogozin, as chairman of the Duma Committee for International Affairs, and Saveliev, as vice president for the Duma Committee for CIS Relations and Compatriot Affairs, tried to influence the legislative debates conducted on the subject. In 2004, Rodina filed a draft bill on repatriation that was not adopted by the Duma but did contribute to the birth and codification in June 2006 of the "State Assistance Program for Voluntary Repatriation of Compatriots to Russia."[74] This obsession with the issue of the unity of the Russian people was directed not only at Russians abroad, but also at those living within the Federation. Rodina argued that ethnic Russians should be recognized as the eponymous people of Russia, and even demanded their recognition in territorial statutes as national minorities. Such ethnonationalist ideas dominate in political Orthodoxy, most especially in the writings of Natalia Narochnitskaia.[75]

Such discourse was accompanied by catastrophic predictions about the country's future. Rodina claimed that the negative demographic situation threatens Russia, that Russians are an "endangered" people, and that they may become a national minority in their own country. Thus it supported the idea of the massive repatriation of ethnic Russians from other republics under the slogan "return rather than immigration, compatriots rather than *Gastarbeiter.*"[76] The main figures of the movement also backed the Patriarchate in its desire to see Orthodoxy be turned into a national religion, calling for a probirth policy and the protection of the "moral values" of marriage, family, heterosexuality, and sobriety. In March 2005, the Rodina parliamentary faction again hit the media spotlight in a row over a public health funding law, demanding an end to reimbursements for abortions. The main accuser of the law, Alexander Chuev, denounced it as Russophobe insofar as it facilitated the Russian people's disappearance, a people already overwhelmed by the demographic dynamism of minorities, particularly those from the Caucasus.[77] Rodina's objective was thus to impose Russian ethnic, linguistic, and religious supremacy throughout the country, which it perceived as too secular and multinational.

The issue of anti-Semitism divided the party. Some figures from National Will, such as Baburin, Nikolai Pavlov, and several members of Rodina, were openly anti-Semitic; others like Rogozin and Orthodox

nationalists like Narochnitskaia made euphemistic remarks on the subject by referring to "oligarchs" or "foreign influences in Russia"; and others still such as Alksnis remained true to more internationalist ideas. However in January 2005, Rodina became mired in scandal after the *Letter of 500*, a petition of public figures and parliament members that called for a struggle against "world Jewish domination" and an investigation into Russian Jewish associations, which were accused of conducting extremist activities that were possibly subject to Article 282 of the Penal Code. The petition was signed by several Rodina members—five Baburin supporters, and four Rogozin supporters—but not by Rogozin himself, while Chuev withdrew his signature, professing not to have read the text. The holding of public anti-Semitic opinions was controversial within the party, which confirmed that there existed in it a core group of radicals for whom the primary enemies of the Russian people are not just migrants but also Jews.

While divided over anti-Semitism, Rodina found unity in xenophobia. Its agenda was primarily directed against "illegal migrants," whether Caucasians or Central Asians. During a panel discussion on the issue of migration in the fall of 2005, Rogozin and Saveliev argued that migrant trading activities were to blame for the rising crime in the capital. They vehemently condemned the authorities' refusal to introduce visa requirements for citizens of CIS states and asked that the Eurasian Economic Community not be founded on the free movement of people within member states.[78] Rogozin stated that henceforth, "illegal migration is to blame for Russia's woes and the corrupt nature of state power. The most vested in these illegal migrations . . . are large corporations, commercial mafias . . . and drug traffickers."[79] Between 2004 and 2006, Rodina deputies campaigned for a bill restricting the business dealings of foreign citizens in Russia, which was initiated by none other than the leader of DPNI, Alexander Belov. The Duma did not pass this bill unchanged, but it did directly inspire a November 2006 law prohibiting foreigners from trading in Russian markets, which went into effect in April 2007. However, the Kremlin's legalizing of hundreds of thousands of migrants that same year raised Rogozin's wrath; he accused the authorities of doing nothing to counter the twin threats of terrorism and illegal immigration.[80]

In fall 2005, during the election campaign for the Moscow Duma, Rodina sought to take advantage of the wave of migrantophobia that was rocking the capital city, which was accentuated by the media's treating the riots in the French suburbs as a systematic rebellion of "Arabs" and "Muslims" against the French state. Rodina's main, widely broadcast

television advertisement depicted identifiably Caucasian youths throwing leftover pieces of watermelon under the wheels of a baby carriage pushed by a young, blond woman with Slavic features, accompanied by the slogan "rid the city of garbage." Ironically, Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR, which was under direct challenge by Rodina's campaign, filed a complaint for "inciting ethnic hatred," leading the Russian court to cancel Rodina's participation in the elections. The party has paid dearly for having been open about its xenophobia and has been directly attacked by the Kremlin ever since. However, Rodina has reached its goal: its slogans actually dominated the campaign; its leaders, perceived as victims of the Kremlin, were given a certain legitimacy in the nationalist camp and were heralded as defenders of a Russian people under attack from migrants.[81]

Despite its short existence, Rodina was able to unify many previously distinct nationalists under one partisan banner. Some of them had previously belonged neither to the CPRF nor to the LDPR, or had been linked to movements that had no parliamentary representation, while others had access to parliamentary activity through their membership in parties in which nationalism was not a central element or else, like Baburin or Alksnis, pursued independent actions without real partisan affiliation. Rodina thus worked to give structure to previously separated individual actions and nationalist discourses in the form of a political party and parliamentary faction. However, nationalist commitment does not constitute a sufficient unifying element in itself; Russian political life is actually dominated by a cleavage that is of a more structural nature, namely whether or not to support the presidential apparatus. This question has almost no effect on the doctrinal level, since it does not necessarily entail a moderation of nationalistic arguments, but it does shed light on the career tactics of each politician. Some believe in their ability to work within the system to invigorate it, while others prefer to bank on a wave of social protest putting an end to the domination of those currently in power. It was due to these structural issues, compounded by pressures from the Kremlin, that Rodina eventually broke up.

In three short years, Rodina was able to provide formulations for nationalist ideas that made them respectable, ideas that had previously been deemed radical when put forth by the LDPR, the CPRF, or the extra-parliamentary movements. It managed to garner support from members of the presidential majority, despite the fact that all of its leaders began their careers in peripheral monarchic, Orthodox, or Soviet nostalgic circles. They were then able to take advantage of the prescient issues of demography, of the repatriation of Russians of the Near Abroad, and,

of course, of migration—all issues that were being latched onto by the media—so that they could promote a right-thinking nationalism. Rodina's doctrines and tactics therefore differ from those advocated by the CPRF and the LDPR. In terms of doctrine, the party is much more in tune with the modern political and economic landscape of contemporary Russia than is the combination of Communist and Orthodox references that Gennadi Ziuganov has developed. While the CPRF seems backward looking and governed by nostalgia, Rodina, similar to the presidential party United Russia, was seen as eminently modern and post-Soviet. On the tactical level, it rejected the LDPR's engaging in the provocative and contrary moves of gaining respectability and self-righteous moralizing. Thanks to Rodina, nationalism moved from the margins to the politically correct. However, this process was facilitated because a parallel evolution toward restoring the nationalist topic was also taking place within the Kremlin itself.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Nationalism as Conservative Centrism: United Russia

In this chapter, I define nationalism as a conservative centrism that has permitted the Kremlin to appropriate the nationalist rhetoric that had, for some years, been in the hands of the opposition. In the second half of the 1990s, the ruling elites began to invest in this field of discourse and, in the following decade, succeeded in virtually monopolizing references to the nation, dispossessing both the extra-parliamentary opposition and the populist parliamentary parties of it. If the latter continue to lay claim to the right to express the needs and concerns of the nation, they have many difficulties in making their voices heard and are largely stifled by the patriotic slogans put forth by the Kremlin.

This conservative centrism provides the ruling elite with a unique institutional framework in which to express its internal conflicts—that of United Russia. In the space of a few years, the presidential party has come to embody the consensus of the political, economic, and military elites that today occupy the positions of power. It confirms the continuity of elites, as the majority of the leaders were members of the *nomenklatura*[1] before 1991, although a new, younger class without a Soviet past has also emerged during the two Putin mandates. United Russia is defined by Vladimir Gel'man not as a political party in the traditional sense of the term, but as a creation by groups in power bound to the state apparatus for the purpose of participating in—and winning—elections.[2] The party can thus be compared to a guild or a syndicate of bureaucrats, and is not underpinned by any ideological platform; by contrast to the other parties, United Russia would be unable to exist as an opposition party, confirming its specific status as an administrative electoral machine.

The contemporary Russian regime is founded on the idea of a conservative stabilization that reduces political competition but does not repudiate the principles of pluralism. In order to cement United Russia's supremacy in the long term, the Kremlin's communication advisors and ideologists, called "political technologists" (*polit-tekhnologi*) in Russian political science, have structured a set of power mechanisms, political principles, and tools of propaganda, hoping to shore up control over the patriotic theme and to transform it into a central element of political legitimacy. The question of investing more distinctly in the ideological sector by implementing new strategies of indoctrination presents a fundamental challenge to the ruling elites, for it presumes a specification of the content of the nation, and therefore a break with the reconciliatory logic that United Russia has strived to embody.

The Rebirth of Patriotism Under the Auspices of the Kremlin

The often-mentioned personality contrast between Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin should not obscure the continuities in policy. Presidentialism in Russia has been institutionalized since the 1993 constitution, such that the Prime Minister has never played a major role in the formulation of state policies. The same goes for patriotism: Vladimir Putin only embraced the conclusions of a dynamic that preceded him. With the social violence of reforms and increasingly dilapidated state institutions, the question of the Russian state's survival lurked in the shadows. It was the core reason for rehabilitating patriotism in the 1990s, which itself was the direct precursor of its officialization during the two terms of Vladimir Putin. The unifying theme of the motherland was very quickly revived by the Kremlin in 1994–1995, was its first attempt at formalization in 1996, and began to dominate the political scene in 1997–1999. The fear of excessive polarization led therefore to the birth of patriotic centrism, which put in parallel the weakening of ideological differences between parties and national reconciliation around patriotic slogans.

1994–1995: Decreasing Political Polarization

Despite his victory over the Supreme Soviet in the fall of 1993, the conflict with the parliament weakened Boris Yeltsin. Partly discredited abroad, his legitimacy also took a battering in the polls in Russia. The self-proclaimed democrats and liberals endorsed the use of violence and supported the December 12 referendum, which favored a

new constitution with weaker legislative powers and a stronger executive. Despite the presidentialization of the regime, neither of the two parties linked to the Kremlin was handed a decisive result in the December 12 legislative elections. Democratic Choice of Russia, headed by then Prime Minister Egor Gaidar obtained 16 percent of the vote, while Russian Party of Unity and Peace, led by Sergei Shakhrai, then deputy Prime Minister and chairman of the State Committee for the National Policy, received just 8 percent.

Since 1994, the Kremlin has sought to avoid the political polarization that led to violence between the Supreme Soviet and the president. The Kremlin's first move was to try to reconcile with the so-called nationalist camp, and so, in January 1994, Boris Yeltsin appointed Viktor Chernomyrdin as Prime Minister. Representing industrial lobbies and especially the military-industrial complex, Chernomyrdin immediately indicated that the liberal reforms would be conducted in a less intensive and less ideological manner. In February, the Duma, dominated by the LDPR and the CPRF, granted amnesty to the August 1991 putsch planners and October 1993 insurgents, thus enabling figures like Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi to rejoin political life. Then, in April, the Kremlin proposed a civic agreement, whose signatories thereby vowed not to overthrow the constitutional order or organize massive, extra-parliamentary regime-change movements. More than 200 associations signed it, including the LDPR, the liberals, and Democratic Choice of Russia, while the CPRF and the Agrarian Party refused, seeing it as a restriction of their freedom. The president made an official statement calling for the country's problems to be resolved through a "new conception of co-citizenship (*sograzhdanstvo*) of the nation." That same year, while visiting an exhibition of the nationalist painter Ilia Glazunov, he raised a scandal among liberals, who were confounded by his symbolic validation of one of the major figures of Soviet anti-Semitism.

Shocked by the unexpected popular support enjoyed by opponents of reform, more and more liberals viewed the ideological partition of the country as an excessive price to pay for the establishment of democracy and a market economy. The fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II in May 1995 offered the opportunity to reaffirm the importance of national sentiment and exulting of Russia's prestigious past. While the CPRF tried to capture the event by linking Soviet patriotism to the personality of Gennadi Ziuganov, the Kremlin played the card of reconciliation between "Whites" and "Reds" around the cult of the military. On May 9, 1995, a large memorial park to the war was inaugurated in Poklonnaia Gora, a suburb near Moscow. A statue of

Marshal Zhukov, defeater of Berlin, was restored on Manege Square and a new sculpture representing the historic victories of Russia over the Mongols, Napoleon, and Nazi Germany was built on the Kutuzovski avenue. Stamps commemorating Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill were issued.[3] The discourse on repentance for past crimes—especially those of Stalin—which had been a driving force of perestroika, slowly faded. On March 15, 1996, the Communist-dominated Duma repealed its recognition of the Belovezh agreements, signed on December 8, 1991, and approved by the Supreme Soviet. The Duma also bestowed legality on the referendum of March 17, 1991, when 70 percent of the population voted to maintain the Soviet Union.

Despite the Kremlin's effort to reappropriate symbols of the motherland, the liberals' defeat in the 1995 legislative elections was even more massive than in 1993. They failed to receive even one quarter of the votes, with Our Home is Russia headed by Prime Minister Chernomyrdin getting 10 percent, Yabloko 7 percent, and Democratic Choice of Russia led by Gaidar a mere 3.9 percent.[4] The so-called patriotic forces won some 40 million votes, or almost half of the voting-age population. Faced with Gennadi Ziuganov's popularity, Boris Yeltsin became concerned about his prospects for reelection, in no way guaranteed. He then decided to campaign not for the continuation of reforms but on more centrist issues. His readiness for pragmatic compromise was demonstrated when he insisted on closer ties with Belarus and the formation of a Russian-Belarusian union. In order to weaken the Communist candidate and to ensure that all "patriotic" voices referred to him, the Kremlin brought on board General Alexander Lebed (1950–2002), who received 14.5 percent of the vote in the first round of presidential elections and then joined the incumbent president in the second round, bringing with him votes that would have otherwise gone to Ziuganov. Thanks to the media's demonization of the CPRF, presented as the "party of the past," Boris Yeltsin won the election with nearly 55 percent of the vote, but with little popular enthusiasm. Surveys confirmed the major feeling among Russians that there had been a lack of choice and that they had voted according to the logic of the lesser evil.[5]

1996: The First Call for a New National Ideology

Once reelected to his second term, Boris Yeltsin straightaway set about promoting Russian national identity and quickly lifted the ideological ban imposed on patriotic themes. From 1995, the chairman of the

Federation Council, Vladimir Shumeiko, and the press secretary to the president, Viacheslav Kostikov, evoked Russia's need to have a "democratic patriotism." This term was also employed in the president's statement to the National Assembly on "Strengthening the Rule of Law in Russia," in which he mentioned the formation of a civic Russian identity, the need for a strong state, for the reintegration of the post-Soviet space around Russia, and for a reaffirmation of the country's unity and indivisibility.

On June 12, 1996, the national holiday celebrating the adoption of the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation in 1990, Boris Yeltsin raised the possibility of forming a new national ideal: "There were different periods in Russia's twentieth century history—the monarchy, totalitarianism, perestroika, and the democratic path of development. Each era had its ideology. We do not have one."[6] He then concluded by explaining that "the most important thing for Russia is the search for a national idea, a national ideology."[7] This statement raised concern among some politicians and intellectuals, who pointed out that Article 13 of the constitution stipulates that the state is prohibited from establishing an official or mandatory ideology. Nationalist opponents to Yeltsin, meanwhile, interpreted the presidential remarks as an indirect validation, but also as an attempt at usurping a topic that had never belonged to the liberals. In October, the Duma Committee for Geopolitics, headed by the LDPR, organized parliamentary readings on the "Russian Idea" and the need to provide the country with a new ideology. Members of the LDPR and the Congress of Russian Communities called on the Duma to vote in favor of an ethnic definition of Russianness and criticized the development of neo-Eurasianism.[8]

The presidential speech was followed by a series of official initiatives. A study group was established, headed by presidential advisor and director of the sociological center INDEM, Georgi Satarov, known for his commitment to perestroika and rapprochement with Europe. This group never reached agreement on any final text and simply organized the publication of an anthology of key articles on the topic. In January 1997, the government newspaper, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (Russian Gazette), launched a contest on a new "Russian Idea," gathering hundreds of slogans sent by readers. The Institute of Sociological Analysis organized a poll on the issue, although its authors were obliged to point out that no consensus vision was obtained, with the majority of respondents classified as "post-Soviet individualists."[9] Several official meetings took place between the Patriarchate and the Ministry of the Interior, as the Church attempted

to present itself as the only institution capable of offering a prescriptive ideology for public opinion.

A few months after Boris Yeltsin's statement, the brother of then Economy Minister Anatoli Chubais, Igor Chubais, published a book called *From the Russian Idea to the Idea of a New Russia*, which had a large impact on public debate at the time, especially on the ruling elite.[10] After recapitulating the old debates, the author went on to endorse the idea of a new ideology, arguing that "where there are no ideas, there is no country."[11] He criticized shock therapy and privatization, which strengthened the power of the *nomenklatura* instead of dispossessing it, and called for a new consensual Russian identity, combining spirituality, collectivism and individualism, social democracy, civic identity, pride of the national past, and linguistic purism. The work appears in a collection called *Novye vekhi* (New Milestones), a direct reference to the founding role of the volume *Vekhi* (Milestones), a veritable manifesto against the ideology of the radical intelligentsia by some of the biggest names of the early twentieth century, including Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Peter Struve, and Semion Frank. Published in 1909, *Vekhi* called on the revolutionary intelligentsia to promote the primacy of the spiritual over the material, to strive toward a merging of knowledge and faith, and to restore the role of religious philosophy in the intellectual and spiritual development of Russia. The message of the *Novye vekhi* collection was therefore devoid of ambiguity: a part of the elite rejected the liberal radicalism promulgated on their behalf and called for a more consensual development, one more in tune with the "Russian Idea."

Many liberals criticized this interpretation of Yeltsin's statement about the need for a national idea. For them, the important issue was not the creation of a new ideology in the Soviet sense of the term, but a collective reflection on the "Russian Idea," which was then defined not as a corpus of texts imposed from above, but as a fruitful interrogation on the society they wished to build.[12] Economists such as Vladimir Filatov and Sergei Fateev, as well as researchers on military issues like Andrei Kokoshin, sought to equate the "Russian Idea" with the defense of the country's interests. For the former, this Idea can exist only in a competitive liberal economy, for the latter, in a powerful state with a strong army and foreign policy logic.[13] Between 1994 and 1996, several foreign observers such as Fiona Hill noted a massive return to debates about the idea of great power (*derzhavnost'*), particularly in the press.[14] The analysis of Russia's condition was nothing except critical, even among liberals. The Russian state was weak, destitute, unable to finance an army,

without influence in the international arena, without clearly defined geopolitical interests, and, domestically, the central government was in permanent decline with respect to the concessions being demanded and obtained by the national autonomous republics. The Khasaviurt agreements signed with Grozny in August 1996 were seen as a humiliation inflicted by little Chechnya victorious over great Russia, and explicit comparisons were made with the 1905 defeat against Japan.

Alexander Lebed: Man of the "Third Way"?

While the Kremlin sought reconciliation with the opposition, which for its part wished to keep its mouthpiece function and to enjoy the benefits of being in the establishment, new figures took up places in the Russian political arena using a consensual centrist discourse. By asserting that there was no shame in thinking of Russia as a strong state in domestic policy and a major world power in foreign policy, these figures reinforced the patriotic agenda that even further marginalized the tone of the last few pro-Western liberals and confirmed the centrist reorientation of the Kremlin. For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, references to the motherland were no longer the province of politicians seen as eccentric or radical, or as bearers of a "fascist threat," like Zhirinovski, but were advanced by respectable figures participating in the decision-making circles.

Three figures represent the "third way" that took shape in the second half of the 1990s: Alexander Lebed, Yuri Luzhkov, and Evgeni Primakov. The three had widely divergent political journeys, ideological convictions, and images in public opinion. Lebed was the most radical and regularly played on his image as a military man famous for his rants and frank nonconformist discourse. Luzhkov occupied an intermediate position; he also wished to appear as a man of the people, at ease with voters, but distinguished himself by his strong commitment to rehabilitating Orthodoxy and defending the Russians of the Near Abroad. Primakov embodied the seriousness and reserve of the major figures of Soviet diplomacy. More technocratic than his two colleagues, he stood equally convinced of the merits of a "healthy patriotism" to help the Russian state regain its great economic power, domestic political stability, and its traditional role between East and West. The founding theme of *power* thus appears to have been the main narrative element by which these politicians made the public expression of Russian national sentiment a politically correct topic.

In the second half of the 1990s, Alexander Lebed appeared as the very embodiment of this long-sought-after "third way," combining appeals to the nation, the people, and the state in a specific version of democratic and nationalist populism that was distinct from the CPRF's neo-Communism or the LDPR's expansionist rhetoric. Lebed enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy within the so-called nationalist camp. Educated in the military, he was a senior officer in Afghanistan, fought in every major conflict during perestroika (Sumgait in 1988, Tbilisi in 1989, and Baku in 1990) and acted in defense of the Russians in Transnistria as commander of the prestigious Fourteenth Army that was engaged in the war in Moldova. Despite this, his refusal to take sides in the 1993 conflict meant that the authorities viewed him as a relative moderate, although he was close to the Supreme Soviet insurgents and was highly critical of Boris Yeltsin.[15] His poor relations with General Pavel Grachev, then Defense Minister, and his criticism of the war in Chechnya, resulted in his resignation from the Fourteenth Army in 1995. Lebed then pursued a political career in the Congress of Russian Communities, where he was considered the most media-friendly personality, ahead of Yuri Skokov, Dmitri Rogozin, and General Igor Rodionov. This latter played a major role in the development of a new military doctrine in 1992, and introduced neo-Eurasianist Alexander Dugin into military circles.[16]

After the electoral defeat of the Congress of Russian Communities in 1995, Lebed attempted to form an alliance with the CPRF, but Ziuganov blocked it. Becoming one of the fiercest enemies of the CPRF and the LDPR, Lebed then grew closer to the Kremlin, but did not cut his links to extra-parliamentary circles interested in the Russian "diaspora" issue. He allied himself with the People's Party of former Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, and agreed to work toward Boris Yeltsin's victory in the 1996 elections by mustering support for him in the second round. He obtained a post in the Duma Defense Committee, and then briefly took the head of the Security Council of the Russian Federation from June to October 1996. He forced Grachev to resign, replaced him with Igor Rodionov, and used his influence to sign the Khasiavurt agreements. During these few months, at the height of his prestige, the press regularly depicted him as the heir to the Russian presidency, but he was suddenly removed from his post. He thus decided to move into opposition, founding the Republican People's Party of Russia, which placed well in the preelectoral polls.[17] In 1998, he succeeded in getting himself elected governor of the Krasnoiarsk region, and then refocused his career on regional affairs. He sought to put

his political beliefs about the role of government into effect by taking over the large aluminum factory in Krasnoyarsk from oligarch Anatoli Bykov.[18] In his fight against the oligarchs, he also received the support of Primakov.

