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Market meets nationalism: making entrepreneurial state subjects in post-Soviet Russia

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This paper argues that nationalism and neoliberalism should not be considered as conflicting ideologies, but can enter into a productive association. This association creates an entrepreneurial nationalism that people can actively embrace as self-governing subjects in pursuit of a good life and successful career, rather than as subjects governed through state-mandated projects from above. The paper illustrates this argument with material from nine months of fieldwork at a Russian elite university. While students at that university strive to develop their potential and increase their market value to be successful in the competition for the best jobs, they also emphasize that developing themselves is not antithetical to serving Russia and being true to one's country. On the contrary, advancing Russia and advancing one's own career are articulated as two sides of the same coin. At the same time, the Russian nationalist project is reframed in entrepreneurial terms: making the Russian nation strong is about developing its potential and raising its competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Keywords: nationalism; patriotism; education; neoliberalism; subjectivation; Russia

Introduction

It would appear that the ideologies of neoliberalism and nationalism are antithetical: while one advocates the supremacy of the market, individual entrepreneurialism and global interconnectedness, the other promotes a collective feeling of belonging together, national autonomy and – at least where state and nation coincide – the primacy of the national state (Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* 9).[1] In fact, much of the literature on the subject treats neoliberalism and nationalism as two competing paradigms (e.g. O'Toole 269–90; Saul 33–43; Worth 297–315). Some see global interconnectedness as contributing to the waning influence of nationalism (Kaldor 161–77) and neoliberalism and globalization as undermining nationalist projects (Ferguson 271–97; Hannerz 81–90; Hobsbawm 190–92). Others conceive of nationalism as a reaction or even counter-project to the discontents of neoliberal globalization (Saul 33–43). In either case, the two ideologies are commonly represented as incompatible.

This article argues that nationalism and neoliberalism, far from being antithetical or mutually exclusive, can enter into a productive association that reinforces, rather than dilutes, the nationalist impulse. It extends work by Helleiner and Pickel (Helleiner 307–29; Pickel, "Explaining Economic Nationalism" 105–27; Pickel, "False Oppositions" 1–20) on the false opposition of (economic) nationalism and neoliberal policies

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at the level of states and asks whether, and how, nationalism and neoliberalism can be compatible at the subject level. Drawing on the case of Russia, the paper attempts to show that the fusion of neoliberalism with nationalism engenders a new mode of subject-making. While much nationalism in Russia works through state-mandated projects that govern individuals from above, intertwining nationalism with neoliberalism and its promises of a successful career through hard work creates an alluring entrepreneurial nationalism which individuals can actively embrace as self-governing subjects.

In support of my argument I draw on nine months of ethnographic research at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), a selective, Moscow-based university. The article intends to show how an entrepreneurial mode of subjectivation not only structures social life at MGIMO but is linked to attachment to the nation. This entrepreneurial nationalism exhibits the seemingly paradoxical quality of subscribing to an individualizing entrepreneurial logic that promotes, at the same time, loyalty to the Russian state.

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Nationalism and the market in post-Soviet Russia

The nationalist impulse

Nationalism is one of the most salient characteristics of contemporary Russia. Identification with the Russian motherland – termed *patriotizm* in Russia – is a cardinal marker of Russian society and forms a shared social imaginary across the political spectrum of parties.[2] Approving references to Russia are ubiquitous, both in high politics and in everyday life: whether it is a politician's justification of a new political agenda in terms of the nation's interest, patriotic education programs in school (Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation* 1–12, 170–174) or the marketing and consumption of domestic food products that feed off a surging nationalism (Caldwell 295–319).[3] Russian nationalism is, of course, not a new phenomenon. It can be traced back to pre-Soviet times and was an important social force in the Soviet Union (Brudny 1–226; Tuminez 1–264). Yet, with the collapse of the Soviet Union it arguably acquired a novel quality. In the profound dislocation that followed the dissolution of the Soviet state, nationalism offered potential for a new social consensus. As social, economic and geopolitical certainties that had seemed to last forever all of a sudden were no more (Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever* 1–35), the nationalist agenda was able to fill the void and provide people with orientation and a sense of belonging (Brudny 23). Oushakine (1–14) has called this phenomenon the patriotism of despair. Identification with the nation helped to channel the traumatic experience of loss through providing a new societal narrative structure. Disillusionment and despair, Oushakine claims, form the condition of possibility of a large part of the current Russian nationalism.

