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Russian nationalists on the Kremlin's policy in Ukraine

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On the Day of National Unity, celebrated in Russia every 4 November, members of nationalist movements organise a so-called Russian March in Moscow. In 2014 the nationalists took part in three competing marches, which illustrated the divisions present in these circles. The reason for these divisions is a difference of opinions on the policy pursued by Russia towards Ukraine. The pro-Russian, Russia-inspired protests in south-eastern Ukraine organised under the slogan of 'defending' the Russians living there (the 'Russian Spring') and the annexation of Crimea were received enthusiastically by the nationalists and contributed to a consolidation of these circles around the Kremlin which lasted for several months. In spite of this, opinions on the Russian government's current policy towards the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics have been varied. The most radical groups have demanded that military support be offered, and that the 'confederation' of these republics, the so-called 'Novorossiya', should be officially recognised. They consider the Kremlin's policy to have been too soft, and see the signing of the peace agreements in Minsk as a betrayal of the interests of the Russians. For the remaining representatives of nationalist circles, who are not so numerous and are less visible in the public sphere, finding a solution for Russia's domestic problems remains a priority. Some of them oppose the very notion of Russia's involvement in the conflict. Since the beginning of the 'Russian Spring', the Kremlin has fostered active attitudes among the nationalists and solicited their support, hoping to win a valuable ally. This has boosted hopes in these circles that their political position may be strengthened. The involvement in the fighting in Ukraine has led to a radicalisation of attitudes among the nationalists, and demonstrated that this group is ideologically motivated and has considerable potential for mobilisation. Moreover, the 'Great Russian' and anti-Western slogans some of them have propagated are reflected in views displayed by average Russians, who have been influenced by the patriotic enthusiasm which followed the annexation of Crimea. Due to all this, from among all the actors active on the opposition side, it is the nationalists – and not the representatives of the liberal and pro-Western opposition – that have the best prospects for access to the political stage in Russia. It cannot be ruled out that a further strengthening of the radical groups might also be boosted by the possible growing social frustration caused by the economic crisis, which additionally increases the risk of political destabilisation.

Two lines of nationalism in Russia

The nationalist circle in Russia is fragmented, and non-homogenous in the ideological sense. It is formed by groups characterised by various organisational structures (movements, non-registered parties, organisations operating in the virtual world)

and profiles (patriotic-social, religious, paramilitary movements and historical reconstruction groups). Overall, two main ideological lines, supported by the vast majority of Russian nationalists, can be distinguished. The first line, often referred to as the **imperial-Orthodox** line, emerged in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union, but

its ideological background reaches back to the 19th and 20th century¹. Supporters of this line of nationalism believe that the eastern Slavs currently living in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, as well as in the other post-Soviet states, are parts of one nation – at least in the cultural, if not the ethnic, sense. Representatives of this line of nationalism consider it necessary to tighten the relations between these countries, or even merge them into one state organism. Their aim is to **re-construct the lost empire**. Therefore, they support those elements of Russian government policy which may help accomplish this goal, such as the creation of the Eurasian Union, which is the Kremlin's priority integration project. However, the vision of the future form of the Russian state is an issue that divides this group: some of its supporters opt for reviving the USSR or a substitute for it, while others would rather see the comeback of a tsarist Russia.

The common elements among the supporters of the imperial-Orthodox line are their identification with the Orthodox faith and the Russian Orthodox Church, and the promotion of its idea of the 'Russian World' (*Russkiy Mir*), understood as a supranational community bonded by Russian culture, the Russian language and the Orthodox faith – a community reaching beyond the borders of contemporary Russia². Organisations centred around this line also have a common enemy – the broadly understood West, in particular the USA, which in their opinion is striving to diminish Russia's role in the international arena and destroy Russia's identity by imposing the Western model of democracy on it. The imperial-Orthodox line of nationalism includes the *Rodina* (Fatherland) party, which is ostensibly an opposition party and whose informal leader is Dmitry Rogozin, as well as various other pro-Kremlin social organisations such as the Eurasian Youth Union (whose patron is Aleksandr Dugin, professor of Moscow State Univer-

sity, and a supporter of the idea of Eurasianism) and the movement *Sut' Vremeni* (Essence of Time) headed by Sergei Kurginyan; other components include the Night Wolves motorcycle club and the Russian National Unity paramilitary movement headed by Aleksandr Barkashov, whose members used to include Pavel Gubaryev, one of the separatist leaders fighting in Ukraine.