In his two major books, Lebed attempted to give a more systematic account of his ideological assumptions in order to frame his presidential ambitions.[19] His vision was that of a presidential regime capable of restoring state authority, operating with minimal bureaucracy, and fighting organized crime. He regularly insisted on the importance of economic patriotism, advocated protectionism, and invited his fellow citizens to reject international aid in the name of "self-respect." He called for a powerful but not imperial Russia and the birth of a civic Russian ideology, and condemned all wars fought outside the national territory, from the Prague Spring to the invasion of Afghanistan. He did not wish to bring the military to political power, drawing on a model supposedly inspired by General Charles de Gaulle rather than Augusto Pinochet. His definition of what Russia should be was later shared by Vladimir Putin: the reaffirmation of the "vertical of power," the end of humiliation domestically and internationally, the refusal of expansionism, and a political success measured in terms of the state's effectiveness.

Thus unlike Ziuganov or Zhirinovski, Alexander Lebed did not make displays of nostalgia for the Soviet regime but called for more modernity, accepting that the changes the country had undergone since the 1990s were required. He advocated nationalist populism for democratic ends. In contrast to his two main centrist competitors/companions, Evgeni Primakov and Yuri Luzhkov, he was not seen as a technocrat, but as a man of the people with real charisma, as shown in a party slogan, "our path is order and common sense." His accidental death in 2002 marked the sudden disappearance from Russian politics of a truly original man with national potential. However, from his Siberian estate, Lebed did not have access to the levers of capital nor the entry networks into state structures necessary for the assertion of his presidential ambitions, contrary to Yuri Luzhkov and Evgeni Primakov, two well-established figures in the structures of central power.

1996–1999: The Rise of the Pioneers of Patriotic Centrism

Educated at the Gubkin Moscow Petrochemical and Gas Institute, Yuri Luzhkov worked for several years at the Ministry of Chemical Industry before being appointed to the City of Moscow Executive Committee in

1986 thanks to his close ties to Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. He worked for several years as a deputy to the Moscow mayor Gavril Popov before being elected mayor himself in 1992. Since the early 1990s, he has advocated a centrist political position, criticized the shock therapy pursued by Gaidar and Chubais as overly violent, and denounced massive privatization as "not conformist" to Russian historical tradition. In Moscow, he found a way to put his idea into practice; since the municipality still owns many buildings, spaces, institutes, and enterprises, it has been able to force foreign companies to settle for joint ventures that preserve its right of supervision. Yuri Luzhkov manages the Russian capital in part as a private property. He has widely expanded the city's economic dynamism, has promoted his own client network centered around the Sistema Group, and has created a media empire, which includes the *Moskovskaia pravda* press group, as well as newspapers like *Rossiia* (Russia) and *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary Gazette).[20]

The mayor of Moscow began to display his national ambitions in 1995–1996, after several disagreements with the entourage of Boris Yeltsin. He presented himself as a pragmatic politician or "manager" (*khoziainstvennik*). Seeing Moscow as a springboard to the presidency, he developed a strategy for visibility at the national level, marked by his nationalist sympathies. He successfully instrumentalized religious themes at the opening of the Christ the Savior Cathedral, originally built to commemorate the 1812 victory against Napoleon, destroyed by Stalin in 1931, and rebuilt in 1995–1997. Portraying it as the spiritual heart of Russia, he displayed his closeness to the Moscow Patriarchate. Then he inaugurated a statue of Peter the Great on the banks of the Moscow River and organized a huge 850-year anniversary celebration for the capital in 1997. He was able to point to his unyielding positions on Ukrainian-Russian relations, especially around the difficult issue of the status of Sevastopol. According to him, the 1954 text that ceded Crimea to the Ukraine did not include the Black Sea port, which he argues should remain in Russian hands. To this very day, he has regularly traveled there to defend its cause and has virulently criticized the 1999 Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty "abandoning" Sevastopol to Kiev. He is also a major supporter of developing closer ties between Russia and Belarus, a friend of President Alexander Lukashenko, and an advocate of arms shipments to the "Serb brothers" fighting NATO. Finally, he has gained from the rise of xenophobic sentiment in the capital city since the 1990s and began denouncing the negative effect of migrants on criminality even long before this topic was at the forefront of the federal media.

Yuri Luzhkov has also proved to be particularly sensitive to the issue of the Russians of the Near Abroad, particularly under the influence of Konstantin Zatulin, one of the main activists of the "diaspora" issue and director of the Diaspora and Integration Institute. In 1997, the latter became one of the mayor's closest advisors, greatly influencing the municipality's interest in the compatriot issue. In 2001, the Moscow government thus established an entire section of its administration devoted to this issue as well as an Interdepartmental Commission for Work with Compatriots. The capital city also runs an extensive program as part of which it has sent several hundreds of thousands of textbooks to neighboring republics, organized the legal defense of compatriots, granted scholarships to young Russian students of the Baltic states and the Ukraine, and funded the opening of a branch of the Moscow State University in Sevastopol.[21] In addition, the municipality has established the International Council of Russian Compatriots, and in 2004 it opened the Muscovite House of Compatriots, which is designed to be the main center for working with Russians of the Near Abroad.[22]

In support of his presidential ambitions, Yuri Luzhkov founded a new party in December 1998, Fatherland (*Otechestvo*), which presented itself as centrist, and sometimes as social democrat, seeking to combine economic reform and state control around the slogan "Fatherland and Freedom." Through this, the mayor sought to gain from Chernomyrdin's ousting from the prime ministership and the collapse of his Our Home is Russia, by founding a new political party based on the same coalition of members of government, regional elites, and energy sector leaders. It drew in some nationalist groups who had previously sympathized with the Communists but did not share Ziuganov's strategies. Such was the case of the Derzhava movement, formed in 1994–1995 by former Prime Minister Alexander Rutskoi, with the help of Konstantin Zatulin, both of whom called to vote for the CPRF at the 1995 election. However, Yuri Luzhkov did not want to abandon his position in Moscow for a far more uncertain career as a minister. Instead, he sought to build alliances with Evgeni Primakov, many of whose political views he also shared and whose presidential candidacy had more solid potential both nationally and internationally.

While Yuri Luzhkov did not arrive in politics by classic means, as he himself acknowledges, Evgeni Primakov embodies the professionalism of the Soviet diplomatic elite. A specialist on the Arab world by training, as well as a former Middle East correspondent for *Pravda*, and a former director of both the Institute of World Economy and International Relations and the Institute of Oriental Studies, he is a highly respected figure

in his capacity as diplomat and as a Soviet and post-Soviet Orientalist. During perestroika, he was appointed Mikhail Gorbachev's foreign policy advisor, and after the failed coup d'état of August 1991, first deputy chairman of the KGB, before becoming director of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), a position he held until 1996. He is one of the only officials appointed by the first secretary of the CPSU whom Boris Yeltsin did not force out. His political ascent symbolizes the Kremlin's reversal in policy during Boris Yeltsin's second term, when the authorities were looking for more conservative figures capable of mitigating the chasm between the liberal government and a Russian society that was much more reluctant to change.

In January 1996, Boris Yeltsin removed Foreign Affairs Minister Andrei Kozyrev from his post, because he was considered too pro-Western, and appointed Primakov as his replacement. Upon taking office, the latter staked out a realistic stance, similar to that which had already yielded success for Soviet foreign policy in the 1970s, advocating multilateralism. He called for a balanced policy that continued to develop good-neighborly relations with the West, in particular with the European Union, while stressing cooperation with Asian countries, primarily China and India. In his very first speech, Primakov iterated what the majority of the political elite had not dared admit publicly: to be recognized as a great power, Russia had to pursue a "multi-vectoral" policy that criticizes the unipolarity of the contemporary world without seeking conflict with the United States and that develops alternative geopolitical alliances in Asia and the Middle East. The ultimate goal of this Primakov doctrine was in no way a return to the Cold War but, in true Gorbachev style, to win Russia's entry into the "club of civilized nations."[23] Washington and Brussels were therefore encouraged to recognize Russia symbolically as an equal partner in world management. During his tenure at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Primakov nonetheless was unable to defend this call for Western recognition in the face of the diplomatic tensions generated by NATO's eastward expansion and the conflicts in Yugoslavia.

After the financial crisis of August 1998 and the inability of the successive governments of Sergei Kirienko and of Viktor Chernomyrdin to achieve political and economic stabilization, Boris Yeltsin decided to appoint Evgeni Primakov as Prime Minister. He appeared to be a good compromise, since the Communist Party also accepted him, and only the LDPR and Democratic Choice of Russia did not. Primakov attempted to replicate the doctrine of balance that he had successfully applied to foreign policy in the realm of domestic politics. He first selected Yuri

Masliukov, a social democrat member of the CPRF, as deputy Prime Minister. Then, in order to emerge from the financial crisis, he proposed a Russian version of the New Deal, came out in support of an economically strong state, and declared war on the oligarchs, especially on Boris Berezovsky. During his short tenure, he succeeded in implementing the economic and fiscal reforms that enabled the country to regain its stability. At his peak period in the polls he was seen as the "savior of the nation," ranked as the most popular man in Russia, and was considered by the media as Boris Yeltsin's potential successor.

However, he quickly fell into open conflict with the Kremlin by refusing to replace his Communist ministers when the CPRF was preparing to impeach the president. He resigned in May 1999 and was replaced by Sergei Stepashin.[24] Hoping to run in the summer 2000 presidential election, Primakov was wary of taking up a new partisan affiliation and thought about running as an independent. However, he went for the first option and, after attempting a rapprochement with the CPRF, agreed to collaborate with Yuri Luzhkov's Fatherland in August. Once the alliance between the two men had been sealed, Fatherland began to look for allies for the 1999 parliamentary elections in order to change its image of a Muscovite political party with no regional influence. To this end, it allied itself with the All Russia (*Vsia Rossiia*) movement led by Tatarstan president Mintimer Shaimiev, Bashkortostan president Murtaza Rakhimov, and Saint Petersburg's governor Vladimir Yakovlev.

The 1999–2000 Elections and the Building of a Hegemonic Party

This alliance gave birth to the Fatherland – All Russia (OVR) bloc, which openly sought to succeed Boris Yeltsin and presented itself as the "party of governors," comprising regional elites, industrials, major financial groups, as well as members of the security services. However, despite the popularity of its two main leaders, Primakov and Luzhkov, the electoral bloc remained divided on the crucial issue of center-periphery relations. Fatherland endorsed a recentralization of the country around Moscow in order to promote a form of "enlightened capitalism" that would give a stronger role to the state and a weaker role to the oligarchs. All Russia, by contrast, promoted a considerable decentralization, in which governors would be elected by universal suffrage and enjoy more autonomy on issues of regional management. These differences created tensions within the bloc, symbolized by Dmitri Rogozin's departing Fatherland on account of the fact that All Russia was an instrument

of the national minorities' elites against Russia. Apart from the center-periphery issue, the OVR bloc had a relatively coherent ideological platform, embodying the growing patriotic centrism within the Russian political scene.

The Fatherland – All Russia bloc, which enjoyed strong support in the first weeks of the fall 1999 campaign, quickly lost its electoral potential. It saw itself confronted with unexpected competition from the Kremlin, which viewed the formation of a "governors' party" as a real political threat. The presidential circle, composed of figures close to Boris Yeltsin and oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky, was seriously worried about Primakov's possible victory, fearing he would then make investigations into the wealth they had accumulated during the decade. With the media under his control, Yuri Luzhkov disseminated the idea that the oligarchy close to the president was a mafia responsible for the country's economic difficulties, and said that once his legal immunity was lifted, the president would be prosecuted by the courts. The Kremlin hurriedly decided to build a new movement, the Bear (*Medved'*), which later transformed into a political party, Unity (*Edinstvo*), whose leadership was entrusted to Minister of Emergency Situations Sergei Shoigu. The latter seems to fill the same role with regard to the competition with Primakov as Alexander Lebed had in the 1996 presidential campaign, when he took votes from Ziuganov to cement a Kremlin victory.

After several figures had briefly occupied the post, Vladimir Putin was hastily appointed Prime Minister on August 9, 1999, and decreed the Dauphin by the presidential circle. As the party of power, Unity subtly presented itself as a progovernment, and therefore as a pro-Putin, party, but also an anti-Yeltsin one, so as not to have to share the president's massive unpopularity. Putin hedged his bets, declaring his loyalty to Boris Yeltsin but presenting himself as a symbol of renewal. Despite its low profile in the polls at the beginning of the campaign, Unity took advantage of Putin's growing popularity due to the second war in Chechnya, and reached its peak in the voting intentions in November after the Prime Minister said that he would vote for it. Competition between the OVR and Unity monopolized all the election debate and marginalized the other parties, liberals and Communist alike, thus indicating the regime's furthered presidentialization and the growing role of the party machines. Taking advantage of all the available "administrative resources," Unity cruised to an election win. The media, submissive to the authorities, violently attacked Luzhkov, and indirectly criticized Primakov, whose positive image remained untarnished.[25]

The election results confirm the success of the Kremlin's improvisational strategy. Unity won 23.3 percent of the votes and the OVR, only 13.3 percent. For their part, the liberals stagnated at about 15 percent and were divided into several formations: the main party representative of liberalism with 8.5 percent was the Union of Right Forces, which included Egor Gaidar, Sergei Kirienko, and Boris Nemtsov, while Yabloko received only 5.8 percent and Our Home is Russia's vote collapsed to 1.2 percent. At the same time the Communist Party lost a part of its electorate to the Primakov-Luzhkov patriotic centrist coalition.[26] The second Duma had staged, in terms that were more symbolic than effective, a liberal presidential administration opposing a Communist and nationalist parliament. The third Duma will no longer be seen as the place of confrontation between the executive and legislative powers, but as the instrument of validation for decisions taken by the Kremlin, or even a mere "house of registration."[27] Disappointed by the OVR's collapse, Primakov decided not to run as a presidential candidate for the March 2000 election. His strategy of building a political party rather than of running as an independent ended in failure. The ensuing absence of any real competition then enabled Putin to chalk up a first-round win against his Communist rival with 53 percent of the vote.

The patriotic centrist coalition could cope neither with the strong personality of the new Prime Minister, nor the second war in Chechnya, a situation favorable to the Kremlin. The nuanced position of Primakov on Islam has indeed earned him the unfortunate image of an "Islamophile," while Vladimir Putin was able to cultivate an openly confrontational image on the Chechen question. In addition, for the first time since the USSR's demise, the military and their families—about six million people—seemed to have voted overwhelmingly for the ruling party, instead of for the opposition.[28] The OVR coalition failed not because it advocated patriotic centrism, which was set to become the driving force of Russian political life through the following decade, but because, like Unity, it was a party of power presenting itself as an alternative to the one already in the Kremlin. If the great figures of patriotic centrism have played a fundamental role in rehabilitating national sentiment in politics, they nonetheless were stripped of their electoral gains, which were skillfully recovered by the presidential party.

As Henry Hale persuasively notes, Unity was designed as an election tactic to win Putin the presidency, not as a presidential party seeking to curb the parliamentary institution. It was only after his victory that Putin built on the momentum of his election by giving power to the party-system.[29] Even if the Russian state is significantly presidential,

the executive cannot forgo the legislature's support. Putin thus subtly maneuvered to divide the parties represented at the Duma. In January 2000, the All Russia faction withdrew from the OVR coalition and joined Unity. The latter decided to build a tactical alliance with the CPRF and independent deputies in order to avoid Primakov's candidacy for the Duma leadership and to prevent the OVR from gaining important committee posts. The presidential party gave the Duma leadership to Communist reformer Gennadi Seleznev, and other Communist deputies were granted positions on nonstrategic committees. But this alliance between Unity and the CPRF did not endure: the Kremlin's main goal was to co-opt the only party that posed competition to it, Fatherland.[30]

In April 2000, after Primakov stepped down as head of the Fatherland faction, the latter changed its stance and moved to give its total support to Unity. Yuri Luzhkov and Sergei Shoigu quickly issued a joint statement announcing the merger of their two movements, effected on December 1, 2001. The new party took the revealing name of United Russia (*Edinaia Rossiia*), thereby reprising the skillful evocation of unity and the motherland that had been the matrix of their predecessors' success. Once they became part of the presidential party, the OVR's leaders were fully integrated into official structures and thanked for their loyalty. Yuri Luzhkov became an important figure in United Russia, showed his loyalty to the president, and came thus to benefit from the Kremlin's "administrative resources," for example by having Rodina barred from the 2005 Duma elections in Moscow. Evgeni Primakov also allied with Putin, and was appointed chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Russia. In a famous speech in January 2007, he proclaimed that "the second phase of Russian recovery has begun," and asserted that the Russian president has exceeded his expectations in foreign and domestic policy.[31] Once again, the tone was one of reconciliation and continuity. The Kremlin thereby managed to take control of attempts to turn patriotic centrism into electoral dissent: the presidential party is supposedly the very embodiment of a consensus that cannot not be realized apart from it, and less still against it.

A Presidential Party on the Search for an Ideology?

The building of a presidential party certain to retain power over the long term constitutes one of the major elements of the two Putin mandates and has greatly contributed to restructuring the political spectrum in

Russia. As we saw in Chapter 1, this process gave rise to an electorally hegemonic party and a strong personalization of power but also, in a contradictory movement, to a reinforcement of the party-system, a reprise of the old Soviet heritage of confusion between the state and the dominant party, and the development of new propaganda tools. As United Russia became more structured, the media slogans for election campaigns and presidential speeches came to form more sophisticated texts promoting "conservatism" and assuming a conscious will to engage in propaganda.[32] During Vladimir Putin's second mandate, United Russia slowly came to understand that, if it wanted to leave its stamp on Russian political life for the coming decade, the party could not limit itself to glorifying the president's person and had to formulate a more coherent doctrine. As a result, Western analyses claiming that United Russia's only ideology consists in loyalty to the president are unable to grasp the recompositions under way within, and the debates driving, the presidential party.

For some United Russia propagandists, ideology is seen as a determining factor in the permanence of the regime. From 2003 onward, the ruling power has been busily discussing the creation of a Council for National Ideology (*sovet po natsional'noi ideologii*)[33] to be convened by important artistic and intellectual figures, but to date nothing has eventuated. The publication, in 2006, of the book *Putin: His Ideology* by Aleksei Chadaev provoked a stir within the party. If some political technologists appear to be supporting this movement toward the formalization of an ideology, based among others on the theme of "sovereign democracy," other figures such as Dmitri Medvedev have not hidden their lack of appreciation for the expression. The quest for a national doctrine thus does not have unanimous support among the presidential administration and the president's political advisors. Does the country really need a state ideology to establish a sole legitimate vision of national identity, if such implies breaking with the consensus? Does the patriotism that has been around since the start of the 2000s decade not suffice to mobilize the nation?[34] The stake is considerable, since it will indirectly reveal the party's degree of centralization and its capacity to block internal dissent and factionalism. It also raises the question of the level of popular support expected from this new ideological indoctrination.

Vladimir Putin's personal opinion of the matter has remained imprecise. He is known for preferring to apply managerial principles to politics rather than ideology.[35] However, he has oftentimes complained about United Russia's lack of ideology. In 2000, he made an explicit parallel between Russia's need to share a common moral value and the Moral

Code of the Builder of Communism (*Moral'nyi kodeks stroitelia kommunizma*), thereby permitting himself a positive reference to the ideological rigidity of the Soviet regime.[36] During a press conference about the December 2007 legislative elections, he made a point of criticizing this lack of ideology: "Has United Russia proven to be an ideal political structure? Quite obviously not. It has no formed ideology, no principles for which the majority of its members would be ready to do battle and to stake its authority."[37] The president has therefore had to hedge his bets: he has had to rehabilitate patriotism at least as a value, maybe as an ideology, all the while remaining as imprecise as possible, since any doctrine in the least bit precise risks undermining the reconciliatory dynamic embodied by the presidential apparatus. The call for United Russia's ideologization appears therefore to contradict the incessantly repeated need for pragmatism. The transfer of power in 2008 and the new function attributed to the party nevertheless force a rethinking of loyalty to the president in more ideological terms to ensure continuity in policy during the leadership transition.

The Legacy of the CPSU: Controlling all the Levers of the State

If the debates over the degree of ideologization are bound to continue, the presidential party's practice of power is already well honed. United Russia has in fact managed to amalgamate state mechanisms and structures, exacerbating the confusion between the public thing (*res publica*) and the dominant party, in a mode not unlike that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. With officially over 1.7 million members and 45,000 regional, local, and primary branches,[38] the presidential party has a strong administrative network throughout the entire country in the form of regional affiliates and support committees. It also includes a significant proportion of young people, rare for Russia, and a large number of state employees and private businessmen. It has, for instance, the support of a quarter of all teachers and a third of all private sector workers; 40 percent of its members have a college education.[39] The electorate of the presidential party is much more evenly distributed than that of its competitors and holds at least a quarter of the votes in all administrative entities. It received particularly high numbers in Central and Eastern Siberia, the North Caucasus, and the Volga region, especially in Tatarstan, thanks to the influence of President Mintimer Shaimiev.[40]

The confusion between party and state reached its peak during Putin's second mandate: At the end of 2007, United Russia controlled 111

members (out of 176) of the Federation Council, 75 governors (out of 83) of the Federation's subjects, 90 percent of mayorships,[41] and 1,400 heads of municipalities and administrative districts (out of 1,800).[42] The presidential administration's communication advisors are aware that if United Russia begins to appear as Russia's one and only real party, it runs the risk of generating dissent. The party's leaders express with disconcerting candor the fact that a key problem for United Russia is "the absence of a serious political partner in the form of a responsible opposition."[43] To respond to that challenge, a few months before the official start of the 2007 election campaign, Vladimir Putin stated his desire to promote a bipartisan politics comparable to that in the United States and Britain, presenting it as a sign of modernity. To this end, the Kremlin formed a second government party, Fair Russia, which was construed as a center-left version of United Russia. However, in order to foster confusion with the state, United Russia refuses to play the game of political competition. During the 2003 legislative elections, it refused to participate in the televised debates, presenting itself as an apolitical administrative party. In 2007, it limited itself to approving a platform calling to continue the policies implemented by Vladimir Putin, once again without taking part in the televised debates.

