

# ZEKE

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Students from School #18 perform a show at the local theater in Sergiyev Posad, Russia. December 15, 2016

# TOY SOLDIERS

RISING NATIONALISM AMONG YOUTH IN RUSSIA

Photographs by Sarah Blesener

Schoolchildren line up for drill on a Monday afternoon at School #7. Drill is not mandatory but takes place before classes start at 8:00 a.m. and at 3:00 p.m. School #7 is a public school but offers cadet classes for those who wish to participate. April 4, 2016, Dmitrov, Russia.





Nationalist views are widespread in modern Russia. One of the main reasons of this social phenomena is the migration from former Soviet republics to large Russian cities. Representatives of these nationalities are rejected by some Russian citizens. Photo by Misha Domozhilov from "I am Russian" on SDN.

past. Racism against people from the Caucasus countries and regions became overt and commonplace. Once again, anti-Semitism emerged, as conspiracy theories about Jews supplemented the standard anti-Zionist rhetoric of the Soviet era."

### Two types of Russian nationalism

Against the backdrop that Russia has dwelled upon its national identity for decades, with questions like "Who are we?" posing up in the people's minds, it is important to note that there are two different types of Russian nationalism: The first type (*Rossiiskii*) is a

Ultra-nationalist organizations promoted their own plans for restoring the "greatness" of the past. Racism against people from the Caucasus countries and regions became overt and commonplace.

— Leonard Zeskind,  
President, Institute for Research and  
Education on Human Rights

survey by the independent polling institute Levada Center, the levels of respect and confidence Russians feel towards their armed forces rose and in turn fueled the popularity of so-called military youth camps. As follow-up, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and his government made a military-patriotic education curriculum the norm across the country for adolescents, offering a range of training from military tactics to maintaining assault rifles, provided by the revived Soviet-era organization Yunarmia (Young Army) that was re-established in 2015 by the Russian Defense Ministry.

Another anchor point of Putin's military-patriotic education curriculum is a program by the Russian Ministry of Education with the title "Patriotic Education of Russian

Citizens in 2016–2020". The initiative aims to encourage young citizens to feel a responsibility for their country, prepare them to defend the motherland, and promote religious values. So far, hundreds of government-funded, often Orthodox Church-sponsored patriotic clubs, with names like Bright Rus, Patriot or Motherland, teach over 200,000 youth across Russia to handle weapons to defend the homeland.

Three other earlier "Patriotic Education of Russian Citizens" programs were also created, in 2011–2015, 2006–2010 and 2001–2005. The first program "included various militarized activities (events in military-patriotic clubs, military sports programs, and events commemorating the heroic deeds of Soviet soldiers in World War II), the dissemination of propaganda in the mass media, the publication of patriotic literature, encouragement of relevant pedagogical research, and, above all, efforts to "actively counteract any distortion or falsification of national history," according to Sergei Golunov, professor at the Center for Asia-Pacific Future Studies at Kyushu University.



Young nationalists at the "Russian March," the largest demonstration organized by the Russian nationalists. Photo by Misha Domozhilov from "I am Russian" on SDN.

Marlene Laruelle, co-director of PONARS-Eurasia and research professor at the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, underlined that "by promoting a revival of Soviet-style military patriotic education, the Russian authorities have also implicitly validated a vigilantism movement that combines radical nationalist groups that train youth for warfare, mixed martial arts clubs, and Orthodox street patrols."

### An international problem

It is a thin line between "pride in one's home country" brand of patriotism to an extreme sentiment of "we are better than any other country" nationalism. With his "America First" campaign, the elevation of self-proclaimed white nationalist Steve Bannon to his chief strategist, and his praise for Vladimir Putin, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled at the heartstrings of many right-wing nationalists. Within Europe, the refugee crisis, fear of financial instability, and a growing disillusionment with the European Union has fueled the rise of far right parties including Germany's

Alternative For Germany, France's National Front, the Dutch Party for Freedom, Greece's Golden Dawn, Jobbik in Hungary, the Sweden Democrats, Austria's Freedom Party, Slovakia's People's Party-Our Slovakia, and The Danish People's Party to just name a few of the most prominent. These parties promote extreme platforms of right-wing political values and policies touting anti-immigration and anti-European Union positions.

