

CHAPTER 6

A Growing Militarism?

Changing Meanings of Russian Patriotism in 2011–2017

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Abstract

Since the early 2000s, the Kremlin has sought to make patriotism an overarching national ideology for Russia. In recent years, the state-promoted patriotism has become increasingly militaristic and the external threats have been more and more emphasized in the Kremlin's discourse. At the same time, some streams of literature suggest that the majority of Russians have actually embraced the state's vision of militaristic patriotism and the regime-promoted idea of strong political leadership over democratic rule. Drawing on previous research and fresh and nationally representative survey data, we examine how public perceptions of patriotism relate to state-promoted patriotism and the preference

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for political authoritarian leadership in contemporary Russia. Our results indicate that, while the Kremlin-promoted militaristic component of patriotism has slightly increased among the Russian public since the political events of 2014, it still differs from the state-imposed patriotism in many ways and remains more diverse across Russian society. Furthermore, the notion of patriotism in mass opinion has remained by and large the same despite the ‘rallying around the flag’ after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Keywords: patriotism, militarism, Russia, authoritarianism, World Values Survey

Introduction

Large-scale social and economic changes affect national identity politics. In the 1990s, the Russian society faced severe social and economic hardships that left deep scars within society (see e.g. Kainu et al., 2017). Russia’s first president, Yeltsin, also ended up having troubles in securing the agreement of the State Duma on the new national symbols and was eventually even forced to adopt them by presidential decree (Goode, 2018, p. 263). Thus, it is no wonder that many Russians consider the 1990s ‘the most unpatriotic time in Russian history’ (ibid.). However, the Kremlin started to take a more active role in moulding patriotic sentiments after the inauguration of Putin in the early 2000s. State programmes for patriotic upbringing, pro-Kremlin youth movements such as *Naši* and *Walking Together (Idušie vmeste)* and paramilitary youth organizations akin to *Ūnarmiâ* (Youth Army) exemplify the militaristic turn in the Kremlin’s national identity politics.¹ After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 the defensive component and securitization took an even more central place in the official state discourse.

At the same time, however, the recent studies on Russian patriotism (Goode, 2018; Lassila, Chapter 5, this volume) suggest that the vernacular understandings of patriotism differ largely from the official discourse imposed by the Kremlin. For instance, in spite of the Kremlin’s attempts to underline the geopolitical and national security aspects of patriotism in recent years (Sanina, 2017,

pp. 45–48), Goode (2018, p. 269) suggests that many Russians actually perceive patriotism primarily as a love for their local living area, whereas Russia as a whole is felt ‘too abstract and distant to be meaningful’. Hence, a degree to which the official discourse does really penetrate ‘everyday patriotism’ or even a variety of vernacular understandings remains an open question. As Goode observes,

When examining closely the ways that ordinary Russians explain and illustrate their understandings of patriotism and what it means to be a patriot, one finds a curious mix of individualism and conformity that goes well beyond opaque public opinion polling. ... Having situated themselves as relatively isolated or marginalized in relation to fellow citizens, Russians instead embrace an individualist, localized, and apolitical patriotism that takes shape through daily practices related to loving the motherland, daily life, and sacrificing public choice. (Goode, 2016, p. 423)

Given these discrepancies in official (state-imposed) and unofficial (citizen perceptions) understandings of patriotism, our study aims to examine to what extent the Russian public has adopted the Kremlin-presented ideas on militarized patriotism and how the mass perceptions of patriotism have changed over time in Russia. In order to answer this question, we analyse representative survey data from the three waves – 2006, 2011 and 2017 – of the World Values Survey (henceforth WVS) for the Russian Federation. Our choice of nationally representative data opens up new opportunities to investigate patriotic sentiments of Russians across time. These data also allow us to compare the respondents’ attitudes in 2011, when the For Fair Elections movement erupted, to the post-Crimean attitudes in 2017. Both events mark dramatic changes in the Russian political regime and patriotic sentiments in Russia. The first point in time is the biggest anti-establishment protest movement in post-Soviet Russia (BBC, 2011), whereas the annexation of Crimea led to a vigorous rallying around the flag and a rising support for political institutions (Cogita.ru, 2016; Sirotkina and Zavadskaya, 2020). In particular, the public’s seemingly unanimous approval of the annexation of the Crimean peninsula has led some Russia observers to conclude that the

majority of Russians actually prefer strong authoritarian leadership over democratic rule, and the regime allegedly corresponds to these genuine preferences with strong undemocratic leadership (see e.g. Gessen, 2017; Snegovaya, 2020).

Along with the main turning points in socio-economic development in Russia, the domestic political regime has undergone dramatic changes as well. From the attempts to consolidate governability and to uphold minimal electoral democracy in the early 2000s, the regime has evolved into competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2010) after 2007 and full-blown hegemonic autocracy after 2012 (Gel'man, 2014). At the state level, consolidation of authoritarianism went hand in hand with the militarization of the state-sponsored patriotism. In this process, state-sponsored programmes for patriotic upbringing, pro-Kremlin paramilitary organizations and similar initiatives serve and justify the state's interests.

Yet, it remains an open question whether patriotic sentiments intersect with preferences for stronger or a more autocratic rule among the Russian population. Therefore, in this chapter, we examine:

- 1) how the military component relates to the notion of patriotism and whether its weight has increased over time;
- 2) how preferences for autocratic political system intermingle with patriotism: are the supporters of authoritarian rule actually more patriotic? Furthermore, are Russian patriots more autocratic in their policy preferences in general than their less patriotic countrymen?

