

Neo-Nazism and Racist Violence in Russia

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Introduction:

Within the Russian Federation there is a distressing trend of racist and xenophobic attitudes. When these attitudes rest in the minds of extremist individuals such as neo-Nazis and skinheads the result can be the manifestation of racial violence towards targeted individuals. It is this violent and extremist behaviour carried out by neo-Nazis and skinheads that will be the main focus of this essay.

The Russian Federation materialised as a sovereign state after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Russia has a unique history of excluding individuals from its society as demonstrated when leaders of the Soviet Union forcibly removed people they deemed as enemies such as the Chechens, Balkars and Kurds on the grounds of their ethnic or national origin (Amnesty International, 2003). In Russia today ethnic minorities are still subjected to unequal rights and face unfair racial violence. The United Nations Special Rapporteur, on his visit to Russia, reported on the alarming nature of racially motivated crimes and attacks by neo-Nazi groups and others. The violence demonstrated by these groups portrays a shift in ideology from the Soviet Union's 'friendship amongst people', which suppressed racism and xenophobia to the new nationalist ideology of the Russian Federation. The economic and social crisis experienced by Russia gave way to the appearance of ultranationalist groups such as the neo-Nazis who use physical violence against those they consider their enemies (United Nations, 2006) as a result it is this behaviour and the motivation behind it that will be considered further.

When considering how racist belief systems emerge in a global context it is important to put forward Frank Dikötter's theory that an interactive model, 'can take into account how racist belief systems were negotiated, appropriated and transformed' (Dikötter, p.1478). In contrast to this view Goldberg proposed a relational account which, 'takes leave of this universalising of racial naturalization' (2009, p.1274) as he argues the dominant comparativist method neglects the deeper issues as it compares and contrasts whereas the relational account, which he endorses, connects (2009). When researching racism in Russia, particularly racial violence carried out by neo-Nazis and skinheads as well as the belief systems behind it, it became apparent that there is not a broad range of academic text on the topic. However before the collapse of communism research around racism and xenophobia in Russia was unheard of. Despite the fact there does still appear to be a gap in racial understanding within Russia, the current availability of research by organisations such as SOVA, a non-profit organisation founded in 2002, is significant and heavily relied upon within this study.

This essay focuses on racial violence carried out by neo-Nazis as well as skinheads. When referring to neo-Nazis and skinheads Richard Arnold's definition will be applied, as it is important to differentiate between the two specifically in terms of the organisation of their groups. Neo-Nazis are a, 'specific quasi-political racist organisation' whereas a 'skinhead' is referring to a subculture and both have an

overlapping ideology (2009, p.649). The extent of their racist violence and motivations will be assessed in this essay through the use of specific examples, reports, typologies of violence and journals. Furthermore it will become evident that the issue of racial violence is still one of increasing concern and magnitude within the Russian Federation.

Anti-Semitism

'Anti-Semitism has continued to form the ideological basis of many right-wing ultra-nationalist organisations in the former Soviet Union. These racist 'skinhead' groups promote anti-Semitic propaganda, use anti-Semitic rhetoric, and incite racial violence' (Rosenthal, 2011). Under the Soviet and Tsarist regimes the tolerance of anti-Semitic attitudes has had an impact on the existing extreme nationalistic views in Russia (ECRI, 1997). According to SOVA nationalism in Russia is 'genetically related' to anti-Semitism, therefore growth of Russian nationalism may result in an increase in anti-Semitism within Russian society. In reality anti-Semitism lingers in the background and is being pushed to the foreground as a result of the racist and xenophobic attitudes expressed towards people from the Caucasus, immigrants, blacks and Muslims and most importantly anti-Semitism is made prominent due to political discourse (SOVA, 2004).

Throughout Russian history there are occasions in which Jews were illustrated as the source of the country's troubles and as a result the scapegoating theory was used to explain the violence and repression that Jews were subjected to including, 'pogroms, purges, show trials, professional and educational quotas bans on religious expression and ridicule in the popular culture' (Gibson and Howard, 2007, p.194). It seems that racial violence and anti-Semitism towards Jews is part of the overall xenophobic atmosphere within the Russian Federation (Grüner, 2009). Despite the period of turmoil that took place early in the 1990s due to the collapse of the Soviet Union which resulted in an unstable state there were no legal restrictions or systematic repressions placed upon Jews during a time in which we would expect anti-Semitism to flourish. Therefore although anti-Semitism certainly still exists in Russia the theory of widespread scapegoating of Jews, that was expected to take place in the post Soviet Union, did not wholly materialise (Gibson and Howard, 2007). Nevertheless within the Soviet Union ones Jewish identity became private, as Jews had no institutions or organisations to associate with. As a result following a survey of Jewish identity within Russia the major impact that anti-Semitism has had on how a Jew living in Russia sees themselves is understood, 'when I encounter anti-Semitism, in daily life or from the government, I feel Jewish; when I don't encounter it, I feel Jewish to a lesser degree' demonstrating that ones identity is shaped by the anti-Semitism they encounter in Russia (Chervyakov et al, 1997, p. 290).