Certainly nationalism unites, but it unites people *against* other people. The challenge moving forward for countries dealing with nationalist sentiments is to find a way of life inclusive of all the identities within their borders.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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# THE MOTHERLAND IS WHITE

## THE RISE OF NATIONALISM IN RUSSIA

By promoting a revival of Soviet-style military patriotic education, the Russian authorities have also implicitly validated a vigilantism movement that combines radical nationalist groups.

—Marlene Laruelle,  
Co-director of PONARS-Eurasia

Text by Anne Sahler  
with additional research  
by Laney Ruckstuhl

In many countries across the world, the refugee crisis, the influx of asylum seekers, and illegal immigrants from other countries have nourished nationalist sentiments. Though these developments didn't affect Russia directly, they had one visible impact: a re-emergence of nationalism and patriotic fervor.

As is the case in other affected countries, nationalist sentiments are not new to Russia. Yet, nationalism in the country is of a complex nature. To understand it better, one has to dig deeper into Russia's history, keeping in mind the complex diversity of a country with over 185 ethnic groups. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has been marked by a feeling of humiliation and the search of many Russians for a

national identity. While Russia has become ethnically more homogeneous, it also experienced a serious demographic crisis. Leonard Zeskind, president of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights and author of *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* wrote in an article published in *The Huffington Post* "The end of the Soviet Union occasioned a period of dire — famine-like in some instances — economic circumstances. Society was in crisis and the birthrate declined sharply and suicides were up. As the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Georgia and others peeled off one by one, ultra-nationalist organizations promoted their own plans for restoring the "greatness" of the

non-ethnic nation model and defines "Russian" very broadly. It includes significant cultural and political rights to non-Russians, but held together with a high degree of common values and traditions. The reintegration of the territory of the former Soviet states is the key theme of these nationalists. The second type of nationalism is understood as "ethnic Russian" (*Russkii*), a much more exclusive and even racist ethnic Russian nationalism with the overall goal to prevent immigration from unwanted groups.

### Putin's military-patriotic education

A rise of nationalism and patriotic enthusiasm in Russia emerged with the Ukrainian revolution and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Furthermore, according to a



Guard of the Eternal Flame, Irkutsk, Siberia, 2010. A Russian organization of youth cadets learn marching and other military activities at this monument to The Great War (WWII) by participating in the changing of the guard several times a day. Photo by Frank Ward from "The Great Game: Travels in the Former Soviet Union" on SDN.



# IRAN

## by IRANIANS

Photographs by **Azad Amin,**  
**Ariz Ghaderi, Saeed Kiaee,**  
**Mehdi Nazeri, Sadegh Souri**

In this issue of ZEKE, we present the work of five Iranian photographers who are part of a large and dynamic community of documentary photographers, film makers, and journalists largely unknown in the U.S. All the photographers in this feature article, except Azad Amin, are affiliated with the Iran Photographic Arts Federation. Amin is affiliated with the Iranian Photographer's Society.

**Sadegh Souri** gives us a chilling look at Iranian girls on death row, who when they reach 18, will be executed for crimes they committed as juveniles as young as 9, the age of responsibility under Sharia law. A still photographer and documentary filmmaker, Souri is active in a number of Iranian photographic associations.

In his exhibit "The Market Is Closed," **Saeed Kiaee**, a photographer, journalist, and researcher, takes

us on a tour of Tehran's fabled Grand Bazaar not as we usually see it, teeming with merchants and shoppers of all kinds, but rather when it is closed and the few remaining people appear as spirits wandering through the darkened alley ways.

**Ariz Ghaderi**, another award-winning Iranian documentary photographer, has focused on the crushing poverty and challenges facing the children of gypsies in Iran's Khorasan Razavi province. Often in poor health and malnourished, they beg to survive and exist on the fringe of Iranian society.

