

National Identity and Xenophobia in Russia: Opportunities for Regional Analysis

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Abstract:

This paper considers the theoretical relationship between nationalism, national identity and xenophobia. It also outlines the current state of the literature on Russian national identity and xenophobia. Using existing literature I consider a range of testable hypotheses on the causes of xenophobia in Russia, which are derived from both the nationalism and xenophobia literatures more generally. In the process I consider how sub-national or regional analysis can be used to examine questions related to national identity and xenophobia in Russia.

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Introduction

The scholarly work on nationalism in the post-Soviet space is one of the region's most celebrated contributions to the social sciences.¹ Given the relationship between the nationalism and something as momentous as the end of the USSR, it is no wonder that scholars have devoted so much attention to understanding the causes and dynamics of nationalist movements. Yet, those works primarily focused on non-Russian nationalist movements, while the development of *Russian* nationalism got far less attention.² Russian nationalism and xenophobia are, however, undoubtedly on the rise in Russia today, while non-Russian nationalist mobilization has declined (Pain 2007, 896). It is interesting to note that these empirical trends have not been studied together systematically.

Given how much we know about nationalism generally in the post-Soviet space, it seems that that literature should have something to say about contemporary Russian nationalism and xenophobia. This paper asks how exactly Russian nationalism or national identity is connected to xenophobia. Are these the same phenomena? Is xenophobia simply extreme nationalism? Can xenophobia explained by a rise in nationalism—in other words, does pride equal prejudice? Or is xenophobia a separate phenomenon for which we have to look to other explanations.

In this paper I consider the theoretical and empirical links between xenophobia and nationalism in Russia, and in the process make a case for how regional analysis can be promising area of further research. I begin with a discussion of definitions of nationalism, national identity, and xenophobia based on existing scholarly literature and I outline xenophobia and national

¹ Just a few prominent examples include Ronald Suny's (1993) book on nationalism in the Soviet Union, David Laitin's (1998) book on language and identity formation, Mark Beissinger's (2002) book on nationalist mobilization, and Philip Roeder's (2007) book on nation state formation.

² There are some important exceptions, e.g. Allensworth (1998), Brudny (1998), and Tolz (1998).

identity in the Russian context. I then discuss the theoretical relationship between xenophobia and nationalism or national identity, in terms of testable hypotheses. For each hypothesis I review the existing state of the literature and discuss how regional analysis might provide important analytical leverage.

Definitions: Nationalism, National Identity, and Xenophobia

Nationalism and National Identity

The primary focus of most definitions of nations and nationalism is on the connection of a people (a nation) with a territory (a state). Michael Hechter, for example, defines nationalism as "collective action designed to render the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governance unit" (Hechter 2000, 7-14). Similarly, there is fairly widespread consensus on the definition of a nation, namely as a group whose members believe themselves to be similar in important ways, including shared descent or culture, and who are related in some way to a certain territory. Ernst Haas, for example, defines a nation as "a socially mobilized body of individuals, believing themselves to be united by some set of characteristics that differentiate them (in their own minds) from outsiders, striving to create or maintain their own state" (Haas 1964, 465). One way in which nationalism differs from national identity is that the former explicitly concerns collective action rather than just shared beliefs or attitudes.

National identity is a type of social identity, whose members constitute a "nation" as described above. Like other social identities, national identity can vary in terms of content and contestation (Abdelal et al. 2006, 2009), and one important type of content concerns relational comparisons between the nation and others.³ In addition, however, national identity content may also include shared goals, norms, and ways of interpreting information (or cognitive content).

³ For a relational theory of ethnicity see Hale (2008).

Empirically speaking, this view of national identity primarily situates identity in terms shared attitudes or beliefs, although the normative content may include behavioral prescriptions. In contrast, nationalist mobilization is fundamentally about collective action, rather than simply shared attitudes or beliefs. While there is overlap, the distinction between behavior and attitudes is one way to think about differences between nationalist mobilization and national identity.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia includes dislike, fear, or hatred of strangers, foreigners, and most generally, of those who are different. The “different” groups range from immigrants and foreigners to strangers of any sort. While there is a wealth of work concerning definitions of terms such as prejudice, exclusion, or racism, Hjern (1998) offers a straightforward definition of xenophobia as “the denigration of individuals or groups based on perceived differences.” Xenophobia has an obvious connection to national identity in that national identity contains relational content, in which one's own nation is explicitly compared with other groups, and negative views of other groups would fall into the category of xenophobia.

Despite this relationship, on the one hand, scholarly studies of nationalism and xenophobia mostly remain rather separate,⁴ but on the other hand, sometimes there is a conflation of the terms, with xenophobia treated merely as extreme nationalism, or a very strong level of national identity. However, a fundamental question remains, which is how does having a national identity affect xenophobia toward *specific* groups? Is it the case that a stronger level of national identity in an individual will lead to higher levels of xenophobia across all outgroups? As I discuss below, much of the research on xenophobia suggests that the relationship between strength of national identity and xenophobia toward specific groups is more complicated.

⁴ Some exceptions include (Saideman and Ayres 2008), (Hansen and Hesli 2009), and (Beissinger 2011).

The empirical analysis of xenophobia again brings up the question of behavior versus attitudes. A number of studies of xenophobia are based on behavioral outcomes including actual violence (Arnold 2010; Laryš and Mareš 2011) or participation in xenophobic organizations (Verkhovsky 2000). However, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests there are significant differences between actual violence and other kinds of conflict between groups (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; King 2010).⁵ In addition there is a good deal of evidence that violence is typically committed by a small subsection of society, namely young men, but that xenophobic attitudes may be much more broadly shared (Laruelle 2009). For this reason, a focus on xenophobic attitudes permits the analysis of potentially societal-wide views, rather than turning the analytic lens only on the subgroup of actors who are willing to commit violence. These studies suggest that theoretically it makes sense to separate causal factors determining attitudes from actions, especially concerning xenophobic violence per se.

If one were to focus on xenophobic violence as a dependent variable, it would probably make sense to situate that within studies of nationalist mobilization. However, in this case, the issue of collective versus individual action would also have to be considered, because xenophobic violence may be individual, whereas nationalist mobilization is by definition a type of collective action. In contrast, a focus on xenophobic attitudes or beliefs calls out for connections with the scholarship on national identity (as opposed to nationalism).

Contemporary Russian Nationalism and National Identity

There are now several typologies of Russian nationalism and national identity (Brudny 1998; Tolz 1998; Vujačić 2004; Laruelle 2009), all of which reinforce the idea of significant

⁵ For explanations of violence, see Fearon & Laitin (2003) on state capacity and ethnic violence; Beissinger (2002, chapter 6) on patterns of mobilization and violence across countries; (Petersen 2002) on emotion as a cause of ethnic violence.

heterogeneity or contestation over the meaning of national identity in contemporary Russia. In her recent book, Marlène Laruelle (2009) convincingly demonstrates that nationalism in Russia is composed of a diversity of intellectual strands, manifest in a variety of organizations espousing different policies. Like others (Hansen and Hesli 2009; Shevel 2011), Laruelle rejects the civic (good, patriotic) versus ethnic (bad, xenophobic) distinction; instead, she writes that nationalism in Russia "must be conceived in terms of heterogeneity, hybridization, fluidity, and oscillation" (Laruelle 2009, 7). For the same reasons, she argues that it is a mistake to conceptualize Russian nationalism only as a phenomenon of the extreme right (Laruelle 2009, 6).

