Is Russia Only for Russians?

Russian Nationalism's Impact on Immigration and Refugees

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Author Note

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I. Introduction

Throughout modern history, Russia, under its various names, has always been a major player in the international system. Although the Russian Federation today spreads over millions of miles and includes a wide variety of people, languages, and cultures, the Russian government continues to emphasize their Slavic, orthodox nation that dates back to Kievan Rus. This appeal to the Russian nation is nothing new, but in the current age of globalization and the refugee crisis, Russia has had to shift their nationalistic rhetoric in order to keep public support in the face of today's issues. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has used ethnonationalism, focusing on those who identify as "Russian", both at home and abroad in order to maintain their sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union. As a result of these nationalistic practices, Russia has created one, specific enemy. This enemy is not limited to a specific race nor country, but rather anyone who is not willing to accept the Russian tradition.

We are seeing this play out today with the war in Ukraine, as well as Russia's response to immigration and refugees. This paper discusses how nationalism in the state and also among the Russian people has influenced Russian immigration and refugee policies as well as how these policies reinforce the culture in which they exist. By preying off of Russian people's fear of the "other" and reinforcing Russian superiority, Russia is able to garner public support for their discriminatory and heavily nationalistic approaches to immigration and refugees. This paper argues that both the culture within the state and among the people, demand anti-immigration and refugee policies against all of those who are not Russian, while simultaneously "calling home" Russians living abroad. In the face of a demographic crisis and a weakening influence in their previous region of dominance, this appeal to Russian nationalism is a final attempt to salvage what is left of what was once the great Russian state.

II. Background

What is now the Russian Federation today can be traced back to Kievan Rus, a nation founded by Vikings in the eighth century controlling a territory including Slavic, Finnish, and Baltic peoples. This nation had, "authority over a narrow belt of territory hugging the waterways connecting Lake Ladoga and Novgorod in the north to Kiev (modern Kyiv) on the mid-Dnieper River in the south" (Engel and Martin, 2015, p. 1). After being under Mongol rule for nearly two hundred years beginning around 1240 and ending in the mid fifteenth century, Kievan Rus had become Muscovy (p. 28). It was in 1721, following the war with the Swedish empire and the Treaty of Nystad, that the Russian Empire was formed (p. 55). It is under the Russian Empire that Russia established itself as a European empire, one with a strong Orthodox tradition. Today, we see many references to this past empire, including the endorsement of the Russian government by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, in 2012 (Uzlaner and Stoeckl, 2019, p. 428).

Following the October Revolution in 1917 and the Russian Civil War in 1924, the Russian Empire was now the Soviet Union. Instead of rallying around their shared history and orthodox tradition, Russians were unified on their shared Soviet and communist identity. This new "Soviet" identity, however, really just became a replacement for Russian. Through the use of national consolidation and assimilation, "..from 1926 to 1970, at least four to six million people abandoned their national identity and adopted a Russian identity" (Simon, 2019, p. 317). Also, after World War II (WWII), many of the soldiers from the non-Russian Soviet states came back speaking Russian and had adopted other Russian cultural habits. (Florin, 2016, p. 506). This is why in Russia, WWII is referred to as "the Great Patriotic War", in that it was a promotion of Russian nationalism under the guise of a broader, Soviet title. The growing Russification of the

Soviet people can be seen in the 1970 census when, “48.7 percent of the non-Russian population could communicate fluently in Russian” (Simon, 2019, p. 322). This example of the linguistic assimilation that took place within the Soviet Union is another example of how the line between Soviet and Russian was often blurred.

Today, many Russians look back at their Soviet identity with pride, as it was under the Soviet Union that Russia was a superpower. It was also a time when nationalism was used as a tool for public approval. This is why we see many references and attempts today to reclaim the dominance they had during Soviet times. In particular, the current Russian president, Vladimir Putin seems unable to move on from Russia’s Soviet past. We are seeing Putin’s reluctance to relinquish former Soviet power with the current war in Ukraine.

