

EUROPA COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES



Russian Nationalism and Ethnic Violence

*Symbolic violence, lynching,
pogrom, and massacre*

Richard Arnold

ROUTLEDGE

Russian Nationalism and Ethnic Violence

Nationalism is now the dominant narrative in Russian politics, and one with genuine popularity in society. *Russian Nationalism and Ethnic Violence: Symbolic violence, lynching, pogrom, and massacre* is a theoretical and empirical study which seeks to break the concept of 'ethnic violence' into distinguishable types, examining the key question of why violence within the same conflict takes different forms at certain times and providing empirical insight into the politics of one of the most important countries in the world today.

Theoretically, the work promises to bring the content of ethnic identity back into explanations of ethnic violence, with concepts from social theory, and empirical and qualitative analysis of databases, newspaper reports, human rights reports, social media, and ethnographic interviews. It sets out a new typology of ethnic violence, studied against examples of neo-Nazi attacks, Cossack violence against Meskhetian Turks, and Russian race riots.

The study brings hate crimes in Russia into the study of ethnic violence and examines the social undercurrents that have led to Putin's embrace of nationalism. It adds to the growing body of English language scholarship on Russia's nationalist turn in the post-Cold War era, and will be essential reading for anyone seeking to understand not only why different forms of ethnic violence occur, but also the potential trajectory of Russian politics in the next 20 years.

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First published 2016
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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by Taylor & Francis Books

Editor, Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia: Dominic Heaney
Editorial Assistant: Eleanor Simmons

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-85743-859-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-31561-794-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Taylor & Francis Books

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Abbreviations

DPNI	Movement against Illegal Immigration
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RNE	Russian National Unity
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
RTR	Russian Television and Radio
SHARP	Skinheads against Racial Prejudice
Sova	Sova Center for Information and Analysis
UCSJ	Union of Councils of Former Soviet Jewry
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1 Skinhead ethnic violence in the Russian Federation

On January 11, 2006 Aleksander Koptsev, a troubled youth suffering from an illness that would lead to blindness and mental distress, burst into a Hassid synagogue on Bolshaya Bronnaya Street in the heart of Moscow. The security cameras at the synagogue captured the entire incident.¹ After entering the synagogue, 21-year-old Koptsev pulled out a knife and shouted “I will kill Jews!” He proceeded to stab nine parishioners before being wrestled to the ground by the Rabbi (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2006: 6: 3). The ensuing police investigation found anti-Semitic literature at Koptsev’s apartment and purported links between him and the international racist skinhead group Combat-18: Blood and Honour. At his trial, Koptsev said that he had gone into the synagogue to “kill as many Jews as possible.” The court sentenced Koptsev to 16 years in prison for attempted murder “motivated by ethnic hatred” but did not charge him with inciting religious or ethnic enmity (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2006: 6: 13). Koptsev took his own life less than a year later.²

Most people in Russia expressed revulsion at the events, as indeed they would do anywhere. Yet some actually tried to invert the meaning of this event and present Russians as the victims. Russian State Duma deputy speaker Sergei Baburin from the Rodina (Motherland) bloc voiced such sentiment when he charged that many of the accusations made against Koptsev were “Russophobic in essence,” implying that the media only cares about crimes committed against Jews (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2006: 6: 3). Likewise former Motherland leader Dmitrii Rogozin blamed violent video games and pornography, claiming that the attack received extra attention due to the Jewish nature of the victims: “Obviously, the murder of a Russian is seen in Russia as an ordinary crime, while the murder of a minority is practically a crime against humanity” (Zavtra, January 19, 2006 in *Bigotry Monitor*, 2006: 6: 5). At the time of writing, Rogozin was Russia’s ambassador to NATO. Albeit not quite support for Koptsev, statements of this nature from officials of such high ranking in the machinery of the state are reflective of popular xenophobic sentiment in the Russian Federation.

Another incident of ethnic violence came in January 2005, when in the Novosibirsk Oblast town of Iskitim armed men expelled a settlement of 400 Roma, claiming that if the Roma would not leave voluntarily then they would

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have drugs or weapons planted on the Roma to frame them. Local media reportedly praised the men for “finally putting an end to inter-ethnic conflict” (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2005: 5: 8). Later in January, arsonists burned down five occupied Roma houses and two more in April. In blog posts on the website of a local newspaper, residents praised the inhabitants of Iskitim for ridding themselves of “drug dealers” and called for Roma to be forcibly addicted to heroin so they could not reproduce (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2005: 5: 15). Later that same year, someone threw a Molotov cocktail through the window of a Roma house, causing third-degree burns to an 8-year-old girl (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2005: 5: 45). The anti-Roma arsonists were not prosecuted by the Russian state authorities, presumably due at least in part to the popular support their actions enjoyed.

