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Right-Wing Extremist Violence in the Russian Federation

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Abstract

This article analyses contemporary forms of extreme-right violence in Russia. The authors deal with the traditions and ideological background of the militant right-wing extremist scene as well as with its contemporary social and political background. The most important forms of right-wing extremist violence are identified as *ad hoc* hate crimes, local ethnically motivated conflicts, activities of organised gangs, the existence of paramilitary units and terrorist tendencies. Political reactions to this violence in Russia are described. The authors come to the conclusion that the threat of extreme-right violence will remain an important element of Russia's future security development.

RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST VIOLENCE HAS BEEN a feature of the security situation in the Russian Federation in recent years. In this article we aim to classify and analyse the main forms it assumes in contemporary Russia and to evaluate its impact on security developments. Right-wing extremist violence in Russia is not a homogeneous phenomenon: some of it is committed by unorganised individuals; some forms a part of short-term local mass ethnic conflicts; yet another part of it is perpetrated by violent youth gangs; and finally some of it is linked with party politics and uniformed paramilitary structures. Certain organisations also exhibit terrorist tendencies.[1] In

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[1]In our article we do not employ the concept of repressive state terrorism (Strmiska 2001, p. 40) as it is inappropriate for the purposes of the study of most types of right-wing extremist violence in contemporary Russia. A large number of definitions of terrorism exist. For our purposes we have opted for a definition proposed by UN experts, which is worded as follows: terrorism is '[a]ny action, in addition to actions already specified by the existing conventions on aspects of terrorism, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004), that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act' (High Level Panel 2004).

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studying the phenomenon of extreme-right violence one must take into account not only the traditional concept of state security, but also that of societal security. The latter refers to the security of societal groups defined according to particular identities (Collins 2007).[2]

Traditions and ideological background of Russian extreme-right violence

To understand the causes and consequences of extreme-right violence as a whole it is necessary first to summarise its traditions and ideological background in Russia. The current situation is primarily the result of overall developments in the post-communist Russian political system, which bears certain traces of authoritarianism, and global developmental trends which have required Russia to deal with the fall-out from the global economic crisis. However, the present-day actors involved in extreme-right violence continue also to seek to justify their activities—at least to some degree—by reference to historical models and traditions.

Generally speaking, all of those involved in the Russian extreme right broadly agree on exploiting the common tradition of Russian nationalism. They employ references to the important events of Russian history, such as the fight against the Mongols, and to leading personalities such as Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Alexander Nevsky. They also view Russian imperialism in a positive light; the nation's past ability to colonise Central Asia and the Caucasus is taken as proof of Russian superiority. The main enemies and victims of Russia's extreme right come from these regions.

However, an ideological clash exists within Russia's extreme right over different concepts of Russian history. On the one hand, there is a vision of Russia as a distinct power that is inimical to other civilisations; on the other, there is a tradition of Russia as connected to a wider entity of Eurasia, as promoted by the circle around Alexander Dugin. The latter allows for co-operation with wider international extreme-right groupings (Ivanov 2007, pp. 217–18).

Russia's extreme right is also split internally, between those linked to the Orthodox Church and other strains linked to Russian paganism. The pagan link allows for a construction of the Russians as descendants of Varyags, fighters and pagans renowned for their brutality. This link is also a prerequisite for the Russian neo-Nazi movement that at least partially stems from the National Socialist and collaborationist ideas and movements of the first half of the twentieth century (Mareš 2005, p. 147). Co-operation between Russian neo-Nazis with those in Germany and other European countries draws on the tradition of Russian collaboration with the Nazis during World War II, especially the Russian Liberation Army (ROA, *Russkaya osvoboditel'naya armiya*) of General Vlasov,[3] and the general involvement of Russians in the SS

[2]Here the object under threat is not a state or political regime, but a social group. According to Peter Hough's research into societal security, violent discrimination can target a (usually minority) group defined in terms of national identity, where the minority group is associated by the majority with phenomena such as crime, terrorism, or a threat to the economic prosperity of the majority (Hough 2004, p. 109). Ethnic groups from the Caucasus and Central Asia in particular are under threat in contemporary Russia.

[3]The panegyric 'Heroes of ROA' is sung by, among others, the popular Russian neo-Nazi rock band Kolovrat (2003).

(Munoz 2004). The handover of Russian captives to Soviet authorities in the Austrian town of Lienz in 1945, which was followed by a massacre, has assumed a symbolic significance.[4] One interpretation of this event allows for the construction of the enemy as 'liberal-plutocratic' Western Allies who co-operated with the Bolsheviks.

In their self-conceptions, perpetrators of extreme-right violence attempt to establish links with military traditions of various historic eras, such as the White Guard traditions during the Russian Civil War. Although traditions of street violence or terrorism do exist, such as groups drawing on the '*Chernaya sotnya*' ('Black Hundred') after 1905 or the terrorist attempts in exile by the Russian White Guard, their importance for today is limited. The connection to Soviet traditions has its specific traits, too. On the one hand, those traditions are viewed negatively as consequences of Bolshevik activities; on the other, the imperialist activities of the Soviet regime are positively regarded. From this follows the significant emphasis placed on the protection of Russian minorities in the post-Soviet republics, notably in the Baltic states.

During the transition of the political system in Russia the extreme right constituted itself to some extent as a military organisation. Some right-wing extremists fought in the Yugoslav wars and were involved in violent acts in Russia.[5] The participation of Russian sabotage units in the anti-American 'assistance' to Iraq organised by the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR, *Liberal'no-demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii*) in 1993 was purely fictional, however, as the volunteer corps organised by the LDPR never left for Iraq (Mareš 2009, p. 180).

At the end of the 1990s, the young generation of Russian extreme-right activists were able to make use of the personal experiences of older combatants. A number of adherents of the extreme right had combat experience not only from their activities within extreme-right organisations, but also from their experience in the Soviet army and, subsequently, the Russian army, especially in the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya. Influenced by the events in Putin's Russia, a large wave of political violence gradually swept the country, drawing at least partially from the earlier militant traditions and experiences.

According to Sokolov (2005), in the period after the demise of the Soviet Union, the Russian radical nationalist movement (understood by him as the equivalent of 1990s right-wing extremism) can be divided into several segments which differ in their patterns of collective behaviour and political style, including a national-patriotic segment (Russian National Unity, *Russkoe natsiona'lnoe edinstvo*[6]), the new right (National Bolsheviks, *novye pravye* [*natsional'-bolsheviki*]), and the skinheads. From about 2000 however, the situation began to change; according to Sokolov, nationalism receded into the background, with other aspects of right-wing extremism occupying its

[4]The song 'Lienz' by the neo-pagan industrial band Ritual Front (2008) references this event.

[5]The Legie Werwolf gang, arrested in Moscow in 1994, represents a typical example. The gang planned terrorist activities and some of its members gained combat experience in the former Yugoslavia. Unlike the bulk of Russian volunteers who fought on the Serbian side, members of the Werwolf gang sided with the Croatians (Laqueur 1997, p. 292; Pribylovskii 1995).

[6]Sokolov divides the ideological background of this movement into four basic elements: orthodox-fundamentalist; geopolitical; occult-racist; and common xenophobic. They often contradict each other, for instance on the issue of religion. Ivan the Terrible was their favourite historical hero for the way he dealt with 'the liberal aristocracy and relied on the popular masses' (Sokolov 2005, p. 130).

place in the ideologies of organisations. These included white racism,[7] orthodox religious fundamentalism, various forms of geopolitical imperialism (as represented by Dugin) and 'statehood' ('*gosudarstvennichestvo*'), a dominant, non-violent form of statism, in which the nation was a means to cement and strengthen the state (Sokolov 2007).[8]

The study of the Russian extreme right has become an important part of the study of the extreme right in general, and various approaches to the conceptualisation of the Russian extreme right have appeared. In the 1990s and early 2000s, it was typically studied within the framework of research into right-wing radicalism in transforming post-communist societies (Beichelt & Minkenberg 2002, pp. 253–54). Approaches that bracket the developments in Russia with the overall evolution of fascism and post-fascism (Laqueur 1997, pp. 273–301), with general conceptions of historical fascism, have also appeared. Stephen D. Shenfield has viewed the political situation on the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through the prism of an analogy with Weimar Germany, for instance (Shenfield 2001, pp. ix, 260–62). The concept of fascism is also employed by other experts in their research into the Russian extreme right as a whole, including, for example, studies of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia because the concepts of right radicalism or right extremism seemed to those authors to be ill-suited to the Russian reality (Umland 2002, pp. 907–9).

