Protesters As Nation-Builders:
Civic Nationalism and Civil Society in 
Contemporary Russia

by

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CHAPTER 1

A New Approach to Nationalism

“There is relatively little mystery concerning why this should have happened. The condition defined by this term had become highly valued and loaded with political appeal. In extensive parts of the world, what it denoted was absent. This lack came in due course to be strongly felt and bitterly resented: eventually it turned into an aching void. The absence was felt acutely in society which had strongly centralized all aspects of life, and where a single political-economic-ideological hierarchy tolerated no rivals and one single vision defined not only truth but also personal rectitude.”

Ernest Gellner on ‘Civil Society’ in *Conditions of Liberty* (1994)

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism transcends that which is merely in the arena of politics. It is an ideology that unites a people based upon its emotive power to provide a form of identity, a sense of pride, and a feeling of belonging. Its origins are arguable yet its powers are strong enough to cause the dissolution of great empires and determine the fate of new states. It is a necessary prerequisite for state legitimacy and territorial maintenance. The ubiquity of this term merits more than a few key questions, some of which include: How does one learn to look beyond oneself and identify with the larger entity of the state? Why would one care about a large system in which the individual plays only a small role? How do a group of people come together in the common project of citizenship? The answer I will provide in this thesis is as follows: Involvement in civil society teaches the individual how to take part in an entity larger than oneself. Her participation in civil society demonstrates her partial ownership, her
stock in, and her role within the nation. People subscribe to nationalism because they recognize their role within society and seek, in exchange, an emotional collateral that gives greater purpose to their membership in the nation.

Soviet propaganda was employed for the purpose of endowing the individual with the idea that his contribution to society was important as a part of the Soviet mechanism. Each citizen made a contribution to the sovetskii narod (‘Soviet people’) by his role and participation in state-sponsored endeavors. This idealistic egalitarian society in which, theoretically, all citizens were collective shareholders in not only the means of production but also the state, gave legitimacy and power to the regime. In reality, while there was a degree of enthusiasm behind participation in the Soviet Union, participatory citizenship in the regime was obligatory and was evidentiary not so much of civic engagement, but rather of a fear of an oppressive authoritarian regime. Additionally, various republics, in exchange for their complicity in federal affairs, were given a high degree of autonomy in the selection of their own national narratives. In fact, the republics were encouraged to maintain their own national languages and design educational curricula that reflected their own histories and cultural heritage (Tishkov 1989; Gorenburg 2001). This fragmentation further undermined the legitimacy of the sovetskii narod. In short, the failure of the sovetskii narod to maintain long-term legitimacy was its unifying ideology’s empty promises of a communist utopia, its demands for obligatory participation, and its failure to transcend allegiance to the titular nationalities throughout its multi-ethnic regions.¹

¹ On the lack of genuine participation in the USSR, see Alexei Yurchak, Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation (2005).
The nationalism of the Soviet ‘nation’ was a grand failure because its legitimacy rested not within society, but within the authoritative powers of a police state.

This thesis seeks to explore an alternative to the failed sovetskii narod as Russia embarks on its third decade of post-Soviet nation-building. Whereas the Soviet citizen saw himself as a part of a system in which he was obliged to play a role—either out of fear, obligation, or indoctrination—a citizen of post-Soviet should see herself as a part of country in which she voluntarily participates. In post-Soviet Russia, it can be argued that it is participatory citizenship that will give the nation its legitimacy. Participatory citizenship is carried out by a civil society that acts as a binding ‘web’ of intersecting organizations that in turn provide a sustainable legitimacy of the nation and its regime over a vast territory. This thesis will explore the extent to which Russian civil society has begun to spin this ‘web’ of intersecting interests under the common banner of nationalism.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

Before 1918, the study of nationalism was merely a subheading in the academic discipline of history rather than a subject matter in its own right. During the interwar period, Carlton J. Hayes’ work, Essays on Nationalism (1926), and later, The Historical Evolution of Nationalism (1931), identified nationalism as a militant ideology that posed a threat to the modern state. Notwithstanding the limited scope of these and other early nationalism studies, Hayes’ work brought the study of nationalism to the status of an ‘ism’ that deserved its rightful place in political philosophy. Later, Hans Kohn’s The Idea of Nationalism (1944) distinguished between what he interpreted as ‘good,’ Western nationalism that identified its
members as a community of citizens and ‘bad,’ Eastern nationalism that identified its members as an ethnic or language group (Breuilly 2006, xvii). While it is inaccurate to conceive of this distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalisms as a divide between West and East, the distinction between ‘civic’ (sometimes referred to as ‘liberal’) and ‘ethnic’ nationalisms will be useful for this thesis as we examine the growth of an inclusive civic nationalism to include all citizens of the multiethnic Russian Federation. While there is far-reaching scholarship on Russian nationalism in a post-Soviet context, it largely neglects nationalism’s civic aspects, looking only at ‘bad’ ethnic nationalisms and xenophobic extremists that threaten the sovereignty of the Russian Federation. Although recent events suggest that ethnic nationalism and racism will not be slow to subside in the near future, scholars of Russian nationalism have largely neglected the development of a ‘good’ civic nationalism.

In the 1974 essay “Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” American anthropologist Clifford Geertz commented on identity and tradition in a remote Balinese village as part of an evolving historical continuum in which cultural themes survive great lengths of time. The term ‘primordialism’ was not used to describe Geertz’s ideas, but his work can be seen as a precursor to the ideas espoused by primordialists Anthony Smith a decade later. In sharp contrast to Geertz’s ideas about cultural identity existing on a historical continuum, Elie Kedourie’s Nationalism in 1960 introduced nationalism as a relatively ‘modern’ concept, originating in early nineteenth-century Europe and heralded by intellectuals (Breuilly 2006, xvi-xix).

2 On the anti-Semitic Russian nationalistic ‘skinhead’ movement, see Hilary Pilkington et. al., Russia’s Skinheads: Exploring and Rethinking Subcultural Lives (2010).
3 See Alexander Bratersky, Rioting Erupts Near Kremlin Walls” (2010).
These seminal works by Kohn, Geertz, and Kedourie were the precursors to theories that would be expanded upon decades later, such as liberal nationalism, primordialism, and modernism. Although the three aforementioned approaches are accompanied by a great many others, they represent the most salient divides within the field of nationalism studies today.

Primordialism, largely popularized by British sociologist Anthony D. Smith, argues that although the nation-state is a relatively new phenomenon, the idea of the ‘the nation’ can be traced back to the way in which the world’s populations were divided from the prehistoric era onward (Smith 1987). Proponents of modernism, of which we will discuss Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm in depth, argue that the nation-state is the product of a series of gradual top-down processes that standardized cultural exchange as a necessary part of industrialization, economic specialization, and modern state-building. Although these approaches stand in direct opposition to each other, both can explain, albeit in different ways, how to conceive of the modern Russian nation-state.

Primordialism can be used to understand common cultural features that have survived through the tsarist and Soviet eras and continue to represent features of Russian national character. These cultural features include common folk-tales, traditional dress, distinctive cuisine, national symbols, and a single language that is used throughout the entire Russian Federation. It can also explain deeper political norms, such as paternalism, which springs from assumptions about the role of the state as protector from foreign invaders and internal anarchy, and political apathy, which springs from the authoritarianism of the tsarist and Soviet eras (Hellie 2005).
Alternatively, from a modernist perspective we can see that nationalism emerges from nineteenth century intellectuals who proliferated the national idea through literature and scholarly debate over Russia’s unique geographical location between East and West. Although this process was interrupted by the inception of the Soviet Union and a ‘new’ national—in fact transnational—idea, this cultural shift was imposed in a top-down fashion. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Yeltsin administration launched a series of patriotic programs designed to construct the national idea of the recently conceived Russian Federation. This enterprise, again, was developed at an elite level and then trickled down to the masses.

But a piece of this puzzle is missing, in fact a large and integral piece that has left our portrait of nationalism with a gaping hole—the weakening of Soviet power during glasnost’ and perestroika, its demise, and ultimately, its collapse at the hands of civil society. What is missing is a theoretical framework to explain the unyielding desire of the masses for liberation at last from authoritarian rule, a desire—whispering at first, then growing louder—for the freedom to participate in a public space not directly attached to the state. This thesis will seek to fill the gap in nationalism theory that does not explain the fall of a regime that, in accordance with

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4 In *Diary of a Writer*, Dostoevsky describes the mysteriousness of ‘Russian Soul,’ a concept heavily debated by Russian writers during the nineteenth century: “I think that the most basic most rudimentary spiritual need of the Russian people is the need for suffering, ever-present and unquenchable, everywhere and in everything. It seems that the narod has been infected with this thirst for suffering since the beginning of time. This stream of suffering runs through all its history, no only summoned by external misfortune and poverty, but welling up like a spring from the very heart of the people. There is an indispensable measure of suffering even in the happiness of the Russian narod, for without it its happiness is incomplete. Never, even in the most festive moment of its history, does it bear a look of pride and celebration as much as one of being moved to torment . . . It is almost as if the Russian narod delights in its own suffering” (qtd. in Ries 1997, 83).
Marxist theory, had dismissed civil society as no more than a façade for the further degradation and alienation of the working class. There was no context for nationalism in the Soviet Union because there was no setting for civil society—that is, the activity of, proliferation of, and discourse on activities that concern the citizens as social members of the nation.

WHY RUSSIA?

The utility of using the Russian Federation as a venue through which we can examine the relationship between civic nationalism and civil society is multifold. Firstly, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, both nationalism and civil society have been developing concurrently from an elementary state. The nationalism of the sovetskii narod was no longer useful after the empire to which it had preached its ideology no longer existed, and the nationalism of the tsarist era (had one truly existed) was too distant in Russian national memory to be revived. Civil society, which was virtually outlawed in the Soviet Union and existed only in embryonic form during perestroika, also emerged at an elementary stage. The absence of both nationalism and civil society in the newly-created Russian Federation left a ‘blank slate’ for the dual enterprises of nation-building and civil society development.

Russia also provides us with the opportunity to fill a gap in the literature on the topic of civic nationalism. While American sociologist Rogers Brubaker uses the examples of France and Germany to establish a working definition of civic nationalism, subsequent work has focused largely upon the United States and Western Europe as ‘poster children’ of civic nationalism (Miller 1995). Russia provides us with the opportunity to look at the development of civic nationalism outside of the
liberal democracies. Additionally, the existent literature on civic nationalism looks at governmental policies about citizenship and immigration and uses a top-down approach to understanding the proliferation of civic nationalism in a given country (Brubaker 2004). The scope of this project utilizes a distinctive, bottom-up approach, an approach that is absent from the civic nationalism literature. By using a bottom-up approach, we can understand how citizens receive and articulate nationalism on their own terms.

But it is not only the fledgling state of both nationalism and civil society or the dearth of bottom-up civic nationalism analysis that interests us. We also seek to dispel commonly held misconceptions about Russians’ participation in political life. Within both Russian culture and its Western appraisals, there is a common vision of Russia as a paternalistic state whose people are doomed to a fate of authoritarian rule due to their political apathy and dependence upon the social provisions of the state. This thesis challenges this deterministic and pessimistic view in favor of a more optimistic perspective that views *citizens* as the agents of change in today’s Russia.

THE CASE STUDIES

The dilemma of examining civic nationalism within the context of civil society creates a myriad of obstacles. First of all, nationalism is ultimately an emotional appeal, and even the most comprehensive surveys on the topic are inadequate measurement devices because they only provide us with a snapshot of
perceptions at a given time.\textsuperscript{5} Data on participation in civil society and the number of civil society organizations operating in the Russian Federation today is largely unreliable because many organizations prefer to operate under the radar in order to escape harassment from the authorities.\textsuperscript{6} Of note, however, are the recent protest movements that have gained prominent media attention within the past year (Aron 2010). Protests provide us with an avenue through which we can concretely observe the issues that concern ordinary citizens, how grievances are articulated, and how many people feel passionate enough about these issues and grievances to take part in these protests. While protests, too, only provide us with a snapshot of grievances at a given time, they allow us to see a more diverse display of civic attitudes than a survey can provide.

Within the past year, there has been a marked surge in protest activity throughout Russia. The Russian Interior Ministry reports that there were 4,900 protests in the first quarter of 2010 alone, a 400\% increase from the 1,269 protest that occurred during the same time period in 2009. As of May 2010, 1.8 million people had participated in various protests across the country (Aron 2010, 1). A March 2010 article in Kommersant reports that the “geography of discontent” (geografiya nedovol’stva), especially in regions where there had been little protest activity in the past, is growing (Kozenko et. al. 2010). In one of the few academic articles written on this new and important development, the author writes, “Russia’s ‘new protesters’ have yet to prove their staying power. Yet, as the only viable political challenge to the

\textsuperscript{5} For a successful execution, see Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud, Nation-building and Common Values in Russia (2004).
\textsuperscript{6} For example, see Clifford J. Levy, “Russia Uses Microsoft to Suppress Dissent” (2010).
Putin-Medvedev Kremlin, they bear careful watching” (Aron 2010, 1). The overall geographic span of the protests, as well as the diverse range of grievances that they represent, demonstrate widespread and comprehensive discontent with the regime.

The protests stand out from others that have taken place in the past because of the diversity of participation across the political spectrum, the ‘middle class’ demographic of the protesters, and the audacity of the protesters’ criticisms of the government. While protests in the past have been initiated by union members, pensioners, and avid opposition activists (Greene & Robertson 2010), recent protests have embodied a new demographic: moderate, middle class citizens and students concerned about economic conditions and authoritarian tendencies among regional and federal officials (Shuster 2010).

From a survey perspective of the protest movements, one can identify common grievances, such as increased taxes, environmental concerns, electoral fraud, and dissatisfaction with Kremlin-appointed regional governors. An in-depth case-study approach that examines the evolution of protest movements in two different regions will allow us to examine the evolution of the protests, understand their degree of inclusivity, and apply our civil society-based model of nationalism on a particularistic basis. It is impossible to select a few regions that are fully representative of Russia as a whole and thus allow us to draw universally applicable lessons from each case study. The two regions selected for this thesis were instead chosen for their particular characteristics, distance from the capital center, and locally-rooted organizations that organized the protests. These case studies capture
some of Russia’s most difficult obstacles to overcome in constructing national identity—diversity of regions, geographic size, and localist tendencies.

The two regions that will be used for this case-study analysis were chosen as a result of the present author’s close following of Russian protest movements during 2010 and the practical consideration of formulating a useful and relevant study. While there was considerable media attention dedicated to the Khimki forest protests that took place in Moscow in the summer of 2010, this protest was heavily influenced by Western actors, with the international NGO Greenpeace playing a major role and even featuring a debut appearance by Irish rock star Bono (Ioffe 2010). The purpose of this study is to analyze civil society in Russia through the lens of civic nationalism, which is most necessarily a home-grown phenomenon. While international NGO partnerships have been beneficial to Russian civil society development, it is important to understand how domestic organizations work together to plan and execute the protest events. It is for this reason that the two regions chosen for this study are the Kaliningrad Oblast and the Irkutsk Oblast. In both cases, the protests were organized by local civil society organizations and the participants were almost exclusively Russian citizens, the principal demographic with which this thesis concerns itself. The case studies selected in this thesis exhibit the key obstacles to developing a form of inclusive, civic nationalism: geographic size, regional particularism, and localist tendencies. Specifically, the case studies will cover protests that occurred the first few months of 2010 against regional governor Georgy Boos in Kaliningrad and the re-opening of Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill in Irkutsk. The protest movements in both regions were concentrated upon local issues that affect a majority of citizens.
Media coverage on this new wave of protests has been sparse, and news stories often leave gaps in the chronological sequence of events and their aftermath. This thesis aims to provide the reader with comprehensive coverage of the evolution of the protests and their aftermath, providing as much detail as possible through a comprehensive consultation of Russian— and English—language media coverage on the protests. While certain articles emphasize the new wave of protest as a general trend, few trace the evolution of protest movements and analyze the lasting effects that they have had. By studying the protests at a local level, we can understand how plans for protest develop, how protest leaders garner support, and how the population receives and reacts to the protests. The case study model utilized in this thesis allows us to understand at a micro-level both how these movements evolve as well as their direct and immediate effects. It is also noteworthy that in Russia, the largest country in the world, where most media is state-owned and does not closely cover the protests, protest movements in Kaliningrad and Irkutsk can have such a large effect on national politics and other regions throughout the country.

RESEARCH METHODS & STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW

Following this structural overview, the remainder of Chapter 1 will be dedicated to a concise history of civil society activity during the Soviet, post-Soviet, and contemporary eras. It is important to understand Russian civil society’s relative nonexistence until the mid-1980s in order to understand both the significance of recent civil society activity and how civil society development coincided with the
development of a Russian [rossiiskii] nationalism that would later birth the Russian Federation.\(^7\)

Chapter 2 provides an overview of existent nationalism theories and a theoretical framework for the study. I have dedicated an entire chapter to a literature overview and theoretical framework construction because it is important to understand the intricacies of existent theories and the ways in which the universality of existing theories is challenged by the Russian case study. A close reading of civil society theory reveals the key connections between civic nationalism and civil society’s role within the state. The theoretical framework constructed in this chapter will be utilized to analyze the two case studies.