In this chapter we argue that, although the connection between public preferences for authoritarian rule and stronger patriotic attitudes has strengthened slightly since 'the rally around the flag' in 2014, it remains very ephemeral. Additionally, in comparison with the state's official discourse, Russian patriotism mostly relates to the notions of pride, dignity and self-esteem, rather than willingness to fight for Russia (see e.g. Ponarin and Komin, 2018). Lastly, perceived threats and fear reinforce the exclusive form of

patriotism and strengthen the link with a preference for authoritarian rule in Russia. We begin with the theoretical underpinnings of the notions of patriotism and preferences for authoritarian rule, and then we proceed with data description and methodology, followed by an empirical analysis of the survey data and interpretation of the findings.

*Russian patriotism: the state discourse vs.
popular views*

Although the studies on patriotism are extensive, there is no agreement on the common approach and definition of the concept. Even the early studies suggested that patriotism has both militaristic and civic connotations. For example, Curti (1946) distinguished between ‘military’ and ‘civic’ forms of patriotism, whereas Morray (1959) contrasted a patriotism of imitation and obedience with a patriotism of innovation and disobedience. Adorno et al. (1950, p. 107), in turn, differentiated between ‘pseudo’ patriotism (i.e. blind attachment and uncritical conformity) and ‘genuine’ patriotism (love of country and attachment to national values based on critical understanding). Hence, the word ‘patriotism’ seems to be associated with both militarized (e.g. ‘military’, ‘protection’, ‘war’) and civic (e.g. ‘love’, ‘respect’, ‘pride’) themes (Schatz, Staub and Lavine, 1999, p. 154).

However, since a detailed overview of patriotism studies is obviously beyond the scope of this chapter, we will not offer extensive literature review of patriotism here. Instead, we will focus on investigating how militarized Russian patriotism actually is according to our data, and whether Russian patriots prefer authoritarian rule over democracy. As discussed earlier, the previous research maintains that, while the state-imposed patriotism has become increasingly militarized, the everyday understandings of patriotism are somewhat more peaceful in Russia. Hence, our main focus in this chapter is to map out to what extent the Kremlin-declared goals translate into public perceptions of patriotism among Russians. In other words, we seek to investigate

whether there has been a similar growth in militarized attitudes in public perceptions of patriotism as has been observed with Russian political elite.

These state-sponsored programmes play a declarative role and prioritize further state actions and policies. However, it remains an open question how and to what extent these declared goals may translate into an 'everyday' vision of patriotism. Apart from the state initiatives for promoting patriotism mentioned earlier, there have been some major events bolstering patriotic ideas and sentiments in recent years in Russia. For example, in 2014 Russia hosted the Sochi Olympics with an impressive opening ceremony. The Olympic host's performance was also highly successful: altogether it garnered 13 gold medals, which was a record in those games (Gessen, 2017, p. 427). The games had important meaning for the Russian public: according to the independent Russian pollster Levada-Center (Levada-Center, 2017, p. 9), the majority of respondents mentioned the Sochi Olympics as the most important event of 2014.²

Nevertheless, the main event that led to an unprecedented patriotic rallying was the annexation of the Crimean peninsula that followed the Sochi Olympics, and the successive eruption of the military conflict in eastern Ukraine only strengthened the sense of external threat and 'the common enemy'. The Olympics and Crimean events had noteworthy consequences for Russian national identity politics. The Sochi doping scandal strengthened the shift towards more isolationist policies, and the annexation of Crimea caused a massive 'rally-around-the-flag' effect that led to a landslide reaction, changes in Russian domestic policies towards the opposition and clashes within the opposition itself (Sirotkina and Zavadskaya, 2020). Although the Kremlin's grip on the public sphere had already tightened after the 2011–2012 electoral protests, the seizure of the peninsula, the subsequent war in eastern Ukraine and confrontation with the West established an even more important demarcation point in the Russian domestic politics.

The 2000s are described as a decade of 'softer' and competitive authoritarianism, which took a more repressive form after the

protests of 2011–2012, and especially after the Crimean events in 2014 (Rogov et al., 2016, p. 5). The post-Crimean period – the period after the year 2014 – has been labelled in the previous research ‘a consolidation of authoritarianism’ in Russia (ibid.). The change in the Kremlin’s politics after the 2011–2013 protests, in turn, has been described as an ‘ideological’, ‘cultural’ or ‘conservative’ turn (Engström, 2014; Laine and Saarelainen, 2017; Robinson, 2017). Indeed, the doping scandals of the Sochi Olympics, the war in Ukraine and the related countersanctions may have increased the public perception that Russia is being discriminated against in the international arena. For example, according to the Levada-Center, in 2016 almost one third of Russians thought that the World Anti-Doping Agency’s doping accusations were ‘groundless and arouse hostile attitude towards Russia’ and over 50% perceived that the Western sanctions against Russia were ‘targeted against broad strata of Russian population’³ (Levada-Center, 2017, pp. 143, 217).

Given the aforementioned trajectories in Russian domestic and foreign policies, it has become almost commonplace to share the view that a new patriotic upsurge stems or overlaps with an authoritarian and militaristic turn, not only among the Russian elites but among the Russian population as well (Gudkov, Dubin and Levada, 2007; Rose, Mishler and Munro, 2011). In other words, after 2014 official discourse seemed finally to converge with the mass vision. The latter implies that Russian citizens share congruent political values with Russian elites, and the elites respond to this public demand for more authoritarian rule.

