



Patriotic Mobilisation in Russia

Europe Report N°251 | 4 July 2018

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Principal Findings

What's new? In recent years, the Kremlin has pursued a policy of patriotic mobilisation – encouraging national pride, commemorating past military victories and promoting a vision of Russia as a reborn global power. While hardly unique to Russia, this project is notable for its scale and its connection to Russia's newly assertive foreign policy.

Why does it matter? For President Vladimir Putin, patriotic mobilisation is a means of shoring up his rule and building popular support for military interventions in Russia's near and far abroad. It can escape the Kremlin's control, however, notably with far-right movements that turn love of country into ethnic chauvinism and perpetrate violence.

What should be done? Rising patriotic sentiment – like assertiveness abroad – is likely a feature of Russian politics today. Western countries should endeavour to understand its roots in post-Cold War grievances and engage the full spectrum of Russian society. The Kremlin should stop accommodating far-right nationalist groups lest they push Russian policy in dangerous directions.

Executive Summary

Since the early 2000s, Russia has witnessed a rebirth of patriotic mobilisation. This revival is not spontaneous: it is underpinned by a concerted state effort to instil patriotic values, celebrate Russia's military past and promote Moscow's recrudescence as a global power. Though not without its critics inside Russia, this mobilisation appears to have helped build support among ordinary citizens for Moscow's more assertive foreign policy, including its increasingly bitter standoff with the West and interventions in countries of the former Soviet space as well as further afield. Such sentiment likely helped mobilise Russian volunteers to fight alongside Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. At home, it appears to have had dangerous side effects, reinforcing ultra-nationalist sentiment and stirring up violent far-right groups. President Vladimir Putin, entering his fourth term, should seek to rein in both.

Rising patriotism is a feature of burgeoning populist movements across the globe; in that sense, there is nothing particularly Russian about the phenomenon. Likewise, state-sponsored celebration of the military is common, including in several Western countries and in Russia's immediate periphery. Finally, in Russia as elsewhere, there is no monopoly on the concept of patriotism, and citizens at times express the sentiment in ways that sit uneasily with the officially sanctioned version. This tug of war plays out as a battle over historical memory and Russia's identity and place in the world. The result is a divide between those the state recognises as patriots and those it does not.

Still, the Russian government's determined efforts to foster a sense of patriotism, coupled with the scale and ambition of those efforts, are worthy of note. The state has marshalled schools, civil society groups and the Orthodox Church, among others, in its efforts to inculcate such values. Federal funding is available to an array of groups, including veterans' organisations, to help the state advance its national pride project. While successive patriotic mobilisation drives over the past eighteen years have largely shared the same aspirations, their focus has evolved, with increasing emphasis placed on military activities and pride in Russia's armed forces. Young people routinely engage in re-enactments of battles or enrol in military-style training.

Understanding the roots of Russia's patriotic mobilisation is important. It developed partly in response to Moscow's perception that following the end of the Cold War, the West humiliated Russia by encroaching upon its sphere of influence and demanding that it conform to a Western vision of global security. Mounting patriotic sentiment helps shape Russians' perceptions not only of the outside world, but also of the Kremlin's foreign policy. Pride in Russia's role in the defeat of Nazism during World War II has influenced the perception of the conflicts in which Moscow is engaged today, notably that in eastern Ukraine, and led to portrayals of those conflicts as continuations of a long Russian tradition of confronting fascism.

Indeed, state-directed efforts to instil patriotic sentiment come as Russia is increasingly assertive abroad, involved in military interventions in theatres near (Ukraine) and far (Syria). While the extent to which patriotic drives enable these interventions is open to debate, growing patriotism does appear to lower the costs at home of the Kremlin's foreign military entanglements. Veterans' and other organisations involved

in promoting patriotism in Russia have helped mobilise volunteers to fight in eastern Ukraine; the Kremlin's portrayals of the Western-backed government in Kyiv as a Nazi-like junta also appear to have helped motivate those signing up. Rising patriotic sentiment may also have helped neutralise or offset – at least temporarily – the political impact of coercive international measures such as sanctions.

Western powers can do little to reverse this trend. But they should continue to engage with as wide a sector of Russian society as possible, whether through cultural, educational or scientific exchanges. They also might seek to factor mounting patriotic sentiment into their policymaking, understand the deep sense of grievance from which it springs and attempt to communicate as best possible the objectives of policies like sanctions, even if such policies are likely to be misinterpreted no matter how well explained.

Swelling patriotic feeling might have implications beyond Russia's foreign policy. Patriotism tends to reinforce national cohesion, albeit often in the face of a common enemy. But nationalism, its ideological appendage, which is also on the rise, in part thanks to the Kremlin's patriotic drives and indulgence of far-right groups, could do precisely the opposite, creating social divides that would threaten Russia's ethnically diverse federation. The rise of nationalist movements opposed to the Kremlin, as well as violence by ethno-nationalist groups, suggest the government risks creating a phenomenon that will escape its control. As President Putin embarks on his fourth term in office, he ought to corral those forces lest growing nationalist pressure circumscribe the government's own policy options and even nudge the Kremlin in a more dangerous direction, whether at home or abroad.

Moscow/Brussels, 4 July 2018

Patriotic Mobilisation in Russia

I. Introduction

This report unpacks the phenomenon of patriotic mobilisation in Russia, both in its gradual phase from 2000 to the present, and its acute phase, which began with Vladimir Putin's return for a third presidential term in 2012.¹ It looks at how various players – both state and non-state – use a patriotic agenda to advance their aims. It also considers how official efforts interact, in some cases uneasily, with grassroots, civil society and activist initiatives, highlighting potential fault lines within Russian society. Finally, it examines the policy implications of these dynamics for Russia and its international interlocutors, both its neighbours and states farther afield. Russia certainly is not the only country whose government actively promotes national pride and the popular display thereof; many Western and other states do so as a matter of course. Still, the scale of Russia's effort, in terms of both ambition and implementation, makes it worthy of attention, while the close relationship between Russia's domestic developments and its foreign policy ventures lends it salience.

The report draws on analysis of official policies and on field work conducted largely in St. Petersburg and the surrounding Leningrad region. With a population of around five million, St. Petersburg is Russia's second largest metropolitan area. It is a strategically important city, site of the Leningrad Naval Base, the Western Military District and seven military high schools. Together, St. Petersburg and Leningrad region (home to another 1.8 million people) provide a strong and representative case study. Field work, mostly carried out in 2017, includes observations of public events and interviews with a wide array of Russian analysts and experts in St. Petersburg, Leningrad region and Russia as a whole. In-depth interviews with ordinary citizens involved in patriotic activities (including parents of schoolchildren, schoolteachers and representatives of political, social and civil society institutions), helped reveal how national pride is taught and influences Russian society. The report looks as well at patriotic mobilisation beyond Russia's borders, drawing on Crisis Group's research in Ukraine and the South Caucasus.

¹The report uses the term "mobilisation", which in Russian (*mobilizatsiya*) has a broader meaning than just preparing the military for an anticipated conflict. In Russian, mobilisation encompasses the whole society, not just the military sphere. It is about ensuring that the nation, with all its component parts, is ready to make sacrifices and face the challenge of war before the outbreak of hostilities.

II. Patriotic Mobilisation Policies

Since the late 1990s, Russia has seen a surge in national pride, manifested in stage-managed rallies and parades as well as in smaller-scale, bottom-up initiatives. While such feeling harkens back to Tsarist and Soviet times, the 21st-century upwelling has coincided with Russia's effort to reclaim what it considers its rightful prominent role on the world stage in the wake of the political upheaval and economic collapse of the 1990s.

Since the beginning of the 2000s the Russian government has elaborated a system of patriotic mobilisation involving virtually all state agencies from the federal down to the local level. Enshrined in legislation and backed by a series of federal programs, this policy, with an increasingly military emphasis, is embedded in the educational system. It enjoins public institutions and civil society networks to promote traditional values, celebrate past military victories and boost support for the government.

In 2011-2012, Russia was rocked by large demonstrations against the prospect of Vladimir Putin returning for a third term as president. Putin nonetheless won election, and once he assumed office, the Kremlin pivoted more directly toward patriotic values in an apparent bid to reinforce a sense of national identity as a means of bolstering support for the Kremlin and painting dissent as sedition. At home, this turn entailed a marked increase in anti-Western rhetoric, an overt show of support for the Russian Orthodox Church, and displays of reverence for episodes from Russian history, including Tsarist-era religious conservatism and the Soviet victory in World War II. The 9 May parade marking this victory became a bigger production each year after 2012 and involved a record 16,000 soldiers on the 70th anniversary in 2015. Abroad, mounting patriotism helped drum up support for Russia's annexation of Crimea and its involvement in eastern Ukraine.

The Kremlin's promotion of national pride was mirrored by a parallel evolution from below. Authorities have sought, with mixed success, to ride the tiger of grassroots nationalist and far-right sentiment that had been lurking for some time and, on occasion, turned on the government itself.

