

**INVESTIGATING THE DEMOCRATIC EFFECTS  
OF STATE-SPONSORED YOUTH  
PARTICIPATION IN RUSSIA: NASHI AND THE  
YOUNG GUARD OF UNITED RUSSIA**

by

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# ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the relative impact of state sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation in the case of two Russian youth organisations – Nashi and the Young Guard, which were established with Kremlin support in 2005. In doing so this study questions the assumption that state involvement necessarily has a corrosive influence on participation and asserts the value of studying state-sponsored participatory initiatives. It concludes that the potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participation should not be disregarded solely on the basis of state involvement for two reasons: Firstly, the impact of state sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation is shaped by other factors, including the socio-political environment and the agency of participants. The state may have a vested interest in supporting some positive democratic effects of participation to further its own aims. Secondly, there are limits to the state's power to determine the democratic effects of participation. In particular, the state is unable to control the significance attached to participation by those involved. Without rejecting scholarly work on the Kremlin's questionable democratic credentials or on the pro-regime youth movements' numerous negative tendencies, this study contends that there is much more to these Kremlin-sponsored youth movements than existing portrayals allow.

*This thesis is dedicated to Jag and Sheila Atwal, my parents, for giving me the best possible start in life; to my brothers and sisters, especially Richard, Gemma, and Jonathan, for their inspiration and support; and finally, to Jon, for his reassurance and love and for being my constant light at the end of the tunnel.*

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# INTRODUCTION

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Scholarly work on participation and development in the last ten to fifteen years is remarkable for the efforts that it has made to debunk the notion that participatory initiatives coordinated by Non-Governmental Organisations are inherently democratising.<sup>1</sup> However, by the same token, the equivalent imperative to re-evaluate the assumption that state-sponsored participation is necessarily a corrosive or undemocratic force remains rarely acknowledged. Consequently, state-sponsored participatory initiatives are all too often overlooked by scholars, who fail to recognise their complexity or that they are worthy of academic interest and scrutiny. This study investigates the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of two state-sponsored Russian youth organisations, *Nashi* (translated as ‘Ours’ - hereafter referred to as ‘Nashi’) and *Molodaia Gvardiia Edinoi Rossii* (the ‘Young Guard of United Russia’ hereafter referred to as ‘the Young Guard’),<sup>2</sup> which are widely considered in the West and by the Russian liberal-democratic opposition to be symptomatic of creeping authoritarianism or at least democratic backsliding in Russia. It finds that in many ways state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard *has* served to perpetuate and indeed exacerbate *negative* democratic tendencies in Russia. Yet, there are also several ways in which it is possible to say that having state sponsorship has supported some *positive* democratic effects as far as Nashi and the Young Guard are concerned. More importantly, this study finds that state-sponsorship has not been the only factor in determining the democratic effects (both positive and negative) of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. Indeed, the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Alvarez, Dagnino, & Escobar (1998, pp. 9-10, 36-43), Cornwall (2002 & 2004), Gaventa, (2004), and Cornwall & Coelho (2007).

<sup>2</sup> All Russian words in this thesis are denoted in English using the standard Library of Congress system of transliteration. Any translation from Russian to English in this study is the author’s own.

socio-political environment and the agency of youth leaders and participants themselves have had a considerable bearing on the relative impact of having state sponsorship on the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. Thus, to dismiss the potential democratic effects of participatory initiatives purely on the grounds that they have been sponsored by the state is shown to be fundamentally flawed, regardless of whether or not any positive democratic effects have in fact ensued.

Formed in 2005 by Vasily Yakemenko, founder of the former pro-Putin youth movement *Idushchie Vmeste* (Walking Together), Nashi labels itself as a ‘democratic, anti-fascist youth movement’. Claiming upwards of 300,000 members in the run-up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle, Nashi rapidly became the largest youth movement of its kind in Russia, infamous as much for its devotion to former President Putin as for its mass actions and grand public rallies. Also formed in 2005, the Young Guard is the youth branch of the dominant pro-regime political party, United Russia, and was an attempt to rebrand the previous youth wing of United Russia *Molodezhnoe Edinstvo* (Youth Unity). Marketing itself as a youth organisation aimed especially at those wishing to pursue a career in politics, the Young Guard had around 100,000 members in 2008. The development of both Nashi and the Young Guard should be viewed as a response to the role played by the Ukrainian youth movement ‘Pora’ in the run up to the events during the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine and, in particular, as indicative of the Kremlin’s attempt to invigorate pro-regime youth initiatives at this time. Both movements underwent significant reorganisation in 2008 to prepare them for the different challenges and new tasks facing them in the post-election period and, despite rumours of their imminent demise with the perceived decline in state interest after the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle, in early 2011 both were still fully functioning and were preparing for heightened activity in the run up to the 2011/12 electoral cycle.

In investigating the specific impact of having state-sponsorship on the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard this study grapples with complex issues such as the role of the active state as well as the development of civil society and political participation, each of which needs to be considered in the context of the contemporary socio-political environment in Russia. This study thus makes a significant cross-disciplinary contribution to the literature – being of possible interest to social movement scholars, area-based specialists and political scientists alike. The case-studies of Nashi and the Young Guard are divided into three parts, each exploring a different category of the movements’ potential democratic effects – public sphere democratic effects, institutional democratic effects, and developmental democratic effects – as defined by Warren in his framework for assessing the relative democratic effects of associational life (2001). It is important to note, at this early stage, that when referring to the ‘democratic effects’ of Nashi and the Young Guard, this author makes no presumption that state support for the development of Nashi and the Young Guard is conducive to democracy: The term ‘democratic effects’ is simply used as short-hand to refer to the youth movements’ impact on democracy, of which there may be both positive and/or negative democratic effects. Reference to the ‘democratic effects’ of Nashi and the Young Guard throughout this thesis, therefore, does not entail a positive bias as it intends to denote potential positive *and* negative democratic effects.

Part 1 of this thesis (comprising chapters 2-3) considers the public sphere democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. Chapter 2 evaluates the impact of state sponsorship on the youth movements’ abilities to formulate a public agenda and gain publicity for their cause, while Chapter 3 explores the corresponding impact on the development of civil society as a whole. Under the heading of the institutional democratic effects of participation in Part 2, Chapter 4 outlines the significance of state

sponsorship for the impact of Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to stimulate youth electoral participation on the legitimacy of political processes and institutions beyond securing the incumbent regime. Chapter 5 then assesses the extent to which having state support has enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to gain access to formal political institutions and decision-making bodies. Finally, Part 3 considers the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. Chapter 6 identifies the significance that young people themselves attach to participation and the associated shift in perceptions of the role of youth in Russian politics and society, while Chapter 7 finishes by investigating the ethos of Nashi and the Young Guard and any variation in the strategies and actions employed by the youth movements. However, before proceeding with the case-study in chapters 2-7, Chapter 1 first establishes the rationale for this research by putting forward the case for studying state-sponsored participation, setting the parameters for investigation, and detailing the methodological approach adopted in this study.

## CHAPTER 1 – THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

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### The case for investigating the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation

Several scholars commenting on the artificial academic polarisation of the state and civil society have pointed to the fact that the resurgence of interest in civil society in the 1980s and 1990s was inspired by the rise of civil society in opposition to authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> This context, they argue, helps to explain why subsequent research into civil society has taken on a fundamentally anti-state stance. Undoubtedly, the success of movements such as *Solidarnozh* ('Solidarity') in Poland buoyed the tendency to focus on the role of civil society in opposition to the state and deterred subsequent study of the potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participation, particularly in the former Soviet Union. However, this author asserts that the widespread exclusion of state-sponsored participatory initiatives from the literature on participation and democratisation is no mere oversight or accidental bias. Rather, it is the product of an entrenched conceptual disaggregation of the state and civil society such that it is inconceivable to many that state involvement in public participation could have any positive democratic effects.

Stemming from Habermas' seminal work on the structural transformation of the public sphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Habermas, 1989), the liberal ideal of the separation of the state and civil society has defined academic understandings of public participation and led to the common perception that state-sponsored participatory initiatives are inherently damaging for civil society in general. Although the perceived ideal separation between the state and civil society is by no means unique to Habermas' work and indeed is more often attributed to

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see Schwartz & Pharr (2003, pp.322-3) or Howard (2003, p. 38).

DeTocqueville's earlier work, *Democracy in America* written in 1835 (DeTocqueville, 1946), the emphasis is placed on Habermas' work in this study because, unlike DeTocqueville, Habermas devotes his attention precisely to state infiltration of civil society and laments what he sees as the corrosive impact of this development on the functioning of the traditional public sphere. In keeping with Habermas' depiction of the classical 'bourgeois public sphere' as an autonomous site of 'rational discourse' wherein private individuals formulate 'public opinion' to serve as a check on the state, "it is precisely [the] extragovernmental character of the public sphere that confers an aura of independence, autonomy and legitimacy on the 'public opinion' generated in it" (Fraser, 1993, p. 24). From this perspective, state involvement in public participation fundamentally prohibits the democratic development of civil society by undermining its basic autonomy. As a result, it is implicitly assumed that there can be no positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation.

This chapter broaches the argument for studying the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation and in doing so lays the theoretical platform, upon which examination of state-sponsored youth participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard will build. It begins by outlining how the belief that state-sponsored participation is inherently undemocratic has developed in the literature and why the perpetuation of such an assumption is damaging. It argues that presupposing that the state always has a corrosive influence upon civil society precludes the analytical process and thus imposes boundaries upon one's scope and conceptual ability. The state impacts upon all aspects of society and is often actively engaged in civil society. Therefore, to reject any involvement of the state in civil society as being an inherently negative democratic force without further scrutiny is to deny comprehensive study of the democratic effects of participation and to limit our understanding of modern society. The chapter then proceeds to interrogate the assumption that state-

sponsored participation is inherently undemocratic. It contends that this assumption is flawed on two counts. Firstly, the assumption that state-sponsored participation is a negative force expressly due to the fact that the impetus and framework for participation originate from above imagines that the state is capable of acting in isolation from societal pressures. In reality, whether participation be state-sponsored *or* NGO-led, the ability of any architect of a participatory initiative to set the terms of play or shape its future course is limited by socio-cultural norms and power structures as well as the political environment and participants' own agendas. Thus, nothing can be prejudged based solely on the designs of those initiating participation. Secondly, while state sponsorship of political participation is undoubtedly not without its own agenda, it may well be the case that the state's end goals coincide with or necessitate forms of participation, which entail some positive democratic effects even when the state is pursuing non-democratic outcomes. When this is the case the administrative resources and policy instruments available to the state may render those positive democratic effects more powerful, for example offering unique opportunities for formal representation or access to legislative and decision-making processes. Thus not only is it possible that there may be some positive democratic effects *in spite* of state sponsorship that the state is unable to control, but, in direct contention with the afore-mentioned assumption of the injury inflicted by state intervention in civil society, it is entirely possible that state support *itself* might promote and enhance certain positive democratic effects of participation. The subsequent detailed case study of the impact of having state sponsorship on the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in Chapters 2 to 7 of this thesis will test these hypotheses and ultimately evaluate the relative significance of whether or not an organisation has state sponsorship for determining the democratic effects of participation.

*'The state is the problem, not the solution': Delineating the boundaries of academic thought and policy development*

Habermas' public sphere emerged with the expansion of what constitutes the public interest (which had hitherto been dominated entirely by the state and the church) to include discussion and input from private citizens. The essence of Habermas' conception of the public sphere rests on recognition of the relevance of public agenda formation to the lives of private citizens and the significance of discursive challenges to the state on fundamental issues and matters of common concern. Habermas laments the development of a public consensus based on compromise between different interests, which he argues has effectively depoliticised the public sphere and allowed the authorities to resume the mantle of guarantor of the public interest. Widespread acceptance of Habermas's theory of the development of the public sphere has encouraged a tendency to measure the value of citizen engagement and participation by its degree of autonomy from the state. According to Habermas, we have witnessed the "state-ification of society" and "societalization of the state" over the course of the twentieth century (1989, p. 142), the result of which has been the reduction of the public sphere and erosion of its ability to function as any kind of counter to the state. Consequently, as well as bolstering the assumption that state intervention in civil society has an inherently negative democratic effect, Habermas' idealistic conception of the public sphere also presupposes the integrity and democratising effect of autonomous participatory initiatives. In fact, this author believes that the "mythification [of civil society] as a virtuous pole against an evil state" (Alvarez, Dagnino, & Escobar, 1998, p. 41) is potentially more dangerous than the vilification of the role of the state, due to the complacency that it encourages. After all, to assume the positive democratic contribution of autonomous participatory initiatives is to denigrate the need for proper checks and balances to monitor the actual effects of

participation. Blindly encouraging NGO-sponsored participation, which may unwittingly serve to entrench existing societal divisions or to provide the illusion of democracy, is potentially more damaging than inhibiting state-sponsored participation and any potential positive democratic effects thereof. However, because scholars have made significant headway in the past twenty years or so in checking the assumed democratic effects of autonomous participatory initiatives and in detailing the possible non-democratic outcomes of civil society,<sup>4</sup> the resonance of Habermas' lament of the disintegration of the classical public sphere is now more acutely felt in relation to state-sponsored participation, where the assumption of inherent negative democratic effects remains rife and academic oversight of the benefit of investigating such groups persists.

Scrutiny of autonomous participatory initiatives has been spearheaded by scholars of NGO-led public deliberative and consultative forums in the developing world, which aim to include the poor and marginalised in localised decision-making processes.<sup>5</sup> The common thread to arguments as to why it is incorrect to assume that these autonomous participatory initiatives necessarily have positive democratic effects rests on the discrepancy between the installation of formal democratic procedures and the actual democratic outcomes of participation. Cornwall notes the tendency for the vast majority of the existing "literature on participation in development [to focus] on methodologies or mechanisms and how they are supposed to work" rather than paying attention to "what actually happens in practice, and to who takes part, on what basis, and with what resources" (2002, p. 7). Similarly, distinguishing between the act of 'spreading' and 'deepening' democracy, Gaventa asserts that "the rapid spread of new democratic forms should not be confused with the quality and

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<sup>4</sup> In particular, see Bayart (1986), Berman (1997), White (1994, p. 380), Schmitter (1997, p. 242), Keane (1998, p. 40) Cornwall (2002 & 2004), Gaventa (2004), Cornwall & Coelho (2007), or Alvarez et al (1998).

<sup>5</sup> The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability has been at the forefront of such work. See [www.ids.ac.uk/drc-citizen/](http://www.ids.ac.uk/drc-citizen/) for more information on the Research Centre.

nature of their performance” (Gaventa in Cornwall & Coelho, 2007, p. xvi). In the given context, this discrepancy between design and delivery is attributed to the apparent failure of NGOs to acknowledge the impact of entrenched power relations and patterns of domination in society upon interactions within the participatory arena, however well intentioned and democratically engineered that arena may be. NGOs’ insufficient understanding and/or scant consideration of the influence of the socio-political environment on participatory dynamics meant that this issue was not addressed and the potential positive democratic effects of participation were all too often curbed or derailed as a result. For example, when attempts to set up citizen deliberative forums aimed at promoting inclusion and equality are unable to bracket existing societal differences they may inadvertently serve to cement existing discriminatory practices, providing the semblance of democracy while, in practice, amplifying the most capable voices and excluding the already marginalised. For this reason, strategies to tackle any obstructive attitudes within society and to break down existing hierarchies among participants have been identified by scholars of NGO-led participatory initiatives as integral to realising the potential positive democratic effects of participation.<sup>6</sup>

However, despite the efforts made to present a more nuanced picture of the democratic effects of autonomous participatory initiatives as well as the fact that questions asked of NGO-led participation are also applicable to state-sponsored participation, state intervention to encourage participation remains cast largely in black and white terms and case-studies of state-sponsored participatory initiatives remain systematically excluded from the literature on participation and development.

Deregulation, privatisation, reduction of social services, and curtailments of state spending have been the watchwords, rather than participation, greater

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Cornwall (2002), Gaventa (2004), or Cornwall & Coelho (2007).

responsiveness, and more creative and effective forms of democratic state intervention. As the slogan goes, ‘The state is the problem, not the solution’.  
(Fung & Wright, 2001, p. 6)

That is not to say that scholars do not recognise the fundamental role of the state in “contouring the associational landscape” (Schwartz & Pharr, 2003, p. xiv). The fact that the modern state cannot be entirely divorced from civil society and, moreover, that the state plays a critical role in shaping the environment for the development of civil society and the socio-political framework for participation has been recognised by political scientists, area studies scholars and social movement theorists alike. For example, Skocpol asserts that not only does the state play a direct interventionist role, but the influence of the state as a structure with its laws and frameworks provides the context in which all societal developments should be understood (Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985, p.27). Similarly Stepan notes that the state “is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic and coercive systems that attempt not only to structure relationships between civil society and public authority in a polity, but also to structure many crucial relationships within civil society as well” (Linz & Stepan, 1978, p. xii).<sup>7</sup> Yet, although the necessity of a “fully relational approach to states and societies” (Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985, p. 20) has been acknowledged by many scholars, analyses of state-sponsored participatory initiatives are all but absent from the literature. “So heavily has the contemporary scholarly literature favoured mobilization from below, one might wonder if a state-sponsored social movement is not a definitional contradiction in terms” (Bowie, 2005, p. 46). In this way, the rigid conception of the negative democratic

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Schwartz and Pharr (2003), Howard (2003), Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol (1985), Skocpol (1996, 1997 & 1999), and Levy (1999). Frolic coins the terms ‘state-led civil society’ in his chapter in the edited volume on Civil Society in China (1997). Schmitter further recognises the importance of state intervention in order to strengthen civil society (1997). This is similar to the Russian conception of the need for the state to take direct action to invigorate civil society, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

effects of state involvement in civil society, derived from the Habermassian notion of the ideal classical model of the public sphere, limits the scope and usefulness of the academic literature on participation and democratisation. For example, recognising that state actions and the political environment affect participation by providing opportunities for or erecting barriers to collective action, advocates of a political process approach to collective action developed the concept of ‘political-opportunity-structure’.<sup>8</sup> The concept of ‘political-opportunity-structure’ (POS) has since become part of an overarching framework, alongside ‘mobilising structures’ and ‘framing processes’ which has been widely accepted by scholars as a basis for studying social movements (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 2). Yet, despite the more holistic approach adopted in the ‘POS’ framework, its proponents do not go so far as to consider state-sponsored participation among their extensive work on collective action. Thus, although social movement theory has been developed to accommodate the perceived need to recognise the influence of the state on the development of civil society and the democratic effects of participation, the assumption that state influence on civil society is corruptive and inevitably impedes democratic development remains tangible and therefore the tendency to disregard state-sponsored participation persists.

In his influential book *Power in Movement*, Tarrow defines the term ‘social movement’ as “those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents” (1998, p. 2). While the idea of ‘contentious politics’ or ‘challenging opponents’ need not necessarily preclude the inclusion of loyalist organisations who set themselves against opponents other than the authorities, further reading of Tarrow’s work reveals that the notion of contentious politics and social movements is

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<sup>8</sup> Primarily Tilly (1978) and subsequently taken up by his students/colleagues Tarrow (1998) and McAdam (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996).

reserved for challenges against the state, bureaucracy and big businesses and thus state-sponsored movements are systematically excluded from study. “Much of the history of movement-state interaction”, Tarrow continues, “can be read as a duet of strategy and counterstrategy between movement activists and power holders” and one should not ignore “the considerable risks and costs involved in acting collectively against well-armed authorities” (1998, p. 3; 6). Characteristic of social movement scholars, here Tarrow restricts his application of the term ‘social movement’ and therefore his frame of reference to those movements arising from the opposition and calling for broad social change in the face of institutional resistance.<sup>9</sup> Scholars of social movements and democratisation only consider state involvement in developing participatory initiatives as far as entry into the state may become an eventual possibility for movements *having emerged from civil society*, as Dryzek underlines:

Democratic life is not just the endless interplay of discourses. There have to be moments of decisive collective action, and in contemporary societies it is mainly (but not only) the state that has this capacity [...] Yet it is important to maintain a public sphere autonomous from the state, for discursive interplay within the public sphere is always likely to be less constrained than within the state. It is within the public sphere that insurgent discourses and identities can first establish themselves. (2000, p. 79)

In these instances the democratic losses and gains of inclusion within the state as opposed to action within the public sphere are weighed up.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Although ‘consensus movements’ and ‘interest groups’ have been studied by collective action scholars, albeit far less than ‘conflict movements’, such groups still emerge from civil society rather than being cultivated by the state.

<sup>10</sup> See McCarthy & Wolfson (1992) or Schwartz & Paul (1992) for discussion of the pros and cons of engagement with the state for consensus movements.

The most notable exceptions to the general trend towards dismissing state-sponsored participatory initiatives from academic scrutiny are the works of Katharine Bowie (2005) and Akkerman, Hajer & Grin (2004). Bowie investigates the Village Scout Movement in Thailand in the early 1970s, which was established in response to the perceived communist threat to the incumbent Thai regime in order to manipulate and police the Thai population. Initiated by the state in 1971 with royal patronage, by 1976 the right-wing movement faced government clampdown. Bowie's study explores the dynamics of state-society power relations at play during the creation and subsequent rise and fall of the Village Scout Movement. Akkerman, Hajer & Grin, on the other hand, use state stimulation of citizen participation in policy-making in the Netherlands as an example to demonstrate that "active states should not generally be distrusted and that civil society should not generally be regarded as the main buttress of democracy" (2004, p. 92). In their work, 'interactive policy-making' in the Netherlands is portrayed as part of a progressive emergent trend in Western Europe to involve citizens in roundtable discussions that feed directly into policy-making with mixed democratic effects.