These events are but two of hundreds of cases of low-level ethnic violence that has gone mostly unnoticed by Western publics but not by international organizations. Indeed, the United Nations special rapporteur for racism Doudou Diène visited Russia in 2006 to investigate and found that, while there was no state policy of racial discrimination, “Russian society is facing an alarming trend of racism and xenophobia, the most striking manifestations of which are the increasing number of racially motivated crimes and attacks” (United Nations, 2007: 2). At the same time, there is significant variation in how skinheads attack ethnic minorities. Such events are not just acts of ethnic violence, but *particular* acts—or forms—of ethnic violence. Is there a way to compare events of this nature to each other? How can we understand these events theoretically? Why are there different forms of ethnic violence in the Russian Federation? What can they tell us about the future of that troubled country?

Such questions are important both from an empirical and theoretical point of view. Empirically, Russian President Vladimir Putin has been accused of constructing a neo-authoritarian (or even fascist) regime, yet it has been one that so far has managed to operate without widely noted political violence. Because of their seemingly random nature, individual incidences of ethnic violence or “hate crime” (Arnold, 2015a) have not been connected to broader social discourse, although such connections are indeed present. Indeed, “since the start of the 2000s, the state-controlled mass media have disseminated the idea of the cultural or civilizational predetermination of a ‘special path’ for Russia with particular fervor” (Verkhovsky and Pain, 2012: 56). Notions of civilizational exceptionalism and inter-ethnic relations have also played out on Russian television and in the media, which is not as orchestrated by the regime as many observers believe (Hutchings and Tolz, 2015). Enhancing our understanding of why there is so much social anger in Russia which the regime can exploit (in, for instance, the annexation of Crimea) is a worthy enterprise. Such questions offer insights into why the “Weimar Russia” scenario (a term first used by Russian journalist Aleksei Yanov in 1995; see also Brubaker, 1996; Luks, 2008; Umland, 2012) manifested itself not in the economically disastrous 1990s but the relatively prosperous early years of the new millennium.

Similarly, understanding hate crime or ethnic conflict in Russia is itself a worthy enterprise. The ultra-right in Russia have become a focus of attention (Arnold, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Foxall, 2012) in recent times and especially in advance of the 2018 World Cup. Some of these ultra-right activists have participated as volunteers in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine (Arnold, 2014a). As global events like the Olympics and the World Cup are staged in less stable countries outside of the traditional West, the activities and opinions of extremist groups will be a subject of intense interest. As a chance to glimpse into the psychology and rationales of people inside such hate groups, these questions are important for those concerned with the prevention of ethnic and racial violence throughout the globe.

At the same time and somewhat paradoxically, the main hope for change in the case of Russia also seems to come from the right. The protests which filled Moscow's streets as well as those of numerous other Russian cities saw an alliance of liberals and nationalists, personified in the form of Alexei Navalny (Arnold, 2014c; Hutchings and Tolz, 2015: 185–91). At the time of writing—and despite Putin's best efforts to commandeer the nationalist movement with foreign policy adventurism—some nationalists remain fervently opposed to the Kremlin as not sufficiently radical. Some thinkers on the Russian far right hold out hopes of Russia becoming the “White World's Future” (Arnold and Romanova, 2013), reflecting the structure of Russian society that has served to keep whole communities intact and ethnically homogenous (Arnold, 2015a). The emergence of an oppositional and extremist right-wing movement should be concerning to anyone interested in Russian politics today.

Moreover, these questions also offer insight into theoretical debates in political science. The case of Russian neo-Nazi violence is interesting precisely because it offers insights into why political-ethnic violence takes more or less extreme forms and, concomitantly, the process of violence escalation. Past explanations of political-ethnic violence have regarded the phenomenon as an outcome of structural conditions (see Tilly, 2003). Yet in a situation where perpetrators are almost completely free to choose how they attack ethnic others, why do they choose particular forms instead of others? What are the conditions under which violence escalates? Comparing forms of violence within the same conflict offers us insights into the violence-generating process by holding many conditions relevant to violence constant. Indeed, work that compares civil/ethnic wars against one another “cannot answer questions regarding why violence varies temporally and spatially *within* a conflict, and therefore cannot be used to examine many aspects of conflict dynamics. Such aspects are better studied within the context of single-case microstudies of violence” (Eck, 2009: 386). The case of Russian neo-Nazi violence constitutes such a single-case microstudy of ethnic violence. Uncovering why neo-Nazis use different forms of violence promises insights into the process of escalation in political and ethnic violence.