A. *Legislative and Institutional Framework*

From the onset of his first presidency in 2000, Putin has promoted patriotism as a core component of his message that Russia must recover its great-power status. To stress the importance of national pride, he has used speeches, declarations and televised annual phone-ins during which he responds directly to questions from the public. In his first presidential address to the Federal Assembly, he described patriotism as the "cultural traditions and common historical memory" that bind together "the unity of Russia".² In his 2012 address, he named "national and spiritual iden-

² Vladimir Putin, "Послание Президента Российской Федерации" ["Message by the president of the Russian Federation"], speech to the Federal Assembly, 8 July 2000, at <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/22401>.

tity” and “patriotism” as the nation’s “consolidating base”.³ In 2016, he singled out love of country as the only truly unifying idea.⁴

As this message morphed from slogan into ideology, the state increasingly lent it institutional heft. In 2001, the federal government adopted four successive five-year programs focused on patriotic education, which it defined as “a systematic and purposeful activity of government bodies and organisations to establish a high patriotic consciousness among citizens, a sense of loyalty to their Fatherland, readiness to fulfil civil duty and constitutional obligations to protect the interests of the Motherland”.⁵ Patriotic education, according to the official documents from each of the four programs, “is aimed at the formation and development of an individual who possesses the qualities of a citizen who is a patriot of the Motherland and who is able to successfully fulfil civil duties in peacetime and wartime”.⁶

The state has used this broad definition for various purposes over the past sixteen years, from seeking to forge a new identity, to promoting national and social unity, to glorifying military heroes. In 2012, one year into the third five-year program, it expanded on this definition, setting out in federal and regional legislation three components of patriotic education programs: military (teaching about historic battles and promoting readiness to defend the homeland); spiritual (imbuing pupils with moral uprightness, desire for healthy lifestyles and respect for the environment); and civic (imparting respect for the state and legal systems as well as Russian history and culture).⁷

³ Vladimir Putin, “Послание Президента Федеральному Собранию” [“Message by the president to the Federal Assembly”], speech to the Federal Assembly, 12 December 2012, at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17118>.

⁴ Georgii Peremitin, “Путин назвал единственно возможную для России национальную идею” [“Putin named the only possible national idea for Russia”], 3 February 2016, at www.rbc.ru/politics/03/02/2016/56b1f8a79a7947060162a5a7. See also Iskender Yasaveev, “Militarization of the ‘National Idea’: The New Interpretation of Patriotism by the Russian Authorities”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 207 (26 September 2017), pp. 12-14 at www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD_207.pdf.

⁵ The terms Motherland (*Rodina*) and Fatherland (*Otechestvo*) are often used interchangeably in Russian, but they have different connotations. *Rodina* evokes a sense of place and loyalty to home, while *Otechestvo* is more of a political construct.

⁶ “Государственная программа ‘патриотическое воспитание граждан Российской Федерации’” [“State program on Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation”] for 2001-2005, 16 February 2001, at www.ainros.ru/ssylki/patr_vos.htm; for 2006-2010, 11 July 2006 (amended 13 November 2006), at <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901941206>; for 2011-2015, 5 October 2010, at http://archives.ru/programs/patriot_2015.shtml; for 2016-2020, 30 December 2015, at <http://government.ru/media/files/8qqYUwwzHUxzVkJH1jsKAErrx2dE4q0ws.pdf>.

⁷ A federal law on patriotic education has been under discussion since the early 2000s; several drafts have been presented but not officially submitted to the State Duma. See, for example, “Проект Федерального Закона ‘О патриотическом воспитании граждан Российской Федерации’” [“The draft federal law ‘On Patriotic Education of the Citizens of the Russian Federation’”], Defenders of the Fatherland, 5 May 2013: <http://za-otechestvo.ru/proekt-fz-o-patrioticheskom-vospitanii-grazhdan-rossijskoj-federacii/>. At the start of 2017, the State Duma again took up discussion of the law on patriotic education. Maria Makutina and Vera Kholmogorova, “В Госдуме рассмотрят законопроект о патриотическом воспитании” [“A law on patriotic education is examined in the State Duma”], RBC, 4 April 2017. Many regions have adopted their own legislation. Statutes in St. Petersburg and Leningrad region define patriotic education as “the systematic and purpose-driven activi-

The exact priorities in each of the five-year programs have evolved. While the first program (2001-2005) identified Russian society as a whole as the target, the second (2006-2010) zeroed in on children and youth, paying special attention to schools. The third (2011-2015) most clearly reflected the idea of continuity with the Soviet experience, referencing the revival of late Soviet-era military sporting events and “traditional” forms of educational work. The fourth and current (2016-2020) program is the most elaborate and focuses on upgrading training for teachers and professors. Overall, federal financing for patriotic education has doubled in real terms since the first program, with the budget for the fourth reaching some 1.66 billion roubles (roughly \$28 million).⁸

Patriotic education is coordinated at the highest and lowest levels of government. In August 2000, Putin issued a decree establishing the Victory Committee, the main advisory agency on the subject.⁹ Headed by the president himself, this committee includes parliamentarians, envoys to Russia’s federal districts and the heads of federal security agencies and several civilian agencies, as well as civil society representatives, including members of veterans’ organisations and Russian Orthodox clergy.¹⁰ The fourth federal program required more than 30 federal agencies to create their own internal coordinating bodies.¹¹ In 2016, the government appointed the Federal Agency on Youth Affairs as the program’s lead executor, another indication of the emphasis on the younger generation. In turn, the agency set up a dedicated body, the Russian Centre for Civil and Patriotic Education of Children and Youth (or Russian Patriotic

ty” of government bodies, local governments and municipalities (and, in St. Petersburg, organisations and citizens) “to form citizens with a high patriotic consciousness [the Leningrad region law also includes spiritual and moral values], loyalty to the Motherland, a readiness to perform their civic duties and constitutional obligations to defend the Motherland”. The St. Petersburg law notes that patriotic education includes “military-patriotic and civil-patriotic education”. See “О патриотическом воспитании в Санкт-Петербурге” [“On Patriotic Education in St. Petersburg”], law of St. Petersburg, 18 July 2016 (amended on 14 April 2017), at <https://gov.spb.ru/law?print&nd=456009810>. See the Leningrad region law at “О патриотическом воспитании в Ленинградской области” [“On Patriotic Education in Leningrad Region”], law of the Leningrad region, 17 November 2015, at <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/537983371>.

⁸ Funding has doubled when adjusted for inflation. In addition, the president’s grants program for NGO-supported patriotic education grew by at least 580 million roubles (approximately \$9.7 million) from 2013 to 2016. Ekaterina Khodzhaeva and Irina Meyer, “Mobilizing Patriotism in Russia: Federal Programs of Patriotic Education”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 207 (26 September 2017), pp. 2-8, at www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD_207.pdf.

⁹ “Владимир Путин подписал указ о создании Российского организационного комитета ‘Победа’” [“Vladimir Putin signed decree on the creation of the Russian organising committee ‘Victory’”], press release, president of Russia, 7 August 2000, at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/38875>.

¹⁰ These agencies include the National Guard, the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Defence, and the Federal Security Service, and civilian administrations such as the Ministries of Education and Science, Justice, Culture, Communications and Media, and Foreign Affairs. See the list of Victory Committee members at “Состав участников оргкомитета” [“The composition of the organising committee”], president of Russia, 10 March 2000, at <http://kremlin.ru/structure/committees>.

¹¹ See the Patriotic Education Program for 2016-2020 at <http://government.ru/docs/21341>.

Centre), through which all federal patriotic education money was to be channelled, to rebrand the agenda and launch new initiatives.¹²

All 80 of Russia's regions have created bodies similar to the Victory Committee. Beyond implementing federal projects, many regional governments develop their own activities.¹³ The average total annual budget of regional programs is estimated at 900 million roubles (approximately \$15 million), 2.6 times its federal equivalent.¹⁴ In Leningrad region, the effort is run through two institutions: the Centre for Military-Patriotic Education and Preparation of Citizens (Youth) for Military Service (also called Patriot) and the Molodyezhniy Centre for Recreational, Health and Training Programs (Youth).¹⁵ Patriot organises and helps pay for military-patriotic activities, coordinating clubs, veterans' groups and historical re-enactment clubs. District and local authorities also conduct patriotic education through schools and youth policy departments. With such broad definitions of the mandate, lower-level officials have great discretion in setting goals and measuring effectiveness.¹⁶

Since 2012 and Putin's return for a third term, ancillary institutions bolster the patriotic education transmitted in schools and youth programs. In October that year, the president decreed the creation of the Directorate for Social Projects, an agency charged with "strengthen[ing] the spiritual and moral foundations of Russian socie-

¹² Федеральное агентство по делам молодежи (Росмолодежь) ["Federal Agency for Youth Affairs"] (<https://fadm.gov.ru/>). "Федеральное государственное бюджетное учреждение 'Российский центр гражданского и патриотического воспитания детей и молодежи'" ["Federal State Budgetary Institution, Russian Centre for Civil and Patriotic Education of Children and Youth (Russian Patriotic Centre)"] (<http://роспатриотцентр.рф>). Other federal agencies involved in patriotic education receive their own money from the federal budget.

¹³ St. Petersburg includes patriotic education in a program for the "establishment of public harmony", managed by the Committee on Youth Policy and Interaction with NGOs. In Leningrad region, it fits within a program for "sustainable development", managed by the Committee on Local Government, Inter-ethnic and Inter-faith Relations. "Государственная программа Санкт-Петербурга 'Создание условий для обеспечения общественного согласия в Санкт-Петербурге'" ["State program of St. Petersburg on the 'Creation of Conditions for Public Consent in St. Petersburg'"], June 2014, at <http://gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/kpmp/gosudarstvennaya-programma-sankt-peterburga-sozdanie-usloviy-dlya-obes>. "Государственная программа Ленинградской области 'Устойчивое общественное развитие в Ленинградской области'" ["State program of the Leningrad region on 'Sustainable Development in the Leningrad Region'"], November 2013, at <http://msu.lenobl.ru/programm/gosprogramma>. Sub-programs are funded annually at 76-97 million roubles (\$1.3-1.6 million) in St. Petersburg, and 27-36 million roubles (\$0.5-0.6 million) in Leningrad region. St. Petersburg's program mentions primarily executive authorities at the district and municipal level, disbursing money to local administrations.