A concept that exemplifies both the stereotype as well as the complexity of Russian nationalism is the slogan "Russia for the Russians" (*Rossia dlia russkikh*). On the one hand, many analysts have been tracking the rising popularity of the slogan since the 1990s in polls. Based on Levada center surveys, the slogan was supported by 15% of respondents in the early 1990s, and 59% in 2004. However, it turns out that it is not really clear what this slogan means. In 2007 Levada asked people what they thought it meant: 47% said support for Russian culture; 31% said reducing the number of foreigners in the country; and 25% thought it mean affirmative action for Russians in government positions (Laruelle 2009, 39). Indeed, Saideman and Ayres (2008) explicitly argue that there is no agreed upon answer to what it means to be Russian, arguing that in terms of foreign policy "the call of 'Russia for the Russians' foundered on the inability of Russians in the 1990s to agree on an answer to that call" (Saideman and Ayres 2008, 200). Shevel (2011) comes to a similar conclusion, albeit with some evidence that this ambiguity is a purposeful strategy of the government, rather than simply the reflection of societal disagreement.

Objective Criteria for Russian Nationalism and National Identity

The idea of heterogeneity in Russian national identity is not new. Some of the earliest statements on the concept after the end of the USSR ask the question of who counts as "Russian" (Szporluk 1992). Vera Tolz identified five objective bases for definition of the Russian nation (Tolz 1998, 995-96):

1. Empire: Inhabitants of the USSR or Russian Empire
2. Eastern Slavic people: Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians
3. Language: Russian speakers
4. Race or ethnicity: Those who believe they share common descent as Russians
5. Citizenship: All citizens of the current Russian Federation

One can find some support for each of these definitions both in the scholarly literature as well as with organizations or political elites within Russia. Upon reflection, however, none of them present very clear boundaries for the nation.

The first basis—inhabitants of the USSR or the former Russian empire—seems counterintuitive and is complicated by the connection to communism, the Soviet experience, and the non-Russian nationalist policies of that era.⁶ Nevertheless, communists and nationalists in elections in the 1990s (e.g. the National Salvation Front or People's Alliance) did push this view and it is also evident in Szporluk (1992) and Smith (1999). Boris Yeltsin, on the other hand, rejected this view by directly contributing to the end of USSR and recognizing the statehood of other (non-Russian) union republics. More recently Richard Sakwa (2011) has analyzed the lack of coherence in Russian identity at the domestic and international levels.

⁶ Emil Pain (2007, 904) notes this contradiction, but makes sense of it with the concept of "imperial nationalism," which is a type of nationalism that merges empire with nation. Also, on the "accidental" development of Russian national identity during the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union, see (Brandenberger 2010).

The second position, which focuses on eastern Slavic people, has both an ethnic and cultural component, with Orthodoxy also being part of the basis for a shared national identity.⁷ This position was supported by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Sergei Baburin and his Russian Public Union, as well as later in the mid-1990s by the National Salvation Front, which had scaled down its empire goals. The position of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) was not clear. The LDP wanted to stop aid to all former republics, but also didn't recognize Belarus as sovereign state (Saideman and Ayres 2008, 195). The KPRF wanted to form a union with Ukraine and Belarus, but also with Kazakhstan, which although it had a sizeable Russian minority also had a majority of ethnic Kazakhs and hence did not exactly fit the concept of a nation based on the eastern Slavic peoples (Smith 1995).

The idea of a nation based on proficiency in Russian language was provocatively set out as a question by David Laitin (1998), but he ultimately argued that Russian nationalists do not really consider ethnically non-Russian, Russian speakers to be "Russian", and hence Russian language ability is not the key delineator of Russian national identity (Laitin 1998, 314-15). Instead, he suggests that Russians use an ethnic or racial basis for nationhood. Political actors such as N.N. Lysenko and his National Republican Party of Russia or A.P. Barkashov's Russian National Unity (*Russkoe Natsional'noe Edinstvo*, RNE) are examples of parties that support the ethnic approach to Russian national identity in that they oppose non-ethnic Russians within Russia (Tolz 1998, 1004; Saideman and Ayres 2008, 195). The ethnic basis for Russian nationalism may intuitively seem to be the one that makes the most sense, but it suggests homogeneity among ethnic Russians in the content of national identity (e.g. goals, norms,

⁷ On Orthodoxy as an emerging basis for Russian identity see (Warhola and Lehning 2007). On the resurgence of religion in Russia more generally see (Johnson et al. 2005).

relations with other groups, and understanding of information), which is not supported very well by empirical analysis as discussed below.

The fifth basis for nationhood, namely citizenship, also turns out to be not as easy a marker as it might seem. Oxana Shevel (2011) details how citizenship policy in contemporary Russia is complicated by the legal ambiguity in who is allowed to apply for Russian citizenship. Hence, using citizenship as a basis for nationhood, only pushes the debate over who is part of the nation back to a debate over who can be a citizen of Russia. Indeed, it turns out that although there have been supporters of various positions, the question of who is part of the Russian nation has not been solved by any easy objective criteria such as those outlined by Tolz (1998).

Subjective Criteria for Russian Nationalism and National Identity

Rather than objective criteria, Brudny (1998) used ideological positions as a way to differentiate types of Russian national identity. He broke ideology into three components, namely the answers to three questions: 1) Who is in the nation; 2) What is the territory of the nation; and 3) What institutions are appropriate for the nation. Rather than using exogenous criteria for nationhood, this ideological typology focuses attention on how groups define themselves and their goals. By looking at individual or groups' answers to these questions, Brudny developed his three-part typology of Russian national identity: "radical nationalism", "liberal nationalism", and "conservative nationalism" (Brudny 1998, 9).

Others have proposed similar typologies, but have made some important extensions. For example Laruelle (2009) outlines 4 types of nationalism in Russia today:

- 1) Opposition or "extra-parliamentary": Radical movements such as skinheads, RNE or the National Bolshevik Party
- 2) Populism: Protest parties such as the LDPR, KPRF, or Rodina
- 3) Conservative Centrism: United Russia
- 4) Social Consensus: Patriotism in terms of tsarist symbols, the Orthodox church, the army, etc.

Veljko Vujačić (2004, 294) considered nationalist parties and institutions in the 1990s on a left-right spectrum, which he termed the five "pillars" of Russian nationalism:

- 1) Left: the conservative wing of the KPRF and Anpilov's *Trudovaia Rossiia*
- 2) Neo-imperial, anti-communist right: LDPR
- 3) Center right: Sergey Baburin's *Rossiia*
- 4) Extreme right: fascists, conspiracy theorists and Barkashov's RNE⁸
- 5) Intellectuals and ideologists such as the journal *Nash sovremennik*, Aleksandr Dugin's *Elementy*, Eduard Limonov's *Limonka*, Aleksandr Prokhanov's *Den'* and later *Zavtra*.

Vujačić traced the development of unity among these left-right organizations in the 1990s.⁹ His analysis supports one of Laruelle's key arguments, which is that nationalism was (and is) widespread in the country and is not just a phenomenon of the extremes.

Whether one uses three or five categories for delineating types of nationalism, what these typologies share is the view that the content of national identity varies depending on which strand of nationalism focuses on. This has implications for understanding xenophobia because relational comparisons with other groups—i.e. attitudes toward specific outgroups, a key component of xenophobia—would also differ across types of nationalists within Russia.