Generally, two main ideological lines of nationalism, supported by the vast majority of Russian nationalists, can be distinguished: the imperial-Orthodox and the ethnic (national) one.

Other groups associated with this line of nationalism include organisations linked to the Orthodox Church, such as Cossack movements. Representatives of the imperial-Orthodox line include the former separatist leader Igor Girkin (Strelkov), a dedicated follower of the White Army tradition, and the Orthodox activist and oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev. Other groups supporting this line of nationalism include certain online communities associated with websites such as *Russkaya Vesna*³ or *Sputnik i Pogrom*. (The latter was created by Yegor Prosvirnin, and is considered one of the major centres of nationalist intellectual thought in Russia.) Some of these organisations favour strengthening relations with the Kremlin, which they expect to increase their influence on the decision-makers and help them gain financial support.

The other line of nationalism can be described as the **national (ethnic)** one. This emerged at the beginning of the 21st century as a response to the mass inflow of immigrants to Russia from Central Asia and Caucasus. Its supporters have anti-immigration and anti-Caucasus views. Their declared aim is to transform Russia into a nation state with ethnic Russians, who are allegedly discriminated against in their own state,

¹ For example, they refer to the idea of Pan Slavism, which became popular in the 19th century, or the concept of Eurasianism.

² See the 2009 statement by Patriarch Kirill, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/928446.html>

³ A news portal presenting the Russian point of view on the events in Ukraine: rusvesna.su

holding primacy over other citizens. One of this group's main demands is to tighten control over the inflow of immigrants. Representatives of this line of nationalism have been involved in organising protests against the introduction of simplified rules of granting Russian citizenship⁴, and have called for a visa regime to be introduced in relations with the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Some of these activists would welcome Russia separating from the 'non-Russian' Northern Caucasus.

The nationalists who could be identified with this line of nationalism usually take a hostile attitude towards the Kremlin, which results from their negative approach to the migration issue.

The marginalisation of the nationalist circles has resulted mainly from the activities carried out by the Kremlin, which is driving them away from the political stage and controlling their actions, while simultaneously exploiting elements of nationalist rhetoric for its own purposes.

They accuse the authorities of neglecting the interests of ethnic Russians and ignoring the problems in the social and security sphere connected with the presence of immigrants. The fact that the Kremlin has strongly denied the possibility of introducing a visa regime in the tourist traffic with the CIS states, claiming that this would be contrary to the spirit of Eurasian integration⁵, positions these groups on the opposition side. The most radical representatives of this line of nationalism consider Putin's regime to be anti-national.

The national line is represented by groups such as the Russians movement (*Russkiye*), the formally dissolved Movement against Illegal Mi-

gration, the Russian National-Democratic Party, the Slavic Alliance, New Power or the Northern Brotherhood. The supporting groups also include Slavic neopagan movements, neo-Nazi groupings and organisations with pro-fascist orientations. Elements of anti-immigration rhetoric characteristic of the above-listed nationalist organisations are also present in the platforms of liberal parties such as the Progress Party (led by Alexey Navalny) and the Democratic Choice (led by Vladimir Milov).

Nationalists as a tool in the Kremlin's policy

In spite of the high level of nationalist sentiments among the population of Russia⁶ and the large number of nationalist-oriented organisations, representatives of nationalist groups do not have any official political representation. Although individual pro-Kremlin politicians such as Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and President Putin's adviser Sergei Glazyev support nationalist views, they have no direct influence on political decisions.

The marginalisation of nationalist circles has resulted mainly from the activities carried out by the Kremlin, which is both driving them away from the political stage and controlling their actions. The reasons for this behaviour include the immense distrust which the Kremlin has of all independent political or social initiatives. As a consequence, the nationalists are not allowed to freely participate in elections. It is the Kremlin that decides which parties will be allowed to run in the elections. The fact that the *Rodina* party, which had gained considerable popular support thanks to its anti-immigration slogans, was eliminated from the electoral race in 2006 confirms this tendency⁷.