¹⁴ "Патриотизм обходится регионам России в 900 млн руб в год" ["Patriotism costs the Russian regions 900 million roubles annually"], BBC, 11 April 2017.

¹⁵ See the information on "Государственное бюджетное учреждение Ленинградской области 'Центр военно-патриотического воспитания и подготовки граждан (молодежи) к военной службе 'Патриот'" ["State budgetary institution of the Leningrad region 'Centre for Military-Patriotic Education and Preparation of Citizens (Youth) for Military Service 'Patriot'"], at <http://youth.lenobl.ru/about/gup/patriot> and <http://youth.lenobl.ru/about/gup/4>.

¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, former regional official involved in patriotic education, Leningrad region, February 2017. The first federal program did not provide metrics of success in any detail. The second proposed a system of indicators (such as the level of patriotism among citizens) to be measured mainly by sociological surveys. All indicators in the third federal program were quantitative. In 2011-2015, about 3 million roubles (\$50,000) was spent on monitoring.

ty, improving the patriotic education of young people, developing and implementing public projects in this sphere”.¹⁷ Two months later he established the Military Historical Society, an umbrella association that brings together professional historians, serving officers and local clubs (including historical re-enactors), tasking it with “stay [ing] in touch with our traditions and roots” and “defend[ing] our history”.¹⁸

Over the course of the almost two decades since the present state-sponsored patriotic education programs began, the government has placed ever greater emphasis in those programs on their military aspects. According to experts, roughly 23 per cent of relevant regional programs now promote military service.¹⁹ Analysis suggests that military training takes up 15 per cent of federal programming on patriotic education, a far greater proportion than in other countries with similar initiatives.²⁰ This trend has gone hand in hand with more attention to external threats; the fourth program exhorts educators to mould young people for “defence of the Fatherland” and “military duty in peacetime and wartime”.²¹

This military focus, culminating in the establishment of the Military Historical Society, taps the reserve of veneration of past martial glories. Recent years have seen a surge in re-enactments of World War II battles, actively encouraged by federal and regional authorities.²² (The military commander who led pro-Russian separatists in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Igor Strelkov, was once an avid re-enactor.²³) In many ways, the re-enactments draw on Soviet precedent, as the third patriotic education program (2011-2015) explicitly attests, noting that “military sports contests and other events have resumed, aiming at military-patriotic education of youth”.²⁴

¹⁷ Official presidential decree, “Presidential Social Projects Directorate Established”, 20 October 2012, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16692>.

¹⁸ Vladimir Putin, “Greetings to the founding congress of the Russian Military Historical Society”, 14 March 2013, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/48111>.

¹⁹ “Патриотизм обходится регионам России в 900 млн руб в год” [“Patriotism costs the Russian regions 900 million roubles annually”], BBC, 11 April 2017.

²⁰ Based on the Russian Patriotic Education Program, 2016-2020. The proportion of focus on the military in patriotic education in China was 2.9 per cent and in Singapore 0.48 per cent (based on the Chinese “Action Plan for Patriotic Education: Action Plan for the Development of Civic Morality, Some Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Development of Ideology and Morality among Minors”; and Singapore’s “Launch of National Education Preparing Students for a Global Future – Next Phase of National Education: Strengthening Heartware and Rootedness to Singapore”). See A. Sanina, “Патриотизм и патриотическое воспитание в современной России” [“Patriotism and Patriotic Education in Contemporary Russia”], *Социологические исследования [Sociological Research]* no. 5 (2016), p. 48, at http://socis.isras.ru/files/File/2016/2016_5/44_53_Sanina.pdf.

²¹ Yasaveev, “Militarization of the ‘National Idea’”, op. cit. Yasaveev notes that labour was previously considered an important way to display patriotism but now is not.

²² Crisis Group observations, Russia, 27-28 May 2017.

²³ “Стрелков о реконструкторах” [“Strelkov on re-enactors”], Rusnext.ru, 23 December 2015.

²⁴ “Постановление о государственной программе ‘Патриотическое воспитание граждан Российской Федерации на 2011-2015 годы’” [“Decree on the state program ‘Patriotic Upbringing of Russian Citizens in 2011-2015’”], Russian Federation legal information website, at <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102141777&intelsearch=%CF%EE%F1%F2%EO%ED%EE%E2%EB%E5%ED%E8%E5+%EE%F2+05.10.2010+%B9795>.

B. *Education as an Instrument*

Since the second federal program was launched in the mid-2000s, virtually all state educational institutions – from kindergartens to universities – teach at least some elements of the military patriotic mobilisation agenda, with the aim of shaping a “spiritual and moral” patriotism.²⁵ Activities range from thematic lessons to local history projects and battlefield excursions.²⁶

Extracurricular activities also revolve around the military theme. Universities, schools and even kindergartens in some regions have set up clubs that are often linked to local veterans’ groups, teach martial arts and basic military training (in some cases, including handling of Kalashnikov rifles), and participate in World War II re-enactments.²⁷ Many organise Soviet-style parades, military song competitions and concerts for veterans.²⁸ Regional and district administrations also enlist schools to hold public events (see section III.A), in some instances giving them no choice.²⁹

²⁵ “Постановление о государственной программе ‘Патриотическое воспитание граждан Российской Федерации на 2006-2010 годы’” [“Decree on the state program ‘Patriotic Upbringing of Russian Citizens for 2006-2010’”], Russian Federation legal information website, at <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102098946&intelsearch=1233+03.11.1994>. Lesson plans appear to draw on ministry templates. See a typical calendar at <http://xn--105-5cdozfc7ak5r.xn--p1ai/tradition.php>.

²⁶ Iskender Yasaveev notes that state youth policy prioritises training young people to defend the country. See Yasaveev, “Militarization of the ‘National Idea’”, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Official statistics show that 21 military-patriotic clubs affiliated with schools and universities provide opportunities outside class for students. For example, the Frunzenski youth centre, with branches in the Frunzenski district of St. Petersburg, opened its doors for a cadet brigade (www.allinform.ru/go_out.php?id=4091392), whose members take part in different militarised actions and competitions. The Rezerv club in Cherepovets, Vologda region, east of Leningrad region, operates in a kindergarten and lists its main goal as training for the army reserve. Valentina Bushmanova, “В Череповце открыли первый в Вологодской области военно-патриотический клуб на базе детского сада” [“First military-patriotic club on the basis of kindergarten was opened in Cherepovets of Vologodsk province”], [Cherinfo.ru](https://cherinfo.ru/news/86860-v-cerepovce-otkryli-pervyj-v-vologodskoj-oblasti-voenno-patrioticeskij-klub-na-baze-detskogo-sada), 29 March 2017, at <https://cherinfo.ru/news/86860-v-cerepovce-otkryli-pervyj-v-vologodskoj-oblasti-voenno-patrioticeskij-klub-na-baze-detskogo-sada>.

²⁸ Parades of veterans are a typical form of patriotic education in kindergartens, alongside songs and crafts. See these pictures from a kindergarten in St. Petersburg’s Kolpino district, at http://kolpin-gdoy46.narod.ru/photo/quot_70_letiju_so_dnja_velikoj_pobedy_quot_posvjashaetsja/35. A well-known example occurred in the south-western city of Saratov in May 2017: “Пятилетних детей вывели на военный парад” [“Five-year-old children were brought to a military parade”], video, YouTube, 5 May 2017, at www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=YiBWpTxzJ4Y&app=desktop. Nursery school teachers in St. Petersburg told Crisis Group there were more such incidents.

²⁹ Crisis Group observations, April-May 2017. Mobilisation of schoolchildren is evident in numerous postings on school websites, eg, an official letter about a YouTube video created with the support of St. Petersburg authorities, at http://sch692StPetersburg.ru/system/redactor_assets/documents/566/.PDF. St. Petersburg and Leningrad regional authorities, with the aid of veterans’ groups, organise the Zarnitsa game, which includes survival skills, the Ready for Labour and Defence test (a Soviet legacy), by which students can earn additional points on university entrance exams, and combat and reconnaissance training. See, for example, http://patriotcenter.StPetersburg.ru/index.php_page=zarnitsa-shkola-bezopasnosti. For an example of combat training, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJ4VtZQ9Us.

In 2016 the Ministry of Defence founded the Young Army project, which aims to stimulate interest in Russian history and celebrate its military heroes.³⁰ Financed through a government-sponsored NGO, the Voluntary Society for Assisting the Army, Air Force and Navy, as well as by state banks, it has grown rapidly. By December 2017, it already boasted some 170,000 members countrywide.³¹ It is affiliated with the Russian Movement of Schoolchildren, also coordinated by the Federal Agency on Youth Affairs, which is present in every Russian school.

It is difficult to assess how much these activities influence the worldview of younger generations. Teachers report that what appeals to parents is the idea of instilling discipline in their children rather than exposing them to a military regimen.³² Likewise, parents and observers suggest that children do not necessarily relate to the activities' military themes, but rather see the experiences as adventures.³³

But even if the military themes do not resonate with many children, the growing emphasis on patriotic education in schools, and in particular its militaristic orientation, has drawn criticism. Teachers and parents debate whether it is appropriate for young children to dress in military uniforms.³⁴ Some fear the programs serve to sanitise or glorify war.

