



# The Securitised ‘Others’ of Russian Nationalism in Ukraine and Russia

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RESEARCH



## ABSTRACT

In trying to analyse and understand Russian nationalism, most scholars focus on what Russian nationalism is as an ideology. But to understand Russia’s war in Ukraine we also need to understand what Russian nationalism *does*. This article explores how Russian nationalism has increasingly securitized and repressed three groups: Muslim minorities living in Russia as internal ‘others’, Ukrainian citizens as external ‘others’, and Crimean Tatars, as ‘others’ in between. Overall, I argue that we need to understand the breadth and depth of the repression against these ‘others’ of Russian nationalism, which now extends to Russia’s desire to legitimize its genocide in Ukraine. This argument is also important in terms of policy: as Russia’s war against Ukraine continues, there is a real risk that some western actors will listen to or repeat Putin’s narrative that Russia is the victim and allow Putin to set the terms of ending war in Ukraine through the idea that Russia is the victim and not the aggressor.

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Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and war against Ukraine has ethnic, imperial, and civilisational overtones. Most fundamentally, however, Russia's war poses an existential threat to Ukraine [1]. Russia is seeking to deny agency and sovereignty from Ukraine as a nation, as a state, and as a community of citizens. Alone, the ethnic, civic, imperial, and civilisational consequences are insufficient for exploring how, let alone why, Russia has brought conflict to Ukraine since 2014 and launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. An existential perspective is necessary, where we recognise how Russia is instrumentalising war as a tool to insist that Ukraine and Ukrainian sovereignty remain tethered to Russia's vision of it. In line with this, Russia acts as if it has the right to veto Ukrainians' interpretation of history; as if Russia has the right to insist that Ukraine has been over-run by 'Nazis'; and as if Russia – not Ukraine – can determine who are 'Nazis' in the first place.

In previous research, I introduced the concept of existential nationalism to capture the stakes of Russia's war against Ukraine, where Ukraine is fighting for its existence, while Russia is fighting for a non-consensual version of Ukrainian existence, where Russia has veto power. Put simply, existential nationalism is 'Russia's motivation to pursue war, whatever the costs, and Ukraine's motivation to fight with everything it has' [1 p46]. In this piece, I want to consider the broader context and effects of existential forms of Russian nationalism.

Similar to Laruelle [2], who argues for viewing Russian nationalism not through its 'contents', but through its 'actors' (state, para-state, and non-state), I argue for analysing Russian nationalism less through its contents or function. Rather, just as the Russian regime has become increasingly repressive, authoritarian, and violent, I focus on groups who are deliberately securitised as 'others' of Russian nationalism. By securitised, I mean groups that are targeted as security threats to the nation. The result of this securitisation is framing groups as 'others', by which I mean groups constructed as deviant because they deviate from Russia's racial, ethnic, political, and/or social norms and construed as security threats because of this deviation.

Scholars tend to focus on what Russian nationalism *is*, ideologically. But we also need to examine what Russian nationalism *does* within an increasingly repressive, authoritarian, and violent regime. Therefore, we need to determine whom Russian nationalism is instrumentalised against.

This lens is as important academically as it is in terms of politics and of policy. There is a real risk that as Russia's war continues, and continues to terrorize Ukrainian civilians, that western actors will begin to listen to, absorb, and repeat Putin's narrative that Russia is the victim. From here, it might be possible for Putin to set the terms of ending war in Ukraine through the idea that Russia is the victim and not the aggressor. These claims might seem far-fetched. But Emanuel Macron, in the shadow of Russia committing war crimes in Ukraine, has claimed that Russia – rather than Ukraine – needs security guarantees as an outcome of war [3], as if Russia is the victim and acted defensively rather than aggressively in invading another state.

By supplementing the study of what Russian nationalism *is* with a focus also on what Russian nationalism *does* forces us to see the increasing array of securitised 'others' of Russian nationalism that face repression inside and outside of Russia. Internally, primarily, it is Russia's Muslim minorities, who are problematised and 'othered'. The Russian state projects an image of the minorities as outsiders, as people who are not legitimately Russian, and whose repression is justified on this basis. Externally, it is groups like Ukrainian citizens (albeit only those who do not accept Russia's hegemony/patrimony) who are portrayed as 'others', if not the Ukrainian state as an entity. For Russia, a legitimate Ukrainian accepts that Ukraine has a primordial and biological connection to Russia. An illegitimate and othered Ukrainian rejects this connection. It is these Ukrainians – likely the majority of Ukrainian citizens – who Russia wants the world to believe are Nazis. Finally, there are the others on the periphery that fall between these external and internal stools, such as Crimean Tatars who reside in Crimea, a *de jure* part of Ukraine, but under *de facto* Russian rule since annexation in 2014.