Also, using a low-level but persistent ethnic conflict, like Russian neo-Nazi groups' targeting of ethnic minorities, holds the prospect of making another

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contribution to theory on ethnic violence. Hitherto scholars have tried to explain why violence occurred in particular situations, ignoring the form it took as unimportant. Indeed, “one of the most interesting yet infrequently asked questions about nationalist violence is why it assumes the forms it does” (Beissinger, 2002: 306). The relatively low level of violence in Russia offers a chance to answer just this question, which promises insights into larger cases. After all, if the processes that lead to minor incidences of violence are the same as those that lead to the major incidences, then those interested in explaining ethnic violence have an immediate interest in explaining just those processes. As Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (1996) argued in his seminal work on the Holocaust, understanding *how* often offers insights into *why*. Explaining how ethnic and political violence takes different forms has implications for the larger question of why ethnic violence occurs at all.

This chapter outlines the nature of what must be explained and presents a typology of the forms of ethnic violence. The next section provides data on racist skinhead violence in the Russian Federation, showing that it reached its apogee between 2008 and 2009, although it remains a significant problem at the time of writing. The scale of Russian racist violence in the first decade of the millennium meant Russia was the most dangerous country for ethnic and racial minorities in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Section 1.2 then presents a typology of forms of ethnic violence with historical examples and applies the typology to Russian violence. Section 1.3 provides the template for the rest of the book.

1.1 Racist violence in the Russian Federation

In 2007, Russia was home to half the world’s population of skinheads—an estimated total of 50,000 (Shnirel’man, 2007: 28 cf. Tarasov). The Russian word for “skinhead,” *britogolovye* (literally, shaven-headed), is used to describe violent extremist youth on the far right, but the Cyrillicized version of the English word “skinhead” is more common in the Russian media. Originally used to denote a cultural style which originated in 1950s London associated with ethnic minorities, the term today has both racist and non-racist skinhead associations (for example, the organization Skinheads against Racial Prejudice (SHARP)). This is true in Russia as well, where anti-fascist groups will sometimes adopt the cultural styles of the skinhead movement. Unless otherwise indicated, however, the term “skinhead” in this book refers to solely racist skinheads. At other times, the book refers to racist skinheads as “neo-Nazis,” due primarily to the association of the term in Russia. Chapter 2 gives more background on Russian skinheads, but for the moment it will suffice to focus on their actions.

Between 2001 and 2009 skinheads in Russia used violence on an almost daily basis against those who are ethnically and racially different. Table 1.1 shows the number of skinhead attacks on members of ethnic minorities in 2001–9, which illustrates the scale of the problem. It should be said that these

numbers are almost certainly conservative estimates as the government keeps no publicly available statistics on skinhead violence. The Diène report discussed above was not the only document to note this. Nikolai Butkevich, head of the Union of Councils of Former Soviet Jewry (UCSJ), complained in 2008 that “the government refuses to implement a comprehensive and transparent system for monitoring hate crimes” (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2008: 8: 15 for more details). In the absence of official data, therefore, Table 1.1 shows the monitoring of skinhead ethnic violence in the first decade of the new millennium.

The data came from the publication *Bigotry Monitor* posted online by the Washington-based organization UCSJ. UCSJ monitors the human rights situation in Eurasia and started monitoring racist crimes in the Russian Federation when it became a notable issue. *Bigotry Monitor* began publication in 2000—a testament in itself to the beginning of the increase in hate crimes. The publication came to an end in 2010, when skinhead violence had passed its peak, due to the departure of its editor Nikolai Butkevich. There are other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Russia that monitor violence, primarily the Sova Center for Information and Analysis (Arnold, 2010b: the word *sova* means “owl” in Russian). Sova has become an authority on ethnic violence in Russia, but its statistical reports lacked the narrative detail provided in the *Bigotry Monitor*—data that was important for this project. Further, both organizations utilized reports from the national and regional press to record racist violence—as seen in the high correlation between Sova and *Bigotry Monitor* databases found by Professor Mikhail Alexseev. While presumably not so comprehensive as a state recording system, NGOs in Russia provide the best available data on the extent of skinhead violence in that country.

The data show that skinhead violence against ethnic minorities peaked in 2008 and started to decline in 2009. Data from Sova confirms that the decline lasted beyond 2009 and in 2014 there were 21 murders motivated by ethnic hatred. In any case, 2010 marked the year in which Russian skinheads started a war on state offices, including the February murder of federal judge Eduard Chuvashov for his role in sentencing a teenage skinhead gang, the White Wolves.³ With Chuvashov’s murder, the state began more rigorous enforcement of its laws against skinheads, meaning that the most intensive period of skinhead violence was captured by the data used in this project.