Within Russia there are neo-Nazi political parties such as the unregistered Russian National Unity that advocate anti-Semitism (SOVA, 2006a) as well as the Liberal Democratic Party led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky's who is known for his fierce nationalism and anti-Semitic views. Large scale anti-Semitic action was demonstrated in Russia and pushed into politics with the 'Letter of 500'. A radical nationalist had interpreted the book Kitsur Shulkhan Arukh to be in violation to an anti-extremist law and appealed to the Prosecutor General to consider all Jewish organisations as extremist. In 2004 a signature collection was initiated and by 2005 it had reached 15,000 signatures including 19 members of the State Duma, 14 from the Rodina Party and 5 from the Communist Party. The campaign and publicity surrounding the 'Letter of 500' resulted in a growth of the relevance of anti-Semitism for extremist groups such as neo-Nazis (SOVA, 2006a). Politics has an incredibly large influence over the public both in Russia and across the world, the evidence of anti-Semitism in mainstream politics acts as a

reason for the increased levels of violent anti-Semitic activity by groups such as neo-Nazis and extreme nationalists as they are inspired and guided by the political discourse.

According to the World Jewish Congress the number of attacks against Jewish cemeteries and synagogues increased from 2013 resulting in the trend of decreasing anti-Semitism being reversed for the first time in four years (WJC, 2014). Within Russia the number of physical attacks against Jewish people have become more rare which is most likely to be due to the fact that a Jewish person is visually more challenging to distinguish among a group of people as opposed to an individual of an ethnic minority (SOVA, 2014). Despite the fact physical attacks against Jews by groups such as neo-Nazis are not as common as those against individuals of an ethnic minority it is not to say they are eradicated completely, the issue of racial violence by these groups is still a major one. On the 11 January 2009 a man that was described as a 'skinhead' stabbed nine people in a Moscow synagogue (Amnesty International, 2006) and the famous Jewish musician Mikhail Altshuler was beaten up by three skinheads on the Moscow metro (Stephen Roth Institute, 2009). Furthermore racist discourse is a common phenomenon not only on the Internet but also from well established publishing houses printing and selling copies of Mein Kampf demonstrating that anti-Semitism is prevalent and visible in mainstream society as well as among extremist neo-Nazi and skinhead groups (ECRI, 2005). Racist discourse can also lead to violence as demonstrated in 2002 when anti-Semitic placards linked to explosive devices were placed along motorways. On the 27 May Tatiana Sapuniva attempted to remove a placard that read, 'Death to Jews' and detonated the explosive resulting in burns and facial injuries (Amnesty International, 2003). Arnold's typology portrays that specific violence conveys messages and when discussing neo-Nazi anti-Semitic violence the majority is targeted towards property as opposed to people. 'Cower!' reiterates the boundary between groups and is linked with the less common symbolic violence offering a warning that those targeted are second-class citizens and 'Leave!' illustrates the reluctance of the majority groups to cohabitate with the minority group. This is associated with the more frequent pogroms, for example the destruction of the property of an ethnic minority (Arnold, 2009). This typology can be illustrated in neo-Nazi and skinhead anti-Semitic violence as the most common attacks take place in the form of graffiti and defacement of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. This was evident in 2008 on Victory Day swastikas, 'Russia for the Russians', 'glory to Hitler' and 'SS' were painted on the Jewish Culture and Charity Centre and in another common practice the gravestones in a cemetery in St Petersburg were broken (Stephen Roth Institute, 2009).