The case studies in chapters three and four will provide the reader with an in-depth overview of each of the protest movements, focusing upon the ‘triggers’ for each of the protests, the groups involved in protest organization, the demographic of the participants, and the effect of the protests on governmental policy. The methods used to provide detailed descriptions of each of the protests, including quotes from opposition leaders and protests, slogans taken from protest signs, and the general atmosphere and energy of the protests are diverse and somewhat unconventional. Because these protests are so recent, there is little academic writing on their trajectory and impact. For this reason, I have constructed the basic narrative of each protest based a variety of available medias. English- and Russian- language news sources provided logistical details and statistical facts, such as organization of the protests, number of participants, and the protests’ immediate impact. Radio interviews,

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\(^7\) In Russian, the adjectives *russkii* (masculine) and *russkaia* (feminine) refer to Russian ethnicity while *rossiiskii* or *rossiiskaia* refer to the Russian state.
opposition leader LiveJournal pages, and YouTube videos were useful in describing some of the on-the-ground details that the newspaper articles did not cover in-depth, such as common slogans, the rhetoric used in speeches, the general attitude and energy of the crowd, and an appraisal of the protests within the context of the larger opposition movement. A more in-depth analysis of the trajectory of each of these protests cannot be found in academic scholarship at this time.

In each case study, an analysis of the ‘civic nationalism’ aspects of the protests will be distributed throughout the description of the protests, with an additional analysis section at the end that will demonstrate how existing nationalism theories are insufficient to describe nationalism in the each of the regions. While the two most prominent theories of nationalism—primordialism and modernism—can explain how nationalism is expressed in each of these regions in part, neither can fully describe the form of civic nationalism that is emerging in Russia today. Each case study will conclude that a close look at civil society’s activities helps to fill in these ‘gaps’ in existent nationalism theories.

The conclusion will summarize the results from each of the case studies and provide the reader with updated news on the opposition movements in each of these regions. Continued opposition activity demonstrates that the protests that occurred in the first few months of 2010 are not isolated incidents, but rather demonstrate a growing trend in civil society activity in Russia. The conclusion will also address counterarguments that challenge the civil society-civic nationalism model. Lastly, the

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8 LiveJournal is a blog interface owned by the Russian media company SUP. It is a prominent avenue for social networking among Russia’s opposition leaders. President Dimitri Medvedev also has an active LiveJournal account. See: LiveJournal.com.
conclusion will discuss the contribution that a civil society-civic nationalism model makes to the field of nationalism studies and suggest future research projects that can utilize this model outside of Russia.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“The Homeland of the Revolution became of the location of its most emphatic and ignominious burial. It is of course this collapse which set free that craving for Civil Society, which is our principle theme. Equally, it released nationalism.”

Ernest Gellner in *Conditions of Liberty* (1994)

*Soviet Civil Society: A History of Nonexistence*

The idea of civil society in Russia can be traced back the *zemstvo* institution under Tsar Alexander II. The *zemstvos* were bureaucratic entities designed to manage economic and social needs at the village level. As smaller institutions, the *zemstvos* came to represent local interests and some scholars cite these institutions as the beginnings of political pluralism in imperial Russia. While the *zemstvos* did have the freedom to appease local interests, they were still officially attached to the state and therefore did not constitute what we would interpret today as an active, independent civil society (Uhlin 2006, 42). Conversely, the development of political parties, an active press, and civic councils during the 1905 and 1917 revolutions constituted what can be interpreted as what one scholar refers to as the “stirrings of the emergence of civil society” (qtd. in Uhlin 2006, 42).

The subsequent application of Marxism during the Bolshevik revolution virtually outlawed civil society, seeing it merely as a façade for the egotistic interests of isolated individuals. According to this view, the dual evils of a negligent state and
an unregulated civil society were “damned as redundant and fraudulent” (Gellner 1994, 1-2). In effect, the Soviet Union conclusively outlawed social organizations that existed independently of the state. With the exception of ‘interest groups’ that operated within the institutional framework of the Soviet state during the post-Stalin ‘thaw’ of the late 1950s and early 1960s and the underground dissident and religious groups that operated underground throughout the Soviet Union, civil society was virtually nonexistent prior to the late 1980s (Uhlin 2006, 43). Furthermore, the academic study of civil society also suffered during the Soviet era. The idea that Soviet society was a beskonfliktnoe obshchestvo (‘society without conflict’) and therefore saw no need for the operation of institutions or interests groups that operated outside of the state further contributed to the dearth of academic study of the subject. In fact, the Philosophical Dictionary published in 1975 defined the term civil society as “pre-Marxist philosophy” (Domrin 2003, 200).

Due to the lack of civil society experience among Soviet citizens, the ‘democratic entrepreneurs’ of perestroika essentially had to build civil society “from scratch” (Fish 1995). The first civil society institutions to develop in the mid-1980s were moderate and politically-ambivalent associations, including historical societies, environmental groups, and alcoholism awareness forums. It was not until 1987 that more politically-motivated groups began to emerge in the form of human rights and pro-democracy organizations. By 1987, there were over 30,000 independent organizations; by 1989, this number doubled. Millions of Soviet citizens had the opportunity, for the first time, to engage in non-state organizations with a diverse range of interests (Uhlin 2006, 45). One scholar writes, “after six decades of ruinous
existence in Russia, [the totalitarian regime] died quietly in 1987 in the apartments and small public conference rooms where the new political clubs convened” (Fish 1995, 33). Although these independent groups existed only in embryonic form, they constituted the first stirrings of a ‘civil society’ of citizens existing within the state, but operating outside of its institutional framework.

While the opposition in the republics was able to unify under Popular Fronts, a cohesive popular front was slow to emerge in the Russian SSR. In fact, before 1989, the diverse range independent organizations could only be unified by the fact that they all existed outside of the institutional framework of the Soviet state (Brovkin 1990, 233). However, during the elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies in the spring of 1989, these groups were able to amass their interests into a relatively cohesive democratic movement. However, the elections themselves did not yield marked political diversification: one-third of the seats were designated to representatives of state organizations under the control of the Communist Party and the nomination processes made it difficult for those who were not already in power to garner support and win representation. In fact only a small minority of pro-reform candidates managed to win representation (Fish 1995, 35). While the end result of the elections did not yield a revolutionized legislature, the election itself “engendered the closest thing that the populace had ever known to a real election campaign” (Fish 1995, 35) wherein the democratic movement’s “first contacts with wider audiences were made” (Brovkin 1990, 245). During a wave of coal miners’ strikes in the summer following the elections, intellectuals that had been part of loosely organized democratic discussion circles were able to garner support among the striking workers
(Brovkin 1990, 245). This type of communication across pro-democratic and labor groups beginning in 1989 facilitated a unity of action that would cause the Soviet Union to crumble from the inside out. In the case studies in chapters three and four of this thesis, we will observe how this phenomenon—diverse groups with differing interests united under an umbrella cause—crystallizes identities through the dynamics of collective action.

There is much debate over whether or not the new independent institutions and democratic movement of perestroika constituted a genuine civil society. While the indicators of a mature civil society (i.e. ability to represent interests, access to political institutions, autonomy from the state, mass participation) were relatively weak, these new organizations were, however, able to have a considerable political impact (Uhlin 2006, 50). At the very least, they “exposed the illegitimacy, brutality, and ineffectiveness of the existing political system” (Fish 1995, 51). In 1990, as these new organizations were developing and evolving, one Soviet scholar saw the new society at the pinnacle of a great change:

The rise of informal political associations in the USSR is a sign of the awakening of Soviet society. It is discovering its strength, it is searching for new ideas, it is crystallising into new political organisations and parties. This brief survey of the new political forces on the Russian political horizon suggests that we are witnessing a rebirth of the pre-1917 political society. Russia is returning to itself, to its history, religion, customs and traditions. It is returning to pre-Bolshevik norms of behaviour, to pre-Bolshevik moral and ethical values, to pre-Bolshevik political culture. We are witnessing a great historical turning point in the history of Russian culture. (Brovkin 1990, 253)

‘Russian culture,’ which was unable to exist outside of the institutional framework of the state during the Soviet era, could flourish within the new independent institutions
of a developing civil society. The Soviet *narod*, and with it its cultural values and norms, could no longer teeter on the strand of Marxist indoctrination upon which it placed its sole source of legitimacy. The emergence of these independent organizations demonstrated that “old answers no longer satisfy various strata of Soviet society” (Brovkin 1990, 238). This ‘new’ society would be satisfied only by the ability to participate in institutions that constitute diverse interests, novel ideas, and creative outlets that would, at times, stand in opposition to the state but would nonetheless operate to further the interests of its citizens as a whole.

*Civil Society: A Definition from Behind the Iron Curtain*

In the West, the definition of the term ‘civil society’ is heavily debated in the West. While a ‘normative’ definition of civil society is difficult to construct, civil society is most often attached to the world of NGOs, charities, religious institutions, and even sports teams. Outside of the West, however, “[d]eveloping civil society became a strategy to overcome totalitarian regimes” (Uhlin 2006, 23). The definition of civil society that this thesis will utilize is best articulated by Ernest Gellner in *Conditions of Liberty*: “Civil Society is the set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and, while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society” (Gellner 1994, 5). The principle reason why I have chosen this definition from the many others posited by the vast literature on civil society is due to its emphasis upon civil society as a force separate from and in balance with the state. This definition is not particularly unique, but the current author finds it suitable
within a post-Soviet context because it recognizes the key difference between Soviet and post-Soviet society: the presence of institutions that monitor the activities of the state, yet nonetheless recognize the authority of the state as a legitimate governing body. Although civil society is by definition separate from the state, its recognition of and operation within the bounds of the state make its goals both oriented toward and limited by the state.

Post-Soviet Civil Society

In the years immediately following the collapse of the USSR, civil society remained institutionally weak and its activities were largely ignored by the state. The civil society organizations that developed during perestroika were unable to maintain their popularity and electoral institutions continued to favor the old Communist Party apparatchiki. Many of the groups that contributed to the regime’s collapse and helped to launch the democratic movement failed to transfer their energies into the new post-Soviet regime. In the December 1993 elections, only the Democratic Party of Russia, just one of the handful of parties that comprised the democratic movement DemRossiya, was able to reach the five-percent threshold necessary to win seats in the new parliament (Fish 1994, 31-32). Even prominent labor groups such as the coal miners’ organizations that operated during the late Soviet period were not able to survive the transition and become viable labor unions. Whereas the aforementioned July 1989 coalminers’ strikes were able to operate concurrently in several different regions, constituting a “genuine grassroots workers’ movement,” subsequent strikes were mainly “wildcat actions born of desperation” or were coordinated by regional leaders seeking to gain recognition (Greene & Robertson 2010, 76-77). During the
Yeltsin era, over 95 percent of strikes occurred because of unpaid wages and manifested themselves as efforts intended to interfere with the operations of the state (such as the ‘rail wars’ of 1998) or were acts of desperation such as hunger strikes and even public suicide (Greene & Robertson 2010, 79).9

The general disunity and ineffectiveness of the civil society did, however, allow a smoother transition to capitalism. It was in fact the inactivity of civil society at this time that allowed economic reformers to “pillage the country under the guise of ‘reforms’ ” (Domrin 2003, 202). During Gaidar’s ‘shock therapy’ program, an active civil society could have potentially formed a strong resistance against economic liberalization (Fish 1994, 34).

While civil society was largely neglected by the Yeltsin administration, there have been renewed efforts to engage citizens during the Putin administration (Evans et. al 2006, 3). Alongside slow civil society developments, Russian laws on non-profit organizations were enacted throughout the 1990s (Proskuryakova & Vandisheva 2005, 15-16). A newly developed Civic Chamber was designed in 2005 “to facilitate coordination between the socially significant interests of citizens of Russia, NGOs, and national and local authorities” (Civic Chamber 2007). The Committee on Statistics of the Russian Federation reports that there are at least 600,000 registered NGOs operating in Russia today, and there are likely to be a significant number of additional NGOs that are not officially registered with the state. In addition to organizations previously attached to the Soviet state, such as veterans’ organizations

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9 During the spring and summer of 1998, striking workers from several different industries severely disrupted routes on the Trans-Siberian railroad by blocking major rail connections (Greene & Robertson 2010, 79).
and disabilities advocacy groups, NGOs that have begun to develop since 1991 advocate for a variety of issues, ranging from human rights to environmental protections to local social services (Proskuryakova & Vandisheva 2005, 16). At a 2005 meeting with the Presidential Advisory Council on Civil Society, then President Vladimir Putin stated, “NGOs may become good and irreplaceable partners to the state in combating the most acute problems” (Proskuryakova & Vandisheva 2005, 16).

It must be understood, however, that although independent organizations are beginning to develop, they were still operating under a semi-authoritarian regime and faced mass repression at the hands of the authorities. During perestroika, enterprise managers reprimanded workers for oppositional political behavior by either firing or demoting them. It was also the case that there remained few channels for dialogue between the newly-developed political organizations and state institutions. For this reason, the most effective forms of activity were protests and labor strikes (Uhlin 2006, 49). We see this same phenomenon in contemporary Russia, wherein opposition candidates have difficulty gaining electoral recognition due to electoral fraud, state-monopolized media, disqualification, bureaucratic technicalities, and lack of public support. As was the case from 1989 to 1991, Russia’s opposition today has difficulty gaining access to electoral institutions; protests, however, are more easily executed than electoral success and can be better indicators for societal attitudes and grievances.
CONCLUSION

Due to a lack of previous research on the topic of Russian civic nationalism and the currency of the protests that will be examined in the case studies, the research design for this thesis is explorative. Ultimately, the proliferation of civic Russian (rossiiskii) nationalism is a development only twenty years in the making, and the new wave of protest activity is a relatively recent phenomenon. While Western countries such as France and the United States can boast two centuries of civic-nationalist history, Russia can only demonstrate what civic nationalism looks like at an embryonic state. While its progress has been both slow and limited, the recent activity of various protest movements throughout Russia suggests that protest activity will be the sector of civil society to watch in order to understand how civic nationalism is expressed at a grassroots level.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

“[T]he particular person is essentially so related to other particular persons that each establishes himself and finds satisfactions by means of the others, and at the same time purely and simply by means of the form of universality . . . In the course of the actual attainment of selfish ends—an attainment conditioned in this way by universality—there is formed a system of complete interdependence, wherein the livelihood, happiness, and legal status of one man is interwoven with the livelihood, happiness, and rights of all. On this system, individual happiness, et cetera, depend, and only in this connected system are they actualized and secured. This system may be prima facie regarded as the external state, the state based on need, the state as the Understanding envisages it.”

Hegel in “On the Jewish Question” (1821)

“The dusty term, drawn from antiquated political theory, belonging to long, obscure and justly forgotten debates, re-emerged, suddenly endowed with a new and powerful capacity to stir enthusiasm and inspire action.”

Ernest Gellner on ‘Civil Society’ in Conditions of Liberty (1994)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that current nationalism theories are inadequate to address the national trajectory of the Russian Federation and the various working mechanisms through which national sentiment is expressed throughout Russia’s regions. This chapter seeks to provide a theoretical framework for the hypothesis laid out in Chapter 1—that Russian nationalism can be better understood at the grassroots level of civil society. The following literature review will outline primordialism and modernism, the two most salient theories within nationalism scholarship, as well as identify the key distinction between ethnic and
civic nationalisms. The literature review will also look at these theories within a Russian context, making reference to scholarship that follows primordialist and modernist models to understand Russian nationalism. Lastly, the literature review will identify the ways in which these two prominent nationalism theories fail to be fully applicable to Russia.

A brief survey of civil society theory will demonstrate how civil society fits into the nationalism equation, filling in the gaps where existing nationalism scholarship falls short. Hegel’s understanding of civil society emphasizes civil society’s role within the modern state, acting as a network of interdependent individual interests that, by a dialectical advance, serve the greater interests of society as a whole. The failure of the Marxist ideology of the Soviet Union demonstrates that this interdependence of individual needs that exists in a working civil society is a necessary part of a functional and legitimate nation-state. The next civil society theorist that we will discuss, Antonio Gramsci, makes a significant contribution to civil society theory by explaining that civil society’s interests are not exclusively within the limitations of individual egos, but within the wider context of societal values and morals. An overview of these three theorists, as well as more contemporary scholars of the subject, will demonstrate that civil society is an important part of the ideology of the modern nation-state and is a necessary part of national identity. The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter will provide the groundwork for an analysis of the case studies in chapters three and four.
LITERATURE REVIEW: NATIONALISM THEORY IN A RUSSIAN CONTEXT

Primordialism

Among nationalism theorists, British sociologist Anthony Smith has received considerable attention for his primordialist approach to nationalism. Smith argues that although the concept of ‘the nation’ is new, ‘nationalism’ is something that existed among traditional societies in the pre-modern era. He identifies parallels between the proto-nationalisms of the pre-modern era and the modern foundations of national identity (Smith 1987, 11). Essentially, he argues that nations have existed from the moment at which civilizations came into contact with each other and recognized their respective characteristics as unique.