Since the 1990s, “The circle of nationalistic ideas has…shifted substantially in the new decade. Ethno-xenophobia in the form of ‘migrantophobia’ became the dominating and the main means of propaganda” (Verkhovsky, 2007, p. 130). This can be seen with the popularity of the slogan, “Russia for Russians” which began in the 1990s as well as the presidential terms of Vladimir Putin, “In his article… published on 30 December 1999, the day before he was appointed acting president, Putin stressed the centrality of a strong state for Russian identity and discussed the cultural foundations of Russian statehood” (Kolstø, 2016, p. 19). Russia is able to use this ethno-nationalistic view to support foreign policy endeavors that aim to maintain their influence in the post Soviet bloc. The emphasis on the Russian, ethnic and cultural identity is an example of the differences between Western and Eastern nationalism, “civic ‘Western’ nationalism is commonly associated with tolerance, liberalism and the overcoming of ethnic divisions, while ethnic ‘Eastern’ nationalism is seen as more bellicose, xenophobic and authoritarian” (Shevel, 2011, p. 180).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, millions of "Russians" found themselves outside of Russia in the newly-formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russians in CIS countries became the target of Russian foreign policy as Russia tried to fight off Western/Chinese influences in their former territory. "Protecting Russians" became the justification for Russia's involvement in CIS countries, simultaneously rallying their population around a common enemy (non-Russians) and warning CIS countries to stick with Russia or face military consequences (Zevelev, 2016).

We began to see this fear of Westernization in Russia, "Following the November 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Revolution of Roses in Georgia in 2003, the Kremlin has begun to fear that Russia could repeat such a path" (Chebankova, 2007, p. 448). This led to support for nationalistic groups, which helped against westernization, but also led to an increase in xenophobia and hate crimes, "The rise of xenophobia culminated in the tragic events in the city of Kondopoga, Kaliningrad region… where the Russian ethnic majorities rioted against the settled Chechens and a number of people were killed" (pp. 448-449). Russian nationalism succeeded in creating an enemy of the West, but in doing so, it also created an enemy of anyone who was not ethnically Russian.

Although anti-West belief among Russian citizens increased support for the Russian state, when it came time to adopt more liberal immigration policies, another consequence of their nationalistic claims became evident. In 2007, Russia realized that they were facing a demographic problem that needed to be solved with immigrant labor, "... in 2007, it became clear that for the first time in the country's history, retirees and premature deaths would not be replenished by new childbirths and a population able to work" (Tetruashvily, 2012, p. 55). In response to this crisis, Putin has made several laws trying to encourage immigrant labor while

also trying to appease his constituents. This paper discusses these laws more specifically in the findings section.

It is in this same year (2007), that Putin began to make references to the "Russian World", the idea that Russia is bigger than its borders and it must look out for Russians everywhere, "the 'Russian World' is an idea defined purely on the basis of self-identification… [forming] a nationalist narrative about the necessity of Russia's revival as a great power and its *revanche* in the post-Soviet space" (Zevelev, 2016). The Russian World became Putin's excuse to essentially bully Post-Soviet countries into remaining under Russian influence.

We are seeing the concept of "Russian World" in action with the annexation of Crimea and the violence in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine beginning in 2014, as well as the most recent military invasion of Ukraine. All of which have been in response to Ukraine's departure from Russia and movement towards the West. Here is a quote from Putin following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, "we [Russia and Ukraine] are not simply close neighbors but, as I have said many times already, we are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other" (BBC, 2014). This historic and ethnic nationalism rallied Russians around Putin, increasing his support while sending a message to Ukraine about the danger of westernization.

III. Literature Review

Following the most recent military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Russian nationalism has become more relevant than ever. However, research on Russian nationalism has always been popular. In addition, in our globalized world, immigration and refugees have become a prominent topic for discussion in academia. The focus of this paper on the relationship between Russian nationalism and immigration is one that has been looked at by many different

scholars and in relation to many different fields. In regards to this paper, the focus is on the political and sociological side of this issue as opposed to the economical side.

