

Police Corruption and the Targeting of Central Asian Immigrants in Russia

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Abstract: *This research examines the correlation between police corruption and the targeting of Central Asian immigrants in contemporary Russian world. The lack of ethical protocols in the police department, followed by normalization of bribery allows for severe targeting of ethnic minorities that continuously migrate to big Russian cities from countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Diving into historical background, this piece explores the roots of predatory policing, government corruption and long-standing xenophobia. Specifically, it shines light on how the lack of independence between the state and the police force, combined with the lack of transparency of government' actions, and promotion of ethno-centric patriotism, results in Central Asian immigrants serving as scapegoats for societal problems in modern Russia.*

Keywords: Central Asian immigrants, police mistreatment, targeting, xenophobia, ethno-centricity, discrimination, corruption, bribery

According to an article published by the Central Asian Bureau of Analytical Reporting (CABAR) in 2021, Makhabat, a Kyrgystanian citizen and mother legally residing in Russia with her family, was detained at three a.m. and taken to the local police station for identity and document verification. After being told that her registration papers were forged, she was ordered to pay 6,000 rubles (US\$81) or risk being deported. Soon after this incident, Makhabat witnessed other Central Asian immigrants being approached at an underground station by a policeman, who shouted at them and fined them for not wearing a mask during the COVID-19 pandemic. After these experiences, Makhabat reported that she now is scared to go outside in the evening and gets nervous whenever she sees someone in a police uniform (CABAR, 2021).

Makhabat's story is not an exception but rather part of a

bigger picture of police mistreatment of ethnic minorities from Central Asia who now reside in Russia. In 2016, the Mayor of Moscow, Sergey Sobyenin, announced that “in previous years, more than half of all crimes in Moscow were committed by migrants,” singling out those from Kyrgyzstan and adding that they “do not sign official working contracts, do not pay taxes, and reside in instantized industrial zones” (Interfax, 2016). Such claims, however, are more speculative than factual; they reflect a kind of demagoguery that is used to excite xenophobia and make Central Asian immigrants easy targets for politicians and public alike. Widespread corruption and predatory tactics among the police only add to the problem, as these immigrants are also easy targets for bribery and harassment. Further exacerbating the problem is the widespread promotion of nationalism and ethnocentricity in contemporary Russia, which penetrate society at every level, from public policies to individual attitudes and behaviors (Gudkov et al., 2018). Promotion of ethnocentricity in this context specifically refers to encouragement of superiority of Russian culture and ethnicity

The Russian media has also played a central role in propagating negative portrayals of Central Asian immigrants. RIA news, one of the largest state-supporting media platforms in Russia, reported that, according to “official sources,” violent crimes committed by immigrants grew by 60% and murders by 20%, although the article did not specify when these increases occurred (Pesnya, 202013). Such ambiguity is a common feature of Russian media when reporting on crimes involving immigrants, which is intended to obscure specific details behind these incidents. This kind of propaganda allows for the normalization of discriminatory attitudes of police officials and other people in positions of authority towards Central Asians living in Russia today.

The reporting of statistics that are either vague or misleading, the lack of independence between the church, state and police, and high migration rates have resulted in systematic

discrimination against Central Asian immigrants in Russia, specifically in the capital cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The situation has been made worse by demagoguery and the promotion of an extreme form of patriotism that is defined by ethno-centric exclusivity. While the government's targeting of its Central Asian residents appears to sanction the unethical treatment of these individuals by the general public and the police, this unfair treatment also reflects a failure to restructure and decentralize the Russian police force. Ultimately, predatory policing of vulnerable individuals is the product of the long-standing normalization of corruption in a police force that suffers from low wages, low morale and lack of disciplinary action for abuses of power.

Historical Background

Normalization of Corruption in Post-Soviet Russia

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was followed by an uptick of corruption within the Russian government. Schulze et al. (2016) noted that, according to Corruption Perception Index (CPT), Russia ranked 136 out of 175 countries surveyed in 2014, with Denmark at number 1 as the least corrupt country (p.136). There was also an increase in discrimination against immigrants, especially those from Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, which had gained their independence as a result of the collapse. Although these systems did not all appear at once and were not direct results of one another, correlations between them have grown stronger in the post-Soviet era.