In the second chapter of his foundational book, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1987), Smith lays out several ‘dimensions’ of what he refers to as ‘ethnie.’ These dimensions are: 1) a collective name, 2) a common myth of descent, 3) a shared history, 4) a distinctive shared culture, 5) an association with a specific territory, and 6) a sense of solidarity (Smith 1987, 22-31). Based upon these qualifications, Smith’s model accurately describes the formation of a Russian ethnie that developed during the pre-modern era and exists today as the Russian Federation. ‘The Russians’ is a ‘common name’ that can be traced back to the establishment of Kievan Rus’ in the ninth century. The ‘common myth of descent,’ described in the twelfth-century chronicle *Tale of Bygone Years*, makes reference to the foundations of Kievan Rus’ as a Christian civilization. The ‘distinctive shared culture’ exists in the Russian

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10 Smith defines *ethnie* as an “ethnic community” that transcends ethnic categorizations (30).
language, the Russian Orthodox faith, traditional folklore, literature, and common customs. The ‘association with a common territory’ is evident in the relative cohesiveness of the vast expanses of Russian territory over several centuries. Finally, the ‘sense of solidarity’ can be recognized in the willingness of Russian citizens to fight various foreign invaders, from thirteenth century Mongol tribes to twentieth century Nazi German troops.

However, although Smith’s theoretical framework is applicable to the Russian case, it is insufficient to explain the nuances of Russian history. If one considers that Smith’s ‘dimensions’ of the *ethnie* have developed over several centuries, how was the Communist Party in 1922 able to quickly establish a new Soviet identity based upon the foreign doctrine of Marxism? How has this Soviet identity, existing for less than seventy years, been able to have such a lasting cultural impact upon the Russian Federation and the former Soviet republics? And how, after a decades-long hiatus, was Yeltsin able to reinvigorate Russian national identity under the banner of freedom and democracy? Primordialism as a nationalism theory is insufficient in the Russian context because it fails to explain how political conditions affect national identity, how identities can shift in accordance with political ideology, and how top-down processes can manipulate and alter identities.

*Modernism*

Modernism may serve to answer some of these questions. While primordialists view nationalism as a relatively stagnant form of identity that can survive great lengths of time, modernists argue that nationalism is a malleable ideology that can be used by elites in order to pursue political and economic goals.
Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) describes modernity as a new type of social order that not only transformed culture into a necessary commodity, but also facilitated the growth of nationalism. To Gellner, nationalism’s triumph was not in its ability to exist and evolve over the course of several centuries; instead, its success was in its role in bringing about a modern social order (Breuilly 2006, xx-xxi). In the pre-modern social order that existed mainly among agricultural societies, identity was determined by *structure*, by the roles that people had in society and the interaction of these roles. In this new, ‘modern’ social order, which is defined by industrialism, it is impossible to identify with structure because people no longer have fixed roles; instead, people are constantly taking on new roles in new jobs. Identity shifts from *structure* to *culture*, wherein a commodified standard of exchange allows people to take part in “context-free communication” (Breuilly 2006, xxiv).

While Gellner’s work laid the foundations for nationalism as a product of modernity, other nationalism scholars expanded upon these ideas. In his book, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (1992), Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm provides a succinct rebuttal to the primordialist argument:

> Why and how could a concept so remote from the real experience of most human beings as ‘national patriotism’ become such a powerful political force so quickly? . . . The problem before us derives from the fact that the modern nation, either as state or as a body of people aspiring to form such a state, differs in size, scale and nature from the actual communities with which human beings have identified over most of history, and makes quite different demands on them. (46)

In conjunction with this idea of nationalism as a relatively modern development that facilitates the commodification of culture onto disparate communities of people,
Hobsbawm argues that ‘national consciousness’ occurs in three phases in a top-down fashion. During Phase A, a cultural, literary, and folkloric nationalism is proliferated among the intellectual elite. In Phase B, pioneers of ‘the national idea’ launch political campaigns for the nation. Finally, in Phase C, nationalism gains popular support (12). The masses do not achieve what Hobsbawm refers to as a ‘separate peoplehood’ until they are persuaded by a campaigning elite.

The flaw in Hobsbawm’s model, however, is that when applied to Russia, the model exhibits a key discontinuity: the Bolshevik revolution promoted an alternative ideology to nationalism: Marxism. Marxism was ultimately ‘anti-national’ in that it promoted a world order during which the workers of the world would unite not under the banner of ‘nationalism’ but under the pursuit of ‘communist internationalism’ during which the state would ‘whither away’ (Marx 1848). However, the though the ideology that the Soviet Union implemented was transnational (Bolshevism, Leninism, Stalinism), it was implemented in under the modernist model wherein the national ideology (that is, the ideology of the state) was promoted in a top-down fashion in order to facilitate industrialization. We can view the Soviet ideologists as Hobsbawm’s ‘campaigning elite’ that defined the Soviet’s ‘separate peoplehood.’ Within a post-Soviet context, one could argue that Phase B picked up where it had left off and, in suit with Hobsbawm’s model, the Yeltsin administration became the new pioneers of the Russian national idea.

In the book *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory during the Yeltsin Era* (2002), Kathleen Smith examines the Yeltsin’s administration’s undertaking of this re-nationalization project. Throughout her book, Smith appraises
the use of several methods and approaches of elite participation in creating a
nationalist sentiment, including the resurrection of Soviet symbols, praise of the
uniqueness of Russia’s multi-ethnic character, and introduction of new symbols and
democratic ideas (Smith 2002).

While Smith uses a top-down approach to demonstrate the extent to which
civic Russian nationalism was orchestrated from above in the years following the fall
of the Soviet Union, Peter Rutland’s article “The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity
Policy in Russia” (2010) continues this analysis of top-down nationalism into the
Putin era. Rutland notes that Putin’s appointment to the presidency in 2000 marked a
decisive shift from the confederal precedent that Yeltsin had set to an emphasis upon
a unified federal government. Putin’s subsequent national policies followed suit.
Combining symbols from both the Tsarist and Soviet eras, he “quickly and
energetically revived a symbolic repertoire for Russian national identity” (6). From
Yeltsin to Putin, Smith and Rutland’s work demonstrates the paradigmatic shift from
an ethnic (russkii) nationalism toward the cultivation of civic Russian (rossiiskii)
nationalism.

Liberal Nationalism: The Civic-Ethnic Divide

The theoretical work for this distinction has been completed in large part by
American sociologist Rogers Brubaker. In his book *Citizenship and Nationhood in
France and Germany* (1992), Brubaker uses the case studies of France and Germany
to exemplify the distinction between two distinct forms of nationalism. In Germany,
German nationalism can be categorized as ‘ethnocultural’ and the nation is
constructed upon a base of ethnic legitimacy. The unification of the Central European
German principalities in 1871 marked the fruition of a nation legitimized by ethnic homogeneity. In France, the nation is defined by inclusivity and the assimilation of peoples from multiple backgrounds into a common national identity that guarantees individual rights. The French revolution, guided by ideas of secularism, equality, universalism, citizenship, and inalienable rights, gave birth to a post-revolutionary France that was constructed within the institutional framework of the state (Brubaker 1992). The United States, the birthchild of the same Enlightenment-era rhetoric that preceded the French Revolution, is often advertised as a poster child (though in practice has many flaws) of an inclusive, ‘civic’ nationalism (Miller 1995).

The ‘civic’ form of nationalism will be the one primarily addressed in this thesis and will allow us to distinguish between Russian civic nationalism and various ethnic and right-wing nationalisms that exist within and among regions throughout the Russian Federation. Within a normative framework in an increasingly mobile world—that is, one in which borders are becoming increasingly permeable—the only kind of nationalism that is acceptable is a civic form of nationalism, one that is inclusive and diverse. The Russian Federation claims itself to be a civic rather then ethnic nation, with the opening lines of its 1993 Constitution reading, “We the multinational people…”

Another way to conceive of the civic-ethnic nationalism dichotomy is through a distinction between state-framed and counter-state nationalism. In state-framed nationalism, the nation “is conceived as congruent with the state, and as institutionally and territorially framed by it,” whereas in counter-state nationalism, the nation “is imagined as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the territorial and
institutional frame of an existing state or states” (Brubaker 2004, 144). The utility of this distinction, as opposed to the simple distinction between ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ nationalisms, is that it places a normative value upon an inclusive nationalism that does not require the ‘common descent’ dimension of Anthony Smith’s *ethnie*, instead requiring only Eric Hobsbawm’s ‘separate peoplehood’ (Hobsbawm 1992, 136-137).

Of the prospect of a civic nationalism in the Russian Federation, Kremlin aid Vladislav Surkov writes,

> The destiny of the civic-Russian [rossiiskaia] nation is continuously being solved as a nonlinear equation of diverse interests, customs, languages, and religions. The ethnic Russians [russkie], tireless rulers of this lofty destiny, are tightly interwoven with the peoples that have been drawn into the creation of the multifaceted civic-Russian world. (Surkov 2009, 18)

Ultimately, a civic nationalism is the only viable option that will bring the greatest legitimacy to a country that spans over a great diversity of ethnicities.

> Ultimately, “the civic nation is based upon citizenship, and therefore includes all citizens, regardless of their particularistic traits” (Brubaker 2004, 141). In accordance with the modernist model, nationalism is most necessarily civic in order for it to cultivate a common cultural exchange. But once this distinction has been made, there are several questions that remain unanswered. If a modern, civic nationalism that arguably has many cultural attributes is adopted and is inclusive of all citizens of the state, how is this sense of civic belonging *felt* and *exercised* by the populace? How does it *manifest* itself within society?

‘Civil Society’ and Civic Nationalism
In one of his lesser-known books, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (1994), Gellner addresses these questions with some success. Defining ‘Civil Society’ (the term capitalized throughout his book) as a social order that exists exclusively in ‘modern’ industrial societies, Gellner argues that the modern era in which ‘modular man’ lives is hospitable to both nationalism and Civil Society. The ‘modular man,’ whose education has given him the capability of “performing highly diverse tasks in the same general cultural idiom,” exists in a culturally homogeneous society (102). Cultural homogeneity, Gellner argues, is “the very essence of nationalism” (105). Furthermore, modular man’s key interests rest within the state, for it is the sole provider of the education and culture that he so values:

Modularity with its moral and intellectual pre-conditions makes Civil Society, the existence of non-suffocating, optional yet effective segments, possible; but it makes not only for a civil, but also for a nationalist society. In these circumstances, for the first time in world history a High Culture in this sense becomes the pervasive and operational culture of an entire society, rather than being at most the privilege and badge of a restricted social stratum. (106)

Because ‘modular man’ is capable of “performing highly diverse tasks in the same general cultural idiom,” he can participate in not only industrial, but also in ‘civil’ society, joining organizations as he so chooses. He is a ‘nationalist’ because his government provides him with the education that allows him to participate in his standardized culture.

Of the logic behind looking at the pivotal connection between nationalism and civil society, American political philosopher Michael Walzer, in “A Better Vision: The Idea of Civil Society” (2003) writes,
The quality of nationalism is also determined within civil society, where national groups coexist and overlap with families and religious communities. . . and where nationalism is expressed in schools and movements, organizations for mutual aid, culture and historical societies. It is because groups like these are entangled with other groups, similar in kind but different in aim, that civil society holds out the hope of a domesticated nationalism. In states dominated by a single nation, the multiplicity of the groups pluralizes nationalist politics and culture; in states with more than one nation, the density of the networks prevents radical polarization. (316)

Civil society creates a space wherein nationalism can be established, defined, and expressed, facilitating an avenue for disparate interests within the same social medium. Furthermore, it is the nature of civil society participation, wherein individuals must take on both leadership and subordinate roles, that teaches the individual how to participate as a citizen within the nation (Almond & Verba 2003).

The utility of combining nationalism and civil society literatures, a scholarly exercise that has not yet been thoroughly explored, is that it allows us to view nationalism through the eyes of its citizens who are, in fact, the target recipients of such a fantastic ideology. Civil society is an avenue through which we can understand how citizens play certain roles within the nation and articulate what they, as citizens, deem to be important for both themselves and their fellow citizens. In this way, nationalism manifests itself in civil society; it creates an avenue of expression. While this section has demonstrated that civil society and nationalism have the same prerequisite—a ‘modern’ social order—we are left with a question posed by Gellner: “If Civil Society and nationalism are the offspring of the same forces, does this affinity turn them into political allies or enemies?” (Gellner 1994, 109). In reply, he answers, “We do not yet know how this drama will end” (112). A close reading of
civil society literature will reveal that civil society and nationalism are, in fact, ‘allies.’

CIVIL SOCIETY THEORY

In Western liberal thought, civil society was not always considered an entity separate from the state. Enlightenment era thinkers understood civil society as a transition of social life from a ‘state of nature’ toward a more ‘civil’ society through a social contract. According to Locke, the ‘social contract’ is one in which the individual leaves a ‘state of nature’ and enters into an agreement with the state, enjoying its shelter from the capriciousness and instability of the natural world and in exchange ceding to it a certain degree of freedom. While Hobbes saw this ‘state of nature’ as a brutish and warlike condition, Locke saw in nature an existing civil society wherein functions later carried out by the state were carried out autonomously among individuals. The creation of the state as an institution only provided greater convenience for those who entered into it (Femia 2001, 132).

*Hegel: Civil Society and the ‘Particular’-‘Universal Synthesis*

Hegel, unlike Locke, did not interpret civil society as synonymous with political society, but instead saw it as a distinct structure within the framework of the state. To Hegel, civil society is characterized precisely by its economic nature, wherein the individual seeks his or her egotistic needs. In this way, civil society represents the ‘subjective’ or the ‘particular’ interests of individuals that are seemingly in direct opposition to the ‘objective’ or the ‘universal’ interests of the state (Hegel 1821). But Hegel emphasizes that the interests of each individual are not mutually exclusive; instead, the system is governed by ‘interdependence,’ “wherein
the livelihood, happiness, and legal status of one man is interwoven with the livelihood, happiness, and rights of all” (Hegel 1821, 182-183). By way of a dialectical advance, the system regulates itself. Civil society, according to Hegel, is a society in which one can serve one’s own individual interests but at the same time serve the greater benefit of the ‘universal’ whole of society. The ‘universal’ is therefore only realized through the ‘particular’ interests of each individual.

Hegel understands, however, that as the wealth of certain individuals increases, others become disenfranchised. The system simply needs at least mild regulation in order to compensate for the circumstances in which civil society fails to strike a compromise between the ‘particular’ and the ‘universal.’ Therefore, the existence of civil society must be supplemented by ‘corporations’ that divide civil society into groups of specialized enterprises that meet various different demands. It must also be supplemented by a judicial system that provides security to the individual and protects his or her property. Civil society, therefore, becomes “the free market plus the administration of justice” wherein opposing private interests are regulated by a state, an entity into which the individual enters “out of solidarity, out of the will to live in a community” (Femia 2001, 134). From this Hegelian perspective, civil society is the pretense for and the substance of the state itself. This dynamic interdependent system of pursuits and needs is the reason why the individual prefers to live as a citizen of the state instead of in an anarchic, Hobbesian state of nature.

For the sector of civil society with which this thesis concerns itself—protest movements—Hegel’s dialectical synthesis of the ‘individual’ and the ‘universal’
within civil society is highly relevant. A protest movement consists of more than one organization, each representing a diverse range of ‘selfish,’ ‘individual’ interests. As the case studies will later demonstrate, each group that took part in the protest movements in Kaliningrad and Irkutsk had a specific agenda that it wanted to advance: labor unions wanted to advocate for workers’ interests, environmental groups wanted to raise ecological concerns, political parties wanted to gain political recognition, and individual citizens wanted to express specific grievances. Yet despite their respective ‘individual’ agendas, they collectively promote a ‘universal’ cause: in Kaliningrad, we will see that this ‘universal’ cause is the removal of an unpopular regional governor; in Irkutsk, it is protection of a Lake Baikal, which is ultimately a demand for their rights as citizens. We can also think of Hegel’s individual-universal synthesis as solving the problem with the modernist nationalism theory. While modernism explains how nationalism is understood at an elite level, it fails to address how nationalism is received among the citizenry. Under Hegel’s model of civil society, the link between the individual and the state exists in a dialectical synthesis. An individual’s pursuit of his or her individual interests is ultimately interconnected with the interests of others; together, the citizenry as a whole is intertwined with the ‘universal’ interests of the state because individual interests can become part of the universal interest. The specific ways in which this ‘universal’ cause is a form of nationalism will be addressed later; however, it is important to recognize that Hegel equates the ‘universal’ as the interests of society as a whole, comprising all citizens of the state.
In Russia, policymakers and academics do not view civil society as an entity that stands in direct opposition to the state; instead, Russian scholars and policymakers understand the idea of civil society within the context of the ‘law-governed state,’ which is a political manifestation of civil society: “Civil society is interpreted not as diminishing the law-governed state, but rather complementing and completing it” (Domrin 2003, 201). In general, Russian scholars agree with a Hegelian definition of civil society wherein civil society is not merely a manifestation of unregulated individual pursuits but an entity that must necessarily operate within the framework of the state, existing neither “before the state [n]or outside of it” (Domrin 2003, 201).