An example of some of the existing research that pertains to this paper would be the work of Caress Schenk. Schenk's work was helpful in the research for this paper in order to understand Russia's ever-changing immigration policy and how it correlates to nationalism, xenophobia, and migrantophobia. Schenk argues a similar one to this paper, connecting both the nationalism among Russian society and within Russian institutions to immigration policies. In Schenk's 2010 article, she uses data regarding the Russian population's increase in xenophobia, looking at trends in Russian attitudes and hate crimes to support her argument of Russia's ethno-nationalistic driven immigration policies. In her 2016 article, Schenk uses data looking at the migration of Ukrainian refugees to support her argument that the Russian government uses immigration to provide support for their foreign policy endeavors. Kuznetsova's 2020 article and Myhre's 2017 article, also looked at Ukrainian refugees' role in foreign policy which provided additional data that this paper uses to connect nationalism and immigration policies. This paper combines all of this research, in order to support the claim that nationalism in Russia supports restrictive immigration policies.

In the articles by Liou, Davis and Sosnovskaya, as well as Tolz there was a focus on specific "other" groups and how this "otherness" manifests itself in Russian societal thought through the media and in subsequent policies. These articles provided commonalities among both Chinese and Muslim migrants in relation to their depiction in the media and public reception. This was useful for this paper's claims as their research showed how non-Russian groups are poorly perceived in Russian society and how this anti-immigration culture can be seen

in policies. These articles were great case studies that supported the claim of this paper about how nationalism is used to both influence society and policies.

Finally, looking at rhetoric from Putin's speech regarding the annexation of Crimea, as well as the work done by Kolstø and Verkhovsky in regards to the rise of nationalism in Putin's Russia, gave specific examples of how Putin uses nationalism and its impact on the Russian population. Kolstø's book had useful information about the timeline/history of Putin, while rhetoric from Putin himself and Verkhovsky's work on ethnonationalism among the Russian population provided descriptions of the outcomes of Putin's actions. The culmination of these works is represented in support of the argument that Putin is using nationalism in order to maintain power in the post-Soviet bloc. This is successful due to Russia's history of nationalism that can be seen in high nationalistic support among Russians.

However, there were still some limitations in the research. The Russian Federation is not very forthcoming with much of their information regarding immigration, thus this was one restriction during the research process. Instead of focusing on exact numbers, this paper looks at attitudes among Russian society and policies that were implemented. Several scholars conducted their own public opinion polls in Russia, as the Russian state is not always honest with their numbers. The consensus among scholars appears to support the argument in this paper; the use of Russian nationalism is a strong emotional motivator of the Russian population and is used to justify foreign policy as well as push for immigration restrictions.

Another limitation would be timeliness. Much of the sources of this paper are from 2007-2016 when research about Putin's immigration policies/the war in Ukraine and nationalism became an area of interest. The issue of Russian nationalism is still very relevant, however, due

to the limited research that has been done with the recent Russian nationalistic events, this paper does not focus on nationalism in more recent years.

IV. Theory/Elaboration of Questions

This paper looks at the relationship between Russian nationalism and its impact on immigration and refugee policies. The main questions guiding this paper include: How does Russian nationalism impact immigration and refugee policies? How do these policies impact Russian nationalism? How are immigrants and refugees used to bring out nationalism in order to manipulate the Russian population? How does nationalistic belief influence the Russian public's perception and reaction to immigrants? This paper argues that Russian nationalism is used in both the public and political realm to justify/establish anti-immigration policies. Also, the use of nationalism is used to support Russian foreign policy and justify certain types of migration in order to solve Russia's slipping regional influence and labor shortages.

The explanation of this lies in the fact that throughout its history, Russia has prided itself on being different from the other world powers. Under the Russian Empire and again today an emphasis on Orthodox Christian tradition was used as a distinguisher, whereas under the Soviet Union, the term "Soviet" combined people under the Russian nation. Today, we are seeing Putin appeal to many of these historic forms of nationalism as well as an increase in ethnonationalism in order to keep support for himself and his policies. This has been successful, but has also made liberal immigration reforms heavily disliked among the Russian population, leading to anti-immigrant legislation. However, nationalism is also being used to justify "Russian" immigration and bring even more support for Russia's military involvement in CIS countries.

