

# **Russkii Obraz: The Politics of Managed Nationalism in Russia Based**

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia embarked on a tumultuous journey of political and social transformation. Amidst this upheaval, a new movement emerged that sought to shape the country's national identity and foreign policy: Russkii Obraz. This article delves into the history, ideology, and impact of Russkii Obraz, exploring its role in shaping the politics of managed nationalism in Russia.

Russkii Obraz (Russian Image) was founded in 1998 by Leonid Simonyants, a former journalist. The movement took its inspiration from the Russian Orthodox Church and the writings of Ivan Ilyin, a Russian philosopher who advocated for a strong and centralized state. Russkii Obraz espoused an ideology that emphasized Russian national superiority, Orthodox Christianity as the foundation of Russian identity, and a rejection of Western liberalism.

Russkii Obraz quickly gained traction through its activism. The movement organized rallies and protests, advocating for policies that aligned with its ideology. It played a significant role in the passage of the 2013 law banning "homosexual propaganda" among minors. Russkii Obraz also established ties with Russian nationalists and far-right groups in other countries, promoting a pan-Slavic agenda.

**Putin's Fascists: Russkii Obraz and the Politics of Managed Nationalism in Russia (BASEES/Routledge**



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by Robert Horvath

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While Russkii Obraz initially operated independently of the Russian government, it gradually gained support from the Kremlin. The movement's ideology resonated with President Vladimir Putin's efforts to consolidate power and promote a nationalistic narrative. The government provided financial support to Russkii Obraz and allowed it to operate with relative freedom, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

Russkii Obraz played a pivotal role in shaping the concept of "managed nationalism" in Russia. This strategy involved the state's active promotion of nationalist sentiments and symbols to bolster support for the regime and mobilize citizens around a common cause. Russkii Obraz helped to create a climate of fear and intolerance, portraying Western influences as threats to Russian values and traditions.

Russkii Obraz's influence extended beyond domestic politics. The movement's ideology informed Russia's foreign policy, particularly in its relations with Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 was justified in part by appealing to Russkii Obraz's narrative of Russian nationalism and protecting ethnic Russians in the region. The movement also supported

Russian military intervention in Syria, framing it as a defense of Christian values.

Russkii Obraz has faced criticism for its authoritarian tendencies and its association with far-right groups. Critics have accused the movement of promoting hatred and intolerance, and of using nationalist rhetoric to justify violence against minorities. The movement's close ties to the Kremlin have also raised concerns about its role as a tool of political manipulation.

Russkii Obraz emerged as a powerful force in Russian politics, playing a significant role in shaping the country's national identity and foreign policy. The movement's ideology of Russian nationalism and Orthodox Christianity has resonated with many Russians, while its activism and Kremlin support have allowed it to influence policy and public opinion. However, the movement's authoritarian tendencies and associations with far-right groups have also raised concerns about its role in suppressing dissent and promoting intolerance.

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