This assimilation to the state is evident in United Russia's electoral marketing: all of its posters are based on the Russian flag, which no longer allows one to dissociate visually the appeals to voters put out by the Electoral Commission and the calls to vote for United Russia. In addition, in 2007 the mayors of the large cities, who nearly all side with the presidential party, distributed leaflets in the letterboxes explaining why it was necessary to vote for United Russia, thereby confirming that it has had the "administrative resources" of the municipalities put at its service.[44] The party also manages projects that traditionally fall within the authority of the state: its especially large budget and its close ties to local administrations and large companies has permitted it, for example, to finance roads, rural libraries, and the restoration of historic buildings, all aspects of its key publicity instruments. This collusion between the state and the party calls for an examination of the possible continuity between United Russia and the CPSU, which are increasingly put in parallel. Some Russian researchers even define United Russia as "CPSU *light*."[45]

Since 2005, United Russia's agenda relies on "national priority projects" (*natsional'nye prioritetnye proekty*, NPP). In September 2005, Putin decreed that the country should now focus on a few major projects, which will receive special state attention through a council for

the implementation of priority projects, over which he personally presides. Dmitri Medvedev, then the head of the presidential administration, was appointed deputy Prime Minister responsible for the implementation of these projects, thus confirming that they are also designed to strengthen the influence over the ministries of those close to the president and to accentuate the role of the presidential administration as a "parallel government." Five priority projects were defined: health, education, housing, agriculture, and "gazification"—that is, the development of access to natural gas throughout the country.[46] The official goal is to better coordinate the activities of different ministries and assign specific budgets for the projects in order to ensure their effectiveness.

United Russia, which is spearheading these projects, hopes to reach those professional categories most disappointed in the state (teachers, health personnel, and rural milieus), who constitute the heart of the protest electorate. As Stephen Wegren and Andrei Konitzer have explained, "rural politics represent the 'last frontiers' that previously were not fully 'conquered' in the pursuit of managed democracy."[47] The NPP's goal is thus to get those still reluctant to join the general consensus on the merits of the political status quo, even if they are excluded from the benefits of the market economy, by enabling them to profit from the modest wealth redistribution created by the oil and gas boom. The logic of reconciliation is thus pursued, since the priority projects suggested that the 1990s reforms were truly a social tragedy that led to the impoverishment of a large part of society. In this way, United Russia is trying to occupy the social niche located to its left by promoting the social state, aware that excessive economic liberalism will play into the hands of the opposition. These priority projects also tie into the patriotic rhetoric on the "winning Russia": the discourse surrounding their promotion is full of references to modern technology, the need to be efficient and competitive in a changing world, to make use of the country's human potential, to realize individual personality, and so on.

The ideology underlying the projects also calls, in very Soviet-like tones, for the intelligentsia to accept the hand being held out by the Kremlin and to transform itself into a "creative class"[48] supporting the authorities, helping them to realize their objectives and serving as a bridge with society. United Russia's objective is in fact to remobilize a society seen to be passive, atomized, and totally indifferent to the state, and to propose that it commit to the state and get something out of it, not ideologically but practically by an increase in living standards. The same logic underlies the heavily media-exploited project of the "ideas factory" (*fabrika*

mysli) pushed by United Russia and financed by public monies (15 billion rubles over 2007). The factory, headed by deputy Andrei Kokoshin, president of the Committee for CIS Affairs and Relations with Compatriots, has a mission to "form a highly efficient contemporary economy, based on knowledge, the use of leading-edge technologies . . ., to formulate strategies for the establishing of Russian technological production on the world market, and to attract foreign investments."[49] The presidential party has therefore realized that a rhetorical speech on Great Russia cannot have social impact without pragmatically changing the daily lives of citizens, hence the emphasis placed on economic patriotism and the modernity of the market economy.

A Propaganda Tool: The Evropa Publishing House

For the purpose of elaborating the ideological corpus that United Russia is in need of, a publishing house called Evropa (Europe) was established in 2005, the objective of which is "political education, the reinforcement of civil society and of Russia's political system as a European state."[50] The publishing house is headed by Viacheslav Glazychev, who is president of the Public Chamber's Commission for Regional Development and Local Self-Management, and by the presidential advisor Gleb Pavlovski, who is its editor-in-chief. The presence of these key figures is confirmation of just how keen the Kremlin is to conquer the editorial market and to make good-quality propaganda literature. The Evropa publishing house is part of the Russian Institute, a structure created in 1996, which Gleb Pavlovski also runs along with Sergei Chernychev. Its aim is to "establish a Russian cultural awareness and the formation of institutions for the representation of a new social identity."[51] Evropa's range of publications has pretensions to be grand: it is replete with theoretical works devoted to nationalism from philosophical, historical, and doctrinal angles, includes a presentation of Vladimir Putin's thought and analyses of significant political events (such as the Kondopoga pogrom and the anti-Russian movements that hit the CIS), as well as anti-American essays, publicity brochures promoting United Russia, and handbooks about political techniques and working in state structures.

By studying the Evropa corpus, it is striking to note the paradoxical willingness of United Russia simultaneously to claim and refuse the CPSU's legacy. The party's ideologists recognize that much of the Russian population attaches a negative connotation to concepts like "party apparatus," "propaganda," "agitation," and "professional cadres."

However, they express the wish to repeat this experience in a modern, positive sense. For example, *The Technology of Party Creation* explains the didactic methods required for a proper political formation, taking United Russia as a model: the recruitment of members—"average Russians" and social activists—aware of the important role they play; affirmation of the vertical and democratic centralism within the party; conducting multiple activities between elections to occupy the public and associative space; close relations with the media for an obvious propaganda purpose, and so forth.[52] All Evropa texts reject the notion that a political party should defend special and corporate interests, and they endorse the idea that it is more of a machine for training competent personnel for state service. Using this logic, United Russia has been described in Evropa publications as "the party of the best,"[53] the structure in which the political, economic, and cultural elite of the country naturally subscribe.

The United Russia's Agitator, a sort of small red book for the party militant that lists the correct responses to give to the principal questions of electors, takes up on its own account former methods of Soviet training and supervision. It mentions for instance the possibility, if United Russia's membership greatly increased, of organizing national-level selective examinations, or of requiring letters of recommendation from preexisting members. It thus hopes to recreate the functioning of CPSU, where membership was seen as a confirmation of social status and a reward for services rendered.[54] However, United Russia's desire to present itself as the "cadre machine" underlying the state makes its relation to other parties and the system of parliamentary democracy a complex one. Andrei Isaev, deputy secretary of the party's Presidium, has stated that this machine does not in itself translate to a one-party state, since many machines may be competing to serve in the government. But, at the same time, he criticizes the emergence of new parties or blocs in the electoral process, and has little regard for what he disdainfully calls the "calendar show" that takes place every four years.[55] He also asserts that Russia traditionally believes in the personalization of power, without this necessarily meaning an authoritarian regime because the authority of the leader is supposedly based on consensus: Boyar councils in ancient Russia, soviets in the twentieth century, and the search for "democratic consensus" today.[56]

To ensure its specific role on the political scene, United Russia employs the tactic of discrediting and demonizing other parties, something particularly evident during Putin's second term. Thus, unlike the presidential party, the other parties are allegedly not "cadre machines," but representatives of narrow, particularistic interests. The CPRF, for

instance, is denied the right to claim the legacy of the CPSU and the Soviet Union, as this legacy is one that United Russia indirectly demands for itself; the Communists, it claims, represent only the "rural" branch of the nationalist Writers' Union, which was in fact very anti-Soviet.[57] Liberals, be they Yabloko or the Union of Right Forces, are treated the same as oligarchs, whose return to Russia the latter are claimed to support unequivocally. *The United Russia's Agitator* thus defines liberal parties as bearers of the "revenge of the oligarchs" and supporters of the "offshore aristocracy."[58] According to it, liberals and fascists are united by their "hatred of Russia . . . their goal is to control [Russia] from the outside in order to prevent its renewal."[59] In a book whose title could not have been more explicit, *Putin's Enemies*, published by Evropa, the authors denounce pell-mell Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Kasianov, Garry Kasparov, and Eduard Limonov for seeking to "destroy everything that was built up between 2000 and 2007."[60] By their refusal to recognize Putin's success, they are automatically deemed to be "enemies of the state and the nation, enemies of our Homeland."[61]

With the other parties delegitimized, United Russia tries to arrogate the right to represent the nation as a whole by identifying the external and internal threats menacing the country. These are all united under a single term—"extremism." "The extremists are all forces that aim to destabilize the political situation in Russia,"[62] a catch-all category that covers everything from the Islamists to the "Oranges," that is, supporters of "colored revolutions." Among the many dangers threatening the country, at the top of United Russia's list is Islamic terrorism, followed by the risks of secessionism and attacks on territorial integrity, NATO's eastward enlargement, United States involvement in Caspian energy issues, the destruction of Serbia, Western support to anti-Russia regimes in the post-Soviet space, and actions organized against the Russian population (discrimination against Russian minorities in the Near Abroad, the trials of Second World War veterans in Baltic countries, etc.) or against pro-Russia minorities (the Ossetians and Abkhaz in Georgia, the Dagestani in Azerbaijan).

Condemning "colored revolutions" as an example of an anti-Russia conspiracy organized by the West is one of United Russia's most salient themes. Its "specialist," Vitali Ivanov, founder of the Web site www.antirev.ru, devoted an entire book published by Evropa to the doctrines of "anti-color revolutionism." His aim was not so much to denounce the events that occurred in Georgia and Ukraine as to demonstrate the unlikeliness of such a scenario in Russia. According to him, the idea of a political alternative exerting pressure from the street is borne

by the oligarchy and the last Yeltsin supporters, who allegedly see in it a chance to take revenge on Putin. Russia, he says, has already had more than its share of destabilizations and revolutions in the 1990s. What it needs are pragmatic technicians rather than romantics still captivated by the myth of the "great night." Ivanov is also critical of the ideological incoherence of Other Russia's joining the National Bolsheviks and Westernizers, denounces Kasparov's vision of a possible uprising of Caucasian minorities against the Russians in the event of a revolution, and condemns politicians like Rogozin, who regularly threatens the Kremlin with organizing another "Maidan" in Moscow.[63]

To demonstrate the futility of a "colored revolution," United Russia proposes a "strategy of renewal," based on the reaffirmation of the "inalienable right of the free people of Russia to define its own historical destiny, display its national pride, which includes natural resources, and achieve its development in the interest of the nation, not of a specific group of oligarchs or influential outside forces."[64] Democracy and the market economy are values that are stressed in presidential party speeches, however they are not taken as ends in themselves, but instead as a means of redressing the state. They do not have a universal character, and can apply only in the context of specific national models or sovereign democracy. The party's national narrative is thus built around three central themes: population issues (ending the country's demographic crisis through reduced mortality and increased births), economic patriotism (the creation of an "innovative" economy), and the collusion of internal and external enemies (recurrent references to "colored revolutions"), which occupy the overwhelming majority of Evropa's editorial range.

Patriotism Versus Nationalism in Presidential Discourse

If the ruling elites began their efforts to revive national pride in the second half of the 1990s, it was not until Vladimir Putin's arrival in office that the equation between the individual and the state was reworked. In October 2000, six months after taking office, the Russian president made a highly publicized visit to Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008), in which the two men expressed agreement on almost all issues.[65] Following their talks, Putin attempted to appropriate ownership and legitimacy over the formulation of the Russian national identity. From his first statements on the subject in 2000–2001, he insisted that the precondition of Russia's recovery was that Russians take pride in their nation. This logic was pushed to the forefront during the 2007–2008 election campaign,

during which the slogans "believe in Russia, believe in yourself" (*veri v Rossiiu, veri v sebia*) or "Russia, it's me" (*Rossiia—eto ia*) epitomized official plans to link together the idea of individual potential and the development of the country.[66] Aimed primarily at young people, the message was meant to engage citizens, presenting personal success as the intrinsic condition for national success.

In December 1999, Vladimir Putin, then Prime Minister, published a long article on the nation, often refered to as 'Millennium Manifesto'.[67] This manifesto of his future presidency put forward a third Russian way that rejected both the Communist regime and the liberalism of Western Europe. Putin presented himself immediately as a nonideological individual, stating, "I am against the restoration of any form of ideology in Russia."[68] The term "ideology" carries with it negative connotations in Russia and an immediate connection to Marxism-Leninism; however, an alternative values-centered terminology has emerged. While ideology is seen as dogmatic and imposed from above, values are understood as a flexible concept, shared by all, and internalized in the personal experiences of each citizen. Putin thus evoked three supposedly fundamental values: patriotism (*patriotizm*), power (*derzhavnost'*), and statism (*gosudarstvennichestvo*). He defined the former as pride in one's homeland, its history, and its success, and the aspiration to make one's country more beautiful, richer, stronger, and happier.[69] However, cognizant of the negative connotations and chauvinist sentiment associated with the expression, he sought to clarify his position: "When these feelings are free of nationalist vanity and imperial ambitions, there is nothing wrong with them," concluding that, "having lost patriotism . . . we lost our identity as a people capable of great achievements."[70] As for the state, Putin went on to dissociate Russia from Western countries, claiming that the latter are marked by individualism, and to herald the uniquely Russian relationship between the citizen and the state: "A strong state is not an anomaly for the Russian citizen, this is not something against which we must fight, to the contrary, it is the source and guarantor of order, the initiator and main driving force of all change."[71]

Although he maintained in the text that he did not consider patriotism an ideology, but rather a value, Vladimir Putin actually combined the two terms. In 2003, at a conference on the development of small cities across the country, he very explicitly called for patriotism to become the unifying ideology of Russia.[72] The same year, during a meeting with the presidents of institutes of higher education, he explained that "large-scale changes have taken place in an ideological vacuum. An ideology was lost and nothing new has been proposed to succeed it. . . . Patriotism, in

the more positive sense of that term, must be the backbone of this new ideology."[73] During his speech to the nation in April 2007, he reaffirmed that the unity of the people is not achieved solely by economic and political stability, but also by a spiritual unity and "common moral compass" (*obshchaia sistema nravstvennykh orientirov*), giving the examples of respect for the language, specific cultural values, the memory of ancestors, and each chapter of national history.[74] During multiple commemorations and official meetings with the military, senior religious dignitaries, teachers, youth, businessmen, and diplomats, the president stressed the importance of patriotism that is not driven from the top but comes from below, stating that Russia needs a civil society, but one imbued with patriotism and consideration for the country.[75]

A textual analysis of Putin's discourse illuminates the meaning that the Kremlin gives to both *patriotism* and *nationalism*. Patriotism is seen as a positive and constructive value, which turns to pride in oneself rather than the hatred of others, while nationalism is understood as a negative, destructive, and aggressive phenomenon. This classical division is a resumption of the opposition developed during the Soviet period, according to which only Soviet patriotism was positive and internationalist, while nationalism of the Soviet peoples and peoples of Western Europe was negative and chauvinistic. Likewise, patriotism is thought of as authentic, as the entire population shares it, while nationalism is deemed to be hollow and illusory because it is elite driven and so disconnected from reality. The expansion of xenophobic violence in Russia has required that Vladimir Putin regularly employ this lexicological dissociation. In December 2005, at the Day of Security Services Workers, he called on the FSB to improve the fight against militant nationalism (*voinstvuiushchii natsionalism*), another Soviet formula, and xenophobia, identifying those who endanger the country's unity through the "propagation of ethnic hatred."[76]

Nationalism is therefore defined as systematically extremist, while any moderate expression of national sentiment made under the label of patriotism is considered not only respectable, but also necessary. The former remains confined to the fascist threat—which would include supporters of Limonov, successor groups to the UNR, and skinheads—but also to the national sentiments of other peoples of Russia that might call state unity into question. The fight against nationalism, xenophobia, fascism, and extremism—four terms regarded as synonyms by the presidential apparatus—is one of the central elements of the political strategy put forth by the Kremlin. In February 2006, United Russia and 11 other political groups, including the LDPR, signed a pact designed to bring

together the antifascist parties.[77] Only the CPRF, Yabloko, and Rodina refused to sign on and denounced the document as a farce initiated by the supporters of Vladimir Putin with no impact on the social causes of xenophobia. Indeed, the Kremlin's ability to decide political legitimacy is based on control over the patriotic label. This validates those parties allowed to participate in public life, while opponents are systematically disparaged either as traitors to the nation or as nationalist extremists.

Vladislav Surkov: Father of the Idea of Sovereign Democracy

If Vladimir Putin has remained content with reviving the patriotic narrative and dissociating it from a negatively connoted nationalism, Vladislav Surkov, United Russia's éminence grise and Putin's personal advisor, decided to make public the need for a party doctrine. As a member of Russia's first television channel in the 1990s, he was a close associate of Boris Berezovsky and Mikhail Fridman, and had a rather atypical background before he was noticed by the head of the presidential administration, Alexander Voloshin, who gave him the position of vice-director of this administration in 1999. Since this time, Surkov has overseen United Russia's communications policy and has published articles on doctrinal matters discussing the best policy options. In February 2006, during a seminar at the Center for Training and Preparation of Party Cadres, Surkov gave a long speech on the need for ideology and remarked upon the necessity of having a more refined theoretical framework to avoid future schisms.[78] Published by the *Moskovskie novosti* (Moscow News) under the ironic title "The General Line,"[79] a throwback to its similarity with official CPSU declarations, the article was integrated into United Russia's program some months later. As Surkov put it, "United Russia's aim is not only to win the 2007 elections but to guarantee the role of the dominant party for at least the next 10–15 years."[80] To achieve this, the party has to be able to formulate a national ideology, to create a class of propagandists (*agitatory*), to master the technologies of the street, and to enlist the youth in its service.

For Surkov, sovereign democracy (*suverennaia demokratiia*) is the first fundament of any future ideology. The adjective "sovereign" is meant to indicate the idea that Russia has a specific path of development: therefore it must refuse the *pax americana* imposed by Washington and define its own rhythm of development and priorities. Sovereign democracy is the Kremlin's direct response to the "colored revolutions" of 2003–2005: no Western interference will be accepted in the name of democratic

values.[81] In using the term sovereign democracy, Surkov thus wants to underline the fundamentally modernizing character of his national project, whose mission is to guarantee Russia "the nationalization of the future," as the title of one of his principal programmatic texts explains.[82] This nationalization of the future can only come to life after the vision of the past has been pacified: the USSR was sovereign but not democratic, the 1990s Russia was democratic but not sovereign, while Putin's Russia reconciles these two contraries into one synthesis destined for success. Within this framework, Surkov develops a nuanced discourse on the Soviet Union. He claims that it enabled Russia's industrialization and produced an ideology that promoted freedom and justice in the world. And far from being an autocratic country, the USSR was also one of the actors of globalization.[83] What ought to be retained from the Soviet Union, he claims, is therefore "obviously not the army barracks, but the modernizing project."[84]

However, the Soviet system, which functioned according to a dogmatic and not a pragmatic logic, and was too closed in on itself, did not succeed in assuring its own effectiveness. On this basis, Surkov rejects theories claiming that there was a plot to bring down the Soviet Union and asserts that its fall actually followed an "objective process," for the Russian people itself did not get anything out of this model and rejected it.[85] He insists on the idea that Russia was the author of its decision for democracy, and rejects the notion that it was imposed after defeat in the Cold War. As he puts it: "Russia does not consider that it was defeated in the war; Russia itself defeated its own totalitarianism."[86] Despite his virulent critique of the 1990s decade, Surkov seems to be situated in continuity with the changes promoted since perestroika and to have appropriated Gorbachev's discourse calling for the construction of a democratic state that is integrated into, but not subjugated to, the international community. This wish to claim an adjectivized democracy as the principle of a new national ideology is grounded in his analysis of the contemporary world. In his terms, if Russian society were not open to the world, hence partially democratic, it would not be able to continue its modernization and would have no chance of survival.

Thus, for Surkov, the much-proclaimed sovereignty is a "synonym of the ability to be competitive (*konkurentosposobnost'*)."[87] This competitiveness operates on the economic level (Russia's ability to assure its own development thanks to its energy wealth and its industrial sector, but also by developing new technologies), on the military level (its ability to ensure its defense), and on the political level (its ability to influence the rest of the world by showing its resistance to the decisions taken in

the West). Russia's "sovereign democracy" might therefore present itself as a model for other countries desiring to free themselves from Western pressure by appealing to their economic development, and Surkov surely has in mind the other BRIC countries (Brazil, India, and China). An integral part of this reconciliatory reading of Soviet experience and of liberalism, Surkov also savvily latches on to the meritocratic discourse of the young Russian elites, recalling how much the country's future depends above all on the birth of a genuinely national bourgeoisie. Thus, at the end of 2008, he did not conceal his alarm at the political impact of the economic crisis and called for voluntarist measures to support middle-class consumption in order to avoid a loss of confidence. As he says, "if the 1980s were the years of the intellectuals, and the 1990s those of the oligarchs, then the 2000s are those of the middle classes"[88] to whom the Kremlin ought to devote all its energies.