Granted, corruption in Russia was a problem even prior to the formation of the Soviet Union. Until 1715, corruption in the form of bribery by officials was perceived as a legal activity and was widely practiced, despite the judicial code implemented by Prince Ivan the Great (Krasnolutskiy, 2018, p. 148). During the Soviet era (1922-1991), corruption levels increased substantially due to the common idea cultivated by the Communist party

that “there are no social conditions for the emergence of corruption in our ‘socialist’ regime, since the system is based on the ideas of public property and ultimate equality” (Krasnolutskiy, 2018, p. 150). The fact that widespread corruption in the Soviet Union contradicted the prevailing ideology was never discussed publicly. Corruption in Russia continued unabated after the collapse of Soviet Union, especially as migrants flowed in from Central Asia, and the government failed in its attempts to decentralize the police department.

Flow of Immigrants from Central Asia (1991-2017)

Ever since gaining independence in 1991, most Central Asian countries have suffered from weak economies and high-levels of unemployment. As a result, people from these countries have been migrating to major Russian cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg for the last three decades in search of a better life. Between 2000 and 2007, a total of approximately 12 million migrants entered Russia, which represented over 8% of its total population at the time (Marat, 2009). According Kurylev et al. (2018), migration rates of Central Asians reached 1,942.372 people per year by 2017, which is almost 40 % higher than it was in 2000. This high immigration flow, combined with a difficult transitional period in Russian history from the Soviet era to today, created a number of legal problems for immigrants.

Difficulty of Obtaining Legal Documents

An increased flow of immigrants into Russian cities caused substantial financial problems for local government's, given that education and healthcare are highly developed and free. As a result, restrictions were placed on migrants, which ironically created an incentive for Russian authorities and migrants alike to engage in corrupt practices rather than comply with legal requirements that were nearly impossible to satisfy (Light, 2010, p. 286). In fact, Light (2010) considered the development of systematic racism against Central Asian immigrants to be the

direct result of the Soviet Union's collapse (p. 275). Light (2010) also pointed out that the granting of a 90-day "free stay" visa to Central Asian Immigrants coincided with the 140 days that it normally took for legal documents to be obtained for a CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States or ex-Soviet countries) citizen, which only added to the "incentive to substitute a bribe or simple non-compliance" (p 305). According to the article in CABAR (2021), Bekhruz Aslonov, a Central Asian immigrant who, at the time the article was written resided in Moscow, explained what it was like to live under this system:

We always try to pay our bills on time because we know where we live. But we don't always get our salary on time. Sometimes, our friends were detained in special reception centers for two months for no reason. Thereafter, their migration card was expired because we can stay in Russia for 90 days only. We have lawyer friends who tell us not to argue with law enforcement officers. (CABAR, 2021)

Marat (2009), writing for the journal *Silk Road*, reported on the correlation between migration and corruption in law enforcement. She noted that, in most cases, when migrants are faced with custom control officers while trying to enter or exit a Russian city, they are expected to pay a bribe. She also reported that "roughly 35-50% of migrants in Moscow and St. Petersburg are not paid for their work" and that in Yekaterinburg (one of the Russia's largest cities), 80% of migrants reported being underpaid at least once (Marat, 2009). Although the article was written in 2009, it reflects an ongoing problem of how officials in high positions use their power to take advantage of vulnerable populations.

The Development of Predatory Policing

To understand how predatory policing and targeting of Central Asian immigrants are correlated, we must examine the evolution of the police department and how its failure to enact major reforms after 1991 to increase decentralization and de-

mocratization, left the police force in Russia even more “centralized and less accountable to the public” (Gerber & Mendelson, 2008, p. 42). Beck and Chestyakova (2001) supported this claim, stating that the military used to function “as a tool of the Communist Party,” hence the relationship between police and political authorities remained remarkably close, despite efforts to privatize police departments (p. 124). In addition to the police department being closely aligned with the Russian government, they are also poorly equipped and managed, two factors that also contribute to predatory policing. Semukhina and Reynolds, (2013) in their book *Understanding the Modern Russian Police*, explored how low wages and high quotas for arrests and convictions established by the heads of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), contributed to “number cooking” and the targeting vulnerable persons, such as “homeless alcoholics” and “illegal immigrants,” as a means of improving performance indicators for MVD officers. The term “number cooking” in this context refers to the process of altering statistical data for MVD reports. This means that predatory policing stems from both “the political interests of elites in preserving their power and the individual material interests of the police themselves.” (Gerber & Mendelson, 2008, p. 42). Normalization of corruption in Russia is caused by the fact that individuals in higher positions consistently go unpunished for their corrupt behavior; hence, it is not surprising that the police force continues to demand bribes and express openly discriminatory attitudes.