Nonetheless, there is no such precedent for studying the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in *Russia*. Even accounts of the development of Russian civil society that seek to explore the influence of the state and the manner in which various associations work alongside the state, such as the volume *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment* (Evans, Henry, & McIntosh Sundstrom (eds.), 2006), devote little consideration to state-sponsored participatory initiatives among their studies.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the limiting effect of the

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<sup>11</sup> The only state-sponsored participatory initiative referred to in Evans, Henry and McIntosh's edited volume (2006) is the Civic Chamber created by Putin in 2001. This may be because the most obvious precedents of state-initiated groups prior to the development of Nashi and the Young Guard in 2005 were political parties, who are not strictly defined by the term 'civil society'. The volume in question does not necessarily subscribe to Habermasian or DeTocquevillian inspired depictions of civil society's 'good' as opposed to the state's 'bad'.

narrow framework for investigating potential sites of democratisation remains highly visible in recent scholarly work on youth organisations in Russia. In keeping with the propensity to explore the potential for democratisation exclusively from within the opposition, while state-sponsored youth organisations are acknowledged in research on Russia, oppositional youth organisations have been the sole focus for examination of potential positive democratic effects. As the opening lines of Diuk's essay on youth in politics attest to, the assumption that democratisation can only come from the liberal democratic opposition and not from measures taken by or originating from within the regime itself is prevalent among research on Russian politics and sets the focus for study squarely on the opposition:

Since the latest parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia, many commentators have been trying to explain why the more liberal parties and candidates suffered such a rout, why the period of (at least apparent) 'transition' has come to an end, why progress towards democracy has hit a wall, and where the path forward may lie. (Diuk, 2004, p. 59)

Following the role played by youth movements in the 'coloured revolutions' in the Former Soviet Union between 2000 and 2005, several studies have sought to provide an overview of the main youth organisations in Russia, both pro-regime and opposition, and to reassess the potential for youth-led democratisation in light of the post-orange "political coming of age" of young Russians (Topalova, 2006, p. 24). However, because the emphasis of recent interest in research on Russia's political youth has been on assessing progress towards democracy or the potential for an 'electoral revolution'<sup>12</sup> in Russia, and because it remains assumed that democratisation originates from autonomous groups within civil society, research since the

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<sup>12</sup>The term 'electoral revolution' has emerged among literature on the coloured revolutions in the Former Soviet Union and refers to the propensity for elections, or more specifically the announcement of fraudulent electoral results, to be the catalyst for a popular revolution against the incumbent regime.

‘Orange Revolution’ to date has continued to be confined to looking to the opposition alone for potential positive democratic effects. For example, although Schwartz’s overview of youth-based political organisations in Russia highlights the polarisation between pro and anti-regime forces and therefore acknowledges both opposition and loyalist youth organisations, the situation is framed in terms of the opposition’s struggle against the state’s administrative resources (Schwartz, 2007). Schwartz denies agency to those Russian youths who support the incumbent regime and participate in groups such as Nashi and the Young Guard, portraying them as passive instruments of the state’s efforts to prevent a ‘coloured revolution’ from happening in Russia. The chief objective of Schwartz’s study is to assess the ability of opposition youth movements to mobilise against the state and thus the conception of democratisation and participation is limited to greater oppositional influence to check the power of the state. Similarly, while Vinatier sets out a broad conceptual typology of the political orientations of the main loyalist and opposition youth movements in Russia, the purpose of his research is to explore “which ideas still have critical potential” *for the opposition* and what the “possibilities of an opening or a fracture of the Putin regime” might be (Vinatier, 2007, p. 5). With this aim in mind, Vinatier discusses the development of ideological strands amongst the opposition and their strengths and weaknesses in isolation from any investigation of the ideology or development of Nashi or the Young Guard. While it may well be sensible to look for potential openings for democratic development in Russia among opposition groups, whose democratic credentials are far stronger than the pro-Kremlin youth organisations’, consequently Nashi and the Young Guard have been almost entirely ignored by academic analysis and the actual significance of state support for these dominant groups is unknown.

By focusing on Nashi and the Young Guard, this study seeks to rectify the bias that the assumption of the inherent negative democratic effects of state-sponsored participation has engendered in the literature on youth movements in Russia and on theories of participation and development more broadly. However, before proceeding to analyse the impact of state support on the democratic effects (both positive and negative) of Nashi and the Young Guard in the main part of this study, this introductory chapter first sets out the main flaws in the basic assumption of the state's corrosive influence on the democratic effects of participation in order to pave the way for the subsequent analysis and to justify the value of this research beyond merely going through the motions of filling a gap in the literature that might well be there for a reason.

### *All power to the state*

The belief that state-sponsored participatory initiatives have an inherently negative democratic effect is in part founded on overblown assessments of the power of the state, which increase fear of the 'active state' in civil society. The tendency to endow the state with more power than it truly possesses is manifest in two main ways of relevance to this study.<sup>13</sup> Firstly, singling out cases of state-sponsored participation as having negative democratic effects simply because they have been initiated by the state rather than emerging from civil society is based on the misconception that the state is capable of acting in isolation from societal pressures and the political environment. In the modern reality, it is usually far more difficult to distinguish between the roles of the state and civil society or to discern the primary

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<sup>13</sup> These two misconceptions have been discussed previously in an article by this author, which focused on the sustainability of Nashi following the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle (Atwal, 2009).

instigator of participatory initiatives than this presumption allows for.<sup>14</sup> Skocpol asserts that states are ‘autonomous actors’ in the sense that they may “formulate and pursue their own goals which are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes or society” (Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985, p. 9). However, this study contends that, in the same way that the notion that NGO participatory initiatives can function in isolation from society is misleading, the concept of ‘autonomous state action’ is not useful for understanding the role and capabilities of the active state in civil society. Although it is true that states are not passive agents of the public will, far from it, neither the decisions they make nor the action they take are ever entirely divorced from consideration of socio-political issues or the sway of external actors. Labelling states as ‘autonomous actors’ encourages oversight of the influence of society and the broader political environment on the development and implementation of state initiatives and thus exacerbates the tendency to exaggerate the state’s powers. Even in instances when the state seems to act solely in its own immediate interests, pursuing a course of repressive measures to impede the expression of societal interests for example, it still has to take into account a number of factors in assessing its optimum course of action, including societal pressures and the wider political context. In fact, such policy is often pursued in direct acknowledgement of the influence of society and in fear of its potential power to topple the incumbent regime. It is this understanding that state-sponsored participatory initiatives cannot develop in isolation from society that reveals the flawed logic of dismissing the potential democratic effects of all such initiatives solely on the grounds that they have not emerged from civil society. As Nashi commissar and spokesperson Maria

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<sup>14</sup> Habermas himself acknowledges the decreasing viability of such a clear demarcation of the roles of the state and civil society in the second section of his analysis. However, the Habermasian conception of the classical public sphere as being necessarily independent from the state is retained as a liberal-democratic normative ideal, which continues to inform contemporary understandings of the state-society dialectic (Hohendahl, 1979 in Cornwall, 2002, pp.4-5).

Droková notes, state support for Nashi's initial development was partly a response to the perceived intentions and demands of young Russians:

When the threat of the 'Orange Revolution' arose, after the events in the Ukraine and Georgia [...] the realisation that [young people's actions can affect the whole country] by both young Russians and the government led to the creation of Nashi.<sup>15</sup>

While the above quotation reflects the way in which the state sought to support the development of Nashi in order to contain youth energies inspired by the 'Orange Revolution', it also reveals that the attitudes and potential actions of young people themselves were an integral component of Nashi's origins. Both Nashi and the Young Guard were designed to cater for the particular needs of young people in Russia at the time in a way that would be non-threatening and even beneficial to the incumbent regime, yet nonetheless responsive to young Russians.

Secondly, the assumption that the state has a corrosive influence on the potential democratic effects of participation is based on the further misconception that the state is able to direct participation and determine its effects according to its own purposes. In fact, neither the state nor any other external actor is able to fully control the outcome or significance of voluntary participation. State initiatives are prey to socio-cultural influences in the same way that 'well-meaning' NGO attempts to foster participation are affected by the norms, prejudices and expectations that participants themselves harbour. Moreover, conceiving of the democratic effects of state sponsored participation as immutable and based solely on the state's intentions is to deny participants' own agency. To make such a claim is a severe

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<sup>15</sup> Author's interview with Maria Droková, Lake Seliger, 24 July 2008.

indictment of the political environment in any given situation and thus the blanket application of this assumption is inappropriate. Taking into account the significance attached to participation by participants themselves, the framework that Sarah White uses to assess the 'content of participation' is useful here (White, 1996). White examines the form and function of participatory initiatives in relation to what she terms 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' interests, both of which have a bearing on the democratic effects of participation. 'Top-down' interests refer to "the interests that those who design and implement development programs have in the participation of others," whether they be the state, NGOs or other actors. 'Bottom-up' interests refer to "how the participants themselves see their participation and what they expect to get out of it" (White, 1996, p. 7). In this way, White's article appreciates that neither the interests of those involved in setting up and running participatory initiatives, nor the interests of participants themselves can be understood without reference to the other.

Bowie's case study of the right-wing Village Scout Movement in Thailand, referred to above, provides an excellent illustration of the undeniable dialectic between the state and society (Bowie, 2005). Bowie demonstrates that even under conditions of active state interference and political repression, the interaction between state interests and societal demands shapes the creation, development, and significance of state-sponsored movements.

Although the role of the [Thai] state was fundamental [in the creation and spread of the Village Scout movement], the movement can be best understood by exploring the intersection between the crisis facing the Thai state and the varying hopes and fears of its citizenry. (2005, p. 48)

At the time of the inauguration of the Village Scout Movement, Thailand's military dictatorship was under threat from Communist insurgency, rising civil discontent and

demands for democratic reform. Consequently, the Ministry of the Interior for Thailand formed the Village Scout Movement with two primary objectives in mind. Firstly, “the movement sought to inoculate the Thai body politic against communism by injecting its citizenry with a dose of nationalism” (Bowie, 2005, p. 48). Secondly, the movement aimed to repress dissent and generate support for the incumbent regime across society by a process of intimidation and encouraging others to inform on traitors to the nationalist cause. Thus it is possible to say that although the Village Scout Movement was designed and initiated by the state with the preservation of the incumbent regime and the state’s interests foremost in mind, its creation was also a response to the contemporary environment and the perceived threat of mass communist revolt. In a similar fashion, the huge success of the Village Scout Movement and its rapid expansion between 1972-6 owed as much to public fear of perceived threats to the integrity of the nation and the current popularity of the King (patron of the movement), as it did to state planning and expenditure on the movement’s grand initiation ceremonies. Finally, in 1976, the authorities attempted to rein in the Village Scout Movement following rising conflict between movement activists and local government officials. Again state clampdown on the Village Scout Movement demonstrates how societal interests and participants’ own agendas impact on state intervention within civil society. In the time preceding the clampdown, the Village Scout Movement had begun to take on a dynamic, which the state had not intended. The movement had begun to be used as a “political base for various politicians seeking national-level positions of power in the capital and increasingly caused political complications for the state rather than offering solutions” (Bowie, 2005, p. 56). Therefore, although the state played a key role in both establishing and halting the activity of the Village Scout Movement, it could not control the direction of the movement’s development.

Accordingly, the affirmed interplay between state and societal interests, between the creators' intentions and the operational reality of participatory initiatives, will be elaborated in the course of this study's analysis of the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in Russia. While this author is certain that the Kremlin could and would shut down Nashi and the Young Guard if they began to challenge the regime, as with the example of the Village Scout Movement above, the state cannot fully determine the direction the youth movements take, control their behaviour, or direct the significance of participation for activists beyond threatening to take action to halt the movements' activities.

### *State interests and resources*

The preconception that state-sponsored participation has negative democratic effects also presumes that the state has no interest in pursuing any positive democratic effects of participation. Judging by Dryzek's assessment below of the historical impetus for democratisation such an assumption would not be unfounded:

An examination of the history of democratisation indicates that pressures for greater democracy almost always emanate from insurgency in oppositional civil society, rarely or never from the state itself. (Dryzek, 2000, p. 87)

However, while state-sponsored participation is not without its own agenda and without discounting Dryzek's above assessment, it may still be the case that the state's end goals coincide with or necessitate forms of participation that entail some positive democratic effects regardless of the questionable democratic credentials of the state's motivation in supporting such participation.

A prime example of the state having a vested interest in pursuing positive democratic outcomes of participation is when, in the face of a perceived threat to the incumbent regime, the state encourages engagement of a particular group or adopts a more inclusive tactic in order to maintain the regime's legitimacy and secure its control. This may be the case when certain sections of the population, such as ethnic groups, women, young people (in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard) or even the political opposition, threaten civic unrest and the state seeks to incorporate them into the existing power structure in order to maintain the incumbent regime's hold on power. For example, it has been claimed that the Mexican state's "longevity and stability can be attributed to its brilliantly successful incorporation of successive waves of potential troublemakers" (Dryzek, 2000, p. 92). Although cooptation of democratic opposition forces does not equate to the state pursuing democratic outcomes for democracy's sake, and indeed the negative democratic effects of forced cooptation are obvious, the example of the Mexican regime is used in order to highlight the state's recognition and accommodation of political alternatives into the formal political arena as part of its strategy to prevent political instability: Presumably there are some concessions in terms of power and influence made by the state to such groups in order to persuade them to relinquish their potential to act as a mobilising force for opposition to the incumbent regime. Alternatively, the state may seek to provide genuine opportunities for public involvement in local decision-making through the devolvement of decision-making on certain issues to local communities, in order to shift some responsibility from themselves and reduce their own accountability for any failings.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, when the state initiates consultation with user groups, for example, regarding healthcare practices, the state may strive to ensure that feedback arising from consultation informs policy-making so as to secure its legitimacy in the

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<sup>16</sup> Warren terms this strategy of devolving decisions-making in order to deal with difficult issues with public support 'subsidiarity' (2001, p.190).

eyes of the electorate, irrespective of how successful the implementation of said policy is in practice. In each of the above instances it is fair to say that the state *intends* to encourage some positive democratic effects through participation although the motivations for doing so are not necessarily commendable. Therefore, it is not safe to automatically assume that state involvement in participation equates to all round negative democratic effects even if it is true, as Dryzek asserts, that the state itself is rarely or never motivated by a genuine desire for greater democracy as an end in itself.

Furthermore, if and when state interests *do* coincide with or necessitate positive democratic effects of participation, the administrative resources and ‘policy instruments’ available to the state may render these effects more powerful. This eventuality runs contrary to the assumption that state-sponsored participation is inherently undemocratic. Consequently, by emphasising the singular importance of participatory initiatives’ autonomy from the state, liberal democratic conceptions of the public sphere influenced by the Habermassian tradition besmirch any idea of collaboration with the state and thus deny participatory initiatives’ access to potentially massive opportunities that may be available via the state,<sup>17</sup> as Fraser notes:

The desirability of a sharp separation of civil society and the state [...] promotes [...] weak publics, publics whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formulation and does not also encompass decision-making [...]. (Fraser, 1993, p. 24)

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<sup>17</sup> Although McCarthy and Wolfson outline the benefits of state support for ‘consensus movements’ (1992), as noted earlier, state support for social movements in general is considered in terms of the weighing up the potential gains of having state sponsorship against the perceived inherent detriment to the movements’ integrity by having any involvement with the state.

Recognising the potential benefit of opportunities available through cooperation with the state, some scholars have criticised academic work on Latin American social movements during the seventies and eighties, which “praised movements’ putative eschewal of institutional politics, their defence of absolute autonomy, and their emphasis on direct democracy”, for giving rise to an “ethos of indiscriminate rejection of the institutional (Doime 1993; Silova 1994; Coelho 1992; Hellman 1994) that made it difficult for movements to effectively articulate their claims in formal political arenas” (Alvarez, Dagnino, & Escobar, 1998, p. 13). Ironically, while outside interest in youth movements and potential openings for democracy in Russia remains almost exclusively focused on the opposition, having state support becomes especially significant under a repressive regime such as Russia, where resources are centralised and the state has greater power to erect barriers, remove obstacles or even to provide incentives for participation.

This study explores the possibility that the Russian state may have a vested interest in promoting certain positive democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. It considers whether the Kremlin’s motivations for sponsoring the youth movements have supported any positive democratic effects. Moreover, taking into account the state’s potential to strengthen these effects, this study assesses the Kremlin’s role in reinforcing both negative and positive democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.

Overall, more than the basic desire to rectify the existing bias in the literature, this chapter has emphasised the importance of studying the impact of state sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation on two counts. Firstly, state involvement in civil society (both in terms of shaping the regulatory framework and socio-political environment as well as actively intervening to support favoured initiatives) *is a reality* and therefore worthy of thorough-

going academic scrutiny. Accepting for a moment, as many do, that state intervention in civil society has an inherently negative democratic impact, investigation of the specific impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation nonetheless provides an insight into the interaction between state and societal interests and informs our understanding of the nature of the political system at hand. Secondly, the democratic *effects* of participation are *not* solely dependent on the democratic credentials of the *motives* or *intentions* of those initiating participation. Thus, potential positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation should not be dismissed on the grounds that state support for participatory initiatives prioritises its own interests above public interests. The fact that the state is the primary agent in initiating participation should not automatically override other factors in assessing the democratic effects of participation: Attention should also be paid to factors such as the socio-political environment and the nature of participation itself, as scholars of NGOs have noted. Rather than employing Nashi and the Young Guard as an example of the positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation, the validity of this thesis rests only on the democratic impact of state support for the youth movements being far more complex than simple negative causation. This study will identify specific features of the impact of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard on various categories of potential democratic effects (public sphere, institutional and developmental – explained below), discerning any differences between the two state-sponsored youth movements as well as highlighting the significance of factors other than state-sponsorship in determining the democratic effects of participation. Before embarking upon this task in the main body of the thesis (chapters 2-7) this study must first set out the framework and methodology employed to evaluate the impact of state sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard.

## Conceptualising the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard

Although analysing the ‘democratic’ effects of state-sponsored participation is necessarily a normative task,<sup>18</sup> this study refrains as far as possible from becoming bogged down in discussion of the relative nature of the concept of democracy. Acknowledging the breadth of literature devoted to the concept of democracy in Eastern Europe alone as well as recognising the relevance among others of the ideas of ‘electoral democracy’ or ‘managed democracy’ for evaluating the democratic effects of state-sponsored youth participation in Russia,<sup>19</sup> this study nonetheless chooses to adopt a more clinical approach to assessing the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in the hope that this will bring greater clarity and provide a more objective and comprehensive assessment than adopting one or other concept of democracy would. This decision is justified on the grounds that issues of contention regarding definitions of democracy and what constitutes a ‘consolidated democracy’ are concerned with determining what the end point of the democratisation process is and with providing labels that can be used to determine whether a country has achieved a certain level or quality of democracy; whereas this study is concerned only with measuring the various positive or negative democratic effects of state-sponsored youth participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, not what examination of state support for these youth movements reveals about the nature or progression of Russian democracy as a whole. Nonetheless, in adopting Warren’s categorisation of the potential democratic effects of association, discussed below,

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<sup>18</sup> Not only is the concept of democracy in general a normative concept, but the rationale for undertaking this research is inevitably imbued with a sense of the bias involved in dismissing state-sponsored participatory initiatives from analyses of participation and development based on liberal democratic assumptions made about the role of the state in civil society.

<sup>19</sup> The concept of ‘electoral democracy’ is associated with Schumpeter (1976). The term ‘managed democracy’ is used frequently to refer to contemporary Russia, for instance see Balzer (2003).

this study appropriates the liberal democratic frame of reference for analysing the democratic effects of participation contained in Warren's work.<sup>20</sup>

Developing a framework for discussing the interaction between different democratic effects of associations, which he intends to be employed by other researchers in a case-study approach, Warren distinguishes between three types of democratic effects – public sphere, institutional and developmental (2001, p.13). Categorisation of the potential democratic effects of participation in this way is extremely useful for the purposes of this study as it enables the researcher to separate areas where the state is assumed to have a particularly negative impact (public sphere democratic effects) from areas where it is conceivable that the state could potentially have a positive effect (institutional democratic effects) as well as to draw out the manner in which 'trade-offs' can and often do occur between different democratic effects of participation (Warren, 2001, p.12). As noted above, while state-sponsored participatory initiatives' perceived lack of autonomy and negative impact on the development of civil society forms the basis for the common assumption that state-sponsored participation has an inherently corrosive influence, at the same time it is recognised that the state has the potential to boost the positive democratic effects of participation in other areas such as access to decision-making and representation in formal political institutions. Within each broad category of democratic effects as well there are possibilities for trade-offs whereby some positive effects naturally come at the expense of others. Thus Warren's approach to framing the democratic effects of participation so as to take into account the interplay between different effects without giving any obvious priority to one particular area of democratic effects over another is considered to be an appropriate framework for this study.

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<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that this thesis is applying Warren's criteria for measuring the democratic effects of associations in contemporary Russia, which is based on study of associations in America.

However, although the framework for this study is heavily based on Warren's disaggregation of the possible effects of participation, it does not apply Warren's conceptualisation in a prescriptive fashion. Seeking to uncover the *dominant* democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard and explore any tradeoffs between them, this study identifies six specific areas from Warren's exhaustive breakdown of the potential democratic effects of associations on which to focus (two for each of the three categories of democratic effects). The six areas of the potential democratic effects of association, which form the basis of this investigation, are set out below under the headings of the three broader categories of public sphere, institutional, and development democratic effects. These six areas correspond directly to each of the six chapters that comprise the main body of this thesis.