The degree to which schools focus on patriotic education ranges from considerable to scant. Schools' participation in public events also varies, as some avoid it while others either choose to take part or are forced to do so by local authorities.³⁵ Finally, a number of teachers seek indirect ways to counter what they perceive as the overly militaristic orientation of patriotic education. One said she digressed from the curriculum to tell her students about the Holocaust, Soviet-era political repression and the anti-retreat units (army units in the rear ordered to shoot deserters from the front) in World War II, in order to dull the impact of school-organised parades and military-patriotic song contests.³⁶ Likewise, a social studies teacher required to lecture – on the first anniversary of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea – about how the consti-

³⁰ Sergey Sukhankin, "Russia's 'Youth Army': Sovietization, Militarization or Radicalization?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 13, no. 180, 9 November 2016, at <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-youth-army-sovietization-militarization-radicalization>.

³¹ "В октябре юнармейцев Северо-Западного региона стало больше" ["In October, the number of members of the Young Army project grew in the north-west region"], Pandoraopen.ru, 3 November 2017, at <https://pandoraopen.ru/2017-11-03/v-oktyabre-yunarmejcev-severo-zapadnogo-regiona-stalo-bolshe/>; VTB bank provided 150 million roubles (approximately \$2.5 million). "Банк ВТБ выделил патриотическому движению «Юнармия» 150 млн рублей" ["VTB bank allocated 150 million roubles to the patriotic movement Yuarmiya"], *Obshaya Gazeta*, 6 September 2017.

³² Crisis Group interviews, schoolteachers, St. Petersburg, May-June 2017.

³³ See the 2013 photo projects by A. Vonogradov and Sarah Bresene, at www.lensculture.com/articles/sarah-blesener-toy-soldiers-russia-s-patriotic-education.

³⁴ Almost every parent and teacher interviewed by Crisis Group between January and June 2017 mentioned that wearing of military uniforms has become popular since 2015. See also Yulia Dudkina, "Пока ты в школе, свобода слова прекращается" ["Freedom of speech stops while you are in school"], *Meduza*, 11 April 2017.

³⁵ Teachers from Petrograd, Kirovski, Frunzenski and Krasnoselsky districts mentioned the district administration's 2015 mobilisation of their schools in Immortal Regiment (see p. 15). Crisis Group interviews, February-June 2017.

³⁶ Crisis Group interview, schoolteacher, spring 2017.

tution allows “incorporation” of territory focused on technical and legal aspects, avoiding any normative assessment – celebration or condemnation – of the act itself.³⁷

C. *Civil Society Agents of Patriotic Mobilisation*

Civil society organisations, particularly veterans’ groups, are heavily involved in implementing federal and regional patriotic education programs. Examples include the Russian Military Historical Society, the Russian Fleet Support Fund and military Cossack societies.³⁸

Veterans’ groups of varying size are active throughout the country. Their work reflects both top-down and bottom-up initiatives.³⁹ They occupy a unique position in Russian civil society given their status as well as their robust participation in various public spheres, with World War II veterans receiving more attention as they age. Some take members only from certain military units; others are open to all. Security agencies can enrol employees, but in some cases employees can opt out – though their ability to do so varies by agency among the FSB, military or police.⁴⁰ Enjoying close ties to the military, the largest such groups wield great influence in executive and legislative bodies. They also are represented in various state councils, at the federal and local levels.

Veterans’ groups play a key role in patriotic mobilisation and education.⁴¹ In this regard, there is a two-way relationship with the state: in some cases the government directs activities, while in other cases it encourages initiative from below with finan-

³⁷ Crisis Group interview, schoolteacher, April 2017.

³⁸ In 2013, an amendment to the law “on non-profit organisations” recognised socially oriented NGOs that carry out patriotic education. This status provides the NGOs with access to financial and other support from state budgets at all levels. “Федеральный закон о внесении изменения в статью 31-1 Федерального закона ‘О некоммерческих организациях’” [“Federal Law on Making Amendments to Article 31-1 of the Federal Law about Non-Profit Organisations”], Russian Federation legal information website, at http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&link_id=3&nd=102166357&intelsearch.

³⁹ In the 1960s, the state fostered the establishment, under regional administrations, of veterans’ councils representing various groups. New groups have continued to appear since the late 1980s. For an overview of veterans’ movements in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, see Aleksandr V. Sheretin, “Этапы становления общественных организаций военных ветеранов Российской Федерации” [“Stages of Veteran NGO Formation in Russian Federation”], *Middle Russian Herald of Social Sciences*, no. 2 (2010), pp. 187-192. The state-supported Battle Brotherhood (Боевое братство) brings together over 90,000 local organisations with 400 regional branches and 60 inter-regional associations. Elena Chebankova, *Civil Society in Putin’s Russia* (Abingdon, 2013), p. 116.

⁴⁰ For instance, the Battle Brotherhood (Боевое братство) welcomes all who share the ideas of the organisation’s charter. In St. Petersburg, branch leader Igor V. Vysotsky prompted representatives of regional and local parliaments, district administration officials, heads of schools and clinics, and the managers of law enforcement agency offices (the police, prosecutor’s office and Investigation Committee) to become members. Even members of other veterans’ organisations were prompted to become members. Crisis Group interview, municipal deputy in St. Petersburg’s Nevsky district, May 2017.

⁴¹ For instance, B. D. Gromov, head of the Battle Brotherhood, is a deputy in the State Duma, and Vysotsky is a deputy in St. Petersburg’s regional parliament. This reach makes veterans’ groups “brokers” between politicians and constituents. Meri Kulmala and Anna Tarasenko, “Interest Representation and Social Policy Making: Russian Veterans’ Organisations as Brokers between the State and Society”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 68, no. 1 (2016), pp. 138-163.

cial rewards. In St. Petersburg, veterans' group members run youth clubs that engage in physical and martial arts training, as well as re-enact battles.⁴² In the city's Krasnoselsky district, members of veterans' organisations head a "victory club" established by the Ligovo youth centre, which participates in re-enactments, excavates battlefields and holds exhibitions.⁴³ Veterans' groups also organise youth camps. The state clearly values these endeavours as a way of nurturing patriotic sentiment among young people. Veterans' success in recruiting children to take part in these events, particularly among the rural poor, and in promoting the army and improving its image is well documented.⁴⁴ Veterans' organisations also develop their own activities, which buttress the Kremlin's vision and for which they can secure state funding.⁴⁵

Some of these groups have recruited Russian citizens to fight in eastern Ukraine as volunteers.⁴⁶ Representatives of veterans' groups were seen at a number of Moscow rallies for Donbas in 2014, raising funds for separatist fighters and civilians affected by the conflict – as well as for volunteers going to their aid.⁴⁷ In the autumn of 2014, several veterans' organisations issued a joint statement boasting of their members' enthusiasm for fighting alongside the separatists.⁴⁸ An investigation by *Novaya Gazeta* highlighted the role of Cossack groups in the recruitment for the Donbas conflict.⁴⁹ One veteran described the volunteers he helped recruit – particularly those aged 40 to 60 who grew up in the Soviet Union – as having been inspired by Russian state TV's portrayal of the Kyiv government that assumed power after the Maidan uprising as similar to the Nazis.⁵⁰

⁴² See a television review of some of the clubs at: "Патриотические клубы Петербурга" ["Patriotic clubs of St. Petersburg"], *Gorod Plus*, 11 June 2014.

⁴³ "Военно-историческая выставка в военной академии материально-технического обеспечения" ["Military-historical exhibition at the military academy for logistics"], at <http://ligovospb.ru/index.php?id=1272>.

⁴⁴ Anne Le Huérou, "Where Does the Motherland Begin? Private and Public Dimensions of Contemporary Russian Patriotism in Schools and Youth Organisations: A View from the Field", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 67, no. 1 (2015), p. 44.

⁴⁵ Allegations have surfaced of some organisations misusing public funds. Sergei Satanovskii, "Война и тир" ["War and the shooting range"], *Novaya Gazeta*, 27 June 2016.

⁴⁶ One military-patriotic club, Reserv in St. Petersburg's Vyborg district, provided sports and military training (see its website "Центр тактической и огневой подготовки 'Партизан'" ["Centre for tactical and fire training 'Partisans'"], at www.ruspartizan.com/--c1gr2) organised by veterans of law enforcement agencies. According to the centre, some of the trainees served as volunteers in Donbas. See one volunteer's story: Tatiana Voltskaia, "Ты записался в добровольцы?" ["Did you join as a volunteer?"], *Radio Svoboda*, 31 January 2015.

⁴⁷ Observations made by a future Crisis Group member, summer 2014. See also Anna Arutunyan, "Ukrainian rebels set up recruiting office in Moscow", *USA Today*, 7 August 2014.

⁴⁸ Nikita Vasilyev, "Veteran organisations support Russian volunteers in Donbas", *TV Tsentr*, 3 September 2014.

⁴⁹ Elena Kostiuhenko, "Армия и добровольцы" ["Army and volunteers"], *Novaya Gazeta*, 3 September 2014.

⁵⁰ Пиа Каза, "Глава фонда свердловских ветеранов спецназа: 'Я помогаю добровольцам отправиться воевать на Украину'" ["Head of the Sverdlovsk Fund of Spetsnaz veterans: 'I help volunteers go fight in Ukraine'"], *Ekaterinburg Online*, 24 December 2014, at www.e1.ru/news/spool/news_id-416966.html.