Nonetheless, even if authoritarian practices and the largely instrumental use of patriotic rhetoric by the Kremlin and state media do not bring much doubt, it remains questionable to what extent the Russian populace accepts the imposed rhetoric and official patriotic narratives. Previous research has shown that elite and mass preferences and moods may diverge or change with significant time lags (Sokolov et al., 2018). As some scholars claim, in the early 1990s ‘a substantial fraction within the elite was hopeful to get somehow integrated into the club of privileged

nations led by the West, which further constrained the spread of anti-Western rhetoric' (Ponarin and Komin, 2018, p. 6), but later Russian elites experienced disillusionment and embraced a more isolationist rhetoric. On the other hand, before the consolidation of contemporary authoritarianism in Russia, the elites had limited capacities to tilt public opinion towards a more conservative discourse. After 2014, the regime acquired more capacity and opportunities to impose official narratives. However, did Russian patriotism accordingly take a more militaristic turn? And does this imply stronger support for authoritarian rule?

It is necessary to note here that the connection between support for authoritarian rule and patriotism is far from straightforward. Nationalism or patriotism may have authoritarian notions and practices implying more ideas of cultural supremacy (imperial nationalism) or even prioritization based on ethnic grounds (Anderson, 2006). On the other hand, civic nationalism is usually believed to be more compatible with democratic rule and the idea of civil rights and freedoms (Gellner, 1983). Official discourse as well as public attitudes keep oscillating between an 'imperial' or 'ethnic' version of nationalism (Ponarin and Komin, 2018) and an 'everyday patriotism' and statist vision of patriotism (Goode, 2016). For instance, 'real' or authentic patriotism implies such practices as choosing, living and improving one's place of residence, while participating in public actions and performances is seen by Russian citizens as 'inauthentic' and imposed patriotism. As Goode claims, Russian patriotism is detached from democratic or authoritarian orientations, as it instead touches upon tolerance and the acceptance of motherland 'as it is' and implies deeply apolitical and private linkages between a person and homeland (*ibid.*, pp. 443–444).

Unfortunately, our data do not allow us to explore the dynamics of the elites' preferences. On the other hand, there is already robust evidence that the predominant version of the patriotic narrative that is transmitted through the mass media and official addresses of the president and other state officials to the public is highly militarized, anti-Western, and defensive (Kolstø and Blakksrud, 2017). The state-promoted initiatives that actively engage

with children and adolescents include for example Ûnarmiâ (a patriotic youth movement including summer camps and regular training for schoolgirls and -boys), history textbooks for schools with a special emphasis on the Great Patriotic War, the Immortal Regiment (*bessmertnyj polk*) marches,⁴ and presidential grants and other public funds for a variety of patriotic organizations. Since the militaristic and authoritarian turn in the elites' vision of patriotism is visible and well documented, it is crucial to understand how it echoes in the popular vision by means of representative countrywide surveys.

As discussed earlier, the notion of patriotism has both militarized and civic connotations. Since patriotism still includes both aspects of national identity – inclusive (pride for one's motherland) and exclusive (superiority of one's nation) – we use a broader range of question items that potentially capture the concept. Therefore, we believe that four question items reflect a large variety of connotations that builds up the notion of a more multidimensional concept of patriotism. These items are as follows (for details, see the codebook (Table 3 and Table 4) in the Appendix):

- Being proud of one's country (national pride).
- Willingness to fight for one's country (henceforth: willingness to fight).
- Trust in the army.
- Preference for a strong political leader (authoritarianism).

National pride is the most common indicator of nationalism or patriotism and is widely used in comparative survey studies (see e.g. Fabrykant and Magun, 2019). Willingness to fight and trust in the army serve as proxies for the state-promoted militarization we aim to grasp empirically. We assume that these two indicators could each become more closely connected with national pride. By tracing the degree of connectedness between militarization and national pride we are able to draw conclusions on possible convergence between the state-imposed discourse and popular vision. Lastly, preference for a strong leader shows the dynamics of preference for authoritarian rule in Russia. The latter operates as an additional check on whether the patriotic turn of the 2014

paved the way to higher support, not only for Putin but for the authoritarian regime in general.

It must be noted that there are alternative indicators of self-identification with the motherland or patriotism. First, anti-immigrant sentiments may catch the exclusive form of national identity. However, this notion is rarely associated with the term patriotism in the Russia context. Second, feeling of closeness to a person's hometown, village or city (*malaâ rodina*)⁵ demonstrates alternative and not necessarily militarized forms of patriotism (Goode, 2016). However, we deliberately drop this dimension as it is outside the main research focus. Finally, anti-Western attitudes capture a more imperialistic vision of patriotism and nationalism. Unfortunately, these question items are not available in the WVS surveys. However, these might have served as additional indicators of negative self-identification following the logic 'us against them'.

It is also important to bear in mind that the political regime heavily affects the way respondents evaluate democracy. Previous studies have demonstrated that questioning whether respondents support autocracy as a form of political system cannot produce reliable results as the term autocracy contains strong negative connotations. Evidence from the cross-national surveys confirm this observation, as the popular endorsement of democracy is a dominating form of government in spite of the actual level of democracy of the respondent's home country (Rose, Mishler and Munro, 2011, pp. 23–26). At the same time, when asked about democracy in Western countries, respondents may also share varied views and understandings of the term (Ferrin and Kriesi, 2016). The problem aggravates when it comes to comparing autocracies with established democracies as there is little equivalence in the meaning of democracy. For instance, in most authoritarian countries support for democracy (whose meaning is unspecified in the survey question) could be even higher than in real democracies (Kirsch and Welzel, 2019), although it should not be interpreted that respondents share the same notion of democracy. This is specifically relevant to societies that have never experienced

electoral democracy as respondents may either idealize democracy or endow the notion of democracy with additional meanings: apart from civil rights, freedoms and political competition, this can be complemented by equality, economic prosperity and even connotations that have nothing in common with a general understanding of democracy (*ibid.*).