Xenophobia in Contemporary Russia

Measuring xenophobia is not easy. First there is the question of behavior versus attitudes and which to focus on. Second, the discussion contemporary Russian nationalism suggests that there is considerable disagreement regarding the boundaries of the nation, and therefore there is likely to also be disagreement about those who are not part of the nation (outgroups). Empirical

⁸ Some scholars have also divided extremist groups, i.e. Laruelle's "extra-parliamentary" or Vujačić's "extreme right" groups into further divisions. See for example, Sokolov (2005)'s delineation of orthodox- fundamentalist, geopolitical, occult-racist, and common xenophobic groups, and further discussion of these in (Laryš and Mareš 2011, 131)

⁹ Allensworth details these pillars (national bolshevism, LDPR, fascist extremists, and reform nationalism) in separate chapters in this book (Allensworth 1998).

analysis of xenophobia in Russia today reflects this diversity of views on the nation, its others, and policies toward them.

If we start with xenophobic behavior, there are two empirical routes for analysis: measurement of violence and measurement of mobilization in the form of protests or support for parties or organizations.

Xenophobic Behavior

The leading source for data on xenophobic violence in Russia is the Sova Center in Moscow headed by Alexander Verkhovsky. The center's yearly report and other reports are an important source for scholars and policy makers (Arnold 2010; Verkhovsky and Sibireva 2010; Laryš and Mareš 2011). From this data, there is little question that xenophobic violence has risen in the 2000s.

Laryš and Mareš further suggest that extremist violence might be delineated into types: ad hoc incidents, local conflicts, pre-meditated organized violence, paramilitary units, gangs, and terrorism (Laryš and Mareš 2011, 139-41). They also make the reasonable argument that there are likely to be different causes for each of these types of violence.

However, to date none of these empirical analyses of xenophobic violence offer a systematic or comprehensive explanation for such violence. Laryš and Mareš (2011) argue that "The basic reasons for this violence are racism, as articulated with reference to contemporary factors, and xenophobia, as well as frustration resulting from personal, social and political developments." (Laryš and Mareš 2011, 132-33). Pain (2007) makes a similarly broad case. Racism and xenophobic attitudes, however, are much more widespread than violence, so those factors are not sufficient explanations for violence. One reason for the lack of systematic analysis of violence might be that it is a much more limited phenomenon than xenophobic

mobilization, organizational support, or attitudes more generally. For this reason, at both the individual and regional level, there are serious data constraints on systematic analysis.

In comparison with xenophobic violence, mobilization in terms of support for extremist organizations is a much more widespread phenomenon in Russia today. A number of scholars have attempted to track these organizations.¹⁰ The trajectory laid out in the literature is very consistent: at the time of the end of the USSR there were only a couple dozen extremist groups (e.g. "ultra-radical nationalist" or "far-right" groups), but these have grown significantly over time. Pain reports 10,000 in 2001 and 33,000 in 2004, with the caveat that those "official figures" probably underestimate the number (Pain 2007, 897-98). Laryš and Mareš report that according to an interview with Verkhovsky, in Moscow there are "between 2,000 and 3,000 young skinheads ready to attack and kill immigrants." (Laryš and Mareš 2011, 136). Pain reported 6,000 "neo-Nazis" in Moscow, and over 3,000 in St. Petersburg (Pain 2007, 898).

The structure of these organizations has also changed over time: whereas in the early 1990s they contained less than ten members, Pain writes that "after 2000 groups constituting upwards of 500 members or more began to appear more frequently." (Pain 2007, 898). Some prominent organizations from the 1990s such as RNE have declined in recent years, but they have been replaced by newer organizations such as the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (*Dvizhenie protiv nelegal'noi imigratsii*, DPNI), and the National-Imperial Party of Russia (*Natsional'naya-Derzhavnaya Partiya Rossii*, NDPR) (Varga 2008, 567).¹¹ Alexseev reports that DPNI was formed in July 2002, but by 2010 had members in 30 regions of Russia (Alexseev 2010, 90). The rapid growth in support for these organizations cries out for explanation, but thus

¹⁰ For a comprehensive taxonomy of extremist nationalist organizations as of 2000, see (Verkhovsky 2000). On far right political parties, see (Umland 2002).

¹¹ For analysis of the communication style of the *DPNI* see (Zuev 2010).

far very few scholars have attempted to do this systematically.¹² To the extent that one could get regional data on xenophobic organizations, there may be opportunities for further systematic analysis.

Xenophobic Attitudes

An alternative to looking at xenophobic behavior, whether it is violence or organizational support is to look at attitudes. We might ask, why focus on attitudes when action might be what is the most pressing concern? As it turns out both violence and organizational support, although they are on the rise, are connected with only a very small fraction of the population in Russia. Support for formal parties, for example, is very low: Laruelle reports less than half of surveyed Russian citizens have *heard of* the most-well-known party, RNE, and only 3-5% "sympathize with it" and even less, one-half percent "support" it (Laruelle 2009, 37). Similarly even following the Kondopoga events of 2006,¹³ two-thirds of respondents had not heard of DPNI (Laruelle 2009, 37). A focus only on behavior then will necessarily limit the phenomenon of xenophobia to a rather small subset of the population.

On the other hand, xenophobic attitudes are very wide-spread. Laruelle reports that "since 2003-2004 all conducted surveys show that about two-thirds of the Russian population express some kind of ethnic phobia, albeit to varying degrees of radicality and toward various objects" (Laruelle 2009, 40). Therefore, theoretically, if we want to understand the relationship between xenophobia and national identity, it probably makes sense to analyze that link in the wider population.

¹² (Varga 2008) is an exception.

¹³ Kondopoga is a town in the republic of Karelia where there was a fight between Russians and Caucasians, leading to two deaths, followed by a march by more than 2000 people against Caucasians, targeting Chechens. The police response was very slow to stop the violence.

Thankfully, there are now a few sources of that will allow this kind of analysis. The Levada Center regularly publishes overall results of questions related to xenophobia and nationalism, such as support for the statement of "Russia for Russians." In addition, Mikhail Alexseev (2010) surveyed over 3,000 respondents in 2005 and 2007 in five regions: Volgograd Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, and the Republics of Tatarstan, Adygeia, and Dagestan. Interestingly he surveyed both ethnic Russian respondents (51%) and non-Russian respondents (49%) including Adygeians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs, Russians, and Tatars. He was interested in explaining hostility as well as tolerance for migrants. His survey is a big step forward in understanding the relationship between xenophobia and national identity in that it looks at how different ethnic groups view other groups and he measures the variation in views towards others rather than assuming that one group will have the same view towards all others.

Another survey was conducted by Theodore Gerber and Sarah Mendelson in 2001-2004 (hereafter the Gerber-Mendelson dataset).¹⁴ They surveyed over 11,000 individuals across 43 regions of Russia. While the vast majority self-identify as ethnically Russian (89.7%) other groups include Armenians, Avars, Bashkirs, Belarusians, Chuvash, Georgians, Jews, Komi, Tatars, and Ukrainians. More importantly, however, is that the dataset includes questions about feelings toward nine different groups: Americans, Azerbaijanis, Catholics, Chechens, Roma, Italians, Jews, Muslims, and Swedes. Respondents were able to choose from the following terms: "admiration, sympathy, no special feelings, hostility, fear, and not sure," allowing for the disaggregation of views towards outgroups. In addition, the dataset also includes some questions with national identity content, beyond the ethnic labels, including support for Stalin or Andrei Sakharov as well as religious identity.

¹⁴ For more detailed discussion of this dataset see (Herrera and Kraus 2011) or (Kraus 2008).