The acceptation of globalization constitutes one of the atomic elements of Surkov's discourse. To win back part of its world leadership, Russia cannot withdraw into itself; on the contrary, it must embrace globalization so that it can take charge of it. As he puts it: "if Russia quits global politics and ceases to influence global decisions, then all the decisions will soon be taken to its detriment."[89] Similar to Evgeni Primakov's statements during the years 1996–1999, Surkov argues that Russia's aim is not to become the world's sole leader, a purely utopian idea, but to be one of the principal leaders of international politics alongside the United States, the European Union, China, and India. This claim is often expressed in a way that is marked by torment and disappointment: "This is how we see ourselves in the world and we hope that with time, our neighbors and partners will accept this."[90] Surkov, then, does not refrain from criticizing those whom he defines as ethnonationalist, and who, in his view, seek to return Russia to the borders of a medieval Muscovite principality. He is troubled about a potential victory of the isolationists, which would mean the return to Soviet state bureaucracy, and has targeted Rodina and Dmitri Rogozin in particular. In his view, "Both restorations, oligarchic and bureaucratic, have as their aim only to distance Russia from the future, to hide it in the past or in the supposed 'nightmare' of global competition."[91]

Surkov endorses a more pro-European vision of Russia than rival currents within the presidential party and refuses to get too involved in debates on the nature of national identity. His discourse maintains a generally vague line on identity matters: although he uses the term Rossian nation (*rossiiskaia natsiia*), he also refers to the "multinational Russian state" (*russkoe mnogonatsional'noe gosudarstvo*).[92] In his texts, the term

"Russian" may be used as much in an ethnocultural sense as in a civic one. He sometimes distinguishes the Russian people, which he considers the driving force of Russia, from the other peoples of the country, whose sole mission is to highlight the primary role of the Russians.[93] However, he rejects calls for the russification of Russia: for him, the need for a national ideology cannot be explained by the intrinsic weakness of a Russian identity supposedly in need of consolidation, but by the country's weakness at the international level. He claims that "if we do not create our own discourse, our public philosophy, our ideology (I am not speaking of state ideology but of national ideology, although the term national does not please me, it has something mistaken and devalued about it), one that is accepted at least by a majority, if not, were it possible, by all citizens, then why would one speak with the mute? No one will discuss anything with us. And if we do not speak, we will no longer count."[94] Russia's revival, Surkov thinks, can therefore occur only through its role on the international stage and its ability to take a lead role in the globalized world, and not by the reprisal of old debates on the idea of Russian uniqueness.

An Absence of Doctrine in Identity Issues?

Despite the emphasis placed on the idea of specificity in Russia's development, United Russia openly and unequivocally supports the thesis of Russia's Europeanness. "Russia's opting for Europe is not a fashion or a result of political circumstance. It is the natural result of several centuries of state and societal development."[95] In this way, several texts point to the common values that Russia shares with Europe, such as material success, freedom, and justice. This does not mean, however, that Russia must let Brussels subject it to a "test of Europeanness": the ruling elites no longer recognize the West as a moral authority.[96] On the party Web site, almost all references to the European Union are negative: United Russia denounces it as a bureaucratic structure devoid of popular legitimacy and accuses it of bias against Moscow. As such, United Russia reiterates in its own way the already lengthy tradition of differentiating the West and Europe: the first is said to include the United States, while the second excludes it; the first personifies the right of interference, while the second refers to larger historical values. The European Union, dissociated from the idea of Europe, adds a third element that further complicates this binary division. As Angela Stent remarks, the Kremlin's objective is not to promote European values per se but to modernize Russia, to

strengthen its economy, and to transform it into an actor of globalization by building closer ties with the European Union.[97] In spite of such, Europeanness as identity remains a privileged element in contemporary official Russian discourse. As Vladislav Surkov states, "not to separate ourselves from Europe, to defend ourselves against the West—that is the key element of the construction of Russia."[98]

If the various currents within United Russia minimally concur on a vision of Russia as European but not Western, and assert the idea of sovereign democracy as the archetype of the Russian political system, nonetheless the party remains divided over its definition of national identity. To date there is no standardized doctrine on the sensitive question of the terms Russian/Rossian. Representatives of the national minorities in United Russia present a favorable view of the country's national diversity, inspired by Eurasianist discourse. They contend, for instance, that the country is built on "traditions of Rossian civilization . . . , the product of a natural historical process of convergence of autonomous civilizational projects and world religions, of the Slavic West and the Turkic East, of peoples of Europe and Asia, of Orthodox Christianity and Eurasian Islam."[99] This opinion is shared by the party's most liberal members, who do not want to see the officialization of Orthodoxy, any suppression of the country's federal character, or the effacement of minority rights. They think that these domestic elements are second-order issues that will be forgotten once and for all when all the country's citizens find themselves in the market economy and hold private property, and Russia is recognized on the international scene.

As a result, the Kremlin has seen itself reduced to a skillful balancing act, putting forward bills and texts that maintain maximum imprecision in their definitions of Russian identity. In many of his speeches, Vladimir Putin has stated that the people is not the total of an arithmetical sum but an organic whole of persons. After the events in Kondopoga in 2006, he stepped forward to take up the defense of the "indigenous population," a designation that includes all the peoples of Russia by contrast to an entity defined as "migrant."[100] Although he regularly insists on the preservation of the country's multinational historical legacy,[101] he drew attention with his reintroduction of the term "Russian," which, during the 1990s, had partly disappeared from official discourse. During the festivities of May 9, 2000, for instance, he stated, without using the term "Rossian," that the pride of the Russian people is immortal and that no force can defeat the Russian armies.[102] He simultaneously foregrounded elements regarded as specifically Russian, such as the role of Cossacks.[103] In 2006, he claimed that his policies were dictated by "the interests of the Rossian nation

and of the Russian people,"[104] a dissociation swiftly picked up on by the media and so-called radical nationalist circles.

This reflection on the definition of Russianness, far from being purely theoretical, influences political decisions in two strategic domains, namely migration policy and the federal makeup of the country. Contrasts between definitions of the country as Russian or as Rossian intersect rather systematically with those concerning migration flows. *The United Russia's Agitator*, for example, takes up official discourse on its own behalf, claiming that the measures taken for reviving the nation are insufficient to enable Russia to overcome its demographic crisis: what is needed is a policy to allow massive but controlled migration of persons from the CIS, that is, Russophones who are already familiar with Russian culture, and to allow Russian citizens belonging to national minorities, such as Chechens and the Ingush, to settle outside of their own autonomous republics.[105] However, there is no consensus on this approach: in another official booklet, Andrei Isaev maintains an opposite discourse, arguing that massive immigration would signal the disappearance of historic Russia and its transformation into an American-style melting pot in which the comportment of migrants would conflict with that of Russians. He presents United Russia as the party for self-sustained national revival, with the implication that the presidential party and presidential policy support contrary perspectives on the migration issue, the former being guarded, the latter too liberal.[106]

The second stake of the debate on identity concerns the policy on nationalities and the future of federalism. United Russia has no single doctrine on this issue either, and discussions held in the Duma for the purpose of elaborating a policy on this matter divide its deputies.[107] Some such as Evgeni Trofimov, who heads the Committee for Nationalities Issues, would like to officialize the supremacy of ethnic Russians in the Federation. Indeed, increasingly many United Russia deputies are favorable to the proposition, regularly put forward by so-called radical nationalists (members of the LDPR, Rodina, etc.), that Russians be given the status of an eponymous people and therefore that the 1993 constitution—which mentions only "the multinational people of Russia"—be modified.[108] The most liberal of United Russia's members reject any such russification of the country and have until now succeeded in blocking bills that are too explicit about the status of the Russian people as first among equals.

United Russia's doctrine is thus essentially consensual; it is about confirming the presidential party in its role as the driving force of national reconciliation. In a propaganda brochure, Andrei Isaev precisely presents

United Russia as "*the* party of Russian political tradition,"[109] that is, as its name indicates, the only one able to grasp not only the political unity of the contemporary nation but also its unity in time. According to Isaev, no period should be excluded or prohibited from the national history's continuity. During the perestroika years and the 1990s, by contrast, each political current sought a golden century that it could hold up as a model (the Brezhnev or Stalin or Lenin years, imperial absolutism, Peter the Great, Ancient Muscovy, etc.), which, he claims, led only to endless debate and uselessly sullied the nonvalorized eras. As Isaev puts it, "the multiplication of concurrent versions of history is the sign of a national crisis."[110] By articulating a consensual reading of the past in which each period has its place, United Russia hopes to reconcile the past as it opens up the future, for the party's ultimate objective is the "return of the future."[111]

United Russia's political logic, which is mainly to unify high-profile state employees, is followed up at an intellectual level by its emphasizing of the key role of statehood: "No Russian political tradition is possible outside of the state."[112] This state continuity is alleged to be embodied by two atemporal features. The first is based on the messianic tradition: "A global role is a necessity for domestic politics, an indispensable condition of the stability of the Russian state."[113] The second relates to the feeling that Russia is at the crossroads of the world: "It is time to restore Russia's role in the world. Russia can endorse initiatives in which the central question is internationalism as a union of nationalisms and a genuine alternative to globalization. Russia is ready to assume its role as a 'civilizational frontier.'"[114] Thus, while many debates are being led behind the scenes of the presidential party, publicly proclaimed patriotic rhetoric remains deliberately vague and imprecise in its definition of Russia, playing on old clichés about its role at the crossroads of civilizations, the continuity of the state over and above political divisions, and the natural grandeur of the Russian soul.

The presidential party claims to represent not a part of the electorate but its totality, and thinks of itself as a palliative for the whole political field. It is multiplying its functions and presents itself as the embodiment of the state, its practical application, whence comes its desire to take control of grand state projects such as the priority national projects. As such the values underlined by United Russia's propaganda do not necessarily respond to the convictions of its members but are conceived by the party's communication advisors as a technical means of mustering up votes. Membership in the party has become the practically unavoidable ticket for all those wanting to participate in public life and to get into

political or administrative positions, to advance their career within the public function or the cultural milieus, and to obtain preferential economic markets. In this way, although it is obviously not a replica of the CPSU, one cannot but note the parallel between the former Communist structure and the logic established by United Russia, which thinks of itself as a "pluripartite party."[115] The conflicts between influence groups now play out within a single partisan structure and no longer in the public arena, since these groups do not seek to obtain popular assent for validation, but to control state positions.

The place of ideology in United Russia's functioning and legitimacy is likely to develop in the coming years. Until now, the refusal of too thorough an ideologization has contributed to the party's success. It has enabled United Russia to maintain discourses that are at once liberal on the economic level (promarket) and very statist, to be anti-Western and pro-Western at the same time. More so than Vladimir Putin, Dmitri Medvedev appears reluctant about toward ideologists such as Vladislav Surkov and appeals to a "democracy without adjective," one that would not promote Russia's so-called historical exceptionality.[116] The indoctrination of political activists and, if possible, of a great part of the society continues to be thought a relevant mode of leadership by a good number of United Russia's leaders, but it would require such massive investment in a large-scale coercion apparatus that nobody seems willing to pay the price.[117] Because of its will to reconcile Russia's antagonisms, the Kremlin therefore seems doomed to adopt paradoxical stances. Although without a constituted doctrine, United Russia has succeeded in turning conservatism into a legitimate discourse, based on a centrist position and a double refusal of (liberal) revolution and (Communist) counterrevolution. It has also given the state back the prestige of being the driving force of society's modernization and the peak point in the nation's development, although it is difficult to know if the population really subscribes to this vision.[118]

CHAPTER FIVE

Nationalism as Social Consensus: The Patriotic Brand

The Kremlin does not utilize the reference to the nation only as an instrument by which to control the political spectrum. It also has a social function, that of creating a twofold consensus: one between citizens themselves, and another between citizens and the political elite. The first consensus is aimed at ending the ideological polarization that threatened Russia at the beginning of the 1990s and at recreating unity in a country that today is extremely divided socially. In fact it appears that there is not one but multiple Russias coexisting on the same territory in heteroclite times and social and cultural worlds: despite reductions in poverty, the social inequalities are widening; the oligarchy lives in a globalized world entirely disconnected from the rest of the country; the aspirations of the middle classes are far removed from the daily preoccupations of the rural population and parts of the provinces; and the national republics and the minorities all see the Russian state in different lights. The second consensus is born of the Kremlin's primary goal to remobilize a Russian society accustomed to living in an environment divorced from politics. United Russia and the presidential administration are convinced that the political, social, and economic status quo currently in their favor is possible in the long term only if citizens also remobilize, in their daily life, to support the rebirth of Russia as a great power and therefore to support the party that embodies this revival.

In this chapter, nationalism is approached as a central element in the construction of social consensus in Russia. To reconnect with society, the Kremlin thinks it has no alternative but to draw on reservoirs of cultural consensus and symbolic evidences. Nothing is more consensual and

self-evident than the topic of the motherland, insofar as it works to attenuate political divisions, to negate social potential conflicts, and to efface the multiplicity of cultural references by recentering discourse on the idea that the nation is in danger and must be defended. The Kremlin's patriotic agenda is therefore focused on three driving forces of consensus: the rehabilitation of fatherland symbols and institutionalized historical memory, the instrumentalization of Orthodoxy for symbolic capital, and the development of a militarized patriotism based on Soviet nostalgia. I do not look here at other forms that might also be mentioned, such as economic patriotism in the name of safeguarding Russian industries and companies,[1] the educational indoctrination of the youth, and the latter's politicization through youth movements inspired by Komsomol and so forth.

Officializing National Pride through Patriotism

At the time of the Soviet Union's collapse and the early Yeltsin years, the polls were unanimous in showing that Russians had a very negative view of themselves. According to VTSIOM surveys, between the beginning and the end of the year 1991, affiliation with the phrases "we are worse than everyone else" or "we bring only negative things to the world" climbed from 7 percent to 57 percent.[2] These feelings rapidly combined with the idea that only the return of a powerful state could overcome this sense of shame. Nearly half of respondents found the idea of great power to be a unifying element, able to transcend partisan divisions.[3] Surveys conducted in 1995–1996 confirmed that the majority of Russians were ashamed of the current state of their country and viewed the era of Peter the Great as the greatest period in the nation's history. Based on surveys he conducted in 1995, Vladimir Shlapentokh stated that if Russians were primarily and practically concerned with individual issues, nonetheless two-thirds recognized the importance of the idea of great power and were nostalgic for the Soviet past.[4]

This paradox has been an enduring one. In a 2002 sociological survey that asked what aspects of life in contemporary Russia gave them a sense of pride, half of those surveyed had no answer to offer or found the question irrelevant, while 20 percent said that nothing made them feel proud.[5] However, this figure dropped rapidly in the following years: in 2006, only 3 percent of respondents replied that they were not proud of anything in Russia.[6] This evolution has its corollary in the terminological changes that occurred in the 2000s. Throughout perestroika and the 1990s, the extra-parliamentary movements and opposition parties like

the CPRF had a monopoly on the term patriotism, but in the 2000s the authorities themselves have increasingly appropriated it, using it to designate the social norm. Success seems to be theirs. In December 2006, a survey revealed that 57 percent of respondents claimed to be patriots (*patrioty*), against 30 percent who claimed they were not.[7] This rapid change in assessment was made possible by the construction of a parallel between pride in oneself and pride in one's own country, embodied primarily in the visual and festive rehabilitation of symbols of the nation.

The Restoration of Tsarist and Soviet Symbols

The rehabilitation of Soviet symbols was a key step toward the promotion of the patriotic label. In an address to the Federal Assembly in April 2005, Putin made his own vision of the past particularly clear by recognizing that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."[8] The formalization of this widely held view—more than three-quarters of Russians approve of this statement—that was long regarded as politically incorrect closed a cycle of the reintroduction of former Tsarist or Soviet symbols.[9] While the desire to regain the geopolitical power lost in 1991 is obvious, these symbols have not been restored purely and simply for their ideological value—communism itself has not been rehabilitated—but because they are part of a cultural background common to the entire population and are seen as an indication of normalcy.

The Soviet Union indeed enjoys a positive image in Russian public opinion. At the end of the 1990s, 78 percent of Russians thought that the best period of their life was under Leonid Brezhnev.[10] In 2001, only 7 percent of those surveyed stated that the Soviet Union had no positive qualities. The former regime is especially appreciated for its ensuring of job security, interethnic peace, and economic stability. The memory of its bureaucracy, however, is very largely negative, far more so than that of its political repression (31 and 11 percent respectively).[11] In 2005, an opinion poll revealed that although elder persons are the most nostalgic, 60 percent of the young generation that did not have any adult experience of the Soviet regime (that born after the second half of the 1970s) are also nostalgic for it.[12] This nostalgia for the Soviet past, which transcends social milieus and age brackets, is also present in the countries of the former Eastern bloc: in 2004, more than half of the population of the eight ex-socialist countries had a positive vision of the communist regime.[13] However, this nostalgia ought not to be confounded with a reactive desire to return to the status quo ante or the

restoration of the preceding regime, but reveals, among other things, a certain dissatisfaction with the contemporary situation.

In December 2000 a new law on the flag, emblem, and anthem of Russia helped to bring about a new ideological compromise in reconciling the three major eras, the Tsarist regime, the Soviet Union, and independent Russia. The national flag—the tricolor white, blue, and red—was adopted as a symbol of the young democracy under the provisional government in 1917, and then again in the post-Soviet era. The national emblem combines the two previous regimes; the red flag represents the Soviet period while the double-headed eagle at its center symbolizes the imperial era. The Soviet anthem was then brought back to replace a nineteenth-century anthem composed by Mikhail Glinka that had been instituted in the early 1990s. The music of the anthem composed by Alexander Alexandrov remains unchanged, but its lyrics were amended to remove references to communism. The new version was composed by Sergei Mikhalkov, father of the famous film director Nikita Mikhalkov. A popular poet, Sergei Mikhalkov has authored both of the previous versions of the lyrics, one written under Stalin and the other during de-Stalinization. Appealing for the third time to Mikhalkov was a way of reinforcing the paradoxical continuity in the rupture Vladimir Putin has sought to personalize.

In 2000, the former red flag of the Soviet army was also reintroduced as the flag of the Russian armed forces.[14] In 2003, it was redesigned with a double-headed eagle to symbolize Tsarism, the four five-pointed stars that Trotsky had proposed,[15] and the slogan "Motherland, Duty, Honor" used by Tsarist armies in the eighteenth century.[16] In 2007, the Federation Council approved a law allowing the Soviet flag with the hammer and sickle to be used once more at major ceremonies, such as that on May 9. However, the Duma voted in favor of the red star flag without the hammer and sickle, raising dissension between the two chambers.[17] The politicization of national memorial symbols occurs not only in the parliament, but also in patriotic associations. Since 2005, the yellow and black Ribbon of Saint George, which during the Soviet era was called the Ribbon of the Guard, has been widely distributed (more than one million copies) by various veteran associations during Victory Day celebrations as a commemorative sign of the glorious Soviet past.

In 2007, Mikhail Kalashnikov, the creator of the world's most popular firearm, was defined by Putin as "a symbol of the creative genius of the people."[18] Then, in 2008, the parliamentary fraction United Russia put forward a bill making provision for the broad utilization, by citizens, of the Russian flag, precisely so that it would not be limited to merely official use.[19] In this context, the May 9, 2008, military parade—to

show off Russia's new missiles and tanks in the Red Square and mark its return as a military power—and the discussions on whether to have *Misha,* the bear that was the emblem of the 1980 Moscow Olympic games, as the official mascot of the 2014 Sochi winter Olympics, confirm that references to Soviet-era grandeur can still act as key elements of consensus.

Consensus through Commemoration

After reofficializing Tsarist and Soviet symbols, the Kremlin turned to the issue of holidays and commemorative days. Although festivities related to May 9 have always been fundamental regardless of political regime, the authorities decided to rehabilitate the June 12 Russia Day, a public holiday since the early 1990s that has never been a popular event. In 2003, the presidential administration sought to transform it into a patriotic celebration of great magnitude, centering on symbols of the state and including a march of thousands of pupils and students. On June 12, 2006, the municipality of Moscow put up hundreds of posters bearing the slogan "Glory to Russia" (*slava Rossii*). This was also the motto used by the fascist Russian emigration movement in Kharbin, Manchuria, in the 1930s, as well as by Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity. In some provincial cities more proactive efforts were organized. In Lenin's birthplace of Ulianovsk, for instance, a "patriotic birth" project was set up with the objective of motivating citizens' patriotic spirit to reverse Russia's negative demographic curve. The local government offers gifts for the birth of a child on June 12, and authorizes all the region's municipal employees to take a half-day holiday on September 12 in the hope of a birth nine months later.[20]

The Soviet tradition of professional holidays remained intact under Yeltsin and was even expanded during Putin's second term. Local authorities have been encouraged to organize special celebrations in their city or region, while television stations increasingly devote their airtime to special programming. Although all professions are supposed to have their own commemorative day, the military has always been highly overrepresented, with separate days for police officers, cosmonauts, customs officers, security agencies, the air force, and the navy. In May 2006, a presidential decree on the introduction of new holidays and professional days dedicated to the Russian armed forces increased the number of these celebrations in order to "revive and develop national military traditions and prestige of army service, and to recognize military specialists defending the state."[21] Fourteen new holidays devoted to

military professions were introduced, including days for military lawyers, military police, migration services workers, the presidential guard, anti-aircraft forces, the nuclear industry, tank workers, intelligence agents, and biological and chemical weapons defense personnel.[22]

Among these many commemorative days, one occupies a place of particular importance, namely February 23. This date was declared Red Army day in 1922, to celebrate the birth of the Red Army in 1918. In 1995, Boris Yeltsin renamed it Defenders of the Fatherland day and, in 2006, Vladimir Putin put the word in the singular, making it Defender of the Fatherland Day (*den' zashchitnika otechestva*). With this change, authorities indicated that the celebration was no longer dedicated only to military defenders, but to every citizen who is responsive in one way or another to the national cause. The festivities organized for the occasion in recent years have insisted precisely on this combination of civilian patriotism and glorious military accomplishments. The same is true for Heroes of the Fatherland Day (*den' geroev otechestva*), though for this celebration a day off of work is not given. Adopted in January 2007 by the Duma, the new holiday is celebrated on December 9 in commemoration of the founding of the Order of Saint George by Empress Catherine II in 1769.[23]

The Kremlin has also reinforced the celebration of a specific category of commemorations, that is, days of Russia's military glory (*dni voinskoi slavy Rossii*), which are not "day-off" holidays.[24] In November 2003, the Duma voted at the Kremlin's behest to amend a February 1995 law on these celebrations to alter the days on which some of them were commemorated after various debates emerged among historians about the specific problems posed by the Julian calendar.[25] The law established or re-established about 15 days of military commemoration. Two pertain to Russia's medieval history: the victory of Alexander Nevski over the Teutonic knights in 1242, and of Dmitri Donskoi over the Tatars at the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380. At Vladimir Putin's suggestion, the second commemoration was extended over three days, from July 18 to July 21, and was celebrated with great pomp in 2005 when the Orthodox Church opened the ceremony with a religious service. However, while Alexander Nevski's victory over the Prussian world might work to unify anti-Western sentiment in Russia, the figure of Dmitri Donskoi poses problems within the Federation. Tatarstan, for instance, has made known its objections, since it deems this victory to be an anti-Tatar celebration that prohibits the reconciliation of different national memories.