V. Methodology/ Research

This paper's research focuses on attitudes and the culture among Russian people, represented in polls and other forms of civil engagement as well as specific Russian legislation and political/media rhetoric. When compared to the data that has been released on immigration and refugees, this paper aims to make an argument that the relationship between the two is causal not casual. This paper defines anti or discriminatory immigration and refugee policies as policies that limit immigration and/or remove these limits for former Soviet Union (FSU) countries/ethnic Russians. Russian nationalism is a term that encapsulates many different ideas and can be expressed in several different ways. Russian nationalism in this paper primarily refers to ethnonationalism. For example, the belief that Russia is for Russians and preferential treatment of those who identify as Russian and/or are Russian speaking are examples of ethnonationalism. However, this is not the only kind of nationalism that exists within Russia, but for the purposes of this paper, Russian nationalism primarily pertains to these principles.

VI. Findings- Immigration

Results show that even when faced with a demographic crisis in which immigrant labor would help Russian economics, Russia continues to create anti-immigrant, nationalist policies in order to appeal to their xenophobic constituents and support their foreign policy.

Immigration Policies Since 1991

In 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved, there was hardly any migration regulation between Russia and the FSU, "The freedom of movement and tradition of forced migration for labor during the Soviet period changed direction, and traditional routes for migration were replaced with a steady stream of refugees and repatriated Russians entering the country from former Soviet states" (Tetruashvily, 2012, p. 54). This lack of regulation led to widespread corruption (human and drug trafficking, forced labor, etc.), and on July 25th, 2002 the Russian

government passed the, “Federal Law No. 115 FZ, ‘On the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons’” (pp. 54-55). This law was extreme, and attempted to eliminate illegal immigration with “strict regulation and bureaucratic obstacles” (p. 55) and is the first example of anti-immigrant legislature in Russia. However, this just exacerbated corruption by forcing migrants towards the illegal route in order to migrate.

Five years later, on January 15th, 2007, once the demographic crisis had been fully realized, Federal Law No. 109, “On Recording the Migration of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation” was passed as amendment to the previous 2002 law (Tetruashvily, 2012, p. 56). This law was a liberal approach to immigration, easing all aspects of the immigration process. However, this law would not last long among the nationalistic Russian population, “in 2007, the Putin administration and the nationalist parties collided as populists called for liberalization while nationalist played on xenophobic sentiments for conservative approaches” (pp. 57-58). In 2009, the government responded to their constituents by passing amendment No. 36 which required migrants to receive a labor contract in order to stay in Russia, limiting migrant labor.

This is another example demonstrating the connection between Russian ethnonationalism and immigration. As Caress Schenk, points out in her 2010 article, “Both institutional and societal xenophobia work together to create an environment that demands restrictive immigration policies, despite the economic and demographic need for migrant labor” (Schenk, 2010, p. 109). The public disapproval of the 2007 immigration law, despite the economic benefits it would bring, indicates an anti-immigrant Russian population that prioritizes ethnic familiarity over economic growth with diversification.

In addition, after the backlash that was met following the 2007 law, quotas for CIS migrants decreased "from 6 million in 2007 to 1.3 million in 2010. Furthermore, in the sector of retail trade… foreign workers were banned altogether as of April 2007" (Schenk, 2010, p. 101). This once again demonstrates how, "the use of restrictive immigration policies is a populist maneuver that focuses on nationalist impulses rather than demographic realities" (p. 108). Despite the need for migrant labor, the Russian Federation finds itself unable to adopt the liberal reforms necessary to combat their demographic crisis. Conservative politicians use anti-immigrant rhetoric to exploit the xenophobic nature of Russian culture, "Nationalism in Russia currently has a number of manifestations, both institutional… and societal, which can be linked to the recent immigration policies specifically and anti-immigrant attitudes more generally" (p. 109).

Compatriot Program

However, starting in 2012, the Russian Federation found a way to solve their demographic crisis with immigrant labor without upsetting Russian nationalists. This was called the Compatriot Program and it originally appeared in 2006, "The Relocation programme assisted the Former Soviet Union citizens to immigrate to Russia for permanent residence" (Chebankova, 2007, p. 450). However, even Putin admitted that the program was not as successful as he had planned. Therefore, in 2012, he updated the program and used Russia's nationalistic preferences to garner support, "His [Putin's] message was that new measures had to be developed in order to support people who want to return to their 'historical motherland.'" (Myhre, 2017, p. 690). Putin found somewhat of a loophole when it came to immigration policies and public support. Not only was his idea of the "Russian World" helping with foreign policy and maintaining Russia's

influence among CIS countries, but now it was being used to bring much needed foreign labor into Russia under the guise of "reunification".