### *Public sphere democratic effects*

'Public sphere democratic effects' refers to the "formation of public opinion and public judgment, especially by providing the social infrastructure of public spheres that develop agendas, test ideas, embody deliberations, and provide voice" (Warren, 2001, p. 61). In other words, 'public sphere democratic effects' refers to the impact of participation on the development of a functioning civil society.<sup>21</sup> Warren identifies three areas of potential public sphere democratic effects of organisations: 'public communication and deliberation', 'representations of difference' and 'representations of commonality'. Focusing on the areas of potential democratic effects that relate directly to Nashi and the Young Guard, this thesis considers the relevant aspects of 'representations of difference' and 'representations of

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<sup>21</sup> The definition of 'civil society' used in this thesis is discussed in the introduction to Part 1 on pages 43 and 44.

commonality’ together in its analysis and the key research questions concerning the public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard are thus as follows:

1. Public communication and deliberation – How has having state sponsorship affected Nashi and the Young Guard’s ability to make ‘public presentation of their cause’ and thus to exert public influence? Are Nashi and the Young Guard sufficiently distanced from the state and from ‘sensitivity to power and money’ to be able to develop a public agenda and to formulate public opinion (Warren, 2001, p. 80)?
2. Commonality and difference – Do Nashi and the Young Guard foster the development of bonds of mutual trust and reciprocity between young Russians by building youth communities? Are Nashi and the Young Guard able to challenge the status quo by recognising difference of opinion and ‘discursive challenges’ as opposed to representing a ‘mainstream consensus’ (Warren, 2001, p.81)?

### *Institutional democratic effects*

‘Institutional democratic effects’ refers to the manner in which associations may “influence the extent to which the institutions of voting and representation work in democratic ways [...] by providing political representation, enabling pressure and resistance, organizing political processes, facilitating cooperation, and serving as alternative venues for governance” (Warren, 2001, p. 61). Warren identifies 5 areas of potential institutional democratic effects of organisations: representation, resistance, subsidiarity,<sup>22</sup> coordination and cooperation, and democratic legitimisation. For the purposes of this thesis democratic legitimisation and

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<sup>22</sup> This refers to the ways in which organisations can “serve the social infrastructure of subsidiarity” by encouraging self-governance in tackling social/moral problems, which have less success when dealt with at the state level by issuing sanctions and such like (Warren, 2001, p. 88).

representation are identified as the key areas of potential democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard and the key research questions are as follows:

3. Democratic legitimisation - In what ways do Nashi and the Young Guard serve to “underwrite the legitimacy of the state” in terms of encouraging support for state policy, democratic processes and institutions (Warren, 2001, p. 91)?
4. Representation – How has having state sponsorship affected Nashi and the Young Guard’s ability to provide representation for young Russians and communicate their interests at state level?

#### *Developmental democratic effects*

Finally, ‘developmental effects’ refers to the ways in which participation in associations “may contribute to forming, enhancing, and supporting the capacities of democratic citizens [...] to participate in collective judgment and decision-making and to develop autonomous judgments that reflect their considered wants and beliefs” (Warren, 2001, p. 61). Of the five areas of potential developmental democratic effects defined by Warren, ‘efficacy’, ‘political skills’ and ‘critical skills’ are considered together here and ‘information’ is disregarded as neither Nashi nor the Young Guard aims to provide any kind of information service. The two resultant areas of developmental effects investigated in this thesis and the key research questions for each are set out below.

5. Political efficacy and critical skills - How have Nashi and the Young Guard contributed to changing perceptions of youth in Russian politics and society and to improving young Russians’ political efficacy? Do Nashi and the Young Guard enable

the development of critical and cognitive skills required for participants to be able to form autonomous judgements? Is there the opportunity for internal debate and conflict to arise and be resolved by deliberative means?

6. Civic virtues - How do Nashi and the Young Guard promote or hinder the development of civic virtues such as tolerance and respect? How has having state-sponsorship affected this?

The *relative* influence of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard is all-important for this study. When measuring the youth movements' democratic effects in the above categories, this study considers whether it is likely that the same outcome would have been possible without state support. It also evaluates to what extent gains made in some areas with the help of state support have come at the expense of other areas of potential democratic effects. The point of reference for evaluating the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in this study is the corresponding situation in Russia prior to the youth movements' development. Thus, in terms of representation, for example, this study seeks to assess how representation of young people in Russian politics has changed since 2005, to what extent there has been an improvement or deterioration, and what of the positive or negative democratic effects here can be reasonably attributed to Nashi or the Young Guard and the impact of having state-sponsorship. Similarly, with regard to the youth movements' contribution to the development of a functioning civil society, the wider context of political repression in Russia is considered only insofar as Nashi and the Young Guard have themselves reinforced or exacerbated this problem. This study does not measure the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard against the movements' own objectives, although examination of the movements' objectives

is a useful indicator of their *potential* democratic effects. Comparison with other countries is used for illustrative purposes; however, this study is aware of the importance of continually situating its evaluation of the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in the Russian context in order to identify the pre-existing conditions by which to measure the impact of state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard. The key question is not so much what the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard have been, but rather how having state sponsorship has impacted upon these.

## Methodology

### *Aims of the thesis*

- To *identify the democratic effects, both positive and negative*, of Nashi and the Young Guard in the three main areas already identified (public sphere, institutional and developmental) and *explore the trade-offs* between these effects.
- To *seek voices unheard* in the West and address the gap in the literature on participation and development.
- To *illustrate the complexity* of state-sponsored participation by demonstrating that the state's intentions are not the only factor that shapes the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.
- To *demonstrate the value* of studying state-sponsored participation as well as autonomous participatory initiatives.

In order to address these aims and meet the demands of assessing each of the different categories of democratic effects, it was decided that this research required a multi-vector approach. Such an approach would also allow for anticipated likely problems with data generation in the field, including but not limited to the researcher's status as a Westerner, the provocative normative aspect of the research topic relating to processes of democratisation in Russia, the difficulties of accessing sensitive documentary material, and the unreliability of statistical data on elections. Ultimately the process of data-generation needed to be a reflexive process and open to change.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The term *data generation* is used purposefully here rather than *data collection* to acknowledge the researcher's role in producing the data as a result of their engagement with the field.

### *Qualitative research methods*

Semi-structured elite interviews: At the heart of this analysis is the investigation of Nashi and the Young Guard's relationship with the state and the need to try to gain a better understanding of the dynamics involved with state-sponsored participation in this case – what does having state sponsorship mean for these youth movements and ultimately how has it impacted upon the movements' democratic effects? For this purpose, elite interviews were selected as the primary method of data generation. This method is considered to be the most reliable way of enabling the researcher to investigate complex attitudes and perceptions within the situational context of the social, political and cultural norms of the participant. Interviews were held with Nashi and Young Guard leaders in Moscow in July 2008 and, rather than simply gaining as many interviews as possible or continuing to interview whoever was able until saturation point was reached, emphasis was placed on conducting in-depth interviews with key figures identified beforehand. 21 interviews were conducted with Nashi and 16 with Young Guard leaders in summer 2008. No opportunity was afforded me to communicate with anyone in the Kremlin involved in setting up Nashi or supporting these youth movements. Vladislav Surkov, widely accepted to be the instigator of Nashi from within the Kremlin, was not available for comment at any point despite several attempts to arrange some form of interview or communication with him during my fieldwork. The interviews were semi-structured because, although I had an agenda and set items that I wanted to discuss, I wanted the content to be determined as much as possible by the interviewee in order to allow them room to shape the discussion and thus enable the data generated to capture their interests and concerns. All interviews were recorded and anonymity provided at the interviewees' discretion.

Having anticipated that there might be issues in the field with participants' potential perception of me as a critical, anti-Kremlin Westerner, I made sure to take care to begin each interview by explaining the starting point for my research, my reasons for studying the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in Russia, and most importantly my genuine interest in finding out more about these Kremlin-sponsored youth movements. However, I still found that I was initially treated with suspicion or at least cynicism by some Nashi and the Young Guard elites. The usual suspicion and hostility towards Britons by Russian loyalists was not helped by framing this research in terms of the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation, because immediately it was likely to be assumed that my version of democracy was a Western construct, and thus that I intended to criticise the Kremlin and by extension Nashi and the Young Guard. The fact that I was young in this case seemed to work in my favour, adding credibility to my interest in the youth movements as well as perhaps passing me off as naive and the product of the British government's perceived aggression towards the Kremlin and 'hypocritical democratising mission' rather than as personally critical of the Kremlin. Yet even when I managed to convince them of the integrity of my interest in Nashi and the Young Guard, it became apparent that sometimes it was assumed that I could not be reasonably expected to understand the nature of Russian democracy and the function of state-sponsored organisations such as these. Nonetheless, the elite interviews have subsequently provided a rich resource for this study, providing a unique insight into the functioning and mindset of Nashi and the Young Guard. Although it must be acknowledged that this data necessarily has a partisan bias, this information source has been deliberately and specifically sought out in order to provide a platform for voices hitherto unheard in the West.

Informal talks / internet blogging and social networking sites: This author takes the ‘interpretivist’ view that activists’ own perceptions of the implications of Nashi and the Young Guards’ activity and the significance that they personally attach to their own experience within these organisations is key to assessing the democratic effects of participation (Mason, 2002, p. 56) – especially the developmental democratic effects, such as activists’ political efficacy, their ability to form autonomous judgments and their attitude towards others. In this respect, the methodological strategy adopted in this study represents an inductive approach to answering the research question (Flick, 2002, p. 2), because the value attributed to elements of participation by interviewees, their framing of their story of personal development as well as the emphasis added by them all guide analysis of the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.<sup>24</sup> In order to obtain this kind of highly personalised and sensitive data, informal talks with small groups of activists was initially chosen as the most suitable method of getting members of Nashi and the Young Guard to share their personal experiences and attitudes. However, it proved to be difficult to gain access to activists, particularly Young Guard members and, again, the impact of my own role in the process of data generation and as a factor in the research process became all too obvious. In this instance, it quickly became apparent that participants’ perceptions of me as a Western outsider researching pro-Kremlin youth movements was shaping the content of the discussion such that I believe that participants were refraining from sharing their true opinions and thoughts with me and were saying what they thought I wanted to hear and selecting the information they chose to share with me. Evidently I needed to be able to interact with activists over a period of time in order to first break down the barriers between myself and

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<sup>24</sup> Whether or not the effects of participation conveyed by the interviewees can be substantiated or somehow verified is not the ultimate assessment of the validity of that evidence. The fact that those involved directly in participating in Nashi and the Young Guard perceive them to be the effects renders them meaningful for analysis.

them and to gain their trust and understanding of the purpose and ethics of my research.

Fortunately, the opportunity presented itself for me to be able to spend two weeks with Nashi activists at the movement's annual summer camp at Lake Seliger in July 2008. Taking part in the camp myself as a full participant (eating, sleeping, studying, relaxing and sharing chores with Nashi members at all times) and being of a similar age to many of the young people there, I was able to build relationships with groups of them during the course of the camp and hold several productive informal group discussions with activists from different regions. No such opportunity was afforded me to spend a period of time with Young Guard activists engaging with them on their own terms and therefore an alternative strategy of obtaining this data was necessary.

'Zhivoi Zhurnal' (Live Journal) and 'V Kontakte' (In touch) are two web-based communication sites. I first became aware of Zhivoi Zhurnal on return from Russia in August 2008 as this became the means of my ongoing correspondence with several Nashi and Young Guard leaders that I had interviewed at length in Moscow. The Young Guard itself also has its own account on Zhivoi Zhurnal, which activists use as a forum for discussion and which I have been able to observe and also use as a way of contacting Young Guard activists.<sup>25</sup> Zhivoi Zhurnal users can send each other messages and view each other's blogs. V Kontakte is another popular Russian social networking site.<sup>26</sup> Again I was introduced to this on return from Russia when the group of Nashi activists whose particular camp I shared suggested using this as a way of staying in touch with them. Since then I have been able to use this site to initiate and maintain contact with other Nashi and Young Guard activists and in this way have informal conversations with them via the internet in a way that they feel comfortable

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<sup>25</sup> <http://molgvardia.livejournal.com/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://vkontakte.ru/>

with and with more productive results than attempts to organise informal discussion groups in the field had brought.

I decided that it would be a truer reflection of activists' genuine impressions of the relationship between various influences on agenda formation and practices in Nashi and the Young Guard if I were to deliberately refrain from any direct questioning of this topic and instead gage this through snatched glimpses within wider conversations about their work with Nashi and the Young Guard, the function of the youth movements and simply their reasons for joining.

Reflection and observation: As in any qualitative piece of research, “instead of excluding it as far as possible” the researcher’s inevitable interaction with the field is embraced and becomes part of the data (Flick, 2002, p. 6). Keeping a fieldwork diary of my experience of being in the field and noting my observations during the course of my stay at Nashi’s camp at Lake Seliger – any difficulties that I encountered, and my impressions of interviews and participants’ reaction to me – proved to be a great asset over my time in the field and during analysis. Not only did my diary enable me to reflect on my fieldwork, adjust my strategy and adopt new tactics when appropriate, but it was also extremely useful as a complementary data source in contextualising interviews and informal talks as well as providing a record of my own thoughts and feelings.

Documentary analysis: Documentary data sources were examined prior to the fieldwork, including Nashi and the Young Guard’s manifestos and press-releases as well as official state documents, speeches and policy relating to youth, in order to generate ideas as to the democratic goals and intentions of those involved in developing Nashi and the Young Guard. As Mason notes, “effective generation of data” during the interview process and during

informal talks is “contingent upon [the researcher’s] prior analysis” of data from documentary sources (Mason, 2002, p. 60). However, given the significance of actor’s perceptions and insider perspectives in this study, documentary data were only partial forms of evidence. Only alongside the insider perspective of activists and those who have a place within the hierarchy of these organisations, gained from narrative analysis of elite interviews and informal communications with activists, was documentary analysis able to provide an insight into the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. Documentary analysis was nonetheless useful in tracking changes in the strategies used by the youth movements over time as well as for comparing the rhetoric between the two.

### *Quantitative research methods*

Data compilation and statistical analysis: Quantitative research methods were used alongside qualitative methods in the section on institutional democratic effects as appropriate to investigate the following:

- The composition of the State Duma of the Russian Federation over successive convocations by age, party and time in office.
- The age distribution of candidates on United Russia’s party lists for elections to legislative assemblies at all levels between April 2006 and April 2009 compared with that of the elected United Russia deputies.
- The percentage of elections to executive office won by under 35 year olds in the period 2003-4 compared to 2007-8.

- The number of legislative projects initiated by young United Russia Duma deputies in the first six months of the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation (between 2/12/07 and 2/6/08) and their success rate.

At times this research was hampered by inconsistencies in the availability of data, particularly with regard to analyses of the age composition of United Russia's party lists and elected deputies for elections to legislative assemblies prior to 2007.

Surveys of specific groups: Surveying targeted groups of United Russia State Duma deputies rather than using a qualitative interview approach was considered to be more appropriate in this instance, not simply because of the difficulties of arranging personal interviews with busy parliamentary deputies, but because there was no need for questions to be tailored specifically to each interview. Instead a list of generic questions was compiled for each of the identified groups of interest – new, existing and former United Russia State Duma deputies – and these were sent electronically to the deputies via United Russia's portal for Duma deputies past and present.<sup>27</sup> Again anonymity was provided at the respondents' discretion and I believe that this method of contacting deputies electronically rather than any personalised or intrusive approach encouraged deputies, who would not have otherwise consented to give me an interview on the topic at hand, to respond to my questions at their own convenience revealing as much or as little information as they felt comfortable with. Rather than using stratified purposive sampling usually employed to identify and target key people considered to be representative of particular groups, it was decided to contact all United Russia State Duma deputies to account for the fact that the response rate was likely to be extremely low. In addition, follow-up contact with the deputies was made several months later in order to chase up further responses. In the end, responses were received from 35 deputies spanning all the

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.er-duma.ru/>

age brackets as well as including new, existing and former United Russia deputies. These responses were then coded thematically in order to allow me to develop a general picture of the predominant attitudes and opinions of deputies, but deputies' full responses to all questions were retained intact and no data was removed from its original context.

### *Starting point for this research*

Selecting Nashi and the Young Guard as case-studies for exploring the potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in this study is not to automatically eschew existing scholarship on the increasingly authoritarian nature of the contemporary Russian regime and naively embark upon what might be called a futile quest for signs of democratisation. This study recognises that the primary motivation for the Kremlin in committing its considerable resources and influence to supporting the development of Nashi and the Young Guard was to prevent the perceived threat of a Russian 'coloured revolution'. Yet this study endeavours to go beyond the state's objectives in supporting Nashi and the Young Guard to reveal the actual democratic outcomes of participation and the significance here of factors other than having state sponsorship. As such, this study does not seek to claim that the Kremlin does not have its own agenda in supporting the development of Nashi and the Young Guard or that having state sponsorship does not have a negative impact overall on the potential democratic effects of youth participation in this case (although that remains to be seen). It is argued only that

normative criticisms of the active Russian state be eschewed in favour of objective evaluation of the democratic effects of state-sponsored youth participation in the same way that unreserved praise for NGO-led participatory initiatives has been checked. Regardless of the state's intentions, the specificities of the ensuing democratic effects, positive and negative, deserve scrutiny.

Furthermore, it should be emphasised that this study has not been driven by a desire to uncover positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. While this study seeks to question the assumption that state-sponsored participation is *inherently* undemocratic, it does not argue that the state *should* intervene in civil society or that state-sponsored participation *necessarily* entails some positive democratic effects. The objective of this study is not to present the findings of the democratic effects of 'Nashi and the 'Young Guard' as an evidence-based contribution to the case for or against state-sponsored participation in Russia and beyond. Rather, this study aims only to put forward state-sponsored participation as an object of scrutiny. It provides evidence of the multitude and complexity of factors that influence the potential democratic effects of participation beyond the initiator's intentions (in this case the Kremlin's) in order to support the argument that the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation should not be disregarded simply because of the state's involvement.

PART ONE - PUBLIC SPHERE DEMOCRATIC  
EFFECTS OF NASHI AND THE YOUNG GUARD

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## INTRODUCTION

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As established in Chapter 1, rejection of state-sponsored participation is derived from the classical Habermasian conception of the public sphere as necessarily distinct from the state. From this fundamental perspective, state involvement in participatory initiatives inherently impedes the development of a functioning civil society by encroaching on the necessary autonomy of the public sphere and thereby restricting the development of a public agenda and suppressing the articulation of non-dominant or alternative discourses. Based on this reckoning of the logic behind widespread dismissal of state-sponsored initiatives among the literature on participation and development, it is the state's apparent disabling impact on the democratic effects of participation in the realm of *public sphere* effects in particular that constitutes the core of such an approach.<sup>28</sup> Thus, by investigating the public sphere effects of state-sponsored participation, Part 1 begins the main body of this study by directly interrogating the underlying assumptions behind the view that state involvement necessarily has a detrimental impact on the democratic effects of participation. Notably, the adoption of Nashi and the Young Guard as case-studies in this thesis entails its own normative implications as the prevalence of current perceptions of the Kremlin's authoritarian tendencies reinforces existing assumptions of the negative impact of state involvement here. By selecting case studies which are generally considered to be the epitome of the negative democratic effects of state-sponsored participation rather than cases which might be readily

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<sup>28</sup> According to Warren's categorisation of the democratic effects of association adopted in this study and discussed previously in Chapter 1, 'public sphere' democratic effects refers to the "formation of public opinion and public judgment, especially by providing the social infrastructure of public spheres that develop agendas, test ideas, embody deliberations, and provide voice" (2001, p. 61). In other words, the public sphere democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard refers to the youth movements' impact on the development of a functioning civil society – both in terms of the abilities of Nashi and the Young Guard themselves to gain publicity and develop a public agenda as well as their impact on the development of civil society more broadly and the articulation of alternative viewpoints.

acknowledged as an exception to the rule, Part 1 challenges the Habermassian conception of the state-society dialectic and the resultant disregard for the potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participatory initiatives to its very core.<sup>29</sup>

On a basic level, Part 1 seeks to verify whether or not the assumption of injury to civil society is borne out in the case of state-sponsored youth participation in contemporary Russia. While finding that the overall impact of state-sponsorship on the public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard is indeed negative would not validate generic dismissal of *all* possible democratic effects of state-sponsored participatory initiatives (including institutional and developmental democratic effects as defined in Chapter 1), it would nonetheless demonstrate the legitimacy of adopting a critical attitude towards state involvement on these grounds. In this way, the conclusions drawn in Part 1 set up the rest of the study by determining whether this basis for the common rejection of the potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participation holds firm. Further to this rudimentary objective of simply checking the assumption that the state has an inherently negative impact on the development of a functioning civil society, Part 1 draws out the tensions between voice (the opportunity to effectively propagate your message to the public) and integrity (the ability to act freely and in accordance with members' own interests unencumbered by external influence), and the resultant quandary facing associations in contemporary Russia. Conceiving of state-sponsorship as potentially being both a blessing and a burden for participatory initiatives in general and, moreover, a pre-requisite for survival under the present conditions of the Russian regime, Part 1 considers how having state sponsorship may have enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to facilitate the development of Russian civil

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<sup>29</sup> Akkerman, Hajer and Grin's analysis of state stimulation of citizen participation in policy-making in the Netherlands, noted in Chapter 1, might be considered to be a more obvious exception to the rule (Akkerman, Hajer & Grin, 2004).

society in some ways and caused them to compound existing restrictions on the development of civil society in other ways. In doing so, Part One seeks to make some preliminary findings as to what factors affect the varying impact of state-sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation for further consideration in Parts 2 and 3.