Two other commemorative days were chosen to celebrate the many conflicts between Russia and Sweden in the early eighteenth century,

which allowed Peter the Great to acquire his famous window onto Europe over the Baltic Sea, where he founded Saint Petersburg: the Russian army's victory at Poltava in 1709, and the Russian navy's one over the Swedes in 1714. Three days are also dedicated to the remembrance of the long conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire: the capture of the Ottoman fortress of Ismail in 1790, the Russian army's victory over the Ottomans in the same year, and the Crimean War (1853–1856). The victory at Borodino against the Napoleonic army in 1812 is also celebrated, as is the victory of the Red Army against the troops of the German Kaiser in 1918. Finally, the Second World War is privileged above all else. In addition to May 9, official celebrations are held for the beginning of the Soviet offensive against the Nazis surrounding Moscow in 1941, the victory of Soviet troops over the Nazis at the Battle of Kursk and the Battle of Stalingrad, which both occurred in 1943, and the end of the blockade of Leningrad in 1944.

With these dates established, the debate over commemorations turned to the issue of finding a replacement for November 7. Following a 1996 presidential decree, the celebration of the October Revolution was transformed into a Peace and Reconciliation Day (*den' soglasiia i primireniia*). In September 2004, the Interreligious Council of Russia proposed to mark the events of November 1612, the celebration date of which is roughly equivalent to that of the October Revolution (according to historians, it may be celebrated anytime in the first ten days of November). The proposal was backed by Patriarch Alexis II and quickly obtained the support of the vice-chairman of United Russia's parliamentary faction, Valeri Bogomolov. In November, the Duma voted overwhelmingly in favor of introducing November 4 as People's Unity Day (*den' narodnogo edinstva*). The choice was applauded by United Russia, the LDPR, and Rodina, with only the Communist Party opposed, not because it rejects this national symbol as such but because it competes with the anniversary of the October Revolution. The presidential decree establishing the new holiday also stipulated the elimination of the December 12 holiday commemorating the constitution adopted by Boris Yeltsin in December 1993 following his victory against the Supreme Soviet. The majority of deputies supported the abolition of this highly symbolic event, while liberal and democratic parties interpreted it as a final liquidation of the memory of 1990s liberalism by the Putin administration.

November 4 was chosen to commemorate the 1612 victory of Moscow residents over the Polish-Lithuanian *Rzecpospolita*. Without either tsar or patriarch, the Russian civilian population led by Kozma Minin and Dmitri Pozharski managed to stop Polish expansion in its

tracks. This victory finally brought an end to the Time of Troubles (1598–1613), when due to a lack of reigning dynasty—the Riurikides had died out—the Russian state itself nearly disappeared. Russian and Soviet historians traditionally regard this period as one of the worst in the country's history. The November 4 commemoration therefore officializes a double parallel: first, that between the Time of Troubles and the Yeltsin era, both of which are symbols of peril to the nation; second, that between the enthroning of the first Romanov, Mikhail III, in 1613, and Vladimir Putin's nomination, the two saviors of the nation. November 4 also covers other, less consensual commemorations. The icon of Our Lady of Kazan was celebrated on that date between 1649 and 1917, although the authorities have not sought to insist on this Orthodox reference. November 4, this time in 1721, is also the date on which Peter the Great was awarded the title of emperor following Russia's victory against Sweden in the Great Northern War.

These references, which combine Orthodoxy, the imperial past, and the danger posed by the West in the form of Poland, correspond to the consensual atmosphere that the Kremlin has sought to establish by depicting Russia as a fortress surrounded by enemies. The sentiment that Russia has both qualities (large, unique, all-encompassing, and powerful) and enemies (external ones from the West and internal ones in the form of the ethnic minorities) that are timeless is portrayed in a film called *1612*, first released on People's Unity Day in 2007. A similar vision of history is also reflected in the regular allusions made by the media and government officials to an eternal Russia that spans from "Vladimir to Vladimir," meaning from the first Russian prince who christianized the country in the ninth century to Putin. The loop of Russian history seems therefore to be fastened at both ends and the process of reconciliation materialized through these commemorative strategies. The same applies to the role assigned to Orthodoxy in the promotion of patriotism: religion is generally seen as a form of consensual symbolic capital that allows for the consolidation of national unity.

Promoting Symbolic Capital: Instrumental Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy occupies a paradoxical place on the Russian landscape. This can be explained as much by the multiplicity of modern modes of belief—by no means specific to Russia—as by the country's diversity and strong tradition of associating national and religious identity. Surveys carried out on religiosity in Russia all confirm that between 70 and

80 percent of the population claim to be Orthodox, slightly fewer than those who define themselves as ethnic Russians, that is, as those who do not belong to the national minorities.[26] However, only between 40 and 60 percent of those surveyed stated that they believe in God, which seems to imply that a large number of citizens consider themselves to be non-believing Orthodox. Moreover, religious practice in Russia is among the lowest in Europe: while 40 percent of those surveyed say they attend mass at Easter and Christmas, less than 8 percent of the population attend religious service on a monthly basis, and for weekly attendance the figure drops to 2 percent.[27] Viewed sociologically, practicing believers are more often women than men, more elderly than young, and from rural rather than urban milieus.[28] However, there is also an intellectualized religiosity to be found scattered among relatively young urban elites as part of the so-called renaissance of faith that emerged during perestroika.[29]

Sociological surveys show that, within a context of generalized distrust of all state organs, Russians view the Church as one of the institutions in which they have most confidence.[30] However, the Patriarchate does not have a measurable power of influence over public opinion: two-thirds of Russians think that the Church should have no influence either over elections or over political decisions, and nearly half consider that it has no experience in the present-day matters of state.[31] *A contrario*, those surveyed maintain that Orthodoxy helps to diffuse moral values and positively participates in the reconstruction of national identity.[32] During perestroika and the first years after the fall of the USSR, the Orthodox Church engaged in a profound memorial reflection on its relation to the political authorities and supported democratic forces. This multiform process more or less ended with the events of fall 1993, when the Church could no longer recognize itself in the concepts of democracy and liberalism.[33] Reacting to the social and cultural changes that had occurred in Russia, the Patriarchate hardened its ideological stance in the second half of the 1990s. It began to develop a conception of Orthodoxy as a religion of the community rather than as one of the individual, that is, as a religion built around the concepts of canonical territory and Orthodox civilization.[34]

The Patriarchate: An Ideologically Divided Institution

The Moscow Patriarchate faces many internal tensions and divisions. Some of them are shared by all ecclesiastical institutions, such as those between clerics and laypeople, between parish clergy and monastic

clergy, and so on. Others are more distinctly ideological and stem from the Khrushchev years, not to mention from the varying degrees of willingness to make compromises with the Soviet state and the KGB, and from the differences in educational training between the theological schools of Saint Petersburg and Moscow.[35] However, the splits can also be explained by more contemporary political stakes. From the 1990s the Church has excluded from its principal institutional positions all priests belonging to ecumenical and liberal currents, that is, those inspired by the major figure of Alexander Men.[36] The renovators (*obnovlentsy*), as the latter are called, continue to administer parishes in some districts of Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other regions, but they do not control any of the Patriarchate's important administrative functions.[37] Though very critical of secularization, the Patriarch Alexis II was not himself part of the most reactionary Orthodox trends; however, his second-in-command and successor as of December 2008, the Metropolitan Kirill, who was formerly in charge of the Department of External Relations and considered the institution's main ideologist, has himself played a major part in them.

The conservative elements have made distinct advances in the Patriarchate and today find themselves in the dominant position, with control over the principal parishes, educational institutions, and decision-making positions. They obtained numerous concessions from Patriarch Alexis II, who was keen to maintain unity within the Church, since prior to reconciliation in 2007, the possibility that the most radical members might initiate a schism and leave to join the more nationalist and conservative Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was of great concern.[38] Accordingly, the changes of the years 1990–2000 brought with them signs of renewed ideological engagement on the part of the Patriarchate, which made several very significant symbolic gestures. While it had for many years been opposed to canonizing the imperial family, Alexis II finally changed his mind in 1998. This canonization was interpreted by the media as a critique of the Soviet regime and as a declaration of support for monarchist principles. However, the Patriarchate, which is wary of politicization, stated that it acted only in recognition not of the Tsarist political regime but of the imperial family's passion (*strastoterptsy*) and the martyrdom of the last Romanov emperor.[39]

The Patriarchate has never looked to condemn any of the statements issuing from the more extreme currents within the Church. The Metropolitan John of Saint Petersburg (1927–1995), known for his commitments in favor of ethnic Russian nationalism, continued until his death to publish violently xenophobic, and in particular anti-Semitic,

articles in numerous newspapers such as *Zavtra*, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, and *Pravoslavnaia Rossiia*. The Church has never publicly disavowed him, and his teaching continues to be widely disseminated within it.[40] The Patriarchate has also reduced its participation in the World Council of Churches and marginalized previously established ecumenical relationships. After opposing the papal visit to the Ukraine in 2001, it entered into open conflict with the Vatican when the latter declared that it wanted to make the extant provisional Catholic diocesan structures on Russian territory into proper dioceses. Since 2003 the Patriarch has reestablished close relations with the Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which is known for its radical opposition to ecumenicalism.[41]

Outside of the Patriarchate, several associations have emerged claiming to be representative of Orthodoxy, Russian nationalism, and the monarchy, all in various combinations. Seeking to become the mediators between the ecclesiastical institution and political parties, they have tried to politicize Orthodox references in order to capture media attention.[42] Several among them represent the Orthodox intelligentsia, such as the Union of Orthodox Citizens—which has several deputies at the Duma—and the Sretenski Monastery circle of the Archimandrite Tikhon.[43] These associations push a hard-line social conservatism that is centered on questions of morality, patriotism, and the return to spiritual values. They are rivaled by movements whose monarchist commitments and eschatological vision of the contemporary world are much more radical. One example is the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods, which, since the beginning of the 1990s, has constituted one of the main sites for the development of an Orthodox radicalism. It counts in its ranks as many laypeople as figures issuing from the Church.[44]

The most radical brotherhoods, such as the Union of Orthodox Banner Carriers headed by Leonid Simonovich, have taken up the theories of the Black Hundreds[45] and combined them with an eschatological sentiment of the end of time. Other groups, like the Radonezh brotherhood, are less radical.[46] In 1999, a new eschatological movement appeared that is opposed to all electronic codes, which it alleges are the door leading to the Antichrist.[47] All these associations openly state their commitment to a monarchic regime, understood as a form of national dictatorship, and base their arguments on historical references to the Russian tradition of autocracy. Taking the sanctifications of Alexander Nevski and of Dmitri Donskoi as models, they call for the canonization of new figures like Ivan the Terrible (who is celebrated for his conquest of Kazan and of Astrakhan in 1552 and 1556 respectively, in addition to his anti-Semitism) and Rasputin (who they allege was assassinated by

freemasons).[48] To date the Patriarchate has systematically rejected such suggestions.

In the 2000s, the ideological position of the ecclesiastical institution became rather complex. Alexander Verkhovski describes it as a form of fundamentalism that is founded on the rejection of concepts such as liberalism and modernity, but that does not believe in any possible return to the past.[49] Others, like Alexander Agadjanian, prefer to speak of traditionalism, thereby underlining the fundamentally conservative societal views advocated by the Patriarchate.[50] Regardless of the definition given, the Russian Orthodox Church has itself clearly and often proclaimed that it is in favor of a gradual desecularization of society. In its *Fundaments of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church* published in 2000, the Patriarchate states its cognizance of the separation between Church and state, recalling that its political subordination during Tsarist times was certainly no guarantee of spiritual autonomy.[51] However, as mentioned in the text, while the Church accepts its separation from the state, it refuses to be separated from society, and claims it has the right to preside over social, cultural, and political questions. It seeks collaboration with the state on issues concerning the spiritual and patriotic education of citizens, as well as a privileged partnership with the army and educational institutions, and involvement in legislative decisions on social and moral questions (marriage, divorce, birth, gay rights).[52]

Although the Patriarchate has given assurances that it has no preference for any particular type of regime, the *Fundaments* put forward an obvious political hierarchy: monarchy and theocracy are regarded as superior forms because they guarantee the Byzantine symphony of temporal and spiritual powers, whereas democracy is criticized for its incapacity to respond to the profound needs of people.[53] The Church also stands firm on the idea that Russia is a unitary country on the religious level: the *Fundaments* argue that in relation to Russians one ought to speak of an Orthodox people (*pravoslavnyi narod*), since any citizen who does not belong to a national minority is assumed to be a member of Orthodoxy.[54] By placing identity belonging and religious practice on the same level, the Patriarchate is attempting to play down the country's small percentage of churchgoers, but also to undermine the phenomenon of conversion: its aim is not so much to prove that all Russians are indeed believers, but that they are not *anything other than* Orthodox. The schema it promotes is simple: the minorities have the right to perform their worship in their own communities, but Orthodoxy takes the mantle of the official religion of Russia as a whole.

This assimilation between national and religious identities is inscribed in a larger intellectual context, that of culturalism or civilizationism. The works of the Church's principal ideologist and now Patriarch, Kirill, espouse Samuel Huntington's arguments, according to which the world is divided into civilizations defined by their religion. The world stability can be preserved only on condition that each of the civilizations desists from intervening outside of its zone, or from influencing the functioning of other cultural spaces. From this perspective, references to the universalism of human values, to liberal democracy, and to secularism are viewed as inventions pertaining to Western Europe that are inapplicable to other cultures. Instead, the Church upholds its own *Declaration of the Rights and the Honour of Man*, which adopts the theory of the so-called right of peoples as opposed to human rights, and which, in insisting on the collective entity and not on the individual, advocates a primordialist vision of identities. This culturalist theory has led the Church to engage in virulent critiques of globalization, as well as of "western hegemonism" and the destruction of national differences that it purportedly brings about.[55]

According to the Patriarchate's logic, Russia is both a part and the atomic matrix of an Orthodox civilization (*pravoslavnaia tsivilizatsiia*) that extends far beyond the country's current borders to embrace the whole of post-Soviet space and the Orthodox Balkans.[56] The Church has tried on this basis to establish an intrinsic link between a canonical territory (which basically coincides with former Soviet territory[57]), inclusion in Orthodox civilization, and Russia's foreign policy: brother countries, in the religious sense, are therefore called upon to pursue policies favorable to Moscow, which explains the Church's incomprehension of Ukrainian policy, and its praise for the Russophilia of Serbia, Belarus, and the secessionist republic of Transnistria.[58] This civilizationist doctrine runs into difficulties, however, when it comes to thinking both the internal alterity composed by the non-Orthodox Russian citizens and the identity external to national territory that is represented by the brother countries and the other Patriarchates, in particular that of Constantinople, with which Moscow has had many conflicts.[59] This Orthodox civilization is conceived in a concentric way: nonnative Russians and the brother countries form a unit with flexible borders, but its central kernel is composed of ethnic *and* Orthodox Russians. The Patriarchate's publications also propagate theories that are basically ethnicist, and intuitively recognized by a large section of the population: Kirill speaks for instance of *ethnos* in Gumilevian terms, defining Russians as an ethnic group distinct

from other entities with whom he hopes there will be no assimilation or miscegenation.[60]

The Difficult Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the State

Ever since the religious liberalism of the first years after perestroika, the Orthodox Church has sought more restrictive legislation and campaigned against too many religious freedoms. The 1993 Constitution, which does not at all take the Orthodox Church's concerns into account, guarantees the secularity of the state and the equality of all religions. Despite this, in 1995 Boris Yeltsin did create a Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations headed by Anatoli Krasikov, which quickly became dominated by Orthodox members. These latter argued for the need to preserve the country's Orthodox tradition, to fight against what they characterized as totalitarian or destructive sects, and they decried the competition of Western proselytizing movements, whose significant financial support disadvantages Orthodoxy on the now open religious market.

In June 1997, a bill on the freedom of conscience and of religious association was introduced at the Duma, but Boris Yeltsin, wary of reactions from the international community, used his power of veto, citing its unconstitutional character. Nevertheless, the president was rapidly obliged to retreat under pressure from the Church and the parliament, which at the time was dominated by the CPRF and the LDPR. He ended up ratifying a barely altered version of the text in September of the same year. This bill undermines the equality of religions and restricts the freedoms of some religions present in Russia. The Preamble to the bill stipulates recognition of the "particular role of Orthodoxy in the history of Russia, in the constitution and development of its spirituality and its culture,"[61] and goes on to speak of Christianity as if it were a religion to which Orthodoxy did not belong. In addition, the text divides religions into two legal categories, namely organizations and groups, the first of which disposes of more rights than the second.[62] In order to obtain the status of organization, religious communities have to register with the Justice Ministry to prove their existence in the country for 15 years. The aim of this restriction is to limit the rights of the proselytizing groups that arrived in Russia in the 1990s, but paradoxically it ends up making the Soviet era legally pertinent in terms of religion.

Without according them a special status, the 1997 bill refers to four main religions (Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism), which between 2001 and 2003 became officialized as "traditional religions" of Russia. These four alone compose the membership of the Interreligious Council of Russia, which recognizes Orthodoxy as having the primary role in the country and refuses proselytism toward traditional religions because they are de facto regarded as ethnic identities. The other religious currents, Catholicism, Protestantism, and foreign movements, are thus defined as nontraditional, and are often conflated with sects. Since the 2002 law, the accusation of extremism has been stretched to include every assertion by a religion of its superiority, and can also be applied to any religious movement deemed undesirable. A first version drafted by the Minister for Nationalities, Vladimir Zorin, but rejected by the Duma, even referred to the Protestant movements and the Catholic Church as extremist.[63] Following this, several bills were passed during Vladimir Putin's second mandate that aimed at restricting the activities of NGOs and the foreign financing of associative circles, weakening the already diminished rights of the minority religious communities.[64]

The Orthodox Church enjoys an increasingly privileged status, which, although ambiguous, goes against the idea of religious equality in Russia. The Patriarchate boasts many intimates in the Kremlin, while none of the other religions have any. Alexis II was invited to the second inauguration ceremony of Boris Yeltsin in 1996 and blessed Vladimir Putin upon his assumption of duties in 2000 and 2004. In contrast to his predecessor, Putin publicly affirmed that he was a believer, and regularly attended monasteries in his function as president and continues to do so as Prime Minister. In addition, he often visits the Church in a private capacity, and frequently meets with Father Ioann Krestiankin, who is a very influential figure within the ecclesiastic institution.[65] The preferential status accorded to Orthodoxy was confirmed during a trial instigated by the Church under Article 282 of the Penal Code. The trial followed the accusation that an exhibition at Sakharov museum in 2003 called "Attention, religion!" was an incitement to religious hatred. In 2005 the organizers were sentenced, after a report provided by an art history specialist, of inciting religious hatred against Orthodoxy and ethnic hatred toward Russians by means of paintings caricaturing Christian symbolism.[66]

In his speeches, Putin has often mentioned the Church's important role in the country's spiritual revival. In his New Year's address in 2000, he enthused about the second millenary of the birth of Christ and claimed that Orthodoxy is "the never-changing spiritual kernel of the

people and of the state as a whole,"[67] a controversial expression that was condemned by the representatives of minority religions. During the tenth anniversary of the election of Alexis II, he once more insisted on the "major role played by Orthodoxy in the spiritual unification of Russia, after so many years without faith, of moral degradation, and of atheism."[68] In 2004, while visiting a monastery, he stated the idea that a special relation bonds Orthodoxy to the Russian nation, stating that "of course, our Church is separate from the state. But in the spirit of the people, everything is conflated."[69] In addition, the Russian president was personally involved in the reconciliation process between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church Outside of Russia: in 2003, he participated in a meeting in New York with the representatives of the latter, and then, in 2004, received Alexis II alongside the prelate of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, Metropolitan Laur. He encouraged the two Churches to reconcile, once again injecting some national signification into the act: "The process of reunifying the Russian Orthodox Church is much more than a process internal to the Church; it is the symbol of the rebirth and the reunification of the Russian people itself."[70] In May 2007, an act of canonical communion was signed between the two Churches. This act brought an end to the schism, thereby closing the Soviet parenthesis, although many disagreements still divide the two institutions, in particular those caused by the Moscow Patriarchate's refusal to entirely condemn the Soviet period.

The presidential strategy of promoting Orthodoxy as an instrument for the revival of the state is manifest in the domain of foreign policy, in particular as regards the reassertion of Russia's role in the Near Abroad. The Kremlin supports the Patriarchate's statement that a canonical territory embraces the entire former Soviet Union. It has criticized the proclamation of autocephalous Churches in Estonia and the Ukraine, and played up its Orthodox solidarity with the Balkans. In May 2000, for the fifty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, and Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko together unveiled a monument dedicated to the battle of Kursk after a religious service officiated by Alexis II, eliciting criticism from Ukrainian and Belarusian Uniates and Catholics.[71] In the same year during a visit by Serb president Vojislav Koštunica, the Russian president delivered a speech about maintaining Orthodox solidarity with Serbia. In September 2005, while on a visit to Mount Athos, he enthused about the close religious relations uniting Greece and Russia, and declared that "Russia's strength lies before all else in its spirituality . . ., the renewal of faith is one of the foundations of the current

renewal of Russia."[72] In February 2007, Putin pushed this instrumentalization of the Orthodox reference to its logical foreign policy caricature, declaring that the state and national security have two pillars, nuclear deterrence *and* Orthodox faith.[73] The 2008 foreign policy doctrine also indicated for the first time that 'global competition is acquiring a civilisational dimension', an ambiguous terminology that confirmed how widespread is the idea of being a "specific civilization."

Other political leaders, in particular concerning foreign policy matters, have adopted the Church's conviction on the existence of an Orthodox civilization. This notion was, for example, defended by the Russian delegation to the "Dialogue of Civilizations" that was held in Rhodes in September 2003,[74] by Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov in 2004, and in the same year by Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov in London in relation to the Yukos affair.[75] In 2006, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov openly defended the *Declaration of the Rights and the Honor of Man* drafted by the Church despite its being contrary to the international definition of human rights ratified by the 1993 constitution.[76] This instrumentalization of Orthodoxy is not confined to presidential circles and the government; it actually dominates the whole of the political spectrum: many important public figures attend religious services not out of personal conviction but for reasons of electoral prudence, so that they can glean some of the—real or imagined—capital of sympathy and legitimacy from which the Church benefits. The phenomenon is so massive that the Russian media ironically refers to politicians who go to publicized religious services as chandeliers (*podsvechniki*).