Media

A mounting issue in Russia is the use of hate speech in the media. A possible explanation for the existence of hate speech in Russia is that, 'racist tendencies in post-Soviet society and the general lack of tolerance with respect to 'different' cultures and religions have been exacerbated by the social and economic hardships faced by the majority of the population' and as a result hate speech is frequent and seen as a part of daily life by the population, editors and journalists (Lokshina, 2006, p.201). This essay is considering neo-Nazism and racial violence and as a result violence is understood through Richard Arnold's definition, 'a particular approach to managing human plurality'. Due to this definition physically hurting someone and calling them abusive names or inciting hatred through speech are both types of violence as, 'they deny the other a voice in how plurality is to be managed' (2009 p.643). In Russia there are over 800 extremist websites that give open space to leaders of neo-Nazi and extreme right organisations and over 100 newspapers that regularly use hate speech and initiate racial hatred towards foreigners (United Nations, 2006). Furthermore in an

empirical study of hate speech in Russia from a range of websites, national and regional newspapers illustrated that 51 per cent of news items indicated journalist's support of hate speech (Lokshina, 2006).

The media in Russia, as well as throughout the rest of the world, plays an important and influential role in society. Indeed some aspects of Russian media are responsible for the broadcasting of racist messages such as newspapers and TV who add to the growth of intolerance and subsequently influence racial violence. Within this type of media there appears to be an attempt to enforce the idea of Russian ethnic superiority, which leads to the galvanisation of public opinion against those of an ethnic minority (Ovshieva, 2013). Dikötter argues that politics is a crucial component of racism (2009) as media discourse is also driven by political discourse. In Russia there appears to be an expanding influence of political parties who possess racist programmes that are broadcast by the media, such as the Rodina and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (Law, 2012). In general skinhead groups tend to keep away from active politics however some neo-Nazi groups collaborate with extreme right nationalist parties. The Russian National Unity formed in 1990 and advocated the end of mixed marriages and a growth in the fertility rate of ethnic Russians. In addition the Russian National Union, who later became the Russian National Socialist Party, were known for its neo-Nazism, attracting white power skinhead support and producing its own heavily anti-Semitic newspaper (Law, 2012 and Ossipov, 1998).

The media's use of racist and xenophobic language is a persistent problem and the Russian Federation have faced severe criticism because of it. A particular section of media where this is evident is through online websites and social media belonging to neo-Nazis and other ultranationalists (ECRI, 2013). Nazism's popularity is evident through Russia's own version of Facebook called Vkontake where a 2014 Miss Hitler competition takes place between Russian and Ukrainian female Nazi's to determine who is the most beautiful anti-Semitic female. The Nazi women post pictures of themselves with quotes professing their anti-Semitism such as, 'Adolf Hitler's position is genius and true, the races are different not only in appearance, but also in intelligence' (Vocativ, 2014). Racial violence is evident in Russian media through the use of neo-Nazi websites as illustrated on August 12, 2007 when the neo-Nazi group the Russian Nationalist Socialist Society emerged by posting a video online of the execution of two men from Dagestan and Tajikistan in a forest beneath a large Nazi flag. In the gruesome video one man is beheaded and the other shot in the back of the head falling into a grave, the video ends with two men in masks giving the Nazi salute and the party demand that all people from the Caucasus and Asians are expelled from Russia (The New York Times, 2007). It is evident through this video that in Russia many of these neo-Nazi groups that believe and spread their racist ideology vocally are exchanging their racist rhetoric for action and as a result racial violence is continuing to be a serious problem within Russia (Lokshina, 2002).

Neo-Nazi's have shifted from street fights to terrorist group tactics and their actions have brought them the increased media attention that they desire, as current media reports on skinheads and neo-Nazi's are essentially acting as an advertisement of their beliefs and violent actions (SOVA, 2006b). The shooting of human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova on January 19, 2009 by neo-Nazis received significant media attention and is commemorated every year with a march in Moscow (The Moscow Times, 2015). In addition the murder of ethnology professor Nikolai Girenko who was shot dead in his home on 19 June 2004 gained a lot of media coverage as he was respected for his work and conducted several studies on neo-Nazi and skinhead groups and had warned that they were on the rise. Girenko had contributed to numerous high-profile investigations on racially motivated crime and the St Petersburg prosecutor declared that his work as an expert witness in trials is the

probable motive for his murder (Amnesty International, 2006). Before his murder the neo-Nazi group Russian Republic had passed a 'death sentence' on Girenko and posted it online as he had assisted a prosecutor in the sentencing of three skinheads for murder (The Telegraph, 2008). The media in Russia are inadvertently promoting these neo-Nazi and extremist groups in the manner they report their crimes, meanwhile the state is not orchestrating a fight against their actions as, 'courts continue to pass conditional sentences to violent skinheads and allow high-profile neo-Nazi ideologists to get away with it' (SOVA, 2006b).