This piece considers these three groups of securitised 'others' and situates them with existing discussions of Russian nationalism. Such an endeavour is not one of moral relativism or comparative trauma. I do not suggest that the nature and extent of repression and violence are the same across these three groups. Rather, I demonstrate that we need to speak plurally about who Russian nationalism represses and securitises, and understand its variegated

nature across external ‘others’, internal ‘others’, and ‘others’ in between. Doing so also speaks to more a intersectional and reflexive analysis of Russia that seeks to challenge, rather than reflect, powerful narratives within the Russia regime that has ‘systematically suppressed ethnic minority voices and concerns’ [4 p2].

## THE IDEOLOGY OF RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

In studying Russian nationalism, while also reflecting broader debates in studying nationalism, we can divide approaches between those who are state-centred and those who are more society-centred. State-centred approaches tend to be more top-down and supply-side, focusing on how elite political actors within the regime create nationalism policy, and create a vision of the Russian nation that diffuses top-down out of the state. Meanwhile, society-centred approaches are more bottom-up, that is, they focus on society rather than the state, and explore how Russian nationalism is articulated, given meaning, and practised within everyday life in Russia.

Across this cleavage in how to approach Russian nationalism, and more importantly how to approach the study of Russian nationalism, there is significant debate in how to categorise and conceptualise Russian nationalism. Is the Russian nation, for example, a civic nation – more political than cultural, where a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Russia state and society can agree around a set of political more than cultural norms? Or is the Russian nation an ethnic nation – where to belong to the Russian nation you must identify as ethnically and culturally Russian, as well as speak Russian?

Since Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, and Russia annexed Crimea and brought conflict to Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014, this debate on how to conceptualise and categorise Russian nationalism has become even more prescient. Most scholars agree that Russian nationalism *has* shifted in this period. Scholars also largely agree on the function of Russian nationalism – regime survival and legitimation [5–7], and as something to be instrumentalised to unify the Russian population during crises [8 p223]. Where they disagree is on how to conceptualise these shifts in Russian nationalism, in particular under Putin.

One of the challenges of such a conceptualisation is the deliberately ambiguous nature of Russian nationalism in the post-Soviet period [2, 8–10]. As Laine argues, there is a clear ‘contradiction’ between a state that officially represents itself as ‘multi-ethnic’ while also trying to establish an ethnic category of ‘Russian’ [8 p226].

For Goode, Russian nationalism had been civic in orientation. But after the failure of civic nationalism, shifted to a more ethnic orientation. This shift occurred because of ‘institutional instability and personalist dynamics of hybrid regime politics in the 1990s’ [11 p141]. As a consequence, Putin’s increasingly authoritarian and populist regime sought to transform an ‘ambivalent civic nationhood’ – that never really resonated with Russian society – by filling it ‘with more popular ethnic content’ [11 p154].<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars argue that Russian nationalism has shifted from civic to civilisational. Both from a top-down elite perspective and bottom-up societal approach, scholars remark on how belonging to the Russian nation is imagined and mythologised, such as via multi-ethnic discourses, and how this demonstrates its civilizational components [12, 13]. However, Blakkisrud argues that while Russian nationalism might appear civilisational, it is still ethnic in content [14]. For example, while civilisational rhetoric is frequently anchored in ethnocultural terms and appeals, as the Russian regime’s rhetoric towards Crimea (e.g., ‘KrymNash’ / ‘Crimea is ours’) demonstrates [14].

Others argue, as Kuzio does, that Russian nationalism is firmly imperial [15]. For example, Kuzio argues that the extent of Russia’s war against Ukraine ‘can only be explained by the growth of imperial nationalism and dehumanizing discourse on Ukrainians’ [15 p3]. However, Laruelle problematises the distinction between imperial and ethnic as ‘artificial’ [2 p90]. Citing evidence of how Putin referenced Russia as a ‘divided nation’ when annexing Crimea, Laruelle remarks how it is not only ‘ideologists’ of Russian nationalism that exhibit *both* imperial and ethnic nationalism but also Putin [2 p90].