The case for the empirical separation of data on national identity from support for xenophobia is supported by work outside the Russian context. First, some have argued that ingroup attachment and outgroup denigration may simply be different phenomena (Brewer 2001); if that is correct, treating them as the same in terms of data collection would be a mistake.

In the context of American politics, many scholars have sought to distinguish "patriotism" from "chauvinism," where patriotism essentially means pride or ingroup attachment (a positive type of national identity), and chauvinism means prejudice or outgroup denigration (xenophobia) (Sidanius et al. 1997; Citrin et al. 2001; de Figueiredo and Elkins 2003; Huddy and Khatib 2007). Sidanius et al. define "patriotism" as "love of country and its major symbols"; in contrast, they define chauvinism (which they confusingly term "nationalism") as "desire for the dominance of one's own nation over others" (Sidanius et al. 1997, 106). Citrin et al. have a similar definition of chauvinism as "an extreme and bounded loyalty, the belief in one's country's superiority, whether it is right or wrong" (Citrin et al. 2001, 75). There is now quite a bit of evidence that if one distinguishes these two phenomena, there are significant differences in their causes as well as their implications for other variables including conflict, support for public policies, etc. In addition, levels of patriotism and chauvinism differ across ethnic groups (Citrin et al. 2001; Sidanius and Petrocik 2001).

In the Eurasian region, Stephen Saideman and R. William Ayres (2008) followed a related strategy in order to explain irredentism by dividing into two independent variables, the strength of ethnic attachments on the one hand, and the level of tolerance toward ethnic outgroups on the other. Similarly Holley Hansen and Vicki Hesli (2009) analyzed national identity in Ukraine using those two dimensions. In addition Hansen and Hesli surveyed multiple ethnic groups, Russians, Crimean Tatars, Hungarians and Roma (Hansen and Hesli 2009), in

order to get at differences in how different ethnic group attachments are related to tolerance (or intolerance). By separating ingroup attachment from outgroup intolerance these studies are able to evaluate how strength of ethnic attachment may or may not be associated with intolerance.

In their analysis, Hansen and Hesli do not evaluate differences in national identity within the ethnic ingroup, which the discussion above on the diversity within Russian national identity suggests may be significant. However, their dataset contains information on religious affiliation, language use, region, and age cohorts (Hansen and Hesli 2009, 9-11) and hence one might be able to do further analysis with the dataset to evaluate differences in national identity types and tolerance. One limitation of both the Hansen and Hesli data, as well as the qualitative work by Saideman and Ayres, however, is that they do not investigate attitudes toward different outgroups and hence are not able to evaluate differences in the evaluation of different outgroups as in the Alexseev (2010) dataset or the Gerber-Mendelson dataset.

By way of concluding this discussion of xenophobic attitudes in Russia it is worth highlighting some important features of popular xenophobia that have been outlined by Laruelle (2009, 38), which have implications for measurement of attitudes. First, in characterizing xenophobic violence, Laruelle argues that the racist aspect is frequently downplayed in the media and in society, with the idea instead that it is just hooliganism or some kind of youthful bad behavior.¹⁵ Second, there seems to be some contradictory views of racism and nationalism in surveys. On the one hand, violence and explicit fascism are condemned, and the term "nationalism" also has negative connotations, but on the other hand a concept like "racial purity" is not rejected (it got a 53% approval on a survey from 2004) (Laruelle 2009, 38). Similarly

¹⁵ For more on broader discourses of legitimization of xenophobia in a case study of Krasnodar see (Popov and Kuznetsov 2008).

when racist groups are framed as patriotic, they get approval, but if they are linked to overtly fascist or Nazi symbols the approval declines.

Third, Laruelle argues that during and since Soviet times there has not been a "universalistic" approach against racism or towards different groups in the sense of treating all human beings as equal. Instead, as is well known, soviet nationality policy enshrined national differences while promoting friendship among *different* groups. Laruelle cites Mischa Grabowitsch's summary of this position, "The anti-racist or anti-nationalist message... is never understood as a universalist message of total neutrality toward nationality and skin color: it is always meant to highlight the hospitality of the Russian (or Soviet) people, who welcome the outsiders despite their otherness" (Laruelle 2009, 38). Along these lines, Laruelle points out the "host" vs. "guest" (*khoziain* vs. *gost'*) trope that one finds both in xenophobic discourse (e.g. Zhirinovskiy's 1996 book) as well as in scholarly discourse about migrants, where Russians are the owner/hosts, and non-Russians are guests who have been invited (and can be asked to leave).¹⁶

Theories of Xenophobia and National Identity

Given a basic understanding of how nationalism and xenophobia are defined theoretically, and how they have been defined in the Russian context, we can now review theoretically the connection between the two, including testable hypotheses and the existing empirical evidence for them. In brief, as discussed in detail in Herrera and Kraus (2011) there are four basic hypothesis linking xenophobia and national identity. The first, which derives from Social Identity Theory, is that xenophobia equals extreme nationalism or more simply, "pride equals prejudice." As national identity strengthens, so should xenophobia. This hypothesis does

¹⁶ On concept of non-Russians as "migrants" see (Popov and Kuznetsov 2008).

not suggest there should be any differentiation in outgroups, but rather that they should be equally disliked as national identity strengthens.

A second hypothesis comes from Social Dominance theory and suggests that some national identity groups, the historically dominant ones, will be more xenophobic than others. A related hypothesis is that there is heterogeneity within a national identity group and that xenophobia is a result of one strand or type of national identity within a group.

The third and final hypothesis is that xenophobia or the denigration of outgroups is actually the end of process, which begins with nationalism and ingroup attachment, but that other factors intervene to turn nationalists against particular outgroups. These other factors can include group threats (demographic, cultural, economic) or elite manipulation, as well as other factors such as age, gender, education, institutional context, etc. I consider the evidence for each of these in turn below using results from available sources and I discuss the ways that regional analysis might be used to test these hypotheses.

1. Pride equals prejudice

Social psychology offers a number of explanations as to why humans form identity groups (ingroups) and what the implications for group formation are on attitudes toward outgroups. Perhaps most prominent is Social Identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel 1981), which hypothesizes that the creation of an in-group identity will tend to produce competitive behavior with out-groups because the process of in-group identity creation by necessity requires, or leads to, the devaluation of out-groups. While SIT adds a new approach to group formation, it builds on a longstanding traditional view of "ethnocentrism" (Sumner 1906), which suggests that the stronger the attachment to the ingroup, the more negative the view of the outgroup.¹⁷ It is from

¹⁷ For support of this argument in the South African context see (Gibson and Gouws 2000).

these theories that we get the commonsense notion that extreme national identity equals xenophobia.

This theoretical approach to the relationship between national identity and xenophobia can be summarized in two testable hypotheses:

H1a: A stronger sense of national identity should be associated with higher levels of xenophobia.

H1b: Xenophobia toward outgroups should be relatively equal across outgroups given the same strength of national identity.

Hypothesis 1a has been examined outside the Russian context and there is mounting evidence against it. Based on research in social psychology, Brewer (2001) argued that "ingroup love" does not necessarily equal "outgroup hate." In the US context Herring et al. (1999) and Oliver and Wong (2003) similarly argue against this hypothesis. In a series of case studies, including one of Russia, Saideman & Ayres were able distinguish "identification with kin" from tolerance towards others, similarly making the case that pride does not always equal prejudice (Saideman and Ayres 2008). As discussed above Hansen and Hesli (2009) found a similar distinction across ethnic groups in Ukraine.