Before embarking upon this analysis it is first necessary to detail what is meant by a ‘functioning civil society’. Although there are valid arguments for adopting a far narrower, more distinct focus on civil society, for the purposes of this study the term ‘civil society’ is used in a broad sense to refer to any grouping that is located between the family unit and the state (to include social movements, civic associations, trade unions and so on). The adoption of so broad an understanding of civil society is justified by the fact that this study is not concerned with distinguishing civil society from other elements of society but simply with discerning the broad influences of state-sponsored participation for Nashi and the Young Guard on the emergence and development of groupings within society. In terms of what the measures of a *functioning* civil society are, this study distinguishes between the vertical and horizontal functions of civil society.<sup>30</sup> Chapter 2 begins by exploring the impact of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard on the *vertical* functions of civil society. Conceptualising these democratic effects as communication flows between associations (located in the public sphere), the wider public, and the state, Chapter 2 assesses the significance of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard’s ability to make ‘public presentation of their cause’ (downwards communication flow from the public sphere to the wider public) and to develop a public agenda (upwards communication flow from the wider public to the public sphere). Does state-sponsored participation imply the top-down

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<sup>30</sup> While not unique to their work on civil society, the distinction between the vertical and horizontal functions of civil society adopted in this study was inspired by McFaul and Treyger’s chapter on civil society in the edited volume *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (McFaul, Petrov, & Ryabov, 2004).

transmission of a particular message from the state to the public? Focusing more on the impact of state-sponsored participation on other groups and on the development of civil society as a whole rather than on the capabilities of those receiving state support per se, Chapter 3 proceeds to examine Nashi and the Young Guard's effects on the *horizontal* workings of civil society. It asks whether Nashi and the Young Guard have been able to recognise difference of opinion and 'discursive challenges' as opposed to representing a 'mainstream consensus' (Warren, 2001, p. 81) as well as to what extent the youth movements have contributed to building 'social capital' by developing networks of civic engagement and reciprocity between young people across Russia (Putnam, 1993; 1995). The density and spread of networks of participants are considered alongside the youth movements' interaction with other civil-society groups. Has Nashi and the Young Guard's dominance come at the expense of other groups and the development of civil society in Russia? Is there a basic and undeniable good of participation for civil society in general regardless?

To complicate matters further, although civil society and democracy are interlinked, civil society can be used for undemocratic ends and with undemocratic goals in mind. It is thus important to stress that this study considers Nashi and the Young Guard's contribution to the development of civil society as a potential (public sphere) *democratic* effect only insofar as the youth movements serve to support or undermine the development of a functioning civil society according to the criteria detailed above. Whether Nashi and the Young Guard are pursuing an entirely democratic agenda or whether Russian civil society in general is currently directed towards democracy as its end goal is another matter entirely.<sup>31</sup> This is not an attempt to sidestep or to obscure what is a thorny issue and perhaps the main bone of contention that scholars interested in the development of Russian civil society and

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<sup>31</sup> Chapter 7 of this thesis will broach the topic of the democratic credentials of the ethos and methods employed by the youth movements.

democratisation would have with Kremlin-sponsored groups such as Nashi and the Young Guard. Rather, it is an attempt to leave aside the broader, long-examined question of Russia's political trajectory and future prospects for democratic consolidation in order to clarify what precisely the impact of having state sponsorship is on the democratic effects of participation (both positive and negative) and why this is the case.

## CHAPTER 2 – PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND DELIBERATION

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This chapter considers the impact of state sponsorship on the *vertical* functions of civil society in terms of dominant communication flows between the state, the public sphere and the wider public. For the purposes of analysis these communication flows are broken down into two streams, which are considered in turn.

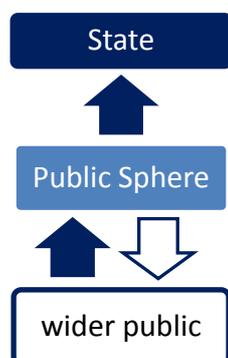
[1] The way in which participatory initiatives may provide a public platform and communicate their ideas *downwards* to the wider public, encouraging support for their cause.

[2] Conversely, the way that participatory initiatives may serve as an arena for the formation of public opinion and thus the *upward* flow of ideas from societal groups, developed in the public sphere, and then articulated at government level.

Conceptualising the potential public sphere democratic effects of participation in this manner highlights the two-way interaction between participatory initiatives and the wider public. This becomes significant when it is considered that the implicit critique of state-sponsored participation contained within the Habermasian tradition (discussed in Chapter 1) centres on the assumption that state intervention in civil society denotes a top-down influence and impedes the upward flow of ideas necessary for the development of a public agenda (see Figure 1 below).

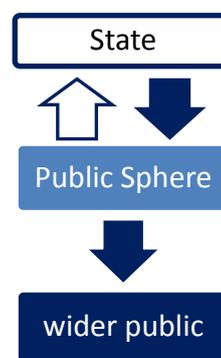
Figure 1 - Dominant communication flows between the state, the public sphere and the wider public

A - The classical conception of the public sphere (autonomous participatory initiatives)



Dominant upward flow. Main interaction between the public sphere and wider public

B – Anticipated reversed flow under conditions of state-sponsored participation



Dominant downward flow. Main interaction between the public sphere and the state

In broad terms, Chapter 2 identifies the extent to which Nashi and the Young Guard fit the ‘classical’ model of dominant communication flows set out in Figure 1 or whether they are better characterised as exhibiting ‘reversed flow’ as a result of having state sponsorship. In doing so, this chapter investigates not only precisely *what* the impact of having state support has been for Nashi and the Young Guard, as far as public communication and deliberation are concerned, but also *how*, *why* and *under what conditions* state sponsorship has had this effect. In terms of the tensions between voice and integrity (noted in the introduction to Part 1), the relative strengths of the youth movements’ allegiances to the state and to their own members are interrogated and their implications considered in light of the lack of viable alternative to state-sponsorship in contemporary Russia as well as the unique political environment for youth politics following the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine. Essentially, Chapter 2 questions whether it is better, in terms of the development of a functioning civil society in Russia, for

pro-regime groups to accept the imposition of external limitations on the scope of dialogue and action possible (the debilitating effect of such compromises on ideology and principle would be far greater for oppositional groups than for pro-regime groups) than to potentially face losing all access to administrative resources and support necessary to be heard not only by power-holders but also by the general public.

The chapter begins by exploring the downward flows of communication from Nashi and the Young Guard to the general public. In particular it evaluates the impact of having state support on the youth movements' ability to gain publicity and thus to exert public influence. After delineating the significance of state support for the youth movements' publicity and the relative democratic effects thereof, the chapter proceeds to consider whether this impact is likely to be enduring given the nature of its origins. Next, the upward channels of communication, by which Nashi and the Young Guard are able to develop and articulate a public agenda, are explored in detail in order to ascertain whether state intervention in this case signifies the complete subordination of societal interests to those of the state. Is it possible for the state to support the development of a public agenda of any kind and, if so, under what conditions and to what effect?

### The power of publicity

To the extent that they are directed to this end, the financial and administrative resources of any state may provide an organisation with unrivalled publicity by which to exert a public influence. In the case of the Russian state, however, the situation is more complex in that the Kremlin also reserves the right to deny publicity to those who fail to meet its approval. Thus, in the Russian context, state approval is *critical* for a group's ability to make public presentation of its cause. As far as Nashi and the Young Guard are concerned, state-sponsorship has not simply improved the youth movements' ability to gain publicity, but has been the key to unlocking this positive democratic effect of participation.

The high degree of control exerted over the Russian media by the Kremlin since Putin's accession to the presidency has been well documented by numerous studies concerned with the concentration of power within the central executive branch to the detriment of all other institutions and traditional loci of power.<sup>32</sup> Essentially, the advantage to be gained from having state sponsorship rests on the regime's ability to direct media attention and provide favourable media coverage to its allies. Lipman refers to this phenomenon as 'newsworthiness' (2009, p.10) and explains how the Kremlin plays a very hands-on role in directing the news agenda for the television schedules on a weekly basis.

Political TV broadcasting is managed by the joint effort of one or two Kremlin aides, including the head of the Kremlin press service and the directors of the three major TV channels. This is a cooperative and creative partnership — no coercion is involved. Jointly they shape the news agenda in weekly Friday

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<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in her chapter on the state of the Russian media, Oates strives to go beyond merely updating evidence of the state's monopoly of the media and the impact of this on alternative voices in Russia to begin to identify specific particularities of the Russian media and to evaluate the causes and consequences of these traits (Oates in Evans, Henry & McIntosh-Sundstrom, 2006, p. 50).

meetings inside the Kremlin; then, during the week, the TV managers stay in touch with the Kremlin and fine-tune the coverage by phone. This system was honed during Putin's presidency and remained operative when he handed over the presidential office (as well as the head of the press service) to Medvedev.

(Lipman, 2009, p.11)

A prominent example and one which Lipman herself refers to is the speed with which Dmitrii Medvedev's public image and popularity was raised after President Putin anointed him his desired successor. According to Lipman, all the major TV channels switched to giving Medvedev 'blanket coverage' from this point on and Medvedev's activities consistently became the key news items (2009, p.10). Whether the Kremlin is involved in detailing the news coverage of the main media outlets in such a direct fashion as Lipman states or whether the media outlets themselves are simply following the Kremlin's lead on the tacit understanding that groups or individuals which the Kremlin looks favourably upon and which serve the Kremlin's interests should be the focus of media attention, the outcome is still the same – there is a line of direct causality between Kremlin approval and positive media exposure. Certainly, Medvedev's popularity ratings (judged by the number of people who said they would vote for him as president if an election were to be held on the coming Sunday) jumped from 35%, in a survey conducted by the Levada Center immediately prior to Putin's endorsement of Medvedev as his preferred successor on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007, to 79% just two weeks later.<sup>33</sup>

The other side of the coin is the tendency for media outlets in Russia to make disparaging comments towards or more often to simply ignore any political opposition or

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<sup>33</sup> Levada Center, 2007, '*Prezidentskie reitingi – Vuibori 2008*', available at: <http://www.levada.ru/vybory2008.html>, last accessed 23 January 2010. Surveys conducted on 7-10 December and 21-24 December 2007.

non-state-approved initiative, which compounds the relative advantage to be gained from having state support. Comparison of public recognition of Nashi with long-standing opposition groups is indicative of the publicity afforded to Nashi as a result of having Kremlin backing. In a 2007 Carnegie Foundation survey of young Russians, just two years after Nashi was founded, only 67% of respondents had not heard of Nashi compared to 88% who had never heard of the *Dvizhenie Protiv Nelegal'noi Immigratsii* (Movement Against Illegal Immigration, hereafter 'DPNI' – founded in 2002) and 71% who had never heard of the *Natsional-Bol'shevistskaia Partia* (National Bolshevik Party, hereafter 'NBP' – founded in 1992).<sup>34</sup> A further case in point regarding the multitude of benefits of having state support for an organisation's ability to gain publicity is the series of rallies organised by the opposition in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle and the counter rallies run by Nashi and the Young Guard. The 'Marches of the Discontented', which were organised by several opposition groups working in collaboration, attracted only several thousand participants, often found themselves operating illegally in direct confrontation with the *militsiia*, and received relatively little media attention on the main television channels, all of which was negative.<sup>35</sup> In comparison, the 'March of the Contented' and other Nashi and Young Guard rallies, which ran counter to the opposition demonstrations, attracted many more supporters and enjoyed the sanction and security of the authorities as well as relatively positive and extensive media coverage. The mass protests in Kaliningrad in January 2010, which are considered to be the

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<sup>34</sup> Carnegie Foundation, 2007, 'Putin's Generation: Political views of Russia's youth, presentation by Sara Mendelson', available at: <http://www.carnegie.ru/ru/pubs/media/105712007%2007%2025%20Presentation%20corr.ppt>, last accessed 5 January 2010. The same survey showed that a significant proportion (41%) of all those who were members of or were interested in joining any of the 5 groups listed (Nashi, DPNI, NBP, Memorial and Walking Without Putin) expressed a preference for Nashi. The Young Guard was not included in this survey, however, a more recent survey conducted by the Forum for Public Opinion in 2010, which includes both Nashi and the Young Guard, will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>35</sup> In a public opinion survey conducted by the Levada Center in January 2007, when asked whether they understood the aims and slogans of the 'March of the Discontented', a massive 73% said that they 'did not know anything about this or it was difficult to answer' (available at [www.levada.ru/press/2007011504.html](http://www.levada.ru/press/2007011504.html), last accessed 4 March 2011).

largest opposition rallies of the decade, were not reported as leading stories on either of the two main news programmes *Vremia* or *Segodniia* as, despite their evident ‘news-worthiness’, their significance was potentially threatening to the regime.

Moreover, not only are groups ill-favoured by the Kremlin shunned by a media that works in cahoots with the government, but such groups are further subject to discriminatory practices by the authorities facilitated by a raft of legislation introduced in Putin’s second term, which increased state control over the right to assembly and freedom of association in Russia. The federal law ‘on fighting extremist activity’, adopted in July 2002 and amended in July 2006, gave the Russian authorities the legal grounding to shut down any organisation that it perceives to be guilty of inciting extremist behaviour and effectively enabled them to silence any opposition to the incumbent regime by its vague definition and selective application of the term ‘extremist’. In June 2004, tougher regulations on protest meetings and demonstrations were introduced, which imposed restrictions on the right to assembly and similarly enabled the authorities to prohibit opposition rallies at their own discretion. In January 2006, a new law regulating Non-Governmental Organisations was passed which meant that all NGOs operating in Russia had to re-register with the Russian government, disclose their sources of funding, and undergo expanded state auditing. By hampering the ability of Russian NGOs to secure Western funding, this move also contributed to bringing opposition to the Russian regime increasingly under state control and vulnerable to Kremlin disapproval.<sup>36</sup> Aside from this specific legislation increasing state oversight of the functioning of public sphere organisations, the authorities have simply harassed and illegally detained members of the opposition on trumped up charges. For example, in late 2007, Oleg

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<sup>36</sup> This much criticised 2006 law on Non-Governmental Organisations was amended in July 2009 after members of the *Obshchestvennaia Palata* (Public Chamber) lobbied President Medvedev to simplify the registration process for NGOs and thus reduce the scope for abuse of this requirement by the authorities in order to deny organisations registration (Evans, 2009, p.9).

Kozlovsky, one of the leaders of the youth opposition group ‘*Oborona*’ (Defence), was illegally detained on charges of evading military service and not released until after the Presidential elections in March 2008. That is not to mention the numerous arrests and alleged use of violence to intimidate peaceful opposition protesters whose rallies were repeatedly prohibited by the authorities. Yet, although the Kremlin’s propensity to abuse its power to marginalise alternative views from the public eye might naturally seem to underscore the negative democratic impact of state intervention in civil society, this tendency cannot properly be considered an effect of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard. In fact, as far as the impact of state support on the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in isolation are concerned, the undemocratic methods and policy of political repression of the Russian state render the *relative* positive democratic effect of the publicity gained by the youth movements all the more significant.<sup>37</sup> The benefit of having state support for Nashi and the Young Guard’s ability to make public presentation of their cause is multiplied by the fact that without state approval, organisations are unable to find alternative means of mass publicity.

Having established the critical significance of having state support for Nashi and the Young Guard’s ability to make public presentation of their cause, it is important to note that this positive democratic effect is not necessarily enduring, especially as the degree of state support has naturally declined with the passing of the immediacy of the perceived threat of youth-led political instability in the period 2007-8. While to a certain extent this is true of any situation where the benefits are contingent on resources available through sponsorship that might be

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<sup>37</sup> The wider consequences of the benefits accrued to Nashi and the Young Guard by means of the state’s repressive tactics for other groups is given due consideration in Chapter 3 alongside the impact of Nashi and the Young Guard on pluralism and contestation and the development of civil society as a whole.

withdrawn at any point, this danger is far greater in the repressive political environment that exists in Russia, where there is little viable alternative to state support for the purpose of gaining media access to the domestic public and where the state is ready to abuse its power in order to disable any group that falls foul of its favour. In this way, the very socio-political conditions that boost the positive impact of having state support on Nashi and the Young Guard's publicity also render this benefit less secure.

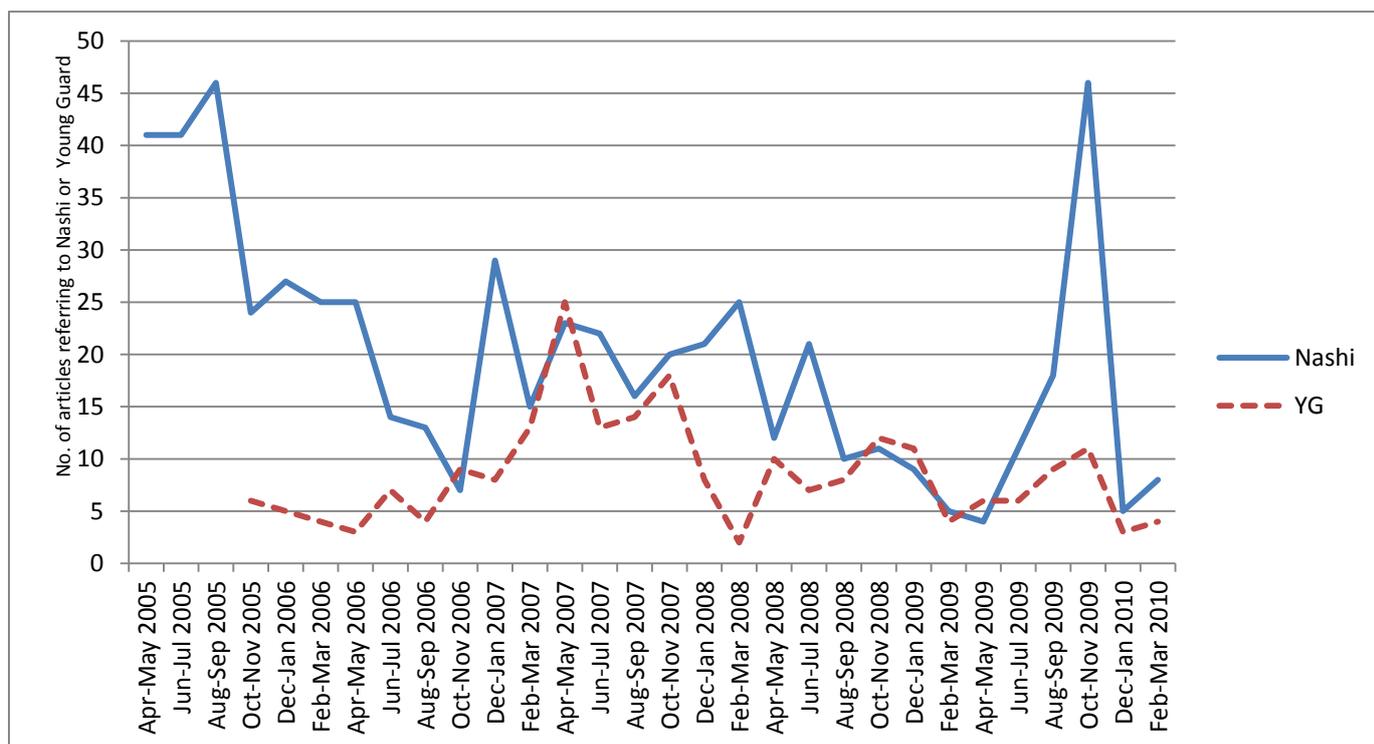
As implied at the beginning of this section on the 'power of publicity', the extent of the benefit in terms of publicity to be derived from having state support is dependent on the extent to which the state's resources are directed towards the fulfilment of this objective. Although it is extremely difficult to pinpoint any precise information to evidence a decline in state funding for Nashi and the Young Guard, it is safe to say that the level of state funding made available for the youth movements' mass actions, which have been the main focus of publicity for the movements, has decreased with the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle and the emergence of new state priorities. Consequently, with less attention from the Kremlin since spring 2008, the extent of the advantage of having state support for Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to make public presentation of their cause has been reduced. Using the Eastview online archive as an indicator of print media coverage,<sup>38</sup> apart from the 'Podrabinek' anomaly between September and November 2009 (which will be discussed below), after peaking in 2007 by the end of 2008 the number of central newspaper articles referring to Nashi had trailed off to a consistently fairly low level of coverage. The greatest coverage of Nashi came in 2005 when the movement was launched and is higher each summer when the movement holds its annual youth forum. Coverage of the Young Guard peaked in

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<sup>38</sup> The Eastview online archive is available at [http://online.eastview.com/login\\_russia/index.jsp](http://online.eastview.com/login_russia/index.jsp). Although broadcast media and especially television attracts a far larger audience than print media, newspapers are used as the example here because information is more readily available and this study is simply concerned with the change in media coverage over a period of time.

spring/summer 2007 and decreased fairly steadily over the course of 2008 (see Figure 2 below).<sup>39</sup>

Figure 2 – Coverage of Nashi and the Young Guard in central Russian newspapers<sup>40</sup>



Similarly, if one considers Nashi's annual summer camp held in July each year at Lake Seliger, in 2008 there was a noticeable, albeit perhaps predictable, reduction in the degree of celebrity and spectacle compared to the 2007 camp, which was held in the immediate run up to the parliamentary and presidential elections. In summer 2007, Putin, Medvedev and Sergei

<sup>39</sup> While this is symptomatic of a natural and more general decline in the flurry of political activity and corresponding media reporting that marks the passing of any electoral campaign period, and does not necessarily provide evidence of a decline in state funding for Nashi and the Young Guard, it does indicate a decline in state attention and certainly a decline in publicity for the youth movements.