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<sup>1</sup> As markers of such popular ethnic content, Goode [11] identifies ‘traditional Russian values, Orthodox religion, and Russian language, together with anti-Westernism and Soviet-era nostalgia’.

As Blakkisrud [14] and Aksiumov and Avksentev [16] identify, the problem is that neither civic/ethnic nor nation/empire dichotomies work for understanding Russian nationalism. The contemporary Russian Federation is an heir both to the Soviet Union *and* the Russian Empire, while other post-Soviet states are not. Rather these scholars dissect Russian nationalism into its different civic, multicultural, imperial, and civilisational components [16], and in terms of whether Russian nationalism is oriented towards the status quo or revision of borders, and state-centred or ethnically focused [14].

What is left out of all these accounts is a consideration of race within Russian nationalism, just as race is often left out when studying Russia more broadly [17, 18]. But how race and racialisation are invoked when Russia is a mythologised multi-ethnic state should not be overlooked. For Zakharov, the ‘ethno-racial understanding of Russianness’ is not an extreme or abnormal position but something mainstream in Russia, whether on the ‘left, right, or liberal’ dimensions of politics [18 p128]. ‘Synonyms for racial whiteness’ include, for example, biological or primordial understandings of the Russian nation, by attempts to ‘deduce a person’s origin from their physical appearance’, and constructions of Russia as a ‘civilized nation’ via anti-western rhetoric [18 p129]. In other words, race is an implicit part of how Russian nationalism is articulated.

## **WHAT RUSSIAN NATIONALISM DOES: THE SECURITISATION OF ‘OTHERS’**

Shifting from debates over what Russian nationalism is, ideologically, I pivot to consider what Russian nationalism does. Arguing that Russian nationalism understands itself through the lens of an existential threat, we need to understand how each group – the internal others (Muslim minorities), the external others (Ukrainians), and the others in between (Crimean Tatars) – is constructed as a threat to Russia. While each group experience varying degrees and forms of repression and violence, extending to war and genocide in Ukraine, such repression and violence is legitimized through an increasingly securitizing rhetoric towards these ‘others’ of Russian nationalism.

### **INTERNAL SECURITISED ‘OTHERS’ AND RUSSIAN NATIONALISM**

Above, I described the link between Russian nationalism and anti-western rhetoric and the racialised tropes that this performs within Russia. In recent years, the construction of ‘others’ has turned inwards towards Russian citizens, particularly Muslim communities such as the Tatars [19 p724]. As Prina comments [20], inter-ethnic relations between ethnic Russians and the Russian state and non-Russian minorities are increasingly securitised in Russia. Muslim minorities are presented as security threats [21], facing not only political and police repression but also cultural repression. Their rights are decreased not because of legal changes but because of how the law on the rights of minority languages is now interpreted [21], demonstrating the contingent and discretionary nature of Russian law as instrumentalised by the state.

Moreover, non-Russian minorities, and Muslim minorities in particular, have been disproportionately targeted by Russian draft notices to fight in Ukraine [22]. This disproportional targeting includes Crimean Tatars, as I explore below. This disproportional drafting does not signify a contradiction in policy between framing Muslim minorities as a national threat and a security necessity during war. Rather, disproportionately drafting Muslim minorities represents a continued, and extended, use of repression of non-ethnic Russians in Russia during wartime. At best, it represents an extended instrument of control, by denying agency and implicating society-at-large in war efforts, making Muslim minorities complicit in atrocities. At worst, and in the case of Crimean Tatars, it represents an instrument of elimination via war.

Currently, there are many questions around why protests in Russia against the war in Ukraine are so limited and small in scale. In particular, observers ask why Muslim minorities are not protesting against the war or against their repression. But rights to protest are not equal. Ethnic Russians face harsh consequences for protest. Non-ethnic Russians, or those read or presumed not to be non-ethnic Russians (because of biological and primordial understandings of Russianness), do not have the capacity to take the same chances, when existing in an even more extreme and repressive politics of fear [21]. But the absence of protest is not the same as the absence of resistance: ‘repressive contexts only make dissent and resentments that stem from cultural marginalisation acquire hidden forms’ [4 p2].