Table 1.1 Incidents of skinhead violence by year, 2001–9

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
N (attacks)	37	117	75	96	132	128	140	149	91
Cumulative	37	154	229	325	457	585	625	874	965

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There is good reason to believe that the monitoring which is available seriously underestimates the scale of violence. First, many people are afraid to go to the police after incidents of ethnic violence as they do not wish to make their situation worse. The police may sometimes be indifferent to the plight of a member of an ethnic minority (or worse, try to extort bribes from them as well). Specific examples are difficult to include for reasons of confidentiality, but this does include people known to the author. Second, the monitoring that does go on includes only cases which make it into regional newspapers and so is an incomplete system. If people are afraid to go to the police as they do not wish to antagonize attackers, then this logic is only going to be more pronounced regarding newspapers. Third, because of the difficulties of coding violence as specifically ethnic violence it may go unreported as such: unless a murder had witnesses who heard racist language being used in a scuffle, it is difficult to separate racist murders from regular murders. Yet even with these caveats in mind, the sheer scale of reported violence is still considerable. Chapter 2 outlines further coding decisions made when analyzing skinhead violence.

This section has presented racist skinhead violence against ethnic and racial targets in the Russian Federation between 2001 and 2009. Table 1.1 demonstrates that there were 965 recorded instances in which solely racist skinhead perpetrators used violence against specifically ethnic targets in the eight years after the millennium. This does not include instances of violence against non-ethnic targets or acts which stopped short of violence. In line with the fact that Russia had more racist skinheads than other parts of the world is the comparatively huge number of violent attacks they committed in this time. Understanding this violence also promises to shed light on the social undercurrents that propel the Russian regime today. Yet in order to understand it better, we need some analytical framework. The next section presents just such a framework and breaks ethnic violence down into the distinct forms of symbolic violence, lynching, pogrom, and massacre.

1.2 A typology of the forms of ethnic violence

Skinhead violence in the Russian Federation could be described simply as “ethnic violence” and left as an aggregate phenomenon, as has been done with instances of ethnic violence in the past. Yet doing so would miss the commonalities and connections between particular acts of skinhead violence—the systematic nature of violent conflict apparent in the different forms. Aside from what this can tell us about the individual case of Russia, moreover, disaggregating the phenomenon of “ethnic violence” into discrete forms gives us a framework for the analysis of other instances of “ethnic violence.” This section offers a typology of the forms of ethnic violence which Chapter 2 applies to the data of skinhead violence.

One of the properties of violence is that it has a communicative function. The communicative function of violence pronounces itself in messages that

may be thought of as commands. Violence “commands” rather than “requests” because violence treats others as objects, not subjects. One does not ask an object to do anything, one commands or instructs it. Although it may be an inefficient way to communicate, there are nevertheless communicative functions to violence. This insight has been shared by scholars in the past who also think violence is at some level communicative. For instance, Charles Tilly (2003: 6) thinks that types of violence are comparable and he sees violence as “a kind of conversation, however brutal or one-sided that conversation might be.” Donald Horowitz (2001: 1) says the idea of communication can be seen in the claim of Countess Waldeck that “Rumania says it with murder.” Another example of this communicative function also lies behind the reasoning of Lilja and Hultman (2011) that violence against co-ethnics can send a message to others not to defect. Ethnic violence is thus a blunt tool which conveys messages. This said, only negative “messages” could be communicated in this manner: violence can hardly be used with other intent. These messages are cower, behave, leave, and perish!

The content of these messages is fairly intuitive. The first message of “cower!” restates awareness of the boundary between groups. Violence reminds people that they are different and inferior. The second message (“behave!”) punishes for an alleged infraction of norms. Violence is a kind of warning not to repeat an action. The third message of “leave!” indicates an unwillingness of the majority group to co-exist with the other group any longer. In this case violence aims to make a certain group feel so unwelcome that they are forced to flee. Finally, the message of “perish!” represents an utter rejection of the right of the other group even to exist. All these hypothesized messages are not just literal commands but also expressions of the underlying conception of ethnic relations, telling ethnic others their position in the status hierarchy.

These four messages of ethnic violence map neatly onto existing typological distinctions between forms of political and ethnic violence (Horowitz, 2001: 17–28; Mann, 2005: 12; Levin, 2009; Tilly, 2003: 14–16). Two characteristics of violence emerge as especially important from the work of these scholars. First is the legal division between whether violence focuses on people or on property. This intuitive distinction is also enshrined in law: the penalties for violating the property of another are usually less severe than violations against another’s person because we recognize the lesser nature of damage to another’s property than their person. Whether practitioners of ethnic violence harm the property or the very person of ethnic others has important implications for the command conveyed.

The second characteristic is somewhat more abstract and concerns the scale of the violence used. Again, there is an intuitive sense in which violence that systematically aims to destroy a group or their property is different from that which is more sporadic. The difference might be between Hitler’s “factories of death” and particular killings of individual Jews in the Weimar Republic, for instance. The “messages” sent by these acts were very different. Similarly,

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Perry (in Levin, 2009: 5) makes the distinction between hate crimes that occur at differing scales in the “pyramid of hate.” There is some sense in which it ought to be the case that more widespread violence is more emotive. Therefore, this division between a few and many targets constitutes the second characteristic of ethnic violence.