Ethnic Minorities

Within the Russian Federation there are more than 170 ethnic groups and nationalities that face a considerable amount of hostility from the general public and those associated with neo-Nazi and skinhead movements (United Nations, 2006). It is important to consider that following the fall of the Soviet Union the desire for a 'civilized country' was synonymous with the desire for racial whiteness (Zakharov, 2015). Those who are targeted in Russia include Caucasian people, black people, individuals from Central Asia, and essentially people who 'ethnically differ from a certain, undefined 'slavic type' (Moscow Helsinki Group, 2002, p.368). The growing enmity and hostility in Russia is illustrated in the opinion polls carried out by the Levada Centre in 2011 which revealed that 58 per cent of respondents agreed with the nationalist slogan, 'Russia for the Russians' (ECRI, 2013). Russian ethno-nationalism emerged in the 1980s with groups such as Pamyat who promoted power for ethnic Russians, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting social and economic crisis that ensued are therefore believed to be the source of increasing ethnic hatred, racism and racial violence in Russia (Law, 2012).

Skinhead violence towards ethnic minorities is a major issue in Russia and there are believed to be between 60,000 to 65,000 skinheads in 85 cities within the Russian Federation. The racially violent actions of these groups was demonstrated in 2006 when neo-Nazis planted a bomb in the Moscow Cherkizovo market in which there are mainly Asian workers that killed 12 people and injured 66 (Arnold, 2009). As previously discussed Arnold's (2009) typology of racial violence demonstrates that specific types of violence communicate negative messages. These differ if the target is property, as evidenced through the majority of neo-Nazi anti-Semitic violence, and people. When neo-Nazis are carrying out racial violence towards those of an ethnic minority the most frequent targets are individuals. Lynching is an attack on the body, which can result in murder and is associated with the message 'Behave!' essentially punishing someone for not being 'normal'. However, when referring to neo-Nazi and skinhead violence the idea of being 'normal' means to be ethnic Russian. Furthermore a massacre is associated with groups of people, such as neo-Nazis, and the killing of people revealing the message to 'Perish!' demonstrating a complete rejection of the minority group. The types of violence and messages they disseminate are naturally all cumulative, as specific types of violence will portray more than one message depending on the details of the attack. Furthermore it is apparent, through their actions, that skinhead violence is becoming more demonstrative as they desire greater publicity and media attention (SOVA, 2006c). The above typology is reflected through an attack carried out by skinheads upon a senior member of staff at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow a Russian citizen who came to Russia from Tajikistan. A group of 25 to 30 skinheads on a train carriage attacked Bogsho and his son on their way back from a cultural event for Tajikistan people. The skinheads kicked them until they were covered in blood and chanted; 'Moscow for the Muscovites, Russia for the Russians' while some of the attackers took photos (Amnesty International, 2003). This violent attack communicated both the messages of 'perish!' as they were rejecting the minority race and 'behave!' as they were returning from a cultural event for people from Tajikistan

therefore going against neo-Nazi and skinhead ideology by embracing their ethnic minority culture.

In Russia skinheads are groups who orchestrate racially violent attacks with a, 'racist, neo-fascist and violent ideology' (Amnesty International, 2006, p. 1). In 2006 the Public Opinion Foundation reported that 42 per cent of those asked supported the decision to, 'deport representatives of certain ethnic groups' (Amnesty International, 2006). A brutal and disturbing incident of racial violence against ethnic minorities carried out by Russian skinheads is illustrated in the murder of Khursheda Sultonova, a nine year old girl of Tajik ethnicity on 9 February, 2004. While walking with her father and cousin Khursheda was attacked by a group of skinheads and beaten with chains, sticks, knuckledusters and knives while chanting 'Russia for the Russians' and other racist slogans, she was stabbed nine times in the chest and died of blood loss at the scene. It is common practice in Russia for authorities to determine these attacks as acts of hooliganism and blame drunken teenagers, as opposed to enforcing the Criminal Code and prosecuting the actions as being motivated by race. In the beginning of the investigation of Khursheda's murder the racial motive of the attack had not been taken into consideration as the St Petersburg prosecutor stated, 'this crime is not classified as one committed on the grounds of national hatred. This is an ordinary crime linked to unemployed youths, who were excited after drinking alcohol' following this seven individuals responsible for the attack were charged with hooliganism only (Amnesty International, 2006, p.26). According to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) non-citizens must enjoy, 'equal protection and recognition before the law and in this context, to take action against racially motivated violence', (Amnesty International, 2006, p.7). Despite the fact that Russia sign up to various human rights treaties it is evident with the above case and many others that the racial motivation of attacks is rarely acknowledged. The repercussions of this are evident in another attack on a 9 year old girl who was stabbed near her flat on 25 March 2006 and seriously injured by skinheads who painted the words, 'skinheads.. we did it' near the attack. Some activists believe that this attack took place due to the fact that no one was found guilty for the murder of the 9 year old Tajik girl therefore encouraging skinheads to continue to carry out these violent attacks (Amnesty International, 2006). Furthermore the numbers of murders motivated by race hatred are increasing and have surpassed the figures of previous years. However, the statistics do not accurately portray the true level of violence as in many cases ethnic minority victims are too scared to come forward and they feel there is little point in doing so due to the high proportion of cases in which the motivation of racial hatred is discarded and ignored (SOVA, 2014).