Herrera and Kraus (2011) used the Gerber-Mendelson dataset to test the second hypothesis (1b) and they demonstrate very clearly that xenophobia toward outgroups is not equal across target groups. Across all ethnic groups surveyed, the percent of respondents registering either fear or hostility towards specific groups varied widely: for example, 40% said they felt fear or hostility toward Roma, 37% toward Chechens, 23% toward Azerbaijanis, 14% toward Americans, 10% toward Muslims, 8% toward Jews, 2% toward Catholics, and less than 1%

toward Italians and Swedes (Herrera and Kraus 2011, Table 3).¹⁸ Moreover, one of the central conclusions from Herrera and Kraus's statistical analysis is that there are significant differences across types of xenophobia, i.e. predictors of xenophobia against Roma are very different from those associated with xenophobia against Chechens, Azerbaijanis, or Muslims.

Similar results regarding differences in how groups view other groups are reported by other scholars as well. In an analysis of 10 republics in 1999-2000 regarding nationalist mobilization (attitudes toward separatism), Hagendoorn et al. found quite a bit of variation in how titulars versus ethnic Russians evaluated each other (Hagendoorn et al. 2008, 364).

In Alexseev's study (2010), he found that "whereas ethnic Russian respondents generally held negative views of most non-Russian ethnic minorities, the latter held considerably more positive views of ethnic Russians than of other non-Russian ethnic groups." (Alexseev 2010, 118). In addition, he also found large differences in animosities between ethnic groups in Russia, with "disproportionately strong animosities" between Caucasian and East Asian groups, especially on the issue of inter-marriage. He noted that, "the Caucasus-Asian negativity has been stronger than intra-Caucasus and Caucasus-Russian negativity" (Alexseev 2010, 118).

Conclusions and opportunities for further analysis of the pride equals prejudice hypotheses

The results overall from these qualitative and quantitative studies of xenophobic attitudes suggests that there is not much empirical evidence for hypothesis 1a, namely that the view that xenophobia is simply a stronger level of national identity, nor hypothesis 1b, which was that xenophobia should be relatively equal across all outgroups. These results call into question a research strategy that treats views of outgroups as uniform, and suggests instead that we should

¹⁸ It is interesting that Roma are the most disliked group in this survey, but in the literature on xenophobia and nationalism in Russia or FSU states, with the exception of (Hansen and Hesli 2009), they get very little scholarly attention.

consider variation attitudes or behavior across out-groups. One way that we might think about doing this is to analyze how regions differ in views of specific groups or how attitudes towards groups differs across regions.

This type of regional research would require additional data. Despite the virtues of the nine target groups considered in the Gerber-Mendelson dataset which covers forty-three regions and the six target groups in Alexseev's (2010) data which covers five regions, one glaring omission is data on views towards Chinese. Alexseev has a book on the topic of xenophobia towards Chinese in the Far Eastern regions of Russia (Alexseev 2006), but ideally we would like to consider the question of xenophobia toward Chinese in conjunction with analysis of xenophobia toward other groups and for that we would need a more comprehensive dataset with a wide variety of groups. It seems very likely that views towards specific outgroups would vary across regions, and knowing something about each outgroup would improve understanding of the causes of that xenophobia, e.g. explanations of xenophobia towards Chechens, Roma and Chinese may entail different factors.

In this same vein, it is also worth thinking theoretically about groups and categorization. Typically ethnic groups are included, but certain religious categories have been treated like ethnic groups in Russia, e.g. Jews, whereas other categories, e.g. Muslim, appear rather abstract to average Russians.¹⁹ In addition, the Roma pose a number of classification difficulties because they are an ethnic group, but also differ from other groups in terms of class, culture, and lifestyle choices. Hence, those who are xenophobic toward Roma may not think of themselves as being ethnically or racially prejudiced but rather as taking a stand against a disagreeable lifestyle choice.

¹⁹ Laruelle (2009) says that "islamophobia" was not common in Russia until recently, but that in recent years Muslim as a category is becoming reified.

Another issue to consider in cross-regional data collection and analysis is that regions present an opportunity to study not only attitudes but also behavior. While it is the case that lot of people with xenophobic attitudes are not formally members of organized groups or even supportive of such groups, organizational strength probably varies across regions and such variation would be a source of analytic leverage in understanding the basis for the very rapid expansion of xenophobic organizations in the 2000s.²⁰ Actual violence could also be analyzed across regions. Laryš and Mareš (2011, 139-41) present regional level data on "race violence" for 2004-2008 collected by the Sova Center (Kozhevnikova 2009), and such data is updated yearly.²¹ But so far it has not been systematically analyzed using statistical methods. One issue however with regard to the cross-regional data on violence that exists is that it is thus far not disaggregated across outgroups.

2. Some Nationalists Are Xenophobic: Social Dominance Theory and Heterogeneity Within National Identities

Studies that focus on the content of nationalist ideology tend to examine heterogeneity within national identities, although there are varying levels of contestation which may make one or another strand dominant at a particular time. In the case of contemporary Russian national identity, as discussed above there are a number of studies that point to heterogeneity. In addition, several works point to the idea of an "imperial", non-democratic sense of national identity, which reaches back to the Russian empire. The imperial legacy makes national identity and nationalism in Russia different in its outlook towards others, than nationalism in other FSU states (Brudny and Finkel 2011).²² This idea is compatible with social dominance theory,

²⁰ For example, Alexseev argues that the DPNI had members in 30 Russian regions by 2010 (Alexseev 2010, 90).

²¹ See (Kozhevnikova 2010) for the latest report.

²² See also (Pain 2007) on the concept of "imperial nationalism."

pioneered by Sidanius and colleagues, e.g. (Sidanius et al. 1997), and also builds on earlier theories of group threat, e.g. Blumer (1958) and Quillian (1995). Social dominance theory suggests that historical group hierarchies matter, and that the dominant group "regards itself as having preeminent right to an ownership of the nation, its resources, and its symbols" (Sidanius et al. 1997, 105). Thus we should expect dominant groups to have attitudes toward outgroups that differ from subordinate groups.

Two somewhat competing testable hypothesis that can be derived from theories focusing on the content of Russian national identity and social dominance theory:

H2a: Russians will be more xenophobic compared to other national identity groups within Russia

H2b: National identities may be heterogeneous and xenophobia may be associated with one strand within a national identity

Note that in the first hypothesis (H2a) national identity is treated somewhat homogenously, where an entire national identity group is presumed to have certain views towards outgroups. In contrast, in the second (H2b) hypothesis, the national identity group, Russian in this case, is broken up in terms of content or ideology and some ideological strands or factions within the group are presumed to be more xenophobic than others. Unlike hypotheses 1a and 1b, however, xenophobia is associated with specific content or type of national identity rather than just being a function of the strength of a given identity.

In evaluating hypothesis 2a, Herrera and Kraus (2011) found that Ukrainians narrowly edged out Russians as the most xenophobic ethnic group compared to other FSU groups in the study, while Belarusians came in third. Yet taken together these three groups (Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians) do represent a historically dominant group (Eastern Slavic people) and as a group they were more xenophobic compared to other subordinate ethnic groups, which

does suggest support for social dominance theory. However, it is hard to explain the different levels of xenophobia beyond those three groups using social dominance theory because the average level of xenophobia does not seem to follow a particular dominance hierarchy in terms of historical relations with the Russian empire or Soviet state.