When these two axes are juxtaposed to one another we get four distinct types of ethnic violence. Each of the “messages” listed above corresponds to one of these types of violence. These types and their meanings are displayed in Figure 1.1.

This typology thus gives four distinct forms of violence, labelled as Symbolic violence, Lynching, Pogrom, and Massacre. These forms of violence send qualitatively different “messages” to the target group and so express the social hierarchy of such groups. Once again, this is intuitive—some acts of violence are more severe than others and those against whom violence is most severe are less esteemed than others. Symbolic violence is the least severe, followed by lynching, pogrom, and massacre. Although this is not the distinction that motivates the typology, it is one to which the text later refers. In line with advice (George and Bennett, 2004: 238) concerning typographical analysis, this schema is both mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Chapter 2 demonstrates the utility of this typology in greater detail. The typology is also generalizable to other cases of ethnic violence, as is illustrated in Chapter 4.

One might object that this typology leaves some instances of ethnic violence rather hard to place. For example, it is not immediately obvious where rape would fall. Rape, or sexual degradation of others, is frequent in ethnic conflict⁴ and as a meaningful action *should* have a place on the typology. Cohen (2013) found that rape is primarily used to recruit men into the ranks of ethnic insurgents, suggesting an additional layer of meaning and communicative function to violence in the form of rape. However, rape is a rather hard case to place due to its associations with femininity, reproduction, and the survival of the ethnic group. Admitting this additional valence of rape

Scale of violence/number of targets			
		Few	Many
Targets	Property	<i>Cower!</i> Symbolic Violence	<i>Leave!</i> Riots/Pogrom
	People	<i>Behave!</i> Lynching	<i>Perish!</i> Massacre

Figure 1.1 Axes and varieties of ethnic violence

crimes, I nonetheless classify rape as a crime against the body and so it constitutes lynching or massacre, depending on its scale.

Similarly, one may object that mass violent action—for example, a pogrom—will contain some damage to people as well. How does one decide in which category they belong? The Nazi pogrom of *Kristallnacht* (“the night of broken glass”) caused millions of marks worth of damage to Jewish property and the deaths of 100 Jews. Where does it belong on the typology, therefore—as a pogrom or a massacre? While I admit the validity of this criticism that fitting events in the typology is necessarily a matter for interpretation, there are two responses. First, all typologies and coding schema contain contestable coding rules, but this is not a reason to abandon the insights they offer. Second, the concept of primary target, or what appears to be the main concentration of a violent attack, is determinative. If a report of violence states that perpetrators set out to attack property but struck people who tried to defend it, then we can assume that property was the target and this should be coded as pogrom. Furthermore, where the scale of property damage is out of all proportion to physical damage—when there is simply more damage to property than to people—then we can infer the primary target being property.

This is well illustrated by the case mentioned above of *Kristallnacht*. On the night of November 9–10, 1938, there was a series of violent events throughout the German Reich. The violence damaged 7,000 shops, 200 synagogues, and 29 department stores. Set against this background, “only” 91 people—according to official statistics—were killed. Nazi stormtroopers also shattered the front windows of some 7,500 Jewish shops, giving the name “the night of broken glass” to these events (Kershaw, 2000a). Without minimizing the human suffering or making moral claims about the worth of a human life, the evidence does suggest that the main target and central focus of violence was to find specifically Jewish *property* and destroy or damage it, thus sending the message of “*leave!*” If the Nazis had wished to kill Jews, then with the resources mobilized they would almost certainly have been more successful. The comparatively low death tally on this ignoble night (especially compared to later events) is the reason we remember it as a pogrom and not a massacre.

Below I elaborate upon each of the forms of violence using well-known examples from history. First, a good example of symbolic violence is the case of paramilitary murals in Northern Ireland. According to Rolston (2004: 118), Loyalist murals glorifying the achievements of William of Orange and depicting Protestants in mythological form first appeared about 100 years ago, at roughly the beginning of the agitation for Home Rule. Because murals were a reaction to the agitation of the Irish for equality, the implication is that the artists consciously designed these murals to tell Catholics to “cower,” to intimidate the Catholic minority and remind them of their inferior position in Ulster society. Even outside observers know the real intent of the celebrations of Orange culture. The leader of the Black Caucus in the United States, Donald Payne, reacted to attempts to portray celebrations of Orange culture

as defenses of human rights by saying “these [Orange] marches have been *symbols of intimidation and oppression*” (Rolston, 2004: 121, my emphasis). Symbolic violence had at its heart the intention to intimidate, commanding its targets to “cower!”