Football

Russian football is a particular element of society in which racism and racial violence is increasingly evident and a major cause of concern among officials, particularly due to the fact that Russia is set to host the FIFA World Cup in 2018. Indeed the neo-Nazi threat has not vanished from Russia and it is evident that many have joined with violent football fan groups in the orchestration of violent rallies expressing their racist views particularly towards those of ethnic minorities (Arnold, 2014). In 2013 it was believed that there were over 50,000 skinheads in the Russian Federation and it is these youth nationalist groups that are the cause of extremist violence within the country (ECRI, 2013). Football hooliganism is an on-going issue in football across the world particularly when it leads to severe violence as demonstrated in Russia. Hooligan activity is based around the concepts of masculinity and nationalism and Anthony King suggests that football hooligans have twisted these concepts and intentionally breached the borders in order to carry out more extreme and dangerous behaviour (King, 1997).

The issue of racism in Russian football is a concerning one. In the report by the Fare network and the SOVA centre between May 2012 to May 2014 there were 21 instances of race and politically motivated violence by football fans as well as a total of 91 types of discrimination evident including far-right and neo-Nazi symbols, anti-Caucasus and anti-Black displays (Fare and SOVA, 2015). Those most frequently targeted are both black players and people from the Caucasus as well as a significant use of neo-Nazi symbols to antagonise players. Neo-Nazis are considered the 'foot soldiers of the radical militant Russian nationalist movement' (SOVA, 2014) and have been more vigorous recently in utilising the streets to organise rallies and meetings. In 2013 21 people died and 178 were physically injured due to racist and neo-Nazi violence (SOVA, 2014). What took place in Manezhnaya Square in Moscow on December 11 2010 is an example of football fans coming together with neo-Nazi and ultra-right groups in a violent memorial demonstration following the deaths of two Spartak football fans in street clashes on two separate occasions with youth from the North Caucasus. The unauthorised rally was attended by 5,000 football fans who chanted racist slogans and raised their hands in a Nazi salute, as well as violently attacking those from the North Caucasus and individuals of non-Slav appearance resulting in the injury of 30 people and detention of 65 (ECRI, 2013). The growth in racist and xenophobic feelings among young Russians has led to an increase in street fights with those of ethnic minorities and groups of nationalist football fans. It is however when these street fights ultimately result in the injury or death of the member of the ethnic majority, as demonstrated by the death of the two Spartak football fans, that their deaths are used as a justification for football fans to join with neo-Nazis in a display of racial violence against those they ideologically oppose (Kulaeva et al, 2013).

A further illustration of football fans engaging in racial violence is demonstrated through 'white wagons', which take place on commuter trains and subways as fans participate in beating those with non-slavic appearances and anti-fascists who are their ideological opponents. In March 2013 Spartak fans orchestrated a 'white wagon' on board a city train targeting those with a non-slavic appearance and following the attack a neo-Nazi fan Maksim Petrov posted the video of the attack onto the ultras website (Fare and SOVA, 2015). For males, football upholds their status as a man and through supporting a football team the male earns respect from his peers. A key practice in the demonstration of manhood in football is the act of communal chanting, through this chanting the males assert their masculinity and present themselves as a unified social body (King, 1997). In domestic football attacks take place in and outside of the stadium by organised far-right groups including neo-Nazis who stir up racial hatred through the use of racist slogans, banners with swastikas adorned on them, the burning of flags as well as instances of monkey chants and throwing bananas onto the pitch at black players (Fare and SOVA, 2015). Furthermore fans also collect money on their websites in order to attempt to secure justice to those they consider 'white heroes', namely the neo-Nazis who have been sentenced for severe crimes such as racist murder and violence. This was evident on 18 May 2013 when Spartak ultra fans unfurled a memorial banner of Dmitry Borovikov a notorious neo-Nazi and leader of the Mad Crowd group who was killed whilst being arrested (Fare and SOVA, 2015). Crowd trouble is a continuing problem in Russian football as illustrated in a match between Spartak Moscow and Shinnik Yaroslavl as a Nazi flag was displayed both in and out of the stadium and Spartak fan's threw flares and smoke bombs leading to the game being stopped in the 53rd minute in order for police to restore order (ESPN, 2013).