<sup>40</sup> Data derived from author's own searches for the number of articles referring to 'Molodezhnoe Dvizhenie Nashi' (Nashi youth movement) or 'Molodaia Gvardiia Edinoi Rossii' (the Young Guard of United Russia) per month among central Russian newspapers held on the Eastview Online archive. For details on what constitutes central Russian newspapers according to the Eastview Online archive see <http://dlib.eastview.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/browse/udb/1>.

Ivanov<sup>41</sup> made appearances at Nashi's camp, whereas in 2008 the official state presence at Seliger consisted solely of Igor Shuvalov.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, despite Nashi's claims to the contrary and the contradictory information on the number of participants at the camp that can be found in the public domain, the reduction in the sheer size and scale of the camp in 2008 and 2009 compared to 2007 was apparent. Speaking to participants at Seliger 2008, who had also attended the previous summer camp, revealed a consistent picture of the changes taking place within Nashi, not least in terms of a reduction in money and participants.<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, Nashi and the Young Guard have managed to remain in the Kremlin's favour and thus the comparative benefit of having state approval for the youth movements' abilities to gain access to the domestic public remains, albeit a far less potent force. According to a nationwide survey conducted by the *Fond Obshchestvennoe Mnenie* (Public Opinion Fund) in February 2010, the percentage of those who had heard of Nashi or the Young Guard had only dropped by 3-4 percentage points since May 2009 and were still higher than those who had heard of the National Bolshevik Party and considerably higher than those who had heard of the DPNI.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, while the Young Guard enjoys the relative security of a more constant source of support through its affiliation with United Russia than Nashi (who is not formally affiliated to any political party), it is Nashi who has managed to continue to attract the most media attention (see Figure 2 above). Since the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle, Nashi has begun to adopt various tactics in order to attract media attention with some notable success. Nashi's publicity, in this respect, has come from the more

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<sup>41</sup> First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation from Feb 2007 until May 2008, when he became Deputy Prime Minister.

<sup>42</sup> Appointed First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation in May 2008.

<sup>43</sup> As I have argued elsewhere in detail, this is not necessarily symptomatic of the demise of Nashi, but rather simply of the movement's transformation in order to adjust to the post-electoral environment (Atwal, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Public Opinion Fund, 2010, '*Molodezhnie Politicheskii Organizatsii*', available at: <http://bd.fom.ru/pdf/d06molodezh10.pdf>, last accessed 1 June 2010.

controversial nature of the movement's actions and from the hype artfully generated by the youth movement itself.<sup>45</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Young Guard's post-2008 emphasis on its status as the youth branch of United Russia represents a significant change from the youth movement's original 2005 manifesto. While indicating growing conformity on the part of the Young Guard (to be discussed further below), this shift might also be viewed here as a deliberate strategy by the youth movement to assert its claim to support from United Russia in the post-electoral environment. In contrast to the Young Guard, it is precisely Nashi's *lack* of formal ties and position outside of the formal political sphere that has enabled the youth movement to boost its own publicity. For example, Nashi's picketing of journalist Aleksandr Podrabinek's Moscow home in October 2009 attracted international media attention and forced the Kremlin to take notice, provoking comments from both Putin and Medvedev.<sup>46</sup> This explains the sharp rise in media coverage between September and November 2009 noted in Figure 2 above. However, the legality of this action against Podrabinek by Nashi is questionable, which is partly why the Podrabinek affair became so controversial and attracted such interest. For this reason, this is an unconventional tactic which is far more difficult for the Young Guard to adopt given its location within the formal political arena and the restriction on the scope of activities permissible within the framework of being the youth wing of the United Russia party. In different ways, therefore, both Nashi and the Young Guard have demonstrated an ability to cope with the challenge of

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<sup>45</sup> Having state approval in general is critical to Nashi's ability to drum up a media storm and thus the idea that Nashi is attracting media attention itself does not mean to imply that it is doing so without the implicit support of the state – Nashi is simply trying to push itself back up the agenda in terms of the Kremlin's priorities and what is newsworthy, because the Kremlin itself is no longer automatically directing media attention towards the youth movements as it did in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle.

<sup>46</sup> Aleksandr Podrabinek is the author of a controversial article published online on *Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal* (Daily Journal), which criticised what it saw as the Russian authorities' systematic and enforced glorification of the Soviet period. Nashi viewed Podrabinek's article as offensive to war veterans and the youth movement's ensuing campaign against the journalist was condemned by human rights watchdogs for amounting to harassment and physical intimidation. The Podrabinek affair is discussed further in Chapter 7.

decreased state attention since the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle: The Young Guard by drawing on its position as youth branch of United Russia and Nashi by embroiling itself in controversy. As such the positive impact of having state support on the movements' ability to make public presentation of their cause remains enduring.

In order to place these findings concerning the impact of state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard's publicity in the context of the research framework and objectives of this study, it is necessary to return to Figure 1 (included in the introduction to this chapter), which maps the hypothesised dominant communication flows under conditions of state-sponsored participation. It is important to note that the ability of a state-sponsored participatory initiative to make public presentation of its cause (portrayed by the downward arrow from the public sphere to the wider public in Figure 1) is not denied by those who dismiss state-sponsored participation on liberal-democratic grounds. Thus, in this respect, the noted benefit of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard's publicity does not challenge the perceived wisdom on state-sponsored participation. However, what is significant from this case study of the impact of having state support on Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to make public presentation of their cause is that it exposes the flawed assumption that autonomous participatory initiatives are largely able to gain publicity according to their own merits. In fact, the alternative to state sponsorship in contemporary Russia is marginalisation and the very real possibility of harassment by the authorities. This discrepancy between the basis for comparison between the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation and autonomous participatory initiatives according to the theory on the one hand and in the case of contemporary Russia on the other has a considerable bearing on the impact of having state support. Nashi and the Young Guard's abilities to communicate their message to the public

have not only benefitted from state support but have been entirely dependent on it. Moreover, the repressive actions of the state towards other groups have boosted the *relative* benefit of state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to gain publicity. Though the future sustainability of the benefits in terms of publicity accrued to Nashi and the Young Guard as a result of having state sponsorship rests on the youth movements' abilities to maintain Kremlin favour, state approval for them has not been withdrawn and the impact of the decline in state interest resulting from shifting Kremlin priorities in the post 2007-8 electoral period has been tempered by the adoption of alternative strategies and means of attracting media attention by the youth movements.

The only significant downside or limiting factor, as far as the benefit of having state support for Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to make public presentation of their cause is concerned, is the simultaneous constraints imposed by the state on the scope of the movements' dialogue and actions: A state which is able to act as gatekeeper, providing selective access to the domestic public via the media, is likely to be a state which is also able to impose constraints upon that which is publicised, even by favoured groups. As such, the extent of the relative gains in publicity for Nashi and the Young Guard as a result of having Kremlin support is inextricably linked to the propensity for the youth movements to be subject to state oversight themselves. This chapter proceeds to investigate the dynamic between state and societal interests in the development and functioning of Nashi and the Young Guard. It considers whether Nashi and the Young Guard are sufficiently distanced from the state and from 'sensitivity to power and money' (Warren, 2001, p.80) to be able to develop a public agenda in the first place and then proceed to pursue those public interests in their bargaining with power-holders. In terms of the hypothesised impact of having state

support on the dominant communication flows of participation set out in Figure 1, having asserted the magnitude of the benefit of state-sponsorship for a group's ability to gain publicity in the Russian case, this chapter now seeks to confirm whether state support does indeed suppress public influence and extend state control over Nashi and the Young Guard. This is conceptualised in Figure 1 above by the replacement of an upward arrow from the wider public to the public sphere in diagram A, with a downward arrow from the state to the public sphere in diagram B. Moreover, having noted the significance of the socio-political environment for the relative impact of having state support on the ability of Nashi and the Young Guard to make public presentation of their cause, the chapter explores whether this factor is equally important for the youth movements' abilities to develop a public agenda.

### Public voice in the corridors of power

The work of social movement scholars on the implications of a movement (having originated from civil society) entering into an agreement with the authorities in order to procure resources and influence to support their cause highlights the dangers associated with opting to take advantage of state-sponsorship for these groups, such as becoming detached from their support base or compromising on principles in pursuit of influence.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, according to this author's reading of the literature, state-sponsorship of autonomous participatory initiatives is ultimately conceived of as a reciprocal (though not necessarily equal) exchange whereby *both* parties are obliged to make some concessions in return for gains. From this perspective (and thereby ignoring groups whose very conception was influenced or even initiated by the state) state support for social movements generally indicates government

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<sup>47</sup> For example, see McCarthy & Wolfson (1992) or Schwartz & Paul (1992).

recognition that a broad popular consensus has formed around the movement's goals or else that, for some other reason, it is politically expedient for those in power to be seen to support such goals at that time and therefore that it might be advantageous for the movement to engage with the authorities. There are two main points of interest arising here, which relate to the impact of having state support on the development of a public agenda in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard and which will be considered in turn. Firstly, there is the implicit notion that an initial formative period of development independent of the state is critical for the legitimacy of any social movement claiming to represent public interests. Given the Kremlin's role in initiating Nashi and the Young Guard, it might be expected therefore that these youth movements primarily reflect the interests of the state. The impact of Nashi and the Young Guard's origins and allegiance to the state on the dynamics between state and societal interests in the youth movements' policy and actions will be investigated here. Does a certain amount of reciprocity still exist when groups have been *initiated* under the auspices of the state? Secondly, there is the decision as to whether or not to opt for state sponsorship. It is assumed that social movements are free to refrain from accepting state support should they so wish. The implications of constraints on the degree of choice available regarding state sponsorship for the extent of state influence over Nashi and the Young Guard are considered in terms of their resultant impact on the development of a public agenda. To what degree does the necessity of having state support reduce the youth movements' ability to negotiate with the state in order to secure gains in the public interest?

### *Origins and allegiances*

At the heart of the understanding that state involvement in the early stages of a movement's development has a debilitating effect on the movement's capacity to represent public interests lies the matter of the relative positioning of participatory initiatives in relation to the state. Certainly, this author recognises that there are definite implications for a participatory initiative of having state-sponsorship from the very beginning compared to attracting state support at a later stage. While state sponsorship of social movements in the later stages of their development is equally motivated by vested interests and may also be an attempt to institutionalise potentially subversive elements, significantly, when state support comes later, regardless of the state's agenda, it is always reflective of societal interests and pressures that have already emerged and established themselves independently of the state. Often state support at this later stage comes in recognition of the public mandate that has formed behind the views of a particular group or organisation and therefore that group might be expected to be better placed to negotiate with the state and procure certain guarantees in the public interest. In contrast, when the state intervenes in the formative stages of a movement's development, whether the intention be to stifle potentially undesirable elements or even to prop up favourable initiatives, this is pre-emptive action by the state designed to manipulate participation and prevent it from running its natural course governed by societal influences alone. Without having had the opportunity to develop independently prior to state sponsorship such groups are dependent on the state from the outset and thus more vulnerable to state pressures. Moreover, the process of agenda formation for participatory initiatives that have state-sponsorship from the beginning is overseen and influenced by the state at every turn. As members of the Russian political opposition are quick to point out in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, these "pro-Kremlin youth movements [...] have not been set up for young

people, but rather with political aims in mind to carry out projects in which young people are the instrument”.<sup>48</sup>

Nonetheless, Nashi and the Young Guard have made a noticeable effort to appeal to young Russians and to develop an explicitly public agenda and this has, at the very least, been tolerated if not approved or even promoted by the Kremlin in the interests of thwarting any threat of youth-led instability in Russia. As far as Nashi is concerned, the youth movement’s efforts to present a public agenda are best exemplified by its strategy of appropriating much of the rhetoric and content of ‘Pora’- the Ukrainian youth movement set up in 2004 in *opposition* to Kuchma’s regime and at the forefront of the ‘Orange Revolution’. Maintaining national sovereignty by resisting foreign attempts to steal the elections, demanding public accountability and transparency, as well as promoting the development of a functioning civil society are all prioritised by both Nashi and Pora as being necessary for their country’s future progression. By demanding an end to entrenched malpractice and calling for the dismissal of self-serving, non-patriotic or simply ineffectual members of the elite, Nashi has sought to promote issues of relevance to young Russians inspired by the ‘Orange Revolution’.<sup>49</sup> Considering that Nashi is a pro-regime youth movement, the parallels between Nashi and Pora noted here indicate a deliberate strategy on Nashi’s part to draw on the inspiration of the ‘Orange Revolution’ to mobilise young people while simultaneously undermining any ‘orange’ threat to the Kremlin by sapping its anti-regime potency. In this light, state-sponsorship for Nashi’s efforts to present an explicitly public agenda might be viewed either as a genuine attempt to rally young Russians around a public agenda which has been

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<sup>48</sup> ‘On the role of the state in youth politics, social programs for youth and the activities of independent political youth organisations’, Interview with Oleg Naumov and Anatolii Ermolin for the programme ‘Dialog’ on ‘Oren-TV’, 23 December 2007, available at: [http://www.sps.ru/?id=206905&cur\\_id=224827](http://www.sps.ru/?id=206905&cur_id=224827), last accessed 2 December 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Nashi, 2005, ‘*Manifest*’, available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

supported by the state in order to neutralise the potential threat of anti-regime youth activity (and in this sense represent the deliberate promotion of some positive democratic effects whilst in pursuit of undemocratic ends), or as an insincere programme created in cahoots with the incumbent regime in order to mislead young Russians (but which may nevertheless have gathered a momentum of its own and thus had some unintended positive democratic effects that the state was unable to control). Though the Young Guard made no reference to the ‘Orange Revolution’ in its founding manifesto, it too was inspired by the events in Ukraine, drawing on the increased attention given to the role of youth in Russian politics that followed. Moreover, despite differing from that of Nashi, the stance adopted by the Young Guard in 2005 may also be described as an attempt by the youth movement to present a public face and indeed in this case an anti-hegemonic face. While Nashi reserved its criticism for ‘non-patriotic elements’ and the political opposition, the Young Guard’s original manifesto extended its critique of the existing system to all ‘adult’ politicians, asserting that they were shaped by the politics of the Soviet Union and of the nineties which devoted its energy to preserving the existing set up rather than changing the world.<sup>50</sup> Such a bold attack on the political elite by the youth wing of the United Russia party (the ‘party of power’) again speaks of powerful ulterior motives for those setting and approving the Young Guard’s agenda at best, and at worst suggests that such challenges to the incumbent elite as set out in the youth movement’s 2005 manifesto were completely disingenuous and designed simply to capture the mood among youth at that time.

Furthermore, although the sincerity of or at least the motivations behind such dramatic challenges to the incumbent elite as contained in the hyperbole of Nashi and the Young Guard’s founding manifestos might well be questioned, there are some indications that Nashi

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<sup>50</sup> The Young Guard, 2005, ‘*O gvardii*’, no longer available online since the youth movement replaced it with a new manifesto in 2008.

and the Young Guard have actually *pursued* a public agenda, coming into conflict with power-holders on issues such as corruption and elite rejuvenation.<sup>51</sup> Former Nashi activist, Mikhail Kulikov, pointed to the fact that Nashi activists often meet resistance from civil servants and state officials in the regions who seek to resist the movement's anti-corruption drive.<sup>52</sup> This claim has been confirmed by Nashi activists, who bemoan the fact that their efforts to support the state's declared drive for modernisation and greater accountability encounter obstacles placed by regional elites and local administrations seeking to preserve the status quo. It is worth noting that this is not dissimilar to derogatory remarks made by members of the opposition and critics of Nashi and the Young Guard within United Russia, who claim that the youth movements are being used by the Kremlin to do its dirty work.<sup>53</sup> Yet, while there may well be resentment towards Nashi activists by regional and local elites, and especially towards those who have rapidly ascended through the ranks and been awarded various posts in regional and local executives owing to their favoured status by the Kremlin, this is not necessarily linked to any anti-corruption drive by Nashi. Nonetheless, despite being far less high profile than the youth movement's mass actions which have more palatable objectives, such as honouring Russia's war veterans on Victory Day or promoting patriotism on Unity Day (by far and away Nashi's two biggest events of the year), Nashi has held numerous events aimed at raising awareness of the problems caused by corruption in Russia and at tackling bribery on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, in testimony to the salience of young Russians' concerns in determining the youth movement's activity at the local and

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<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that these examples of the youth movements taking action to pursue a public agenda reflect antagonism between the youth movements and intermediary regional and local elites and do not indicate any tensions with the state in the sense of the federal government or political leadership.

<sup>52</sup> Author's personal correspondence with Mikhail Kulikov, 13 November 2009.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see Andrew Osborn, *The Kremlin's youthful vanguard*, 10 October 2009, available at <http://andrewosborn.co.uk/article/317/>, last accessed 3 March 2010, which describes Nashi as a tool of the Kremlin used to do its bidding. Guillory also refers to Nashi as 'youth mobilized blindly to fulfil the whims of a repressive regime' (Nashi: Is it really the end?, *The Exile* (22 April 2008) available at [http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE\\_ID=18776&IBLOCK\\_ID=35&PAGE=4](http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE_ID=18776&IBLOCK_ID=35&PAGE=4), accessed 2 Feb 2011).

regional level in particular, Nashi's declared commitment to combating corruption and supporting the Kremlin's anti-corruption drive has tended to manifest itself in actions intended to reduce corruption in the education system, which has direct relevance to young people. Although Nashi has also conducted publicity stunts, calling for a general public rejection of bribery, its greatest efforts have been campaigns targeted at institutes of higher education. For example, on 21 March 2007 Nashi held a rally in Kaliningrad to protest against the prevalence of corruption across higher education institutes, raising awareness of the potential consequences of such corruption for Russian academia and industry.

With regard to the youth movements' efforts at elite rejuvenation, which culminated in United Russia's adoption of a 20% youth quota for all future party lists, there is a much greater sense of conflict between young activists and regional elites. As will be discussed and analysed in Part 2 of this thesis, United Russia's youth quota was not adhered to in practice and did not result in any considerable increase in the proportion of young people in power.<sup>54</sup> Yet, what is significant for this chapter is the suggestion that the failure to implement the youth quota may be partly attributed to the unassailable influence of regional party elites and business interests and thereby indicative of the conflict between Nashi and the Young Guard and regional authorities. In a 2008 summary of the Young Guard's work thus far, coordinator of youth politics for United Russia, Andrei Turchak, claimed that the Young Guard had been fully aware of the immense difficulties that its ambitions to get more youth into power were

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<sup>54</sup> United Russia announced the introduction of its 20% youth quota on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2006, effective for all of its party lists to legislative assemblies at local, regional and federal level. The implementation of this quota has subsequently proven to be problematic and as of 2010 there has been little quantitative change in the percentage of young United Russia deputies in legislative assemblies. This will be discussed in detail in Part 2 on the impact of state-sponsorship on the institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.

likely to encounter “particularly from regional elites.”<sup>55</sup> The proposed influx of young candidates represented a significant challenge to existing patterns of patronage practised by United Russia and to the influence of business powers and regional elites on the formation of the party’s electoral lists.<sup>56</sup> Various reports on the formation of United Russia’s party list for the 2007 State Duma elections draw attention to regional party elites’ abuse of their position for personal gain by unfairly awarding places on the party list on the basis of clientelism. For example, Kuinev alleges that people who did not take part in primaries got through to United Russia’s party list, and also that there was widespread manipulation of the results of primaries so that people who came in 7<sup>th</sup> place, for example, in a particular region jumped up to 5<sup>th</sup> place by the time of United Russia’s central pre-electoral congress when the party list was formalised.<sup>57</sup> As a former United Russia State Duma deputy of the 4<sup>th</sup> convocation explained, “nowadays, more and more business people with huge financial resources are becoming deputies. These people have a strong influence on the leadership of regional branches of the party”.<sup>58</sup> Whether or not such serious problems were indeed anticipated by the youth movement and its allies, Turchak’s statement praising the Young Guard’s efforts and achievements clearly identifies the influence of regional elites as a source of resistance to the youth quota and this appears to be backed up by reports of fixing the United Russia party list at regional and local level.

However, there is an important caveat to be noted regarding the above assertion that Nashi and the Young Guard have sought to develop and to pursue a public agenda – namely,

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<sup>55</sup> Turchak, Andrei, 2008, *Molodezh kak polnotsennii sub’ekt politiki*, Young Guard of United Russia, available at [http://www.molgvardia.ru/vazhnaya\\_tema/andrei\\_turchak\\_molodezh\\_kak\\_polnocennyi\\_subekt\\_politiki.html](http://www.molgvardia.ru/vazhnaya_tema/andrei_turchak_molodezh_kak_polnocennyi_subekt_politiki.html), last accessed 14 November 2007.

<sup>56</sup> This is will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

<sup>57</sup> A. Kuinev, 2007 ‘Analiz partiinikh spiskov’, available at <http://monitoring.carnegie.ru/2007/11/2007-duma-elections/analysis-of-kandidate-lists/>, last accessed 21 May 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Correspondence with this author, 25 March 2009

the ambiguity over what constitutes a public as opposed to a state agenda in this case and the consequent difficulty in drawing any definite conclusion as to whether the youth movements have been able to develop a public agenda or not. It almost goes without saying that any 'public' agenda propagated by Nashi or the Young Guard meets the Kremlin's approval. There is certainly no evidence of Nashi or the Young Guard pursuing an agenda that has gone against the Kremlin's wishes. In theory, public interests do not necessarily have to be at odds with the state's agenda and, indeed, pro-regime groups are likely to reflect state interests to some degree anyway. Yet, in practice, it is inherently problematic to judge the sincerity of claims to represent a public agenda that is in accordance with the state's interests, especially when the organisation in question has much to be gained from its allegiance to the state. If we return to the ways described above in which Nashi and the Young Guard have tried to appeal to young Russians by developing an explicitly 'public' agenda based on the demands made by Pora during the Orange Revolution, then it is possible to note the corresponding function that this has served for the Kremlin. By pillorying the liberal-democratic opposition and so-called 'non-patriotic elements', Nashi ensures that its inflammatory critique of the current polity are directed largely at the political opposition and the incumbent regime instead becomes the necessary vehicle for initiating an overhaul of the existing system.