Because it had to fashion a new sense of both domestic and international belonging, the nationalist project in post-Soviet Russia comprises a strong geopolitical element. Khachaturian (20) observes a "parallelism between nationalism at home and the renewed effort to build regional and international influence." More than a domestic phenomenon, Russian nationalism is bound up with imaginations of territoriality (Simonsen 263–88) and plays a central role in Russia's global political agenda to reassert itself as a great power (Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation* 35; Tuminez 265–98). The essence of Russia is not thought to be in its political regime but in its international greatness (Laruelle, "Rethinking Russian Nationalism" 26). Garnering international recognition, defending Russia's national interests and expanding Russian influence in the post-Soviet space are essential demands linked to nationalism. Lo, for example, argues that "Russia's imperial past established an image of itself as a great nation and global power – crucial elements in

any powerfully felt nationalism" (Lo 57). For Tuminez (265–98), too, the rise and fall of nationalism in Russia has a close tie to foreign policy: whenever the international environment was hostile and Russia experienced humiliation, a surge in nationalist sentiments could be observed.

In Russia, nationalism is commonly understood as a state instrument to form loyal state subjects (e.g. Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation* 1–12, 153–92; Sperling "Last Refuge" 235–53). Since the early 2000s, it has become something of a universal lens that regulates the relationship between the individual and the state. It serves to strengthen the state and uphold its power vis-à-vis the people.

The authorities indeed expect that their excessive promotion of patriotism will yield precise results, including greater respect for the army and for military service, more paying of taxes, less corruption and flouting of the law, consumption of national products to revive the economy, increased charitable social works, and a more efficient organization of structures for supervising youth (Laruelle, "Introduction" 1).

Promotion of nationalism in Russia therefore aims at marshalling support for the current regime as a form of state-led nationalism. In this type of nationalism, rulers speak in a nation's name, demanding "that citizens identify themselves with that nation and subordinate other interests to those of the state" (Tilly 190; see also Breuilly 19–53 for nationalism as politics). The state's repertoire for instilling patriotic feelings in the population is extensive and documented in detail by Laruelle (*In the Name of the Nation* 153–92; see also Sperling, "Making the Public Patriotic" 218–71). It includes a patriotic education program (*patrioticheskoe vospitanie*), which in its second edition from 2006 to 2010 came with a budget of USD 20 million, to instruct people in the love of the motherland, a campaign to raise the prestige of the army and military service and a change in the school curriculum that has placed greater emphasis on the Great Patriotic War (the World War II) and has contributed to the rehabilitation of Stalin as a national hero. The extensive media programming in newspapers, special publications, on TV and in cinemas spreads the patriotic message to a wide audience.

The fostering of patriotism is linked to a particular mode of governing subjects that Foucault (*Discipline and Punish* 135–230; see also Rose, *Inventing Our Selves* 22–40) understands as subjectification (*assujettissement*). The concept of subjectification refers to the regulation of the individual through outside forces. With its strong prominence of hierarchical subordination and disciplining of subjects, Russian nationalism seems to fit the parameters of subjectification rather well. Laruelle (*In the Name of the Nation* 180) underscores that patriotism in Russia understands the individual "as a *subject* of the state, more than a *citizen*." The individual is to be formed, molded and educated as a state subject with "high patriotic awareness, allegiance to the fatherland and the readiness to fulfill the constitutional duties" (Government of Russia). One of the main channels to achieve the "collective conduct" (Smith, *Nationalism* 82) of nationalism is patriotic education in schools and universities – institutions which Foucault ("A Conversation" 192–201) describes as classic abodes of subjectification.

The emergence of the entrepreneurial subject

Along with the renewal of nationalism, market reforms have constituted a second major force of transformation in Russia. While failing to achieve the transition to a Western-style market economy, economic reforms have profoundly changed both everyday lives of ordinary Russians and high-level decision making. The emergence of diverse economies (Adrian Smith, "Culture/Economy" 232–50) and what has been called "hybrid

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consumption" (Shevchenko 841–66) are but two examples of the socio-cultural inflection of transition ideologies. With the import and adaptation of Western economic models through the "transition industry" (Swain 208–23) came the discursive rollout of neoliberalism (Gowan 3–60; Job 931–49; Adrian Smith, "Imagining Geographies" 647–70). When writing of neoliberalism in this paper I do not primarily refer to its macroeconomic understanding as a particular model of capitalism which advocates free markets, free trade, limited state intervention and the utility of private property rights (see Harvey 64–86). Instead, I shall be more concerned with its implications as an ideological project that forms subjects insofar as it institutes an individualizing entrepreneurial logic and contributes to the reconceptualization of social behavior along economic lines (cf. Lemke 190–207; Rose, *Powers of Freedom* 41):

> Neoliberal thinking likens society to an economic 'free market,' in which self-governance is presumed to flourish in an environment of liberty and individualism, concepts that are modeled on economic notions of market competition and consumer choice. (Vann 482)

Yurchak ("Russian Neoliberal" 72–90) gives an impressive account of how this neoliberal subjectivity plays out among well-educated business people in Russia's two capitals. In his article, he describes the archetype of the Russian neoliberal – the tough, talented, self-confident, self-made and hard-working professional who rides atop the rough waves of capitalism and lives to work and accumulate. The model of the Russian neoliberal is at the same time highly class- and gender-specific. It applies to a narrow, privileged fraction of well-educated men in Moscow and St. Petersburg who hold positions as key decision-makers. If at all, women figure as subservient and transient mistresses or are relegated to "women's business" – fitness centers, beauty parlors or secretarial work – because they purportedly lack the speed, flexibility and acumen of men.