Ever since the beginning of post-Soviet era, the general public has demonstrated high levels of distrust toward the police force. Even most law-abiding Russian citizens fear and avoid the police, even after becoming victims of crime (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2013, p. 15). Adding to this widespread corruption, nationalistic ideologies prevail in Russian society today. These beliefs are often passed down from high government officials to those in lower ranks, and finally, to the general public.

Promotion of Russian Identity

Putin and the Resurgence of Russian Nationalism

According to Terzyan (2019), who writes about xenophobia (negative preconceptions against people from other countries) in Russia and its' implications for Central Asian immigrants, the Russian government has adopted a more nationalistic approach since Vladimir Putin came to power in the early 2000s, which involves "Othering" cultural values that are considered foreign, including those of Western Europe and the United States (3). Compared to the Tsarist and Soviet eras, when leaders were trying to build an imperialist society that assumed a certain degree of multi-ethnicity, Putin's government has built a strong alliance with the Orthodox Church to promote extreme patriotism and cultural unity. As Blackburn (2021) explained, Russia is developing a "civilizationally distinct" cultural identity based largely on Slavic ethnicity and devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Terzyan (2019) noted that, since the end of the Second World War, Russia has continuously pronounced itself "anti-fascist" and made it a mission to prevent "the revival of fascism in Europe" (p. 8). However, he also alluded to the fact that the line between nationalism and fascism in Russia has become blurred in recent years and provided the example of a government youth movement called "Nashi" ("Ours"), which emerged in 2005 and presented itself as an independent anti-fascist movement, when it was, in fact, a state-run, anti-Western organization that adhered to the framework of the Russian Orthodox Church (Hemment 2015, as cited in Terzyan, 2019). Nashi is just one example of how Putin's nationalistic views are being promoted among the general public to such a degree that they have penetrated the minds of many ordinary Russian citizens. A nongovernment organization SOVA reported that between 2004 and 2007, there were 1,049 racially motivated attacks in Moscow and St. Petersburg alone (Khachaturian 2009, as cited by Terzyan, 2019).

Developing Xenophobia

The promotion of a distinct and narrow concept of Russian identity, combined with unclear boundaries between the interests of the church and state, has helped to create a system that allows for the proliferation of discriminatory attitudes against ethnic minorities in modern Russia. In 2018, 1600 people were asked what personally annoys them about individuals arriving from CIS countries: 41% of them answered “They are too cocky, behave as if they own the place, and do not observe the customs of our country / insolent, uncivilized and rude / want to play it according to their own rules” (Gudkov et. al., 2018, p. 33). Surprisingly, only 1% of those surveyed chose immigrants “speaking their own language/ not knowing Russian” as the most annoying factor, considering that in 2012, 87% of Russians said that knowledge of Russian language is mandatory for anyone to be considered a citizen of the country (Gudkov et. al., 2018, p. 33). These results demonstrate a lack of acceptance of cultural differences, as well as strict exclusivity of presumed Russian identity.

As noted by Terzyan (2019), the Russian nationalism promoted by Putin and supported by the Orthodox Church has resonated strongly with the Russian populace, which is perhaps unsurprising, considering that roughly 71% of them are affiliated with the church (Sawe, 2018). Terzyan (2019) also noted that in the recent past, Russian people used to parade the streets with slogans like “Russia for the Russians,” which shows how extreme nationalism is concealed as patriotism in the society. However, Gudkov et. al., (2019) contended that in recent years, ethnic nationalism “has almost disappeared” from the explicit public agenda, although the sentiment behind these slogans is still supported by the general public. The line between explicit xenophobia and underlying support of a narrowly-defined Russian identity remains unclear. Gudkov et. al., (2019) suggested that, in most cases, those Russians who support such slogans show greater expression of “ethnic isolationism” and

“migrantophobia” than those who object to them (p. 26). For example, when people were asked about perceived implications of the motto “Russia for Russians,” 31% answered: “Expulsion of some non-Russian groups [...] from the original Russian areas” in 2005; in 2018, only 22% gave the same answer, while the majority of respondents (47% and 50% respectively) thought that the meaning of “Russia for Russians” implied “State support of the Russian culture and national traditions” (Gudkov et. al., 2019, p. 26). These results reveal xenophobic attitudes in contemporary Russian society and show that, although anti-immigrant sentiment may not be as widespread today as in the early 2000s, a considerable portion of the Russian populace still associates such slogans with ethnic discrimination and national superiority.