**Mehdi Nazeri**, a self-trained, experimental photographer who has turned to documentary work, provides a moving examination of the have-nots who live on the scraps of the wealthy in one of Iran's three main business hubs. Dedicated to exposing the cultures and traditions of his people, his work has been included in numerous exhibitions throughout Iran.

And finally there is the work of **Azad Amin**, whose project on the bond between dog owners and their dogs in a nation that forbids dog ownership, turns on its head our understanding of that relationship. Amin has been photographing professionally for the past six years, and in that time has won a number of important awards.

—B.D. Colen

### Photograph by **Ariz Ghaderi**

Modina Khatun is waiting for her husband because he went to work five days before and hasn't returned. She doesn't know if he is dead or alive.

# BETWEEN LIFE & DEATH

## MATERNAL HEALTH IN HAITI AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

**Photographs by B.D. Colen,  
Nikki Denholm, Paolo Patruno**

Halimo lives in an internally displaced persons camp in Somalia and had her first baby at 14-years-old. Somalia has the lowest birth attendance rate internationally and coupled with the complications of female genital mutilation, birth outcomes are poor. Halimo lost her baby during a traumatic birth and suffered a severe fistula.

**Photograph by Nikki Denholm**



# TAKING PICTURES, TAKING ACTION

SDN asks scholars, activists, and photographers how images can change the world

by Anna Akage-Kyslytska

You really can't go into it with the idealistic thought that there will come a difference just if you shoot it.

—Amy Yenkin



As the police arrested his father, Diamond said "I hate you for hitting my mother! Don't you come back to this house!" Minneapolis, MN, 1988.

Photo © Donna Ferrato

## A CONVERSATION WITH:

**Michelle Bogre:** Associate Professor of Photography, copyright lawyer, documentary photographer and author of *Photography As Activism: Images for Social Change*

**Greg Constantine:** Documentary photographer working on a long-term project, "Nowhere People," documenting the life of stateless people around the world

**Donna Ferrato:** Acknowledged documentary photographer, TIME Magazine's one of the "100 Most Influential Photographs of All Time"

**Vicki Goldberg:** Photography critic, historian and author of *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*

**Ruddy Royce:** Brooklyn-based photographer and activist who documents life of his community and has over 270,000 followers on Instagram

**Minky Worden:** Director of Global Initiatives, Human Rights Watch

**Amy Yenkin:** Former and founding Director of the Documentary Photography Project at the Open Society Foundations

Images cannot stop a war, although some have tried to use them to such end. A viral video of a shocked and bloodied toddler in an ambulance cannot turn the exchange of missiles into a peaceful settlement, although thousands on Facebook may view it. Still, photography refuses to be just an illustration. Its nature is action, and framing is an exercise in taking a side. To see where taking pictures as taking action can bring us, we talked to seven experts in the fields of photography and activism.

## MAKING A CONNECTION

"No photograph has ever made a change unless a political or social response was ready for or aroused by it," Vicki Goldberg says. "The whole world saw hundreds upon hundreds of videos and photographs of the destruction in Mosul and Aleppo, but nothing was done about it because almost no country could see a clear geopolitical path or support for intervention."

The power that a photographer has over circumstances starts a bit earlier than the action. It starts with the activism of knowledge.

"Being an expert at your craft is the starting point," says Amy Yenkin. "If photographers are trying to do more than shoot images for the daily news cycle, they have to involve themselves in the existing environment, develop a deep understanding of the history and circumstances, and form connections on the ground to the actors involved, both subjects and advocates. That's a very different approach from going in and shooting a body of work and then trying to figure out how to sell it around."

Over the years, within the framework of the Documentary Photography Project at the Open Society Foundations, Yenkin helped to develop and present hundreds of projects whose creators were stubborn enough to believe that change was up to them.