In this study, we stick to the question on political leadership as a proxy measure of a stronger preference for authoritarianism. This approach has been widely used in analysing democratic transitions in post-Communist Europe and keep track of how democratic values spread and take roots in these societies (e.g. Haerpfer, 2003). We prefer to resort to the concept of strong political leadership that taps into individual proclivities to support political authoritarian regime. Most people who genuinely support dictatorial rule, including dictators themselves, often refer to their regime as democratic. In this sense, support for strong political leadership coupled with other questions such as preferences for the rule by experts, clergy or the military helps avoiding ambiguous interpretations.

As discussed above, the elite and vernacular understandings of patriotism may differ from each other substantially. In order to keep track on how popular attitudes have evolved, we compiled the aggregate time-series data of the four indicators of our interest – national pride, willingness to fight, trust in army, and preference for a strong leader. Figure 5 demonstrates that, while the feeling of national pride has increased significantly since the 1990s, the willingness to defend Russia in the event of war has been in decline since the early 1990s, with its lowest value at 53% in 2011. However, the share had increased by more than 10% by 2017, thereby having returned to its initial values of the ‘unpatriotic 1990s’. Trust in the army remained quite stable since the 1990s until its increase from 63% to 75% in 2017.

At the same time, the preference for a strong leadership had been going down in the 1990s, while it went up to almost half of the respondents in 2006, then peaked at 67% in 2011. However, against expectations, it declined by nearly 20% between 2011 and

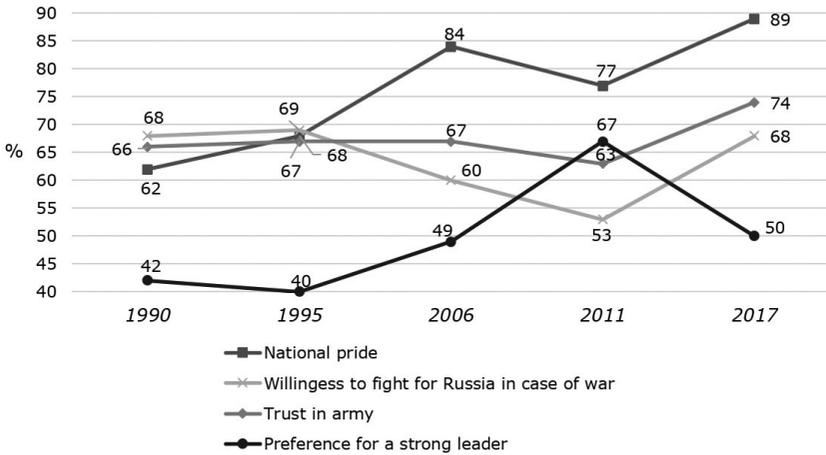


Figure 5: National pride, willingness to fight, trust in the army and preference for strong leader: dynamics from 1990 to 2017.

Source: WVS time-series (1981–2020) data (Inglehart et al., 2020).
Figure by the authors.

Note: National pride, preference for a strong leader and trust in army are collapsed categories of the two most positive answers in a four-point scale. The trend line for willingness to fight for country is depicted as ‘Yes’ answers to a dichotomous question item (‘Yes/No’).

2017. The latter observation contradicts the view on historical preferences for strong authoritarian leadership among the Russian population that change little in time, embodied in such political slogans as ‘strong president, strong Russia.’⁶ To sum up, national pride has dramatically increased and reached almost 90% of respondents, while militarization indicators have somewhat increased after 2011, but not as sharply as national pride and the overall share is lower. We would rather say that military attitudes went back to the values observed in the 1990s, while national pride, indeed, has grown quite noticeably. Authoritarian attitudes, vice versa, are not in sync with other indicators and have even declined.

However, descriptive statistics do not allow us to see how these indicators are connected with patriotism. This is why we go beyond these statistics by exploring how strongly military connotations overlap with patriotism and by building regression models to see whether the patriotic turn facilitated the consolidation of authoritarianism from the public opinion perspective.

The data and methodology

The data for our analyses are drawn from the last three waves of the WVS in the years 2006, 2011 and 2017. Our data allow us to not only see how patriotism changed after the annexation of Crimea but to explore the dynamics of patriotic attitudes before the massive anti-regime protests against the unfair elections in December 2011–March 2012. Accordingly, the year 2006 is the last year that the Russian political regime qualified for electoral democracy and made a transition to fully fledged authoritarian rule.

We begin our investigation by conducting a principal component analysis (PCA) for each WVS wave to find out how the different indicators of patriotism relate to each other. More precisely, we seek to explore the degree to which military connotations overlap with national pride. PCA is a conventional statistical tool that aims at reducing the number of variables that strongly correlate with each other. In our case, many question items capture the underlying notion of patriotism. Drawing on previous studies (e.g. Fabrykant and Magun, 2019), we included three variables that strongly relate to the sense of patriotism: willingness to fight for Russia, trust in the army and national pride. Willingness to defend the motherland and trust in the armed forces are used to capture militaristic attitudes, while national pride is used to measure self-esteem and dignity aspects of patriotism.

Figure 6 demonstrates the relative weight of each question in the underlying notion of patriotism. This relative weight is reflected through PCA loadings that are mapped on the graph. Loadings vary from +1 to -1, where positive values stand for a positive relation between the variable and an overall phenomenon (here: patriotism), while negative values indicate a negative relation. Large absolute values of PCA loadings indicate that a variable contributes a lot to the underlying phenomenon and describes it better. In our case, this method allows us to see how militarized Russian patriotism is according to our data.