Lynching is a term that refers to violence aimed at a few people and is most commonly associated with the American Deep South. Despite the associations the term has today, however, it did not originally refer solely to murder. As a phenomenon, it dated back at least as far as the American Revolution and “referred to a variety of forms of punishment, including beating, whipping, tar and feathering, and, only occasionally, killing” (Markovitz, 2004: xxiii). All of these were punishments aimed at the body, at the actual person, rather than at their property. Therefore, any attack on a person’s body could be described as “lynching.” Further, perpetrators of lynching usually focused only on a few targets, normally just one individual held responsible for an alleged violation of the norms of Southern society, often accusations of murder or rape (Markovitz, 2004: 8–11; Tolnay and Beck, 1995: 46–50). Ignobly, even conversations between black men and white women could provoke offense in the Deep South which sometimes resulted in violence. The message sent by lynching was that violators from a particular group were subject to vigilante justice and so had better “behave!”

Pogroms concentrate on the property of an ethnic minority and attack many targets. These violent actions command the target group to “leave!” the area. While some physical injuries may occur to people in the wake of a pogrom, I assume that these are the result of property owners trying to defend their livelihoods and not the perpetrators’ main target. There are many targets because all the property of the target group is potentially at risk, no logic being apparent to the selection of targets save the fact that it belongs to the minority group. Pogroms demonstrate the unwillingness of the majority group to tolerate the presence of the minority any longer and so mark attempts to force them out, to make them “leave!”

This proposed meaning to a pogrom gains support from the etymological origin of the word. Originally a Russian term, the stem of the term *нёрпём* (pogrom) is the verb *гремять* (*gremiit*) and the noun *грём* (*grom*), which mean “to thunder” and “thunder,” respectively.⁵ This implies a general sense of intimidation that causes one to flee, thunder and lightning being inescapable by any other means. Pogroms recreate the sense of intimidation felt in such a circumstance and so send a message to the ethnic targets that they should leave. In this sense, then, the implied meaning to “pogroms” is consistent with the origins of the word.

There are historical examples of where pogrom-style violence actually forced people to leave the community: this section has already discussed the infamous Nazi *Kristallnacht* pogrom which caused 80,000 Jews to flee Germany from 1938 until the beginning of the war (Kershaw, 2000a: 141–5). The pogrom clearly sent the message of *leave!* to the Jews in Germany. Other examples come from Donald Horowitz (2001: 434–6), who gives evidence that

rioters in Bombay destroyed the homes of Bangladeshis once and then another time after they were rebuilt. He also provides slogans displayed during riots such as in Assam in 1960, “Bongal Kheda!” (“Drive out the Bengalis”) or in Tuva in 1989, “Russians get out ... a war has begun.” Whatever the objectives of the rioters were, the message they sent to their targets was that they should leave and possibly never return. Decolonization witnessed many such examples of forced separation as people left their homes for neighboring “homeland” states, not least the population transfer between India and Pakistan upon independence. Clearly, therefore, the message of a pogrom is meant to instruct an ethnic group to leave the country and present evidence of the dangers of not complying.

The final space on the typology is filled by “massacre.” Massacres are both concerned with killing individual people and many people, as all members of the target group are liable to be persecuted. In some ways this form of violence both contains a message and is that message, as the judgment is enforced upon a group. However, if we are to attribute a message to this form of violence in order to be consistent with the other types, then the only command it could contain would be “*perish!*” Examples are thankfully rare and the most well known are those of a large scale, such as the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide of 1915, or the Rwanda genocide of 1994. However, there is a surprising reluctance on the part of scholars to recognize the commonalities between psychological processes that motivate massacres and genocide. As an “ideal” type (although the word is hardly suited to situations of ethnic violence), massacres involve literal death for all. But in small-scale cases of violence such as are the focus of this project, mass beatings that stop short of death for all but in which either some deaths occur or there is credible evidence of intending death for all are also considered to be massacres. Massacres instruct their targets to “*perish!*”

At this point, one may object that these examples commit the sin of conflating situations of ethnic *conflict* and ethnic *violence*. Genocide, after all, is not a single act but one composed of a series of massacres. This objection has merit but one may respond by suggesting that this may be a point where the two phenomena come together—when perpetrators launch a systematic genocide, it takes on many characteristics of individual-level massacres. If coding an event such as the Rwanda genocide, this typology would count each individual massacre as its own event, it being their number and frequency which made up the larger concept of “genocide.”

All four forms of violence are present in skinhead violence in the Russian Federation between 2001 and 2009. To be sure, they are not equally present, but nonetheless they are all in existence in Russia—there are cases of symbolic violence, lynching, pogrom, and massacre happening temporally and geographically close to each other, if not simultaneously. Chapter 2 provides evidence that the ethnicity of the victim provides the strongest correlation in determining which form of violence skinheads use. This section foreshadows that argument by providing examples of each form of violence against each specific ethnic group.