III. The Politics of Patriotism: How State and Grassroots Efforts Interact

Many other types of civil society organisations are engaged in mobilising the public, often with federal funding. They include the Russian Orthodox Church, Cossack associations and “people’s museums” (small installations run by history buffs that are quite common in Russia). Some of these groups parrot the Kremlin’s brand of patriotic discourse – but not all. In some instances, civil society groups offer competing definitions of love of country, while some nationalist groups criticise the Kremlin and have emerged as a potent opposition force.

A. *Public Events and Historical Memory*

State-organised public events illustrate the contest over historical memory and the values it is meant to inculcate. Tightly controlled, with mandatory participation of government employees, these events tend to stress Russia’s triumphs on the battlefield.⁵¹ These events also give politicians and business owners a chance to display their patriotic credentials.⁵²

The largest celebrations occur on 9 May, Victory Day, marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. Instituted as a national holiday in the mid-1960s, Victory Day was a low-key event in the Soviet era.⁵³ Today, it has become a mass demonstration of national pride, the culmination of a series of battle re-enactments and related activities.⁵⁴

According to the Levada Center, 76 per cent of Russians planned to celebrate Victory Day in 2017, the highest number since 1995, when the government started staging military parades that have become an annual tradition in cities across the country.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Most celebrations are organised by the state, with the help of veterans’ groups, historical societies and local museums. Patriotic celebrations include Defenders of the Fatherland Day (23 February), Russia Day (12 June), Memorial Day (22 June), National Unity Day (4 November) and Slavic Writing and Culture Day (24 May). In all, there are seventeen holidays celebrating Russia’s military glory and at least fifteen holidays for the branches of the armed forces. Federal Law “On Days of Military Glory and Memory Days of Russia” (www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_5978) lists the dates and describes how they should be commemorated. State employees and schoolchildren get some of these days off.

⁵² Igor V. Vysotsky, the Battle Brotherhood regional leader and assemblyman, helps organise the Nevsky district’s parade and concert in St. Petersburg. Vysotsky’s name figures prominently on posters congratulating local residents on Victory Day; he also awards prizes to schoolchildren for the best essay on World War II. Crisis Group field observations.

⁵³ Before 1995, there were only three major parades, in 1965, 1985 and 1990. “День Победы: история военных парадов” [“Victory Day: The history of military parades”], TASS, 8 May 2015.

⁵⁴ For example, roughly 100,000 people attended St. Petersburg’s second annual Battle Steel festival on 1-8 May 2017. Visitors could ride armoured vehicles, sample soldiers’ rations, learn how to shoot and assemble weapons, witness a staged World War II scenario, and buy replica pistols and other military souvenirs. There were re-enactments of battles during the civil war, World War II and the Afghan war, as well as a hostage-taking scenario representing the contemporary era. Crisis Group observations, St. Petersburg, May 2017. See “Боевая сталь. Весна победы” [“Battle Steel: Spring of victory”], at <https://vk.com/tankfestival>.

⁵⁵ “Празднование дня Победы” [“Celebration of Victory Day”], press release, Levada Center, 5 May 2017, at www.levada.ru/2017/05/05/deklaratsii-o-dohodah-chinovnikov/.

On Victory Day, in St. Petersburg, tanks and soldiers rumble down the main street, as warplanes zoom overhead and warships steam through the harbour.

The parade is followed by concerts, a veterans' procession and a mass march known as Immortal Regiment. Immortal Regiment began in 2007 as a grassroots initiative, but gradually the government has appropriated it, requiring state employees – including schoolteachers and professors – to join.⁵⁶ It is the largest such march in Russia, bringing ordinary citizens together as “comrades in arms”. In 2018, the march attracted 10.4 million across the country, with over one million marching in Moscow alone.⁵⁷ Many marchers carry portraits of relatives who fought in the war. Spectators dress their children in military garb and photograph them in front of tanks and artillery pieces.⁵⁸

Both the militarisation and the state appropriation of Victory Day are criticised by those who feel that the occasion ought to be one of mourning war dead rather than mere festivity.⁵⁹ These competing visions play out in the ways in which St. Petersburg and Leningrad region mark the 1941-1944 siege of Leningrad, in which over a million civilians died. In 2017, the speaker of the St. Petersburg assembly required deputies to wear orange-and-black ribbons to commemorate the World War II victory.⁶⁰ The orange-and-black ribbon has also been appropriated by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, as part of the effort to brand the post-coup government in Kyiv as a fascist foe akin to Nazi Germany. The traditional colours of commemorating the defence of Leningrad are olive (for victory) and green (for life).⁶¹

⁵⁶ Activists in the Siberian city of Tyumen invented Immortal Regiment in 2007 and then the practice spread elsewhere. In 2013, it turned into a mass event, and since 2015 (the 70th anniversary of the World War II victory) it has become one of the most popular public events in Russia, organised in almost every city. “История Бессмертного полка России” [“History of the Immortal Regiment”], at <https://polkrf.ru/about/>. During the 2017 march, Crisis Group observed posters of World War II heroes being distributed prior to the parade and collected in its wake. See also “Казанским студентам раздавали портреты для шествия ‘Бессмертный полк’” [“Kazan students distributed portraits for the ‘Immortal Regiment’ march”], Radio Svoboda, 9 May 2017.

⁵⁷ “В акции «Бессмертный полк» в городах РФ приняли участие 10,4 млн человек” [“10.4 million people took part in the Immortal Regiment march in Russian cities”], *Argumenty i Fakty*, 9 May 2018.

⁵⁸ One resident described Immortal Regiment as “our Russian version of All Hallows’ Day”. Crisis Group interview, St. Petersburg, May 2017. Many marchers told Crisis Group they participate every year, and prepare their children by watching movies about the war and talking about relatives involved. Alexandra Arkhipova et al., “Война как праздник, праздник как война: перформативная коммеморация дня победы” [“War as Festival, Festival as War: Performative Commemoration of Victory Day”], *Antropologicheskij Forum*, no. 33 (2017), pp. 84-122. In 2016, researchers noted a trend of parents bringing babies in military uniforms, in cribs styled as tanks.

⁵⁹ See also Iskander Yasaveev, “The function of victory: ‘Can we repeat it’ or the commemoration of millions of casualties?”, Radio Svoboda, 15 May 2017; “Игра в Победу [18+]” [“The Victory game (18+)”], Корпорация Гениев [Corporation Geniuses], 7 May 2017, at <https://zhartun.me/2017/05/pobeda.html>.

⁶⁰ The orange-and-black striped ribbon became a very important symbol during the 2005 celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the World War II victory. People who identify as Russian patriots wear it to public events and affix it to their cars. See Galina Artemenko, “Блокада – наше общее горе, наша общая память” [“The siege – our common grief, our common memory”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 28 November 2016.

⁶¹ “И мы никогда не забудем с тобой” [“And we will never forget you”], Pravda, 3 February 2014.

B. *Grassroots Initiatives and Critical Patriotism*

A great deal of patriotic mobilisation proceeds independent of the state and at times reflects rejection of the official historical narrative. Activists are sometimes repelled by clumsy or overly bureaucratic imposition of the official version. One such grassroots initiative is the “people’s museums” that often collect war memorabilia and enjoy links to local schools.⁶²

Relations between official and unofficial mobilisation efforts are complex. Ordinary citizens can have a strong interest in promoting their own narrative of Nazi Germany’s defeat. Research on “critical patriotism” has found that many citizens feel deep love of country while, at the same time, disdaining political elites who co-opt this sentiment for their own purposes.⁶³

A case in point is the museum at Fort Krasnaya Gorka, located on the Baltic coast between St. Petersburg and Sosnovyi Bor. This museum, which honours local veterans of the Great Patriotic War and attracts 500 school visits each year, showcases cannons, rifles, uniforms and other artefacts.⁶⁴ In September 2016, museum managers clashed with regional officials who sought to take its B13 naval cannon for use in a battle re-enactment. Museum volunteers formed a human ring and dug a trench around the gun to prevent it from being carried away. The museum is determined to keep its autonomy and resists pressure to enter into such arrangements with local authorities.⁶⁵

The state’s militarisation of national pride can also invigorate peace activists. On 9 May 2017, for instance, the Conscientious Objection to Military Service movement invited St. Petersburg residents to join a procession through the city rather than attend the Battle Steel festival.⁶⁶

C. *Patriotic and Nationalist Groups*

One side effect of top-down patriotic mobilisation is the proliferation of ultra-conservative Russian nationalist groups that operate outside of state control and are willing to use violence. These movements simultaneously boost and undercut the Kremlin’s efforts.

Dissident far-right groups have been a prominent feature of the Russian political landscape since the early 1990s. These disparate groups espouse a range of ideologies,

⁶² See, for example, the “Народный музей ‘дети и дошкольные работники осаждённого Ленинграда’” [“National Museum of ‘Children and Teachers of Blockaded Leningrad’”], St. Petersburg State Budgetary Institution for Professional Education: Pedagogical College No. 8 (<http://pedagog8.ru/college/museum>).

⁶³ C. Clement, “Patriotism as a channel of politicisation”, presentation of study of patriotic attitudes in six cities (including St. Petersburg), St. Petersburg, 10 April 2017.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, A. I. Senotrusov, museum head, April 2017.