For Foucault, the spread of neoliberalism marks a change in the techniques of governing subjects towards what he terms governmentality (Foucault, "Governmentality", 87–104). Neoliberal governmentality conducts conduct by making subjects govern themselves as entrepreneurial selves, striving to form themselves according to the requirements of the market (cf. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves* 150–98). The ideal neoliberal subject is a "free and autonomous atom of self-interest" (Hamann 38) who follows market rationales – not because it is forced to do so through external coercion but because it pursues its alleged freedom as an enterprising self. The neoliberal subject understands and enacts its life in terms of choice; it conducts its behavior in a way that allows realizing its potential and making dreams come true (Burchell 267–82; Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 15–97). Neoliberalism thus works through what Foucault calls subjectivation (*subjectivation*), the ways in which individuals govern themselves and their lives as enterprises. This is opposed to the dominance of subjectification in Russian nationalism in which subjects are governed by the state (Audureau 17–29; Burchell 267–82).

At first glance, nationalism and neoliberalism, subjectification and subjectivation, appear to be antonymous on many counts. While nationalism foregrounds communal bonds and identification with the state, neoliberalism is predicated on the autonomous individual that is oriented towards the market. Nationalism operates at the level of the national, whereas neoliberalism emphasizes global connectedness but operates at the level of the individual. And indeed, often enough the two have been treated as antithetical. Nationalism then becomes a "response" to the disappointments of neoliberalism, cushioning or countering its impact (e.g. Job 931–49; Worth 297–315) and reasserting the national against global cultural imperialism.[4]

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This seeming antinomy of nationalism and the market also appears to be true for the Russian case. Laruelle ("Rethinking Russian Nationalism" 34) observes that "the radical reforms undertaken under Boris Yeltsin's leadership, have not worked to paint a positive picture of free-market economics. With some exception, contemporary Russian nationalism is above all nostalgic for the Soviet welfare state, and for its social and economic omnipresence." In a similar vein, Caldwell (314) detects "discomfort with the new consumer practices that have arisen with Russia's shift to a capitalist-style economy. Individuals who participate in the non-Russian economy by buying foreign goods and acquiring foreign values and behaviors are perceived as having lost something intrinsically Russian." Oushakine (15–78) echoes this apparent antithesis in his account of patriotism and market reforms in the Siberian city of Barnaul. Oushakine found that the onslaught of market reforms and global capitalism was counterbalanced with narratives of an authentic, self-contained national community. Those who benefitted from privatization, often termed *prikhvatizatsiya* (grabitization), were considered as immoral, resorting to lies and deception to accumulate their wealth, whereas the losers of transition kept their moral integrity and stayed true to their fatherland. Neocommunists, in particular, opposed the "alienating individualism" of neoliberalism and contrasted it to the "true" Russian path and national consciousness of the Russian people. Patriotism and capitalism here figure as incompatible narratives, one revolving around truth and unmediated values, the other around lies and deception.

Laruelle (*In the Name of the Nation* 194–95) notes, however, that nationalism has also been used by the state to legitimate the new economic order of the market. There is thus a certain paradox inherent in Russian nationalism: on the one hand it is fuelled by discontents with the market economy at the popular level, while on the other hand serving as a legitimation of state policies to perpetuate that very economic order. This observation ties in with that of Helleiner and Pickel (Helleiner 307–29; Pickel, "False Oppositions" 1–20) that market-oriented policies have been promoted through nationalist discourse and that neoliberal policies can be compatible with nationalist values. While Helleiner and Pickel focus on the level of the state, this paper argues that this claim is equally true at the subject level. The material from ethnographic research at a Moscow elite university suggests that, far from seeing them as incompatible or competing paradigms, students articulate neoliberalism and nationalism as one project. For them, nationalism is part and parcel of the neoliberal imperatives of professional development and self-realization. In short, as I shall argue, nationalism becomes entrepreneurial.