There were many cases of symbolic violence in the period under study. In particular, the desecration of Jewish graveyards, synagogues, and community centers stand out in the database as exemplars of symbolic violence. In Bogordorsk, Nizhnii Novgorod region, racists attacked a Jewish cemetery on the night of September 9, 2009, leaving swastikas and stars of David on the gravestones (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2009: 9: 35). Similarly, on October 8, 2007 skinheads desecrated 64 gravestones in a Jewish cemetery in Krasnoyarsk (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2007: 7: 39). There appeared to be no logic as to why skinheads attacked the gravestones other than that they were in a Jewish sanctified area. Cemeteries belonging to other ethno-religious groups, like the Muslims and the Roma, have also faced vandalism and desecration in the past. Finally, on November 9, 2007, in Izhevsk (Republic of Udmurtiya) a youth resembling a skinhead was caught on camera defacing a Jewish community center (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2007: 7: 44). Sadly, there are many instances of symbolic violence in the time period under study.

Sadder still, however, is the frequency of the lynching form of violence. First, on May 11, 2004 skinheads held a march through a region of southern Moscow and when they had finished three of them beat a 37-year-old Korean man to death (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2004: 4: 11). The youths were apparently intoxicated and decided to attack the man because of his “Eastern appearance.” Such an event constituted a lynching according to the typology developed above. Another example comes in the form of an attack by three youths on a Zimbabwean man at a bus stop in the “Southern capital” of Rostov-na-Donu (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2006: 6: 22). The victim was clearly identified as a target on account of his skin color. Nonetheless, this example of ethnic violence still constitutes a case of lynching due to the nature of the attack: three people beating an individual on account of his social deviance.

The Russian data also contained many examples of pogrom. With their loose adherence to Nazi ideology, skinheads the world over celebrate the Fuhrer’s birthday on April 20 and in Russia it is frequent for them to do so through attacking those who are ethnically different. The situation became so bad that some of the universities with foreign students began advising them not to leave the *obshchezhitiiye* (dormitory) in the middle of April. One example of pogrom-style violence comes from 2001 when neo-Nazi skinheads decided to celebrate Hitler’s birthday by breaking stalls at the Yasenevo local market, a place where a number of Caucasians work. According to the report, 150 skinheads descended upon the market, beat traders from the Caucasus, and overturned their market stalls, in effect commanding the traders to leave Moscow. Russian President Vladimir Putin condemned the violence as “absolutely unacceptable” in a multi-ethnic country like Russia (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2001: 1: 3). This example constitutes a pogrom despite the occurrence of several beatings and even a death because it is clear that the skinheads could have inflicted more damage if they had wished to do so. That there were not more deaths only underlines the extent to which violence was limited in its aims to focus on property.

Finally, massacre was thankfully a rarer occurrence than other forms of ethnic violence and many of the incidents designated as massacres could also be described as mass assaults. On November 19, 2002 in Krasnoyarsk, for example, 15 skinheads armed with metal pipes attacked seven North Koreans who were working on a nearby construction site. The skinheads began by pelting the workers' caravans with rocks and waited outside for the Koreans to appear. When they did so, the skinheads attacked and caused one of the workers to go to the hospital with head injuries. The subsequent police investigation arrested four of the youths and found literature calling for ethnic cleansing in their possession. When questioned, the skinheads said they had thought the workers to be Kyrgyz. Similarly, in the village of Yablonovsky (Krasnodar Krai) on the following night, a group of men attacked seven Roma-owned homes, severely beating 12 Roma (see *Bigotry Monitor*, 2002: 2: 47). In interviews, the Roma said that they were afraid to go to the local hospital and instead stayed away. Both examples constitute cases of massacre according to the typology.

This section has elaborated a typology of forms of ethnic violence. Starting from the intuitively plausible observation that different kinds of violence send qualitatively different messages to victims, it developed a parsimonious typology which is capable of covering all conceivable acts of violence. The typology has two axes: whether violence focuses upon property or people and the number of targets involved in violence, whether few or many. The juxtaposition of these two dyads generates four types of violence: symbolic violence, lynching, pogrom, and massacre. The section substantiated these forms with historical examples and then showed the utility of the typology in analyzing skinhead ethnic violence in the Russian Federation from 2001 to 2009. Subsequent chapters provide a greater statistical accounting of this violence. The following section outlines how the rest of the book will develop.

1.3 Layout of the book

This chapter has outlined the severity of Russian neo-Nazi violence in 2001–9 and developed a typology of different forms of ethnic violence. Russian neo-Nazi violence was so frequent in the first decade of the new millennium that Russia was one of the deadliest countries for minorities in the world. Given current speculation that Russia is devolving into a more lasting form of authoritarian government and the ability of such inquiries to shed light on this devolution, the work contained in this book will be an invaluable resource for those seeking to understand Russia's current trajectory as well as its antecedents. Indeed, internal developments in the country may also explain some of Russia's actions on the international stage. This book will be of interest to those concerned with understanding and hopefully containing ethnic violence.