All the parties seated at the Duma emphasize the need to defend Orthodoxy.[77] Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Communist Party has propped itself up on the idea of Russian specificity, in which Orthodoxy is deemed to occupy a specific place, and it has explicitly sought the Patriarch's support. Vladimir Zhirinovski's LDPR, Rodina, and the Movement Against Illegal Immigration all present themselves as great defenders of Orthodoxy against attacks from Western proselytizers as much as from so-called fanatical Islam. Yuri Luzhkov has based his political strategy on building an image as an Orthodox activist, in particular during the reconstruction and the inauguration of the Christ the Savior Cathedral. Nor does United Russia depart from this tradition, even if some of its deputies continue to emphasize the necessity of state secularism. These latter seem to be in the minority in a presidential party that includes openly Orthodox figures such as Konstantin Zatulin, deputies from the Union of Orthodox Citizens, and numerous members from a former movement called "In support of the traditional spiritual and

moral values of Russia." All political parties also make sure to send their representatives to the meetings, which Vladimir Putin also attends, of the World Russian National Council organized by the Patriarchate.[78]

Nevertheless, it so happens that Vladimir Putin regularly goes against the opinion of the Orthodox Church whenever he thinks it runs counter to state interests. In 2003, he attended the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the canonization of Saint Seraphim of Sarov in Diveevo and, to erase the Orthodox character of the feast, he was accompanied by representatives of other "traditional religions." In the same year, he met with Pope John Paul II in Rome despite criticisms emanating from the Patriarchate. While the Orthodox Church has real symbolic capital and economic privileges at its disposal,[79] its influence over state organs nonetheless appears to be relatively minimal. With the exception of the bill of 1997, it has not succeeded in obtaining any further revisions to legislation on religious freedoms. Nor has it obtained its desired status as the state's official religion; it receives no official public funding and has not managed to impose itself as much as it would have liked in the areas of the military and education. In addition, its official memory differs sharply from that of the state; this is obvious, for example, in its numerous canonizations of victims of the Soviet regime, while the state, by contrast, claims that continuity with the Soviet Union constitutes a key element in the process of reconciliation.

Nonfunctional Patriotic Alliances Between the Church, the Army, and the School

The Patriarchate is fully aware that its principal vector of influence over the state and, through it, over society, consists in the glorification of national sentiment. The Church has thus put the "patriotic argument" at the center of its strategy to gain entry into officially secular domains such as schools and the army, which it has no right to do on purely religious grounds. The ecclesiastical institution has every interest in anticipating the Kremlin's attempts to promote patriotic education and in benefiting from the development of state programs concerning it. The Patriarchate has, for example, published several works on patriotic education, and many spiritual academies have organized conferences to demonstrate the natural equation between Orthodox faith, national sentiment, and the bolstering of state power. Its argumentation in this regard is rather repetitive and includes elements such as glorification of the Byzantine tradition of a symphony of powers; references to the great Slavophile authors

of the nineteenth century and to conservative interwar thinkers such as Ivan Il'in; and an insistence on applying the vertical of power to culture in order to ensure the preeminence of patriotic sentiments among the younger generations.[80] A similar conjunction of themes is also to be found on the Orthodox television channel Spas (The Savior). Launched in 2005 by Ivan Demidov, this channel is modeled on the military channel Zvezda and has the support of the Patriarchate, which had long been clamoring for its own channel. Hoping to respond to the spiritual needs of the Russian people, Spas gives voice to various clerics and to Orthodox essayists like Natalia Narochnitskaia and Alexander Dugin.[81]

Since the 1990s, the Church has endeavored to develop privileged relations with the army. To achieve this goal, it set out to point up the situation in prerevolutionary Russia, a time when Orthodoxy was the national religion and massively present in military institutions. At historical commemorations, in particular those celebrating days of Russia's military glory, the Patriarchate has consistently reiterated that the Russian army's victories were only possible thanks to the spiritual support of Orthodoxy. For national revival, the Church puts itself forward as the only institution able to provide the armed forces with the necessary spiritual fortification. In March 1994, the Patriarchate and the Minister of Defense, Pavel Grachev, signed their first cooperation agreement. The Synod has stated that one of its key goals is to collaborate with the army and, in 1995, even created a specific organization, the Synodal Department of Relations with the Armed Forces and Defense Institutions.[82] In April 1997, the then Defense Minister, Igor Rodionov, who was close to extra-parliamentary nationalist circles and openly Orthodox, signed a new cooperation agreement with the Church extending the latter's prerogatives. The Church has also signed similar texts with the other power institutions, namely the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Border Guard Service, and so on.[83]

These agreements have drawn the disapproval of the other religions. The Islamic authorities in particular have criticized Orthodoxy's assertions of preeminence and claim to have equal rights.[84] Some military personnel, whether they are concerned about the country's internal stability or are staunch supporters of secularism, also protested by recalling that Russian legislation prohibits religious activities in state structures. The Church, for its part, has multiplied its demands, taking the prerevolutionary period as its point of reference. It has called for the right for the clergy to enter all barracks to perform rites and for a permanent presence on military bases by setting up places of worship on them. It has demanded that chaplains working with military personnel be given legal

status and, last, that this chaplaincy service receive direct special funding from the Defense Ministry. However, while the first two demands were fulfilled as early as the 1990s with the signing of the cooperation agreements, the third has been systematically rejected.

The Church has also succeeded in gaining access to military training institutions. Courses on Orthodox culture performed by Orthodox priests were administered, for example, at the Peter the Great Military Academy in 1996, and then at the Anti-Air Defense Military Academy in 2000. This teaching has today become standard in nearly all military institutions and cadet schools. As Françoise Daucé has noted, "the Saint-Synod does not prohibit its faithful from bearing arms and encourages the defense of the fatherland."[85] However, the question of a military clergy, that is to say of soldier-priests, remains more problematic. The state organs are not in favor of having them, and the Patriarchate is also divided on the matter, since some members note that the holy texts prohibit the clergy from bearing arms. There are recorded cases of military personnel being ordained priests, but this has been done out of personal initiative. The Church is also ambiguous in its relation to war. The Patriarchate backed the Kremlin in the Chechen conflict, and many tens of religious members joined the army to give spiritual guidance to the troops. But at the same time the institution seems to have been caught off guard by the emergence of popular cults dedicated to soldiers killed in Chechnya, such as that of the young Evgeni Rodionov, who has many Church supporters asking for his canonization.

Despite its symbolic preeminence, the Church has not obtained the results it had anticipated. It has been allowed to have 200 places of worship constructed on military bases and about 2,000 priests now officiate in the army (8 percent of its personnel), but this number is largely insufficient.[86] Priestly activities are therefore limited to performing weekly services, officiating the main rites, and distributing propaganda brochures, but no real missionary work is done.[87] The rare sociological surveys carried out on the army reveal that by no means do military personnel compose a distinct social layer with a specific political and religious opinion. The number of believers and churchgoers is no higher in the army than in the rest of society. In addition, the Church has been unable to put a halt to the army's internal social difficulties: the high rates of violent acts between military personnel, alcoholism, depression, and criminality have not been reduced in those barracks at which there is a permanent religious staff. Neither has the Patriarchate's appeals to the moral duty of serving the fatherland had any influence on youths refusing to do their service.

Despite its declared intentions, the army does not seem to be one of the Patriarchate's main priorities in terms of religious reconquest. Neither the Patriarch nor any members of the Saint-Synod participate personally in activities pertaining to army relations, nor do they go on publicized visits to military bases. This disinterest is largely mutual. The Defense Ministry—notwithstanding those figures who openly declare their faith—appears to be skeptical about the Church's real capacities and refuses to entertain the idea that it be allowed to return fully to the prerevolutionary status it once enjoyed.[88] Sergei Ivanov, who was Defense Minister between 2001 and 2005, explicitly underscored the patriotic rather than religious role of the Church's cooperation and often reiterated the secular status of the armed forces.[89]

The Church's presence within the school system, which turns out to be still more ambivalent, constitutes the second object of conflict between state and church in their common patriotic agenda. The Patriarchate, with the exception of the most radical movements, remains relatively realistic about its tactic of entryism into the school system and has not made any calls for its complete clericalization. Nevertheless, on this question of church-school relations the *Fundaments* remain rather ambiguous. In certain passages the text claims the Church's right to administer religious courses in public schools to children whose parents desire it; in others it implies that a minimal education in Orthodox culture should be obligatory for all children. In addition, the document does not make any provision for similar rights for other confessions or religions. Here again, the Church's acceptance of secularism does not imply any recognition of the equal rights of other faiths. Instead what it asserts is that Russian citizens are faced with a simple choice: either they declare themselves Orthodox or they practice no faith at all.

At the start of the 1990s, the Church tried to enter into the education system by offering optional religious education courses, which were negotiated separately with each school headmaster. This entryism policy, which became manifest in 1994, aroused opposition from the state, which prohibited the teaching of theology at school and was against public financing for religious schools. The Patriarchate had therefore to develop its own network (specifically Orthodox schools, so-called Russian national schools, and cadets institutes often run by Cossacks) in order to be able to ensure that religious education was taught, but it remains statistically marginal. The general situation changed as the decade came to a close. The Education Minister at the time became concerned about the void left open by the disappearance of Komsomol-administered civic education courses and sought to regulate the presence

of the mostly Protestant proselytizing NGOs that were offering optional religious education courses.[90] The scandals provoked by the proselyte movements were advantageously used by the Patriarchate to request the creation of a joint commission composed of employees from the Ministry of Education and members of the Patriarchate. The Metropolitan Kirill, accompanied by Vladimir Vorobiev, rector of the Saint Tikhon Orthodox Theological Institute and vice president of the Patriarchate's Educational Committee, militated for the introduction of an obligatory course on Orthodox culture.

After many discussions, the Minister for Education, Vladimir Filippov, announced in a public letter in October 2002 that a course would be introduced on the fundaments of Orthodox culture, taught for one hour per week for all 11 school years. Taught by religious members, it would provide a total of more than 500 lesson-hours. The proposal, however, did not receive Vladimir Putin's explicit backing and so was not sanctioned at the federal level by presidential decree. Its obligatory or optional status was therefore left up to the discretion of regional governors. The ministerial letter immediately elicited violent reactions from representatives of other religions and from all those attached to Russia's secular character. Several high-level regional leaders, especially in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Ekaterinburg immediately announced that they would refuse to implement the project.[91] Surprised by the outcry against his decision, the Minister retracted it in February 2003, announcing that implementation of the course would be left to the discretion of school headmasters and not of regional governors.[92]

In 2002, ten thousand copies of the first textbook on the fundaments of Orthodox culture were published. The textbook was validated solely by the joint commission without any prior ministerial approval and was quickly condemned. Although the course was presented as an introduction to Orthodox culture, the issues discussed in it were plainly theological and akin to the catechism taught in religious Sunday schools. The text, moreover, was critical of other confessions and religions, was tainted with anti-Semitism, and endorsed creationism.[93] In 2003, the Ministry of Education announced that these courses on the fundaments of Orthodox culture would be transformed into courses designed to initiate pupils in the history of the world's great religions, without any pro-Orthodox bias. The new course was taught in some schools, subject to approval by a municipality, to the interests of the establishment's principal, or to the volunteer work of professors, but it did not receive unanimous support. In November 2007, new education system reforms withdrew the right of regions and municipalities to offer

and administer the so-called regional component of the school curriculum. This recentralization at once concerned and pleased the Church: the possibility now existed for the state to make a course on Orthodox culture obligatory, yet it could also refuse without leaving any option open to provide an optional course.[94]

The Orthodox Church thus finds itself in an eminently paradoxical situation. It occupies a dominant position within the "hierarchical pluralism"[95] that has been set up by the ruling powers—which administer the country's religious diversity ambiguously—but its demands in relation to questions of faith have not received their assent: there has been no restriction placed on the freedoms of other "traditional" religions; secularism remains the Russian state's juridical point of reference; the Patriarchate's success in military institutions has been only partial and to date it has failed to anchor itself in the school system. If it is to gain any influence over a society out of its control, the Church has no other choice but to appeal to the state to gain a recognition that it lacks in social practice. Reciprocally, the state is seeking to procure for itself symbolic capital that would enable it to assert itself as the motor of national reconciliation. The central element of this quest for unity, which is shared by state and Patriarchate alike, lies in the equation between national and religious identities and in culturalist presuppositions. However, the localization of Russian specificity in Orthodoxy exhibited in official discourse ought not make us think that the Church has achieved its goals: for the Kremlin, the Patriarchate's only legitimate function is to justify Russia's greatness and to bolster its national and international revival. The state deems that only itself, and not the Church by any means, is qualified to manipulate the reservoir of cultural elements that constitute patriotism.

The Army as a Metaphor for the Nation

The Kremlin also hopes to achieve its patriotic agenda by implementing militarized education programs. Lacking consensus over what constitutes social reality, the authorities have tried to tap into a cultural reservoir of military metaphors. The army represents the country's historical continuity across political regimes and its national unity over and above ethnic, religious, and regional differences. It embodies state power: no state purpose is higher than war. Vladimir Putin's expression formulates it most explicitly: "no army, no Russia" (*net armii, net Rossii*).[96] However, this society's militarization does not translate into the political domination

of civilians by the military, but into an equation between power, the state, and the army—just like the model of the Soviet era.[97] The Second World War therefore naturally appears as the focal point of new patriotic programs. As formulated by the patriotic collection of the Institute of Russian History, Russia needs to "actualize the potential of the Second World War"[98] because only "military history has a practical vision of the world."[99] The reference to the consensual history of the Second World War can then be projected into future capacity for social mobilization and common ground between the state and society.

The army's use as metaphor of the nation has taken place in the paradoxical context of society's profound suspicion toward its own military forces.[100] Throughout the 1990s, the Russian army tried in vain to counter its largely negative image resulting from its setbacks in Afghanistan (630,000 mobilized and 15,000 dead), its multiple failures in Chechnya, its poor living conditions for military personnel, its obsolete equipment, its massive corruption, the failure of its highest-ranking members to comply with the law, and its violent hazing traditions for young conscripts (*dedovshchina*).[101] In 1998, Boris Yeltsin, who drastically reduced military budgets in the first half of the decade, again emphasized the army's positive role during Victory Day celebrations.[102] This process has been intensified under Vladimir Putin, who has recurrently praised the army at all national commemorations. Putin's general program has included the development of new military doctrines in 2002 and 2007; the reintroduction of Soviet military ranks; the maintenance of conscription and rejection of alternative forms of service; the remilitarization of society through the resumption of training sessions for reserve officers and general mobilization exercises; an increase in military budgets in strategic sectors such as armaments, the navy, and missiles; and the relaunch of the Russian space program.

The money that has been pumped into the military sector during Vladimir Putin's two mandates (the army's budget has increased 500 percent in eight years) did not really modernize the logics of the Soviet army. The military elite has difficulties in understanding the stakes of recruiting conscripts in a country in full demographic crisis or in accepting the idea of alternative service and professional recruitment. Hazing goes largely unpunished, massive corruption among officers has not declined, and the quality of military techniques in difficult terrain did not improve between Afghanistan and the two wars in Chechnya. According to Zoltan Barany, the army has not been able to reform itself because the military elite has resisted reducing the officer corps or losing the immense servile and free labor that was provided by conscripts.[103]

With military officers composing one of the president's main supports, Putin himself has had little room for maneuver on such issues and so has been reluctant to initiate direct confrontations with this influential circle.

Even if the army has succeeded in regaining influence over the political authorities, it remains a poor stepchild by comparison with other state security services, particularly the interior and secret services, which have seen a rapid increase in the size of their workforces and budgets, and have managed to set themselves up in the most profitable commercial, industrial, and financial institutions. Yet, working in its favor, the army enjoys a broad cultural consensus based on the Soviet past, and is supported by that portion of the population linked to the military-industrial complex, which comprises several thousands of state firms and about two million employees, not counting their families. However, even improvement in the army's symbolic and material standing cannot weaken the suspicion of the younger generations seeking to avoid military service. In 2006, the Defense Ministry and the Union of Afghanistan Veterans launched a major advertising campaign explaining that "doing your service is not scary" (*v armii sluzhit' ne strashno*). The primary objective of patriotic programs is therefore to reconcile draftees with their army.

State Programs for Patriotic Education

In 2001, the Kremlin instructed the Duma to vote on the first state program on the "patriotic education of citizens of the Russian Federation for 2001–2005." The program's introduction gives a negative assessment of the state of Russia's patriotic consciousness and is peppered with Soviet terminology. It mourns the loss of a sense of internationalism, condemns the development of negative attitudes like selfishness, individualism, cynicism, and the lack of respect for institutions, and—exemplifying the lexicological dissociation mentioned above—it expresses regret that "patriotism has begun to transform itself into nationalism."[104] To remedy this situation, the program calls for patriotic awareness to be cultivated in all generations and social classes through the organization of various cultural activities like museum exhibitions, creation of history and sports clubs with military-patriotic topics and of amateur military equipment groups, collaboration with veterans and religious associations, reenactment of famous historical battles and operations, and research into locations of fallen Soviet soldiers. The ultimate goals of this patriotic program are threefold: to prepare citizens for

military service, to revive the spiritual values of the country, but also, more ideologically, to "weaken ideological opposition to the state."[105]

In 2005, the program was devoted to celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It involved a variety of initiatives, but almost all of them related directly to military themes, such as conferences on the army, meetings with veterans, visiting "hero cities" of the Soviet Union,[106] a patriotic song contest called "I love you, Russia," and an artistic competition to be the "young patriot of Russia." However, the low levels of funding granted to the program—177 million rubles, or about 7 million dollars—confirms that it was not considered a state budget priority. In addition, as it was an interdepartmental project, it remained under the tutelage of several institutions, including the Ministries of Defense, Education and Science, Culture and the Media, the FSB, and the Foreign Intelligence Service, a diffusion that accentuated its administrative inefficiency. At the end of this first program, the power ministries insisted that it be extended, and Vladimir Putin accepted the suggestion immediately. In his speech to the Duma in May 2006, the president made an explicit reference to the link between patriotic education and military service; the lack of motivation that young Russians have for military service can be countered only by a positive revaluation of patriotism.[107] The idea of an intrinsic link between patriotic pride and the cult of the army seems to be well received in society because it is part of a valued Soviet tradition. In 2003, according to a poll by the Levada Center, 83 percent of respondents were in favor of introducing a basic military training course in schools. In 2004, 62 percent of them supported the idea of reviving the Soviet practice of patriotic military education, as compared to a disapproval rate of only 22 percent.[108]

The text of the second program, whose mandate spans from 2006 to 2010, declares that the main objectives of the first program were attained: but although a general framework for patriotic education was established, many regions are still without any local coordination council.[109] In addition to getting each region to commit to the program, the new text focuses on the youth. It envisages the strengthening of training in patriotism for teachers through the activities carried out by the Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Education, and major institutions of higher education, which must offer specific courses devoted to this subject for primary and secondary school teachers. In this logic, the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences has launched a collection of books devoted to the history of military patriotism, recounting the great acts of bravery of the Russian army from the Middle Ages to the Second

World War. The contemporary significance of these historical reminders is not concealed: the introductory page of the collection defines patriotism as "the love of citizens for their motherland and their readiness to give everything, and if necessary their lives, on behalf of its interests and well-being."[110]

The new program's objective is to "make the patriotic consciousness of Russian citizens one of the most important values, one of the foundations of moral and spiritual unity" so that patriotism becomes the "spiritual backbone" of the country.[111] Although no more precise a definition of patriotism is proposed, the document refers to pride in the Russian state but also, more prosaically, to the need to serve the motherland and to fulfill one's obligations toward it.[112] To this end, the program tries to mobilize not only state structures but, more importantly, civil society, and encourages the television media to get involved in promoting patriotism. The text signaled, for instance, that the state will commission artistic and cultural works on patriotism, finance the development of the "artistic potential" of patriotism, and oppose "attempts to discredit and devalue patriotic ideas in the media, literature, and art."[113] All the elements of managed democracy are therefore an explicit part of the program: the state takeover of the media, growing control over the academic field, and the reestablishment of some forms of censorship.

The second program, which is more ambitious, enjoys funding three times greater than the first. It was accorded 500 million rubles or 20 million dollars, which was distributed among more than 200 projects detailed in some 60 pages of annexes. Half of these projects relate to developing patriotic education, which is not precisely defined, and have mostly methodological and pedagogical aims: conferences to promote patriotism among youth, workshops of experts on patriotic education, funding for patriotism-geared textbooks and videogames, exhibitions in museums, music contests, poetry and folk art, sports and automotive events, and activities inspired by Bolshevik traditions such as an "agitation train" (*agitpoezd*) traveling across the country. The program is also intended to promote "youth education in the appropriate reproductive behaviors and willingness to create a family, which is the foundation of the revival of moral values."[114] The other proposed initiatives are directly linked to the army, including historical commemorations of great battles and the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Second World War, the promotion of Cossack traditions, worshipping the war dead, and invitations to participate in various army corps. Only two contemporary events are mentioned, the 20-year anniversary of the departure of Soviet troops

from Afghanistan in 2009, and the ten-year anniversary of the victory over the armed bands in Dagestan in 2010, the latter constituting the one and only discreet mention of the war in Chechnya.

The program does not include any of those activities that, in Western Europe and North America, might be called civic education. In formulating its idea of a patriotic education, the document does not include any presentation of state institutions, does not mention the division between the three branches of government, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, political and social participation, or a moral obligation to vote. Although the duties of citizens are listed many times over, the ultimate one being to die for one's country, the rights of citizens are totally absent. The individual is thus understood as a *subject* of the state, more than a *citizen*. No mention whatsoever exists of the idea of a social contract that would oblige the state to respect the rights of citizens and demand their service in exchange. Russian patriotic education appears entirely detached from the issue of citizenship, which is not mentioned in any of the program's activities. In addition, the federal structure and the national diversity of the country go largely unmentioned in the document, the exception being a few folk art competitions for "the minority peoples," especially Siberian ones. Moreover, the only religion referred to in the program is Orthodoxy, as if Islam were nonexistent. The cultural and historical references, far from being Russian in a civic sense (*rossiiskii*), are entirely Russian in an ethnocultural sense, or Slavic, such as, for example, the organization of a Slavic youth festival held near the monuments dedicated to the friendship with Ukrainian and Belarusian brother countries.