The changes that we aim to make to the format of our country's development will be revolutionary, but revolutionary in content not in form. Our task is to achieve dynamic change [...] our generation must replace the defeatists currently in power. But that does not mean that we should destroy the existing state. On the contrary,

political stability is the most important condition for the development of our country.<sup>59</sup>

Ultimately, Nashi contends that regime stability is essential for Russia's future progression and, moreover, that the means of initiating and implementing the far-reaching socio-political transformation that it envisages lies only within the remit and capabilities of the incumbent regime. Similarly, although the Young Guard did not explicitly seek to undermine the opposition and attack potential 'orange' elements in the way that Nashi did in its manifesto, the Young Guard did aim to encourage young people to become involved in politics and by implication to provide support and legitimacy for the incumbent regime in the face of a potential electoral revolution (to be discussed further in Chapter 4). Thus, both Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts at developing a public agenda inspired by Pora have broadly suited the Kremlin's purposes too.

Moreover, while there may be some degree of convergence between the interests of the youth movements and the state, it cannot be denied that the Kremlin's role in supporting the development of Nashi and the Young Guard is fundamentally exploitative and to the extent that it may promote the development of a public youth agenda it does so in order to contain the force of public opinion and thus inevitably limits the scope of dialogue and actions allowed within the remit of state support. Despite the afore-mentioned difficulties in asserting that public interests have superseded state interests or vice versa in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard with any conviction, the substantial metamorphosis that the Young Guard underwent in the period from 2005 to 2008 would seem to provide the best possible indicator of top-down external influence on the youth movement. Although both Nashi and the Young Guard underwent significant reformation following the completion of the 2007-8

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<sup>59</sup> Nashi, 2005, '*Manifest*', available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

electoral cycle, while Nashi has continued to pursue its patriotic stance against what it sees as an ineffectual and self-serving elite in a manner reminiscent of the Ukrainian youth movement Pora, the Young Guard has noticeably begun to adopt a more conformist position. At its third congress, in summer 2008, the Young Guard passed a new manifesto championing its achievements and status as the youth branch of United Russia and dropping all criticism of the existing elite and the older generation of politicians in favour of explicit support for Putin's plan, 'Strategy 2020', and for President Medvedev. In the previous manifesto, which was the founding manifesto for the Young Guard when it was rebranded from 'Youth Unity' in 2005, no mention of the youth movement's relation to United Russia was made at all. The Young Guard's revised manifesto thus contains explicit recognition of its supportive role as the youth branch of United Russia as opposed to the challenging role, critical of all adult politicians, set out in the original manifesto. While a less aggressive tone makes more sense after the furore of the presidential and parliamentary elections has subsided, it does appear as though the Young Guard has, at the very least, become more closely tied to United Russia and the Kremlin and functions as a means of discussing and mobilising support for state policy rather than in any initiatory capacity. It is also possible to argue that the shift in the Young Guard's stance between its 2005 and 2008 manifestos suggests more than a growing conformity on the part of the youth movement and in fact reveals the insincerity of the Young Guard's earlier statements (in apparent defiance of the incumbent political elite) as well as the degree of Kremlin oversight over the Young Guard from the very beginning.

Furthermore, I would suggest that although there may well be little in the way of direct top-down dictate of the youth movements' policies by the state on any specific basis,<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>In correspondence with this author, Mikhail Kulikov (former Nashi commissar) declared: "direct control over the movement didn't exist – that's a fact. There was state support for initiatives suggested by the movement

those in the upper echelons of Nashi and the Young Guard strive to support the Kremlin's interests in part out of compulsion. In other words, regardless of Nashi or Young Guard leaders' manifest sympathy with the regime's cause, the severity of the threat of falling foul of the Kremlin's approval restricts the freedom of dialogue even of those who would look to support the regime. In the citation included below from this author's interview with Roman Romanov (head of the ideological sector of the Young Guard), Romanov seeks to emphasise that there is no top-down dictate of the Young Guard's policy by United Russia or by implication from the Kremlin:

Conflicts have been particularly rife between the youth wing and party members in the regions when there have been different opinions about what should be done. But it is possible to get through this because United Russia should not be seen to be a rigid, monolithic structure. The party is also diverse you see, they are all patriots but ... there is no longer a strict party line which must be strictly adhered to and which cannot be deviated from. It is an entirely different situation these days. There is no party line, only a framework, within which discussion and political debates can take place and struggles for positions etc. [...] What precisely are the limits of this framework? Well, first and foremost it means support for the current course – internal security of Russia, economic growth, innovation etc. Our support for this course unites us. So you see there's no party line, but an expanse with certain limits.<sup>61</sup>

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and input from the central authorities, but no such control". Author's correspondence with Kulikov, 13 November 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Author's interview with Roman Romanov, Federal Staff of the Young Guard of United Russia, Moscow, 10 July 2008.

While this statement of the Young Guard's integrity made by one of the movement's key background figures cannot be taken at face value and certainly the matter of fact assertion that the youth movement is able to form its own position independently of the party is highly dubious, what is interesting is the admission that there are certain limitations on the scope of dialogue possible by the Young Guard and the reference made to conflicts between youth activists and party members in the regions. This adds weight to the earlier assertion, presented as indicative of the public face of Nashi and the Young Guard, that the youth movements have encountered resistance from the authorities at an intermediary level. However, it also illustrates the complexity of the relationship between public interests and state interests in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, by alluding to the fundamentality of state-imposed constraints on the free development of a public agenda while simultaneously making apparent the difficulty of pinpointing the precise nature and degree of state influence on agenda formation due to the element of convergence between the interests of the pro-regime youth movements and the Kremlin.

### *The impact of necessity on negotiation*

The closing section of this chapter addresses the question of the impact of the socio-political environment on an organisation's bargaining power with the state and weighs up the aggregate sum of the balance between voice and integrity in the case of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard, which has been a running theme throughout this chapter. As we have already seen, the degree of coercion and political repression that exists in Russia renders state support more a necessity than a choice in order for an organisation to be able to function effectively. In an environment where there is little choice but to accept the imposition of state support in order to avoid marginalisation or persecution, groups are unable to effectively use

their decision as to whether or not to opt for state-sponsorship in order to extract concessions from the state in return for their loyalty. Thus, that which is considered to be the main benefit of state-sponsorship among social-movement scholars (who are nonetheless wary of the ultimate cost of the inherent compromise involved in accepting state support), namely the courtship of societal influences by the state in return for allegiance, is fundamentally undermined by the inability of a group to refuse or to withdraw from state sponsorship. Though all state-sponsored organisations must necessarily satisfy certain conditions imposed upon them by the state in order to receive state patronage, the lack of viable alternative to state support in contemporary Russia further constrains such organisations by denying them the leverage required to bargain with the state in order to secure greater gains for themselves. This means that the opportunities for voice for Russian state-sponsored organisations are limited to that which the Kremlin is prepared to give. The critical question thus becomes what has the Kremlin been prepared to give in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard and what is this dependent on? The impact of environmental factors, including formal institutional structures, informal norms and behaviour and external influences which all condition the socio-political arena, are examined alongside a more agent-centred approach, whereby the actions of the Kremlin and the youth movements themselves influence the outcome of consequent decisions.

To begin with the environmental factors, the emphasis here is placed on the specific circumstances following the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine, which shaped the run up to the 2007-8 Russian federal electoral cycle, rather than on more fundamental and longer-term components, such as formal and informal political structures and the rules of the game, which govern socio-political activity more generally in Russia. The underlying features of the socio-political environment in contemporary Russia are considered here only insofar as they may

have been temporarily altered by the events surrounding the 2004/5 Ukrainian presidential elections and thus may have contributed to opening up new opportunities for the pro-regime youth movements. The issue is to what extent, if at all, environmental factors specific to youth politics in the period 2005-8 have tempered the additional level of constraints imposed by the lack of alternative to having state support for Nashi and the Young Guard. If one accepts that the state supported the development of Nashi and the Young Guard as part of its response to the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine, as this author does, then this would intimate that the Kremlin had a vested interest in being seen to promote youth participation: In other words, that both Nashi and Young Guard leaders *and* the Kremlin had a stake in the youth movements' success. In this way, it is possible to argue that, because of the priority placed by the Kremlin on securing young Russians' allegiance to the incumbent regime in the run-up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle, the balance between voice and integrity swung in favour of Nashi and the Young Guard, as the constraints in terms of integrity resulting from state-cooption remained the same while the potential benefits or opportunities for voice via state-sponsorship grew. To put it crudely, there was now a prize on offer for youth allegiance to the regime: Whereas previously there had only been penalties for non-conformity, the Kremlin was now prepared to devote considerable resources to its youth project. The Kremlin's support for Nashi and the Young Guard was not confined to passive methods such as allowing access to the media and not hindering the movements' development, but included active promotion of the youth movements with Putin's personal involvement.

However, although pro-Kremlin youth movements were able to command more attention from the Russian state following the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine, it does not automatically follow that the Kremlin's strategy of promoting youth politics in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle provided Nashi or the Young Guard with any sort of bargaining

power in its actions with the state. The capacity of the Kremlin's desire to counter the potential threat of youth-led instability to compel the state to make significant concessions to the pro-regime youth movements should not be assumed. In fact, it would be a truer representation of the dynamic between the state and the youth movements to conceptualise their interaction not in terms of demands made and concessions granted but rather in terms of the state simply offering rewards for allegiance. Should Nashi or the Young Guard begin to place demands upon the regime or to challenge it, then it would be a question of the Kremlin weighing up the cost of accepting the youth movement's impositions against the cost of taking repressive action to neutralise the threat, but it would still be at the state's discretion and based on the overall balance of state interests. Even Nashi, being by far the largest youth movement and most potent force on the streets, would have only been able to take advantage of the Kremlin's vested interest by taking small calculated risks at most, based on the logic that the Kremlin would not wish to take repressive measures against the movement unless it was absolutely necessary. Though the Kremlin's desire to support the development of Nashi as part of an anti-opposition strategy may have given the youth movement some small degree of leeway in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle, this is nothing akin to bargaining power of any kind. Moreover, the critical importance for Nashi and the Young Guard of maintaining state support cannot be underlined enough. The case of the *Rodina* (Motherland) party provides a useful illustration of the fate of state-sponsored groups who forget the imperative of remaining loyal to the regime and sets a precedent for state repression of formerly state-sponsored and even state-initiated participation. *Rodina* was allegedly set up by the Kremlin prior to the 2003 State Duma elections in order to siphon votes from the Communist Party.<sup>62</sup>

When *Rodina* subsequently began to attempt to assert its own authority and thus, by

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<sup>62</sup> Wilson refers to such parties, created by the state in order to divert support away from a genuine opposition party, as 'flies' (2005, *Virtual Politics: Political Technology and the Corruption of Post-Soviet Democracy*, available at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9324-5.cfm>, last accessed 11 August 2011).

implication, to challenge the regime's hegemony in 2006 the Kremlin took action to tame all wayward elements associated with the party by forcing *Rodina* to merge with the Russian Party of Life and the Pensioners' Party in 2006 to form *Spravedlivaia Rossiia* (A Just Russia) and in the process sidelining the party's most controversial members. Thus, the benefit of having been set up with the administrative resources and funding derived from state support in the initial stages does not assuage the ultimate vulnerability of Nashi and the Young Guard to state disapproval and castigatory action.

Nonetheless, Nashi in particular has demonstrated an extraordinary resilience in the face of dwindling state interest since the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle. Once Putin's chosen successor, Dmitrii Medvedev, was successfully installed as President of the Russian Federation following a resounding first round electoral victory, Nashi and the Young Guard had served their primary purpose for the Kremlin and could no longer reasonably expect to receive the inflated gains of state sponsorship available in the period 2005-8. Yet, despite rumours of its imminent demise, in early 2008 Nashi remodelled itself, diversifying its activities and reorganising its structure. Nashi's reorganisation involved the formation of 10 new projects, including *Nasha Innovatsiya* (Our Innovation), *Nasha Ekonomika* (Our Economy), *Novoe Obrazovanie* (New Education) and *Nashi Stroitel'y* (Our Builders). Although it is fair to say that the development of these projects was to a large extent based on activists' existing work and thus represents a recognition of activists' priorities and efforts in a bid to sustain their interest, the decision to create a number of specific projects around modernisation, enterprise, the economy and innovation also reflects the attempts of Nashi leaders to align the movement with Russia's post-election strategic interests. As Nashi's leader, Nikita Borovikov, explained, 'like any civic organisation, [Nashi] coordinates its activity in line with the needs of the state. The state is now in great need of political and

economic innovation. We will occupy this niche and do everything that is required of us'.<sup>63</sup> Through the diversification of its activities to embrace Russia's latest strategic interests, Nashi leaders have sought to position the movement so as to continue to be of use for the state as well as to prepare the movement to compete effectively and legitimately for funding from various sources and from sections of the federal budget that have been earmarked precisely for these areas. Such resilience in the post-2008 environment indicates that the specific circumstances of the post-'orange' environment in Russia in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle are not the *only* important factor in considering the relationship between the youth movements and the state and demonstrates the significance of the role of agency on the part of the youth leaders. Without the option of procuring alternative support and security in a repressive socio-political environment, organisations must try to favourably influence state behaviour towards them by other means and within the framework of remaining loyal to the regime. In addition to reconfiguring the youth movement's projects so as to realign itself with the Kremlin's latest priorities, Nashi leaders have taken several further measures to lock-in the advantages gained from having state support, including decentralising the organisational structure of the youth movement and installing members in formal political institutions. Each of these measures, which will be discussed further at various points in this thesis, have strengthened the movement's position in relation to the state and in doing so have raised the costs for the Kremlin should it seek to take repressive action against Nashi. Interesting parallels might be drawn here with the work done by Tarrow and other social movement scholars working on contentious politics, which identifies raising the costs of repression as part of an opposition strategy.<sup>64</sup> In the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, state sponsorship itself initially increased the costs of repression of these groups by helping to provide the

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<sup>63</sup> Author's interview with Nikita Borovikov, Lake Seliger, 21 July 2008.

<sup>64</sup> See also Linz & Stepan (1997) for further discussion of the state weighing up the costs of repression and the costs of toleration.

financial support and infrastructure for the youth movements' mass actions, which mobilised thousands of young Russians on the streets of Moscow. Since the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle, Nashi has actively sought to further increase the costs of repression whilst also currying favour with the Kremlin by diversifying its activities and establishing its presence. In contrast, the Young Guard's survival strategy has been to become more subservient to United Russia and, in this way, reduce the likelihood of the Kremlin wanting to rein the youth movement in.

Overall, it has been noted that while state sponsorship under such repressive socio-political conditions provides an organisation with vital resources and some degree of protection from harassment by the authorities in the form of arbitrary bureaucratic or criminal investigation, it also entails a higher degree of oversight and interference from the state. State-sponsorship of groups within the public-sphere indeed results in the subordination of societal interests to those of the state. Yet, as hypothesised in Chapter 1, the state may have a vested interest in promoting an organisation's public face and fostering relations between the public sphere and the wider public for its own ends. In the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, the Kremlin has had a vested interest in supporting the development of a public agenda in order to attract young Russians inspired by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and, as a result, state sponsorship has enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to appeal to young Russians' interests and concerns as well as to begin to challenge regional authorities and the incumbent elite on some issues. However, state support was conducive to the youth movements' development of a public agenda only insofar as was deemed necessary to secure the Kremlin's interests. The constraints imposed by having state sponsorship mean that the youth movements are unable to defy the regime and the Young Guard in particular has shown increasing signs of conformity

since 2008, thus raising questions over whether Nashi and the Young Guard have actually been able to pursue a public agenda in isolation from the state's agenda at all. Consequently, although the upward channels of communication from the wider public to organisations in the public sphere (such as Nashi and the Young Guard) are not necessarily eradicated as a result of having state sponsorship from the outset, they are completely overridden by the downward influence of the state on those organisations. The post-‘orange’ environment in Russia, particularly in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle, increased the advantages of having state support for youth movements, but did not restore the bargaining power denied to state-sponsored groups as a result of the ongoing lack of viable alternative to Kremlin support in contemporary Russia. While remaining nevertheless vulnerable to the designs of the state, Nashi's 2008 reorganisation made it viable for the youth movement to retain state support and thus rendered the inflated gains of state support in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle more durable than may otherwise have been the case. In this way, the interaction between the youth movements and the state, and thereby the impact of having state support on the democratic effects of Nashi and (to a lesser extent) the Young Guard, have clearly been affected by the socio-political environment and by the actions of the agents involved.

## Conclusion

On a basic level, Chapter 2 affirms the implicit criticism of state-sponsored participation contained within the Habermassian tradition, which has been identified in Chapter 1 as the source of widespread academic rejection of state-sponsored participatory initiatives among the literature on participation and development. State sponsorship *does* denote a dominant top-down influence on participation and *does* ultimately impede the development of a public

agenda independent from the state. In this sense the underlying logic behind the conceptualisation of reversed dominant communication flows between the state, Nashi and the Young Guard, and the wider public in Figure 1 at the beginning of this chapter is sound. However, there are significant qualifications to be made on this statement, which speak of the importance of the socio-political environment and the agency of youth leaders for the impact of having state support on the democratic effects of participation.

Firstly, while it is true that state sponsorship impedes an organisation's ability to develop a public agenda and then to pursue that agenda in their interactions with the authorities, the *scale* of the benefit accrued to Nashi and the Young Guard, in terms of the publicity gained via state support, is not accounted for in traditional assumptions of the detriment of state involvement in civil society, as they fail to recognise the criticality of having state approval for access to the mass media in contemporary Russia. In the absence of alternative means of access to the media, the logic of rejecting state support on the basis that this prevents the expression of public interests is less persuasive. Without state approval, autonomous participatory initiatives in Russia struggle to gain the publicity required to attract support for their cause or advance their 'public' agenda. Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to make 'public presentation of their cause' (Warren, 2001, p.80) is the direct result of having state sponsorship and its advantage is increased by the inability of those without state approval to gain access to the media. Secondly, the fact that state-sponsorship does indicate a dominant top-down influence on participation does not necessarily mean that the youth movements are unable to influence state behaviour towards them. Both Nashi and the Young Guard took action to secure their position following the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle, with Nashi diversifying its activities and demanding state and media attention while the Young Guard retreated under the wing of the United Russia party for stability and support.

Thus, considering the public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard relating to the *vertical* functionings of civil society alone (i.e. not the democratic impact of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard on the wider civil society or the potential knock on effects on the institutional or developmental democratic effects of participation), in the context of the socio-political environment of contemporary Russia it *is* desirable for *pro-regime* youth movements to accept the impositions of state support on the scope of dialogue possible in order to gain the publicity necessary to garner support and to be able to promote a public agenda to whatever degree. Moreover, the Kremlin's reaction to the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in 2005 increased the advantages to be gained from having state support at that particular time and thus boosted the positive impact of having state support on the vertical public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. Nevertheless, it did nothing to assuage the severity of the constraints imposed by the Kremlin on the development of a public agenda.

## CHAPTER 3 – COMMONALITY AND DIFFERENCE

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In the previous chapter it was implied that Nashi and the Young Guard found themselves in a situation where there was much to be gained and relatively little to be lost from having state support in terms of the vertical channels of communication between the state, Nashi and the Young Guard, and the wider public. Yet this refers specifically to Nashi and the Young Guard and not to other groups in civil society, namely other youth movements, the opposition and even civil society as a whole. This chapter investigates the impact of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard as far as public sphere democratic effects on a broader level are concerned. In doing so, the focus shifts from the *vertical* channels of communication between the state, public sphere and the wider public to consider the impact of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard on the *horizontal* linkages within Russian civil society, the key elements of which are two-fold: Firstly, the existence of plurality and contestation and, secondly, the building of ‘social capital’ via the development of ‘networks of civic engagement’ (Putnam, 1993, p.173).

Chapter 3 begins by considering how state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard fits in with the Kremlin’s conception of the importance of the state’s role in civil society and how this relates to the principles of pluralism and contestation. It explores the specificity of civil society in the Russian context and grapples with the perennial debate as to whether liberal-democratic norms and understandings of civil society can and should be applied to societies in which such concepts are not universally accepted. As an alternative, it considers the notion of hegemony being conducive to a nation’s socio-economic development and political progression. Next, chapter 3 grounds such abstract analysis firmly in the contemporary reality of Nashi and the Young Guard’s activities by examining the nature of

the pro-regime dominance among youth organisations in Russia. In particular, it identifies the extent to which Nashi and the Young Guard have fostered a culture of debate and discussion around key policy-issues or whether they have stifled such ‘discursive challenges’. Finally, Chapter 3 explores the structure and nature of participation within Nashi and the Young Guard in order to assess their value in terms of the intrinsic ‘social capital’ of collective action. The youth movements’ contribution to developing networks of reciprocity among young people across Russia’s regions is considered in light of the historical context of societal trends in post-Soviet Russia.