The Russian populist radical right has also been studied in the context of European right-wing populism, although the LDPR was designated as 'undoubtedly the most eclectic and erratic of all populist radical right parties' (Mudde 2007, p. 45). General criteria of right-wing extremism have also been applied in the research into the Russian extreme-right (Kupka *et al.* 2009, pp. 160–236). Russian scholars sometimes see right-wing extremism as synonymous with radical nationalist organisations (Kozhevnikova 2008).

Social and political background of violence in contemporary Russia

Although an understanding of its traditions is important they are not the main factor to be considered for an understanding of the state of contemporary extreme-right violence in Russia. The basic reasons for this violence are racism, as articulated with reference to contemporary factors, and xenophobia, as well as frustration resulting

[7]Most National Socialist skinhead groups identify with the 'white race' and consider themselves the direct successors of European neo-Nazis. They pigeonhole their main opponents according to racial criteria. According to Sokolov, the concepts of 'Russian nation' or 'Russian state' do not penetrate very deeply into this international worldview. Some militant extreme-right organisations, for instance the Party of Freedom (*Partiya svobody*), *de facto* call for a struggle against their own state and reject the most important symbols of national identity. During the Orange Revolution in Ukraine some racist extremists welcomed the orientation of their 'Slavic brothers' towards Europe and away from the 'Asiatic influence' of Moscow (Solokov 2007, pp. 189–90). Among those groups were organisations, or branches thereof, in the north-western part of Russia (St Petersburg, Novgorod, Pskov, Petrozavodsk). Separatist ideas of the likes of Alexei Shiropaev, who called for the overthrow of the 'Mongolian–Muscovite yoke' and rewrote the national history to make main heroes such as Alexander Nevsky racial traitors, also gained popularity in these circles (Solokov 2007, p. 190).

[8]The idea of 'statehood' ('*gosudarstvennichestvo*') has been taken over from the opposition by the Putin regime and 'cleansed' of radical nationalism and racism.

from personal, social and political developments. Although not every frustrated adherent of racist and xenophobic views is willing to manifest them in violence, these attitudes play an important role in establishing their ideological background. According to sociological surveys by the Levada Center, more than half of the Russian population agreed with the slogan 'Russia for Russians' between 2001 and 2006 (Levada tsentr 2006). The sharp rise of xenophobia in Russian society is linked with the conflict in Chechnya and the wave of migration coming mainly from the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Through terrorist attacks, the Chechen conflict spread into Russian cities. After 1999, a series of bomb attacks hit a number of Russian cities (Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buynaksk in Dagestan) and claimed almost 300 lives.[9] This was followed by further terrorist activities.[10] Chechen terrorism has played a decisive role in the decrease of a sense of security in Russian society, the corresponding rise of fears and anxieties, and aversion to all Caucasians irrespective of their nationality (which has been dubbed 'Caucasus phobia'—'*kavkazofobia*').

Other causes of the rise of xenophobia in Russian society include unfavourable demographic developments and the influx of immigrants, mostly from countries that were part of the Soviet Union, but also from China.[11] As far as immigration is concerned, according to various estimates, immigrants comprise 15% of the inhabitants of Moscow alone (which is the most attractive location economically), and the real number is probably higher still, due to the presence of illegal immigrants (Dubas 2008).

Most of the guest workers from the countries that comprised the former Soviet Union are members of the young generation who were born after the Union disintegrated. They were not educated in the Soviet system, do not speak Russian very well and do not know Russian culture. They mostly live in their ethnic enclaves. What irritates Russians is that the newcomers do not integrate into local communities and live separately from ethnic Russians. Cultural differences and the attitude that considers immigrants a potential threat in the labour market only increase the xenophobia. Unlike Russians, whose society is mostly atomised, the immigrants are able to help each other out and co-operate within their communities (Dubas 2008).[12]

There are also a number of deeper socio-economic causes of racial violence in Russia: economic uncertainty; the disintegration of the former education system; the government's lack of interest in youth programmes; unemployment; lack of trust in political elites; the psychological discomfort of living in the tired panel-block suburbia

[9]The perpetrators of these attacks remain unknown to this day. The Russian government accused Chechen rebels and used it as one of the excuses for unleashing the Chechen conflict. The accusations voiced against the FSB, which supposedly committed those attacks as a pretext for the invasion into Chechnya, are of no lesser gravity (Litvinenko & Felshtinskiy 2006).

[10]The 2002 attack on the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow and the 2004 attack on a school in Beslan, Northern Ossetia are the most important examples.

[11]Between 1992 and 2007 the population of the Russian Federation decreased by seven million. Whereas Russians have higher mortality than natality, the opposite is true of some other ethnic groups, especially of those originating in the Caucasus.

[12]The different ethnic groups were concentrated in specific branches of business: Azeris in the Moscow markets in flowers, fruit and vegetables, Armenians in small services such as shoe repairs, Tajiks as porters, and Georgians as minibus ('*Marshrutka*') drivers (Dubas 2008).

of Russia's metropolitan cities; and poor conditions within families, such as poverty, alcoholism, frustration and violence. All of this creates psychological stress in the youth population and leads them to associate with people with the same problems and the same ideas, who seek to solve their problems by violence against the people that they perceive as responsible for their situation.

The absence of a set of ideals that would be attractive to the youth in post-Soviet Russia is also an important factor (Shnirelman 2007).[13] Soviet-style internationalism is fully discredited and is not even taken seriously by the sympathisers and members of the Communist Party (KPRF, *Kommunisticheskaya partiya*). The ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism which have spread in the West have not found a favourable reception on Russian soil: part of the population rejects it outright, while others only accept it in a purely formal fashion. Abstract appeals to friendship among nations are met with emotional refusal, linked with the non-acceptance of 'aliens' who differ from 'native inhabitants' in their behaviour and do not tend to assimilate. This creates the well known situation whereby 'foreigners' are associated with all the problems that exist in society, be it social inequality or a soaring crime rate. Anti-Semitism is replaced by new, more up-to-date phobias: hatred towards 'Caucasians', those who come from Central Asia, and generally towards anyone who does not look Russian (Makarkin 2009).

The first generation of extremist-right youth came from the poorest housing estates and city peripheries with undeveloped infrastructures though, over time, they were joined by members of other social groups, including university students (Tarasov 2002, 2005).[14] The main platform of the extremists today comprises the children of the former Soviet 'middle class' (professionals and engineers) whose financial situation has noticeably worsened during the 1990s, or the children of small and medium-sized business owners, the so-called 'lower-middle class' (Shnirelman 2007).

According to Verkhovskii, the parents of young right-wing extremists in Moscow are only rarely manual workers; mostly they are small-business people or civil servants.[15] In Moscow, the perpetrators of race crimes are often students of average-quality universities and of relatively high intellectual capabilities. The highest share of the attacks are committed by very young people aged 15–17 years, who band together in violent racist gangs, mostly based on the parts of the city in which they live. They do not have contacts with older extremists and usually leave right-wing circles when they are 18–19 years old. Extremist opinions are quite popular among young people, which represents a significant difference from the situation in the 1990s when such views were marginal.

[13]According to Sokolov, Russian National Unity (*Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo*) members are typically men aged between 25 and 45 with no higher than secondary vocational education, usually former junior officers of the police or the army who work manually (as security staff, drivers or mechanics) or tradesmen (Sokolov 2005).

[14]According to Tarasov, a typical National Socialist skinhead or organised violent racist comes from a family that experienced the Soviet variant of the 'middle class' (highly paid qualified workers) and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union suffered a sharp decline in social standing, having to earn their living by selling on markets or as security staff (Tarasov 2002).

[15]Interview with Verkhovskii and author Martin Laryš, Moscow, 15 May 2009; see also Tarasov (2002, 2005).