*Marx: Civil Society is a ‘Fraud’*

While Hegel was optimistic about the possibility of the prevailing political-societal schema to bind these two forces into the ideal interdependent relationship, Marx saw civil society as “a Hobbesian nightmare of isolated and aggressive individuals bound together precariously by the cash nexus” (Femia 2001, 135). In “On the Jewish Question” (1844), Marx traces how civil society had evolved into an unregulated, egotistic world of competing self-interests. In feudalistic society, political roles mirrored social obligation and man (indeed, only men) participated in the political sphere in a manner that corresponded with his economic position: “[T]hat is to say, the elements of civil life, for example, property, or the family, or the mode of labor, were raised to the level of elements of political life in the form of seigniory, estates, and corporations” (Marx 1844, 22). In effect, these quasi-political institutions served as a tangible link between civil society and the state and provided the
‘administration of justice’ component of Hegel’s regulated civil society. The French Revolution, having broken the feudal ties of manor and estate from the political sphere, removed the regulatory measures put in place by civil society’s direct partnership with the state. In the absence of the ‘administration of justice,’ civil society becomes a ‘fraud,’ a set of institutions designed to be free from the oppression of the state, but in actuality representative of the unfettered egoistic and capitalist interests that would serve to alienate the proletariat from the fruits of his or her labor.

Whereas Hegel believed that the universal and the particular could be combined through a dialectical synthesis, Marx suggested that liberation could occur only through the ‘socialization’ of the particular into the universal. Under Marxism, the state is no longer an abstract entity in which we have no obligatory role; it is, rather, the sole provider of all of our individual needs formerly acquired in civil society (Femia 2001, 135). Whereas before, civil society had reinforced the state’s domination over society by “masquerading as benign, neutral or divinely ordained [institutions],” this ‘socialization’ of the public and private spheres “claims to unmask both partners in this deception” (Gellner 1994, 2). The state, heretofore distant and vague, is transformed into an entity that is, in essence, a universalized version of civil society.

However, the ‘socialization’ of civil society requires that the state is distribute all profits from civil society in a theoretically equal manner, which offsets the precarious state of checks and balances created by the interdependence of each individual’s efforts and needs so profusely emphasized by Hegel. No longer does man get in return what he has put in; his efforts do not match his proceeds. And so the
political entity becomes just as vague as it had been before, representing not the socialized manifestation of the interests and needs of civil society, but rather a universal approximation of these interests and needs. By taking away civil society’s autonomy from the state, we take away the individual’s freedom to pursue individual interests. If the individual is not free to pursue individual interests, then entering into the state is no longer beneficial to the individual. It is at this point that we can recognize why a civil society-less Marxist society is incompatible with nationalism; it gives the individual no incentive to subscribe to the nation, no benefit for its participation, and no individualized avenue through which he or she can express his or her role. The ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union at the hands of civil society is the key to understanding civil society’s role within the nation. Without civil society—that is, an arena in which the citizen is free to express his or her own individual interests, to profit and learn from the activities of others, and to learn how to be a part of entities larger than the oneself—there is no area for the individual to participate in an entity wherein it is beneficial to enter into the state. The creation of the nation-state is, essentially, the creation of society into which individuals join by way of social contract. To take away society’s avenue of activity is to take away the legitimacy and the basis upon which the nation state was created. Under this broken ‘social contract,’ the forces of social rebel against the oppressive and monolithic state.

*Gramsci: Civil Society as the ‘Superstructure’ of the State*

Unlike Marx, Antonio Gramsci, a post-Marxist political theorist, conceded that civil society has an important role within the state. Describing civil society as a
‘superstructure’ that functioned within the framework of the state, he artfully crafted this point through a military metaphor:

The superstructures of civil society are like the trench systems of modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy’s entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defense which was still effective. (Gramsci 1972, 489)

While the government itself serves as ‘outer perimeter’ of the state’s defense, it is civil society that provides the intricately woven trench systems that constitute the second line of defense. This is why the communist regime collapsed. As the regime’s first line of defense—its political administration—began to crumble during perestroika, civil society was too weak to provide a second line of defense.

Yet it is not only Gramsci’s military metaphor that demonstrates the role of civil society within the nation. Gramsci also expands our conception of civil society as a manifestation of purely egotistic interests, emphasizing that a system of morals and values underlies these egotistic interests. He interpreted the individualized interests that drive capitalism as actual manifestations of morals and values.

According to one scholar, Gramsci understood that

exploitative exchange relationships are . . . underpinned by a complex of moral injunctions that make these relationships seem right and proper to all parties in the exchange. Capitalism does not turn us into rational calculators, pursuing our objective interests in an ethical vacuum. For we necessarily define our interests in terms of our ideals and values—the evaluative categories that enable us to find meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. These ideals and values may be ‘false’, or class-biased; they may mystify us and cloud our judgment; but we can never detach ourselves from some moral perspective or other. (Femia 2001, 139)
Notwithstanding the egotistic nature of the interests that we pursue in civil society, these interests are nonetheless motives driven by a system of morals and values that define these interests. I argue that this system of morals and values that underlie the exchange relationships present in civil society espouses, in essence, creates a basis for a national idea. Within the context of our case studies, the material concerns associated with the protests—namely, high taxes, poor standards of living, unemployment—are underpinned by common values that citizens deem as important, such democratic political processes, concern for the environment, and transparent government processes. Although economic concerns tend to take precedence, a collective voice emerges from the protests that dictates a national agenda. By demanding dialogue with regional and federal officials, voicing personal concerns and grievances, and participating in the protests, the citizens themselves—not the government, as modernists would argue, nor the prevailing cultural schema, as primordialists would argue—embody what it means to be a part of the nation, an association of individuals engaged in the common project of citizenship.

American political scientists Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba explain the integral role played by civil society within the state in their 1963 book *The Civic Culture*. Seeing civil society as an intermediary between the individual and the state, they argue that civil society prevents the citizen from being “either a parochial, cut off from political influence, or an isolated and powerless individual, manipulated and mobilized by mass institutions of politics and government” (Almond & Verba 2003, 173). It is the avenue of civil society that provides the citizens with an avenue through which he or she can engage other citizens, find common ground, and have grievances
heard through the medium of collective action. Walzer also emphasizes the integral role that civil society occupies within the nation. He argues that our roles within civil society organizations ultimately teach us how to take part in the larger entity of the nation: “[I]n the associational networks of civil society—in unions, parties, movements, interest groups, and so on—these same people make small decisions and shape to some degree the more distant determinations of state and economy” (Walzer 2003, 314). Within the context of our case studies, we can see the operation of this dynamic in which the ‘associational networks of civil society’ ultimately have an impact upon policy decisions at a federal level: in Kaliningrad, the dockworkers’ union initiated a protest that subsequently ousted an unpopular regional governor. Similarly, in Irkutsk, local environmentalists raised awareness of ecological concerns surrounding Lake Baikal to a national level.

CONCLUSION

In the first section of this chapter, an overview of the two most salient theories within nationalism literature—primordialism and modernism—revealed that these theories can only be applied to the Russian case in part. Primordialism fails to explain how the multiethnic expanses of the Russian Federation can be synthesized under the banner of an inclusive Russian (rossiiskii) nationalism and how the Soviet Union could have a lasting cultural legacy over a short period of time. Modernism provides only a limited scope, endowing only the intellectual and political elite with the agency to articulate a national idea and failing to address the reception of nationalism among the citizenry, in fact the intended recipients of such a fantastic ideology. A brief clarification of the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalisms helped us to
establish a working definition for nationalism within this thesis as an ideology fitted
to all citizens of the nation-state, regardless of ethnic origin. Modernist nationalism
theorist Ernest Gellner provided us with a general framework for understanding the
relationship between nationalism and civil society—that they are both part of a
‘modern’ social order that requires a ‘modularity’ of culture for exchange within a
national industrial economy, though he leaves us with an unanswered question: Are
civil society and nationalism allies or enemies?

An overview of prominent civil society theorists answers this question. The
failure of the Soviet state, a product of Marxist ideology and therefore a Marxist
interpretation of civil society, demonstrates that civil society is a necessary part of the
state because it provides the citizen with an avenue through which he or she can
express his or her individual interests. These individual interests, Hegel argues, are
governed by an ‘interdependent’ system of needs, wherein an individual’s interests
are interwoven with the interests of his fellow citizens, thereby creating a system of
‘interdependence’ wherein the ‘individual’ translates into the ‘universal’ by way of a
dialectical synthesis. In layman’s terms, this dialectical synthesis can be understood
by what Gramsci refers to as a ‘superstructure’ of civil society that provides a ‘second
line of defense’ for the state against instability, giving it legitimacy not only in its
own right, but within the hearts and minds of the its citizens.
CHAPTER THREE
Kaliningrad Leads the Way

“Two things fill the soul with increasingly new and growing admiration and awe as you ponder on them increasingly deeper and longer: the starry sky above me and the moral law within me.”

Inscription on Immanuel Kant’s tombstone at the Kaliningrad Kant memorial

INTRODUCTION

The transplantation of Russian culture and Soviet ideology onto a historically German territory has given the Kaliningrad Oblast a peculiar historical narrative. The region’s lack of pre-1945 Russian heritage as well as its exclave status as a part of the Russian Federation creates a unique identity dynamic that cannot be neatly fitted into existing nationalism theories. Recent protests in January and March 2010 in response to unfavorable tax and customs policies, high utilities prices, and a widely unpopular regional governor demonstrate that ‘Kaliningraders’ are articulating they, as citizens, envision for the immediate and long-term future of the region. These protests serve as excellent micro-case studies for this thesis because of the size and demographic of the protests, the civic nationalistic rhetoric used in speeches and in popular slogans, and the rippling effects of the protests throughout Russia’s regions.

In order to understand the parameters of this discourse, it is necessary to provide a brief post-1945 historical background of the oblast as an ethnically and culturally transformed region. After a discussion of the historical and cultural context, this chapter will present a detailed description of the two protest events and their aftermath, placing specific emphasis upon the demographic of the protesters, the
rhetoric used in opposition leader speeches and in common slogans, and the effects of the protests upon subsequent policy decisions. Lastly, this chapter will provide a broad-level analysis of national identity in the oblast and the significance of the protests as expressions of civic nationalism according to the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2.

This case study demonstrates that primordialist and modernist nationalism theories are not comprehensive enough to explain how national identity is expressed in this unique Russian exclave. Upon its conclusion, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the protests, as manifestations of civic engagement, help us to better understand national identity in the region at a grassroots level.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: National Identity in a Unique Region

The Kaliningrad Oblast occupies a unique role within the Russian Federation. Aside from its physical separation from the contiguous Russian Federation, it is also one of Russia’s smallest regions, occupying a territory roughly the size of Connecticut. Formerly known as Koenigsberg, the capital of East Prussia, Soviet troops occupied the city in 1945. In 1946 Koenigsberg was renamed Kaliningrad after former Soviet President Mikhail Kalinin and became a part of the Soviet Union. After the war, nearly all German citizens either emigrated out of the region or were deported to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany, and people from the Russian and Belarusian SSRs repopulated the newly-acquired Soviet territory (Zverev 9, 2007). The new citizens of Kaliningrad, many of them from largely rural areas, became part

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11 Kalinin served as the Soviet head of state from 1922-1946. He had no connection to the region.
of a one of the most urban and densely populated regions in Russia. Throughout the Cold War, the oblast became a military stronghold upon which the Baltic fleet was based, with the military as the oblast’s primary employer (Oldberg 2000, 271).

In addition to the demographic transformation of the region from German to Russian, the region’s infrastructure was overhauled to match its newly-established Russian-Soviet character. The new Soviet administration sought to transform 700 years of German heritage by changing the names of all towns and streets. The destruction of ninety percent of Koenigsberg by Allied bombings in 1944 and 1945 allowed for a complete conversion of the city into the uniform Soviet archetype. Statues of Prussian intellectuals, artists, and politicians were replaced by statues of Lenin and Stalin (Oldberg 2000, 272). The city became a ‘social experiment’ to prove that the new Soviet citizens of Kaliningrad could completely disregard the region’s German past (Jokubaitis 2006, 168). Perhaps the most overt example of this transformation occurred in the region’s capital where the thirteenth century castle that had seen the crowning of the first Prussian emperor in 1701 was blown up in 1966. The Soviet government devised a proposal to build the Kaliningrad House of Soviets in its place, but its lack of completion only served as a reminder of the inability of the Soviet government to restore the city to its former glory (Oldberg 2000, 272).

Historiography of the region also neglected the region’s German past, mentioning it only in passing as a feudal or capitalist-imperialist era (Oldberg 2000, 272). The entry for ‘Kaliningradskaya Oblast’ in the 1953 version of the Bol’shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya reads, “On April 7, 1946 the Kaliningrad district (oblast) was created from the ancient, age-old lands of the Baltic Slavs after Fascist Germany
was defeated and as eternal centre of aggression—East Prussia was destroyed” (Gricius 1998, 151-152). In many ways, Kaliningrad is an excellent example of a region that has few claims to Anthony Smith’s defining features of *ethnie* because an external culture was completely transplanted onto the region and imposed in a top-down fashion.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about many changes that forever altered the fate of this makeshift Soviet republic. With the secession of Belarus and the Baltic states from the Soviet Union, Kaliningrad became both geographically and psychologically separated from the contiguous Russian Federation. Because of this, businesses in Kaliningrad found that it was easier and more convenient to establish business relations with bordering Poland and Lithuania than with Russia. In consideration of the region’s trade interests, Yeltsin granted the region customs-free trade and favorable tax rates by establishing a free economic zone (FEZ), named ‘*Yantar*’ (‘Amber’) after the gem’s prominence in the region.\(^\text{12}\) Kaliningrad governor Yurii Matochkin saw the future of the region as a ‘Baltic Hong Kong’ that would become the forerunner of reforms in Russia (Oldberg 2000, 274).

In 1990 the region established visa-free travel agreements with Poland and Lithuania, increased trade with Western countries, and developed an active tourist industry. Additionally, the region initiated relationships with nearby European states and organizations. These relationships stimulated mutual exchange programs that have further increased Kaliningrad’s repertoire of activity with Europe (Oldberg

\(^\text{12}\) Kaliningrad was not the only Russian region to be granted FEZ status. Free economic zones were established in 11 other Russian regions during the early 1990s (Usanov 2008, 3).
Today, the oblast receives financial support through the EU program of Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States. Since 1991, the EU has allocated approximately €40 million for projects in the Kaliningrad Oblast, with another €50 million budgeted for the future. The region boasts 2000 registered NGOs, 250 of which are social service-oriented. Many of these NGOs are part of ‘pilot projects’ involving joint-participation between Kaliningrad and European NGOs. The range of interests in these projects include local self-governance, democracy promotion, and civil society development (Zverev 2007, 18-19).

Yet despite the region’s relative economic autonomy and close ties with European political, economic, and civil society institutions, the region was by no means immune to the stark realities of the post-Soviet economy. Throughout the 1990s, economic conditions in Kaliningrad fell below the Russian average and due to a lack of Western investment upon which the region depended, support for the free economic zone waned as calls for greater financial support from Moscow increased (Oldberg 2000, 278-279). The FEZ was largely ignored by the federal authorities who would periodically concede and rescind economic privileges. In 1996, Governor Yurii Matochkin was able to secure the region’s economic privileges through the passing of the federal law “On the Special Economic Zone in Kaliningrad Oblast,” which changed the zone’s status from ‘free’ to ‘special’ (SEZ). In January 2006, Putin signed another law “On the Special Economic Zone in Kaliningrad Oblast and Changes in Some Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation,” giving the SEZ active status for the next twenty-five years. The law, however, changed the conditions of
customs regulations in order to grant tax exemptions to large investors, a change that was detrimental to domestic business of the region (Zverev 2007, 11).

While the region’s physical proximity to Europe has not yielded the type of economic conditions that constitute a ‘Baltic Hong Kong,’ it has highlighted its post-Soviet reality as Kaliningraders compare their situation with conditions across the border. Local opposition leader Konstantin Doroshok told Russia Profile, “We can see that groceries are half the price and wages are twice as high over the border” (Oliphant 2010). Vedimosti Daily reports that the unemployment rate in Kaliningrad is at 10.5 percent, several percentage points higher than the Russian average (Williams 2010).

In comparison to other local identities in Russia, regional identity in Kaliningrad is markedly distinct: “The new population, which mainly consisted of Russians and other Slavs, mixed and formed what has been called the only truly ‘Soviet’ region in the Soviet Union, since there was no local Russian basis” (Oldberg 2000, 271). Despite the easing-up of policies that had sought to downplay any sort of German cultural sentiment during perestroika, Kaliningrad has maintained its distinctive Russian character. Sociological data reveals that three-fourths of Kaliningrad citizens are agreeable to the current arrangement as being a part of Russia. Seventy-seven percent consider themselves Russians while twenty-one percent view themselves as Europeans. Eighty-two percent of the Kaliningrad Oblast’s population is ethnic Russian, and in total ninety-four percent of the population is Slavic (Russian, Belarusian, or Ukrainian). Russian is the native
language for more than eight-six percent of the population and the dominant religion is Russian Orthodox (Zverev 2007, 11).