⁴ Katarzyna Jarzyńska, 'Łatwiej o rosyjskie obywatelstwo', Analizy OSW, 24 April 2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2014-04-24/latwiej-o-rosyjskie-obywatelstwo>

⁵ See: <http://www.fergananews.com/news/21311>

⁶ This is confirmed by the sharp reactions to ethnically-motivated incidents and the high level of acceptance for the slogan 'Russia for the Russians', supported by 54% of the population: see <http://www.levada.ru/26-08-2014/natsionalizm-ksenofobiya-i-migratsiya>

⁷ See: <http://www.newizv.ru/politics/2006-03-24/43067-personalnoe-delo.html>

In recent years, organisations representing the ethnic line of nationalism have been subject to pressure and control from the authorities. To justify their actions, the government argues that due to the excessive popularisation of ethnic nationalist slogans, the multi-ethnic Russia would be in danger of breaking up. This was true in the case of the Chechen wars, which almost caused Russia to lose a part of its territory. For these reasons, the state has been limiting the activities of the nationalist movements centred around this line of nationalism, e.g. by refusing to issue permissions to organise mass meetings. The leaders of some of these organisations have been prosecuted (for example Aleksandr 'Belov' Potkin). As part of this tactic, the Kremlin attempted to infiltrate groups of football fans which support extreme nationalist and racist views. The special services gathered materials on the activity of the movements' leaders and attempted to direct their actions.

In the last two years the imperial-Orthodox line of nationalism, which previously had been present only on the margin of political discourse, has become one of the main elements of political debate in Russia.

However, the series of street riots organised by football fans (such as the 2010 riots in the Manezh Square in Moscow) have demonstrated that their actions may evade the state's control and challenge the effectiveness of the policy pursued by the authorities.

On the other hand, the activity of radical nationalists in Russia (for example, young paratroopers) has been used by the Kremlin as a tool in its domestic and foreign policy, serving as a negative example. By making references to certain incidents provoked by the nationalists, such as the 2013 riots in Biryulevo⁸, the authorities of Russia

are trying to convince its citizens that only the current ruling elite can guarantee law and order in the country. In its international relations the Kremlin is trying to demonstrate that although Putin's regime has been criticised by the West for violating the principles of democracy, it is in fact a pragmatic and predictable partner – unlike the anti-Western radical nationalists. According to the Kremlin, their potential rise to power in Russia would be unfavourable for the Western partners, as it might lead to the emergence of social chaos and legal nihilism in Russia, and thereby increase the unpredictability in international relations.

Moreover, due to the large potential of support from Russian society for nationalist rhetoric, some elements of this rhetoric are being adopted and used by the Kremlin as tools for achieving its own goals. In previous years, the authorities successfully drew on slogans associated with ethnic nationalism during the pre-election period to increase the chances of the candidates they supported. One such case took place before the 2013 elections for mayor of Moscow⁹. In the last two years, on the other hand, the authorities have started to draw ever more frequently on rhetoric typical of the imperial-Orthodox line of nationalism. A sharp turn was observed after Vladimir Putin's return to the office of president in 2012, which happened in reaction to the weakening of the government's social mandate and the increased level of distrust within the elites. In their public statements, representatives of the Russian ruling elite began to emphasise the idea of Russia's 'unique identity' and 'civilisational mission'¹⁰, refer to the concept of the 'Russian World', and use sharp anti-Western rhetoric¹¹. Vladimir Putin called for the Russian nation to be unified, which

⁸ Katarzyna Jarzyńska, 'Ethnic riots in Moscow', OSW Analyses, 16 October 2013, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-10-16/ethnic-riots-moscow>

⁹ Katarzyna Jarzyńska, 'The Kremlin plays the immigration card', OSW Analyses, 20 August 2013, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2013-08-23/kremlin-plays-immigration-card>

¹⁰ Vladimir Putin, 'Rossiya - nacyonalnyi vopros', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 January 2012, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html