For the young generation, World War II is an event from the very distant past. The Soviet taboo on 'fascism' has slowly died away and opens up a wide space for a revisionist history of German Nazism. The government is not well prepared to fight right-wing extremism and often accepts nationalism and the topics it puts forward in order to prevent the opposition from exploiting them. Often when a taboo topic is introduced in public discussion it is met with an ideologically weak response from the government. It relies instead either on entertainment in television and other media to divert society's attention away from politics, or on 'official patriotism', promoted by pro-Kremlin youth organisations whose members concentrate on their careers in governmental structures—a principle adopted from *Komsomol*. Pro-government youth organisations such as *Nashi* or Young Russia (*Molodaya Rossiya*) consider the 'orange' political forces, rather than xenophobic organisations, to be their main political adversaries (Makarkin 2009).

The victims of the attacks of right-wing extremists are mainly non-Slav ethnic groups and foreigners, but also members of some other subcultures including extreme-left activists, homosexuals and other sexual minorities, and all those whom the extreme right considers its enemies. Under the influence of the two Chechen conflicts, individuals coming from the Caucasus, especially if they are of Chechen extraction, are deemed enemies of Russian society and stereotyped as criminals, Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists. Immigrants from Central Asia are most likely to be the victims of violent attacks, however. These attacks are carried out under the pretence of fighting against illegal immigrants who 'occupy the Russian Motherland'.[16]

Ad hoc *hate crimes*

Some of the extreme-right political violence in Russia falls under the category of hate crimes[17] committed as situational violence or after very little preparation. We can therefore speak of *ad hoc* hate crimes, although it should be borne in mind that even this violence usually appears in subcultures dominated by racist convictions. Instances of sudden violent unrest are often exploited by extreme-right organisations for their own political ends.

[16]One specific case in October 2008 was instrumental in prompting a wave of fear: at the beginning of the month, a city maintenance worker from Uzbekistan raped and murdered a 15-year-old schoolgirl Anna Beshneva in Moscow's Mozhaiskii *raion*. The crime provoked a surge of revenge race attacks in Moscow's housing estates inhabited by the lower-middle class, specifically in Mozhaiskii. Neo-Nazis took this murder to be a sign of the beginning of the war on immigrants; in November, several guest workers were attacked in the Mozhaiskii suburb and one was killed. This caused a panic among maintenance workers (an overwhelming majority of those in charge of the housing estates and roads in Moscow come from Central Asia, and from Tajikistan in particular), who started to give notice *en masse* and return to Central Asia (*NewsRu.com*, 11 December 2008).

[17]In this article we adopt the definition of hate crimes recommended by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Russian non-government experts of the SOVA centre contributed to this definition, which is formulated in the following words: 'hate crimes are criminal acts committed with a bias motive [sic.]. It is this motive that makes hate crimes different from other crimes. A hate crime is not one particular offence. It could be an act of intimidation, threats, property damage, assault, murder or any other criminal offence' (OSCE/ODIHR 2009, p. 16).

Short-term planned racist violence today bears the two following main characteristics: first, it is much more often perpetrated by offenders of around 20 years old rather than younger age groups since they are able to carry out more sophisticated violence than just primitive verbal street violence, for instance, to make a bomb; second, the murders are committed with senseless brutality. Theft is occasionally committed along with the murder to obscure the latter's racial motive. Extremists under trial occasionally plead guilty to more murders than they have actually committed in order to increase their authority within extremist circles or to protect other perpetrators.[18]

Although the vast majority of Russians do not support a violent solution to the issues of immigration and nationality, in Moscow alone there are, according to Verkhovskii, between 2,000 and 3,000 young skinheads ready to attack and kill immigrants. In the second half of the 1990s, the activities of Moscow's right-wing extremists focused mainly on the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, which during the Soviet era educated students from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The extremists, mostly extreme-right skinheads, physically attacked its students, especially Africans. At the same time, there were also regular attacks on foreign students in the city of Voronezh (Verkhovskii 2007a).

Towards the end of 2000, Russian extremists embarked on more serious, mass organised activities which may be described as *pogroms*.[19] The first *pogrom* took place on 21 October 2000 in Moscow, close to the Sokolskaya metro station. On 21 April 2001 another was organised in Yasenevskaya market, in which about 300 skinheads took part; 10 people had to be taken to hospital and about 50 stalls were destroyed. The extremists then clashed with the police and about 50 people were arrested. Another *pogrom* took place on 30 October 2001; it started in the market close to the Tsaritsyno metro station in Moscow, and ended in front of the Sevastopol Hotel which housed many Afghan refugees. At least 300 took part in the violence which resulted in four deaths, 80 people injured and 22 hospitalised. The Yasenevskaya and Tsaritsyno *pogroms* prompted the extremists to organise more such events. On 16 February 2002, between 150 and 200 skinheads started a *pogrom* in St Petersburg, attacking passers-by, destroying stalls, breaking windows and overturning cars. The police eventually arrested 27 suspects. During the night of 12–13 May 2002 a similar incident occurred in the famous Moscow street Staryi Arbat, with police arresting 18 people. Further incidents were reported on 3 June 2002, 9 June 2003 and in September 2003. The *pogroms* were not limited to Russia's two biggest cities, Moscow and St Petersburg: in April 2004 skinheads organised a *pogrom* in a market in Volgograd. The year 2004 saw more mass attacks on markets in Moscow (near the Kolomenskoye metro station) and in Nizhny Novgorod, in 2005 in markets in Ufa and Chelyabinsk, and in March 2006 in Yekaterinburg (Shnirelman 2007). On 20 October 2007 neo-Nazis attacked people in the streets of Moscow in which 27 people were injured and

[18]Interview with Verkhovskii and author Martin Laryš, Moscow, 15 May 2009.

[19]This term, originating in the Russian language, is most often defined as an organised violent attack on a religious or ethnic group, involving the destruction of their property or places where they assemble such as market halls or religious centres.

four later died. Two raids in the same year in St Petersburg claimed one life (Kozhevnikova 2008).

Since autumn 2003 there has been an increase in the number of deaths from racist attacks across the whole territory of Russia. According to the data from the SOVA analytical centre which focus on the activities of the extreme right, between 2000 and 2002 there were about 20 such murders, in 2004 there were 50 murders and 218 injured, and in 2005, 49 people were murdered and 419 were injured. The number of murders has steadily increased: 66 murders and 522 injuries were recorded in 2006, and the tally was 89 and 618, respectively, in 2007. In 2008, Russian racists murdered 110 people and injured 487 people on the territory of the Russian Federation. In 2009, 71 people were murdered and 333 injured; between January and May 2010, 18 people were killed and 132 injured (Kozhevnikova 2010). Between January 2004 and May 2010, about 450 race murders were committed on Russian territory and more than 2,500 people were injured as a result of racist attacks (Kozhevnikova 2010). The bulk of these attacks and murders were committed in Moscow and St Petersburg. One has to bear in mind, however, that these data are not necessarily exhaustive and the real numbers might be significantly higher. Alexander Verkhovskii, director of the SOVA centre, estimates the real number of race murders to be about double the unofficial figures quoted above.[20]

Local ethnically-motivated conflicts

From 2006 to the time of writing, several larger clashes between Russians and members of other nationalities have worsened interethnic relations, with the extremists attempting to exploit these clashes for their own benefit. Conflict between Russians and members of other ethnic groups that occur for a variety of reasons might be used to instigate such clashes, which are always presented by the extremists as conflict between nationalities and as another manifestation of the licence of non-Russians who hate Russian citizens. The usual pattern of events was for extremist activists from neighbouring towns (and sometimes even from Moscow) to congregate in a city and distribute provocative leaflets containing attacks on people from the Caucasus and immigrants in general and to organise 'people's assembly' which, unlike other kinds of meetings, do not need government permission.[21] This was followed by clashes with the police and attempts at *pogroms*. Similar events may also be triggered by other factors, such as corruption in the security forces (notably the police). An unimportant incident

[20]Interview with Verkhovskii and author Martin Laryš, Moscow, 15 May 2009. It is likely that there have been murders of right-wing extremists as well but no precise information is available. A web server dedicated to murdered, as well as condemned, extremists mentions a figure of 40 deaths on the territory of the Russian Federation since 1999 (*Kniga pameti pavshikh geroev*, undated, available at: http://whitememory.org/book1.html, accessed 23 July 2009). In April 2009, an international arrest warrant was issued for a Tajik citizen who was suspected of murdering three skinheads in Kolomna (Moscow *oblast'*) on 28 March 2008.