By claiming that Russia expands far beyond its borders, Putin was able to tap into the Russian nationalistic belief of uniting Russians, "Within Russia, there is a consensus that Moscow has some responsibility to those people who identify themselves as Russians or Russian speakers and who live in the successor states of the former Soviet Union" (Zevelev, 2016). Although, the term "compatriot" is not explicitly defined as those who identify as ethnically Russian, but rather is conveniently ambiguous so it can be used for a number of different reasons. Russian nationalist see the definition of compatriot as those who are ethnically Russian, while Putin can change the definition depending on what foreign policies he needs to pursue, "The fuzziness of the compatriots concept means that limiting migration, citizenship and employment benefits to compatriots allows the government to control the composition of migrants, including ethno-cultural composition if it wants to" (Shevel, 2007, p. 198).

This vague definition allows Russia to control who comes into the country without blatant ethnic discrimination. However, "...comments by some officials as well as a sample application form for the resettlement programme prepared by the FMS signal that ethnic Russians of Orthodox faith are indeed the preferred group" (Shevel, 2007, p. 198). Compatriot seems to just be another word for someone who is ethnically or culturally aligned with the "traditional" Russian. The compatriot program is an example of how migrants from the FSU and more specifically, "Russians" are given preferential treatment in the Russian immigration system.

Specific Groups

While it is clear that ethnic Russians are the "winners" of Russian immigration, who are the "losers"? This paper looks at two examples: Muslims and Chinese migrants and how the media portrays them as "others" in the Russian nation.

Russian nationalism and anti-immigration was also used to rally voters around Putin in 2012. The medium through which the nationalistic rhetoric was spread was through the media, "Channel 1 and Rossiia [two prominent Russian television channels] started launching well-orchestrated campaigns which offered viewers clear, simplistic messages about who belonged to the national communitie, who did not, and who the nation's significant Others ('enemies') were" (Tolz, 2017, p. 744). In this 2012 coverage, it was Islam and Muslims that fell victim to this nationalistic rhetoric. Specifically, Muslim was a blanket identity encapsulating multiple groups of people and the "distinction between radical Islamism and Islam was erased" (p. 746). By doing so, the state portrayed Muslims, specifically Muslim migrants as threats to national security, which increased xenophobia, islamophobia, and support for anti-immigration policies (besides compatriot immigration).

Simply put, "...representations of the 'Muslim migrant' [were framed] as a threat to European, Christian identity and culture" (Tolz, 2017, p. 747). Media coverage tapped back into the past Soviet nationalistic policy of assimilation by constructing, "...Islam into an immutable characteristic, which is represented by the media… as being the main obstacles to migrants' integration" (p. 747). Russians believe that migrants should adhere to the dominant, Russian Orthodox culture within Russia similar to how many adopted a Russian identity under the Soviet Union. Non-adherence is seen as a threat to Russian culture and society, "Those who introduce 'another's language, another's customs, or isolation of national communities, disrespect for the Russian district which sheltering 'them'cannot be accepted" (Davis and Sosnovskaya, 2009, p.

9). Because of this belief, Russia is able to construct and convince the Russian public that almost any migrant is a threat to Russians.

Another group falling victim to the term "other" would be Chinese migrants, "In the context of Russia's population crisis, the contemporary Chinese immigration issue causes Russians to feel that the Chinese may become the majority and then threaten Russian society and culture" (Liou, 2017, p. 276). This feeling was justified by Putin when he said, "If Moscow does not actively develop the Russian Far East, the local residents will speak Japanese, Chinese or Korean one day'" (p. 276). In response to this popular belief, "Moscow issued a government decree to step-by-step prohibit foreign immigrant workers from engaging in retail sale… almost 100,000 Chinese immigrant workers were still forced to leave from Russia in 2007" (p. 272). Another example of how anti-immigration attitudes within Russia leave the societal and political realm and enter the legislative. These examples show how fear of the "other" whether it be Islam or Asia, is used among the nationalistic Russian population to support anti-immigration policies.