⁶⁵ “В Форте Красная Горка идёт борьба за корабельную пушку” [“In the Fort Krasnaya Gorka people fight about a naval cannon”], Leningrad Region Broadcaster, 5 September 2016. “Combat brotherhood and military democracy are the basic principles of management here. No one orders anyone around. Everyone is working for a common cause”. Crisis Group interview, A. I. Senotrusov, museum head, April 2017.

⁶⁶ “Экскурсия ‘Мирная прогулка по военной столице’” [“Guided tour ‘peaceful walk through the military capital’”], at https://vk.com/wall-145227079_22?hash=5e5f263d728adc276b.

from conventional support for strengthening the state to virulent ethno-nationalism and xenophobia, which overlap with the state's growing emphasis on patriotism. This focus on national and ethnic pride distinguishes such groups from the liberal opposition, which has traditionally leaned westward, or at least did during President Putin's first two terms. The far right's patriotic rhetoric taps into both nostalgia for Soviet-era ideas of self-sacrifice and discontent with the government's own perceived tilt toward the West. Such sentiment also appears to be evident in parts of the armed forces and security services, though it is mostly kept under wraps and its extent is difficult to assess.⁶⁷

The chief threat presented by these groups lays in their potential to spark racial and ethnic unrest. A spate of such riots, typically triggered by an attack on an ethnic Russian by a migrant or a member of Russia's ethnic minorities, took place in the mid-2000s, notably in the Karelian town of Kondopoga. In 2010, the authorities were caught unaware by an anti-immigrant demonstration of up to 15,000 people, including skinheads, football hooligans and members of various nationalist groups, just steps away from the Kremlin. The demonstration prompted a crackdown on the far right.

But the Kremlin also saw an opportunity in these nationalist groups. It tried to co-opt them into mainstream politics, such as with the short-lived Rodina party created in 2003. It also sought to enlist fringe nationalist movements in its own projects, as in 2005, when Kremlin ideologue Vladislav Surkov helped the nationalist Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) organise what would become the yearly Russian March. Co-optation was reversible: when DPNI sought to join forces with the hard-line Slavyansky Soyuz, as in the 2010 demonstration, the Kremlin cast it aside.⁶⁸

When the Kremlin's increased its emphasis on patriotic mobilisation after 2012, the authorities again turned to nationalists for support. Lawmakers such as Yevgeny Fedorov, who has been behind some of the more conservative recent legislation coming out of the State Duma, spoke in terms that resonated with such groups, calling liberal elements in the government, media and society "fifth columnists".⁶⁹ For a period in 2014, particularly with regard to Russia's forays into its near abroad, the government's interests aligned with those of nationalist groups, which adapted their message to support government policy.

⁶⁷ Officers in several agencies frequently refer to this sentiment in conversations with Crisis Group. One illustration is the case of a former military intelligence officer, Vladimir Kvachkov. Kvachkov has promoted nationalist and anti-Semitic views in his authored works published after his retirement in 1998. In 2005, he was charged, and later acquitted, of an assassination attempt on liberal Russian official Anatoly Chubais. In 2009 he founded a far-right People's Militia that Russian authorities declared a terrorist organisation; four years later he was jailed for thirteen years on charges of plotting to overthrow the government, allegations he denied. The sentence was later reduced to eight years. In 2017, he was found guilty of inciting hatred, due to an anti-Semitic video recorded in his jail cell on his mobile phone and sent to supporters outside. "Верховный суд подтвердил приговор Квачкову за разжигание розни" ["Supreme Court of Russia upholds sentence of Kvachkov for inciting hatred"], Interfax, 28 December 2017.

⁶⁸ This relationship has been documented based mainly on interviews with members of nationalist groups between 2006 and 2011. See Anna Arutunyan, "Playing cat and mouse with Russia's nationalists", *The Moscow News*, 13 January 2011. See also Mark Galeotti and Anna Arutunyan, "Russian nationalists: Putin's critical children", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 2017, at <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Russias-Nationalists-Putins-Critical-Children.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Video interview from official site, at www.eafedorov.ru/node2000.html.

The Kremlin toyed with the idea of “Novorossia”, for example, a term from Russian imperial history referring to regions bordering the Black Sea. Separatists in eastern Ukraine had adopted this notion to win friends among nationalists in Russia. In early 2014, both Putin and presenters on state television used the term to refer to the breakaway region. The nationalist backing Putin received helped generate support for the annexation of Crimea and mobilise volunteers to fight alongside Ukrainian separatists.⁷⁰ State financial support for patriotic groups that themselves sent aid or volunteers to eastern Ukraine has been cited in a number of Crisis Group interviews.⁷¹

As the government reoriented its policy in Ukraine, however, it was clear that the alliance with such groups had been a marriage of convenience. The Kremlin dropped its talk of Novorossia, straining the allegiance of nationalists to the state. Igor Strelkov, a former FSB officer who commanded separatist fighters, was recalled to Russia in the summer of 2014 on orders from Moscow. He made no secret of his falling-out with Surkov, the Kremlin’s point man cultivating the separatists. Described by an associate as a staunch patriot, Strelkov was said to have removed a portrait of Putin from above his desk a year after returning from Ukraine.⁷² He founded an opposition group called the All-Russian Nationalist Movement, fusing imperial aspirations with calls for democracy and rule of law at home.

The genie was out of the bottle, however. By tacitly blessing such groups, the authorities arguably paved the way for more activism and protest – sometimes violent – on the part of fringe elements. Such elements have disrupted gatherings of liberals and opposition politicians, for instance, including some physical attacks.⁷³ To impose their version of history and public morality, they have harassed museums offering dispassionate perspectives on World War II, reportedly forcing them to remove from exhibits text they found objectionable.⁷⁴ In 2016, nationalist groups attacked an annual event organised by Memorial – an NGO dedicated to history and civil rights – throwing eggs and green antiseptic liquid at participants and asserting that Russia “doesn’t need an alternative history”.⁷⁵ The police did little to stop the violence. The 2017 event was held under tight security, in contrast to previous years, amid renewed nationalist protests.

The controversy over *Matilda*, a Culture Ministry-funded film about the young Tsar Nicholas II’s affair with a ballerina, deepened the sense that extreme nationalist forces have run amok. Months before its October 2017 release, members of the Russian Orthodox clergy labelled the film blasphemous (the Church canonised Nicholas II and his family in 2000). An ultra-nationalist group calling itself Christian State-Holy Rus threatened to attack cinemas showing *Matilda*. A campaign to ban the film, led by Natalya Poklonskaya, a member of the State Duma from Crimea, gained wide-

⁷⁰ Donald N. Jensen, “Is radical nationalism in Russia getting out of control?”, Institute of Modern Russia, 12 May 2015. Crisis Group interviews, two Kremlin advisers and several Donbas volunteers, Donetsk and Moscow, 2014 and 2018.

⁷¹ Crisis Group interviews, Moscow, 2014-2018.

⁷² Crisis Group interview, expert, January 2018.

⁷³ Marlene Laruelle, “Putin’s Regime and the Ideological Market: A Difficult Balancing Act”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 March 2017.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interview, St. Petersburg/Leningrad region, spring 2017.

⁷⁵ Tanya Lokshina, “Russia’s Growing Intolerance for Dissent”, Human Rights Watch, 28 April 2017.

spread support – including from the Church – despite calls for moderation from senior government officials.

In the late summer of 2017, unknown perpetrators targeted individuals associated with the film, including the director, throwing Molotov cocktails at his studio in St. Petersburg and blowing up a car full of gas canisters outside a cinema in Ekaterinburg. In response, Russia's largest cinema chain said it would not show the film due to security concerns. Many commentators saw this announcement as a sign that Putin cannot fully control Peklonskaya's nationalist movement – or that he chooses not to exert control lest he lose its support.⁷⁶

Hard-line activism and, in some cases, violence, poses a dilemma for the Kremlin. Rigorous attempts to rein in nationalist groups could provoke a backlash from nationalist-minded politicians and undercut the support the government has often enjoyed from their constituencies. But turning a blind eye could encourage the growth of such activism and open the door to more violence.

D. *The Russian Orthodox Church and Cossacks*

Orthodox Christianity has enjoyed a rapid revival since the 1990s. In the 2000s and particularly since 2012, cognisant of the faith's place in Russian history and identity, the state co-opted the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate in support of its patriotic mobilisation agenda.⁷⁷ This partly accounts for the increasing prominence of "traditional values" as an ideological touchstone in state rhetoric.⁷⁸ In his 2015 Easter address, Putin praised the Church for its aid in educating the younger generation in the spirit of patriotism.⁷⁹

The Church's vision of patriotism is complementary to but not quite the same as that of the state. Both promote the concept of *Russky mir* (Russian world). But while the state has often seen that concept as the moral underpinning for intervention in the near abroad – often justifying such action as a means of protecting ethnic Russians – clergy tend to emphasise its religious aspects, envisioning the *Russky mir* as united and defined by the Orthodox faith.⁸⁰ But despite this variance, the Church has a special status in the system for bolstering the government's domestic legitimacy.

This status is evident in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region. In the eyes of many experts, St. Petersburg's Governor Georgy Poltavchenko relies heavily on the Church for political support and in turn solicits the Church's input in affairs of state.⁸¹ Orthodox clergy in the city endorse government crackdowns on liberals and mobilise their flock for events like Immortal Regiment. The St. Petersburg patriarchate liaises closely with the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, as do three dioceses in the Leningrad region. The Church and area military academies appear to enjoy close

⁷⁶ Alexander Baunov, "Is Putin losing control of Russia's conservative nationalists?", *Foreign Affairs*, 10 October 2017.