[21]Some of these incidents have been organised by the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (*Dvizhenie protiv nelegal'noi immigratsii*, DPNI), which specialises in such provocations. DPNI was founded in 2002 by the former leading activist of the *Pamyat* organisation, Alexander Potkin ('Belov') and became probably the best known and most influential extreme-right organisation. In 2008 however, its influence started to decline due to internal divisions.

might be used as a pretext for inciting conflict and provoking disorder (Dubas 2008; Kozhevnikova 2008).

The disorder in the Karelian town of Kondopoga in September 2006 is probably the best known example. The events were triggered by a conflict between two visitors to the Chaika restaurant (owned by Caucasians) which expanded into a massive brawl. Two Russians died in the fighting and six people were gravely injured. The Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) immediately exploited the situation and convoked a 'people's assembly' which was attended by approximately 3,000 people. Some of the local inhabitants interpreted the brawl as an 'interethnic conflict' and shortly after the 'people's assembly' meeting a mob burned down the Chaika restaurant. The town then witnessed anti-Caucasian *pogroms* as properties and shops owned by people originating from the Caucasus were ransacked. The organisers of these activities (including Potkin) demanded that all Caucasians move out of the town. The DPNI put the responsibility for the Kondopoga events on the local and regional state authorities, but mainly on the Chechens whose criminal gangs have allegedly 'terrorised' the local inhabitants.[22] Thereafter their further strategy focused on attempting to replicate the Kondopoga scenario. Similar events took place in May and June 2007 in Stavropol, southern Russia in which a young Chechen was killed in a mass brawl and two Russian students were murdered. It is not known to what degree these two incidents were connected; nevertheless, they started mass demonstrations, and then transformed into violence and a rise in ethnic tension in the city that lasted several days (Dubas 2008).

According to Alexander Verkhovskii, the Russian government's main worry in connection with the extremist right is precisely that the situation in Kondopoga, where the government was not in control of the town for two days, could repeat itself elsewhere. Since then however, the state authorities have been aware of the plans of the extremist groups and have been able to prevent the occurrence of such a scenario.[23]

Organised violence

Organised violence by the extreme right takes several forms which can be divided into three types. First, are violent acts carried out by paramilitary branches of extremist organisations which are trained in camps to use weapons against their perceived enemies. Second, there are established gangs of young extremists who specialise in street violence committed in Russia's cities against immigrants and people who generally do not look 'Slavic'. Unlike the paramilitary units, they almost always use only cold weapons (such as knives or brass knuckles). There is also a difference in that the paramilitary units are not necessarily involved in violent acts even though they are well prepared to use violence whereas for the racist street gangs violence is a necessary

[22]Similar events on a smaller scale took place in spring 2006 in the Charagun village (Chita *oblast'*), where an anti-Azeri *pogrom* claimed one life and four people were injured. Another conflict which did not result in loss of life or heavy injuries was recorded in the town of Salske in Rostov *oblast'* (Kozhevnikova 2007, p. 40).

[23]Interview with Verkhovskii and author Martin Laryš, Moscow, 15 May 2009.

TABLE 1
STATISTICS OF RACE VIOLENCE IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION, 2004–2008

	2004			2005			2006			2007			2008			*Totals for the* oblasti, 2004–2008		
	1	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*
Total	**50**	**218**	**268**	**49**	**418**	**467**	**66**	**522**	**588**	**85**	**605**	**690**	**97**	**429**	**526**	**347**	**2192**	**2539**
Including:																		
Moscow and *oblast'*	18	62	80	16	179	195	40	228	268	49	222	271	57	196	253	**180**	**887**	**1067**
St Petersburg and *oblast'*	9	32	41	4	45	49	6	56	62	11	111	122	15	38	53	**45**	**282**	**327**
Abakan	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	**1**	**4**	**5**
Arkhangelsk	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	7	8	0	5	5	**1**	**13**	**14**
Astrakhan	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**2**	**2**
Barnaul	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	5	7	0	0	0	**4**	**7**	**11**
Belgorod	0	5	5	0	4	4	0	18	18	0	1	1	0	2	2	**0**	**30**	**30**
Birobidzhan	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**3**	**0**	**3**
Blagoveshchensk	0	2	2	0	7	7	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	**0**	**12**	**12**
Bryansk	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	3	0	13	13	**1**	**17**	**18**
Vladivostok	5	9	14	0	3	3	2	18	20	1	3	4	0	4	4	**8**	**37**	**45**
Vladimir *oblast'*	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	6	6	**0**	**15**	**15**
Volgograd	0	2	2	0	1	1	2	9	11	1	5	6	0	4	4	**4**	**20**	**24**
Vologda	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	3	0	1	1	**0**	**5**	**5**
Voronezh	1	2	3	1	21	22	1	6	7	0	16	16	2	18	20	**5**	**63**	**68**
Ivanovo	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	**0**	**5**	**5**
Izhevsk	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	6	7	0	5	5	**1**	**13**	**14**
Irkutsk *oblast'*	3	0	3	2	5	7	0	8	8	1	53	54	0	1	1	**6**	**67**	**73**
Yoshkar-Ola	0	1	1	0	15	15	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**21**	**21**
Kazan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8	0	1	1	0	9	9	**0**	**18**	**18**
Kaliningrad	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	11	11	0	1	1	0	10	10	**0**	**25**	**25**
Kaluga	0	0	0	0	11	11	1	4	5	2	1	3	2	2	4	**5**	**18**	**23**
Kemerovo *oblast'*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	**0**	**1**	**1**
Kirov	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**1**	**1**
Kostroma	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	3	3	0	0	0	**0**	**18**	**18**
Krasnodar	2	32	34	1	3	4	0	7	7	0	11	11	1	1	2	**4**	**54**	**58**

(*continued*)

TABLE 1
(*Continued*)

	2004			*2005*			*2006*			*2007*			*2008*			*Totals for the* oblasti, *2004–2008*		
	1	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*
Krasnoyarsk	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	3	3	0	3	3	1	1	2	**2**	**8**	**10**
Kurgan	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	**1**	**7**	**8**
Kursk	0	5	5	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**7**	**7**
Lipetsk	0	1	1	0	3	3	1	0	1	0	3	3	0	3	3	**1**	**10**	**11**
Maikop	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	**0**	**4**	**4**
Murmansk	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	5	5	0	0	0	**0**	**7**	**7**
Nizhny Novgorod	1	5	6	4	12	16	0	36	36	1	41	42	2	12	14	**8**	**106**	**114**
Novgorod	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	**0**	**7**	**7**
Novosibirsk	2	12	14	1	9	10	0	9	9	1	5	6	2	6	8	**6**	**41**	**47**
Omsk *oblast'*	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	3	4	1	2	3	0	2	2	**2**	**10**	**12**
Oryol	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	9	9	0	0	0	0	1	1	**0**	**18**	**18**
Orenburg	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	**2**	**2**	**4**
Penza	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	14	14	**0**	**15**	**15**
Perm	0	1	1	3	2	5	0	1	1	0	3	3	2	3	5	**5**	**10**	**15**
Petrozavodsk	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**2**	**2**
Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	**1**	**1**	**2**
Pskov	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**1**	**1**
Rostov-on-Don	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	2	2	1	7	8	0	4	4	**1**	**23**	**24**
Ryazan	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	4	0	6	6	0	7	7	**0**	**18**	**18**
Samara	1	3	4	4	5	9	0	2	2	2	9	11	0	2	2	**7**	**21**	**28**
Saratov	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	4	8	2	4	6	0	0	0	**7**	**8**	**15**
Sverdlovsk *oblast'*	1	7	8	6	6	12	0	6	6	3	17	20	4	16	20	**14**	**52**	**66**
Smolensk	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**2**	**2**
Stavropol	0	0	0	0	21	21	0	1	1	1	8	9	3	10	13	**4**	**40**	**44**
Syktyvkar	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**8**	**8**
Tambov	0	3	3	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	**0**	**10**	**10**
Tver *oblast'*	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	7	9	0	2	2	0	0	0	**4**	**9**	**13**
Tomsk	0	3	3	0	6	6	0	4	4	0	5	5	0	0	0	**0**	**18**	**18**