Methodology: living the university

Oushakine (13) laments that in the study of Russian nationalism, scholars tend to focus on textual material and representations such as speeches, documents, pamphlets, policy papers or political events at the expense of social practices. To be sure, careful archival and document research and analysis are crucial for understanding the ideological underpinnings of nationalism and much has been done in this respect. This paper, however, focuses on nationalism as a project that manifests itself also at the subject level and in the processes of subject-making. It ties into what Fox and Miller-Idriss (537) have called "everyday nationhood:" "the actual practices through which ordinary people engage and enact (and ignore and deflect) nationhood and nationalism in the varied contexts of their everyday lives." This shift in focus is important in order to understand the interplay of nationalist ideology and the lives of people who are purported to be its subjects.[5]

In order to get close to the processes of subject formation, the paper adopts an ethnographic approach. It draws on material from nine months of participant observation and 39 interviews with students at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), a small, selective university with about 5500 students. Choosing an educational institution as the research site reflects the importance of education – and universities in particular – as a conduit for spreading patriotism in Russia (Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation*, 170–74, 180–84). After all, "schooling is a key institution of cultural pedagogy, and a channel through which states communicate ideals of identity and conduct to future citizens" (Hanson Thiem 161). Educational institutions therefore act as loci of subject formation (see also Mitchell 390) and have been chosen before to study the manifestation of nationalism (e.g. Fox 217–36).

During my time at MGIMO from August 2005 to May 2006 I participated in academic life, which meant attending and studying for classes that appeared pertinent to my research focus and writing exams and term papers, and in student social life, such as having lunch in the cafeteria, meeting to discuss homework or preparing for exams. Field diaries served to keep a systematic record of my observations and findings during the nine months. In addition to this participant observation, I conducted 39 interviews with students, mainly from the disciplines of political science and international relations, towards the end of the field research, when I had a clearer understanding of the relevant themes from the lectures, which allowed me to develop a suitable interview guide. In selecting interviewees I strove to maintain a balance with regard to gender and socio-economic background so as to avoid selection bias. Interviews were an important complement to participant observation. While the period of observation had given me a good understanding of students' everyday lives, I did not feel that I had enough material to gauge students' relationship to Russia and Russian nationalism. The interviews were designed to provide material to close this gap in my observations (see Müller 69–90 for details on methodology).

It is important to be clear about the possibilities and limitations of this approach. While the type of material generated from close observation and participation provides a unique insight into processes of identification and subject-making for a specific context, it does not and cannot claim to have general validity. The research focuses on a rather narrow socio-economic group in post-Soviet Russia and it cannot be indicative for all of Russia, let alone for other countries. Its purpose rather is to sketch the interaction of nationalism and neoliberalism in exemplary fashion, drawing on one particular case. Yet, this focus on the new generation of young, highly educated Russians is crucial, since they are the ones who will make up part of the ruling elite in the future. Also labeled the "Putin generation" (Mendelson and Gerber 131–50), this cohort has not actively lived through the Soviet collapse and has grown up with the opportunities and challenges of the market – an experience that a growing number of Russians share. In this sense, it provides a counterpoint to studies that concentrate on more peripheral locations in Russia – both geographically and socially – and find nationalism to be mainly backward-looking (e.g. Oushakine 1–14).

What is more, ethnographic research does not represent a somehow authentic picture of social life (Cook and Crang 5–12; Vrasti 279–301). The researcher does not simply record reality that is "out there," but has to interpret his or her material (Jackson 91–93). This inscribes the presence of the researcher much more into the material than with other methodologies. However, because ethnographies seek to primarily understand (*verstehen*), they have the advantage of greater openness towards new phenomena. This proved to be a key advantage in my case study, since I had initially planned to focus only on the articulation of nationalism, but realized in the course of the research how articulations of nationalism did not exist in isolation but were interwoven with neoliberal

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subjectivities. The material selected to corroborate the argument in this article can be considered typical in the sense that it reflects views that were expressed, in similar form, by a number of respondents and do not constitute isolated or extreme cases. All fieldwork was conducted in Russian. Translations of verbatim excerpts are my own.

Educating patriotic entrepreneurs

The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) was founded in 1944 as a government institute under the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs to train students to become specialists in foreign affairs and diplomacy. As such, the school was off-limits to the majority of the Soviet population and subject to stringent ideological regulations governing its work. Every applicant had to present recommendations from the local party organs, foreign language publications were stored in separate archives and the admission of women to MGIMO was kept low by imposing limitations. Students were induced into Marxist-Leninist ideology which framed global politics as a class struggle between capitalist and socialist societies (Torkunov 19–36).

Today, MGIMO continues its role as a training ground for elites that serve the Russian state. The only university under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, education at MGIMO is also meant as education for Russia. Aleksandr Losukov, ex-deputy foreign minister of Russia, underscores that students at MGIMO "should be taught to be patriotic, loyal to the country" (Ivanova-Galitsina 8). Yet, MGIMO has also diversified its academic base after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Capitalizing on its reputation as an elite school, it started to adopt entrepreneurial strategies that took advantage of the recent market reforms so as to tap into private funding. It expanded the range of degrees to include those, such as business and management, that were particularly sought after on the labor market. MGIMO now admits half of its students on the basis of merit and provides them with a tuition waiver and a nominal stipend, while the other half pays tuition fees of USD 7000 and more per annum. There is no need-blind admission process so that the applications-to-place ratio is higher for the tuition-free places than for the tuition places. In the 2006 admission cycle, there was an average of 4.5 applications for a scholarship place over the whole university, with individual departments ranging from 3 to 12 applicants per place. In the competition for paid education the maximum ratio was 2.5 for the most popular department with average ratios not published but probably somewhere close to 1.5. This means that the majority of students able to cover the tuition are admitted.