⁷⁷ Lauren Goodrich, "A picture of Russian patriotism", Stratfor, 22 March 2016.

⁷⁸ Alicja Curanović, "Religion in Russia's foreign policy", *New Eastern Europe*, 4 August 2013.

⁷⁹ "Congratulations on Orthodox Easter", press release, president of Russia, 12 April 2015.

⁸⁰ Hieromonk Yefimiy Moiseev, "Русская Церковь как основа Русского Мира, Русский Мир как основа Вселенской Церкви" ["Russian Church as the basis of the Russian world, Russian world as the basis of the Universal Church"], *Bogoslov.ru*, 12 November 2009.

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interviews, St. Petersburg, spring 2017.

ties.⁸² Cadets participate in religious events with political significance such as the procession around the historic St. Isaac's Cathedral, whose transfer from state to Church ownership in 2017 prompted protests from residents who opposed the Church's expansion into cultural life. Moreover, some parishes operate their own militarised youth programs, such as Ratoborets at the Church of the Savior of the Holy Face in Pargolovo, St. Petersburg, a military-patriotic club similar to those run by veterans' groups but with a liturgy.

The Church is barred from proselytising in public schools, but priests can be found there engaging in patriotic education.⁸³ Clergy also oversee several federal initiatives in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Sciences, including annual competitions among secondary school instructors for who best performs what the Church often calls "the moral feat of a teacher". The contests are held at dioceses, and priests pick the winners. In exchange, the state has relaxed its strictures on religion in schools. In 2015, a course on religion became mandatory for fourth graders, though parents could choose which faith their children would study. The Church has proposed expanding religious studies.⁸⁴

Cossack communities also help the Kremlin convey its patriotic message. Ethnically Slav, religiously Orthodox and traditionally a military caste, Cossacks have a chequered history with the state. Imperial Russia employed them to patrol the Caucasus buffer zones between Orthodox Christendom and areas controlled by Muslims; the Soviet Union repressed them; and the Kremlin embraced them again under Boris Yeltsin and Putin.⁸⁵ Today, 740,000 Russians are part of Cossack organisations, although this number is likely boosted by the government funding these organisations receive.⁸⁶ Almost anyone who is Orthodox can join. Closely associated with the Church, these organisations are often enlisted by the state to provide security and even as paramilitaries serving under the Russian army.⁸⁷ Putin has found them a natural ally due to their militant patriotism, piety and deeply conservative outlook. During his 2012 election campaign, he said, "the state's task is to help the Cossacks in every way, to attract them into military service and the military and patriotic upbringing of young people".⁸⁸ In St. Petersburg and elsewhere, the authorities have been known to finance Cossack communities.⁸⁹

⁸² Crisis Group interviews, St. Petersburg, spring 2017.

⁸³ Crisis Group interview, teacher, St. Petersburg/Leningrad region, March 2017.

⁸⁴ Daria Saprykina, "Математика победила православие" ["Mathematics won over Orthodoxy"], *Gazeta.ru*, 23 August 2016.

⁸⁵ "Russia again cautiously embraces the Cossacks", Stratfor, 20 September 2015.

⁸⁶ Orysia Lutsevych, "Agents of the Russian World: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood", Chatham House, April 2016. See also Alexandr Lito, "The Cossacks", *Open Democracy*, 24 July 2014.

⁸⁷ "Russia again cautiously embraces the Cossacks", Stratfor, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Steve Gutterman and Thomas Grove, "Russian Cossacks test their powers in Moscow street patrol", Reuters, 27 November 2012.

⁸⁹ "Культурная станица: Как Петербург превращается в 'крупный провинциальный центр'" ["The cultural village: How St. Petersburg became a 'major provincial centre'"], *Argumenty Nedeli*, 18 May 2017.

IV. Patriotic Mobilisation and Russian Foreign Policy

Underlying the state's efforts at patriotic mobilisation is a belief that Russia, after a period of deep humiliation at the hands of an arrogant West, is surrounded by enemies. After the demise of the Soviet Union, Western officials presented their policies in the region as promoting the independence of states that formerly were Soviet republics; enabling those states to determine their own security alliances and economic as well as political systems; building a new partnership with Russia; and integrating it into frameworks such as the G7 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Russia Founding Act (1997), later renamed the NATO-Russia Council (2002).

Moscow perceives Western policies differently. For most Russians, the 1990s are synonymous with economic collapse at home and the unravelling of Russian influence abroad. According to a narrative widely shared across the country, Russia acted in good faith by withdrawing military assets from former Soviet states yet instead of being rewarded was punished with the creeping expansion of Western influence and institutions. In particular, Moscow interpreted NATO and European Union enlargement as an effort to exploit Russia's weakness during the traumatic post-Soviet transition by compelling it to acquiesce in its loss of security, political influence and economic clout, and to submit to Western rules and norms.⁹⁰

These clashing narratives apply to the contemporary era as well. The West sees Russia's increasing assertiveness under Putin, notably its military interventions in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria, as manifestations of an aggressive, expansionist approach that foments conflict in Europe's neighbourhood and threatens international peace and security. In contrast, the Kremlin blames the West for destabilising the international system, citing the 2003 invasion of Iraq and NATO's 2011 bombardment of Libya and subsequent ouster of Libyan leader Muammar al-Qadhafi as evidence of its hypocrisy in adhering to international law. In Moscow's rendition, the so-called partnership with Russia is a fig leaf Western powers have used to extend their influence in what Russia considers its neighbourhood and globally.⁹¹

Russia's annexation of Crimea and backing for insurgents in eastern Ukraine have completed the breakdown in trust, amid aggravated threat perceptions on both sides. There is an overwhelming tendency in Russia to interpret the sanctions imposed after it absorbed Crimea through the prism of past indignities that it has suffered at the West's hands: in 2015, polls suggested some 70 per cent of Russians thought the sanctions were designed to "weaken and humiliate" their country, rather than respond to Russian aggression.⁹² Against this backdrop, opinion polls suggest that the Putin government's emphasis on patriotic mobilisation has been accompanied by a surge

⁹⁰ For a distillation of the differences between Russian and Western narratives, see the final report of a panel featuring former Crisis Group president Jean-Marie Guéhenno: "Back to Diplomacy: Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project", OSCE, November 2015, at www.osce.org/networks/205846?download=true.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² "Санкции и Контрсанкции" ["Sanctions and Counter-sanctions"], Levada Center, 30 September 2014.

in national pride, notably since 2014.⁹³ At the same time, Russian society increasingly has come to see the West as a threat.⁹⁴

A. *Patriotic Mobilisation and the War in Ukraine*

The government frames its involvement in Ukraine following the start of the Maidan protests at the end of 2013 as part of a longer Russian tradition of confronting – and vanquishing – fascism. Indeed, official rhetoric links virtually all of the country's contemporary conflicts to the Great Patriotic War, though this is particularly the case in Ukraine.⁹⁵ At the peak of the crisis, state media repeatedly reminded the population of the heroism of the Soviet fight against the Nazis. At the same time, it labelled Russia's adversaries in Ukraine as fascists and criminals, effectively equating the fighting between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to the war against Hitler.⁹⁶

As early as the winter of 2013-2014, as the Kremlin prepared to seize Crimea, state television began to drum up support for the Donbas intervention, airing reports that, for instance, portrayed the new Kyiv government as a Nazi-like junta. By portraying Kyiv as in the clutches of the far right and citing its intention to inflict atrocities upon inhabitants of eastern Ukraine, this propaganda stoked up separatist sentiment and helped mobilise local separatist forces.⁹⁷ It also appears to have helped marshal the Russian volunteer groups that the Kremlin initially relied upon as fighting in Donbas escalated.

Russians volunteering for the Donbas rebels typically said a key motivation was to follow in their grandfathers' footsteps, namely fighting fascism and restoring the "Russian world".⁹⁸ Such volunteers of all ages are fond of the Soviet Union, critical of the liberalisation of the 1990s and welcoming of Putin's patriotic rhetoric. While they do not necessarily want a Soviet restoration, they consider themselves "healthy" Russian nationalists and think Ukraine and Belarus are part of the Russian nation.⁹⁹ Many volunteers saw themselves as peacemakers helping civilians in eastern Ukraine survive.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ According to figures from the Levada polling centre, including those cited here: "Нынешняя Россия близка к идеальной", *Gazeta.ru*, 19 November, 2014, at www.gazeta.ru/politics/2014/11/18_a_6305885.shtml

⁹⁴ The spread of mistrust through society is discussed more fully in Wolfgang Zellner et al., "European Security: Challenges at the Societal Level", OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, December 2016, p. 19.

⁹⁵ Kolesnikov, "Do Russians want war?", *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Yury Nosovskiy, "Украинская хунта - пародия на Третий рейх" ["Ukrainian junta: A parody of a Third Reich"], *Pravda*, 2 June 2014.

⁹⁷ More on this and other aspects of the conflict can be found in earlier Crisis Group reporting, notably Europe Briefing N°79, *Russia and the Separatists in Eastern Ukraine*, 5 February 2016; and Europe Report N°231, *Ukraine: Running out of Time*, 14 May 2014.