Flagship Institutions of Militarized Patriotism

The implementation of this interagency program has been assigned to three major institutions of patriotic renewal: the State Military Cultural-Historical Center (*Rosvoenotsentr*), the Center for Civic and Patriotic Education for the Children and Youth of Russia (*Rospatriottsentr*), and the Russian Organization for Defensive Sports (ROSTO). The Military Cultural-Historical Center, founded in 1997 under Boris Yeltsin, was established on the proposal of the Defense Ministry after a reorganization of the Russian Maritime Cultural-Historical Center. Its mission is to support veterans' associations and to organize commemorative military activities, particularly in the context of days of Russia's military glory and celebrations related to May 9. The Rosvoenotsentr is also expected to

work with the media in order to "convey the heroic history and warrior traditions of the Russian army and navy."[115]

Founded in 1994, its publishing house, Armpress, puts out a wide range of propaganda material for the army, including posters and DVDs presenting the various military corps; educational brochures about military holidays; and books on the great battles of the Russian army and its heroes, especially the main triad of Suvorov, Kutuzov, and Zhukov.[116] All these educational materials are meant for professionals of patriotic education at schools, museums, and libraries, but also for youth recruiters at the power ministries.[117] The Military Cultural-Historical Center also publishes the monthly journal *Patriot otechestva* (Patriot of the Fatherland), which combines all of the references one would expect from a very Soviet patriotic culture, including stories from teachers about their daily experiences of teaching patriotism, methods of "protection from negative phenomena," a presentation of "unique achievements of the country's collective creativity" (factories and crafts), and a hagiography of the contemporary army and major historical battles.[118]

While Rosvoenotsentr is directed as much to an audience of veterans as it is to youth, the Center for Civic and Patriotic Education for the Children and Youth of Russia is entirely devoted, as its name suggests, to the younger generations. Created by the first state program on patriotic education in 2001, and under the direct responsibility of the Education Ministry, Rospatriottsentr's main objective is the coordination of the various ministerial departments involved in the program, in particular the regional centers that are supposed to implement it in each subject of the Russian Federation. It also works with the Memorial Center for the Armed Forces of Russia, the Foundation for the Heroes of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, and the Association for Military Memory.

Its mission is to "encourage youth to participate in social activities and defend the interests of the state," but also to strengthen in society "ideas of morality and humanism, preservation and development of the national cultural and spiritual heritage."[119] Beyond engaging in such rhetoric, the center manages military commemoration activities, in particular research brigades (*poiskovye otriady*) into the battlefields of the Second World War and a major Memory Guard (*vakhta pamiati*), which gathers more than 10,000 adolescents and young adults each year. It assists schools in the organization of military-sports games (*Zarnitsa*, *Orlenok*, and *Pobeda*) and has published a manual specifically devoted to these games called *Forward Young Recruit!* as well as educational brochures on military archaeology and basics for handling weapons. It also publishes textbooks for a course

on military preparedness that was reintroduced into secondary schools in 1999 after having been removed following the Soviet Union's collapse.[120]

Both institutions work in close partnership with the Russian Organization for Defensive Sports, or ROSTO, founded in 1991 as the successor to the Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF), which was founded in 1951 after the merger of various Soviet military institutions from the 1920s and 1930s. The association is intrinsically linked to the military-industrial complex and to the power ministries that train future specialists in military technology. With over three million members, ROSTO specializes in preparing younger generations for military service through sporting and technological activities (aviation, automobiles, tanks, ships, and military technologies) in order to strengthen the country's economic and defensive potential. It proposes an annual quota of 600,000 persons for specialized careers in the army, at the request of various state institutions. It also manages about one thousand military and sports clubs and supervises the top athletes who compete for Russia.[121] The inherently militarized nature of patriotic education and programs focusing on the Second World War is therefore explained in part by the traditions of the institutions responsible for their implementation, which are all centered on the armed forces and linked to the military-industrial complex.

The Publications of the Defense Ministry and the Security Services

In the context of promoting militarized patriotism, the role of the publications of the Defense Ministry and security services should be taken into account. Inherited from the Soviet period, the power ministries have a relatively large editorial presence with nearly a dozen federal newspapers. Most are intended for a specialized audience (police, customs officers, etc.) and few attempt to appeal to a wider audience. Since the adoption of the Information Security Doctrine in 2000, control over state information, especially pertaining to the military, has received much attention from the central government, and military newspapers have thrived.[122]

The Defense Ministry publishes four such journals. The first, *Armeiskii sbornik* (The Army Review), founded in 1994, focuses on the problems internal to the institution. The journal usually starts off with a few interviews with top brass and a detailed presentation of one subdivision or another. The majority of the journal is then devoted to technical military combat in a section called "the practice of authority." The second,

Rossiiskoe voennoe obozrenie (The Military Review of Russia), founded in 2004 and dedicated to the contemporary state of the armed forces and problems of national defense, deals with technological innovations, international cooperation, the army's internal restructuring and modernization (contracting and education), and seems designed mainly for civilian readers. The third, *Zhurnal voennoi istorii* (Journal of Military History) is a historical review that devotes about half of its articles to the Soviet army, its major battles, and the Second World War, particularly first-person stories and veterans' memories. The other half is devoted to discussing the imperial army of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its battles, institutions, and major figures. The last, *Voennaia mysl'* (Military Thought), focuses primarily on theoretical issues of military doctrine for the general public.

Paradoxically, in all these journals the theme of patriotism remains minimal. Although they raise the army to the status of a metaphor of the nation that guarantees the security of the state and is supposed to form better citizens, they contain few articles devoted to patriotic education as a means of linking the military and society. At the same time, the issue of future recruitment methods is very rarely raised. Between 2005 and 2007, these four Defense Ministry journals together contained only one article about the patriotic program and the Memory Guard,[123] a second related to a patriotic song competition,[124] and a third that talked about the tradition of military museums in schools.[125] They included a mere three articles discussing the positive aspects of the presence of Orthodox priests in the army[126] and two endorsing the acts of the propresidential youth movement *Nashi* during the 2007 Russian-Estonian crisis on historic monuments dedicated to the Soviet liberators.[127]

There is, however, one journal, *Ofitsery* (Officers), which deals more directly with patriotic issues and appears to support some form of interaction with society at large. It is the main publication of an association called Officers of Russia, which is officially independent of any ministry and whose goal is to "assist the leadership of the country to achieve social programs aimed at improving the well-being and social status of the Russian officers corps."[128] In addition to specific missions such as assistance to orphans, widows, and veterans, the association seeks to fight against "fascism, xenophobia, and other forms of extremism" by organizing sports activities, introducing people to military professions, and strengthening patriotic sentiment.[129] This journal is the first to specialize not only in the military, but in all of the power ministries: Defense, Interior, Justice, prosecutor, police, and secret services, with the aim, once again, of "raising the prestige of these professions."[130] It contains

many more editorials that emphasize the need to defend citizens against rising rates of crime—which is the prerogative of the police and secret services—than those that deal with the external dangers that are the realm of the military. Its subtitle, "the newspaper of the law and those who defend it," and the presence of many anonymous commercial sponsors suggests that it is controlled by the members of power ministries, the so-called *siloviki*.

The journal devotes an entire section of each issue to domestic policy questions. The main topics are immigration, trade, and organized crime, which are discussed in such a way as to emphasize the alleged links between them. The issues dealt with are actually of far more interest to members of the police than to those of the military. The journal features a historical section that is not confined to mass praise of Soviet exploits during the Second World War, but also deals with much more controversial issues, such as past tensions between the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc (the Budapest uprising in 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968, the intervention in Afghanistan, and the departure of Soviet troops stationed in the German Democratic Republic) and the contemporary conflicts in which Russia is involved (the war in Chechnya, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and tensions with Georgia and Moldova). The journal also endorses popular legends linking Russia to ancient warriors, such as the mythical Amazonians, the Vikings, and the Crusaders of medieval Europe. It is therefore not managed by military professionals for themselves, but attempts to position itself nearer to the interests of a broad public opinion with an amateur interest in security studies.

The Web site of Officers of Russia includes a specific section on patriotic education closely linked to another association called Stiag (Banner). This latter presents itself as a "military and patriotic education group for organization, informative, and pedagogical purposes."[131] Created in 2007 by some 40 regional patriotic associations, Stiag advocates an Orthodox-influenced patriotism. The site displays numerous religious symbols, and the link between patriotism and faith is presented as self-evident. It also publishes a booklet called *The School of Young Heroes*, as well as numerous articles that discuss the age at which to begin children's patriotic education or complain about the minor role accorded to Orthodoxy in official discourse.[132] The authors of these texts contend that Orthodoxy alone is capable of transforming the Russian-civic army into a truly Russian-ethnic army and of restoring the moral values of the fatherland's great medieval heroes.[133] Stiag collaborates with several Orthodox-inspired military-patriotic groups and volunteer paramilitary patrols (*druzhina*) in different regions of the country.

Thus, while the patriotic theme has a paradoxically small presence in the journals directly associated with the Defense Ministry, it dominates in *Ofitsery* and the associations linked to it. This example seems to validate the assumptions of several local observers that the patriotic atmosphere promoted by the authorities is being driven not only by the military—even if they very clearly welcome it—but by the other power ministries, in particular the secret services.[134] The participation of the KGB in the promotion of a Russian nationalist ideology during the Soviet era had already been noted.[135] The role of those close to Vladimir Putin, who himself came from the FSB, and their growing place within the presidential administration, which was the first to support patriotism, works to confirms this hypothesis—although it cannot be validated without further inquiry and more specific research. While the power ministries as a whole, including the army, are the institutional mainstays of patriotic programs, the presidential administration seeks also to promote them through other channels of influence.

Cultural Ways of Promoting Militarized Patriotism

The media plays a crucial role in the promotion of patriotic themes. Since Vladimir Putin's coming to office, television has been broadly subject to the Kremlin's control and has become the principal means for the state to spread its messages. There are, however, some newspapers (*Novaia Gazeta*) and radio stations (*Ekho Moskvy*) that have maintained their autonomy. But the majority of television news and political analysis programs are known for their pro-Kremlin stance and their role in the promotion of patriotism. Notable here are shows like Mikhail Leontiev's *However* and *The Great Game* (Leontiev is often claimed to be one of Putin's favorite presenters), Alexei Pushkov's *Post-Script*, Andrei Karaulov's *The Moment of Truth*, and Elena Pisareva's *Russian View*. Several talk shows, on which political figures answer questions from presenters or the audience, have also been noted for their lack of neutrality, particularly *Judge for Yourself*, *The People Want to Know* and *Duel*.[136] However, the dissemination of patriotism is not confined to political broadcasts, which reach only a limited audience. It actually affects the entire scope of television programming, especially through the many broadcasts that focus on scandal stories to promulgate patriotic and xenophobic stereotypes.

Since 2003–2004, patriotic concerts, which are something of a genre in their own right since Soviet times, have been given more and more

airtime. These concerts systematically accompany the professional celebrations of the different military corps, days of Russia's military glory, and other major national holidays such as February 23, May 9, June 12, and November 4. They are also organized for the jubilee days of large companies that, like Gazprom, symbolize the country's success and occupy the prime evening time slot on Channel One. Studies by sociologist Vera Zvereva show that all of these concerts share similar ritual features: pompous opening speeches, ceremonial gestures such as a moment of silence, patriotic and military objects as symbolic backdrops, and the presence of major political figures and variety singers (*estrada*). Again, the themes that are drawn upon during these events are closely linked to the supposed ethnic Russian identity and include folk groups in Slavic peasant and Cossack dress, stylized representations of the Russian countryside, and recurrent allusions to Orthodoxy. The Soviet past is also very present through well-known films and songs.[137]

In 2005, the Kremlin launched a new federal television channel called Zvezda (Star) for the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against Nazi Germany. The name of the channel refers to the newspaper of the Soviet and later Russian army, *Krasnaia zvezda* (The Red Star). Mentioned in the first patriotic education program in 2001 and promoted by the Defense Ministry, Zvezda is officially funded by advertising revenue and therefore exists for commercial purposes. However, it presents itself as "the first patriotic state television channel" in Russia and aims to become "an instrument for the preservation of national heritage and for the patriotic education of the new generations . . . for the sake of motherland."[138] As the channel's CEO explained, "only a man sincerely dedicated to his country is capable of living in harmony with the interests of the state, defending his country, and having an informed understanding of contemporary realities."[139] According to its own figures, the channel dedicates just 10 percent of its airtime to the army itself, by playing documentaries and showing archival images. The remaining time is divided between reruns of Soviet cinema classics (mainly films related to war and reenactments of war), musical events, and cartoons.[140] At its launch, the president of the new channel stated that it would show very few Western productions, especially of a violent or sexually explicit nature, nor any "depicting Russians as barbarians and bandits."[141] Like the more intellectual channel Kul'tura (Culture), Zvezda bases itself on the cultural consensus related to the Soviet past.

Fiction is indeed one of the main means of spreading the patriotic message. Since the second half of the 1990s, more and more of the television series produced in Russia have focused on themes relating to the

police, army, and secret services. During the 2000s, the audiences of these series increased, as an indication of the popular interest in military fiction. Examples include *The Special Services* (2002), a series about elite troops fighting the Chechens and their Islamist allies; *The Code of Honor* (2002–2003), which takes up the various military exploits of special units; *Sarmat* (2004), based on the story of a professional soldier of Cossack origin who served in Afghanistan and then Chechnya; *The Saboteur* (2004), a series celebrating the sacrifice of an elite unit of the Soviet army operating in Nazi Germany; *The Criminal Battalion* (2004), which emphasizes the cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the Red Army during the Second World War; *The Cadets* (2006), which recounts the adventures of young members of the Suvorov Military Institute; and *Soldiers* (2006), based on multiple adventures and humorous anecdotes in the daily lives of conscripts and officers.

The same observation can be made for cinema. Since the beginning of the 2000s, patriotic films seem to have found a second wind and enjoyed state support through a Fund for patriotic films, which was created in 1996 and is financed by various charitable organizations linked to the military.[142] Since 2009, the Education Ministry is even able, thanks to special financing, to commission films based on "the ideas of humanism, of spirituality, of patriotism and of other traditional values of the peoples of Russia."[143] Nikita Mikhalkov, one of the protagonists of patriotic cinema, has also proposed to film remakes of the great Soviet productions from after the Second World War. A case of such cinema is *The Apocalypse Code* released in 2008 and financed directly by the FSB; the film itself is dedicated to telling of the exploits of a secret agent and is played by one of the current Russian stars. Many productions are devoted to the Second World War, while others focus on the conflicts in Afghanistan and Chechnya, presenting reflections on the contemporary state of the country in metaphoric form.[144] The models and scenarios are broadly stereotyped. War is presented as a just cause waged in the name of a holy and eternal Russia, the Russian soldier embodies honesty and integrity, and the enemy takes on the characteristics of demons and animals. However, unlike its Soviet predecessor, post-Soviet patriotic cinema often makes insinuations about the military hierarchy's incapacity and sometimes even alludes to the negative role played by the secret services during the Second World War, by contrast to the simple soldier, always presented as the one who best conveys the greatness of the Russian soul.[145]

The films devoted to Afghanistan and Chechnya combine various fashionable Manichean views, especially on the opposition between

Islam and Christianity, and between the gratuitous violence of Muslims and the natural pacifism of Russians. Presenting the Caucasian peoples as born warriors, these films exult Russia's military capability, depicted here not by the simple soldier, but rather by the *spetsnaz*, special troops equivalent to the British SAS.[146] The warrior appears as the only possible foundation for an adventure film, in which he is depicted as a hero with great heart, capable of living out beautiful love stories in difficult environments. According to Yulia Liderman, a sociologist of contemporary Russian cinema, this situation can partly be put down to the lack of entertainment films.[147] However, the main reason for the success of this wave of patriotic cinema is probably because it draws upon Soviet tales known and appreciated by a vast majority of the population.[148] In similar fashion, there has been a veritable literary phenomenon in Russia among those in the 25–49 age bracket: action novels (*boeviki*), that reproduce themes similar to those of western fiction, but which are further superposed with patriotism insofar as the heroes' sacrifices are made in the name of the nation.[149] Again, the only way of arousing the patriotic consensus that the Kremlin has long sought appears to be by means of the Soviet cultural background, in this context in a version that is exclusively male and virile.

Mass Focus on the Second World War and the Rehabilitation of Stalin

The militarization of patriotism is logically based on the idea that the army embodies the nation, but also on the assumption that war is a unique moment during which the strength of the nation is revealed to itself and the world. In Russian history, the symbol of this intimate link between the nation and war is of course the Second World War. Upon Soviet entry into the war in June 1941, Stalin began his famous speech not with "Comrades!" but with "my brothers and sisters," thereby rehabilitating national sentiment as the engine of the Russian people's resistance, whereas the other Soviet peoples were relegated to a secondary position. In the postwar period, after the cycles of massive repressions ended, the Party sought to consolidate its authority through the mythification of the so-called Great Patriotic War, characterized as the key moment of Russian history and a confirmation of the soundness of the socialist system. In the 1990s, whereas many elements of Soviet culture were sharply questioned or became obsolete, the image of the Second World War managed to survive all these contextual changes.

All surveys, whether done in the early 1990s or in the second half of the 2000s, confirm that about 80 percent of respondents think of the Great Patriotic War as *the* major event ever in Russian history. Even if the young are less well versed in the exact dates—such as the Nazi troops' entering Soviet territory on June 22, 1941—than older generations,[150] the population at large sees the war as a primary event of national history, regardless of social class or age. In the face of the unity created by this event, other major historical moments seem to fade precisely due to their nonconsensual nature. Thus, in sociological surveys on the ten major dates of the nation regularly conducted by the VTSIOM-Levada Center, not even a single reference is made to the prerevolutionary past, which is too distant and arouses mixed feelings. The conflicting events of the late twentieth century have also gradually disappeared. The putsch of August 1991, which featured prominently in polls in the 1990s, is no longer mentioned as a top-ten historical reference, absent along with perestroika and even the collapse of the Soviet Union. The only date to have moved up the list over the years is the space flight of Yuri Gagarin in 1961 (31 percent in 1989 to 54 percent in 1999),[151] due to the sentiment of a return to the Cold War and technological competition with the United States.

The Second World War is described in terms that are increasingly nationalist. Its international context has been partially erased such that not only are references to the allies less explicit, but the idea that the Soviet Union could have won the war without outside help is on the rise. The strictly Russian character of the event is also growing: the role of the other Soviet peoples is increasingly denied, with claims that Russians were almost the only ones who actually took part in the fight. In addition, the analysis of the massive Soviet losses, about 25 million people, has worked to reinforce the link between war and suffering. The loss of men allegedly reflects the heroism of the Russian people, exulting it in spite of the human suffering. As the sociologist Lev Gudkov explains, the Second World War allows individuals to talk about themselves without referring to the state or the authorities, notions that today are perceived negatively. The dominant feeling is that, unlike the peoples of Western Europe, Russians reveal their true character in times of hardship, conflict, and suffering.[152] This directly corroborates the vision that they have of Russian identity, whose features include patience, resistance to life's difficulties, spirituality, collectivism, and hospitality.[153]

The extent of the casualties during the Second World War is decreasingly associated with Soviet mismanagement and Stalin's lack of military preparation, but is explained by Russia's being surprised by "German

aggression."[154] This version of the event, then, supports the general vision of Russia as a victim country. One out of two respondents have not heard of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret clauses that allowed Moscow to invade Finland, the Baltic countries, and Poland. Among those with knowledge of this historic event, many believe that it was a false propaganda text or one of Hitler's tactics, or they harken to the Soviet explanation that in order to better prepare for war, the Soviet Union had no other choice than to grant this concession.[155] In addition, the massive repression of the 1930s, which played a key role in the liberation of expression during perestroika,[156] has been gradually erased from collective memory. In 1989, 36 percent of respondents regarded it as the major event of twentieth-century Russian history, a figure that dropped to 11 percent in 1999,[157] and then collapsed to 1 percent in 2003.[158] More generally, for two-thirds of respondents, Russia has never played the role of aggressor in its history but instead has been continually attacked.[159] The colonial conquests of the Tsarist Empire are nonexistent in memorial discourse and the suffering they caused to some peoples, totally denied: only Russians can boast of collective suffering.[160]

This positive vision of the Second World War and the Soviet Union has its corollary in the rehabilitation of Stalin. Many books have been devoted to him in such thriving sectors of the Russian publishing world as military history, alternative history, and anti-Semitic conspiracy. Presented as a great strategist who guaranteed Russia its position on the world stage, the "father of peoples" occupies a significant place in the literary domain.[161] He is also popular in polls. In 1989, 12 percent of respondents regarded Stalin as the main figure of all time among all countries, a figure that reached 35 percent in 1999.[162] In 2000, he was named the "best Russian leader of the twentieth century," and in 2003, appreciation for his positive role in Russian history reached 53 percent.[163] The younger generations are not left behind in this vision, as 56 percent of people aged 16 to 29 years believe that Stalin did "more good than harm."[164] Finally, in a survey conducted in fall 2003 as part of the election campaign, more than a quarter of respondents said they would have voted for Stalin if he had run in the presidential election of March 2004.

The ruling elites cleverly maintain this cult of Stalin. In 2004, Vladimir Putin requested that the name of Stalingrad replace that of Volgograd on the tomb of the unknown soldier in Moscow in order to prepare for the sixtieth anniversary of the war's end, to build "respect for the heroism of the defenders of Stalingrad, and to preserve the history of the Russian state."[165] In March 2005, the city of Volgograd went even

further when it decided to erect a monument to Stalin as a winner of the Second World War, alongside Roosevelt and Churchill.[166] The Kremlin actually draws discreet comparisons between the Communist leader and Vladimir Putin. In 2004, while placing flowers on Stalin's tomb, United Russia's speaker at the Duma, Boris Gryzlov, made a plea to the public not to forget Stalin's contribution to Russia in difficult times, insinuating that the country was at a another pivotal time in its history and needed an authoritarian leader more than ever.[167] However, the logic of reconciliation also requires that concessions be made: in 2007, for the 70 year commemoration of the great trials, Putin visited Butovo, a major memorial site dedicated to the victims of the Stalinist purges.[168]

In 2008, a televised broadcast called *The Name of Russia* (*Imia Rossii*) drew up a list of the 50 historic Russian persons that most embody the nation. Many political, religious, and literary figures got involved in promoting such-and-such a figure as nearly five million television spectators voted for their favorite historical character.[169] The winning trio, Alexander Nevski, Petr Stolypin, and Joseph Stalin, reflect a paradoxical vision of Russian history: if Nevski embodies the resistance against Western invasions and Stalin the victorious Russia of 1945, the presence of Petr Stolypin (1862–1911), the Prime Minister of Nicholas II, known for his agrarian reforms and a large symbol of prerevolutionary Russian capitalism, is largely unexpected. By voting both for Stalin and for Stolypin, the television viewers indicated that by no means can nostalgia for Stalin be formulated in ideological terms that are favorable to Communism, but rather as an identity consensus in which references to a phase of national "pre-capitalism" have started to become positive. Pacifying memories of the Soviet Union can therefore paradoxically lead to a rehabilitation of Stalin.