In asking why the Putin regime has taken this course, it is important to understand the perceived benefits of such action: forging internal cohesiveness among ethnic Russians, as well as between ethnic Russians and the Russian state and Putin regime [19 p724]. Just as ethnicization of Russian nationalism can be explained as regime legitimation, the consequences of ethnicisation – repression of Muslim minorities in Russia – can equally be explained by regime legitimation. Specifically, such repression offers and ensures the promised order and ‘stability’ by constructing, and repressing, as threats anything that might undermine such aims [6].

Just as Russian authorities have turned more repressive towards Muslim minorities, so too have they sought to control narratives of nationalism. Radical nationalists also face repression in Russia to allow for a singular version of history to be stage managed by the regime. While radical nationalists do not face the same extent and nature of repression as Muslim minorities, alongside increasing popular xenophobia, the Russian regime is increasingly unwilling to ‘share societal space’ with them since 2014, and instead chooses to adopt their narratives while pushing them to the political margins [8]. Concurrently, Russia is ‘securitizing historical interpretation’ by constructing the idea that a ‘good Russian’ does not interpret history differently from the government [7 p1074].

## THE SECURITISED ‘OTHERS’ IN BETWEEN: CRIMEAN TATARS AND RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

Following from the increasing repression of Muslim minorities in Russia, I want to zoom into a particular Muslim minority: Crimean Tatars. This largely secular and pacifist Muslim minority community resides in Crimea and considers Crimea to be their native homeland, and themselves indigenous to Crimea [23]. Crimean Tatars are now securitised ‘others’ in between: existing in territory illegally annexed by Russia in 2014, functionally residing in Russia de facto since 2014, that de jure is Ukrainian (though many now live in exile in mainland Ukraine *due to* repression). Moreover, Crimean Tatars imagine themselves as separate from other Tatar groups residing in Russia, for example, Volga Tatars. They were and remain the biggest supporters of Crimea as Ukrainian territory. Hence they were immediately treated with suspicion and repression by Russian authorities following its annexation.

Crimean Tatars were brutally deported by Soviet authorities in 1945 to Siberia and Central Asia due to false claims they were ‘Nazi collaborators’, with many dying as a result.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Crimean Tatars have been framed as a threatening ‘other’ not only by the contemporary Russian regime. For example, Soviet authorities sought to instrumentalise the coincidence of distrust towards non-Slavic communities and mobilisation of Soviet troops to set about eradicating non-Slavic ‘ethnies’, like Crimean Tatars, deemed to be untrustworthy by the Soviet regime” [24 p358].

Living in exile, what bound Crimean Tatars together was their shared and inter-generational grief over deportation and a longing to return to Crimea [24, 25]. Crimean Tatars were only able to return to Crimea in the late Soviet period, in the late 1980s, during perestroika. In post-Soviet Ukraine, prior to Crimea’s annexation, Crimean Tatars experienced improving conditions. But they also experienced unsettled questions, for example pertaining to land rights and registration of community organisations like the Mejlis, Crimean Tatars’ representative body [26].

The situation for Crimean Tatars immediately deteriorated after annexation in 2014. The Mejlis was labelled as an extremist group and banned. Crimean Tatars were exposed to rising and brutal repressions including arrest, censorship, torture, kidnapping, ‘extra-legal prosecutions’, and murder, ‘cynically justified by rhetoric of anti-extremism and counterterrorism’ [27 p29]. The options for Crimean Tatars were, and remain, exceptionally limited. Russia offers the option of co-optation or repression for those it considers ‘extremist’. But we can also view Crimean Tatars’ ‘compliant behaviors’ as ‘tactics of resistance’ [28 p80]. Such tactics include ‘displays of politeness and compliance’ to ‘subvert the Russian regime’s stereotyped picture’ of Crimean Tatars as ‘terrorists’ [28].

But, in 2022, like other non-Russian minorities residing in de jure Russia, Crimean Tatars residing in illegally annexed Crimea also face disproportional draft notices. For Crimean Tatars being drafted is even more sinister since they are being forced to fight in a war against their state of

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<sup>2</sup> Williams demonstrates how 20,000 Crimean Tatars served in the Wehrmacht, but many were captured as prisoners of war by the German army in 1941 and 1942; an equal number of Crimean Tatars fought in the Soviet army [24 p259].

Ukraine, while Russia is able to pursue a strategy of ‘getting rid of undesirable people’ in Crimea and Russia [29].