While the hefty tuition fees exclude all but the richest households from sending their children to MGIMO, even those admitted on the basis of merit often come from comparatively well-off families in Moscow or the Russian regions. In 1999, 74% of students were from families in which the father occupied an executive position with the state or private enterprise (Temnitskii 192–93). Given their socio-economic background and the education they enjoy, students at MGIMO can be easily identified as the winners of Russian transformation. Their qualifications are highly sought after in the labor market. While MGIMO's connections to the Russian state and the Russian Foreign Ministry still make it a gateway to influential positions with the Russian state, graduates, however, increasingly seek out job opportunities in the private sector.

Big business is indeed quite prominent at MGIMO. The shortage of qualified personnel on the Moscow labor market places students at the centre of attention of private corporations who vie to attract the best graduates. Company presentations, recruitment workshops and business-sponsored seminars are ubiquitous. In 2007 MGIMO concluded an

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agreement with TNK-BP, a joint venture between BP and a Russian oil company, according to which "TNK-BP experts will also be involved in developing new educational programs, conducting specialized professional courses and master classes" at MGIMO (Eurasia Press). Beside the mere exposure to private business, however, principles of the market also shape notions of the valuable self at MGIMO. The conception that education at MGIMO serves to increase one's market value and must be geared towards enhancing students' performance in a capitalist economy is one example of this. It is evident in the rhetoric of officials praising innovations in the education process at MGIMO: "The individual capitalization of a student increases if he [*sic*] demonstrates that he has been validated by internationally recognized educational centers" (*Majordom*, "Dvoinoi Diplom" 75). It is, however, also found in students' own accounts of future career plans, as the example of Dmitriy shows:

> I will probably do a double Master's degree at a European university to gain some experience working in Europe and practicing my languages. And my internships will certainly be a plus when I apply for a job. You've got to think about what people want from you. I try to be as good as I can. Everyone does that and the best get the best jobs.

The notion of competition, which shines through in Dmitriy's account, is one that frequently recurs at MGIMO. Only those who perform best are rewarded and those who do not show enough commitment and clout will not be able to rise in the ranks. This can be read as an expression of an individualizing ethics according to which everyone fights for themselves. While the choices to develop one's potential seems to be vast and almost unrestricted – ranging from internships and terms abroad to additional languages – there is an implicit conduct of conduct (Burchell 267) in that everyone tries to make "the right choice" for realizing their potential. "Conduct of conduct," or "*conduire des conduits*" in the French original (Foucault, *Dits et Écrits* 237), refers to the art of governing individuals not through rules and discipline but through self-regulation in the face of the demands of the market. In this sense, the apparent freedom of choice is in fact highly restricted as students follow calculative practices of utility. Raising the price that one's labor commands on the job market, adding value, turns students into self-entrepreneurs.

The orientation towards competition and the conception of a good student as one who performs well in the job market is best illustrated in an interview with an MGIMO alumna, published in the MGIMO student magazine *Majordom* (*Majordom*, "Uspeshnaya Bol'shakova 54–55) under the rubric "career" that features successful alumni. The interview carries the heading "Successful 'Bol'shakova' and portrays the life and career of a graduate-turned-businesswoman, Marina Bol'shakova, who is now head of a subdivision in a well-known law firm. The article starts by approvingly listing several key attributes of "successful Bol'shakova": "She is a very successful young woman, slim and smart. … Her work constantly keeps Marina in the flow, she is always ready." Not without a certain pride, Marina recounts how for the past half year she has worked without a day off and how it is difficult to "plan" her private life. She comments that "success depends on three factors: how much you want it, your energy, and luck," and the author of the story comments that Marina's "luck" is the fact that she has never even doubted for a second that all will turn out well if she just pursued her goals and slaved away."

Yet, the student entrepreneurs at MGIMO, while striving to increase their market value and boost their careers, are also supposed to maintain their loyalty to advancing the Russian state. The successful businesswoman is expected to develop her potential and take advantage of the manifold opportunities that MGIMO offers her, but nevertheless remain mindful of her duties towards Russia. As a professor at MGIMO states:

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> It is our mission to prepare highly capable elites – opinion leaders, business captains, who can serve as a role model and who will be of use for the Russian society and our state.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov underscores in an interview that the best graduate of MGIMO not only has professional skills and creative talents, but also "truly goes for his or her country" (*Majordom*, "Ministr Nashikh Del" 63).