"Just because you have a really strong NGO partnership, a well-developed campaign, a clear goal and an audience, doesn't necessarily mean that change is going to happen. But it doesn't mean you shouldn't work hard. Even active docu-



I watched two bouncers escort 31-year-old Olajuwon Green from out of the Casablanca night club on Malcolm X Blvd. He had shuffled inside to beg. As our paths crossed at the entrance, me heading home and he being tossed out of the club he asked me if I could help him get something to eat. I told him that if he went to the chicken spot and waited for me I would drop off my bags and join him. He got two centre breasts and a bottle of green tea. "Warrants, I spent four weeks at Rikers Islands because I did not pay my tickets. I was caught smoking weed twice and so they picked me up on September 4 and the bus dropped me off on Gates Avenue a few days ago. My mom lives there, I really love her," he told me.

Photo © Ruddy Royce. Excerpted from Instagram.

to get someone's attention," Worden says. "I think images, for example of landmine victims in Burma, are striking and difficult to look at, but it's the truth. They represent consequences of the war and reality for these people, and for their families, which is much harder than the viewer's experience of the photo."

Situations where a viewer becomes a photographer are numerous, although Bogre is rather skeptical about citizen journalism.

"As a viewer, I trust a photographer more than I trust an image," Bogre says. "Citizen journalism is a little dangerous. New media shifts responsibility to a viewer — unless you do your own extra work you can't assume that what you're observing has any accuracy."

The problem of actually getting to a viewer or to an extensive audience is complicated. Vicki Goldberg gives the main reason — the lack of a generally acknowledged national newspaper or a generally trusted TV channel. Digital sites are multiple and have their own audiences, as do TV stations and newspapers.

"Back in the age when an image could cost the presidency, as with Michael Dukakis in a helmet sitting on a tank in 1988, we had a limited number of television channels instead of the 500 we have now, *USA Today* increasingly functioned as a national paper, and private ownership of computers only reached something like 15% in this country in the late 1980s, all of which meant that a very large percentage of the voting population saw the same images," Goldberg says. "Now audiences are divided, which means that people tend not to see opposition news, often being

mentation — keeping a record — is vitally important. You never know how or when the result will come."

Writer and scholar Michelle Bogre names artists whose works are obviously documents and demonstration of activism.

"Depending on the subject, the story and the audience, a less traditional documentary work can be powerful," says Bogre. "I think work like that — of Alfredo Jaar or Shahidul Alam — should be mentioned here. If you just look at their installations, you would think it's art, but when you try to read the story, you will realize it's actually documentary."

The absence of actual change as a result of hard work becomes an unavoidable circumstance, Yenkin says.

"You can't go into it with the idealistic thought that just because you take a picture, change will happen," Yenkin says. "But, that does not mean we should stop taking pictures. Recently, *New York Times* photographer Daniel Berehulak took enormous risk to photograph the extrajudicial killings by the Duterte regime in the Philippines. I don't know what immediate change it can bring, but it is imperative and urgent that this be documented."

Since media agencies started cutting their budgets and long-term projects became rare, NGOs and photographers have strengthened editorial and financial

partnerships, leading to mutual benefits.

Minky Worden, Human Rights Watch's Director of Global Initiatives, believes photography is a key tool to be included in reports on human rights abuses that HRW produces regularly.

"A photograph often is an entry point for viewers to engage with our work. By using photography and multimedia we're able to connect the media and ordinary citizens to testimonies and stories in our reports."

## TRUST

More freedom means more responsibility, which is why Michelle Bogre talks with her students about being a sophisticated viewer.

"My students are far more sensitive than I am," Bogre says. "Maybe because I've been a photojournalist and I've seen things. On the other hand, they are more desensitized because they are oversaturated with images and don't think about the power of a serious photograph...I don't think there is anything too graphic for people to see. Describing the Abu Ghraib photographs or an image of a child washed up on a beach with words does not have the same value as an individual photograph."

Sympathy toward a viewer is generally a rare thing among photographers or activists, and the reason is clear.

"It's not about telling a sensational story