As can be seen from the figure below (Figure 6), there is a clear connection between national pride and trust in the army, whereas willingness to fight loads strongly in the opposite direction. This indicates that national pride and trust in army represent different

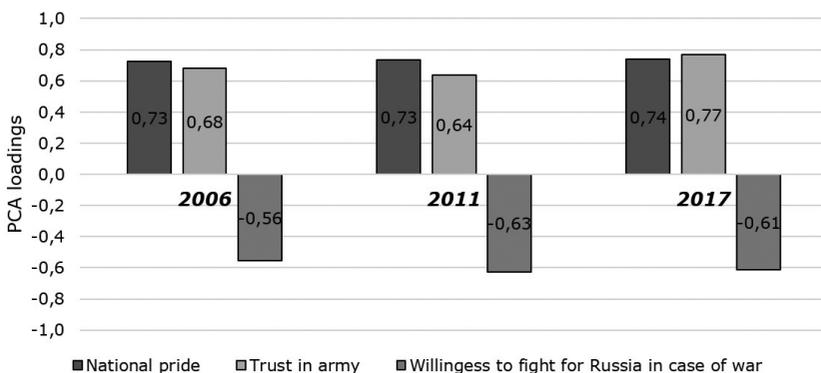


Figure 6: PCA (principal component analysis) loadings in the index of patriotism across survey waves (years 2006, 2011 and 2017).

Source: WVS time-series (1981–2020) data (Inglehart et al., 2020).
Figure by the authors.

dimensions of patriotism than willingness to defend and sacrifice for the motherland. Trust in army and national pride both contribute to Russian patriotism. The relationship between these variables has also remained quite stable during the 10 years covered in our analysis – although the role of trust in the army proved a bit stronger in 2017 (0.77 in 2017 against 0.64 in 2011). Essentially, military connotations are mostly related to trust in the army and pride, rather than desire to fight. The latter even negatively correlates with patriotism. The Crimean annexation does not seem to have affected the rise of military moods within the population. Against our expectation, there is no militaristic turn in popular views from the perspective of patriotism.

Between Patriotism and Authoritarianism: Do Russian Patriots Support Authoritarian Rule?

Drawing on the literature, we formulate the following set of hypotheses or propositions for further empirical tests. First, we expect Russian patriotism to be consistent with the notions of pride (positive self-identification or loving motherland ‘as it is’), while willingness to fight for Russia and trust in the army to capture military notions of patriotism (i.e. ‘activating and performing’, according to Goode, 2016). We also expect that the relative weight

of each component would change before and after the annexation of Crimea so the military component would gain more importance. Second, we hypothesize that the connection between authoritarianism and patriotism strengthened after 2014. More broadly speaking, those who prefer strong political leadership, other things being equal, tend to be more patriotic. Third, 'the rallying around the flag' is connected to the common understanding of external threat and necessity to at least temporarily unite against an enemy. We expect higher levels of anxiety and threat perceptions to be positively associated with higher patriotism.

Following the results obtained from the PCA, we build up a weighted index of patriotism. As we mentioned earlier, survey data provide less flexibility than interviews or ethnographic observation in exploring how people define patriotism themselves as surveys restrict the choice of questions and their phrasing. Nevertheless, if one includes a maximum number of items that might potentially refer to the notion of patriotism, one still manages to identify the phenomenon. The index consists of three survey items: willingness to fight for respondent's country (dichotomous variable), trust in the army (four-item scale) and pride for respondent's country (four-item scale). All variables are reversed and rescaled before running a principal component analysis (see Appendix for the exact coding of the variables). The latter allows us to reduce the number of highly correlated variables and, at the same time, to explore the extent to which these three components reflect the notion of patriotism shared by respondents. A resulting index is a continuous variable, so we use simple ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression with year-dummies.⁷

Our main independent variable, preference for authoritarianism, is operationalized through a question item about political system and whether having a strong leader is very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad (for details, see 'coding of variables' in the Appendix). This measure has been conventionally used to approximate popular preferences for a more autocratic rule in the context of democratic transitions in Eastern Europe (Haerpfer, 2003).

We also take into account an overall interest in politics that varies from 'not at all interested' to 'very interested'. Previous research literature has also indicated that professional occupation, gender,

age and domicile are, to varying extents, related to levels of patriotism. For instance, rich and urban families are less willing to send their children into military service than the poorer families of the countryside, older generations were socialized to extensive Soviet patriotism, and public servants are expected to promote patriotic values in today's Russia (Emcov and Lokšin, 2006; Sanina, 2017; Svyntarenko, 2016). Thus, we use gender, age, income, size of domicile and employment sector as control variables in our model. Since there is some evidence that more educated Russians are more willing to leave the country (The Insider, 2016), in theory we could have controlled for education as well. Unfortunately, the measures of education level differ from one WVS wave to another, so we had to leave them out from the analysis. Finally, in order to estimate how the annexation of Crimea, countersanctions, the Sochi doping scandal and the subsequent 'rallying around the flag' have affected the formation of threat perceptions and enemy images, we examine whether respondents had concerns regarding a war involving Russia, civil war or terrorist attacks. These variables allow us to control the degree of anxiety and perceived threat and their changes in time.

Figure 6 shows how the index of patriotism co-varied with authoritarianism in 2011 and 2017, that is, before and after the Crimea annexation. The figure offers a visualization of the relationship between patriotism and preference for authoritarian political system (measured here as preference for strong leader). To recap, patriotism is operationalized here as summated scales of national pride, willingness to fight and trust in the army, and figures in the graph represent factor scores that are drawn from the PCA we conducted earlier on these variables.