Societal Reactions

Russia's emphasis on ethnonationalism can be seen among members of Russian society. As mentioned previously, a more liberalized immigration policy was met with public backlash, but how does nationalism impact Russians views towards immigrants and immigration? Well, the steady support for the slogan, "Russians for Russians" can be seen in the anti-immigrant attitude of the Russian population. In a survey conducted in Moscow, 50 percent of Muscovites, "... think that the presence of international immigrants causes an increase in…crime…[37.4 believe it] upsets the labour market, [36.5 percent believe it] causes corruption in business, and [34.7 percent believe it] is expanding the illegal drugs trade" (Yudina, 2005, p. 600). This perception does not match reality as between the years 2003 and 2009, only 2.7-3.8 percent of total crimes

were attributed to migrants (Schenk, 2010, p. 113). The cause of such invalid widespread belief is nationalism, “It is logical, thus, that these perceptions are influenced by elite statements and the media's disproportionate focus on the criminality and economic threats posed by migrants” (p. 113). In response to the perceived threat of migrants, there was a 60 percent increase in extremist crimes from 2006 to 2007 (p. 113).

The anti-immigrant opinion is not limited to only citizens, as institutions in Russia allow for nationalistic extremist groups to remain unpunished for their crimes. Many nationalistic groups have government ties and due to the unclear language within the anti-extremist law in Russia, many extremists, even some of the most severe, only face a few days in prison before their release (Schenk, 2010, pp. 113-114). However, the same cannot be said of those who nationalists deem as extremists groups such as the “punk prayer” demonstration of the anti-Putin group, “Pussy Riot” in 2012. The group's criticism of the government resulted in the arrest and trial of three of the members (Uzlaner and Stoeckl, 2019, p. 428). It seems that nationalism’s pervasiveness among the people and government in Russia allows for nationalist extremist groups to commit crimes against immigrants without retaliation, however, those who appear to be anti-nation are seen as an enemy to the state and Russian people.

Findings- Refugees

This paper finds a similar relationship with that of refugees in that they were oftentimes used to justify foreign policy and help with the demographic crisis. In order to illustrate the nationalistic tendencies in refugee policy, this paper compares Russia's policy towards Syrian refugees versus Ukrainian refugees.

Similar to how the term “compatriot” was purposefully vague, Russia does not call refugees, “refugees”, but rather simply refers to them as “people”. This is problematic when it

comes to policy making, “Behind the terminological problem is a practical one; as a result, decision and policy makers almost never refer to people as refugees, and it prevents civil servants from treating them as such” (Denisova, 2018, p. 372). When seeking protection in Russian, one has to either claim temporary asylum (TA) or refugee status (RS). Due to Russia’s specific definition of refugee, most applicants are denied RS. Therefore, many people claim TA, “However, this leads to fewer rights and, most importantly, poorly developed assessments of the grounds for international protection (RS)” (p. 389). By not calling refugees, refugees, Russia is able to get away with providing less aid to people in need. Also, even if the refugee’s home country’s violence has increased since they have begun their application process, they still have to claim whatever title they initially claimed. Finally, legal aid is only provided to Russian citizens, making the refugee process that much more difficult (p. 389).

In the example of Syrian refugees, “From 2011 to the date [2018], 2,585 refugees from Syria have applied for a refugee status…Of these, only one application was successful” (Denisova, 2018, p. 377). However, when it comes to TA status, “In 2013, the TA success rate for Syrians was approximately 67%, in 2014 it rocketed to 95%, and in 2015 it plunged to 61%” (p. 382). By granting TA status to more refugees, Russia is able to provide refugees with less resources because they are not deemed “refugees” while making it seem as if they are helping with the refugee crisis.

How does this compare to Ukrainian refugees? The difference is drastic, “by the end of 2016, the number of those with temporary asylum status reached 313,707 people, with 99% of them being Ukrainian” (Lyapina, 2021, p. 145). This can be explained through the nationalistic refugee process. Ukrainians had a much easier time with the application process due to the shared history of the two nations, “the relocation of refugees from Ukraine was often

accompanied by social network assistance as the majority of Ukrainians have relatives in Russia. Most Syrian refugees got invitations from their friends or relatives who were living in Russia before" (p.148). This proves that the refugee process is set up to benefit those who have connections in Russia, which primarily benefits those with Russian ancestry. This demonstrates a nationalistic preference in the process.