This interpretation of patriotism as a necessary personal quality can also be found in adverts of companies seeking to recruit students at MGIMO. A number of companies pad their adverts with deference to Russia and try to tailor them explicitly to the patriotic or at least to the proud Russian. The most striking example is an advert by flexsearch, a Russian headhunting firm. The main body of the ad is dominated by a colored map outline of Russia and the prominent slogans, set in italics, "Rebuilding Russia's self-image as a great power" and "Rebuilding Russia together." A short text on the left side of the ad reads: "We understand that without the combination of our teamwork and our candidates' knowledge and skills Russia will not be able to reconquer its position as a true world leader."

The rhetoric employed in this ad directly links the success of the entrepreneurial self to the rise of Russia. The mission of the company to recruit the best graduates and channel them to the right firms is presented as a direct contribution to the geopolitical project of reasserting Russia's status as a great power. If students are educated and trained well enough to compete in the job market, they will be able to assist Russia to compete in the geopolitical marketplace. For boosting Russia's geopolitical position the ad appeals to a common identification with "Russia as a great power." Thus, although everyone is responsible for their individual success, all are expected to come together in making their career instrumental for Russia's re-emergence in the geopolitical arena. The individualizing logic of neoliberalism here becomes interarticulated with the collective project of promoting Russia as a great power.

All the while highlighting the desirability of international competence, the career section of *Majordom* similarly makes a point in emphasizing that the people portrayed have been successful in Russia and sometimes have even opted against taking on a job opportunity abroad. Others, like Yuriy, even return from the West to study in Russia:

> I love Russia, I believe in its potential and I have Russian blood, and that's why I love the free Russian soul, its depth and incomprehensible vastness. I finished an English school, Clifton College, after which I had the possibility to receive an excellent higher education in universities in Britain and Germany. Initially, I wanted to enroll in the London School of Economics and Political Science, but then I realized that if I wanted to work in the area of the CIS and do business there, I would not only need knowledge but also an understanding of the Slavic culture and mentality. … I decided to choose MGIMO. Why? Above all, because you get professional education, prestige, a rich history and international relations. Here you can meet a lot of successful people, established scholars and veteran diplomats.

Nationalism and entrepreneurialism are clearly intertwined in Yuriy's statement. In the pursuit of a successful career one has to remain true to one's fatherland. This sentiment of patriotism, of devoting one's career not only to one's own profit but also to the advancement of Russia repeatedly surfaced in the interviews: certainly, gaining international experience and making international contacts is important, but the acquired competencies should be employed to the benefit of one's home country.

In the Soviet Union, the traditional way of serving one's country and showing loyalty was to work in the state service. While in Soviet times a career with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the most attractive prospects for MGIMO alumni, this career route is becoming less and less popular. Application ratios at MGIMO show that

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departments with an economic orientation have the greatest appeal for applicants, whereas the traditional education in the School of International Relations – MGIMO's pride since Soviet times – is at the lower end of the ratio range and considerably less sought after. It is also indicative that the School of International Relations offers only three Master programs, whereas there are now 18 such programs in business and management. But what makes training for the state service so unattractive? Many students complain about the low salaries and dim career prospects. Julia states:

> Although I love my country, I think that the state does not disburse sufficient funding for its employees. This is not politically correct. By and large, these are people who are very devoted to their work. Unfortunately, a lot of them simply leave because it is impossible to live on such a salary.

For another thing, work conditions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are generally met with considerable disapproval by many interviewees. A large number of students are disgruntled with the strict hierarchies and rigid structures and the undemanding nature of work. Andrey describes the atmosphere as stifling and uncreative:

> The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has special requirements for the people that are going to work with them. And in the past few years among these haven't been "showing initiative" or "creative work." It's not a question of money. Recently, it has been about the submission to some general directives, to general orders. It has become very difficult to make a career, to show initiative.

The presence of civil servants that do not have adequate qualification for the job they are doing and that have been occupying the same position since Soviet times, unwilling to leave, was cited as one of the factors that made a career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs unappealing. Julia even thinks that at MGIMO students' attitude towards working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is rather negative. I think that it won't be pleasant working there, because chances of moving up the career ladder are low.

Yet, only because working for the state directly does not appeal to students' sense of self-development and career choice does not mean that students do not feel any allegiance to the state at all. Some students, such as Oleg, propose to work in state structures for some years and perhaps then go into private business:

> I might work with a government authority for a couple of years and then go and take my contacts into private business. That's how many do it here. Because if you know people in the state institutions, it makes life much easier. … After all, you have received a good education here and that [serving the state] is what is expected from you.

What becomes apparent in this statement is a sense of duty to symbolically repay the education one has received by accepting a position in the state service. The contacts made serving the state, however, can then be used to start a profitable career in private enterprise. There is thus a clear element of utilitarianism in this version of entrepreneurial nationalism: loyalty to the state ranks high on the agenda, but only as long as it delivers personal benefit. Not devoting one's entire career to the state is not a lack of patriotism but owed to the fact that opportunities for scoring a demanding and well-paying job are far more attractive outside the state service.