Alexseev (2010) presents a similar finding with regard to dominant groups. In his study, which examined relations between Adygeians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs, Russians, and Tatars, he wrote that "The strongest finding of the 2005–2007 surveys is that ethnic Russians were consistently more hostile and less tolerant toward migrants than ethnic non-Russians" (Alexseev 2010, 96). Moreover, he continued, "The second-strongest finding is that non-Russians representing titular ethnic groups were more hostile and less tolerant toward migrants than non-Russians representing non-titular ethnic groups" (Alexseev 2010, 101). In addition having majority status as a titular group also increased xenophobia (Alexseev 2010, 106). In sum, Russians were the most xenophobic, titular groups were more xenophobic than non-titulars, and majority group titulars were more xenophobic than minority group titulars. While Alexseev does not use the language of social dominance theory, his argument about titularity and the institutionalized privileges it confers is entirely consistent with and supportive of the theory.

With regard to hypothesis 2b, Herrera and Kraus (2011) examine heterogeneity within Russian national identity and they find that the type of national identity does matter for xenophobia: supporters of Stalin were more xenophobic towards all groups (Chechens, Roma, Azerbaijanis and Muslims), but the opposite was true for supporters of Sakharov, and the Sakharov effect was only significant in the case of Chechens. Orthodoxy was positively associated with xenophobia, but again only toward Chechens.

Although their dependent variable was not xenophobia, but instead attitudes towards nationalist mobilization in the form of separatism, Hagendoorn et al.'s (2008) cross-regional study is instructive and provides further evidence in support of hypothesis 2b, connecting specific types of national identity with particular views toward outgroups. Hagendoorn et al. were interested in evaluations of out-groups, as well as inter-group relations within republics in order to explain support for separatism. They focused on ten republics—Karelia, Komi, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Udmurtia, Adygeia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Sakha-Yakutia and Tuva—in a survey of both ethnic Russians (n=5,233) and non-Russian titulars (n=4,703) conducted during 1999-2000. They selected these regions based on proportions of Russian and titular groups as well as economic factors (Hagendoorn et al. 2008, 360). They tested a number of hypotheses but one of their main findings was that support for separatism varied among Russians and non-Russian titulars, and negative views of outgroups (which varied across regions) was a factor in explaining separatist support among different groups.

Conclusions and opportunities for further analysis of specific national identities' relationship with xenophobia

The analysis above provides some support for hypothesis 2a, namely that Russians or Eastern Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) are more xenophobic than other than other national identity groups within Russia, and that titulars are also more xenophobic than non-titular groups. There is also support for hypothesis 2b, namely that within a national identity group there may be heterogeneity with some factions of the group more xenophobic than others.

These findings suggest the need to analyze how national identity can vary across or within regions. There is clearly a need for more focused and systematic survey data on the content of Russian national identity. We do have data on "ethnicity" from the censuses—although the census questions actually ask about a "sense of national belongingness" (in 2002 and after) or

"nationality" (before 2002) rather than "ethnicity" per se—but we don't have a dataset on Russian national identity that would include information on ideological commitments (e.g. following (Brudny 1998)) or identity content, e.g. norms, goals, views toward other groups or cognitive content (Abdelal et al. 2006, 2009). This kind of disaggregation of Russian national identity, if it were also done cross-regionally, would be tremendously useful in analyzing the ways in which Russian national identity is related to xenophobia.

Thankfully, in terms of qualitative research on Russian national identity there is a growing body of work upon which to build. Laruelle's (2009) book provides a number of insights into Russian national identity in general. Leokadia Drobizheva has a recent book (Drobizheva 2009) that also considers regional analysis of development of Russian identity.

There are also some case studies on Russian nationalism or xenophobic identity using a variety of methods. Yulia Mikhailova (2011) conducted a systematic content analysis of the discourse surrounding the Kondopoga riots (2006) and the bombings in the Moscow subway (2010), in order to get at the discourse of nationalism surrounding seemingly xenophobic violence. David Benn examined textbooks and the teaching of history in contemporary Russia (Benn 2010). Hilary Pilkington examined skinhead culture in Vorkhuta, Komi (Pilkington 2010). And Maya Atwal has studied the youth organization Nashi, which could be classified as patriotic, a nationalist organization, or a pro-government group (Atwal 2009).

There are also a number of case studies of regional identity in Russia. For example, Hege Toje has published a case study on Cossack identity and mobilization in Krasnodar (Toje 2006). Ulrike Ziemer has analyzed gender and ethnic identity in Armenian girls in Russia as a "diasporic identity" (Ziemer 2010). Although it is not regionally based, this type of case study could be instructive in thinking about how ethnic or national identities vary across regions.

3. Why xenophobia develops in some cases: Group threat and elite manipulation

In contrast to the above theories in which xenophobia is a function of the development of particular national identities, a somewhat different approach is to consider the development of outgroup denigration in terms of factors that are different from the development of ingroup attachment; in other words, ask what are the factors, beyond national identity formation, that lead to xenophobia. Marilyn Brewer (2001), for example, posits a multistage process whereby group formation occurs and, only in some cases, is followed by competition with other groups, leading to a lack of trust, and then a sense of threat.²³ She notes that "Ingroup identification thus precedes outgroup hostility and intergroup conflict but is not by itself a sufficient explanation for such conflict" (Brewer 2001, 17). Brewer also notes that the competition between groups can be based on material or psychological factors, and threats also may be real or perceived. In this way she does not posit a specific factor that leads to a sense of group threat.

In the xenophobia literature, group threat theory is perhaps the leading paradigm for explaining outgroup hostility. Broadly speaking, group threat theory (e.g. (Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995; Hjern 2007)) predicts that the existence and expansion of out-groups threatens dominant ingroups' material advantages and historical privileges. Because the ingroup perceives the out-group as a threat, there will be a rise in prejudicial or xenophobic behavior.

In order to test group threat theories, it is useful to delineate the main bases for group threat into the following categories: demographic or cultural threat, and economic threat. From the literature on nationalism we can also add the possibility of elite manipulation, which may result in a perceived sense of group threat, regardless of its objective basis.

²³ Most of the nationalism and national identity literature is concerned with the first step only, that is the formation of national attachments.

Demographic or Cultural threat

Stated most simply, a demographic threat considers the number of people in the outgroup relative to the ingroup (Bowyer 2009). Here, it is the physical presence of the other that constitutes a threat. One problem with this theory is that it does not address the basis of hostility other than being in the outgroup, and as such it doesn't explain the differential treatment of different outgroups. A cultural threat is related to a demographic threat in the sense that the presence of others may threaten a group's ability to uphold its own culture.²⁴

A contrast to these views is the theory of group contact (Allport [1954] 1979), which suggests that under certain circumstances, increased intergroup contact will improve understanding and relations between two groups and reduce xenophobia. In this case, the existence of the out-group itself is not as important as the nature of the interactions between groups. We can consider group contact to be in many ways the opposite of a demographic threat argument. A testable hypothesis based on these theories can be stated as follows:

H3a: Increasing numbers of outgroup members in proximity to the ingroup will increase xenophobia.

In the Russian context we would expect ethnic Russians to be the ingroup and outgroups would be non-Russian groups. To evaluate this hypothesis, we would need demographic composition data, ideally collected over time to be able to identify any patterns of changes in populations as well as corresponding attitudes.

Unfortunately, such data is not included in the Geber-Mendelson dataset nor in Alexseev (2010)'s dataset. However, Alexseev did ask questions related to demographic and cultural threats, and his findings do not support the group threat hypothesis. He writes,

²⁴ Sniderman et al. in a series of experimental surveys tried to separate and test hypotheses related to cultural vs. economic threats and found some support for the cultural threat hypothesis, but also for the economic threat hypothesis (Sniderman et al. 2004).