(*continued*)

TABLE 1
(*Continued*)

	2004			*2005*			*2006*			*2007*			*2008*			*Totals for the* oblasti, *2004–2008*		
	1	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*3*
Tula *oblast'*	1	0	1	0	3	3	1	2	3	0	0	0	1	3	4	**3**	**8**	**11**
Tyumen *oblast'*	3	1	4	1	0	1	0	15	15	0	0	0	0	3	3	**4**	**19**	**23**
Ulan-Ude	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	**1**	**1**	**2**
Ulyanovsk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	**1**	**2**	**3**
Ufa	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	4	4	**0**	**10**	**10**
Khabarovsk	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	**1**	**6**	**7**
Cheboksary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	2	2	**0**	**8**	**8**
Chelyabinsk	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	11	11	1	6	7	**2**	**22**	**24**
Chita *oblast'*	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	**1**	**3**	**4**
Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**	**0**	**1**
Yaroslavl *oblast'*	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	7	0	3	3	0	1	1	**1**	**10**	**11**
Yakutia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	**0**	**2**	**2**

Notes: 1 = killed; 2 = beaten and injured; 3 = total number of assaults.
Source: Kozhevnikova (2009).

TABLE 2
STATISTICS OF VICTIMS OF RACE ASSAULTS BY CATEGORY

	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009 (Jan–Apr)	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Totals	**50**	**218**	**49**	**418**	**66**	**522**	**85**	**605**	**97**	**429**	**21**	**65**
Citizens of dark complexion	1	33	3	38	2	32	0	37	2	22	1	13
People from Central Asia	10	23	18	34	17	60	30	81	49	108	12	6
People from the Caucasus	15	38	12	52	15	72	25	57	23	72	5	10
People from the Middle East and North Africa	4	12	1	22	0	11	1	21	1	12	0	3
People from East Asian countries (China, Vietnam, Mongolia, etc.)	8	29	4	58	4	52	2	43	1	34	3	3
Other people of 'non-Slav appearance'	2	22	3	72	4	69	20	87	12	37	0	13
Representatives of youth subcultures and leftist youth	0	4	3	121	3	119	5	193	3	75	0	16
Others (including ethnic Russians) and those about whom no specific information is available	10	57	5	21	21	107	2	86	6	69	0	1

Note: 1 = killed; 2 = beaten and injured.
Source: Kozhevnikova (2009).

condition of existence. The third type of organised violence and one that is most dangerous for society as a whole lies in terrorist activities undertaken by the Russian extremist right.

Paramilitary units

The best known organisation with a purely paramilitary structure was the Russian National Unity (*Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo*, RNE) headed by Alexander Barkashov, which was also the largest Russian neo-Nazi organisation in the 1990s.[24] Allegedly, some of the '*soratniki*' ('comrades-in-arms')[25] fought as volunteers in Trans-Dniester, Abkhazia, as well as in Bosnia & Hercegovina on the Serbian side. RNE first aroused significant public notice during the political crisis of September and October 1993, when President Yel'tsin dissolved the Russian parliament and called a new election for December 1993. When the anti-Yel'tsin forces, who had a majority in

[24]For more details, see Likhachev (2002), Sokolov (2005), Umland (2006) and Pribylovskii (2000).
[25]There were three categories of membership: '*soratniki*' (the highest), '*spodvizhniki*' and '*storonniki*'. The *soratniki* were fanatically devoted to the Leader and followed his orders without question. They were the fully-fledged members of the organisation. According to Likhachev, RNE in a certain sense looked more like a totalitarian sect than a political organisation (Likhachev 2002, p. 12). They imitated the structures of army units (Sokolov 2005).

the parliament, defied the president, between 100 and 300[26] of Barkashov's militants appeared in the parliament building to defend it. The rebels had given Barkashov the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and the RNE fighters were declared the 'special military section of the Ministry of Security' (Likhachev 2002, p. 40). On 3 and 4 October 1993, Barkashov's supporters took part in a military action that brought the country to the brink of civil war.[27] After these events the RNE was temporarily banned. From September 2000, the RNE started to split up, eventually ceasing to exist as a unified organisation and breaking up into several warring factions. In addition to the individual acts of political violence, RNE was also often involved in purely criminal activities (Sokolov 2006, p. 69).[28]

Among other organisations with paramilitary branches or training camps are the Slavic Union (*Slavyanskii soyuz*, SS), the Party of Freedom (*Partiya svobody*, PS) and the National-Socialist Society (*Natsional-sotsialisticheskoe obshchestvo*, NSO). Currently, only the Slavic Union and the Russian All-National Union (*Russkii obshchenatsional'nyi soyuz*, RONS) have permanent bases that are used for training camps. The Slavic Union is currently the best known Russian neo-Nazi organisation, although it does not have many members. Its main activities involve the training of its members in sports and military techniques, which some then go on to employ in racist attacks. The SS itself does not call for violent action and its leader Dmitri Demushkin does not publicly endorse the violent activities of the organisation's members. However, individual members, including Demushkin himself, have been tried for violent acts. In 2006 Demushkin was arrested on suspicion of involvement in an explosion in a mosque in the small town of Yachroma in the Moscow *oblast'* but he was eventually released. In September 2008 another leader of the SS was detained for the murder of a Tajik and a Dagestani (Kozhevnikova & Verkhovskii 2009, pp. 156–57).[29]

In 2005, the St Petersburg-based neo-Nazi Party of Freedom set up a militant wing, White Watch (*Belyi patrul'*), to make violent attacks on individuals whom the party

[26]There is no specific figure; inside the government building there were 168 members of RNE, but there were also other armed members outside the building (Telekanal 'REN TV', 2008, *Reporterskie istorii—dva dnya grazhdanskoi voiny*, available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-soA4vu65AA, accessed 7 October 2010).

[27]Two RNE *soratniki* (who were also reserve officers of the Russian Army) were killed in the fighting and 11 members of the organisation were injured. Barkashov claims that these two 'martyrs' were actually 'ritually murdered' by Jews linked with the Yel'tsin forces (*Russkii poryadok*, 9–10 (12–13), dekabrya 1993 g.–yanvarya 1994 g.).

[28]The organisation was involved in the contract killing of several businessmen, including in October 1995 when A. Zakharenko, general director of the Primorrybprom company, died in a bomb attack. The leader of the Primorskii branch of RNE, A. Shestopalov, together with nine other '*soratniki*' of the regional branch, were accused of this (and other) murders. According to a testimony, A. Brechov, a local businessman and chairman of the board of the above-mentioned company, as well as sponsor of the Primorskii branch of RNE, 'contracted' them to carry out the killing. A number of other RNE members from different branches have been prosecuted for blackmail, racketeering, armed assaults, robberies and illegal possession of arms (especially in this regard, the Oryol, St Petersburg, Saratov, Kostroma, Yekaterinburg and Khabarovsk branches). For more details, see Likhachev (2002, pp. 22–41).

[29]In 2010, repressive measures were taken against the Slavic Union; the organisation was banned and dissolved by the judiciary.

counted as its enemies.[30] Most of the members of the White Watch as well as the Party of Freedom itself are neo-Nazi skinheads. The National-Socialist Society (NSO), which is now disintegrating and banned by the state, was also a very militant organisation and a large number of its members have been arrested by the police. During the whole period of its existence, the NSO was embroiled in acrimonious disputes with Demushkin's Slavic Union.[31] The Russian All-National Union (RONS), headed by Igor Artemov, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Vladimir *oblast'*, has since 1998 been organising military camps for youths and training programmes in sports clubs. From 2005 onwards, RONS co-operated systematically and openly with neo-Nazi skinheads. (However not all skinhead organisations are involved in violent activities, especially those that do not belong to the extreme right part of the spectrum. Least violent are the so-called apolitical, traditionalist skinheads.) In May 2006, the organisation was in the public eye when it organised violent assaults on participants in the Moscow Gay Pride march. In May and June 2007, RONS was one of the main provocateurs of the mass disorders in Stavropol when the police denied Potkin, the DPNI leader, entry to the city (Kozhevnikova & Verkhovskii 2009, pp. 108–10). The DPNI also organised training camps for the so-called DPNI squads, which were to implement order in demonstrations and help police to expel illegal immigrants. Given that the squads were learning how to use firearms, they probably had other goals in mind too.