A brief historical overview of the region reveals that national identity in Kaliningrad represents a combination of exceptional circumstances arising from the region’s cultural influences from both Europe and Russia and exclave status as a part of the Russian Federation. As this chapter proceeds with its micro-case studies, the reader should keep in mind the region’s strong European influences, its physical separation from the contiguous Russian Federation, and the juxtaposition of images of Kaliningrad as a ‘Baltic Hong Kong’ with the empty promises of the FEZ. These unique cultural and economic conditions provide us with a contextual framework for the protest movements that evolved throughout 2009 and exploded in 2010 with the largest protest event to occur in Russia in nearly a decade.

MICRO-CASE ONE: “Pravitel’stvo, v Otstavku!” [“Government, Resign!”]

For over a year a small group of dockworkers, sailors, and other citizens discontent with the local government’s policies had gathered outside of the Kaliningrad regional governor’s office every Friday to protest hospital closings and cuts in health services. Each week, the protesters’ grievances were ignored by the local authorities, who found little threat in the small gathering of union members and pensioners (Pan 2010). However, when local grievances erupted in a 5,000-person December 2009 protest and a shocking 10,000-12,000-person January 2010 protest, the protesters were heard not only at the local level but also across the border in Moscow. Retired teacher Vladimir Ustinov, who had been taking part in the weekly dockworkers’ protest outside of the governor’s office said, “We kept coming here and
protesting, appealing to the public and to the city. Then we found we were not alone. Now, people believe in their own strength, and we’re getting closer to victory” (Pan 2010).

The protesters’ grievances can be traced back to several factors. Citizens were outraged in 2009 when Putin imposed a protectionist tariff on cars imported into Russia from Europe. The reselling of imported used cars had been a lucrative business for many of the region’s citizens. The tariffs, imposed to bolster domestic car company Avtovaz, have benefited only the super-rich oligarchs at the cost of the livelihood of ordinary citizens (Felgenhauer 2010). As many as 20,000 Kaliningraders were affected by new tariff (Shuster 2010). Of this sudden change in customs policy, leader of the local opposition group ‘Justice’ (Spravedlivost’) Konstantin Doroshok says, “One fine day it seems that one of the oligarchs calculated how much he failed to earn as a result of the fact that citizens of Russia were importing automobiles independently and decided to try to push us out of this business.” Doroshok, who had been in the business of reselling imported used cars for several years, says that he had been wrongly charged with failure to pay customs duties and received a fine for the equivalent of $600,000. The discontent spurred by the tariff was amplified by Regional Governor Georgy Boos’ December 2009 decision to use the authority given to him in a tax code amendment to set the base rate for the region’s transport tax. It was this event that inspired Doroshok to team up with local dockworkers’ union leader and representative of the Patriots of Russia party Mikhail Chesalin to mobilize other civic-minded Kaliningraders to find a way to fight
back (Schwirtz 2010). In December 2005, the two opposition leaders managed to organize a 5,000-person protest against Governor Boos’ unpopular policies.

Anticipating an even stronger public reaction after the December protest, Governor Boos decided to take back his decision to change the transport tax rate in January 2010 (Oliphant 2010). His actions, however, were too late; plans for a second protest were already under way. The January 30, 2010 protest sent shockwaves throughout the country when it attracted an astounding 10-12,000 people. It was the largest protest to take place in Russia since the April 2001 protest in Moscow against the takeover of formerly independent television station NTV by state-owned Gazprom.

The protest was promoted and attended by a coalition of opposition groups, including the Kaliningrad regional organization ‘Justice’ headed by Doroshok, the Patriots of Russia party led by dockworkers’ union head Chesalin, the Moscow-based Solidarity group (Solidarnost’) frontlined by prominent opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, and Yabloko party spokesman Ilya Yashin. Other groups that were present included the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party (KPRF), the Just Russia party, the banned National Bolshevik Party, the Other Russia opposition movement, motorists’ clubs, and a variety of other minor opposition movements (Odynova 2010). Prominent protester signs read, “Against the antisocial policy of the government and United Russia!”,” Return the election of regional governors!” and “United Russia—United against Russian citizens!” (France 24 2010).
Foreground: “Return the Election of Governors!”

Background: “You’ve Overeaten, You’ve Stolen Too Much, Will You Serve Your Time?” 13

Source: RFE/RL 2010b

Sign: “What the Crisis Couldn’t Do—The Deputies Have Done!”
Protester in foreground holding Russian flag.
Source: RIA Novosti 2010

13 The phrase, “You’ve overeaten” is addressed to Governor Boos, who was typically ridiculed by local citizens for being overweight.
Speakers at the event called for an end to United Russia’s monopoly on political power, Boos’ resignation, and a crackdown on corruption. In his speech, Solidarity leader Ilya Yashin praised Kaliningraders for their ability to mobilize their grievances into action: “For the first time in these years, I see that the Russian people are finally waking up. I see that the veritable civil capital of my country is the city of Kaliningrad.” Later in his speech, he commented on the diversity within the crowd, characterizing the group as, “People from different views, different religions, different, different people who are demanding resignation [of the officials].” After listing a series of grievances against the ruling United Russia party, including a declining GDP, rising unemployment rates, and authoritarian politics, Yashin asked the crowd, “Do you need that kind of government?” Yashin’s question was met by a roaring “No!” followed by a chant, “Government, resign!” and comprehensive cheers of affirmation from the crowd (YouTube 2010a).\(^\text{14}\)

In another speech, Solidarity leader Boris Nemtsov, who had also flown in from Moscow for the protest, highlighted the popular grievances associated with the region’s exclave status: “Moscow is sucking money from the regions as if they were its colonies” (Shuster 2010). As is the case in many of Russia’s regions, Kremlin-appointed regional governors and top-down federal policies often disregard local interests in favor of benefiting the political and economic elite. In the Irkutsk case study in the following chapter, we see this same phenomenon wherein citizens’ interests are sidelined in the dispute over the Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill. Increased

\(^{14}\) For the full speech in Russian, as well as a crowds-eye-view of the protest and the adverse weather conditions, see “Митинг №2 в Калининграде 30 января 2010 10” at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nz-ZkjX8oGc.
protest activity in Russia’s regions demonstrates that citizens in regions distant from Moscow—and in this case physically separated from Russia—want to be included in the political processes that govern their country. On a similarly nationalistic note, Nemtsov ended his speech with a famous quote from Alexander Pushkin: “Russia will waken from its slumber. And on the ruins of despotism, our names shall be inscribed!” His closing remarks were met with wild cheers from the crowd (Shuster 2010).

While protest activity during the year and a half prior to the January protest did little to influence the authorities, the grievances of 10-12,000 people are difficult to ignore. But it is perhaps not just the protest itself that is significant; it is the long-lasting effect of a successful protest that saw mass participation and little interference from the authorities. In an interview with editorially-independent radio station Ekho Moskvy, Yashin commented on the significance of the protests on a nation-wide scale,

The main thing that prevents people from taking to the streets is that they are afraid to be there on their own. The protest, in which 12,000 people took part, not in a very big Russian city, will of course inspire a lot of people in the country. Because it is important for people to see that they are not alone in their ideas and protests. Therefore I think this will lead to an increase in protest mood in the country and the Triumfalnaya Square was a confirmation of this. (BBC Monitoring 2010) \(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) The Moscow-based opposition group ‘Strategy 31’ protests on Triumfalnaya Square in Moscow on the thirty-first of each month to demonstrate the right to assembly as indicated in Article 31 of the Russian Constitution. On January 31, a day after the Kaliningrad protest, the Strategy 31 protest was attended by ten times the number of people as ever before (BBC Monitoring).
The protest allowed Kaliningraders to join forces with fellow citizens that share similar grievances, see that they are not alone, and engage each other with the common project of civil disobedience.

MICRO CASE TWO: Kaliningrad’s ‘Tangerine’ Revolution

On March 20, an estimated 20,000 people across fifty Russian cities attended protests as a part of the all-Russia (‘vsyerosiiskii’) ‘Day of Wrath’ protest event organized by a coalition of national, regional, and local opposition groups. Despite the Kaliningrad regional administration’s ban on the gathering, an estimated 2,000 Kaliningraders protested on the same city square that had been the site of the January protest. Protesters, wearing pins with the name of the ruling United Russia party circled and marked with an ‘X’, smashed tangerines in a demand that Governor Boos resign (Feifer 2010b). Youtube videos show protesters chanting “Boos, v otstavku!” [“Boos, resign!”] and wearing facemasks as a symbol of the administration’s infringements upon Russian citizens’ freedom of speech and (YouTube 2010b).

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16 The smashing of tangerines was making reference to the popular Orange Revolution that took place in Ukraine in 2005.
The protest was organized once again by Patriots of Russia party and dockworkers’ union head Chesalin and was headlined by Solidarity leader Vladimir Milov. Doroshok, who opted not to take part in the protest after it had been banned by the authorities, instead agreed to take part in a television debate with Governor Boos. The debate took place during the protest and was aired on several televisions stationed throughout the city. Although protesters were disappointed with Doroshok’s absence, his decision to forego the protest and take part in the televised debate was
inspired by a desire translate the opposition’s grievances into real policy-level results. Of his absence from the protest, he said, “We have to try to achieve the protest’s aims. And that’s to create levers of control over the authorities. Of course, the coalitions most important work in general is to fight for citizens’ rights and freedom. But we also have to set up the means for breaking the monopoly on power” (Feifer 2010a).

Local citizens reported that they attended the protest because they felt sidelined by officials who do not include citizens in political dialogue. Retired construction worker Viktor Nikitin said that he attended the protest because “The authorities should work for the people, but here it’s the other way around. We work like slaves and pay taxes, which only go toward a small part of the population—officials.” Anastasia Rybachenko, a local student, also spoke about the inefficacy of elections in bringing about the will of the people: “Elections don’t mean anything. That’s why people are coming out onto the streets. I showed up here because I don’t see any other political means of expressing I’m unhappy” (Feifer 2010b). Nikolai Gritsayev, a Kaliningrad government worker who took part in the March 20 protest after having his salary recently cut, said, “This country is one of the richest in the world, and people here living poverty” (Schwirtz & Levy 2010). These citizens’ grievances reflect not only a general dissatisfaction with the inability of citizens to take part in the political processes, but feelings of abandonment by regional and federal authorities who disregard the micro-level repercussions of economic policies. As citizens of a region within close proximity to Eastern European countries, where there is marked economic growth, extensive social welfare programs, and more
democratic political regimes, Kaliningraders have higher expectations for their own
government. The protests are significant because they demonstrate how Kaliningrad
citizens are demanding not only improved economic conditions and more transparent
government, but a better future for Russia. As citizens in Russia’s other isolated
regions see Kaliningraders’ actions, it is likely that they, too, will envision a new
future for themselves and for their country.

IMPACT OF PROTESTS

On the federal level, the January protest sent shockwaves to Moscow, where
officials scrambled to keep the influence of the protest contained (Schwirtz 2010).
Kremlin officials traveled to Kaliningrad to assess the significance of the largest
protest to occur in Russia in almost ten years. The administration immediately fired
the federal official delegated to domestic politics in the northwestern region of
Russia, Oleg Matveichev (Bratersky 2010). Authorities were specifically concerned
about the demographic of the protesters, which was comprised mainly of middle-class
citizens and small business owners (Feifer 2010a). Whereas protests and strikes in the
past had involved only pensioners and disgruntled motorists, this protest represented
citizens from across the political spectrum, from hardline communists to fervent
nationalists to ordinary middle-class citizens with moderate political views. Although
not covered on any of the state-owned national news channels, news of the January
protest traveled rapidly throughout Russia, and on the following day, January 31, the
prominent Russian opposition movement Strategy 31 saw ten times the number of
protesters on Triumfalnaya Square in Moscow as ever before (BBC Monitoring
2010). In the week after the protest, the state-run polling agency VTsIOM reported
that Putin’s nationwide approval ratings had fallen to the lowest level in almost four years (Shuster 2010).

On the local level, Doroshok’s hope that the protests would translate into policy-level results was realized in the months following the protest. In response to the protesters demands, Governor Boos agreed to meet with opposition leaders, and on March 12 the two opposing groups had a lengthy meeting during which Boos agreed to address the protesters’ grievances and create a political consultation council that would include representatives from the opposition, community organizations, and politicians not affiliated with official political parties (Bachurinsky 2010, 7). Soon after the meeting, the Kaliningrad Internal Affairs Office, modeled on a comparable council at the federal level, was established with locally-known political strategist Aleksandr Boboshin appointed as its head (Kashin 2010). Also soon after the protest, a joint resolution with the opposition was drawn up to annul the amendment giving regional governments permission to set their own base tax rates. The resolution also demanded reduction in the cost of fuel, abolition of customs barriers on imported used cars, a freeze on tax rates until the end of the economic crisis, increase in pensions, and resignation of Governor Boos (Oliphant 2010).

At a news conference, Boos admitted, “There was an underestimation by us and me personally of the need to devote more time to communicating with people” (Schwirtz 2010). Regional lawmaker and United Russia party member Konstantin Polyakov admits, “We may have stuck our noses in the air a little too much in the past and said, ‘We’ll do everything ourselves.’ That wasn’t exactly right. We should have paid a little more attention to the opposition, and also shared the blame.” According
to one analyst, the massive January protest “lifted a spell that has long hung over their city. After years of depression . . . challenging the Kremlin has enabled them to feel like people again” (Feifer 2010a). The protests demonstrated to Russian citizens that it is possible to launch a popular campaign against unfavorable governmental policies and that despite the helplessness felt by many Russians with regard to regional and national politics, it is important to take part in political discourse, even if that means taking to the streets to protest.

POLICY-LEVEL RESULTS: Boos Ousted

The protests ultimately succeeded in satisfying their main goal: the deposition of Kremlin-appointed Governor Boos. In answer to the protesters’ chants “Boos, resign!” it was clear that United Russia would be hesitant to re-nominate Boos at the end of his term in September 2010. On August 16, when United Russia announced its nominations for the Kaliningrad regional governor position, Boos’ name was markedly absent from the list. The nominees instead included three local politicians who had won municipal elections in past: Duma Deputy Yuri Savenko had served two terms as mayor of Kaliningrad from 1998 to 2006; Aleksandr Yaroshik, Savenko’s successor, had also been popularly elected; and Nikolai Tsukanov, head of the Gusevsky District of the Kaliningrad Oblast, had been popularly elected in 2005.

After the release of nominee list, President Dmitri Medvedev reported that the list reflected the interests of Kaliningrad citizens: “I have said on several occasions that despite the changes to the system for delegating authority to the governors, it

17 Boos was later considered as a candidate for former Moscow government Yury Luzhkov’s position, which was later given to Sergey Sobyanin (Potts 2010).
matters to us what authority a certain candidate has: they should be people who enjoy the unconditional respect and trust of the citizens living in the region” (Interfax 2010). According to prominent Russian journalist Oleg Kashin in an article for Kommersant, “The three candidates advanced by United Russia indeed appear to be the best concessions possible, short of direct elections, in response Kaliningraders’ demand to elect Kaliningraders” (Kashin 2010).

The removal of an unpopular regional governor must be understood within the context of gubernatorial politics in Russia’s regions. In 2004, after the Beslan Hostage Crisis, Putin eliminated gubernatorial elections, replacing popular regional elections with Kremlin appointees in an effort to consolidate state power in the wake of terrorist threats. While the decision was not so great a change from the status quo, wherein governor posts were largely dominated by United Russia candidates, the cancellation of regional gubernatorial elections removed citizens’ agency in choosing their own local leaders (Udensiva-Brenner 2010). In most of Russia’s regions, Kremlin-appointed governors remain in place despite their lack of legitimacy among citizens.

KALININGRAD & THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The micro-case studies in this chapter have demonstrated that local opposition leaders and ordinary citizens are raising local concerns that translate into ‘universal’

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18 Sadly, on November 6, 2010, Kashin was brutally beaten in an alley by unknown attackers near his Moscow residence. The attack, now under investigation by federal authorities, was most likely connected to the strong oppositional views that he expressed during the summer 2010 Khimki forest protests.

19 The removal of unpopular local leaders may become a growing trend. In September 2010, President Dmitri Medvedev ousted unpopular Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov.
concerns for the nation as a whole. A more in-depth analysis of identity construction in the region in the following sections will seek to demonstrate how the civil society-based model of nationalism is most relevant in understanding national identity in this European outpost of the Russian Federation.