In fact, open aggression towards Central Asian immigrants and people of other ethnic backgrounds is not uncommon in Russia today. Neo-Nazi skinhead gangs have organized attacks on people who they see as having non-Slavic appearances, such as darker skin and hair (Terzyan, 2019). SOVA reported that, in 2018, at least 57 individuals were attacked on the basis of their perceived ethnic identity, four of whom died (Yudina, 2019, as cited by Terzyan, 2019). Police have tended to dismiss these attacks as acts of “hooliganism,” while at the same time targeting minorities from Central Asia and elsewhere for registration documents (Terzyan, 2019). Such negligence of what clearly is ethnically-motivated abuse affects Russian society in direct and indirect ways, and makes the mistreatment of immigrants seem almost socially acceptable. The fact that discriminatory behaviors of the public and predatory policing remain unaddressed and unpunished allows for the systematic abuse of ethnic minorities. In addition, the government, who is supposed to be tasked with regulation of equality and well-being of its citizens, continues to spread negative, and often misleading, views of Central Asian immigrants.

Present

Portrayal of Central Asian Immigrants vs. Statistical Evidence

The historically-developed symbiosis between the Russian state, church, media and police has given rise to a uniformity in thinking and actions that results in a system where Central Asian immigrants often serve as scapegoats for societal problems, especially crime. The more recent promotion of an ethno-national Russian identity has resulted in an increase in negative portrayals of these immigrants, as well as other ethnic-minorities. The public disclaimer from Sergey Sobyenin mentioned previously is not the only case of extreme generalizations and mischaracterizations of Central Asian immigrants by political leaders. Even the face of opposition to Putin's regime, Alexey Navalny, has made similarly xenophobic proclamations, claiming that "more than a half of hard crimes in Moscow are committed by Central Asian newcomers" (VOA, 2013). He also promised to decrease migration to Russia by 70% upon the unlikely chance that he wins a presidential election (VOA, 2013). Although Navalny may have simply been appealing to discriminatory attitudes among Russian voters as a way to garner support, he too appears to have little concern for the truth when casting aspersion against Central Asian immigrants.

Despite the amount of contradictory information about crimes involving Central Asian immigrants, including press releases from law enforcement departments, a simple online search found that only about 3% of all crimes in Russia between 2003 and 2012 were committed by those from the Commonwealth of Independent States, which includes Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This data referenced an official MVD website; however, access to these archives is now marked as "unavailable." Similarly, an official "Portal of Federal Law Statistics" subsection titled "Social Portrait of Criminal Activity" showed that, in Moscow for 2013, roughly 17% of all crimes, including violent ones, were committed by residents of other countries or individuals without residency status, and only 100

% in 2021. Even crimes committed due to alcohol use were reported to have higher rates: 20% in 2021. Nevertheless, Navalny, in one of his public speeches in Mitino, a poorer region of Moscow, proclaimed that “I do not even need to know the statistics. I know that women are afraid to go outside at night because of the immigrants, and I also know people who are robbed on the streets by these immigrants too” (Grany.ru, 2013). Once again, this kind of demagoguery demonstrates that politicians, even those opposed to Putin, are willing to use Central Asian immigrants to appeal to the general public.

According to Abramov (2013) who writes for *Vedomosti*, a joint venture between the independent publishers of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Moscow Times*, politically reported data is very contradictory due to the fact that most of the crimes committed by immigrants do not go directly to court; “they are crimes related to legal registration and document forging, and therefore, can be easily used for loud proclamations.” (Abramov, 2013). Unfortunately, the mediators between political proclamations and the general public are social media and news platforms. The Russian government is known for its extreme control of the media and censoring online information, making it easy to filter specific information. Kiriya (2021) pointed to the 2019 Russian law on “fake news” that gives the government “unprecedented rights” to block any media content that is considered false or appears to insult authorities, especially the president.