Gangs

Racist gangs are usually made up of young hooligans, do not have a fixed organisation, and choose their victims more or less at random. It is precisely these gangs that commit a significant number of murders and represent a grave social problem.

A typical example in terms of its gang structure and membership profile is the so-called Ryno gang, which has gained notoriety both in Russia and abroad.[32] In April 2007, the police arrested two teenagers, Artur Ryno and Pavel Skachevsky, and accused them of murdering an Armenian businessman. Shortly afterwards, Ryno voluntarily confessed to 37 murders, all committed between August 2006 and April 2007. His tactics involved loitering in front of metro stations, choosing victims, and

[30] *Publichnaya internet-biblioteka Vladimira Pribylovskogo*, available at: http://www.anticompromat.ru/, accessed 24 September 2010. The aims of the White Watch were to check for non-Slavic people or immigrants in the centre of the city, at pedestrian crossings, public transport stops, and the metro in St Petersburg's suburbs and to 'establish order' in the suburban trains (*elektrichkas*). According to Belyayev it was 'necessary to ensure the presence of the White Watch in every housing estate and courtyard of our city'. The foundation of the Watch was connected with the murder of a Congolese citizen (SOVA 2005). In 2006, the Party of Freedom published reports on White Watch activities, including murders and attacks on foreigners and members of leftist youth organisations. In practice however, it is very difficult to establish which specific acts were committed by the White Watch, as opposed to other extremist organisations (Kozhevnikova & Verkhovskii 2009, p. 75).

[31] Former NSO leader Dmitrii Rumyantsev was one of the leaders of SS. He later left the organisation and founded NSO.

[32] However, this gang falls outside the general pattern of skinhead gangs in Russia in one respect. Gangs are usually created around the domiciles of their members who have already known each other for some time. Ryno's gang, by contrast, was constituted by people who had only met each other through neo-Nazi websites and forums (Harding 2009).

subsequently killing them, stabbing them between 15 and 60 times. The targets were chosen at random, the main criterion being their non-Slav features. Most were guest workers employed in the building industry or cleaners in the communal courtyards and urban parks. Many of the victims were immigrants from Central Asia and China, some came from the Caucasus, a few were even ethnic Russians. Ryno and Skachevsky considered the murders to be part of a national fight for freedom, a quasi-mystical struggle to free Russia from immigrants, in which they themselves played the role of heroes and warriors. They were sentenced to 10 years in prison, which is the highest possible penalty for minors in the Russian Federation. Five other members of the gang received sentences ranging from six to 20 years, and two people were discharged.

Another example is the Kalinichenko gang, whose general characteristics are fairly similar to those of the Ryno gang and like them is named after its leader, Ivan Kalinichenko, who was 19 years old when arrested. The gang consisted of 12 people and they usually stabbed their victims. Through the internet, Kalinichenko gathered together several quiet and inconspicuous teenagers, aged between 15 and 19. The gang committed two murders, and attempted another seven; one of their victims was the well-known chess grand master Sergey Nikolaev from Yakutsk, who was murdered in October 2007 (Trifonov 2008b).[33]

A neo-Nazi gang from St Petersburg, which was active variously under the names 'Schultz-88', 'Mad Crowd' and 'Combat Terrorist Group' (*Boevaya terroristicheskaya organizatsiya*), represents a somewhat different case. It consisted of football hooligans of FC Zenit St Petersburg under the successive leaderships of Dmitrii 'Schultz' Bobrov and Dmitrii 'Kislyi' Borovikov. The gang was very well organised and probably the only Russian neo-Nazi structure to employ techniques adopted from the criminal underworld, such as using false identity papers. It was responsible for the murder of a St Petersburg academic and expert on the extreme right, Nikolai Girenko, who was shot in June 2004 through the door of his flat. The responsibility for the murder was initially claimed by the hitherto-unknown group Russian Republic (*Russkaya respublika*), however it later transpired that that group had nothing to do with Girenko's death. Several members of the Mad Crowd were detained in May 2006 and accused of murdering two members of their own group, several other murders,[34] six physical assaults, an attempted bombing of a café where African students met, and a series of armed raids on post offices (Abarinov 2006). The group's leader, Dmitrii Borovikov, was shot dead by police under peculiar circumstances and immediately became a 'martyr' in Russian extremist circles and a symbol of what they understood as the arbitrary behaviour of the Russian state authorities in their fight against the neo-Nazis.[35] The organisation was able to continue its activities

[33]It was thanks to this murder that the police uncovered the gang, because one of the attackers was so inept in handling the knife he caused himself a serious injury. The police found him in hospital and thanks to the data in his computer found other members of the gang (Trifonov 2008b).

[34]The best-known cases, in addition to the murder of Girenko, include the murder of a little Tajik girl on the estate where Borovikov lived, and murders of a Senegalese student, a North Korean citizen and a Vietnamese student.

[35]Other branches of the skinhead sub-culture exist in Russia (SHARP skinheads and RASH (red and anarchist skinheads) skinheads in particular) but in comparison with the extreme-right wing branch they are very much in a minority.

illegally[36] mainly thanks to Dmitrii Borovikov's father,[37] who was a police officer; however, after he was discharged, the institutions of the state started to arrest members of the Mad Crowd.[38] According to Verkhovskii, the extremist gangs in St Petersburg are better organised than those in Moscow.[39] The social profile of their members is rather diverse, ranging from university students to unemployed or young blue-collar workers. Borovikov himself studied law for a couple of years but was later expelled from the university. Firearms, explosives, radio communicating equipment and sensors able to eavesdrop on police radio communications were found in the gang members' possession (Belogonov 2009).[40] More neo-Nazi gangs responsible for a number of murders appeared later, including the so-called White Wolves (*Belye volki*) led by Alexei Dzhavakhashvili, a half-Georgian. This gang allegedly committed at least 11 murders (Russkii obozrevatel' 2009). Reportedly even more brutal are the 12 members of the National-Socialist Society—North (NSO—North [*Natsional-sotsialisticheskoe obshchestvo—Sever* (*NSO—Sever*)]) from the Moscow *oblast'* led by Vladislav Tamamshev and Lev Molotkov, who reputedly committed almost 30 murders between January and July 2008 (Polyakov 2010).[41]

Terrorist tendencies

Whereas the years 2000–2001 marked the beginning of a period where violent activities on a larger scale—the *pogroms*—began, after 2006 we can also observe attempts at terrorist attacks which have not thus far claimed any human lives. Russia has witnessed bomb attacks and 'exemplary murders', taped on video with a message addressed to the general public and the institutions of the state. Some attempts at terrorist attacks were recorded before 2006, but they did not meet with a substantial response in society. Although these attacks employed firearms or explosives, most of the time they were manifestations of ordinary xenophobia (occasionally accompanied

[36]The group was highly conspiratorial. For example, its members did not use magnetic metro cards or mobile phones. If they needed to call other members about planned violent action, they borrowed mobile phones from passers-by. If they said a time on the phone, they actually met at the given place an hour before (Belogonov 2009).

[37]His father was a very good acquaintance of the leader of the counter-extremist 18th department of the Russian directorate for fighting organised crime (RUBOP, *Rossiiskoe upravlenie po borbe s organizovannoi prestupnostyu*). It was alleged that this was the reason Borovikov escaped punishment despite having already been arrested in 1999. He was later accused of three murders but always managed to escape a sentence (Belogonov 2009).

[38]Dmitrii Bobrov was sentenced to six years in prison in December 2005 and another of the ringleaders, Alexei Voevodin, is in custody and awaits trial. In June 2010 he attempted suicide, but in September 2010 he was found of sound mind and the trial continues (BaltInfo 2010). The co-founder of Mad Crowd, Ruslan Melnikov, was arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in prison. Fourteen members of Mad Crowd are currently on trial (Belogonov 2009).