*Kaliningrad & Conventional Nationalism Approaches*

There is little pretext for the application of Anthony Smith’s primordialist theory for the Kaliningrad Oblast. After World War II, nearly all traces of the region’s German history, including its people and its infrastructure, were quickly forgotten. The region today is distinctly Russian, and if any dimensions of Smith’s *ethnie* are present, they emerge from the mid-twentieth century, which is far more recent than Smith theorizes. However, based upon this limited time span, we can apply Smith’s ‘dimensions’ of *ethnie* to present-day Kaliningraders. We can say that they have a ‘collective name’ as Russians, Europeans, and Kaliningraders, a ‘myth of descent’ that was constructed by Soviet authorities as a rightful reacquisition of the territory of the ‘Baltic Slavs,’ a ‘shared history’ in more than fifty years of Soviet life, a distinctive ‘shared culture’ that is uniquely Russo-European, an ‘association’ with a territory physically separated from the contiguous Russian Federation, and a ‘sense of solidarity’ in protesting against an unpopular regional governor. But even if these ‘dimensions’ are loosely applicable, many of these characteristics stem not from cultural attributes that exist on a historical continuum, but from top-down processes initiated by Soviet authorities after the region officially became a part of the Soviet Union in 1946.
In the Kaliningrad case, a modernist approach to understanding identity dynamics in the region is far more applicable. As the historical background section at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, the city was reconstructed to fit Soviet ideals after World War II. German architecture was replaced by the Soviet archetype, and historians and educators practically erased the region’s German history, replacing it with a historical accounts of the region as the former home of the ‘Baltic Slavs.’ The region was transformed to such an extent that even its citizens were the result of top-down processes as German citizens were deported and citizens from Slavic SSRs moved in.

Kaliningrad also fits into the aspect of the modernist model that emphasizes how identities are constructed in order to facilitate standards of exchange in an industrial economy. After 1945, the new Soviet citizens of Kaliningrad became part of one of the most urban and densely populated regions in Russia, which was a part of the Soviet government’s ‘urbanization’ program that was initiated in order to facilitate industrialization and the application of Marxist ideals (Iyer 2008, 127). The region served as a strategic military stronghold for the Baltic fleet, with the military as the oblast’s primary employer (Oldberg 2000, 271).

A Civil Society Approach

The parallels between Kaliningrad’s history and modernist nationalism theories should not, however, be overemphasized. The modernist narrative that explains the construction of a Soviet identity in the region after 1945 must be expanded upon in order to understand the region’s national identity within a post-Soviet framework. As a region physically separated from the contiguous Russian
Federation and located in close proximity to Europe, it is the citizens of the Kaliningrad oblast that are today articulating their roles within the nation. Unfavorable economic policies paired with an unpopular regional governor have mobilized citizens to take part in protests and speak out against what they see as infringements upon their rights. The January and March 2010 protests against the prospect of a new transport tax and United Russia’s unpopular governor appointee demonstrate that citizens of the region will no longer accept United Russia’s authoritarian tendencies and monopoly on political representation.

In these protests we see the interdependence of individual needs, wherein the grievances of each individual citizen can best be articulated through the larger group. In Hegelian terms, the ‘particular’ interests of each citizen are so interwoven with the interests of other citizens that the ‘particular’ becomes a realization of the ‘universal’ through popular mobilization. In this way, civil society—in this case, the protests, their organization and preparation, and the various groups that took part—functions to articulate the national interests as a whole. The protesters’ grievances, revolving around Putin’s 2005 replacement of popularly elected governors with Kremlin appointees, tax and tariff increases, and utility and housing costs, represent day-to-day concerns of the region’s people as citizens of Kaliningrad. Their grievances are related to their rights as Russian citizens and their prerogative to play an active role in regional and national politics.

But the protests are not simply about grievances and civil disobedience against the authorities. Gramsci tells us that underneath the material needs of civil society—which is, in this case, more favorable customs policies, lower utilities
prices, and more affordable housing—there is a system of morals and values underlying these material interests. Kaliningraders see themselves as Europeans, and their expectations for standards of living are arguably higher than elsewhere in Russia. They are protesting because they are demanding more European political and social standards, such as free and fair elections, accessibility to quality healthcare, reasonable rates for housing and utilities, and higher wages. They envision a future for Russia that reflects their European expectations.

CONCLUSION

The brief historical background presented at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates Kaliningrad’s dual Russian and European character and places the two protest events within the context of regional politics and economic conditions. As an exclave of the Russian Federation, Kaliningrad citizens feel ignored by Moscow and cheated by new economic regulations that take away previous customs advantages. As a part of Europe, Kaliningrad citizens compare their own social and economic conditions with those in bordering European countries and therefore have higher expectations for their standards of living. The January 2010 and March 2010 protests demonstrate how Kaliningraders both want to have their voices heard in Moscow and desire for Russia to move toward the type of democratic processes that they witness in bordering European countries.

Whatever is it is that binds these citizens together in the common project of citizenship, whether it is their collective name, shared history, shared culture, and sense of solidarity or the identity imposed upon them by Soviet authorities seeking economic and military gains, it is expressed at the grassroots level of civil society.
While they are led by prominent, ‘elite’ opposition leaders—Doroshok, Nemtsov, Yashin, and others—their cause would be fruitless if it were not for the attendance of thousands of ordinary middle-class citizens. Like many other regions that feel ignored by the federal center in Moscow, national identity in Kaliningrad is much more complex than what primordialist and modernists predict and can only be fully understood by looking at how civil society articulates its rights and roles within the nation.

If we return to Gellner’s key question that we emphasized in Chapter 2, “If Civil Society and nationalism are the offspring of the same forces, does this affinity turn them into political allies or enemies?” we can say that in the case of Kaliningrad, these two forces have become allies. While the opposition leaders’ and protesters’ grievances are directly speaking out against local and federal authorities, they are pursuing liberal democratic processes that they ultimately claim for the future of Russia.
CHAPTER FOUR

Saving Lake Baikal, Saving Russia

Toward your crags,
    Baikal,
unafraid of hurting myself on crags,
I was forever rowing—
a fugitive convict of fame.
Without you the horizon
in Russia could not be radiant.
If you are polluted,
I cannot feel myself clean.
Like a cry of purity
resounding
    over the perishing blue
comes your voice:
    “Protect me,
protect me,
do you hear, my Son?!”

Valentin Rasputin in *Baikal* (1990)

INTRODUCTION

Situated in a rift valley on the Siberian plateau and stretching between the
Irkutsk Oblast and the Buryat Republic in Eastern Siberia, Lake Baikal, the so-called
‘Pearl of Siberia’ is the world’s oldest and deepest lake. It was formed 25 million
years ago and contains one-fifth of the world’s fresh water. It is home to more than
2,600 plant and animal species, two-thirds of which are endemic (Feldman & Blokov
2009, 739). Today, the purity of this great natural resource is being jeopardized by the
Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill (BPPM), an industrial fixture located on Baikal’s
southern shores in the town of Baikalsk.
In January 2010, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin enacted Russian Government Decree No. 1, which sanctioned the factory’s reopening despite scientific reports of severe environmental damages associated with pollution from the factory. In response to the decree, local environmental groups organized protests in February and March 2010 demanding the immediate reversal of Decree No. 1 and the economic diversification of Baikalsk. These two protests serve as relevant micro-case studies that demonstrate how protestor’s environmental and economic concerns manifest themselves as larger ideas about the role of the citizen in constructing a future for the region. Specifically, they demonstrate how citizens’ grievances are articulated through civic nationalistic rhetoric, interests in improving living conditions for the region’s citizens, and demands for more transparent government.

In order to understand the context of these protests, it is necessary to first provide some background details about BPPM and the role of Lake Baikal in the region. This chapter will begin with a brief outline of the history of the region and the controversy surrounding BPPM, the importance of the lake as a regional landmark, and the present-day local civil society institutions that are dedicated to its preservation. This chapter will then relate and analyze the February and March 2010 protest events, the March 2010 mayoral election results, and the subsequent actions of federal authorities in response to the protests. Focus will be placed upon the demographic of the protesters, the rhetoric used in opposition leader speeches and common slogans, and the effects of the protests upon subsequent policy decisions. The chapter will conclude with a broad-level analysis of nationalism in the region and
the significance of the protests according to the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2.

This case study argues that primordialist and modernist nationalism theories can only partially explain how national identity has developed in the Lake Baikal region. In order to fully understand identity in the region, we must look at how civil society voices its opinions and interacts with the authorities at a grassroots level.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Identity in the Lake Baikal Region

The Cossack traders that first founded Russian settlements in the Baikal region in second half of the seventeenth century were met by the indigenous Buryat people. The Buryats, whose ancestry can be traced back to the Mongol tribes that invaded Siberia and Central Asia in the thirteenth century, share cultural ties with Mongolians. While many Buryats today still maintain the Buryat language and the Buddhist and shamanistic religious beliefs of their ancestors, subjugation by Russian settlers and conversion to Orthodox Christianity during the tsarist era had a 'Russifying’ effect upon Buryat culture. Relations between the Russians and the Buryats remained lukewarm in the pre-Soviet era, but the two ethnic groups managed to live side by side and together share the region’s resources by taking part in the joint enterprises of the trading of furs and the fishing industry (Diment 1993, 50).

The coming of the Bolshevik revolution to the ethnically diverse regions of Siberia meant that “the culture at the forefront was expressly now Soviet” (Grant 1995, 82). Subsequent Soviet policies toward the region were imposed for the purposes of fulfilling economic quotas and imposing Soviet ideals (Iyer 2008, 132). Almost half of the cities that exist in the oblast today were founded only after 1945.
The ‘Russified’ Buryats now became a part of the larger Soviet narod and integrated to a greater extent with the majority ethnic Russian population of the region.

One such project that was a part of the Soviet Union’s program of urbanization was the construction of Baikalsk Pulp and Paper Mill (BPPM) on Baikal’s southern shores. The idea of the BPPM was conceived in 1953 when the Soviets caught wind that the Americans had discovered a new rayon cord that was constructed of fibers of unparalleled breaking strength. This new wonder-cord, produced by the brand name ‘Super-Super’ would be utilized in the construction of tires of high-speed aircraft. In the throes of Cold War rivalries, the Soviets coveted this new technology and sought out a source of clean water with minimal mineral content that would be needed to wash the cellulose fibers. There existed only three water sources that fit the profile: Lake Ladoga, Lake Teletskoe, and Baikal. The choice of Baikal for the site of the plant was most likely determined by a witty analogy: the American plant in Florida that produced this cord was owned by the Buckeye (in Russian, ‘Bakai’) Cellulose Company. Baikal, therefore, seemed like the proper choice (Rasputin 1996, 159). The site for the plant was at the south end of Baikal at the mouth of the Solzan River. In defense of constructing a pollution-effusing factory on the shores the world’s largest freshwater repository, Premier Nikita Khrushchhev proclaimed, “Baikal, too, must work.”

What happened next is eloquently stated by Siberian writer and environmentalist Valentin Rasputin:

And suddenly some writers, who existed for the purpose of creating odes, and some scientists who were also confused about the reason for their existence,
and then the common folk, stirred up by the writers and scientists, began to raise the question, Won’t we destroy Baikal? And they arrived at an answer: Yes, we will. Over our dead bodies. (Rasputin 1996, 161).

And indeed, environmentalists and citizens were keen to raise the question to the authorities. In the spring of 1966, the State Planning Committee created a government commission of experts who were given the power to veto the construction of the cellulose plant. After three months of consideration, a joint deliberation between the State Planning Commission, the State Committee on Science and Technology, and the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences gave the project the go-ahead (Rasputin 1996, 162-163). By the time the factory opened later that year, the fiber was already obsolete, and today the factory produces only low-grade paper pulp, toilet paper, and newsprint (Thomson 2008).

BPPM discharges up to 4 million cubic feet of toxic waste into Lake Baikal each year. Over 6 million tons of solid waste has collected in open-air pits on Baikal’s shores. In 2000, then-President Vladimir Putin declared that BPPM must discontinue discharging toxic waste into Baikal as soon as possible. In the summer of 2009, Putin took a submarine to the lake’s depths and emerged declaring that Lake Baikal appeared to be “in good condition” (Agarkova 2010). On January 13, 2010, Putin signed Russian Government Decree No. 01 “On amendments to the list of activities banned in the Central Ecological Zone of the Lake Baikal Natural Territory,” permitting the factory not only to reopen, but also to skirt environmental regulations in order to cut costs.

The re-opening of the factory marks not only a step backward in environmental policy, but also in economic diversification. Environmentalist and
head of the Baikal program for Greenpeace Russia Roman Vazhenkov argues that re-opening the mill “will take the whole city and its almost 17,000 residents back to the 1960s” (Chizhova & O’Flynn 2010). While at the time of its construction, the factory was a technological leader in the region, Vazhenkov notes there have been no recent investments in modernizing the city of Baikalsk (Chizhova & O’Flynn 2010).

Reopening of the mill was not only an ecological but an economic threat, inhibiting the diversification of the town’s economy.

While environmentalists suggest the alternative of introducing ‘ecotourism’ to the region, developing a diversified economy takes years, even decades of slow progress, and until then, many local citizens will be without work. When Putin ordered the closure of the factory in 2008, many Baikalsk citizens held protests against the factory’s closure. Putting thousands of citizens out of work, the closure was met with vehement public outcry. For several days, sixty women went on a hunger strike, demanding to be paid their share of the millions of dollars in back pay that the factory owed to its former employees. Strike leader Lyudmilla Pashkova said, “It happened because no one needed us. Not the factory owners. Not the authorities” (NYT 2010). Pashkova’s feelings of abandonment by the authorities is a prominent concern throughout Russia’s regions, where citizens feel that they are at the mercy of well-connected officials in Moscow who care little about the economic strife of ordinary citizens. Protest is oftentimes the only avenue through which citizens can have their voices heard.

Some like Baikal Wave front woman Marina Rikhvanova view the mill’s closure as an opportunity to transform the town from a ‘monocity’ exclusively
involved in a single industry to an economically diverse town. While many workers bereaved the factory’s closure in 2008, Rikhvanova organized professional training sessions to help former factory workers get back on their feet by finding work in the tourist industry. In an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, she noted that when authorities decided to re-open the factory, many of its former employees had already found other work and that the unemployment rate at that time was only about 3.5 percent, well below the national average (Chizhova & O’Flynn 2010).

The dispute between environmentalists, who see BPPM as a grave danger to the lake’s ecosystem, and Baikalsk citizens, whose livelihood depends upon employment at the factory, must be understood within the context of the lake’s prominence as a regional landmark. It is beacon of regional pride and a source of recreation for the millions of people that live within close proximity to its shores. Residents from Irkutsk frequently visit nearby Listvianka throughout the year to enjoy the lake’s beauty and indulge in smoked or dried omul’, a fish endemic to Lake Baikal. More so than Americans visiting the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Park, Russians believe that visiting Lake Baikal is a national duty and a necessary pilgrimage to take in one’s life (Thomson 2007, 11). For those who find the time and money to visit, the trip is “almost [a] patriotic act, a nearly religious pilgrimage to a places that’s a much a part of the Russian soul as the novels of Dostoyevsky, the spires of the Kremlin, and the palaces of St. Petersburg” (11). In a landscape ravaged by the economic and ideological enterprises of the Soviet regime, Baikal remains to be a symbol of purity and uncorrupted beauty. In 1996 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, demonstrating its great cultural and natural value. Lake Baikal is
more than just a prominent landform; it is a symbol of regional identity and national pride.

MICRO-CASE ONE: “Save Baikal, Save Baikalsk”

On the foundations laid by the initial team of environmentalists and scientists who challenged the construction of BPPM from the beginning, a prominent environmental movement emerged in 1987. Since then, these grassroots activists have successfully consolidated their efforts into the unregistered and loosely organized Baikal Movement (Baikalskoe Dvizhenie), which works closely with other local environmental organizations to advocate for Lake Baikal (Hooff 2010). Another prominent environmental group, Baikal Ecological Wave (for short, ‘Baikal Wave’) was founded by local ecologist Marina Rikhvanova in 1990. Baikal Wave was active in the first round of protests and petitions that led to BPPM’s closure in 2008. Since then, the local organization has grown immensely and has taken on several other initiatives. In 2005, when state-owned oil company Transneft announced plans to build a proposed petroleum pipeline less than a kilometer from Baikal’s shores in an seismically unstable area, Baikal Wave helped to organize a national campaign against the pipeline, launching a series of protests and collecting a petition with 20,000 signatures. In April 2006, Putin announced that the pipeline would be rerouted, denoting a success for the growing Russian environmental movement (Titova 2008). Upon receipt of the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2008, Rikhvanova said of the movement’s success, “I wouldn’t say it was just my team who had changed the situation. It was the whole team in Baikal—the common goal united people” (Titova 2008). Indeed this was a collective effort: on three separate occasions
five thousand citizens attended Irkutsk protests. In 2010 Baikal Wave embarked on its next challenge: a campaign against Government Decree No. 01. This, too, would become a popular movement in which ordinary Irkutsk citizens would play a vital role.