Serving one's country therefore no longer means joining the state service for life. Students can pursue their wish for a challenging and well-paying job, all the while being true to their fatherland. The Master degrees in business and management at MGIMO are a striking example of the education of entrepreneurial subjects that not only work in their own but also in Russia's interest. The Master program "Management in the Area of Defense-Technological Cooperation and High-Tech," for example, wants to train

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specialists of management with an international profile and offers careers in corporate management and development, strategic planning and analysis, marketing and investment (MGIMO 1). While this list of career choices reflects the aspirations of a large number of business and management graduates worldwide, this particular program is offered jointly with *Rostekhnologii*, a Russian state-owned holding in the defense sector. The syllabi of the course program reveal that learning is not so much about cooperation and high-tech – as the title of the program would suggest – but geared towards the needs of the Russian defense sector. Rather than training students for the general labor market, the program aims to educate specialists for the Russian defense industry (MGIMO 1). It offers employment with *Rostekhnologii* after graduation, promising an international and challenging career.

The student magazine *Majordom*, too, touts the career perspectives in the international arms trade that appeal to the ambitious MGIMO graduate who wants to advance her career and Russia at the same time (*Majordom*, "Torgovlya Oruzhiem" 72–75). In an interview, the general director of *Rosoboroneksport*, the state holding coordinating most of the Russian arms trade, advertises his company as the ideal place to apply the qualifications earned at MGIMO:

> Together with the language and area studies preparation, I would include here [in the list of qualifications that can be useful] the acquisition of methods of analyzing the arms market and the study of potential players – partners as well as competitors – and the training in techniques of negotiation. (*Majordom*, "Torgovlya Oruzhiem" 72)

Taking up a job with *Rosoboroneksport* is presented as an opportunity for personal "professional development and creative growth" that also contributes to developing one of Russia's key industries in which it is a global player. By contrast, little is said about the ethical implications of working in the arms trade. What we see here, then, is a particular from of militarized patriotism in which the military continues to play a significant part but is linked to chances for professional development and not to serving in the army or participating in basic military training (Sperling, "Making the Public Patriotic", 218–71).

Far from being an isolated example, the education of student entrepreneurs that are true to Russia is emblematic of subject formation at MGIMO. Education does not work, as it did in Soviet times, through ideological inculcation and the constant emphasis of citizens' patriotic duties – it does not work through *subjectification* as a state-mandated project of making subjects. It rather operates through embracing choice, career-building and appealing to students' individual aspirations and wish for self-fulfillment and harnessing this for the advancement of Russia – through *subjectivation*. The ideal MGIMO graduate then actively pursues self-development and individual life choice, all the while being aware that the realization of her own potential is closely tied to that of Russia. This fusion of nationalism and entrepreneurialism suggests, however, that maintaining subjects' loyalty is bound to offering them adequate prospects of a steep career and a rewarding job. As soon as the nationalist project reneges on this promise, attachment to the Russian state is also likely to dwindle. In this sense, entrepreneurial nationalism is also more susceptible to external disruption than traditional forms of nationalism that do not operate through subjects' self-realization.

The degree to which entrepreneurialism has become the dominant frame for understanding the social world is finally also evident in students' interpretation of Russia's role in world politics in an individualizing and economistic rhetoric. Students thus not only act as passive consumers of patriotic ideology but also re-interpret it through their own lenses. In the interviews I conducted, world politics was often likened to a global

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marketplace. Students argued that a country's value in this market is increasingly expressed in economic terms. They portrayed the competition for power among states in world politics not as primarily founded on military or diplomatic rationales but as adhering to economic principles. Realizing Russia's greatness, many argued, cannot be dissociated from its economic performance in the global marketplace. Andrey, for example, claims:

> [. . .] if we want to reassert ourselves as a great power *(sverkhderzhava)*, we definitely have to put the economic situation in our country right in order to back up our political power and strength. Without the economy we won't get anywhere.

Where market laws reign supreme, every state should try to maximize its individual economic gain by buying and selling assets. The geopolitical power struggle is reframed as a market game by Natalia:

> I think that Russia acts from an economic perspective and does not try to put pressure on anyone. Like even our Minister of Foreign Affairs says, in the 1990s we developed a market economy. And now we try to act by market laws, just as the West, just as America has taught us. That's normal. We sell, we receive money and we do not try to put pressure on anyone.

The primacy of the market, students argue, also means that every state has to compete on its own with the resources it has at its disposal, or as Igor says: "In the end, we do not have commitments to anyone." Students thus conceive of the situation Russia faces at large and of their own situation in similar terms. States become individual entrepreneurs engaging in market transactions in the quest for increasing their power, just as students work hard to increase their value in the job market and are engaged in a constant effort to stay ahead of their fellow students in the competition for the best jobs. While students endorse the Russian mission of establishing itself as a strong player on the global stage that is on equal footing with the established powers, they also envision their own version of this great power game as following market rules: the Russian nation has to stand up to external competition and realize its potential – it has to become an entrepreneur to remain strong.