[39]Interview with Verkhovskii and author Martin Laryš, Moscow, 15 May 2009.

[40]The money reportedly came from regular contributions, but mainly from the sale of one of Voevodin's two apartments which enabled him to purchase necessary equipment.

[41]Neo-Nazis might also be responsible for the murders of the renowned journalist and human-rights activist Stanislav Markelov (neo-Nazis accused of the murder are Nikita Tikhonov, activist of the developing movement *Russkii Obraz*, and Yevgeniya Khasis, a Jewish-Tatar neo-Nazi activist) and of the judge Eduard Chuvashov who tried the White Wolves gang.

TABLE 3
STATISTICS OF SENTENCES AWARDED FOR VIOLENT RACE CRIMES AND PROPAGANDA

	Number of trials ending in sentences		*Number of accused given sentences*		*Number of suspended sentences and acquittals*	
Year	*Awarded for violence*	*Awarded for propaganda*	*Awarded for violence*	*Awarded for propaganda*	*Awarded for violence*	*Awarded for propaganda*
2004	9	3	26	3	5	2
2005	17	12	56	15	5	6
2006	33	17	109	20	24	7
2007	23	28	65	42	18	12
2008	33	42	109	57	29	20
2009 (Jan–Apr)	7	9	22	11	3	4

Source: A. Verkhovsky, Statistics prepared for the interview with Martin Laryš 15 May 2009, unpublished material (Moscow, SOVA) Moscow.

by banal banditry). Some were carried out by older people or veterans of the armed conflicts of the 1990s,[42] and were often the work of individuals. Today the suspects of terrorist attacks are often young people who have not served in the army. On the one hand, they are indirectly linked to state institutions (for instance, children of relatively high-ranking police officers have appeared among the suspects, as well as students of police schools); on the other, they are connected to the so-called military-patriotic clubs (Kozhevnikova 2007, p. 36).

One example of terrorist activity was the bomb attack on the Cherkizovsky Market in Moscow. In 2001 Nikolai Korolev, a neo-Nazi, founded the military-patriotic club *Spas*. In addition to combat techniques, Korolev, aged 27,[43] and his associate Sergei Klimuk, a martial arts instructor and FSB warrant officer, indoctrinated their followers (who were mostly students of various Moscow universities) with extremist ideological principles. Members of *Spas* and students at the Mendeleev Institute of Chemical Technology, Ilya Tikhomirov and Oleg Kostyrev bombed the Cherkizovsky Market together with two other students in August 2006. The attack claimed 14 lives and 49 people were injured, the perpetrators having found instructions on how to make explosives on the internet. According to the police and investigators, the attack was carried out by one of the organised groups of criminals that demanded payment

[42]Among those were: a series of anti-Semitic posters in 2002; an assassination attempt on the former director of the energy company RAO-UES of Russia and noted reformer of the 1990s, Anatoly Chubais; and the bombing of a train on the Moscow–Grozny line in June 2005.

[43]Korolev was an army close-combat expert and active in the neo-Nazi movement for a number of years. Russian neo-Nazi websites claim that he and his peers committed arson attacks on a Caucasian hostel in Yasny Proezd and on the halls of residence of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, bomb attacks on Vietnamese hostels, and participated in the Yasenevskaya and Tsaritsyno *pogroms* (http://nso-korpus.info/, last accessed 23 July 2009). These data need to be interpreted with great caution, however, as they were probably published with the aim of exaggerating the number and significance of his violent activities in order to increase his authority amongst the neo-Nazis.

for '*krysha*' (or protection) from the owners of the Vietnamese café where the bomb was planted.[44]

Korolev, Klimuk, Tikhomirov and Kostyrev were sentenced to life imprisonment in May 2008. Three other members of *Spas* received sentences ranging from two to 20 years.[45] Korolev also presented himself as a neo-Nazi ideologue. The profile of the main perpetrators of the bomb attack was not very different from that of the members of Ryno's gang. Oleg Kostyrev, a student who was 20 when he committed the crime, was considered an intelligent, quiet young man who did not have many friends. Tikhomirov, similarly, was not known for extremist attitudes in his family circle. Tikhomirov was a member of Artemov's RONS and even frequented the above-mentioned RONS training camp in the Vladimir *oblast'*. He was also one of the observers monitoring the election of the Petushkin *raion* where Artemov was an unsuccessful candidate (Makarkin 2009). Tikhomirov's diary led the police investigators to other individuals implicated in the attack; it also contained the following note: 'Now I plan a large terrorist action. The goal is to kill several hundred enemies and stop the influx of immigrants' (Zheglov 2007). According to Korolev, the Cherkizovsky Market was bombed because it was a centre of illegality, a state within the state: 'Tikhomirov's cell carried out the action because of the rule of Southern occupants on all the markets'. Korolev evaluated the terrorist attack very positively, because 'the government eventually accepted revolutionary changes—it pulled back the aliens from the markets, and the Ministry of Interior started to check immigration much more stringently'.[46]

A further aspect of terrorist activity was the 'live broadcast' of murders. In August 2007 a video recording of the execution of two men, a Dagestani and Tajik, appeared on the internet. The video showed two handcuffed men kneeling in a forest under a flag with swastika.[47] An unknown person shoots one of the captives in the neck and cuts off the other's head with a knife. It was originally assumed that the video was a hoax, but the Prosecutor General of Russia's group of investigators has confirmed its authenticity. One man recognised his brother from Dagestan in the video: he had disappeared from Moscow a couple of months earlier. It was alleged that the branch of NSO in Obninsk,

[44]They had already unsuccessfully attempted several other bomb attacks, for instance on a hostel for Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan; on the office of the newspaper *Russkii vestnik*; on a mosque in Yachroma, a small town in the Moscow *oblast'* for which the leader of SS, Dmitrii Demushkin, was detained; and on several Azeri-owned Moscow market pavilions and gambling houses (*Publichnaya internet-biblioteka Vladimira Pribylovskogo*, available at: http://www.anticompromat.ru/, accessed 24 September 2010).

[45]In the meantime a separate trial was held in which Nikita Senyukov, a student of the police academy and also a member of *Spas*, was condemned to 13 years in prison for the murder of an Armenian student at the Pushkinskaya metro station in Moscow (Trifonov 2008a).

[46]'Nikola Korolev—V blizhaishee vremya sleduet zhdat' novykh podzhogov i vzryvov', *RodRus.Forum*, available at: http://rodrus.org/forum/showthread.php?t=48, accessed 23 July 2007. One of the investigators was quoted in the *Moskovsky Komsomolets* newspaper: 'the worst thing is that those are completely ordinary young men. Any other young guy aged 16 to 23 could be in Tikhomirov, Kostyrev or Zhukovtsev's place. He studies at university, is interested in computers, has a girlfriend. And then on one fine day he goes out and blows up a market' (Makarkin 2009).

[47]*Publichnaya internet-biblioteka Vladimira Pribylovskogo*, available at: http://www.anticompromat.ru/, accessed 24 September 2010.

Kaluga *oblast'*, was responsible for the murders, but the claim was resolutely denied by the NSO and the police did not confirm the NSO'sr culpability for the murder. According to Alexander Verkhovskii, where this act of terrorism was committed and by whom remains unclear: the traces lead to the so-called 'combatant wing' of the NSO, but it could equally be a provocation by some other neo-Nazi group, for example the Slavic Union, wishing to discredit Dmitrii Rumyantsev and the NSO. The responsibility for the murders was claimed by the unknown and probably fictitious National-Socialist Party of Russia (*Natsional-sotsialisticheskaya partiya Rossii*, NSPR).[48]

Another terrorist act which aroused a significant wave of public interest, both in Russia and internationally, was committed by an unknown group calling itself The Militant Organisation of Russian Nationalists (*Boevaya organizatsiya russkikh natsionalistov*), which sent human rights organisations an e-mail with a photograph of a man's head on a wooden chopping block. The group killed a 20-year-old Tajik on his way home from work in a food warehouse. They threw the severed head into a rubbish bin in the Mozhaiskii *raion* where the already mentioned 15-year-old Anna Beshneva was killed. The body was found near the Zabhkino village a few kilometres from Moscow. In its e-mail the organisation claimed that the murder was a form of protest against government authorities for their failure to deal with immigration and 'rid Russia of its Caucasian and Central Asian occupiers'. If the state authorities do not deport 'the blacks', other heads will fall, said the proclamation (OSW 2008).