"Asked if the influx of migrants into one's region/republic/kray may one day result in their numbers increasing so much that one would no longer be able to consider these areas as part of Russia, most non-Russian respondents answered "no"—whereas most of the ethnic Russian respondents in the 2005 survey answered "yes." This showed that Russia's ethnic minorities were less concerned about being "invaded," "overwhelmed," or "swamped" by migrants than ethnic Slavs—despite being less numerous and therefore more likely to be "swamped."” (Alexseev 2010, 98,100)

In an earlier book Alexseev (2006) presents similar evidence about the disconnect between the perception of immigrants as a numerical threat and the reality. He found that Russian citizens in the Far East provinces routinely overestimate, by a factor of ten, the number of Chinese immigrants to the region, and they consider these Chinese immigrants a very serious threat despite their small number.

Similarly, while Herrera and Kraus (2011) could not evaluate this hypothesis directly with demographic data, the composition of views towards different outgroups does not support the hypothesis. In particular, xenophobia toward Roma, Chechens, and Azerbaijanis is far stronger than all other groups in the survey, yet the Roma, Chechen, and Azerbaijani populations are extremely small in Russia (according to the 2002 Russian census, there are approximately 183,000 Roma, or 0.13% of the population, approximately 1.3 million Chechens, or 0.94% of the population, and approximately 621,840 Azerbaijanis, or 0.43%). The largest non-Russian groups in Russia according to 2002 census data are Tatars (3.83%), Ukrainians (2.03%), Bashkirs (1.15%), and Chuvashs (1.13%). The number of Chinese migrants, who may also pose a potential demographic threat, are not well documented. Another issue is that many Russian outside urban areas with negative attitudes towards Chechens, Roma, and Azerbaijanis may not *ever* have met individuals from those groups, nor have any realistic prospects of doing so. While not a direct test of the demographic threat hypothesis, these facts suggest that the physical presence of individuals (or groups) is not critical for the presence of xenophobic attitudes toward

such groups, although a perceived demographic or cultural threat as noted in Alexseev's findings may well exist.

Economic threat

In contrast to the some other formulations of threat hypotheses, Lawrence Bobo (1983) argues that the competition between dominants and subordinates is not just about feelings and prerogatives, but is both a cause and result of real material competition. Grounded in conflicting material interests then, Bobo argues that competition for finite resources drives group prejudice (Bobo 1983; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). In this sense Bobo's argument is a form of "realistic conflict theory."²⁵ Similarly, other studies have found that individuals who feel more economically vulnerable express more xenophobic attitudes (Semyonov et al. 2004).

Much of the nationalism literature also takes a materialist position on group conflict. For example, Henry Hale make a distinction between ethnic group formation, which he argues in social psychology terms is based on uncertainty reduction, and ethnic politics, which he suggests is primarily based on material interests (Hale 2008, 53-55).²⁶ Similarly, Brewer (2001) suggests that competition over scarce resources might be a source of group competition (one step in the process leading to mistrust and hostility). Horowitz (2000) also makes this argument. One could even go back to Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1991) and recast modernization and capitalist development as factors leading to intergroup competition and conflict.

Interestingly, however, although they may share an emphasis on material competition, the group threat arguments are somewhat at odds with many explanations of nationalism, including those that focus on blocked mobility prospects (Gellner 1983). Group-threat theories of

²⁵ See (Sherif et al. 1961).

²⁶ Hale suggests other motives such as power, security, status, and even self-esteem, but his main emphasis is on material interests.

xenophobia, as well as social dominance theories, are primarily focused on the dominant group and its feelings towards others (or subordinates), whereas theories such as Gellner's are largely focused on the subordinate's perspective. One result is that the same variable in these theories could have opposite effects: for example, higher education is generally posited to be positively related to nationalist mobilization (especially when mobility prospects of such people are blocked), but negatively related to xenophobia.

Nevertheless, the basic idea in these approaches is that it is the threat to economic privilege per se, above other kinds of threats, that leads to denigration of perceived outgroup competitors. We can formulate this hypothesis as follows:

H3b: Increasing perceptions that a group's economic position is threatened by specific outgroups will increase xenophobia toward such groups.

At the individual level, economic vulnerability by individuals should be associated with xenophobia against others seen as economic threats.

Although Herrera and Kraus (2011) investigated this hypothesis using a number of different variables (income, unemployment, economic fear, and education), the results do not lend themselves to simple conclusions. Unemployment and economic fear were positive and significant for xenophobia toward Chechens, but only unemployment was significant in xenophobia toward Muslims. Neither was statistically significant for either Roma or Azerbaijanis. For the latter two, however, income was significant, but it was *higher* income that was associated with higher levels of xenophobia toward Roma and Azerbaijanis, which is the opposite of what the economic threat or vulnerability hypotheses would suggest. Higher education was significant and negative for xenophobia towards Chechens and Azerbaijanis, but it was not significant for Muslims, while for Roma it was significant and *positively* related, which

is a rather surprising result. Thus, we can conclude that while economic factors do matter for xenophobia, their results vary across groups.

In Alexseev's analysis of both hostility and tolerance toward outgroups, economic variables such as blue collar status, income, and unemployment were all not significant, while higher education was significant only in reducing hostility (Alexseev 2010, 115).

Based on qualitative analysis of survey data, Laruelle argues that economic deprivation or threat as an explanation for xenophobia only applies to supporters of the most racial elements; she says that it is young people without higher education from small or medium towns who support skinheads or parties such as RNE, while older rural people support the LDPR (Laruelle 2009, 44). In addition, she also argued that since the second half of the 1990s xenophobia has grown in the population and it is now found among educated, higher income, urban people, who are also the most politically active (Laruelle 2009, 44-45).

In one of the only quantitative cross-regional studies of xenophobia Nicole Kraus (2008) used hierarchical linear models to assess the effect of individual and regional-level predictors, primarily focusing on the group threat hypotheses. Using the Gerber-Mendelson dataset combined with 2002 census data on the 43 regions represented in the survey, she analyzed attitudes of ethnic Russians. The most significant finding for individuals was that those with *higher* income were more xenophobic, controlling for other factors. At the regional level, however, higher unemployment was associated with less xenophobia. These two findings are somewhat contradictory in terms of the economic threat hypothesis. However, they are consistent with some of the qualitative findings that suggest income may be positively related to xenophobia.

Elite manipulation

A leading theory of nationalist mobilization in political science suggests actions by elites are critical for nationalist mobilization and may also be behind xenophobic attitudes. At one end of the spectrum there is the manipulation of information by elites or "ethnic entrepreneurs" (Rabshka and Shepsle 1972; Laitin 1998). This instrumentalist perspective questions the authenticity of nationalist beliefs: elites are simply using nationalist discourse to pursue other goals, while the masses are manipulated into following elites.²⁷ At the other side of the spectrum elites may actually believe in their nationalist claims and they may take actions against other groups (such initiating conflict) which leads to mass level antagonism toward such groups .

To the extent that a government is supporting xenophobic attitudes, it may do this through media control, and those individuals who most closely identify with or support the government will be most likely to embrace the government's xenophobic message. Three hypotheses follow from this perspective:

H3c: Government action or rhetoric against particular groups will result in greater popular level xenophobic attitudes against those groups. Where governments control media this effect will be stronger

H3d: Individuals who support xenophobic elites are more likely to express xenophobic attitudes themselves

Vladimir Shlapentokh has directly examined these hypotheses in a number of works (Shlapentokh 2007, 2011). Essentially he argues that through media control, President Vladimir Putin strategically used xenophobia and nationalism to gain and maintain political power. He writes, "It is the elite, through its ability to control and manipulate the media, education and literature, which has the power to either foster or stifle xenophobia" (Shlapentokh 2011, 878).