Conclusion

While neoliberalism and nationalism are often portrayed as following conflicting logics, the case study of students at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in this article suggests otherwise: neoliberalism crossbreeds with nationalism, resulting in a brand of entrepreneurial nationalism. This entrepreneurial nationalism is bound up with market competition and calculative self-development as key attributes of the neoliberal subject – but displays at the same time loyalty to the Russian state and a complicity with calls to advance Russia in its quest for great power status. Entrepreneurial nationalism is therefore marked by a paradoxical quality: adhering to the individualizing logic of competition, it ties into the collective project of nationalism.

Russian nationalism does not appear here, as it does so often, as a state-mandated project which aims to transform people into loyal subjects. Rather, it becomes a project readily embraced by self-governing entrepreneurial subjects in the pursuit of a good life. To put it with Foucault: subjectification is replaced with subjectivation – the entrepreneurial self-governance of individuals (Burchell 267–82; Foucault, "Governmentality" 87–104). If developing one's own potential, building one's own career, can contribute to the greater good of serving Russia, this makes nationalist ideology all the more attractive. This, then, is not a nationalism based on despair and mourning as it can be found in the more peripheral areas and populations of Russia that are on the margins of economic

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development (Oushakine 1–78). Instead, it is a forward-looking nationalism of self-realization, feeding on the opportunities that are available to a highly educated, ambitious group of up-and-coming students in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Analysis of nationalism in Russia therefore has to recognize that it comes in a variety of shapes and works through different modes of subject-making in different socio-economic settings. That, of course, is key to any hegemonic social imaginary: it needs to be so comprehensive to unify a host of diverse demands projected onto it.

Hobsbawm (190–92), among others, has ventured the claim that nationalism is an ephemeral phenomenon no longer suited to the structural conditions of neoliberal globalization. In a world that is growing ever closer together and becoming more interdependent, nationalism appears an outdated model. Entrepreneurial thinking and market orientation place the individual at the centre of attention. The success of making entrepreneurial state subjects in Russia suggests, however, that nationalism and neoliberalism make a good team. At least in Russia, nationalism is here to stay: not because it counters, cushions or opposes neoliberalism, but rather because it can be articulated in conjunction with it as a project that individuals pursue in search of a good, successful life.

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Notes

1. It is important to note that I write of nationalism and neoliberalism as ideologies here, not as policies or economic models (as is the case for much of the literature on economic nationalism, for example).
2. In this article, I am not engaging with the growing literature on so-called ultra-nationalism or radical nationalism, called *natsionalizm* in Russia, that focuses on extremist movements and parties (Allensworth 104–22; Beichelt 505–26; Umland 30–39). Rather my focus is on state nationalism, also understood as *patriotizm* in Russia. While this brand of nationalism arguably takes less violent, racist and xenophobic forms, it is nonetheless an important phenomenon for legitimising state actions. Precisely because it often appears inconspicuous, it becomes naturalized as a powerful national ideology (see Billig 37–59). I use "nationalism" therefore for the conceptual academic term and "patriotism" for the concrete manifestation of state nationalism in Russia. See also Laruelle (*In the Name of the Nation* 7) who rejects the nationalism/patriotism binary: "This arbitrary division, positing two distinct phenomena with defined borders, is in fact an instrument in the hands of the Kremlin, which attributes to itself the 'good' so-called patriotic nationalism and condemns the 'bad' or extremist nationalism of its opponents. In fact the patriotism advocated by the presidential administration is a specific version of Russia's traditional state nationalism … it seeks to emphasize the historical and cultural markers that, directly or indirectly, work above all to define Russia as a state."
3. The importance of nationalism for understanding the constitution of society in Russia is not least evidenced by three recent book-length treatments of the subject (Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation*; Laruelle, *Russian Nationalism*; Oushakine).
4. Conversely, neoliberalism could also be seen as undermining nationalism and creating the condition for its failure. Ferguson (2003), for example, charts the story of the online magazine Chrysalis in Zambia, which was launched by a group of young, educated Zambians to craft a new nationalism. The magazine, however, ceased to exist after a few issues, as the new economic realities of global market integration started to undermine the movement for a national renewal. According to Ferguson, the idea of creating a nation seemed out of date in Zambia, where success was increasingly determined in terms of exploiting global market opportunities.
5. While sharing the general concern about the need to understand nationalism from the subjects' point of view, this study does not subscribe to the distinction between elites and ordinary people in Fox and Miller-Idriss (536–76), which has been criticized by Anthony Smith ("Everyday Nationhood" 563–73). My research context contains elements of both elite and non-elite forms of nationalism: on the one hand everyday nationhood is reflected in students' mundane lives, but on the other hand those students represent a rather privileged group that is not 'ordinary' in a number of respects.

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