Returning to the tensions between voice and integrity introduced in the previous chapter, Chapter 3 investigates whether Nashi and the Young Guard’s attempts to establish their dominance and gain a much sought after public platform and voice for like-minded young people have come at the expense of other groups and to the detriment of civil society overall. Have the opportunities afforded to Nashi and the Young Guard as a result of having state support, identified in Chapter 2, propped open the door for other initiatives to make inroads into stimulating civic engagement and debate, or have they, in fact, damaged such prospects for the development of civil society by slamming the door definitively in the face of aspiring alternative groups? Is it likely that Nashi and the Young Guard were simply adept in availing themselves of the otherwise unheard of opportunities for mobilisation afforded via state-sponsorship in Russia in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle and, in this way, made the most of the potential opening for the development of Russian civil society at the time without taking anything away from the prospects of other groups? Has the advantage of having state support enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to lay the groundwork for the development of social capital in Russia and thereby, in this sense, improved the prospects for the development of Russian civil society as a whole?

### Hegemonic hullabaloo

Despite its predominance in democratic theory and its status as the staple of most definitions of democracy, the principle of pluralism is not universally accepted as necessary or even desirable for a functioning civil society. Significantly, the prevalent Russian conception of civil society implicitly rejects the importance of this principle on two counts. Firstly, both Putin and Medvedev have emphasised that the fate of the state and civil society are interlinked and that the state has an essential role to play in developing civil society.<sup>65</sup> Second and connected to the first, there is the notion, expressed clearly by Putin throughout his term in office, that civil society has an obligation to unite behind national goals or priorities set by the state. The evident discrepancy between the Russian model of civil society and traditional Western conceptions of what constitutes a functioning civil society is expressed in Evans' commentary below:

The Putin administration speaks of the need for a vigorous civil society but interprets civil society as a network of organisations that, while remaining technically outside the state, will be co-opted to assist the leadership of the political regime in pursuing the objectives that it has chosen for society: The compliant social organisations envisioned by Putin would constitute not a genuine civil society but a quasi-civil society. (Evans, Henry & McIntosh-Sundstrom, 2006, p.152)

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<sup>65</sup> Henry and McIntosh-Sundstrom draw attention to the sharp contrast between Yeltsin and Putin's policies towards civil society: "The benign neglect of civil society during the Yeltsin years [gave] way to a more vigorous policy of the Putin administration to engage actors in civil society in a directed way" (2006, p. 3).

While it might be easier to dismiss Kremlin declarations of the importance of the state's role in invigorating civil society as an attempt by the regime to assert its control over that arena and negate the potentially, or indeed some would say inherently, challenging nature of civil society, the possibility of there being genuine cultural differences in understandings of what the functions of civil society are should be seriously considered. Upon further investigation, this study finds that the seemingly alien conception of civil society outlined above is not confined to Russia and has been documented in analyses of state-civil society relations in China and Japan.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, it finds that there is a solid basis for the tendency for Russian society to entrust the state with the power to define the common good and indeed to believe that the state alone has the capability to do this.

Analyses of state-society relations in China and Japan note a similar trend of state involvement in civil society and the all-encompassing state as observed in Russia. Writing on civil society in Japan, for example, Pharr notes a clear and valid cultural distinction between East and West regarding conceptualisations of the function of civil society and the role of the state.

Although liberalism posits a clear division between [state and society], Confucianism does not.... Society is 'subsumed under the state' (Koo, 1993, p.328) and entrusted to the care and protection of leaders. State power is itself subordinate to a higher moral authority, but rulers, not subjects, are expected to define the public good. (Schwartz & Pharr (eds.), 2003, p.333)

Similarly, Dagnino notes that in Latin America in the mid 70s-80s, the particular environment in which Gramsci's work was received "seems to have nurtured a strong emphasis on the

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<sup>66</sup> See Schwartz & Pharr (eds.) 2003 on Japan and Frolic 1997 on China.

progressive or ‘revolutionary’ possibility of hegemony as a project for the transformation of society” in contrast to the European application of the term hegemony “to an analysis of the maintenance of the status quo and dominant power relations” (Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar, 1998, p.39). From this perspective, pluralism is not only not prioritised but is fundamentally rejected as the antithesis of what is considered to be most advantageous for progression and development in the modern world, namely an imposed consensus or hegemony. It thus appears that the Russian regime shares a paternalistic civic legacy with China and Japan in terms of what ‘the proper relation between state and society’ should be and of the need to entrust the state with the task of setting out what represents the public interest, as well as a philosophical kinship with Gramscian notions of hegemony as applied in Latin America in the mid 70s-80s. Yet, while such reference to analyses of other contexts for the development of civil society and particularly for state-civil society relations indicates that the Russian regime is not alone in its attitude towards civil society, it does not justify the Kremlin’s conception of civil society beyond a loose sense that there may be a deeper cultural tendency underlying this. Indeed, such apparent cultural affinities might simply indicate a common tendency for those regimes (Russia, China, Japan and Latin America) to seek to subordinate society and to assume the sole responsibility for determining the public good.

Nonetheless, there is an argument to be made regarding the relationship between Russian political culture and the role of the state in civil society, which further validates the Kremlin’s conception of civil society. It is possible to argue that the importance of the role of the state in invigorating civil society and setting the public agenda is as much a part of mass perceptions of the proper relations between the state and civil society in Russia as it is of elite design or contrivance. As a former Nashi federal commissar and current analyst at the Central Electoral Commission was keen to convey to me, the problem with considering whether state

support has a negative influence on the development of civil society in Russia is that Russian society *itself* is ‘oriented towards the state’:

In the 1990s, when the state practically disappeared from the social sphere, there was a deep internal crisis in Russia – there was a rise in the crime rate and the death rate along with a decrease in the birth rate, war raged in Chechnya... the list is endless... but most crucially, there was no consensus in society over even the most basic of things – whether we needed democracy, a market economy, sovereignty. Now we do have a consensus, thanks in no small part to the state... and the state now understands the importance of civil society for the country’s development.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the widespread desire for some kind of order and stability following Yeltsin’s presidency, it is also possible to understand why Russian society might be keen for the state to play a decisive role in setting the public agenda. Under Yeltsin, the weak state was captured by business groups and regional elites, who used the prerogative and institutions of state as a tool to further their own interests at the expense of the general public. For this reason, excessive influence of society (via unregulated, particularistic interest groups) on the decisions of state regarding what constitutes the public good is perceived to jeopardise public welfare by derailing the process of agenda formation. In this respect, a desire for a strong state empowered to make decisions based on the overall public welfare is understandable in the post-Yeltsin period. Alternative portrayals of mass perceptions of the role of the Russian state in civil society emphasise that this is a product of Russia’s historic political legacy such that Russian society cannot conceive of the state not being in control of civil society or of society not being subordinate to the state. For example, Evans seeks to place Putin’s concept of civil

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<sup>67</sup> Author’s communication with Mikhail Kulikov, 17 November 2009.

society ‘in a broader perspective’ by noting the ‘deep historical roots’ of the ‘traditional conception of the Russian state and society as distinct and separate entities’ whereby ‘the autocratic state is perceived by the people as an alien force, which exerts power with a degree of arbitrariness and is always beyond the control of the society’ (2010a, p.115). Whether Russian society actively entrusts the state with the power to decide what constitutes the common good or whether it is more a case of ‘resigned acceptance’<sup>68</sup> and public disillusionment with civil society remains debatable. Nonetheless, the likelihood of some level of societal support for a prominent role of the state in civil society, for the reasons described above, confers some sense of legitimacy on the regime’s conception of civil society and of the state’s responsibilities and authority in this field.

However, despite having set out a potential explanation for the Kremlin’s conception of the role of the state in civil society, this author contends that ultimately the ongoing legitimacy of the regime’s approach to civil society can only be derived from a commitment to freedom of speech and assembly, which form the cornerstone of democratic pluralism. Though the Russian state may or may not have the active support of the public in its endeavour to shape civil society and to form a clear consensus on the country’s future path, to the extent that it can be sure of continuing to enjoy any such legitimacy it must allow for dissent and debate.

To be free democratically is not only to be able to participate in various ways in accordance with the principles, rules, and procedures of the constitutional system, as important as this is, but also, and crucially, always to be able to take one step back, dissent, and call into question the principles, rules or procedures by which

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<sup>68</sup> The term ‘resigned acceptance’ with regard to Russian society, and in particular the Russian electorate’s acceptance of the incumbent regime, is associated with the work of Rose, Mishler and Munro (2006).

one is governed and to enter into (rule-governed) deliberations over them, or usually over a subset of them, with those who govern. (Tully, 2005, p.193)

In concurrence with Tully, who underscores the fundamental importance of the opportunity for dissent and debate in a democracy, this study affirms the importance of the principle of contestation as a universal foundation for a functioning civil society, regardless of whether the particular conception of civil society that you subscribe to resembles more the Russian conception of civil society than the traditional Western one or vice versa. Recognising difference is crucial for the success and durability of consensus-building and thus for an institution's ability to legitimately represent a 'mainstream consensus' (Warren, 2001, p.81) rather than imposing a false consensus by silencing dissenting voices. Similarly, any support for hegemony as a progressive, democratic ideal along the lines discussed above must be imbued with a sense of the importance of garnering mass support under conditions of free debate and thereby obtaining a clear mandate to act legitimately on the people's behalf. While this author (as perhaps would many scholars of post-Soviet politics) accepts and even supports the logic that schisms and splits within a polity can serve to destabilise a system and potentially threaten a country's development and ability to successfully reform, if democracy is our reference point then the emphasis must be laid on consensus-building and not consensus-forcing. Consensus may be preferable to conflict, but the opportunity for contestation must have first been provided for. In terms of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard, the resultant pro-regime dominance among youth movements is only a negative force on the democratic development of civil society if alternative groups have been artificially impeded or sidelined. Thus Nashi and the Young Guard's tolerance or rather *intolerance* for alternative opinions becomes all-important for the democratic tenability of the Kremlin's conception of the role of civil society.

### Recognising difference

Having defended the concept of the state's role in directing civil society set out by Putin and Medvedev *in principle* and with certain necessary qualifications in place, the democratic credentials of the application of the regime's policy towards civil society are now examined in order to determine what the impact of state-sponsorship under this rubric of state-civil relations is *in practice* based on whether the fundamentality of contestation has been upheld. Evans' research on the development of the *Obshchestvennaia Palata* (Public Chamber) since its creation in 2005 under Putin is instructive here in so far as he situates the creation of the Public Chamber within the wider context of the state's policy towards civil society and identifies the scope and limitations of state-sponsored participation in the case of the Public Chamber. Although the genesis of the Public Chamber predates the development of Nashi and the Young Guard,<sup>69</sup> the Public Chamber was explicitly linked to the state's desire to 'provide the impetus for the growth of civil society' in the fashion described earlier (Evans, 2009, p.6) and as such is useful in discerning the sincerity behind the intentions as well as the nature of the actual outcomes of state intervention in civil society in Russia.

On the occasion of the proposal of the creation of the Public Chamber, in September 2004, Putin declared that the proposed chamber would serve as "a platform for broad-based dialogue, a place where citizen initiatives could be presented and discussed in detail [...] where nongovernmental experts analyze key government decisions and especially draft laws, [...] and a means of] citizen oversight over the work of the machinery of government" (Putin

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<sup>69</sup> Putin first voiced his proposition to create the Public Chamber in September 2004. Thus, discussion of the Public Chamber might, at first glance, seem to be a deviation from this investigation into the impact of state-sponsorship on the public sphere democratic effects of youth movements whose origins lie very much in the 2005 post-'orange' context.

2004 cited in Evans, 2009, p.3). In fact, as might be expected, there is little scope for criticism of the regime and the Public Chamber is intended to bolster state legitimacy and ultimately promote public support for state policy. Yet, Evans' research into the development of the Public Chamber contends that the chamber has functioned well in its capacity of advising on draft legislation and has even successfully initiated legislative amendments in such controversial areas as the 2006 law on Non-Governmental Organisations, which reduced the scope for the authorities to abuse this legislative requirement to ruin NGOs ill-favoured by the regime. According to Evans, since autumn 2006 the Public Chamber has prioritised its ability to undertake a rather more understated but relatively influential advisory legislative role.<sup>70</sup> While fulfilling the role of 'serving the Russian state' by rallying behind national priorities alongside its advisory legislative role, the Public Chamber has been able to 'intervene on behalf of citizens who felt that they were being treated unjustly' and to a lesser extent to 'investigate the activities of state' (Evans, 2010b, p.5). Thus, the Public Chamber serves as an example of how state-sponsorship may allow for public deliberation and contestation *within certain limits* even when state support is bestowed under the terms of the Russian regime's conception of civil society, in other words under the direct tutelage of the state and with the obligation of supporting national priorities. Both those working in the presidential administration and members of the Public Chamber themselves recognise that, in contemporary Russia, societal initiatives need support from the state in order to organise and voice their interests (Evans, 2009, p.6). However, though its members are acutely aware of the need to remain within the remit of contesting singular issues and practices rather than appearing in direct confrontation with the state and thus posing a challenge to the legitimacy of the regime, the Public Chamber has been allowed to challenge policy and legislation with

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<sup>70</sup> See Evans (2009, p.11-12) for detail of the confrontation that marked the chambers early days.

the purpose of improving the state. In other words the Public Chamber is able to provide constructive criticism of the state but its effectiveness comes from working in cooperation not confrontation with the state.

As might be expected, therefore, the situation for anyone *not* prepared to cooperate with the incumbent regime is dire in comparison and the state's action to support the development of what it considers to be a functioning civil society involves the deliberate and extensive repression of political opposition. Though the fact that the state intervenes to support initiatives that contribute to its national priorities is not in itself reprehensible, when combined with the fact that having state approval is the only guarantee against unfair harassment and is the primary means of gaining mass publicity for groups attempting to operate and garner support in Russia (as discussed in the previous chapter), the state's action to support favoured groups serves to impede pluralism and contestation within civil society. The status of oppositional political parties is a case in point: The 2003-4 electoral cycle witnessed the utter 'collapse of the opposition' (Gel'man, 2005, p.44), and in the 2007 parliamentary elections, apart from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the only parties to cross the 7% threshold for entry into the State Duma were state-initiated, approved or co-opted parties. Similarly, while it may be natural for groups with opposing political allegiances to seek to undermine one another, the privileges of state support enjoyed by Nashi and the Young Guard and the dominance of pro-regime forces means that Nashi and the Young Guard's actions towards oppositional groups have a direct impact on the opportunity for contestation in Russian civil society. In this way, the development of Nashi and the Young Guard should be considered as part of a wider and pre-existing trend of decreasing pluralism and a narrowing margin for contestation imposed intentionally by the state as part of its strategy towards civil society. Thus, simply by being a state-sponsored participatory initiative

Nashi and the Young Guard are part of a grander design aimed at furthering the dominance of pro-regime forces in Russian politics and consequently at marginalising any alternatives.

Furthermore, beyond the ways in which the state-sponsored youth movements impact negatively on pluralism and contestation in Russian civil society by default as a result of the broader context of state repression of perceived challenges to the incumbent regime, Nashi and the Young Guard themselves also strive vigorously to undermine the opposition in a manner that betrays their active collusion with the state in the pursuit of marginalising alternatives. Nashi overtly seeks to recruit as many young people as possible, who support the current political course and ‘Putin’s plan’, and aims to dominate the youth political scene to the detriment of the opposition. As Nashi explains in its manifesto, “it is only by spreading the influence of [its] ideas among the younger generation that [it] can prevent young people from being drawn in by fascist and liberal extremist organisations.”<sup>71</sup> Thus Nashi’s explicit objective is to rally support for the incumbent regime in order to prevent the opposition from using young people to incite a revolution. Nashi expresses its unwavering support for the current political course and demands vigilance against those who seek to undermine Russia. It should be noted that *all* political alternatives, or simply actions or ideas that are not in tune with the regime’s perceived stance on Russia’s national priorities, are considered in this category – that is, not only in terms of competition, but in terms of its very existence being dangerous and harmful to society. The Young Guard does not declare its political motives in such stark terms in its manifesto, preferring to call upon all young people who believe that they can make a difference and shape Russia’s future. In contrast to Nashi, for whom political beliefs and ideology have been paramount, in its original manifesto the Young Guard placed the emphasis on generational differences, declaring that “it is not surprising that today

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<sup>71</sup> Nashi, 2005, ‘*Manifest*’, available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

politicians are distinguishable only by surname.”<sup>72</sup> The Young Guard thus aimed to attract young Russians inspired simply by the power demonstrated by Ukrainian youth in the ‘Orange Revolution’ – opting for rejuvenation or youth renewal as opposed to patriotic cleansing. As such, lacking any explicit reference to its support for Putin, United Russia or indeed for any concrete policy or position, the Young Guard’s original manifesto makes no obvious demands on young people other than that they take responsibility for determining their own future and that of their country. Nonetheless, being the youth branch of United Russia makes allegiance to the incumbent regime and the politics of the ‘party of power’ an obvious prerequisite for budding members. Moreover, as noted in the previous chapter, the movement’s revised 2008 manifesto makes its support for United Russia explicit and highlights its cooperation with the party and the state as being of paramount importance.<sup>73</sup> In an interview with this author, Andrei Tatarinov explained that being a member of the Young Guard’s political council ‘basically means counter-propaganda against the opposition, explaining why it is better what United Russia does and so on.’ Tatarinov also expressed clear unwillingness on the part of the Young Guard to engage with other ideas and political alternatives:

We are willing to enter into dialogue with ‘normal’, reasonable people, whether they are members of the opposition or representatives from other youth organisations. But, you see, we know what the value of dialogue is. Talking with the Union of Right Forces, Yabloko or Kasyanov’s people is another thing - these organisations are not even registered, they do not have a single seat in parliament, their ideas are supported by 2% of Russia’s population at maximum, ours are

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<sup>72</sup> The Young Guard, 2005, ‘*O gvardii*’, no longer available online since the youth movement replaced it with a new manifesto in 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Young Guard, 2008, ‘*Manifest Molodoi Gvardii Edinoi Rossii 2008*’, available at [www.molgvardia.ru/convention/manifest](http://www.molgvardia.ru/convention/manifest), last accessed 13 September 2010.

shared by around 90%.... Dialogue has to be meaningful and worth something to our organisation you see.<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, Nashi and the Young Guard demonstrate an intriguing duality in the degree of debate and discussion they encourage, with intolerance towards outsiders tempered by fostering *some* genuine debate within their trusted group. Yet, even in this they undermine the principles of plurality and tolerance by constructing a deep ‘us’ and ‘them’ divide, which ultimately limits the scope of debate.<sup>75</sup> From participation in Nashi’s 2008 summer camp and discussions with Nashi and Young Guard activists it is clear that both Nashi and the Young Guard actively encourage their members to debate and discuss government policy, such as ‘Strategy 2020’, and moreover that they are looking for innovative young Russians who are able to offer a new perspective and suggest improvements and ways that the national priorities could be better achieved. However, members are required to maintain an unfaltering belief that Russia’s current political course is the way forward and to have faith in the incumbent regime to set and pursue national objectives for the common good of the Russian nation. While that might seem a fair enough constraint for a pro-regime association to impose, when coupled with the desire to undermine alternative groups who do not support the regime or whose opinion might be classified as direct criticism of the regime itself along with the dominance of pro-regime groups facilitated by Kremlin sponsorship, this amounts to full-scale exclusion of alternative opinions from political debate altogether. Oates sums up this tendency very succinctly when she reflects that “in the Russian political tradition, there is no sense of a loyal opposition or even a Habermassian ‘sphere’ in which discussion and debate can take place. Rather, the political style is one of winners and losers, friends and enemies”

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<sup>74</sup> Author’s interview with Andrei Tatarinov, member of the Political Council of the Young Guard and now member of the Public Chamber, Moscow, 10 July 2008.

<sup>75</sup> The limited scope for internal dissent within Nashi and the Young Guard is discussed in full in Chapter 6 under the category of the developmental democratic effects of participation.

(Oates in Evans, Henry and Sundstrom-McIntosh, 2006, p.62). Encouraged by their anti-orange origins and state support for them on these grounds, both Nashi and the Young Guard employ exclusionary rhetoric of the enemy within, referring to Western-sponsored politicians and groups in Russia.

It is worth reiterating that although such a strategy of deliberate marginalisation of all political opposition as adopted by the Russian regime and Nashi (the Young Guard to a lesser extent) is not something that is recognised as democratic in any shape or form by traditional Western liberal understandings of democracy, the idea of the ‘tyranny of the majority’ and of ridding the nation of illegitimate challenges to the regime *is* considered to be conducive to democracy in the Russian context. In a similar fashion to societal support for a strong, dominant state following the chaos and suffering of the Yeltsin years, there appears to be some support among the Russian political elite and their supporters (evident bias notwithstanding) that the authority of the views held by the mainstream are made stronger by ignoring minority views and in this sense cutting out the illegitimate interference of particularistic groups, who do not have the common interest at heart. In Nashi’s manifesto, undermining the opposition was one of the ways that the movement sought to *promote* the development of a functioning civil society. Oppositional efforts to organise and mobilise are deemed to be Western-sponsored provocation tantamount to deliberate undermining of Russian sovereignty and consequently of Russian democracy. Parallels may be drawn between Nashi’s manifesto and Surkov’s 2006 speech on sovereign democracy. According to Surkov, failure to produce an effective leading class means that ‘society will achieve nothing’ and will have ‘no future’.<sup>76</sup> In order for Russia to be a competitive and prosperous nation and achieve its rightful position in the global economy, Surkov argues, its leading class must be

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<sup>76</sup> Surkov, V. (2006) ‘Suverenitet – eto politicheski sinonim konkurentosposobnosti’, 7 February 2006 – available at <http://www.er.ru/news.html?id=111148>, last accessed 16 August 2007, pages 6 and 10.

reformulated so that it is competent and loyal to Russia and implicitly sympathetic to the incumbent regime and its ideology. Nashi's manifesto equally abounds with rhetoric of cleansing the incumbent elite and getting rid of 'non-patriotic elements' – a term which has been used by Nashi to refer to any person, group or action that undermines Russian national identity as they perceive it, encourages external influence in Russian affairs, or simply does not support Russia's current political course or the regime's policies.