However, due to their shared heritage, many Ukranians did not even have to register as refugees in order to get protection. Instead of going through the refugee policy, Ukranians were encouraged to seek protection through the compatriot program, "Ukranians are ideal candidates for the compatriot program because they have traditionally been seen as ethnically and culturally more similar to Russians than other groups that may fit the definition of compatriot" (Schenk, 2016, p. 486). This is another way in which the refugee process is biased towards those that identify as "Russian". Syrians are not eligible for the compatriot program because they do not have common ancestry with Russia indicating that refuge in Russia is not determined by the circumstances in your home country, but rather your ethnicity.

Russia took the Ukrainian refugee situation to a whole new level in 2019. In order to gain support and legitimize their military involvement, on July 17th, 2019 Russia created, "a new decree [that] extended the simplified rules for granting citizenship to all inhabitants of Donetsk and Luhansk regions" (Kuznetsova, 2020, p. 523). By offering these refugees a simplified path to citizenship, Russia is making the case that these people are Russian, which reinforces their claim and military presence. It also shows an ethnonationalistic preference within the citizenship process. This policy is not met with any backlash within Russian because these people are deemed to be Russian.

The refugees were also seen as a solution to the Russian demographic crisis, "The influx of Ukrainian refugees, who are more ethnically and culturally similar…offered the Russian government an opportunity to shift the ethnic balance of incoming migrants and at the same time shore up domestic policy needs" (Schenk, 2016, p. 487). This is somewhat of a similar solution that Russia adopted back in 2010 when dealing with the demographic crisis including, "demographic policies focus[ing] on incentives for families (specifically mothers) to increase the birth rate [and]... mortality reduction through greater attention to health and safety…These policies are uncontroversial to nationalist audiences, as they favor the ethnic status quo" (Schenk, 2010, p. 106). However, refugees provided a more immediate solution to the crisis than the other policies. The goal of both the refugee and demographic policies is to solve the demographic problem by promoting population growth among ethnic Russians. In doing so, Russia can appease both its economic and nationalistic demands. This is demonstrative of how nationalism has allowed for refugees to be used for a multitude of political reasons.

VII. Conclusion

Russian nationalism is a deeply complicated phenomenon that manifests itself in several different sectors ranging from the political and social sector to the economic and even legislative sector. This paper discussed the ways in which Russian nationalism can be seen in its impact on Russian immigration and refugee policies, as well as the Russian public in general. Specifically, this paper argues that the nationalistic rhetoric that is being spread under current Russian president, Vladimir Putin, has led to the Russian population supporting and even demanding anti-immigrant policies. This can be seen with the pushback received regarding the adoption of more liberal migration policies in 2007, the 2012 revamp of the Compatriot Program, societal

and media portrayals/ reactions to migrants and the differences among Syrians and Ukranians when it came to seeking asylum in Russia.

This paper did not talk exclusively about the current situation in Ukraine as immigration and refugees is only one part of the greater issue. Also, due to the ongoing nature of the violence in Ukraine, it is still too soon to come to any conclusions. However, more recent research has indicated a rise in Ukrainian nationalism and identity as the war has progressed. It appears that some Russian-speaking Ukrainians are beginning to identify as Ukrainian instead of Russian because of the military involvement. In the future, further research should be done on what this increase in Ukrainian nationalism looks like and how it is competing against Russian nationalism.

As Putin's war in Ukraine continues, Russian nationalism is going to be a crucial component to look at in terms of motivation and justification. However, the spread of nationalism is not an epidemic contained within the borders of the Russian nation. Across the world, far-right leaders continue to use anti-immigrant and refugee sentiments in order to gain power. As our world has become increasingly globalized, many Western countries attribute the rise in immigration as a threat to their safety. Immigrants and refugees have become political scapegoats, preying off of voters' fears of perceived differences. Although this paper focuses on the uniqueness of Russian nationalism, there is nothing unique about the position of immigrants and refugees as the "other" in our global system.

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