Exploring and explaining why the Russian regime has repressed Crimean Tatars, and why Russian nationalism views Crimean Tatars as a securitised ‘other’, it is necessary to view the Russian regime through the lens of ‘settler nationalism’ [30]. The Russian regime seeks to erase Crimean Tatars claims to indigeneity and to remove ‘human and physical evidence’ of Crimean Tatars as a ‘predecessor population’ [23 p842]. Rather, the Russia regime seeks to reframe ethnic Russian ‘settlers’, including those who moved to Crimea after annexation, as the ‘historic population’ [23 p843]. Thus, Russia views claiming indigeneity to Crimea as a perceived threat. Russia acts, therefore, to ‘protect Crimea’s ethnic Russians and Russian speakers’ by acting with extreme repression towards Crimean Tatars, as the central opposition to annexation, so the regime can ‘maintain its grip of territory seized illegally’ from Ukraine [27 p47].

## EXTERNAL SECURITISED ‘OTHERS’: UKRAINIANS AND RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

The third securitised ‘other’ is Ukraine and its citizens. Here, we have to explore the contradiction between the claims advanced by the Russian regime that Ukraine is an artificial nation and inseparable from Russia, and the claims advanced by the Russian regime that Ukraine is ‘other’. An unanswered question is how to explain these contradictions. Since 2014, Russia has securitised ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine (e.g., in Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk) since 2014, legitimizing violence to ‘protect’ these communities (whether they asked for or consented to protection). In 2022, Russia used violence to commit a brutal war that indiscriminately targets Ukrainian military and civilians alike, regardless of whether they are Russian speakers, are Ukrainian speakers, or identify as ethnic Ukrainians or ethnic Russians.

On the one hand, Russia has a specific vision of Ukraine. Putin has claimed many times that Russians and Ukrainians are ‘one people’ [31, 32]. He has also claimed that Ukraine’s ‘true sovereignty’ is only possible ‘in partnership with Russia’ [32]. For Putin, Ukraine is an ‘artificial’ nation, and ‘artificially’ separated from Russia [32]. In these assertions, Ukraine and its citizens are allowed neither agency nor to divert from Russia’s claims.<sup>3</sup> Any diversion is, for the Russian regime, an expression either of false consciousness or association with Nazis. For Russia, Ukraine must stay permanently tethered to Russia, to have its sovereignty protected, and permanently tethered to Russia’s vision of what Ukraine is and can be. For Russia, this relationship is not of equals; rather, Ukraine must exist – and not resist – being in a non-consensual relationship of subservience to Russia.

On the other hand, and temporally stretching back to Russia’s annexation of Crimea (if not before), Russia has been shoring up ‘boundaries between the Russian and Ukrainian nations’ [33], via creating a Ukrainian ‘other’. Russia’s rhetoric around annexing Crimea hinged on ‘recasting’ in an unprecedented way how Russia understood Ukraine, ‘as Russia’s main other, against which Russian national identity was constructed’ [33 p379]. Russia blames, for example, ‘contemporary Ukrainian nationalists [...] for dividing Ukraine and Russia’ who seek to ‘sell’ Russophobia [34]. As a pretext for Russia’s war against and invasion of Ukraine, Putin claimed that ‘neo-Nazis’ had seized power in Ukraine [35].

Of course, Zelenskyy could not be further from a ‘neo-Nazi’, as a Jewish Russian speaker who lost family in the Holocaust [36]. As Pisano [37] argues, Zelenskyy has offered a radically different vision of Ukraine to the ‘two Ukraines’ trope that has presented a vision of a divided and contested Ukraine that is far from many citizens’ lived experience. Rather, Zelenskyy has put forward a plural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual vision where Russophone Ukrainians are as much a part of Ukraine as Ukrainian speakers. This plural inclusive vision did not emerge in response to Russia’s war in Ukraine, or in Zelenskyy’s presidency before 2022. Rather, it emerged via his comedy career in Studio Kvartal-95, during which he performed predominantly in Russian for ‘russified Ukrainians’ and created ‘a space in which Ukrainians could find an idea of multicultural patriotism and community’. In other words, Zelenskyy has for a long time offered a different vision of Ukraine to academic accounts within and beyond Ukraine, and Russia’s vision of Ukraine. As much as offering a different vision in terms of identity politics, Zelenskyy has offered

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth remembering also that Russians have decreasing space to interpret history differently from regime-endorsed historical narratives [7].



a radically different anti-oligarchic vision of Ukraine for domestic and international audiences. A Ukraine dominated by identity debates and oligarchic politics was predictable for Russia; an alternative challenged Russia both in terms of identity, geopolitics, and a political economy where Ukraine was more easily readable and controllable by Russia.