As mentioned previously concerns have been heightened due to the fact that Russia is set to host the FIFA World Cup in 2018. The major incident, which highlighted the problem, was the globally televised Champions League match in which CSKA Moscow fans allegedly hurled abuse at Yaya Toure, the Manchester City player. As a result

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has said they are dealing with the issue and UEFA launched an investigation (Guardian, 2013). However officials in Russia are playing down any suggestions that racism is a major problem in Russian football as Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko told the BBC, ' I don't think we stand out on the issue. There are lots of black players here and I don't see any problem' (BBC, 2015). In response to the incidents black football players may end up boycotting the event in 2018 due to the racist atmosphere and have warned the Russian sports officials that unless the behaviour by fans is eliminated they may not play in the tournament (Ghosh, 2013). CSKA have subsequently released a statement from one of its own black players Seydou Doumbia who declared in reference to his fans, 'they wouldn't ever allow themselves to come out with racist chants. So my Ivory Coast colleague is clearly exaggerating' (Ghosh, 2013). It is evident that racism and racist violence by football fans is a significant issue in Russia and something that needs to be addressed in the near future, particularly before the World Cup in 2018 in which FIFA wants to showcase their zero tolerance of discrimination. However as it stands they are a long way away from being able to complete this task (BBC, 2015).

Conclusion

When constructing this essay the decision was made to focus on four key aspects of racialization in Russia - anti-Semitism, ethnic minorities, the media and Russian football. It is evident that Russia faces a severe issue involving neo-Nazism and the use of racial violence in these areas of society. However, it is necessary to point out that racism is prevalent in many other aspects of society that have not been discussed in this piece.

The Russian Federation is evidently rife with racism, which is reflected through the violence subjected onto members of ethnic minorities, different religions, those who do not conform to the desired 'slavic' appearance and many others. Racist discourse is also disseminated and broadcast through politics and the Russian media, which has the ability to influence and heighten the hostility that prompts neo-Nazis and other extremist groups to carry out racial violence. Furthermore what is most troubling and a major contributory factor in the rise of racist and xenophobic violence and attitudes is the nationalism promoted by the Russian political leadership which is contributing to a siege mentality where plurality has no place and casual racism and fear of the foreigner becomes part of the mainstream society and consistent with patriotic duty. This is increasingly evident in the worrying trend of the motive of race not being taken into consideration by the courts and authorities.

Indeed it is necessary to point out that Russia is not the only country with issues of racism as Dikötter states that although racism is a global phenomenon this, 'does not mean that it is either uniform or universal' (2008, p. 1494) however it is severely unlikely that a form of 'colour blindness' will fall upon the world without a concerted and serious effort by the political leadership. The relevance of the activities of neo-Nazi and other far right extremist groups was made prominent in the media this week with the release of a BBC documentary hosted by Reggie Yates, 'Reggie Yates Extreme Russia: Far Right and Proud' depicting young ultra-nationalists in Russia and teenage neo-Nazis who believe if one is not white then there is no place for you in Russia, demonstrating an intense patriotism and love of one's country that has violent consequences (BBC Three, 2015). If Russia is to effectively address the growing menace of racism and xenophobia it will require determined leadership from politicians and the media in a dialling back of the current nationalist agenda and rhetoric being pursued, which has created a fertile ground in which the extremist views and actions of the groups discussed in this paper have been able to flourish and find justification for their distorted views. Time will tell whether such leadership will emerge but the first

real test will be the 2018 Fifa World Cup were the eyes of the world will be on Russia and the football supporters who have ben a willing conduit for the racist views and violence. Nevertheless until this happens neo-Nazi and racial violence will continue to be a devastating and prominent issue within Russia.

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