⁹⁸ Christopher Miller, "Gore, but no glory for Russia's Ukraine war 'veterans'", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 17 August 2017; and Nail Khisamiev and Merhat Sharipzhan, "Volunteer rebel sheds light on Russian military involvement in Eastern Ukraine", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 22 July 2015. See also Christopher Miller, "How Russia treats its Ukraine veterans", *The Atlantic*, 20 August 2017. Crisis Group interviews, volunteers, St. Petersburg, June and September 2017.

⁹⁹ Crisis Group interviews, volunteers, St. Petersburg, June and September 2017.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Moreover, polls suggest that not only has patriotic mobilisation helped mobilise volunteers and drum up support for more assertive Russian action abroad, but that action in turn has bolstered citizens' patriotism and boosted government approval ratings.¹⁰¹ A sense of national pride may have helped the government forestall any serious domestic backlash over Ukraine-related sanctions. According to a 2015 poll, 34 per cent of Russians acknowledged that Western sanctions had hurt badly and 47 per cent believed they would have serious repercussions in the future; nevertheless, some 69 per cent approved of the Kremlin's desire to "continue our policies despite sanctions".¹⁰² In later months, fewer Russians reported sanctions harming their well-being and more considered Russian counter-sanctions to be effective.¹⁰³ That sanctions inspire some form of national backlash as leaders point fingers at the governments or bodies imposing them is hardly unusual, of course; nonetheless, the patriotic drives appear to have helped the Kremlin divert blame.

B. *Patriotic Mobilisation Abroad*

The patriotic narratives used to mobilise Russia itself appear to be finding traction with Russians living in former Soviet republics as well, as they tap into nostalgia and linguistic commonality. One finds the theme in the Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine, where schools celebrate combatants such as Motorola (the nom de guerre of a notorious separatist leader killed in 2016) in a similar manner to the Soviet-style glorification of World War II partisans, while Soviet-era youth groups such as the Pioneers are reappearing.¹⁰⁴ In 2016, branches of the Russian state-run Sputnik news agency in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia distributed orange-and-black ribbons to commemorate Victory Day.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps to capitalise on the trend, throughout 2017 and 2018, the President's Victory Committee is organising a worldwide campaign to promote a positive image of the Soviet victory in World War II.¹⁰⁶ Coordinated by the foreign ministry and with support from the ministries of defence, culture and education, the committee is hosting roundtables and scholarly conferences as well as setting up meetings with veterans in Russia and abroad.¹⁰⁷

The growing popularity of Immortal Regiment celebrations illustrates how grassroots patriotic activities can also cross borders. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Latvia,

¹⁰¹ A March 2014 survey asked: "What does the annexation of Crimea by Russia mean to you?" Seventy-nine per cent of respondents agreed with the assertion: "This means that Russia returns to its former role of a 'great power' and furthers its interests in the post-Soviet space". Bruk, "What's in a name? Understanding Russian patriotism", op. cit.

¹⁰² According to a Levada poll cited by Interfax, 3 February 2015.

¹⁰³ Andrei Kolesnikov, "Do Russians want war?", Carnegie Moscow Center, 14 June 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Crisis Group correspondence, experts in eastern Ukraine, summer 2017.

¹⁰⁵ "Sputnik Абхазия провел акцию 'Георгиевская ленточка' в Сухуме" ["Sputnik Abkhazia conducted a 'George ribbon' action in Sukhumi"], Sputnik (Abkhazia), 6 May 2016; and "Георгиевская ленточка' в Цхинвале" ["'George ribbon' in Tskhinvali"], Sputnik (South Ossetia), 5 May 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the Russian Pobeda (Victory) organising committee meeting, 4 May 2017, at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/councils/54453>.

¹⁰⁷ "Протокол заседания Российского организационного комитета 'Победа'" ["Protocol of the meeting of the Russian organising committee 'Victory'"], press release, president of Russia, 4 May 2017.

war veterans and their families – along with other ethnic Russians living there – have joined Immortal Regiment marches, carrying photographs of family members who fought in the Great Patriotic War.¹⁰⁸ The 9 May march is particularly popular in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where officials of the de facto entities join in, and in rebel-controlled eastern Ukraine.¹⁰⁹ In Georgia, taking part in Immortal Regiment is a political statement against the pro-Western foreign policy of the Tbilisi leadership and the main political groups. Russians in the former Soviet republics, who typically watch Russian television, are demanding that their respective authorities allow this march. In Armenia and Abkhazia local groups copied the main idea of Immortal Regiment and marched with photographs of those killed in wars in the 1990s and subsequently.¹¹⁰ According to Russian media outlets, the march took place in more than 60 countries in 2017.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ See more at “Бессмертный полк Армения 2017” [“Immortal Regiment Armenia 2017”], Sputnik (Armenia); and “Новости движения Бессмертный полк” [“News about Immortal Regiment movement”], Sputnik (Azerbaijan).

¹⁰⁹ “Габния: сакральность праздника Победы с каждым годом возрастает” [“Gabnia: Sacral meaning of Victory Day is only increasing every year”], Sputnik (Abkhazia), 9 May 2017; “Бессмертный полк: Главное – помнить и чтить” [“Immortal Regiment’: Most important is to remember and to respect”], RES, 9 May 2017. Also Crisis Group observations, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, 2016 and 2017.

¹¹⁰ See the video at “Бессмертный полк: история победы армян в лицах” [“Immortal Regiment: History of the Armenian victory in faces”], Sputnik (Armenia), 9 May 2016; and “«Бессмертный полк» пройдет в пяти городах Абхазии” [“Immortal Regiment’ will march through five Abkhaz towns”], Sputnik (Abkhazia), 29 September 2017.

¹¹¹ Aleksandr Khristenko, “От Вашингтона до Пекина: ‘Бессмертный полк’ прошел по миру” [“From Washington to Beijing: The ‘Immortal Regiment’ took place around the world”], *Vesti*, 7 May 2017.

V. Conclusion

The patriotic mobilisation effort in Russia comes at a time when nationalist sentiment is growing in a number of other countries, including in the West. Efforts to instil pride in the military, particularly when troops are fighting abroad, to venerate a country's historical achievement or to reinforce a sense of national pride are hardly unique to President Vladimir Putin's government. Nor is Putin the only world leader shoring up popular support by playing to patriotic sentiment.

Still, the militarised manner in which Russian society is evincing its love of country is worthy of attention. It is in good part the result of deliberate state policy, involving military-patriotic education conducted by agents at different levels of government and society. Moreover, it is occurring as Russia has become increasingly involved in military conflicts abroad, where in addition to local proxies it has used local political movements and groups sympathetic to Russia, galvanised by Russian propaganda and government support, to achieve its goals. It is debatable whether patriotic drives at home enable Moscow's foreign policy to be more adventurous. In some cases, causality would appear to run the other way; the intervention in Crimea, for example, fed growing patriotism in Russia as much as it relied on it, boosting Putin's approval ratings to record highs. But growing patriotism is part and parcel of a wider trend in Russia that appears to lower the potential costs to the government of military action outside the country.

The trend is all the more notable insofar as it comes as relations between Russia and the West are more strained than at any time since the end of the Cold War. It is no coincidence that the type of patriotism promoted by state media frequently conflates the threat Russia faces from the West's allies in Ukraine with that it faced from Nazi Germany, implicitly depicting the former as being as dangerous as the latter.

Western powers themselves can do little to reverse this sentiment, though they should continue to engage as wide a sector of Russian society as possible through cultural, education or scientific exchanges. Factoring mounting patriotic sentiment, and the deep sense of grievance from which it flows, into policymaking might involve greater attempts to communicate the objectives of policies like sanctions. That said, such policies are likely to be misinterpreted however well explained.

Mounting patriotic sentiment will likely have implications within Russia, too. If patriotism tends to reinforce national cohesion, its ideological appendage, rising nationalism – which the Kremlin has fed through its alignments with far-right groups for both electoral purposes – can produce precisely the opposite, dividing society in worrying ways. The vigilante attacks directed at the *Matilda* film illustrates that the Kremlin might not always be able to control the nationalist forces that it helped unleash. As President Putin embarks on his fourth term in office, he should cease to encourage nationalist elements, whether within his own government or outside it. Unless that happens, pressure from such groups could curtail the government's own options and perhaps push it toward more dangerous policies.

Moscow/Brussels, 4 July 2018

Appendix A: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Mark Malloch-Brown. Its Vice Chair is Ayo Obe, a Legal Practitioner, Columnist and TV Presenter in Nigeria.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Robert Malley, took up the post on 1 January 2018. Malley was formerly Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program Director and most recently was a Special Assistant to former U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Senior Adviser to the President for the Counter-ISIL Campaign, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Previously, he served as President Bill Clinton's Special Assistant for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in ten other locations: Bishkek, Bogota, Dakar, Kabul, Islamabad, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Sanaa, Tbilisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

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North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (IV): Economic and Social Imperatives, Europe Report N°237, 7 July 2015 (also available in Russian).

The North Caucasus Insurgency and Syria: An Exported Jihad?, Europe Report N°238, 16 March 2016 (also available in Russian).

Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds, Europe Report N°244, 1 June 2017.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Time to Talk Trade, Europe Report N°249, 24 May 2018.

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The Ukraine Crisis: Risks of Renewed Military Conflict after Minsk II, Europe Briefing N°73, 1 April 2015.

Russia and the Separatists in Eastern Ukraine, Europe Briefing N°79, 5 February 2016.

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Can Peacekeepers Break the Deadlock in Ukraine?, Europe Report N°246, 15 December 2017.

Ukraine: Will the Centre Hold?, Europe Report N°247, 21 December 2017.

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