Russia seeks either to control Ukraine or ‘other’ Ukraine. This contradiction is best explained by Russia’s greater non-consensual vision for Ukraine that is fundamental for Russia: to be an empire, Russia needs Ukraine to be subordinate [33]. Control over Ukraine, and its subservience to Russia, are themselves an ‘existential imperative’ for Russia [38]. Russia sees those seeking to sow divisions between Ukraine and Russia as wanting to prevent the ‘emergence of a rival, a global rival for Europe and the world’ [34]. In other words, Russia frames Ukraine’s Europeanisation as responsible for both the division between Ukraine and Russia and for creating a Ukraine that Russia seeks to ‘other’.

This othering is classic victim blaming as Ukraine seeks to express its right to disentangle itself from a non-consensual and imperial relationship of subordination. What Russia fears is less Ukrainian nationalists and more as Russian speakers, like Zelenskyy, that offer a new plural, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, Europeanised, and democratic vision for Ukraine. Russian speakers in Ukraine can now clearly communicate a vision for these ideals within Ukraine. But they also pose a risk, in Putin’s eyes, for the Russian state – threatening to offer not only a different vision for how Ukraine can interact with Russia (and oligarchs), but also a different vision for how Russian citizens can interact with Russia.

## THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING THE SECURITISATION OF ‘OTHERS’ OF RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

While the nature of repression differs between these three ‘others’ of Russian nationalism, what ties them together is how Russia views them all as a risk. Securitisation of these ‘others’ therefore serves the function of reducing perceived threats to the Russian regime under Putin.

Muslim minorities, whether in Russia or Crimean Tatars, have been targeted by old and new Russian regimes alike as convenient weapons through which to sow distrust. The othering of Ukraine is more recent, as a multi-ethnic and Europeanizing state led by Zelenskyy has offered a different vision to Russia’s approved version prior to and in response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea and stoking of conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk. The irony is that Russia’s targeting of violence towards Ukraine has shored up a vision of Ukraine that it finds increasingly contentious and threatening. Russia’s indiscriminate violence towards Ukraine and its citizens via war and invasion since 2022 will only serve to shore up these processes even further.

That is why it is so dangerous for western actors, like the French President Emanuel Macron, to suggest that Russia needs security guarantees as an outcome of their war against Ukraine [3]. To do so, it is to legitimise the very threats that Russia uses as a pretext to commit war crimes and genocide, as EU and NATO member-states bordering Ukraine and Russia have echoed [39]. To allow Russia to see security guarantees as a route to peace is to allow Russia to shore up its ‘trap’ that Ukraine is responsible for Russia’s actions because Russia is an ‘innocent victim’ [39]. Such guarantees will also not lead to the end of the war. Ukraine is the victim and is setting the clear terms of what the end of the war looks like: war tribunals, criminal convictions, reparations, and withdrawal of Russian troops from the entirety of Ukraine [40].

That is why it is necessary, academically and in terms of policy, to supplement debates around what Russian nationalism is, with a focus on Russian nationalism does: who it securitises and positions as a threat.<sup>4</sup> Russia seeks to cast itself as the victim while increasingly repressing Muslim minorities in Russia de jure and de facto, including Crimean Tatars. The Russian regime increasingly controls all aspects of political and social life, including Russian nationalists and diverting interpretations of Russian history. All are viewed as threats. But Russia is not the victim. Russia is the repressive antagonist repressing Muslim minorities in Russia, committing human rights abuses against Crimean Tatars in Crimea, and committing war crimes and genocide in mainland Ukraine.

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<sup>4</sup> We could, for example, also view the ‘West’ – whether actors in the European Union or NATO – as also securitized ‘others’ by the Russian regime. This article does not focus on this fourth or supplementary group since western actors, states, and societies only peripherally and indirectly experience Russia’s war and Russian nationalism. My intention in this article was to focus on the three most significant, and directly affected, groups of securitized ‘others’ vis-à-vis Russian nationalism.

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