From Figure 7 below, we can see that the correlation between preferences for a stronger leader is stronger in 2017 than it was before, as the darkest regression line for the year 2017 is a bit more steeply inclined upwards than the light grey (for 2006) and semi-grey (for 2011) regression lines. Yet, it is important to note that the change is quite modest: for instance, the difference between the correlation coefficient (R^2) in 2011 and 2017 is only 0.02 percentage points. This indicates that respondents who preferred

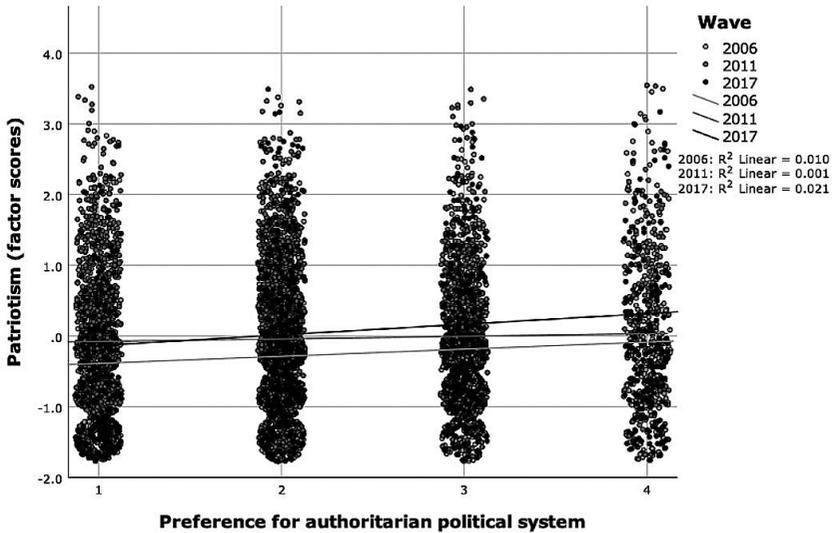


Figure 7: Association between authoritarianism and patriotism: 2006, 2011 and 2017.

Preference for authoritarian political system is operationalized by the question ‘What do you think of the following political system as a way of governing Russia: having a strong leader whose power is not limited by parliament or elections?’, where 1=Very bad, 2=Fairly bad, 3=Fairly good, 4=Very good.

Source: WVS time-series (1981–2020) data (Inglehart et al., 2020).
Figure by the authors.

authoritarian rule after the annexation of Crimea might have been ‘politically activated’. However, it would be an exaggeration to claim that there has been a steep ‘authoritarian turn’ in patriotic public sentiments in Russia after 2014. Instead, our findings suggest quite the opposite – autocrats and patriots are not ultimately the same groups of respondents. In other words, preference for a stronger political leader does not go hand in hand with patriotism.

Next, we present the results of the regression analysis where we estimate the effects of preferences for authoritarianism (‘strong political leader is a good way for governing Russia’), time and perceived threats on patriotism. Table 2 contains unstandardized b-coefficients for each predictor, with standard errors in brackets. Asterisks indicate the precision of our estimates, in other

Table 2: Correlates of patriotism: results of OLS regression analysis.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
VARIABLES	Patriotism	Patriotism	Patriotism	Patriotism
<i>WVS year</i>				
2011			-0.03*** (0.01)	0.07* (0.04)
2017	0.11*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.07** (0.03)
<i>Social background</i>				
Female respondent	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)		
Age	0.07*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)		
Income	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)		
Town size 50,000–500,000	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.01)		
Town size 500,000 or more	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)		
Public sector employee	0.04*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)		
Private or non-profit organization employee	-0.00 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)		
<i>Political attitudes</i>				
Preference for authoritarianism	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.03*** (0.01)
Political interest	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)
<i>Threat perceptions</i>				
War involving Russia	0.02** (0.01)			
Terrorist attack	0.03*** (0.01)			

Table 2. (Continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
VARIABLES	Patriotism	Patriotism	Patriotism	Patriotism
Civil war	-0.02* (0.01)			
2011#Strong leadership				-0.03*** (0.01)
2017#Strong leadership				0.00 (0.01)
N	2,425	2,504	4,220	4,220
R ²	0.095	0.079	0.034	0.036

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: WVS time-series (1981–2020) data (Inglehart et al., 2020). Table by the authors.

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. The following two variables are used as reference categories and therefore they are not shown in the table: the 2006 WVS wave and towns with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants.

words whether our findings are statistically significant and can be generalized beyond our sample. Each column presents one of the four model specifications that contain different sets of independent variables to provide additional robustness checks to our estimates. Models 1 and 2 show estimates for the waves of 2011 and 2017 since the question on perceived threats (war involving Russia, civil war, and terrorist attack) were not asked in 2006. These models include all control variables such as gender, age, income, employment type and settlement size. Models 3 and 4 include all the three waves. Model 4 also includes estimates of the interaction terms between time and preference for strong political leader (authoritarianism).

As expected, preferences for strong political leader positively correlate with patriotism: one unit increase on authoritarianism leads to a 0.02-unit increase in patriotism (varies from zero to one). The effect is robust but small, which means that more pro-authoritarian respondents indeed tend to share views that are

more patriotic. This being said, there is still a lot of unexplained variance left. Timing also plays a crucial role in the dynamics of patriotism: the average level of patriotism is expectedly significantly higher in 2017 than in 2011, by 0.11–0.12 points. At the same time, overall patriotism was dramatically lower in 2011 at the times of the post-election protests and the eruption of the For Fair Elections movement. Model 4 shows that interaction between the time of survey and preference for authoritarianism is significant. More authoritarian respondents in 2011 were far less patriotic than in 2006 (please note that a reference category is not shown in Table 2). This is an important finding as we observe that ‘autocrats’ and ‘patriots’ are not the same people. In 2011, these groups differed from each other in a dramatic way. The latter implies that in 2011–2012 even those who shared views that were more authoritarian did not share a patriotic vision – and perhaps supported the political regime.