¹¹ Marek Menkiszak, 'The Putin doctrine: The formation of a conceptual framework for Russian dominance in the post-Soviet area', OSW Commentary, 27 March 2014, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-03-27/putin-doctrine-formation-a-conceptual-framework-russian>

he described as ‘the largest divided nation in the world’¹². Such statements refer to the demands expressed by representatives of the imperial-Orthodox line of nationalism. The inclusion of nationalist slogans into the authorities’ rhetoric has led to an increase in appearances by individual intellectuals promoting imperialist views in the state-controlled media. The media has begun to devote more attention to the activity of certain state officials, such as Aleksey Pushkov, head of the foreign affairs committee at the State Duma, and Vyacheslav Nikonov, head of the state-sponsored *Russkiy Mir* foundation. Scientists and experts such as Aleksandr Dugin, Sergei Kurginyan, Mikhail Delagin and Natalya Narochitskaya have started to appear in the public sphere ever more frequently. There has been an increase in the activity of columnists and political commentators supporting nationalist or even extreme-nationalist views, such as Aleksandr Prokhanov, Mikhail Leontyev and Dmitry Kiselov. The position of the main proponent of the concept of the ‘Russian World’, the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill, has also been strengthened. There has been a simultaneous intensification of the activity of socially-oriented nationalist organisations loyal towards the Kremlin, such as the Cossack and Orthodox movements. The Kremlin has expressed its support for some of the organisations by granting them financial assistance (for example, the state subsidies for the Night Wolves club¹³, and organisations associated with the Orthodox Church¹⁴). As a consequence, the imperial-Orthodox line of nationalism, previously present only on the margin of political discourse, has become one of the main elements of political debate in Russia.

The Kremlin has used slogans borrowed from the nationalists as justification for the annexation of Crimea, which was presented as an act of ‘serving historical justice’ and ‘uniting’ the

divided nation. The intervention in the Donbas was motivated by the necessity to defend the Russian minority. Additionally, the Kremlin has referred to the supra-ethnic, post-Soviet identity of the Russian-speaking people, and called for counteracting fascism and the hostile West. This type of narration has managed to combine

The actions carried out during the ‘Russian Spring’ consolidated the nationalist circles around the Kremlin. They became the Kremlin’s valuable ally, as their support was not limited to passive approval of its initiatives, but triggered real actions.

elements of the two above-mentioned, essentially contradictory lines of nationalist ideas: the ethnic and the imperial-Orthodox. The syncretic narration based on nationalist slogans has helped the Kremlin to win – at least for a time – the support of representatives of the whole range of nationalist organisations, which differ greatly in terms of their ideological base.

From euphoria...

Although the opinions concerning the Maidan protests voiced by Russian nationalists were varied¹⁵, the actions carried out as part of the ‘Russian Spring’ have temporarily united these circles around the Kremlin and assured it of their support. The nationalists have come to think that in the context of the ‘Russian Spring’, their own interests and the interests of the Russian authorities are convergent.

¹² <http://kremlin.ru/news/20603>

¹³ In 2014 the club received a presidential grant of 9 million roubles (c. US\$180,000); for more see: <http://rbcdaily.ru/society/562949991750668>

¹⁴ In 2014 the Orthodox Church received 2 billion roubles (c. US\$40 million) in subsidies; for more, see <http://top.rbc.ru/politics/28/11/2014/54774e8acbb20ffbe61293aa>

¹⁵ Some of the activists opposed the protests in Kyiv, which lasted from November 2013 until February 2014, whereas others supported them. The critics (mostly representatives of the imperial-Orthodox line of nationalism, in particular the pro-Kremlin organisations) claimed that the events in the Maidan were anti-Russian in nature and had been inspired by the West. On the other hand, a group of supporters of the protesters emerged (composed mainly of representatives of the ethnic line of nationalism and members of the Russian radical right), who claimed that the Ukrainian nation had the right to protest against the corrupt authorities.

The nationalists' attitude at that time was influenced by several factors. The most important of them included the Kremlin's own efforts, including an appeal for support expressed by Dmitry Rogozin during his meeting with representatives of nationalist organisations who committed themselves to 'defending the rights of Russians in Ukraine and in other parts of the world'¹⁶. The fact that the meeting was organised on 1 March, the day on which the Federation Council officially approved the use of Russian armed forces beyond Russia's borders, suggests that the involvement of the nationalists into the events in Ukraine had been pre-planned. The pro-Kremlin attitude of the nationalists at that time was also shaped by the aggressive propaganda present in the media, which suggested that the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine was being subjected to persecution. Due to this, the actions carried out by the new authorities in Kyiv (constituted as a result of the Maidan protests) have been considered by this circle as anti-Russian.