Chapter 2 recounts historical and ethnographic work and draws on secondary sources to narrate the development of Russia's neo-Nazi movement.

While organized skinhead groups from the West first entered Russia in the 1990s, there were many ideological currents and holdovers from the Soviet Union which destined them to do well. The remainder of the chapter analyzes the data on skinhead violence according to the typology. I find that the clearest pattern in the data is between the identity of the victim group and the particular form of violence used against them. Four groups illustrate this: most symbolic violence is directed against Jews, Africans are more frequently targeted with lynching, Caucasians face a disproportionate number of pogroms, and when violence breaks out against the Roma, it frequently takes the form of massacre.

Chapter 3 then generates a theory linking ethnic group identity and particular forms of violence: the theory of ethnic vigilantism. In short, the stereotypical association of an ethnic group with a particular kind of crime causes vigilantes to “punish” them proportionally to the magnitude of the crime. I evaluate this theory and rival explanations drawn from the literature against the case of skinhead violence in the Russian Federation using a content analysis of Russia’s neo-Nazi media. Although many were not official organizations, the skinhead gangs still maintained websites and used internet platforms to communicate with each other. This material provides an excellent opportunity for the researcher to get inside the skinhead worldview. The chapter supplements the content analysis by detailing interviews with skinheads. Although extremists are not the easiest or safest people to contact, the insights from these interviews provide us with the opportunity to see the mechanism of violence rationalization at work as it is happening.

Chapter 4 asks whether the theory of ethnic vigilantism can explain ethnic violence in cases other than Russian neo-Nazi violence. Specifically, it focuses on violence against the Meskhetian Turks in Russia’s south from the “neo-Cossacks” (Derlugian and Cisko, 1997). In Krasnodar Krai the Meskhetians were subject to such fierce violence and discrimination between 1989 and 2004 that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees began evacuating them *en masse* to the United States in 2004. In Rostov, however, despite similar-sized communities of Meskhetian Turks as well as Cossacks, there was no notable violence and minimal discrimination. The chapter evaluates explanations about the form of violence through a content analysis of regional media and using supplementary data from human rights reports and focus groups. Once again, the theory of ethnic vigilantism provides the best explanation. The chapter ends by using insights from the theory to generate predictions about the remaining 75,000 Meskhetian Turks in Russia.

Chapter 5 continues the analysis by exploring mobilizational dynamics within one particular form of violence: pogrom. Returning to right-wing Russian national identity politics, it looks at incidences of mass mobilization in numerous towns throughout the Russian Federation, asking how likely such racial violence is to spread to the mass of ordinary Russians. To what extent, in other words, do insights from pogroms develop the theory of ethnic vigilantism? The chapter looks first at pogroms and their non-occurrence in

five cases in Russia: Lyublino, 2005; Kondopoga, 2006; Khotkovo, 2010; Manezhnaya Square 2010; and Biryulevo in 2013. The chapter asks whether the preconditions for the theory are present in Russian mass consciousness, analyzing mass attitudes to other ethnicities and conducting a content analysis of a small sample of mainstream media. The chapter concludes that such images have penetrated so deeply that Russia could swing even further to the right in its mainstream politics.

Chapter 6 concludes and recaps on what we have learned about the nature of ethnic violence from the study at hand. After briefly summarizing the main findings of each chapter, the conclusion addresses how the theory of ethnic vigilantism advances what the academic and policy communities know about ethnic violence in general and Russia in particular. It suggests further cases for the theory which may increase our confidence in the general applicability of the violence-producing mechanism found in this book. In this way, the book promises to inform analyses of future cases of ethnic violence outside of the Russian Federation.

Notes

- 1 I express my thanks to the staff of the Bolshaya Bronnaya synagogue, who graciously allowed me to watch the footage.
- 2 See “Alexander Koptsev convicted for attacking of the Moscow synagogue died in colony—lawyer” on *Interfax* (May 29, 2008) available at www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=4732 (accessed February 19, 2015).
- 3 See “Judge in neo-Nazi trials shot dead in Moscow” in *The Guardian* (April 12, 2010), available at www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/12/russian-judge-shot-dead-moscow (accessed February 25, 2015).
- 4 The claim that “approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide” is made in the UN document found here: www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/situation.shtml. The President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, said that in the 14 years of civil war in her country, over half of the country’s women aged 18–30 had been victims of rape.
- 5 See any Russian–English dictionary for verification. The one I used was Romanov, A. (1975), p. 78. I thank Professor Ted Hopf for suggesting this to me.

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