Since the beginning of 2009 neo-pagan groups with a distinctly anti-Christian character and terrorist tendencies have appeared in the Russian Federation. Their main unifying element is opposition to Christianity which they consider a foreign and 'occupation' faith which enslaved their ancestors who lived in freedom.[49] Their ideology is a mix of racism and so-called 'Native Faith' (*Rodnovery*)—a neo-pagan cult based on the worship of old Slavic gods. Although not all neo-pagan groups engage in violence or can be categorised as extreme right, it is alleged by SOVA (2010) that some of these groups are responsible for the attempted bomb attack of a McDonald's in Kuzminki on 16 January 2009, the bombing of a railway line in Bulatnikovo and Tsaritsino in Moscow and also the bomb attack on an Orthodox church in the Biryulevo Zapadnoye *raion*. According to Markarkin, one such group was responsible for two murders (Makarkin 2009).[50] Lately their terrorist attacks have turned against the state, thus putting them on the same level as the extreme-left radicals. Their activities include bomb attacks on local police stations and the FSB, on the flats of policemen and on military commissariats, all under the heading of the so-called 'counter-state terror'. The goal is to destabilise the state system and to induce

[48]The public heard of NSPR again only once in March 2008, when a proclamation was put on the internet calling for similar acts of violence not only against foreigners, but also against the whole Russian state apparatus: 'our party appeals to all Russian national socialists to organise their own autonomous combat groups, you must undertake combat operations to destroy the cops, colonists and other enemies' (Barabanov 2008).

[49]For more details about neo-paganism in the Russian Federation, see Pribylovskii (2002).

[50]Specifically, of an Uzbek and a Dagestani, on 1 January 2009. In December 2008, the group supposedly murdered another person who looked like an Orthodox priest (Makarkin 2009).

panic in society, which according to theorists of counter-state terror, will lead to a neo-Nazi revolution (Kozhevnikova 2010).[51]

Political reactions to extreme-right violence in Russia

The political violence of the Russian extreme-right represents a challenge for the security policy in the country, but also has international repercussions. In the long term, Russian security authorities focus on the issue of extreme-right violence and as can be seen from the data provided above, they have discovered the perpetrators of several grave crimes. A number of other offences remain unexplained, however.

Russia has special counter-extremism laws including the federal law no. 148/F3 on the illegality of extremist activities, and various articles of other penal legislation.[52] The organisations responsible for fighting extremism are the special units of *Militsiya* (police) and other units governed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (including the security forces that intervene against violent demonstrations). Intelligence is collected mainly by the Federal Security Service (FSB). The Ministry of Justice puts together the 'Federal list of extremist organisations' and 'Federal list of extremist materials' according to the counter-extremism law mentioned above. As a consequence of government measures, the counter-extremist procedures have become more effective, at least in some areas. The Moscow police, for instance, has started to prosecute racist crimes with appreciably more efficiency since the autumn of 2008 after a new public prosecutor was appointed and a new unit was created within the Ministry of Internal Affairs to fight extremism. It employs experienced investigators who previously worked for the Russian Directorate for Fighting Organised Crime (RUBOP). However, non-governmental anti-racist organisations have criticised the security forces for not dealing with the extreme-right violence resolutely enough and claim that the efficiency of their activities is low.[53]

The extreme-right violence in Russia has been discussed several times in the State *Duma*, although it is not generally an important topic of discussion for the main parliamentary political parties, even though it is a relatively popular subject for the

[51]According to Kozhevnikova (2010), neo-Nazis were responsible for at least 50 terrorist attacks, attempts at terrorism or arson attacks in 2009. According to Tumanov (2010) they might also have been behind the May 2010 terrorist attack in Stavropol where seven people died and 40 were injured in an explosion at a festival of Chechen dancing.

[52]A number of laws have also been amended, primarily in order to coordinate them with the Law on Combating Extremist Activity. Among others, the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offenses have been changed to provide definitions of new crimes and offences related to extremist activity (Verkhovskii 2007b).

[53]Alexei Makarkin of the Centre for Political Technologies provides an interesting analysis of this problem, in which he claims that the danger of the extreme right was not fully appreciated by the Russian government, as the latter did not see in the youth groups an important electoral or financial source that would represent a significant threat. From this follows the absence of a coherent strategy to fight right-wing extremism, a fight that is now carried out solely by the repressive authorities of the state. Furthermore, according to Makarkin, those very agents are divided on the issue: one part takes the matter seriously while the other does not consider it very important. Many crimes committed by the extreme right are then prosecuted as disorderly conduct, which significantly decreases their gravity, as well as the motivation to seek the perpetrators (Makarkin 2009).

media. A more active role is played by non-governmental organisations such as the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis in Moscow. The bulk of these activities is carried out by the Russian section of the Antifa campaign. During the 1990s, members of the Russian Jewish community formed self-defence units. Among those fighting extreme-right violence are also members of the Russian extreme-left, who are not averse to violent means themselves.

The situation in the Russian extreme-right is also being monitored by international organisations of which Russia is a member. The most important ones are the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a monitoring body of the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The political violence in Russia is a phenomenon which has repercussions outside the territory of the Russian state or areas inhabited by Russians. By its intensity and relative success, it represents an inspiration for neo-Nazis throughout the world or, at the very least, is an important topic of discussion about the strategies and tools of the extreme right. In the countries of East-Central Europe, the concept of a 'Russian Way' has become a synonym for the terrorist activities of the extreme right.[54] For this reason extreme-right violence in Russia is monitored by the security forces of states for which the trends in Russia have immediate consequences (mainly countries of the former communist bloc).

Conclusion

Extreme-right violence in Russia represents a serious security threat. Admittedly, the regime is not immediately endangered by it but it constitutes a threat to the personal security of those groups that are being attacked (mainly immigrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia, Muslims, Jews and anti-racist activists). In its consequences, it leads to the erosion of societal security, that is, of the peaceful coexistence of various ethnic, religious and political groups in contemporary Russia. In this sense it can represent a basis for future mass violent conflicts on Russian territory, especially in cities with high concentrations of minorities. If such events were to occur they could have significant repercussions for the internal security of the Russian state regime, and unrest could lead to a strengthening of the state's authoritarian components.

Since the fall of communism, extreme-right violence has been a phenomenon accompanying the development of the Russian state and in the Putin era, it grew in volume, degree of organisation and brutality. Only in the area of public armed activities by paramilitary groups can one perhaps observe a partial decline in importance, although sections with terrorist tendencies have nevertheless appeared in such circles. The attitude of Russian state institutions, which was relatively relaxed for

[54]The Czech neo-Nazis, for instance, have invoked the 'Russian Way' in their discussion forums and there have been suggestions that the experienced Russian violent neo-Nazis could provide their Czech colleagues with training and weaponry. Some Russian neo-Nazi groups have shown interest in the Czech neo-Nazi movement, specifically the National Resistance (*Národní odpor*) group, to whom the Russian neo-Nazi band Kolovrat dedicated a song called 'Czech knights' ('Cheshskie rycari'). The band's frontman, Denis Gerasimov, was previously arrested in the Czech Republic for promoting and supporting Nazism (Mareš 2005, p. 201).

a very long time, made possible the emergence of a large degree of public acceptance of the extreme right in Russian society. The members of violent groups of the 1990s who were adolescents at the time are now around 40 years old but a number of them have not left the scene (although exact empirical research is missing here). A new generation of extreme-right hooligans has grown up alongside them, and the brutality of the contemporary gangs raises very serious alarms indeed. Since right-wing violence has become firmly entrenched, the more forceful approach now being taken by the state will only be able to suppress some of the manifestations of extreme-right violence. The threat of extreme-right violence will remain an important element of Russia's future security development.

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