More politically engaged respondents tend to be more patriotic. Therefore, politicization comes along with patriotism, although, again, the effect is small. The more respondents worry about a war involving Russia and terrorist attacks, the more they tend to share patriotic values. Those who worry about a possible civil war, on the other hand, tend to score lower on patriotism. This suggests that patriotism speaks to the defensive self-perceptions of Russians when they position themselves on the international arena. In other words, more patriotic Russians are more prone to think that the possible hostility comes from the *outside* (external threat), whereas less patriotic respondents are more worried about the internal social issues that might cause unrest *within Russian society* and ultimately even lead to a civil war (internal threat). Thus, fear of external threats and strong support for patriotism seem to go hand in hand.

As for the social background control variables, our estimates suggest that public sector employees are on average more patriotic than those employed in the private and non-commercial sectors. This result is somewhat intuitive, as public sector employees are expected to promote the state version of patriotic values (see e.g. Sanina, 2017; Lassila, Chapter 5, this volume). Urban dwellers and

younger respondents are on average less patriotic. Interestingly, income does not seem to affect levels of patriotism. Finally, female respondents are somewhat less patriotic.

There is a dramatic difference between the least and most 'authoritarian' respondents. This finding indicates that the rise of patriotism has occurred mostly due to the most authoritarian respondents, although it is not possible to say that this is a stable group of the population, since our data are not the panel. Nonetheless, at the same time, we observe the rise of patriotic moods among less authoritarian respondents as well. These results are important at least in three ways. First, a stronger connection between patriotism and authoritarianism emerged only after 2014, which indicates that the wider public has at least partially accepted the state's vision. Second, not only those who prefer authoritarian leadership but also Russians who prefer democratic rule are patriots. Third, a correlation between patriotism and support for authoritarianism exists, but it is not strong.

Conclusion

The mass demonstrations in 2011–2012 (the For Fair Elections movement) and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 are the two milestones in the transformation of the Russian regime and society that affected perceptions of patriotism among the elites and citizens. Accordingly, the Sochi Olympics doping scandal, the war in Ukraine and the successive international sanctions may have also increased the feeling of isolation and discrimination in the international arena among Russians. This may also partly explain the connection between patriotism and the fears of war involving Russia and terrorist attacks that we observed in our findings, as other countries are believed to have hostile attitudes in their relations with Russia.

The state's vision of being a patriot has moved from a more inclusive and civic-oriented (to be a good 'stand-up citizen') view towards a more militarized and exclusive one. Our study shows that, while people's vision has also transformed and shifted slightly closer to the state's vision, it still differs from the state-imposed

version of patriotism in certain ways and remains more diverse across society. The very notion of patriotism in the public opinion has remained largely the same regardless of the ‘rallying around the flag’ in 2014.

Our contribution to the existing research is threefold. First, our research shows that being a Russian patriot does not necessarily imply stronger authoritarian leanings. Accordingly, supporting strong political leadership does not necessarily mean being a patriot. Second, preferences for authoritarianism, other things being equal, remain a strong correlate of high patriotism. Third, fear of external threat is connected with stronger patriotic sentiments, while fear of civil war is negatively related to patriotism.

At the same time, it is important to note that our data and methods have significant limitations. For example, it is obvious that surveys do not perfectly capture all the undertones and nuances of patriotism. Fixed questionnaires do not allow one to explore the whole possible variety of vernacular meanings of patriotism. Surveys also tend to catch respondents’ normative views rather than everyday practices that manifest patriotism (e.g. wearing brown-and-black St. George ribbons [*georgievskaa lentočka*] or supporting domestic producers). These ‘practices’ are to be studied by means of ethnography.

There are also concerns that citizens respond reluctantly to politically sensitive questions, avoid them or falsify their preferences in social surveys, especially if they are carried out in non-democratic settings (Kuran, 1997; Rogov, 2017). Respondents’ unwillingness to answer or hide their true preferences with sensitive survey questions results in higher non-response rates or unreliable data. This fact implies that studying political support and patriotism by relying on surveys may produce questionable findings. Topics related to patriotism, military affairs or support for a regime are subject to self-censorship and may not be adequately reflected in public opinion owing to social desirability bias. The military power of the country, for instance, has also symbolic importance and it can be cited as an important factor in international relations, which may partly explain why the armed forces are one of the most trusted institutions in Russia (Gudkov,

2012). Additionally, it is harder to capture public opinion in the context of more repressive political regimes and especially in situations of high patriotic mobilization (Baum, 2002; Rogov, 2017).

On the other hand, attempts to assess the scale of preference falsification in Russia after the patriotic boom of 2014–2015 demonstrate that real support does not deviate much from the observed figures (Frye et al., 2017). Hence, even though the problems of social desirability and preference falsification are relevant concerns – especially with survey data on undemocratic countries – the fluctuation of patriotic indicators suggests that Russians do not severely hide their opinions when answering social surveys. Nonetheless, further analysis of the survey data and the possibility of distorted results are important issues for future research.

In spite of the above-discussed limitations, we still succeeded in tracing the degree of militarization of patriotic attitudes over time and found out that mass attitudes are somewhat more peaceful than the narrative transmitted by the Russian state. These findings are largely in line with Goode's (2016, 2018) idea on how patriotism 'from below' relies on the sense of self-identification with culture and pride, rather than willingness to fight and sacrifice. Indeed, while Russian patriotism does contain authoritarian connotations, the connection between authoritarianism and patriotism is far from straightforward. Not all patriots share an authoritarian vision of political system and not all who prefer a stronger hand share strong patriotic views. This, in turn, might indicate that the Kremlin-promoted narratives may have been successful in activating at least some groups of Russian society but not the overwhelming majority of Russians.