Russian Media as a Government Agent

In March 2022, the *New York Times* announced the temporary removal of its journalists from Russia due to threatening new legislation that seeks to criminalize “independent” and “accurate” news reporting regarding the Russian attack on Ukraine (Grynbaum, 2022). Such legislation is illustrative of the extent to which the Kremlin is willing to go to control coverage of its actions and prevent the spread of awareness regarding the

truth about its war efforts. Similarly, on almost every level of Russian society, Central Asian immigrants are being portrayed as dangerous and undesirable through news and other media. Ironically, Valentina Kazakova, the head of the main Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation headquarters, recently commented that “the identity of an immigrant in Russia is actively criminalized,” blaming social media platforms that are financed from abroad, saying that some of the published stories have been made up to “promote the feelings of aversion towards immigrants in the souls of Russian people” (TACC, 2021). Here, Kazakova implies that Central Asian immigrants are the victims of outside influence, blaming Western countries for the internal social problems of Russia. Perhaps unsurprisingly, she failed to mention how this unfair targeting correlated to the discriminatory attitudes of police officers towards these immigrants (TACC, 2021).

In response to Kazakova’s claims, a report inspecting the role of social media platforms in anti-immigrant propaganda concluded that state-held media networks, such as RIA news and RT (formerly Russia Today), report on violence and various kinds of misdemeanors involving immigrants more often than independent networks such as Meduza and Dozd (Marohovskaya, 2021). Marohovskaya (2021) also noted that independent media channels such as Dozd reported on cases connecting immigrants to crime an average of four times per month, while state-held media reported such cases an average of 30 times. Additionally, a word-matching analysis showed that the words “fight” and “rape” appeared in the same sentences with the word “immigrant” in most cases on government-supported media platforms (Marohovskaya, 2021). Utilization of media and news platforms by the government to criminalize Central Asian immigrants, combined with the government’s efforts to create a more patriotic nation by preaching ideas of cultural exclusivity, creates a society which isolates foreign individuals. On the collective level, these negative portrayals aid normaliza-

tion of unethical behavior by both police and ordinary citizens towards Russia's Central Asian population.

Central Asian Immigrants as scapegoats for the Police

The patterns of the police targeting Central Asian immigrants range from verbal harassment and shakedowns to physical detainment. Having I conducted an interview with Valentina Chupik, a human's right defender and the head of the NGO "Tong Jahoni," an organization that provides free legal advice to migrants experiencing unfair treatment from law enforcement officers, and she verified numerous cases in St. Petersburg where immigrants have been randomly detained by police officials. After being physically and emotionally abused, they were asked to pay a fine of 5,300 rubles (V. Chupik, personal communication, March 10, 2022). According to Chupik, such fine does not actually exist, and the 300 rubles constitutes a bank commission, while the rest of the money is transferred via the immigrants' debit card to police officials as a bribe (V. Chupik, personal communication, March 10, 2022). Cases like this represent everyday actions of corrupt police officials in relation to Central Asian Immigrants. This normalization of corruption and discrimination of Central Asian immigrants is due to the lack of independence of the police department from the central government, meaning that these attitudes and behaviors are being passed down from the top down of Russian society.

Kleiner (2014) confirms that one of the significant factors influencing the level of corruption is the intersection of the functions of the state and "more precisely, the lack of independence between the various branches of government" (p. 12). As the result of the many flaws and gaps in the underdeveloped system, the active political party, United Russia (the party of Vlad P.), uses the police force as puppets to promote their political agenda as cheaply and effectively as possible, while neglecting ethical factors in the process. Police officials in higher ranks get paid off for not investigating large-scale affairs and "white-col-

lar crimes,” or receive unofficial financial rewards for targeting public figures who need to be taken down for government’ convenience. Semukhina and Reynolds (2013) emphasize that due to the high centralization and militarization of police force, average police officers have no choice but participate in illegal activities. Kleiner (2014) proposes that the Russian army, which is mandatory for all males starting the age of 18, predominantly consists of men doing construction work for free, which leaves opportunities for corrupt deal-making (p. 18). Semukhina and Reynolds (2013) also refer to the new Russian Federal 2011 law on “Police Service” by stating that it “makes orders from superior officers mandatory for execution [for lower-rank patrolling officers]” (p. 208). According to the authors, “Russian police officers often reported that they were given and obeyed what were apparently illegal orders” (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2013, p. 208). The reason why these manipulations are so set in stone is the lack of transparency, and corruption that invades all levels of this large hierarchy; even the Prosecutor’s Office (Procuracy) that is traditionally tasked with “supervision of legality” was involved in a number of corruption scandals, which raises questions about its ability to protect society against corruption (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2013, pp. 208-209).