In February 2010, just weeks after the explosive 12,000-person Kaliningrad protest sent shockwaves throughout the country, the Baikal Wave and the Baikal Movement teamed up to organize a protest against Government Decree No. 01 and the funneling of public funds to well-connected BPPM major shareholder Oleg Derepaska. The traditional tactic of handing out flyers to raise awareness about the protests was supplemented by advertising the protest on Facebook, vKontakte, and the local NGO advertising hub Babr.ru.\(^{20}\) The protest took place at the site of a large sports complex on bustling Lenin Street and was attended by 2,000 people from towns scattered throughout the region. People from as far away as the city of Ylan-Yde, the capital of the republic of Buryatia, arrived in buses to take part in the protest (Yabloko 2010). Other participants in the protest included representatives of the banned National Bolshevik party, local grassroots organization Great Baikal Trail, university students, middle-aged citizens, and pensioners.\(^{21}\)

Solidarity leader Vladimir Milov, who had flown in from Moscow to attend the protest, recalled on his LiveJournal account that around twenty-five speakers addressed the crowd, including Baikal Wave frontwoman Marina Rikhvanova, co-

\(^{20}\) vKontakte is a Russian social networking site that is similar to Facebook.
\(^{21}\) Great Baikal Trail (GBT) seeks to provide an economic alternative to BPPM by helping to develop ‘ecotourism’ in the region. In order to attract tourists, GBT is in the process of building a 2000-kilometer hiking trail around Lake Baikal. See: http://greatbaikaltrail.org.
chair of the Irkutsk branch of the Moscow-based Solidarity movement Sergei Bespalov, and local Yabloko Party leader Sergei Mitrokhin. In his own speech, the opposition leader emphasized that it is possible for the region’s citizens to win the struggle for the purity of Lake Baikal. He also emphasized that a significant popular protest holds weight in the eyes of the authorities and that the future of the region depends upon Irkutsk citizens (Milov 2010). Making reference to civil society’s success in persuading the authorities to reroute the Transneft oil pipeline outside of the Baikal watershed in 2007 (an effort that he had also taken part in), he urged Irkutsk citizens to persevere in their campaign against BPPM:

> Today, authorities are once again encroaching on Lake Baikal. It depends on you only, residents of Irkutsk and the regions around our sacred Lake Baikal, whether we are able this time again to counter the government's dangerous politics, whose real aim is not to save the jobs of 1,500 mill employees but to help the oligarch Deripaska make more money. (RFE/RL 2010a)

Milov’s emphasis upon the citizens’ role in federal decision-making demonstrates that Russia’s opposition increasingly views citizens of the main agents of change in Russia’s political landscape. While the opposition in the past was fragmented and comprised mainly of avid activists and extremists, recent opposition activity has become more inclusive of ordinary citizens with more moderate political views (Aron 2010, Shuster 2010).

Although the protest had been originally organized against the reopening of BPPM, popular slogans took on a more general ‘anti-Putin’ theme, with the familiar chant “Putin, resign!” becoming a popular chorus among the crowd (Milov 2010).
Lake Baikal is sometimes referred to as the ‘blue eye’ of Siberia. Baikalsk citizens report that the pollution released from the factory causes the lingering small of rotten cabbage.
Other notable protest signs read “Moscow! Siberia is not a dump!” and the prominent National Bolshevik Party banner, which read, “People! Baikal! Victory!” (‘Narod! Baikal! Pobedy!’) (Antonova 2010).

During the rally, environmental activists also gathered signatures for a petition imploring the administration to turnover Decree No. 01 and to develop alternative employment for the region’s citizens. The petition, posted on the website Babr.ru, a hub that provides free advertising space to local NGOs, was later submitted to the President of the Russian Federation on May 18, 2010 with over 45,000 signatures (Greenpeace 2010).

**MARCH 14 REGIONAL ELECTIONS**

The March 14, 2010 regional elections, which occurred only a month after the initial protest, fell outside of the norm in Russian electoral politics. Unlike the previous round of regional elections in October 2009, which were wrought with fraud and questionable technicalities that disqualified opposition candidates, the March 2010 elections saw each of the eight regions that elected regional legislatures seat all four opposition parties—the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), Yabloko, and A Just Russia (RFE/RL 2010c). While United Russia candidates took sixty-eight percent of the vote, in half of the regions that elected legislatures, ruling party candidates won less than fifty percent of the seats. Making

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24 This is most likely a reference to the long-held vision of Siberia as the dumping ground of Western Russia’s political prisoners.
headlines among other unexpected victories, Irkutsk citizens rejected United Russia mayoral candidate Sergei Serebrennikov, an ally of BPPM majority shareholder Oleg Deripaska, in favor of Communist Party candidate Viktor Kondrashov, who took sixty-three percent of the votes (Orttung 2010, 7). The election results, taking place in the midst of rising protest activity throughout the country, were met with positive feedback in a majority of the regions. One United Russia official reported that the results “look like a wave of protest voting” (RFE/RL 2010).

The regional elections that took place in eight Russian regions on March 14, 2010 must be understood within the context of Russian electoral politics. As was mentioned in the Kaliningrad case study, then-President Vladimir Putin’s 2004 decision to abolish the election of regional governors was made in response to rising terrorist threats in the wake of the Beslan hostage crisis. While the decision was not so great a change from the previous system, wherein governor posts were largely dominated by United Russia candidates, the cancellation of regional elections nonetheless marked a step backward in Putin’s ‘managed democracy’ (Udensiva-Brenner 2010). In many ways, mayoral elections operate in similar way as gubernatorial elections once did: United Russia candidates are most successful and usually stay in office for several terms. Irkutsk’s rejection of a United Russia candidate reinforces what the protests have begun to show: Irkutsk citizens are displeased with the status quo wherein United Russia holds a monopoly over political power and are demanding to have their voices heard at the regional and federal level.
MICRO-CASE TWO: Saving Baikal, We Will Save Russia!

In a second protest on March 20, 2010 as a part of the larger “Day of Wrath” protests that also took place in Kaliningrad and several other Russian cities, protest organizers Baikal Wave and the Baikal Movement and were able to once again get a protest turnout of approximately 2,000. From the crowd, a variety of political parties and organizations denoted their presence by carrying flags, including the National Bolshevik Party, the Moscow-based Solidarity movement, the Other Russia opposition movement, the civil society activist movement ‘Tiger,’ the Union of Motorists, Siberian regionalist organizations, and anarchist groups (Kasparov 2010a). Interspersed throughout the crowd of waving flags were university students, middle-aged citizens and their families, and pensioners.

The protest took place at the same site as the February 13 protest on a sports complex on Lenin Street. Approximately twenty-two speakers addressed the crowd, including Baikal Wave front woman Marina Rikhvanova, members of regional NGOs, and Baikalsk residents, who demanded that the Russian government in conjunction with plant owner Oleg Deripaska close the factory and provide economic diversification of the city of Baikalsk (Baikal Wave 2010a). Prominent themes that speakers touched upon were Mayor Kondrashov’s victory, the closure of BPPM, and United Russia’s unjust monopoly on power.26 In Solidarity leader Boris Nemtsov’s speech, he praised Irkutsk citizens for attending the protests and persevering in the face of mass corruption and authoritarianism:

26 For a full lineup of the speakers, as well as video footage of each of the speeches (in Russian), visit http://ar-video.xost.ru/Meeting2_no_bcbk.htm (AlexRezn, 2010).
You are an example for all of Russia. Many people in Russia think nothing depends on them. Many people in Russia think the party of corrupt bureaucrats, the party of oligarchs, has seized power and plans to hold on to it forever. But you in Irkutsk have shown them that the will of the people means something. You are beautiful. You are an example for us all. (Whitmore 2010b)

While many citizens remain hopeless about the possibility of dialogue between the state and the authorities and therefore remain indifferent to political matters, Irkutsk citizens are breaking the stereotype and demanding to have their voices heard in regional affairs, providing an example to other regions’ citizens who feel marginalized by Moscow’s authoritarian policies toward its regions. On a similar note, Irkutsk resident and chairman of the humanitarian fund ‘Baikal. The Third Millennium’ Vladimir Naumov announced in his speech, “Baikal is ours! Only we can take responsibility for it! (Baikal Wave 2010a, emphasis mine). By placing the responsibility of the region’s most cherished resource in the hands of its citizens, Naumov, like Nemtsov, is emphasizing the citizens’ agency in dictating the region’s interests and influencing policy.

In addition to the ongoing petition addressed to the President of the Russian Federation against Government Decree No. 01 that emerged at the February protest, protesters also had the opportunity to sign an open letter to Irina Bokova, the Secretary General of UNESCO, insisting that the organization does everything it can to protect one of its named World Heritage sites (Baikal Wave 2010a). The petition was later submitted to Ms. Bokova in June 2010 with over 80,000 signatures (Greenpeace 2010).
In an interview with Ekho Moskvy, Nemtsov emphasized that it was important that it was a coalition protest, including members of environmental organizations, opposition movements, leftist movements, and youth movements (Ekho Moskvy 2010). It should also be emphasized that while it is likely that a few of these groups—namely, the Other Russia movement and anarchist groups—attended the protest in order to gain political recognition and publicity, their share in the protest action nonetheless cannot be devalued. Even if particular groups have ulterior motives, they are still making a meaningful contribution to the protest by taking part in a popular cause.

MOSCOW RESPONDS, UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR BAIKAL

On July 30, 2010, a representative of the Russian Government at the 34th meeting of the UNESCO committee for World Heritage released a statement indicating that the pollution emitted by BPPM would be solved within thirty months. The production of bleached pulp, officials stated, would be transferred to another factory at a location outside of the Lake Baikal watershed. Also within these thirty months, BPPM will either be closed down or will be fitted for alternative production, the Federal Program for the Protection of Lake Baikal will oversee the processing of the accumulated industrial waste, and plans will be made to develop alternative economic development in the region. However, subsequent official statements have been difficult to decipher. In October 2010, Prime Minister Medvedev commissioned a 2011 study on the possibility of keeping BPPM in operation but transferring it to a closed-loop water system. In November 2010, Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shavalov told Baikalsk journalists that BPPM will be “redeveloped” and that the plant will
continue to operate past the original January 2013 deadline for plant closure. These statements directly contradicted those of Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment Yuri Trutnev’s November 17 statement that the mill “must be closed” (Baikal Wave 2010d).

While the outcome of the protests is ambiguous at this time, we must examine the extent to which the protests have had a substantive effect upon officials in Moscow. At the initial February 13 protest, which occurred two weeks after the January 30 Kaliningrad protest that attracted 10-12,000 people, the authorities sent in a team of armored tanks and armed police officers in addition to the routine teams of security forces. The mere presence of such extensive security forces demonstrates that the authorities believe that the opposition (even the form of an environmental movement) poses a real threat to their monopoly on power. The result of the March 14, 2010 election also demonstrates that the opposition in this isolated Siberian region is strong enough to challenge United Russia's political monopoly.

IRKUTSK & THE THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The micro-case studies in this chapter have demonstrated that environmental activists, opposition leaders, and ordinary citizens are articulating interests that reflect the ‘universal’ concerns of the nation as a whole. A more in-depth analysis of identity allegiances in the region in the following sections will seek to illuminate the utility in using a civil society-based model to understanding national identity in this Siberian region.

See pictures of the abundance of security forces sent in to monitor the protest on Vladimir Milov’s LiveJournal entry from February 14, 2010 at http://v-milov.livejournal.com/215513.html#cutid1.
Lake Baikal, long revered by the various peoples that have sought refuge on its shores, provides us with an example that fits many of Anthony Smith’s dimensions’ of ethnie. In the Irkutsk Oblast, we can interpret the development of ethnie in several different ways. Firstly, we can see the region’s two most prominent ethno-linguistic groups, the Russians (russkie) and the Buryats, as two separate ethnic groups that maintained disparate identities throughout the tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet eras. We can also argue that the conversion of Buryat natives to Orthodox Christianity in the eighteenth century marked a convergence of two groups that formed a singular Russian ethnie (Slezkine 1993, 23). Alternatively, we can see both groups as part of a broader regional identity as ‘Siberians.’

While the ‘dimension’ of ‘collective name’ may be difficult to distinguish in the Irkutsk Oblast, Smith’s other ‘dimensions’ reveal how the oblast’s two separate ethnic groups can be classified in accordance with the primordialist nationalism model. The ‘common myth of descent’ and ‘shared history’ is different for the two ethnic groups, with the Buryats’ origin being linked back to Genghis Khan’s Mongol Empire that stretched across the entirety of Siberia and Central Asia (Hudgins 2003) and the Russian’s settlement of the region beginning in the seventeenth century. The ‘distinctive shared culture’ can also be classified as separate for both groups, as many Buryats still speak the Buryat language in their homes and have a repertoire of folksongs, traditions, and customs that are separate from Russian national culture. As ‘Siberians’ living in the Lake Baikal, both ethnic groups can strongly identify with the dimension ‘association with a specific territory’ as both groups have strong
attachments to the Lake Baikal as a source of beauty, recreation, and livelihood. Finally, the two groups’ ‘sense of solidarity’ is evidenced by both ethnic groups’ willingness to fight for the Soviet army during World War II. Today, members from both ethnic groups are represented in local environmental groups and take part in locally-organized protests to defend Lake Baikal.

Although Smith’s *ethnie* is useful in classifying the two ethnic groups, the lasting cultural influence of the Soviet Union, under which both ethnic groups lived for seventy years, can better be explained using the top-down model of modernist nationalism. Arguably, the two groups were consolidated into the Soviet *narod* during the nationality policies of the Soviet government that marked a “passage from tradition to modernity” (Grant 1993, 227). According to the Bolsheviks, ethnic tension is class-based and therefore the advent of Marxism meant the end to both interethnic struggle and ethnic identity (Grant 1993, 227-228). Under Bolshevism, the various ethnicities of the Soviet republics would be “free of oppression” and “would flourish and come together in a new international ethnos” (Grant 1993, 228). The standardization of culture into the Soviet *narod* followed along this belief that ethnic cleavages and identities were only a relic of pre-Marxist society.

Modernist nationalism theory would further argue that the imposition of a singular Soviet identity that transcended ethnic identity was a necessary part of industrialization. It is clear from this evidence that Soviet authorities viewed the lake and its surrounding regions as an industrial opportunities. As related earlier in this chapter, Khrushchev himself declared, “Baikal, too, must work.” The population redistribution policies of the Soviet state urbanized cities in Siberia and the Far East
in order to increase industrial output (Iyer 2008, 127). The Irkutsk Oblast was one such region that was heavily urbanized during the Soviet era. In fact, almost half of the cities that exist in the oblast today were founded only after 1945 in order to meet economic benchmarks and promote socialist ideology (Iyer 2008, 132). Baikalsk, whose founding coincided with the construction of the factory in 1961, is a city that one scholar would put in the category of ‘Soviet-era towns’ which were founded for the purposes fulfilling economic projections and imposing Soviet ideals (Iyer 2008, 129). Many of these new towns, Baikalsk included, were called ‘company towns’ wherein a single industry “served as the hub of the town around which workers’ housing and all other urban activities revolved” (Iyer 2008, 129). The fact the employment, housing, and urban activities centered upon industries developed by Soviet economic planners demonstrates the extent to which identities in these ‘monocities’ were based upon the top-down processes.

A Civil Society Approach

While primordialism does not provide us with a clear way to classify national identity in the Irkutsk Oblast due to the dichotomous nature of ethnicity in the region, modernist explanations of identity construction in the region also fall short. Although the modernist narrative of an identity constructed in order to facilitate industrial progress under the banner of Marxism is applicable within a Soviet context, it is inadequate to describe how national identity has been constructed after the fall of the Soviet Union. While the politics and economy of the region were dictated from the center during the Soviet era, and, as our case study has demonstrated, orders dictated from above still have a large effect upon the region, Irkutsk citizens today have
demonstrated that they have more agency in these top-down processes of national identity formation.

The introduction of a civil society approach to understanding national identity in the Lake Baikal region allows us to understand how the citizens themselves conceive of the region’s future and their role within that future. In the environmental and popular protest movement to protect Lake Baikal, we can see what Hegel would refer to as the ‘interdependence’ of individual needs, wherein the individual motives of each of the groups that participated in the protests translate into the fulfillment of the ‘universal’ interests of the region and the nation as a whole. The many groups that were involved in the protest movement each had their own respective agendas: environmental activists wanted to politicize inadvisable environmental decisions among Russia’s federal authorities; political parties and opposition leaders were looking to increase their political visibility; and Baikalsk citizens were seeking to secure sustainable employment opportunities. Yet in the end, the groups were able to come together and articulate a unified voice against the reopening of BPPM, the authorities’ failure to institute economic diversification of the region, and a lack of transparency in political institutions.

In Gramsci’s analysis of civil society, the broad material interests of civil society’s activities are underpinned by a system of morals and values that guide individual pursuits. Many Baikalsk citizens, though they are concerned with their own material interests and economic livelihoods, also recognize the detrimental effect of the factory upon the lake’s ecosystem and acknowledge the need for developing economic alternatives. Conversely, while environmental organizations may have
agendas of their own in putting forth questions about the Russian government’s environmental practices, they are also concerned about the economic future of Baikalsk citizens. Beneath the disparate material interests of environmentalists on the one hand, and Baikalsk citizens on the other, we see an underlying set of values emerge. These values include preserving nature for future generations, ensuring a sustainable economic future for the region as a whole, and facilitating increased dialogue between the government and its citizens.