At the same time, we found that the most important component of patriotism is growing demand for dignity, self-esteem and pride, rather than willingness to fight. As the time-series data earlier in this chapter illustrated (Figure 5), the only patriotism indicator that has increased almost steadily since the 1990s is national pride. Meanwhile, other and more exclusive and militaristic forms of patriotism (willingness to fight for Russia, trust in army) have been more prone to fluctuate with the passage of time and political trends. Moreover, although the willingness to fight has increased

in the period 2011–2017, our findings suggest it is not connected to national pride or to another militaristic component of patriotism, that is, the trust in the armed forces (see Figure 6).

The Russian state has not fully succeeded in imposing its own vision of patriotism upon the citizens. Remarkably, this still holds true even after the massive rallying around the flag in 2014–2015. Even such dramatic events as the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation do not seem sufficient to significantly bolster the state version of identity politics among Russians. On the other hand, spreading the sense of threat and fear may strengthen exclusive aspects of patriotism. In the times of economic downturn and international sanctions in 2014–2016, Russians tended to blame external forces rather than the executive power (Frye et al., 2017; Sirotkina and Zavadskaya, 2020). If the state undertakes additional effort in this direction, this might reinforce, albeit temporarily, the image of the country under siege and thereby strengthen the connection between political support for autocracy and patriotism. Thus, the effects of rallying on overall militarization prove to be short-lived.

As the modernization theory posits, when people acquire more wealth and social and cultural capital, they begin to question the responsiveness and legitimacy of those in power (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010). Russia is one of the few high-capacity and economically developed authoritarian states whose political institutions are at odds with the overall development of economy and human capital. Even the sense of patriotism corresponds to more emancipative connotations of pride and self-expression, rather than militarization and self-sacrifice. This paradox is here to stay and is to be scrutinized in further research.

Notes

- ¹ The Kremlin-led programmes for patriotic upbringing and the ways the state defines patriotism have been examined recently in detail by Sanina (2017) and Goode (2018), while Lassila discusses changes in Russian identity politics and Alava offers a detailed overview of *Ûnarmiâ* in this volume. Thus, we will not discuss these subjects at length in this chapter.

- ² Against this proposition, concepts akin to *Homo Sovieticus* (Levada, 1999) advance the view of a long-term historical preferences for a strong authoritarian leadership that barely change over time (see also Gessen, 2017).
- ³ In practice, the Western sanctions were more targeted than Russian countersanctions. While the Western sanctions targeted specific individuals and the Russian state-controlled oil companies, the Russian countersanctions targeted not only specific Western individuals but also a large set of daily goods such as agricultural products (see e.g. Overland, 2015).
- ⁴ Ironically, the Immortal Regiment movement emerged in the city of Tomsk in early 2012 as a bottom-up initiative that afterwards merged with a countrywide state-sponsored annual event when participants marched onto the streets holding pictures of their family members who perished or participated in the Great Patriotic War (Nemtsev, 2019).
- ⁵ *Malaâ rodina* means 'little motherland', which often refers to a person's place of birth or current place of residence (see e.g. Goode, 2018, pp. 269, 277).
- ⁶ This was Vladimir Putin's election slogan in the 2018 presidential elections.
- ⁷ Regression analysis is a widely used statistical technique that allows one to estimate the effect of one variable on another. Under certain conditions, regression analysis makes the revelation of causal relations possible. Multivariate regression analysis allows the analysts to estimate causal effects of several variables at the same time (see e.g. Fox, 1997).

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Appendices

Table 3: Coding of variables. Source: WVS time-series (1981–2020) data (Inglehart et al., 2020).

Patriotism	<p>Weighted index built on factor scores of the following variables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to fight for Russia in case of war? • How proud you are of being Russian? • How much do you trust the Russian armed forces? <p>Index values vary between –1 and +1, where –1=lower sense of patriotism and +1=higher sense of patriotism)</p>
Preference for authoritarianism	<p>What do you think of the following political systems as a way of governing Russia: Having a strong leader whose power is not limited by parliament or elections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1=Very bad • 2=Fairly bad • 3=Fairly good • 4=Very good
<i>Year variable</i>	
WVS wave year	<p>WVS wave year for the Russian Federation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2006 (reference category) • 2011 • 2017

(Contd.)

Table 3. (Continued)

<i>Social background</i>	
Gender	0=Female, 1=Male
Age	Age of respondent
Income level	Logged income level
Town size	Whether the respondent lives in a town with a population of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50,000–500,000 • 500,000 or more
Professional field	Which of these branch of industries the respondent currently works in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/state-owned institutions (reference category) • Private or non-profit institutions
<i>Political attitudes</i>	
Interest in politics	How interested you are in politics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1=Not at all • 2=Not really • 3=More likely yes • 4=Very interested
Preference for authoritarianism	What do you think of the following political systems as a way of governing Russia: Having a strong leader whose power is not limited by parliament or elections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1=Very bad • 2=Fairly bad • 3=Fairly good • 4=Very good
<i>Threat perceptions</i>	
War involving Russia	How worried you are about war involving Russia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1=Not at all worried • 2=Not very worried • 3=Quite worried • 4=Very worried

Table 3. (Continued)

Terrorist attack	How worried you are about terrorist attacks? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1=Not at all worried • 2=Not very worried • 3=Quite worried • 4=Very worried
Civil war	How worried you are about civil war in Russia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1=Not at all worried • 2=Not very worried • 3=Quite worried • 4=Very worried

Table by the authors.

Table 4: Principal component analyses for patriotic indicators by WVS round.

<i>Patriotism variables</i>	WVS survey year		
	2006	2011	2017
National pride	0.73	0.73	0.74
Trust in army	0.68	0.64	0.77
Willingness to fight for Russia in case of war	-0.56	-0.63	-0.61
<i>Eigenvalues</i>	1.30	1.34	1.51
<i>Percentage of variance explained</i>	43.32	44.70	50.38

Source: WVS time-series (1981–2020) data (Inglehart et al., 2020).
 Table by the authors.