The nationalist circles' enthusiasm following the annexation of Crimea and the initial successes of the 'Russian Spring' has gradually given way to disappointment with the Kremlin's 'insufficient' involvement in the conflict in Ukraine.

The increase in support for the Kremlin's policy was also inspired by the near-bloodless annexation of Crimea, which caused euphoric moods among the nationalists and boosted hopes for further successes in the fight focused on 'defending the Russians'¹⁷.

During the 'Russian Spring' the Kremlin considered the nationalist circles its valuable allies. Their support was not limited to passive approval of the Kremlin's initiatives; instead it triggered ac-

tions consistent with the authorities' expectations. Some activists, including in particular Igor Girkin and Konstantin Malofeev, became directly involved in fuelling separatist sentiments in Ukraine¹⁸. Nationalist-oriented commentators and ideologists (such as Yegor Kholmogorov and Aleksandr Dugin) joined the public debate on the conflict in Ukraine and attempted to convince the citizens that Russian intervention was necessary. Assistance for rebel fighters was prepared in Russia. Some of the activists took part in pro-Russian rallies and actions involving taking the regional administration buildings in eastern Ukraine by force. The most radical activists volunteered to join the fighting in Donbas; news on these developments was posted by some of the organisations on their websites, such as the Eurasian Youth Union and Russian National Unity. The scale of mobilisation of the nationalists has been confirmed by data compiled by the Ukrainian customs service in Donetsk, according to which in March 2014 the number of Russian men being denied entry onto the territory of Ukraine ran at around 400–500 each day. The reason for denying them entry to Ukraine was that they were unable to declare a credible purpose for their travel, or were carrying objects (such as posters, leaflets, or St. George's ribbons) associated with separatist activities. The Russian writer and nationalist Zakhar Prilepin claims that during the six months of fighting in Donbas, some 35,000 volunteers from Russia joined the rebel fighter groups¹⁹. The voluntary involvement of nationalists in the fight has enabled the Kremlin to refute the international community's charges concerning the alleged presence of regular Russian troops in Ukraine. However, the collective and organised nature of the transfers of the voluntary recruits to Ukraine suggests that these activities could have been coordinated and financed by Russia's secret service²⁰.

¹⁶ See: <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/South/special.asp?id=477480&sec=1724&p=2>

¹⁷ The liberal parties headed by Navalny and Milov were an exception.

¹⁸ Malofeev's interview for *Vedomosti*, <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/article/790641/v-sankcionnye-spiski-vklyuchali-posovokupnosti-zaslug> and Girkin's interview for the *Svobodnaya Pressa* portal, <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/103643/>

¹⁹ This news was posted on the author's Facebook page on 4 November.

²⁰ This was reported e.g. by *Novaya Gazeta*, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/inquests/64052.html>

...to disappointment

The attitude of the Russian nationalists towards the Kremlin's policy has evolved as the conflict in Ukraine progressed. The enthusiasm that followed the annexation of Crimea and the initial successes of the 'Russian Spring' has gradually given way to disappointment with the 'insufficient' involvement of the Kremlin. Some of the most radical nationalists criticised the fact that after the 'referenda' in the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, Moscow failed to incorporate these lands into the Russian Federation (i.e. it refused to repeat the Crimea scenario). Similar criticism has been voiced in connection with the signing of the Minsk peace deals²¹. Contrary to the demands made by the nationalists, the Kremlin has not officially dispatch Russian troops to Ukraine. This group's frustration has been further strengthened by

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the fact that the Russian volunteers and soldiers killed in Donbas have been receiving secret burials in Russia. The dissatisfaction has been further deepened by reports claiming that the Russian secret services have allegedly stopped allowing the voluntary recruits to move from Russia to Ukraine²². Individuals involved in organising assistance are subject to detailed inspections (this has been confirmed by one of the editors of the *Sputnik i Pogrom* website, among others)²³. The media presence

²¹ The truce deal signed on 5 September by members of the so-called trilateral contact group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE) and the representatives of the separatists.