²⁷ For a critique of instrumentalism see (Giuliano 2000).

He analyzed Levada Center surveys regarding the US, Ukraine and Georgia, and argued that for 2009

"Ukraine and Georgia headed the list of the most committed enemies of Russia. In June 2009, Georgia even surpassed the United States in the ranks of Russian adversaries with 62% naming it as 'a main enemy' of Russia, while only 45% named the United States as its main adversary; Ukraine was considered to be the most dangerous threat by 41% of the Russian people. Since the beginning of Putin's rule, the number of Russians who harbour negative feelings towards Ukraine has increased by almost two and a half times, rising from 23% in July 2001 to 56% in May 2009. Russians' negative sentiments toward Georgia have risen by just under 50%, from 40% in October 2001 to 69% in May 2009." (Shlapentokh 2011, 876-77)

He also argued that anti-americanism is due primarily to elite manipulation, including media control by the government, rather than being a deep-rooted aspect of Russian national identity (Shlapentokh 2011).

Herrera and Kraus (Herrera and Kraus 2011) were only able to examine the second of these hypotheses on elite manipulation (H3d) using the Gerber-Mendelson dataset. The measure however, was indirect in that it asked about confidence in Vladimir Putin. Herrera and Kraus found that confidence in Putin was not significant for Chechens or Roma, but was significant and *negative* in its prediction of xenophobia toward Muslims and Azerbaijanis, meaning that those who were more confident in the president were less likely to be xenophobic toward these Muslims and Azerbaijanis. This is the opposite of the expected effect, but it may be that confidence is appreciably different from support for the government or susceptibility to manipulation, and it also may be that confident people have a more positive outlook in general, including in their attitudes toward others.

Conclusions and opportunities for further analysis of group threat and elite manipulation explanations of xenophobia

Although it seems intuitive and still commands a lot of attention in the scholarly literature on xenophobia, the evidence that ecological presence of outgroup members is what causes outgroup hostility or xenophobia (hypothesis 3a) is very sparse. As discussed above in the Russian case and in the wider literature, there are many groups, such as Roma, that are deeply disliked despite their extremely small presence in the population, and many others (e.g. Chinese) whose presence in the population is wildly exaggerated.²⁸ While it probably is not necessary to further "disprove" the demographic threat hypothesis, regional analysis of xenophobic attitudes that is disaggregated by target group, combined with demographic data on target groups, could illuminate the some of the reasons for xenophobia toward specific groups.

Analysis of economic threats (hypothesis 3b) remains a potentially fertile but complicated area for additional regional analysis. On the one hand there are some findings that contradict the economic threat hypothesis (e.g. Alexseev (2010); or Kraus (2008) and Herrera and Kraus (2011)'s findings on income), but others that support it (Kraus (2008) and Herrera and Kraus (2011)'s findings on unemployment). Herrera and Kraus disaggregated xenophobia toward target groups, but the results were still not necessarily supportive or disproving of the economic threat hypothesis. Interestingly there are some similarly contradictory findings in terms of nationalist mobilization, with some scholars arguing that it is rich regions that most likely to be separatist, but with well known cases of poor regions (such as Chechnya) which are also among the most separatist.²⁹ It might be that moving to the level of economic perceptions rather than real economic circumstances is the way forward (Herrera 2005; Alexseev 2006), but

²⁸ There are similar findings for anti-Semitism in Europe, where some of the most anti-Semitic areas were places with very few if any Jewish residents.

²⁹ For a full discussion of this literature see (Herrera 2005).

it could also be that we simply need better data on regional economic conditions related to xenophobia and better regional data for xenophobia disaggregated across groups in order to more fully understand the relationship.

In addition to economic variables, it may also make sense to consider regional variation in structural variables such as age, sex, education, and urbanization. Many of these variables have been significant in existing work, but they are somewhat under-theorized in the case of age and sex, and have effects in opposite directions in the case of education's relation to xenophobia versus nationalism. It should also be noted that Alexseev (2010) found that there was asymmetry in factors related to tolerance and intolerance; that is, particular factors that reduce intolerance, do not necessarily increase tolerance. (Alexseev 2010, 115). This suggests that further studies of xenophobia should take this asymmetry into account.

In considering other exogenous factors might lead to the development xenophobia among some groups, a variable that is conspicuously absent in the xenophobia literature is institutions. Whether from a historical perspective (Suny 1993; Martin 2001; Hirsch 2005) or a more contemporary lens (Bunce 1999; Gorenburg 2001; Beissinger 2002; Lankina 2002; Gorenburg 2006; Roeder 2007), institutions are considered to be a primary factor in much of the scholarship related to national identity construction and mobilization in the USSR and its successor states. As Gorenburg noted, "while both shared ethnic identity and social networks exist independently of institutional arrangements, institutions can play a key role in determining the depth of the sense of common identity and the exact nature of social networks among the minority population" (Gorenburg 2001, 74). Yet, strangely this factor is not very prominent in the xenophobia literature on Russia or in the xenophobia literature more generally.

One study that comes close is that of Anton Popov and Igor Kuznetsov (2008). They considered the discourses of legitimation of xenophobia in Krasnodar. In addition, Mihai Varga (2008) uses the social movements literature to theoretically situate the growth of xenophobic organizations in Russia. Varga argues that rather than just nationalist ideology or attitudes, the political opportunity structure is a key factor in the growth of far-right activism (Varga 2008). Collection of additional data related to the institutions that support Russian national identity formation and mobilization, as well as the institutional context for xenophobia would seem to be a prime opportunity for further research on xenophobia.

Finally, with regard to the hypothesis that government action or rhetoric is responsible for xenophobia (H3c) or that individuals who are supportive of such governments are more likely to be xenophobic (H3d), there seems to be a huge opportunity for regional analysis. These hypotheses have been supported in work by Shlapentokh (2007, 2011) but not systematically across regions, and Herrera and Kraus (2011) were only able to indirectly test for government support. One could analyze media coverage on xenophobia or nationalism across regions, the level of media control by the government, as well as variation in support for the government or elites across regions. Additional regional data on xenophobia combined with existing data on these variables at the regional level would allow for a more complete analysis of the elite manipulation hypotheses.

Conclusion

To date there have not been very many studies of xenophobia across Russian regions³⁰ and there have been no systematic quantitative studies of Russian national identity across regions. One of the key implications of the above discussion of existing work on the relationship

³⁰ Notable exceptions as discussed earlier include (Kraus 2008; Alexseev 2010; Laryš and Mareš 2011).

between national identity and xenophobia, however, is that regional analysis of Russian national identity and xenophobia is potentially a very fruitful way of gaining analytic leverage on the causes of xenophobia and it may also provide a more complete understanding of the heterogeneity in Russian national identity and the sources of that variation.

This paper suggests that as a first step, it is useful to disaggregate the target groups of xenophobia because there is evidence of significant variation across groups. Second, Russian national identity needs to be disaggregated in order to identify which strands are associated with xenophobia. More cross-regional data are needed in both those realms. Third, the causes of xenophobia related to factors beyond identity-related variables such as demographic, cultural, and economic threats or elite manipulation might be more satisfactorily examined with regional level data. Finally the xenophobia literature should systematically examine one of the critical variables in the literature on nationalist mobilization, namely institutions.

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