CONCLUSION

Given the importance of the lake to the region’s citizens, protecting Lake Baikal against encroaching industrial development has become the prerogative of environmentalists and local citizens alike. Of all the Soviet Union’s gross crimes against the environment, the construction of a pollution-effusing plant on the shores of Lake Baikal, the so-called ‘pearl of Siberia’ and reservoir of one-fifth of the world’s freshwater, seemed to be a step too far for environmentalists and scientists whose advice had been superceded by production quotas set by the Soviet Union’s Central Planning Committee and benchmarks set by Stalin’s five-year plans. What environmental groups and the region’s citizens are doing today is changing what had been a closed political environment and opening it up to the interests of the citizens. By diversifying the range of political dialogue, these environmental groups are putting a dent in the federal government’s authoritarian treatment of its regions.

While primordialism and modernism can be applied to understanding national identity in the Irkutsk Oblast in part, neither is able to fully explain how national identity is understood among the region’s citizens. Primordialism can be applied to
understand how Lake Baikal has become a symbol of regional identity and how the Russian and Buryat cultures each play an integral role in the construction of the common cultural values. Modernism can be applied to understand how the Soviet policies had a direct effect upon identity in the oblast’s ‘monocities’ that were established exclusively for the purposes of industrialization and carrying out Marxist ideals. Yet neither theory can explain how national identity is expressed in a post-Soviet space. By demanding dialogue with distant officials in Moscow, fighting for the protection of Lake Baikal, and advocating for the economic diversification of Baikalsk, Irkutsk citizens are articulating their own national idea through popular mobilization and cooperation among disparate groups.

If we return to Ernest Gellner’s pivotal question stated in Chapter 2, “If Civil Society and nationalism are the offspring of the same forces, does this affinity turn them into political allies or enemies?” We can conclude that in the case of Irkutsk, these two forces have become allies. While many of the local environmental organizations and protesters are directly speaking out against the regime’s decisions with regard to BPPM and the fate of Baikalsk, they are pursuing an agenda that will ultimately benefit the region’s citizens by preserving Lake Baikal for future generations and ensuring a sustainable future for Baikalsk.
Chapter 5
Conclusions on Civic Nationalism and Civil Society in Contemporary Russia

“From the time we are born we drink in the salts and scenes of our homeland; they influence our character and organize the cells of our body in their own manner.”

Valentin Rasputin in Siberia, Siberia (1996)

UPDATE ON THE CASES

Protest activity is oftentimes a fleeting phenomenon. It is usually spurred by a ‘trigger’ that takes the form of an unpopular political, economic, or social policy, and in the heat of discontent, citizens take to the streets and protest. In each of the case studies in this thesis, protest activity followed a specific ‘trigger’ that mobilized local citizens: in Kaliningrad, the explosive January 2010 protest followed an increase in tariffs on imported cars and a proposed new transport tax; in Irkutsk, local environmental organizations mobilized the region’s citizens in response to Putin’s January 2010 decision to reopen BPPM. If it were the case that these protests are only isolated incidents, then it would be difficult to argue that the protests represent benchmarks in the growth of Russian civil society and an increase in civic nationalism among each region’s citizens.

This is not the case. The initial protests that occurred in the first few months of 2010 in both regions were followed by several others, and while subsequent protests in each of the regions attracted fewer people, the perseverance of protest movements in each of these regions demonstrates a trend in civil society activity that may be sustainable. The following sections will brief the reader on the more recent activity of each of the protest movements and the ways in which each of the
movements is becoming more integrated into the regional and national fabric of civil society organizations throughout Russia.

“Support Baikal, Utrish and Khimki Forest! Save Our Nature!”

In Irkutsk on November 6, 2010, local environmental organizations Baikal Wave and the Baikal Movement led a crowd of approximately 500 protesters on a city-wide march that culminated in a rally on the City Circus square. The title of the rally, “Support Baikal, Utrish and Khimki Forest! Save Our Nature!” referred to three ‘hot’ areas of environmental contention: Lake Baikal, the Utrish forest reserves, and the Khimki forest.

“The future of our children is in our hands!”
Source: Usov 2010
“Government! Turn your heads to ecological problems!”
At left: Statue of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
Source: Usov 2010

“Heart of Russia”
Source: Usov 2010
The protest was part of a wave of environmental protests throughout Russia organized by a coalition of groups that are a part of the all-Russian (vsyerossiiskii) campaign “For Baikal, for Utrish, for Khimki Forest!—For Our Nature!” The movement has operatives in several other cities and is comprised of a diverse range of local and regional groups, including Greenpeace Russia, the Northern Caucasus Environmental Watch, the Save Utrish movement, the Save Khimki Forest Movement, the Social-Ecological Union, and the Bellona Environmental Rights Centre. Protests organized by the ‘For Our Nature’ movement have been held in Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Krasnodar region, and several other cities throughout Russia (Baikal Wave 2010b). Participants in these protests demand the immediate closure of BPPM, the preservation and protection of the Utrish nature reserve on the Black Sea, and a permanent halt to plans to build a Moscow-St. Petersburg highway through the Khimki forest (Baikal Wave 2010b).

The continued activity of environmental protest movements throughout Russia demonstrates that this particular wave of environmental civil society activity is likely to have lasting influence. The formation of the nationwide ‘For Our Nature’ movement demonstrates the agency of various locally-based environmental organizations to present a united front against governmental policies that disregard the environmental risks associated with industry and development. The perseverance of environmental organizations in the Irkutsk Oblast and their continued ability to mobilize the region’s citizens demonstrates that the protests that occurred in February and March 2010 are not isolated incidents; they are a part of a growing regional
environmental movement that has close ties with other environmental movements throughout Russia’s regions.

Kaliningrad’s ‘Den’ Gneva’ (‘Day of Anger’)

On August 21, after the release of United Russia’s list of Kaliningrad regional governor nominees, 3,000 to 5,000 Kaliningraders attended a ‘Day of Anger’ protest in the city’s scenic Youth Park to protest against the general hegemony of United Russia within local and federal government institutions. Unlike the January and March 2010 protests, which had the backing of the regional organization ‘Justice’ and the Moscow-based Solidarity group, the August protest was organized by private citizens Evgenii Labundin, Konstantin Rozhkov, Irina Voloshina, Viktor Gorbunov, and Vladimir Khabarov. Almost 30 speakers formally addressed the protesters, including Patriots of Russia party representative and dockworkers’ union leader Mikhail Chesalin, who emphasized the significance of United Russia’s decision to exclude Georgy Boos from the nomination list: “Kaliningrad has managed to get the ear of the Kremlin and force it for the first time in post-Soviet history to say the words ‘We are not putting Georgy Boos forward because he does not enjoy the confidence of the people.’ Has anyone ever heard such words from the Kremlin?” His words were met with a roaring and enthusiastic “No!” (Rozhkov 2010).
“Return the Election of Governors!”
Source: Rozhkov 2010

Solidarity leader Boris Nemtsov, also in attendance, delivered a particularly memorable speech that praised Kaliningrad citizens for setting an inspiring example for citizens throughout Russia who disbelieve in their agency to enact real, policy-level results:

Today's event is for the whole of Russia and our enormous country is watching you. When 12,000 people took to the streets on 30 January, Russia awoke. People suddenly realised that much depends on them. They understood that you can talk to those in power . . . People are passive. They sit in their kitchens and think that the government will decide everything for them and nothing depends on them. Only you, Kaliningraders, showed your country something completely different. You are very important and a lot depends on you. This is your victory and a victory for free, democratic Russia . . . Up with democracy! Hurrah for Kaliningrad! (Rozhkov 2010)

Nemtsov’s speech evokes a sort of coming-of-age tale, wherein Russians, previously pacified by the oppression of authoritarianism under the guise of ‘managed
democracy,’ are being led by Kaliningraders toward a new era wherein the
government will be held accountable to the people, when the people will rise to their
duties as citizens, and when Russia will truly begin on a path toward democracy.
While a real change in more accountable government and democratic processes will
be slow to come, continued protest activity in the Kaliningrad Oblast demonstrates
that its citizens will not be placated simply by the removal of Boos; they are
continuing to fight for the reinstatement of gubernatorial elections and more
transparent political processes.

Ilya Yashin expressed a similar vision, emphasizing the role that Kaliningrad
protesters play in the larger opposition movement that operates throughout the
country in several different forms:

[The] significance [of the Kaliningrad protest movement] is not just local –
it’s a matter for the whole country, for millions of our fellow citizens who
have lost faith in justice, or any faith in their own country. Millions of pairs of
eyes are turned today on you. The miners of Mezhdurechensk, the farmers of Tambov region, students from Novosibirsk, car drivers from Vladivostok, ecologists from the Khimki Forest – are all looking at Kaliningrad. They are
proud that you have turned yourselves from the population into a real people,

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28 In May 2010, coalminers blocked a railway line in the Siberian town of Mezhdurechensk in demand of higher wages and improved working conditions (Reuters 2010).
29 In the summer of 2010, farmers in the agricultural Tambov region experienced a drought that destroyed 23 percent of the grain crop (Gorst 2010).
31 Following massive protests in August 2010 against a proposed Moscow-St. Petersburg motorway that would cut through the Khimki forest, President Dmitri Medvedev announced in September 2010 that the construction plans would be indefinitely postponed.
masters of your own country. Throughout Russia today countless people suddenly have hope. (Rozhkov 2010)

While Kaliningrad protesters have direct connections with other protest movements throughout the country, Yashin’s commentary on the solidarity among the protest movements throughout the regions demonstrates a growing awareness of protest activity among several different groups. Yashin is saying that Kaliningraders’ ability to mobilize in the thousands will serve to demonstrate to other protest movements throughout the country that real, policy-level results are possible.

OTHER EXPLANATIONS

In order to increase the validity of the claims set forth in this thesis, it is necessary to address the counterarguments to these claims and analyze their relative strength in comparison to the original claims. A welcome discussion of these counterarguments will hope to clarify the limitations of the ideas set forth in this thesis and suggest further research that can be done in order to strengthen and improve upon these ideas. The following section will address each of these counterarguments on a particularistic basis.

Protests are only attended by a fraction of the population

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the risk in using protests as a proxy for evidence of a broad-based phenomenon (which is, in this case, civic nationalism) is that protests only represent a snapshot of grievances and attitudes at a given time. Additionally, participation in protests is generally limited, and we cannot speak for the nation (or even a single region) as a whole through the voices of a few thousand
protesters that constitute only a fraction of the population. In *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes* (2011), Graeme Robertson argues that even if protests are only attended by a minority of the population, they still have the ability to make a significant impact. He cites the example of the Bolshevik Revolution, which was carried out by a relatively small number of people. He notes that even the labor strikes that occurred in major cities prior to the revolution were attended by a small percentage of the population. In a speech entitled “The Idea of Civil Society” given by Bronislaw Geremek, the former solidarity leader notes that the protests and strikes that occurred prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union were only attended by a small fraction of the population. He notes that even in Moscow, “the eye of the hurricane,” less than one percent of the city’s population took part (Geremek 1992, 7). Despite limited participation, the protests had great effect and eventually contributed to the fall a world superpower.

Robertson argues that even when protest does not translate into revolution, as it did in 1917, 1989, and 1991, protests can be indicators for interest intermediation, political mobilization, and relationships among civil society actors. With regard to analyzing protest activity, Robertson argues that “a focus limited to sheer numbers is clearly inadequate; the who, when, why, and how matters enormously” (Robertson 2011, 44). Robertson’s assessment is relevant to Kaliningrad and Irkutsk, where protests only attracted a small percentage of the total population but nonetheless were indicators for widespread discontent, civil society activity, and the ability of ordinary citizens to enact policy-level results under a semi-authoritarian regime.
Protests are Elite-Led

A survey look at the lineup of Moscow big-shots in attendance at the Kaliningrad and Irkutsk protests—Nemtsov, Yashin, Milov, Mitrochkin—leads one to believe that the protests stem not from the grassroots level of civil society, but from a vaguely unified opposition elite with a political agenda and a Moscow base camp. Although the opposition leaders’ presence at the protests drew much-needed media attention to the protests, we must remember that each of the protest movements were locally-organized. In Kaliningrad, the explosive 10-12,000-person January 2010 protest stemmed out of a small and locally organized dockworkers’ union and was organized primarily by the local grassroots movement ‘Justice.’ The August 2010 rally was not supported by either of these movements; it was organized by independent citizens. In Irkutsk, the February and March 2010 protests were organized by local grassroots organizations Baikal Ecological Wave and the Baikal Movement. Although prominent opposition leaders were key speakers at these events, the vast majority of speakers were local opposition leaders and ordinary citizens.

Protests are a Response to Economic Crisis

It is not a coincidence that the recent surge in protest activity in Russia coincided with a global economic crisis that resonated with significant effect throughout Russia’s regions. In Kaliningrad, the ‘trigger’ for the protest was a rise in a new transport tax compounded by increased customs duties, the latter of which significantly increased expenses for the many Kaliningraders in the business of selling used cars. In Irkutsk, much of the outrage surrounding the reopening of BPPM stemmed from the government’s failure to invest in economic diversification of the
region, ignoring the viable alternative of ‘ecotourism.’ In general, regions such as Kaliningrad and Irkutsk, which are far from the capital center, feel ignored by the authorities in Moscow, especially in a time of economic crisis. Whether or not the surge in protest activity in 2010 is only a ‘snapshot’ of grievances within the context of deteriorating economic conditions will only be revealed with time. It is notable, however, that the demographic of these protests was different from what it was in the past. Protest activity throughout the 1990s was mainly comprised of union members on strike to demand wage arrears and pensioners protesting against benefits cuts as a part of the transition from socialism (Greene & Robertson 2010). The early 2000s saw scattered protest events that were largely isolated incidents in larger cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg (Aron 2010, 2). Unlike previous protest events, the wave of protests that began in the first few months of 2010 were attended by a coalition of political parties, local grassroots organizations, university students, and ordinary, middle-aged citizens.

In addition, it is notable that although the ‘triggers’ for the protests in Kaliningrad in Irkutsk were linked to larger economic problems, protests in both regions had overt political undertones. Common themes among the two protests included lack of government transparency, authoritarian policy-making, United Russia’s monopoly on power, corruption among regional and federal officials, and the abolition of the election of regional governors.

While it may be possible that these protests are primarily a reaction to unfavorable economic conditions, it may also be possible that these protests can set a new precedent for protests in the future, regardless of their respective ‘triggers.’ The
success of each protest—in Kaliningrad, Boos’ removal; in Irkutsk, a provisional agreement to close down BPPM within 30 months—has demonstrated to opposition movements and citizens throughout the country that real change can be enacted through a willingness to attend protests, voice opinions, and envision a new social contract that demands consensus between a government and its citizens.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The existent nationalism theories have varying levels of success in describing national identity Kaliningrad and Irkutsk. Primordialism is essentially inapplicable in the Kaliningrad case because of the complete demographic, infrastructural, and intellectual transformation of the region from a Prussian city to a Soviet military base following World War II. Yet in Irkutsk, primordialism helps to explain the importance of Lake Baikal a part of regional identity among both Russian and Buryat ethnic groups, as well as the formulation of regional etnie that combined characteristics of the two integrated groups. The primordialism theory falls short, however, in explaining how the top-down processes of industrialization in the region synthesized a new Soviet identity for each of the regions.

Modernism fares better than primordialism in both of the cases. In Kaliningrad, Soviet identity was imposed upon the region in a top-down fashion in order to facilitate urbanization and the development of military industries, a policy that went so far as to deport the region’s German citizens and replace them with ethnically Slavic citizens from other SSRs. In the Irkutsk Oblast, following the prototype of the ‘monocity’ phenomenon, the town of Baikalsk was constructed around BPPM, which become the town’s primary employer and social hub.
Both theories, however, fail to touch upon some of the defining characteristics of each region’s identity following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Kaliningrad, both theories fail to address the ways in which the region’s proximity to Europe, physical separation from the contiguous Russian Federation, and failed notions of the region as a ‘Baltic Hong Kong’ have contributed to identity in this unique Russian enclave. In Irkutsk, the two theories fail to address how the lake’s prominence in the region has mobilized ordinary citizens to advocate for sustainable economic development and how citizens want to have their voices heard as a region distant from the Kremlin authorities in Moscow. Alternatively, if we look at identity through the lens of civil society, we can see how these key features of identity translate into popular mobilization and displays of civic nationalism.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, scholarship within the field of nationalism studies that takes an in-depth look at the pivotal connection between civic nationalism and participation in civil society has yet to emerge. While many scholars cited in this thesis have acknowledged the important role that civil society plays within the nation-state (Gellner 1994, Hegel 1821, Gramsci 1972, Walzer 2003, Almond & Verba 2003), none have tested the relationship between the two phenomena through case study analysis. As an undergraduate work, this thesis can only hope to suggest a new dialogue within the field of nationalism studies, place emphasis upon ‘good,’ civic nationalism as necessary element of the modern nation-state, and a put forth a renewed interest in civil society development as a necessary part of state-building.
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