²² See 'V Novorossiye ne puskayut dobrovol'tsev', http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2014/10/06_a_6252029.shtml

²³ The portal's editor's opinion of 2 October, <http://sputnikipogrom.com/russia/21993/now-its-getting-interesting/#.VEZinBZFOKY>

of ideologists supporting 'Novorossiya' has been gradually reduced²⁴. Another reason for the dissatisfaction on the part of Novorossiya's supporters is the fact that Igor Strelkov has left Ukraine, which, in his own words, was Moscow's decision²⁵. These signals have reinforced the radical nationalists' belief that one group of Russian decision-makers is attempting to distance the Kremlin from the separatists and extinguish support for Novorossiya. This group is led by a person the radical nationalists hate – Vladislav Surkov, the Russian President's adviser, who is considered one of the architects of Russia's policy towards Ukraine.

Consequences of the flirtation with nationalism

The 'Russian Spring' has resulted in creating two separatist republics in eastern Ukraine, which has enabled Kremlin to temporarily destabilise the Ukrainian state. This solution does not satisfy some of representatives of radical nationalist circles, who would like Novorossiya to be recognised as an independent state, its territory further expanded, and Russian troops to be dispatched there officially²⁶.

The expectations of some of the nationalist circles regarding the conflict in Ukraine have become a problem for the authorities. This has resulted in the Kremlin's attempts at subordinating these circles to it. This policy has boosted the feelings of disappointment and frustration within these circles, and may lead to the emergence of a movement opposing the authorities in Russia, whose members would

²⁴ The term *Novorossiya* is used to describe the informal confederation of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. However, it originally referred to the historical name of the areas incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 18th century as a result of the wars with Turkey, and which currently belong to Ukraine. This is what Putin meant when he said that the historical 'Novorossiya' comprised the entire area of south-eastern Ukraine. See Putin's statement of 17 April 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/news/20796>

²⁵ Interview given by Strelkov, <http://govoritmoskva.ru/interviews/265/>

²⁶ *Ibid.*

be ideologically motivated and equipped with organisational structures. Their involvement in the war has enabled them to gain experience in real combat, which in turn has radicalised their attitudes yet further.

The threat to the ruling elite posed by the radical nationalists has been aggravated by the actions carried out by the authorities, which have selectively drawn on nationalist rhetoric for the purpose of social consolidation. In recent months the Kremlin has been deliberately fueling anti-Western and anti-immigrant moods in society, referring to slogans typical of imperial nationalism (i.e. demanding restoration of the empire and opposing the West) and ethnic nationalism (the defence of the 'oppressed' Russian). Due to the popularisation of radical nationalist attitudes among average Russians and the increase in the scale of acceptance for the use of violence among Russian public, Russian society will be more likely to accept the potential presence of supporters of radical nationalist views in the country's ruling elite.

The threats associated with the increased activity of the nationalists, together with the popularisation of nationalist slogans in Russia, have been heightened due to the prospect of economic destabilisation. This has already been heralded by the unfavourable macroeconomic situation and the preliminary results of the international eco-

nomical sanctions²⁷. In the long-term perspective this may lead to an increase in the scale of disappointment among the business elite and a part of society, as well as a certain weakening of the model of government in Russia. If this is the case, the nationalists, who are strongly motivated and centred around a clear ideological programme, will have a better chance of strengthening their position within the state and soliciting for their inclusion in a ruling elite which today seems hermetic.

It appears that the Kremlin has already attempted to respond to the threat and channel the nationalists' growing disappointment in a form which would be safe for the authorities. One example of this seems to be the increased public activity of Igor Strelkov (who is unquestionably a respected figure in the radical nationalist circles), which would not have been possible without the Kremlin's approval. It cannot be excluded that he will become the leader of a nationalist-oriented political force which would cooperate with the authorities. In the context of the fossilisation of the Russian political system, the inclusion of such individuals in the country's ruling elite might have unforeseeable consequences.

²⁷ See: the World Bank report, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/09/24/russia-economic-report-32>

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