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Inter-Minority Xenophobia in the Russian Federation: Ethnic, Religious, and Status Differentials

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Abstract

The steady and precipitous decline of Slavic population and the rapid influx of non-Slav migrants in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union have raised concerns that interethnic hostility and violence may become intense. For example, experts have pointed out that the number of skinheads in Russia grew from about 20,000 in 2001 to 50,000 in 2003 and it likely reached 80,000 by 2005-forming one of the largest concentrations of hate groups in the world (Kolesov 2004; Konygina 2004). The principal objective of this study is to investigate systematically two sets of questions related to these concerns. Each of them addresses a distinct dimension of inter-minority xenophobia. The first set of questions compares attitudes of the ethnic majority (Russians) and ethnic minorities toward immigration. Is conflict among ethnic minorities-along the lines of the 1992 Los Angeles riots more likely than conflict between the majority Slavs and the non-Slav minorities (along the 2006 Kondopoga riots)? Would ethnic or religious minorities feel less alarmed by migrants than ethnic or religious majorities? And if migrants have similar ethnic and cultural background as the "native" minorities, are the latter more likely to accept them as kin?

The second set of questions compares immigration attitudes across migrant minorities. Are some minorities more xenophobic than others and, if so why? What drives hostility among groups who share not only minority status in a receiving state or community, but also ethnic, religious, and cultural background? Specifically, this study seeks to examine whether and how variation in administrative status, size, and ethnicity affects hostility of some minorities toward others. Which are more hostile toward incoming migrants: Predominantly Islamic groups of the Caucasus (Azerbaijanis) or Central Asia (Kazakhs)? Titular groups or non-titular groups? Titular ethnic groups that are the majority (Tatars in Tatarstan) or a minority (Adygs in Adygea)? Incumbent ("old") non-titular minorities (Armenians born in Krasnodar) or migrant ("new") minorities (Armenians that arrived in Krasnodar after 1989)? To what extent is hostility mutual in

any given ethnic pair?