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CONCLUSION

Nationalism as Political Posture

During perestroika and the first years of the 1990s, Russian society was torn apart by considerable ideological conflicts in which the political class showed remarkable disdain for a public opinion that it considered too conservative and unenthusiastic about the liberal changes under way. In response to this, the *posture* of nationalism that emerged during the second half of the 1990s has aimed at achieving reconciliation. Nationalism has made it possible to proclaim that the leaders and their people have regained their unity: for the first time since perestroika, the political class is speaking the same language as the population and is proposing a vision of society with which the latter is in agreement. Nationalism, then, cannot be understood as a phenomenon forcibly imposed from *above* without the consent of those *below*: on the contrary, it can be argued that the movement went in the opposite direction, since the authorities themselves were seeking to find a language in common with society and came to interpret societal demands in terms of a need for identity. This at least partially explains the population's vote of allegiance to Vladimir Putin, who personifies the long-awaited consensual atmosphere, as well as the rather compliant acceptance of a limited political chessboard on which opposition parties no longer propose competing social projects. Moreover, this nationalist posture reinforces the mix-up between the state as a mediator of the general good and the ruling elites: the search for an identity between the people and its main leader weakens the importance granted to elective institutions of representation, which has allowed United Russia to occupy the field largely unchallenged.

Nationalism can therefore be likened to a highly strategic tag, the acquisition of which is controlled by the Kremlin, which uses it to

govern the authorized political repertoire: refusing the nationalist posture results in self-exclusion from the public sphere, but proclaiming it can also prove difficult, since the authorities consider themselves to be the only ones entitled to determine its content. Thus, a battle of words, symbols, and postures is being played out between United Russia, the so-called constructive opposition that the CPRF has become, dissident movements stemming from the defunct Rodina, and extra-parliamentary milieus such as the Movement Against Illegal Immigration. The primary stake in this battle is the ability to decide where the line between "true" and "false" nationalism passes, not to mention the line between competing rivals. It enables the division, to be passed over in silence, that actually structures the political scene in Russia between supporters and nonsupporters of the presidential apparatus, shrouded because of a black-and-white, binary division separating patriots and nonpatriots. "Managed democracy" has therefore given rise to a "managed nationalism": the Kremlin has created a nationalist demand and, at the same time, seeks to co-opt or eliminate every nationalist mobilization that it has not fomented or cannot control.

The nationalist posture might conceal political oppositions even among the ruling elites; however it does not suffice to efface them. In point of fact, United Russia, just like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has become a pluripartite party, encompassing multiple unofficial fractions, interest groups, professional corporations, and ideological convictions. What this consensual atmosphere masks is that only having a role in the state apparatus secures the compliance of each of these actors with the rules of the real game.

Nationalism as an Ideology of Domination?

Nationalism has become an ideology of domination, precisely in the sense that it was understood by Marx or Bourdieu: domination is all the more effective in that it conceals the alienation of specific social groups by an ideology that veils relations of power. By fabricating legitimacy for the representation of power, nationalism justifies the social order: the economic system implemented in the 1990s, which the population resented as profoundly unjust, is henceforth justified. Indeed, Vladimir Putin's political restoration has as its bottom line to legitimate the market economy. Whereas other elements from the 1990s have been put into question, the rules of the market economy, the right to entrepreneurship, and the principle of private property stand unchallenged. Although the

recentralization of power means that the large sectoral corporations, in particular energy-related ones, again fall under the control of the state and its secret services, nonetheless they continue to be governed by a capitalist commercial logic (to make profit) rather than by the logic that prevailed during the Soviet period (to fulfill the plan). Here again it is illusory to imagine that there has been a return to the past, insofar as the Russian economy can no longer be thought of as an autarky, but only in interaction with the rest of the world.

Nationalism, therefore, justifies the interests of the ruling class, which by promoting confusion between the public and the private has succeeded in carving up the most profitable political, bureaucratic, and economic functions. Its being an ideology of domination is substantiated by its conservative framework: one of nationalism's focus comprises questions of morality and values. But while nationalism involves multiple appeals to respect the traditional norms of the family, heterosexuality, and religion, it cannot express Russian society's autonomy and it reveals the state's inability to understand the social realities, cultural diversification, and multitude of lifestyles in contemporary Russia. Moreover, this domination through alienation is not as strong as it professes to be. The Kremlin no longer conceives society in the way it did in Soviet times: its right to legitimate violence is limited, as is its power of coercion. The ruling elites consider that the price to pay for implementing a new repressive apparatus would be too high; here again, Russia is rather far from a supposed return to Stalinism. The borders are open, new technologies have a strong presence, and impartial information is still available for those with the courage to seek it out. The prospect of large social movements like that of 2005, of an international economic downturn affecting the middle classes, or of the resumption of emigration as a sign of social discontent, would put the Kremlin at risk of appearing that it does not know where to turn next.

An Ideology Without Any Doctrine of the Nation?

Although the Kremlin's political technologists are far from lacking imagination and innovative ability, the available repertoire upon which to build a consensus appears limited. Having rehabilitated symbols of the motherland and institutionalized a patriotic "brand," the Kremlin seems hesitant about giving it a doctrinal formulation. It understands nationalism as a determinant factor in its ability to structure the political field over the long term. Justified or not, this reading of the situation threatens

to lead United Russia into a position of discursive rigidity, which could provoke internal dissension among the ruling elites or rejection by a society that is hardly keen on relearning a political cant and may refuse new indoctrination.

To date, the patriotism promoted by the Kremlin has turned out to be nothing more than a protean container largely devoid of content. As Ivan Demidov states, the authorities do not intend to establish a "barometer of patriotism" (*patriotismometr*)[1]: from the moment that one accepts the reconciliatory dynamic under the Kremlin's guidance, any discourse on the nation, regardless of its theoretical assumptions, has a right to speech. The themes this imprecise patriotism advocates are fairly general: that Russia again become a great power with a voice on the international stage; that it speak on equal terms with other world powers in the diplomatic, energy, and military domains; that it modernize the imperial tradition by defending Russia's right to have a say in matters concerning the Near Abroad; that it protect its fragile demographic situation by implementing probirth measures; that the country be recentralized by lifting taboos on the russification of Russia; that a halt be put to all attempts to undermine central power, perceived as a threat to the integrity of the state itself; and that the historical continuity of the state be foregrounded over and above differences in political regime and border alterations. Once this level of generality is exhausted, however, consensus gives way to divergences of opinion.

Two key issues focus and divide the ruling classes, namely migration policy and nationalities policy. Both issues involve distinct definitions of national identity that affect differently the choice of foreign and domestic policy. In fact, both issues raise the question of Russia's national identity in a way that is not just *theoretical* but also *practical*. The federal nature of the country is in fact slowly being erased in favor of a proclaimed russification that may well result in the emergence of a bill decreeing Russians (*russkie*) the eponymous people of Russia. This russification conceals multiple objectives. First, it is an act of national affirmation, since Russia is increasingly being conceived in terms—hitherto nonexistent in Russian history—of an ethnic homeland. Second, it is a vector of normalization in which the nation-state is perceived as the modern framework par excellence. And third, it is construed as a guarantee of the state's political and economic effectiveness, the logic being that centralization is a factor of modernization.

While the question of the country's national diversity is receding, leaving the North Caucasus issue at an impasse, the "Russianness of Russia" is being undermined by the phenomenon of migration. This

issue divides the political class: for some, Moscow's standing as a great power must be backed up by an open migration policy, while others consider that the country and its eponymous people are in danger of being swamped by a flood of migrants. The Kremlin has hedged its bets: while new bills have been drawn up to promote the settlement of millions of foreign workers, the authorities are proliferating discourses on the need for a russification of the country. But the supposed dilemma between ethnocentered and imperial visions of Russia is once again invalidated by the parallel rehabilitation of the terms "nation-state" and "empire," both of which are conceived in opposition to a civic Russian nation (*rossiiskii*) that is dismissed on account of its abstraction. Instead, what is at work here is a concentric logic in which all those who assert their "Russianness" in one way or another are assured a place: ethnic Russians make up the inner core, followed by the national indigenous minorities (and here again there are more concentric circles: the Siberian peoples are for example closer to the core than those of the North Caucasus); the Russophone "diaspora" settled in the former Soviet republics; communities of Russian émigrés around the globe; and the citizens of CIS states who are invited to come and work in Russia and, by such migratory means, to preserve Moscow's role as the driver of Eurasian space.

Nationalism as Conformism or as Social Mobilization?

Nationalism is much more than a simple political posture; it is a general label enabling the construction of social legitimacy. In Russia today, nationalism is promoted as the ideological armature of the politically correct, and yet it remains subject to the contradictions of the contemporary Russian regime. A declaration of patriotism is a conformist gesture by which each citizen confirms his or her acceptance of the rules of the game. It signals a form of depoliticization, since discussions on the political and economic orientation of the country are rendered practically nonexistent, or decreed nonpertinent in public space. In fact, by proclaiming his or her patriotism, every Russian citizen shows an interest in the *res publica* without this affecting private life or necessitating any modification in the practice of everyday life. If this ambivalent social contract functions, it is essentially due to its implicit character: citizens are encouraged to abandon the political field to the ruling elites in exchange for the right to invest in their private lives free of state interference.

However, the Kremlin's will to depoliticize citizens in the name of the reconciliation process is at variance with its desire to remobilize society. United Russia has understood that its long-term political project will not come to life without society's somehow being repoliticized to its own advantage. The Kremlin stands for a rejection of feelings of humiliation and self-depreciation that aims to foster economic revival (for example, national priority projects, in particular in the agricultural domain) as well as to reorganize society on a self-sufficient basis. Nationalism, that is, aims to arouse in citizens a capacity to "stand up" for themselves, which means, for instance, completing their military service of their own accord, having children, being united with elderly persons, stopping drinking, engaging in acts of charity, and doing so in order to make up for the incompetence, not to mention the almost complete absence, of the state in these social domains.

This conformism, which is as depoliticizing as it is mobilizing conceals profound antagonisms and does not guarantee that the state can model society as it intends, which is evident, for example, in the discrepancy between the patriotic declarations of the youth and their massive rejection of military service. So, even though, as Egor Kholmogorov, an ideologist close to the Kremlin, affirms, "nationalism [is] a specific technology of working with the nation,"[2] does this mean that the Russian state is really able to control the direction society takes? Insofar as the ruling power has responded to rather than provoked the social demands relating to nationalism, it will be able neither to control their spread throughout society nor to ascertain the degree to which nationalism itself conditions and produces changes in social practices. The consensual character of nationalism is partially illusory: the convergence between the objectives that the Kremlin has assumed and the very real expectations of the citizens are probably only temporary. Though the Russian population seems immensely appreciative of the authorities' willingness to rehabilitate the national narrative, this by no means implies that it is ready to make sacrifices in the name of a new mobilizing ideology.

Nationalism as Nostalgia for a Mythologized Soviet Union

Contemporary state nationalism is directly inspired by the famous triptych "Autocracy, Nationality, Orthodoxy," formulated in the nineteenth century by Sergei Uvarov (1786–1855), during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855). By these three terms Uvarov defined the

doctrine of the Tsarist regime, namely its conservative character in the areas of politics, the nation, and religion. Uvarov was a staunch supporter of a state nationalism centered on dynastic fidelity to the Romanovs. His triptych stood in contrast to the Slavophiles, who were also in search of a national identity, but who gave priority to the people as the source of the nation. The newly operative nationalist ideology, which is centered on the state, is also conceived in partial opposition to those currents that emphasize the people, ethnicity, or race. Indeed, the Kremlin is the direct inheritor of a tradition of Soviet patriotism born in the 1930s, when the idea of socialism in one country and authoritarian modernization were established.[3] It fits perfectly with Stalin's definition, as of 1934, of the Soviet Union as a motherland (*sovetskaia rodina*) as well as his talk of "mother Russia" (*matushka-Rus'*), which he carried out in terms that would not have displeased defenders of Russian uniqueness.[4]

Soviet nostalgia constitutes the structuring content of the nationalist consensus. Nevertheless, it is not the Communist regime but the *country*, its everyday culture and its borders, that are rehabilitated. The Soviet referent is drawn from a fund shared by the whole population; it transcends social and ideological divisions, and even, though to a lesser degree, different age groups. Indeed, for the young generation that will soon take command of Russia, the Soviet regime is practically, if not entirely, unknown to them. As Yuri Levada explains, these youths "have not chosen anything, they have not gained anything after a hard-fought struggle and they have no need to adapt to anything at all . . . they basically constitute, after the entire last century, the first generation of pragmatists that have no (institutionalized) social memory."[5] For this youth, the Soviet past seems particularly remote: it thinks of Communist Russia's various eras, from Stalin to Brezhnev, in rather uniform fashion, and has no knowledge of the personal suffering and interfamilial division that rallying to or refusing Communism could cause. This absence of affective involvement in the regime and the increasing pacification of memories enable the Soviet Union to be integrated into a largely depoliticized national imaginary in which Stalin is nothing other than the winner of the Second World War and the incarnation of Russia at the pinnacle of its power.

The Soviet referent offers a range of identifiers plastic enough to allow the contradictions inherent in the USSR and its interpretation, such as the nature of the regime, Stalinist repression, or the ambiguous status of Russian preeminence, to be blotted out. In this way, it is possible for everyone to share the same consensus on national, military, and civil heroes, on the foundational myths (the Second World War and the

conquest of space), and on cultural production (cinema, variety shows, and literary classics) from the Soviet era. In its search for unity, the Kremlin's use of the Soviet heritage has enabled it to project a capacity for social mobilization that it would not otherwise know how to express. In addition, notwithstanding the discourse of "tabula rasa," the Soviet regime itself also managed to recreate a sort of continuity with the regime preceding it: indeed, it rehabilitated a specific Tsarist past, in particular via historical reconstitutions devoted to the greatness of Russia, that was decreed compatible with the values of the Soviet Union. This sterilization no doubt helped pave the way for a certain imperial past, effaced of its political specificity, to return within the contemporary historical imaginary alongside the Soviet Union and without arousing monarchic nostalgia.

The idea of reconciling contraries thus came to take precedence over sentiments of the insurmountable divides between historical epochs, political and moral values, and ideologies and national heroes. Sociological studies confirm that it is possible, for instance, to attach importance to both Stalin and Sakharov and not to see any contradiction. Indeed, the construction of the symbolic resources of the nation does not respond to logics that an external observer would declare rational. National sentiment is made possible precisely by foregrounding certain references and obscuring others to create a consensus of memories. Impressions of unity and historical continuity in France or the United States obey the same logic and may be shown to be equally artificial and contradictory. Nevertheless, in the current Russian context, the basis of the consensus is not the sentiment that disagreements are natural and constitute part of the social contract, but the restoration of a form of self-censorship, one stemming as much from society as from the authorities, which motivates the internalization of normative discourse on the legitimacy of the nation and the referents that embody it.

Nationalism as the Driving Force of Westernization?

It would, however, be one-sided to see this nationalism as no more than a cult of the past, for it also attempts to project onto the future a specific community of destiny. It is likely here that we see one of the main differences between the nationalism of the 1990s extolled by the opposition—from the extra-parliamentary groups to the Communist Party—and the nationalism of United Russia. Turned toward the Soviet or Tsarist past, the first nationalism is that of the defeated. It expresses a

refusal of the post-Soviet world and of the pauperization resulting from the reforms of the early 1990s. It does not signal a form of consensus but a need to compensate for social difficulties by exulting identity values. On the contrary, the satisfied nationalism of United Russia is that of the winners, of those who have profited from the changes of these last two decades. It expresses a satisfaction with the current situation, gives support to the reforms under way, and displays a desire to make the most of a promising future. The first sort of nationalism has not disappeared; it can be seen with the development of the skinheads and the Movement Against Illegal Immigration. After its main battle theme, national identity, was revived by the authorities, this first nationalism shifted its focus onto a second object, namely the migration question, with the aim of mastering its own discursive field and therefore of establishing its own autonomous public space. Nevertheless, the overall growth of ethnophobia in Russia also leads to progressively effacing the socially "anomalous" character of this first nationalism.[6] This latter in fact tends to be systematically overlapped by the second, winners' nationalism, which means it has more difficulties in making its voice heard in the present nationalist polyphony.

The Kremlin's nationalism does not dismiss the heritage of perestroika, nor even that of the 1990s liberal reforms, but gives them meaning within a *longue durée* that effaces their most salient traits and is no longer centered on the need to "catch up" with the West. In this vein, Vladislav Surkov's insistence on the fact that the Soviet Union ceased to exist not as a result of its defeat in the Cold War, but because Russian citizens themselves had adjudged it ineffective, is revealing of this will to integrate a disputed Yeltsinian heritage into the course of national history. This assumption is inscribed into the conviction that the Russian state bears a fundamental historical continuity over and above political ruptures. Such ruptures are not considered pertinent insofar as the "essence" of Russia is said to lie not in its political regime—imperial, Communist, presidential republic, and so forth—but instead in the country's greatness, in its place on the international stage, in the existence of a sphere of influence over its neighboring countries, and in its sense of a world mission. It is therefore difficult to talk of ideology, in the sense that this would imply a well-defined body of ideas, but one cannot but notice the progressive constitution of a coherent set of assumptions and visions of the world.

It also ought to be mentioned that, over the last two decades, the discourse on the "Russian Idea" has been distinctly Westernized. Based on its position between West and East, between capitalism and socialism,

theories about Russia's *Sonderweg* continue to be largely accepted. However, at the same time, these theories are—depending on the group—rivaled or doubled by the idea of a community of origin and of destiny with Europe. In the first place, this introduction of Europe into the nationalist argumentative spectrum can be put down to the success of the most radical movements in displacing the axis of the enemy from the West onto the migrant. Fears of immigration and of a "clash of civilizations" indeed enable Russia's confrontation with the West to be put in a different light: as a struggle internal to the "white world," it ought to be bracketed whenever a greater danger threatens from the outside. Alexander Dugin is therefore no longer the only one arguing for the Westernization of Russian nationalist doctrine: he is now rivaled by movements modeling themselves on the White Powers and wanting to establish dialogue with specific sections of American culture or with the Western European extreme right wing.

The growing Europeanness of Russian nationalism is also perceptible in the Kremlin's discourses, echoed by the presidential party, about Russia's belonging to Europe. Contrary to the opinion of some researchers who think that the assertion of Russia as a great power goes hand in hand with Eurasianist theories on the Asian nature of Russia, the Russian authorities promote great power by rooting it in Europe. The Kremlin rather contends that it is possible to be of European culture but not be subordinate to the European Union, to develop a globalized economy without sharing the viewpoint of the United States, and to join the club of world leaders while preserving a specific culture, as in the case of Japan or China. The Europeanization of ideological references is also evident in the terminological evolutions under way. If the official discourse still employs the Soviet division of patriotism vs. nationalism, these terminological boundaries are in the process of changing. An ever-greater number of doctrinaires close to the Kremlin desire, as Egor Kholmogorov puts it, "to found the right of Russians in nationalism."[7] The undermining of the taboo of *nationalism* attests once more to the ambivalent Westernization of the Russian national narrative.

By virtue of these inherent paradoxes, the Kremlin promotes an explosive mixture of Soviet nostalgia, focused on past greatness and the victory of 1945, and the call for Russia to assume a leading role in the twenty-first century, at the forefront of globalization. This conjunction is supposed to encourage the society to reunify around the advocacy of consensual symbolic referents. It therefore gives the impression of a political power continuously manipulating contradictions and toying with multiple identity strategies: allusions to Russia as a fortress surrounded

by external and internal enemies, and bound to the historical values of empire and faith, combine with convictions of an open and globalized Russia that seeks to acquire a new role in world leadership. The Kremlin, then, has to deal continually with the conflict between Russia's international integration and the protection of its national autonomy. In this domain of national identity, the United States' experience of multiculturalism has reinforced the feelings harbored by some of the Russian political class who claim that the model to follow, the brother-enemy worthy of comparison, is the United States and not a European Union that dreams of overcoming national identities. The slogan "believe in Russia, believe in yourself!" symbolizes, for instance, the individualization of nationalism and appears to be modeled on the American principle of achieving national success through that of its citizens.

Thus, as paradoxical as it may at first seem, the Kremlin interprets nationalism as an instrument in the service of Russia's triple goal: modernization, normalization, and Westernization. This "enlightened patriotism" is aimed at facilitating a top-down modernization, inspired by the Soviet Union but following a capitalist model. Nationalism is also called upon to accelerate the process of normalization, identified both with the passage to the nation-state and the return of an imperial memory. Finally, nationalism promotes an indirect Westernization, even if this is achieved by military or authoritarian means, as once occurred under Peter the Great. Born in the Middle Ages, the Western European model according to which the national identity resides in the capacity of the citizens to govern their discords—one argues precisely with those with whom one shares something—cannot be taken for granted in contemporary Russian culture. The feeling that division (political, cultural, or ideological) imperils the collectivity and ruptures national unity instead of strengthening it, is very widespread. The current social contract in Russia is therefore not built on the idea that clashes of opinion and interests are natural, but on the effort everyone makes to shore up the consensus by recognizing the need to reconcile one with another. This phenomenon thereby has to be understood by avoiding the essentialist pitfall according to which Russia is in principle unable to adopt the values of the West, as well as the linear and directive pitfall according to which it is only a matter of time, that Russia is simply *behind* relative to a model of society conceived of as unique and atemporal. Multiple modernities and modalities of citizenship are summoned to coexist.

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NOTES

Introduction

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 4

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Chapter 5

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