Ordinary street police, who are at the bottom of the corruption chain, rarely receive any financial rewards, as they are not directly involved in large-scale political corruption. As a result, they aim for low hanging fruit in the form of vulnerable immigrants as a way to receive extra money as compensation for their low pay. Seeking bribes and abusing people from Central Asia invites few negatives consequences since those immigrants are already being targeted by politicians in speeches and by the media. However, saying that Central Asian immigrants are being targeted by the police due to direct orders that come from the top would be inaccurate. Rather, Central Asian immigrants are targeted by the police due to insufficient pay, low morale, undefined protocols and little accountability or over-

sight. In addition, the lack of independent functions between the branches of the government, widespread corruption, and the promotion of xenophobia make Central Asian immigrants easy targets for predatory police.

Solutions

The lack of transparency in Russian society at present makes it difficult for the average citizen to truly understand, let alone combat, widespread ethnic discrimination in their country. Central Asian immigrants serve as scapegoats for many societal problems and, as result, they continue to be portrayed negatively in the media and by the general public. On the issue of transparency, Kosals and Maksimova (2015) introduced the concept of “dual reality,” which defines the informal functioning of the Russian government in contrast with how the system actually operates, with tight networks that “simultaneously serve the system and the private interests of their participants” (Kosals & Maksimova, 2015, p. 280). This lack of transparency is applicable to nearly all levels of government, including the police force. The targeting of Central Asian immigrants for small scale bribes and abuse demonstrates a lack of ethical protocols. As Kuznetsova and Round (2019) pointed out, “It is lost in the mists of legislation as to whether the police can demand documents on the streets without any evidence of a crime been committed but it is a regular occurrence” (p. 56).

Creating more transparency between the government and the general public is the first step that needs to be taken to resolve the issue of police abuse of Central Asian immigrants. While changing the way the government performs its function may be a tremendous challenge, making people see that these immigrants are being unfairly abused by the authorities on daily basis is more realistic. It is also vital to show the society that its own biases about immigrants being the cause of crime and violence is the reason why this unfair treatment is often ignored. Ohunzon Rahimov, a student at St. Peterburg State University

who comes from Tadjikistan, was illegally detained in jail for days, simply for trying to defend a group of immigrants from Uzbekistan who were stopped by the police; he is now taking this matter to court (CABAR, 2021). Knowing the legal rights of immigrants, official police protocols, and having the strength to defend the minorities who are potentially being abused could help Russian society to raise above its biases. Change can start on the individual level by spreading awareness by word of mouth, through social media, and by protecting Central Asian Immigrants from predatory policing on the streets. The Black Lives Matter movement in the United States in 2020 could serve as a model. In the matter of weeks after George Floyd's death, the hashtag "BlackLivesMatter" was used 47.8 million times on Twitter alone (Anderson et. al., 2020). With this internationally-recognized example of how public awareness and determination can help change a broken system, Russian people can start bringing to light the flaws in their own country's policing. In recent years, the number of supporters of discriminatory slogans such as "Stop feeding the Caucasus" has decreased, while opposition has grown (Gudkov et. al., 2018, p. 27). This suggests that people are shifting away from ethno-centric attitudes and begin to notice that Central Asian immigrants are being treated unfairly. With even a fraction of the Russian people working to expose this problem through public protest and social media, news about the targeting of Central Asian immigrants by police could reach across the world. Despite the government's efforts to limit access to outside media, many Russian people still use platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok through VPN services. Getting information about the abuse of Central Asian immigrants by police to circulate online would be the first step in creating a defense of this unfairly targeted portion of the Russian population.

Conclusions

Russia continues to neglect international borders while trying to restore an empire at the head of which would be Vladimir Putin, as its invasion into Ukraine in February, 2022 clearly shows. This invasion is demonstrative of how a hyper-nationalistic ideology continues to prevail in the Russia today, stemming from the top of its political hierarchy, which seems to disregard the idea of Ukrainians having their own culture and identity. Although the issue with predatory policing and Central Asian immigrants is not directly related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the cultures and identities of Central Asian immigrants is also being neglected, and even frowned upon. Widespread xenophobic propaganda by the government and media results in the near-constant scapegoating of immigrants, while the public turns its backs on the issue of systematic discrimination. In turn, the lack of autonomy, solid structure and independent sustainability of the police department, results in systematic predatory policing of Central Asian immigrants.

Note: This essay was originally composed in Professor Mary Jo Melone's AWR 201 class.

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