Nonetheless, the extraordinary level of intolerance for those who hold different political opinions demonstrated by Nashi in particular represents the sharp end of a wider culture of political chauvinism endorsed and even propagated by the state. Nashi's rhetoric and behaviour contravenes even the most generous understandings of the importance of defending the unity of the majority and maintaining the momentum and driving power behind modernisation and development. Nashi has employed tactics of outright intimidation and aggression, which amount to a rather crude and alarmingly vigilante interpretation of what could be perceived as Surkov's call to purge the political elite. The constraints on the scope of discursive challenges to the regime imposed by the state are not only *perpetuated* by these state-sponsored youth movements, but Nashi further *extends* the severity and reach of such constraints – challenging 'non-patriotic' elements across Russian society as well as international groups, who clearly do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Russian regime. In contrast to the Young Guard, who go to great lengths to ridicule and undermine the opposition but whose actions remain well within the limits of what could be considered acceptable behaviour in a political campaign, Nashi adopts a far more aggressive stance by attempting to prohibit such opposition from existing by launching cyber attacks on independent media sources, seeking to force individuals to quit their posts and creating a climate of fear of being

denounced as ‘non-patriotic elements’ according to Nashi’s definition and ruthlessly targeted by the youth movement.<sup>77</sup>

In sum, it is possible to say that the utter intolerance towards political alternatives practised by the Kremlin and the youth movements belies any positive impact of state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard on the horizontal functions of civil society in terms of pluralism and contestation. This is irrespective of whether one accepts the desirability of state involvement in civil society propagated by the Kremlin or whether one believes that ultimately consensus building and a directed focus holds greater value for democracy than pluralism for pluralism’s sake. Because political repression is a feature of the Kremlin’s ongoing strategy to support the development of a functioning civil society, state sponsorship of Nashi and the Young Guard *by default* has a negative impact on the movements’ public sphere democratic effects with regard to ‘recognising difference’. In addition, the extraordinary level of intolerance exhibited *by Nashi itself* towards groups or individuals that it deems to be unpatriotic coupled with the movement’s dominance (enabled by having state support) compounds the negative impact of state support on the public sphere democratic effects of participation in this way.

In the previous chapter, great store was set by the fact that the advantages in terms of publicity accrued to Nashi and the Young Guard as a result of having state-sponsorship were multiplied by the fact that such publicity would have been impossible without state support. Along the same line of reasoning, the existing trajectory of Russian civil society must also be borne in mind in assessing the relative impact of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard

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<sup>77</sup>The use of coercion and tactics of intimidation by Nashi is something that will be discussed in length in Chapter 7 on ‘civic virtues’.

on the horizontal linkages between the youth movements and broader civil society in Russia. By this reckoning, prospects for pluralism and opposition to the regime were already dismal prior to Nashi and the Young Guard's creation – a development which merely intensified with the dominance of pro-regime forces in the youth sector. However, although the poor prospects for the opposition gathering substantial support in the run-up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle and inciting a 'coloured revolution' in Russia were predetermined to some extent (not least by the repressive political environment created by the state as well as other factors such as the opposition's own failings and lack of support), it cannot be ruled out that oppositional youth groups inspired by the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine may have been able to mobilise young Russians. Nashi and the Young Guard served to perpetuate the state's repressive tactics and, by their sheer dominance and tactics of aggression and intimidation, deliberately undermined the potential of alternative civil society groups at this potentially critical juncture. Indeed, regardless of whether oppositional youth movements would have been able to find support and rally around a common cause or whether a 'coloured revolution' was in fact likely in Russia, the tactics adopted by Nashi and to a lesser extent the Young Guard served a blow to pluralism and contestation within Russian civil society. In practice, state sponsorship of Nashi and the Young Guard has exhibited a certain disregard for freedoms of speech and assembly and has thus undermined any potential validity or legitimacy for the Kremlin's conception of civil society noted above.

### [Building communities](#)

Having established the resounding negative democratic effect of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard on pluralism and contestation in Russian civil society, the final section of

this chapter proceeds to consider the ways in which having state sponsorship may have boosted Nashi and the Young Guard's abilities to contribute to the development of 'social capital' by building communities or networks of young Russians.<sup>78</sup> In his work on understanding the disparity in the effectiveness of democratic institutions in Italy's regions, Putnam argues that "networks of civic engagement are an essential form of social capital" and, moreover, that "the denser such networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit" (1993, p.173). The concept of 'social capital' was later made famous by Putnam in his influential article 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital' (1995). In this seminal article Putnam defines social capital as the "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1995, p.67). Although Putnam uses an aggregate quantifiable measure of social capital in his research, derived from the number of social organisations in a given area and other measures of civic engagement including voting habits and preferences, this study draws only on what is relevant to aiding understanding of the relative democratic effects of state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard. With this in mind, this chapter considers the impact of state-sponsorship on the youth movements' development of networks of young Russians in two main ways: Firstly, in terms of the nature and spread of the networks created by Nashi and the Young Guard in relation to what was available to young Russians previously. Secondly, in terms of the way in which the youth movements may have contributed to building reciprocity between members, enabling them to benefit collectively in a manner that would not have been possible alone.

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<sup>78</sup> It is important to note that the democratic credentials of Nashi and the Young Guard's objectives have no bearing on the democratic value in terms of the social capital of the networks they have established. In his later work, Putnam himself qualifies his definition of social capital by asserting that he makes no distinction between whether an association's goals are democratic or not (1999, Social capital: measurement and consequences, *OECD*, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/6/1825848.pdf>, last accessed 28 January 2011).

### *Networks of civic engagement*

On a basic level, state support has enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to fund the development of vast networks of young Russians in comparison with other youth movements such as *Oborona* (Defence), *Da!* (Yes) and *My* (We), which were established around the same time as Nashi and the Young Guard but which met with state disapproval for their direct opposition to the regime. In early 2008, the Young Guard claimed to have between 120,000 and 150,000 members and Nashi 300,000, and in both cases the state-sponsored youth movements have successfully set up branches across many of Russia's regions (see Figure 3 below). Compare this to *Oborona* for instance (considered at the time to be Russia's answer to Pora and arguably the strongest of the opposition youth movements set up in 2005), whose membership in early 2008 ran only into the tens and hundreds with little reach outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the benefit of having state support in this respect is obvious. However, the argument as to the democratic benefit of having state support for the building of networks of civic engagement does not end with the simple fact that state-sponsorship has enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to develop networks of young people in many of Russia's regions. As Putnam draws our attention to, the crucial thing in terms of the development of social capital is whether an organisation is constructed on vertical lines (such as the Catholic Church in Italy) or on more horizontal lines with a less hierarchical structure (such as a bowling league), the latter being far more conducive to the development of social capital (Putnam 1993). Nashi's reorganisation in 2008, with the result that the movement's vertical chains of command were replaced with a more horizontal structure, thus takes on a rather interesting dimension.

As noted in the previous chapter, at the end of January 2008, new leader Nikita Borovikov announced Nashi's reorganisation. This involved closing down many of the movement's regional branches and replacing them with nationwide projects developed around key priorities, such as the economy, education and modernisation. This reorganisation on the eve of the presidential elections has been largely dismissed as a straightforward attempt to position the movement so as to continue to be a useful tool for the regime beyond the completion of the 2007–2008 electoral cycle and has thus been perceived as indicative of Nashi's subordination to the state and dependence on state support. However, although commentators have focused on the closure of all but five of Nashi's fifty regional branches, Nashi's restructuring actually counter-intuitively represents the movement's deeper penetration of Russia's regions. While previously Nashi represented a tangible, centralised force with direct governance over its regional branches, following its reorganisation Nashi now has a more amorphous structure with new nationwide projects that enable young people anywhere in Russia to become involved and apply for funding to develop initiatives around the projects' key priorities. Thus, contrary to perceived wisdom, Nashi's restructuring effectively expands the movement's reach. In all of the regions where the youth movement formerly had regional branches, activists continue to work under the banner of Nashi but now they are organised into distinct and targeted taskforces. Furthermore, enabled by the fact that the establishment of a Nashi headquarters is no longer necessary to coordinate Nashi activity in a region, the project *Malye Goroda* (Small towns) has flourished and is striving to encourage participation in Nashi's activity in the Urals and the Northern Caucasus.<sup>79</sup> As a result of Nashi's reorganisation, much of the movement's activity is now conducted at the micro-level with limited coordination by federal Nashi staff beyond securing funding and

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<sup>79</sup> Information obtained from the *Malye Goroda* section of Nashi's website, available at: [http://www.nashi.su/p\\_small\\_towns](http://www.nashi.su/p_small_towns), last accessed 12 January 2009.

development support. In contrast, perhaps confined by the limitations of being the young wing of the ‘party of power’, the Young Guard remains a relatively hierarchical structure with regional branches looking to the youth movement’s central headquarters in Moscow for guidance.

Furthermore, if the support networks and communities created for young people by Nashi and the Young Guard are considered in light of what the pre-existing situation was for young people’s sense of social cohesion or rather anomie and isolation in Russia, then the social capital of these networks of civic engagement is all the more significant. Through its annual youth forum held at Lake Seliger each summer since 2005, Nashi has promoted the philosophy that young people need to be supported in their development and linked up with other young Russians sharing similar interests. As Nashi seeks to underline, this is a significant departure from the ‘free for all’ of the nineties, which left young Russians to fend for themselves and make their future either by means of the education and connections that their family could provide or, for those from less fortunate backgrounds, by turning to crime.

A few years ago in Russia, youth politics did not exist in principle, because there was simply no inclination for it and also because neo-liberalism was in vogue - the idea of ‘help yourself’, ‘make yourself’. Either you managed to make something of yourself and were a winner, or else you failed and were branded a loser. But not everyone has the same capabilities or equal opportunities, some do not have the necessary technology. Even now, few people understand the concept of youth politics. For the first time [...] we are trying to get the message across

that young people need to be provided with opportunities, young people need to be connected, given the technology etc.<sup>80</sup>

Consequently, by reaching out to youths who previously found themselves on the margins of society and by using the benefits of state support to provide the necessary resources for the development of youth projects in its name at local, regional and national level, Nashi has made progress towards building social capital among young Russians. Nashi's nation-wide projects encourage young people to feel part of a community (with all the rights and responsibilities that that implies) and supported by a wide network of like-minded people. Again Nashi has been much better equipped than the Young Guard here – not being confined to politics alone or designed to groom a relatively small elite group. Nashi has been able to diversify its activities and thereby engage more young Russians from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of different interests.

### *Reciprocity*

The idea of reciprocity is interesting in relation to Nashi and the Young Guard, as it has been often assumed that members' affiliation to the youth movements is very loose and in actual fact constitutes material self interest above all else. Indeed, many of those joining the Young Guard no doubt hope that through their loyalty and participation they will be able to advance a career in politics of some sort. Moreover, many of those whom I met at Nashi's summer camp in July 2008 had a very weak sense of identification with the youth movement and had come to participate in one of Nashi's specific projects that they were interested in and possibly to procure funding and resources for their own regional projects. Yet, for the

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<sup>80</sup> Author's interview with the head of one of Nashi's federal projects, Lake Seliger, 21 July 2008

purposes of building social capital, the strength of the bonds of membership of a particular association or group is important: The degree to which there is a sense of kinship or solidarity between members affects the benefits of association in terms of social capital. In his 1995 article, Putnam implies that there should be a cut off point for recognising the social capital rewards of association, whereby membership involves more than “just writing a check for dues or perhaps occasionally reading a newsletter”: members must be aware of “each other’s existence” (1995, p.71). Putnam goes on to use this distinction to categorise associations as either secondary or tertiary – Nashi and the Young Guard fall under the category of secondary associations as members meet collectively and actively participate regularly, whereas an example of a tertiary association would be ‘national environmental organizations like the Sierra Club’ whose members pay dues but rarely interact with each other (Putnam, 1995, p.70) Following Putnam’s logic, therefore, there is a sufficient connection between members of Nashi and the Young Guard for the movements’ impact on the development of social capital to be recognised. Moreover, in this sense, Nashi’s 2008 reorganisation perhaps facilitates stronger ties between members by encouraging young Russians to work on specific projects together with like-minded people in their region and in collaboration with people working on the same project in other regions, rather than focusing on intra-regional cooperation among a diverse group of people linked only by their basic affiliation to Nashi. It is recognised that Nashi is very diverse and that young Russians join for a variety of different reasons, which are not necessarily conducive to them developing bonds with one another. Whether intentionally or not, Nashi’s reorganisation has encapsulated the essence of encouraging smaller, more closely-knit communities of young Russians, while simultaneously enabling the movement to spread more easily to further the development of new communities in Russia’s more remote regions.

Furthermore, as Putnam suggests in his earlier book on *Making Democracy Work*, “reciprocity serves to reconcile self-interest and solidarity” (1993, p.172), or, expressed more bluntly in a later work, “altruism is not part of the definition of social capital.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, self-interest and personal gain are not incompatible with reciprocity and, in fact, are the primary drivers for mutual reciprocity and consequently for the building of social capital.<sup>82</sup>

Each individual act in a system of reciprocity is usually characterised by a combination of what one might call short-term altruism and long-term self-interest: I help you out now in the expectation that you will help me out in the future. Reciprocity is made up of a series of acts each of which is short-run altruistic (benefitting others at a cost to the altruist) but which together typically make every participant better off. (Taylor, 1982, pp.28-29 cited in Putnam, 1993, p.172)

Thus, whether or not each member of Nashi or the Young Guard ultimately takes part for his or her own personal gain, the means of obtaining that perceived reward is through collective action alone and on these grounds it can be said that Nashi and the Young Guard cultivate a sense of reciprocity for mutual gain among their members. For instance, the realisation of an individual’s aspirations to become a deputy in his regional legislative assembly by means of their membership of the Young Guard depends not only on their own abilities but also on the collective influence of the Young Guard in changing attitudes towards youth in politics and pushing for greater influence of young people in formal political institutions.

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<sup>81</sup> Putnam, 1999, *Social capital: measurement and consequences*, *OECD*, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/6/1825848.pdf>, last accessed 28 January 2011, p.7.

<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that Nashi runs a series of volunteer programs involved with caring for the elderly, providing free legal advice, taking children out on activities and other charitable causes, which serve the needs of the wider community and contribute to a broader sense of community spirit and civic ethos. Thus, to underline that self-interest does not undermine mutual reciprocity and thereby the value of social capital is not to imply that Nashi and the Young Guard’s activities are necessarily always motivated entirely by self-interest.

Overall it is possible to say that, despite the negative impact of state support for the Young Guard and particularly for Nashi as far as impeding opportunities for contestation are concerned, the horizontal public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard are not entirely negative; there are some positive democratic effects with regard to the development of social capital. Moreover, in a similar fashion to the negative democratic effects discussed in this chapter, the positive democratic effects associated with the development of social capital are also magnified by the socio-political context and are also greater for Nashi than the Young Guard as a result of Nashi's own design. As has been noted above, the value of social capital for democracy is dependent neither on the goals or purposes of association nor on the motivations for participation of individual members. "The central idea of social capital in [Putnam's] view is that networks and the associated norms of reciprocity have value."<sup>83</sup> Thus, simply by establishing networks of young people across Russia engaged in collective action, Nashi and the Young Guard have helped to lay the groundwork for the development of social capital among Russian youths by building networks of civic participation and reciprocity. Moreover, state support to establish and promote Nashi and the Young Guard's growth has undeniably had a positive impact in this respect. In addition, Nashi's 2008 reorganisation to structure the movement along more horizontal lines rather than vertical, as described above, has greatly enhanced the movement's positive democratic effects in this field by strengthening the bonds of commonality between Nashi members and reducing the hierarchy within the organisation, which could otherwise seriously reduce the benefit of the organisation in terms of social capital. Being no part of any state design for the youth movement, this positive democratic effect is attributable only to

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<sup>83</sup> Putnam, 1999, *Social capital: measurement and consequences*, *OECD*, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/6/1825848.pdf>, last accessed 28 January 2011, p.1

agency and, more specifically, the decisions taken by Nashi leaders. In this sense, Nashi's contribution to the building of social capital among young Russians indicates both the potential for state-sponsored participatory initiatives to have unintended positive democratic effects as well as the significance of factors other than whether or not an organisation has state support in determining the democratic effects of participation. In Chapter 1 it was noted that the more recent countervailing trend among scholars to question the analytic dichotomy between the state and civil society reflected a desire to recognise the increasingly complex relations that exist between the state and civil society in liberal democracies as opposed to the previous reference to civil society in opposition to the communist state – the implication being that positive state intervention should not be discounted. However, this study has demonstrated that even when the state harbours no aspirations towards becoming a liberal democracy and undermines pluralism and contestation at every turn, there may still be some positive democratic effects – such as the development of 'social capital'. Thus, in addition to questioning the more traditional prevalent assumption of the injury afflicted upon civil society by the state, this study also challenges the liberal-democratic emphasis of the existing countervailing trend of recognising and embracing state-civil society relations.

### Conclusion

In its evaluation of Nashi and the Young Guard's impact on the horizontal working of civil society, Chapter 3 has demonstrated that the concept of a 'state-led civil society' (Frolic, 1997) better describes the Russian context than any Western liberal-democratic notion of an independent civil society. Consequently, this chapter asserts that assessments of the impact of recent state-sponsored initiatives, including Nashi and the Young Guard, on the development

of civil society should not get bogged down in their lack of independence from the state, as this is a measure of development that is not necessarily universally accepted.

However, consideration of Nashi and the Young Guard's impact on the development of the horizontal functions of civil society in practice reveals a rather bleak picture of the public sphere democratic effects of state sponsorship for the youth movements in this area. Although Nashi and the Young Guard's contribution to the development of social capital by building networks of civic engagement and reciprocity among young Russians is especially significant given the social anomie and deviance that is more typical of youth in Russia, the youth movements' negative impact on the scope for contestation fundamentally damages the legitimacy of the Russian conception of civil society and does great injury to the development of any functioning civil society in Russia. Aside from being party to the selective support and repressive will of the state, Nashi has actively extended the state's policy of marginalisation of political alternatives to include anything that might be construed as insufficiently supportive of the regime.

In terms of the balance between voice and integrity referred to in the introduction to this chapter, Chapter 3 finds that Nashi and the Young Guard's attempts to establish their dominance and gain a much sought after public platform and voice for young people in the upper echelons of power *have* come at the expense of other groups and to the detriment of civil society overall. However, this was deliberately sought by Nashi and the Young Guard and thus not antagonistic to the youth movements' own intentions, as the idea of their facing a quandary in negotiating the balance between voice and integrity would imply. The most fiercely positive and negative public sphere democratic effects of Nashi in this chapter are

associated as much with the youth movement's own intentions as with any imposition as a result of state-sponsorship.

## OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE DEMOCRATIC EFFECTS OF NASHI AND THE YOUNG GUARD

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Objective scrutiny of the impact of having state support on the public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in Part 1 has identified the particular importance of the socio-political environment for the relative democratic effects of state-sponsored participation. In the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, the repressive political environment that characterised their development has accentuated the impact of state sponsorship on both the positive and negative public sphere democratic effects of participation as well as affecting the relative value of state-sponsored participation by increasing the costs of not having state approval. In addition, at several points during this investigation of the public sphere democratic effects of participation, the impact of agency or, more precisely, the impact of decisions taken by Nashi and the Young Guard leaders on the democratic effects of participation has been noted. Again, factoring in the significance of agency for the impact of state sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation does not necessarily denote a positive contribution in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard; decisions taken by the youth movements' leaders have impacted both positively and negatively on the public-sphere democratic effects of state-sponsored participation.

Significantly, the findings of Part 1 do *not* refute the main claims behind the implicit critique of state-sponsored participation contained in the work of social-movement scholars and others. State-sponsorship *does* indicate a dominant top-down influence and the subordination of societal interests to those of the state. However, it is not valid to assume that state support has an *entirely* negative impact on the public sphere democratic effects of participation. Such an assumption is undone by the fact that it takes as its reference societies

wherein there are viable alternatives to state sponsorship, in which there exists a relatively free media and a developed civil society in which a variety of aggregate interests can coalesce and present themselves. Drawing on the experience of contemporary state-sponsored youth participation in Russia, where there is little viable alternative to state-sponsorship, this study finds that the distinction between the implications of having state support and not having it becomes all important. Therefore, to allow assumptions based on the conditions that exist in Western consolidated liberal-democracies to continue to inform our understanding of the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation more generally is to make a serious error.

In this way, the findings of Part 1 of this thesis vindicate Robert Pekkanen's assertion, in his chapter tracking the historical development of civil society in Japan, that "civil society is not a dichotomous variable [...] Rather than search for either the suppression or nurturing of civil society, we can examine the patterns that the state creates in civil society and the patterns of state-civil society relations that emerge". Examination of the impact of state-sponsorship on the public sphere democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard has revealed the interplay that exists between the various effects of these state-sponsored movements on Russian civil society. In Chapter 2 it was noted that state support for the development of Nashi and the Young Guard entailed some invaluable positive public sphere democratic effects as far as public communication and deliberation are concerned, but simultaneously imposed potentially debilitating constraints on the youth movements in this same field. Similarly, in Chapter 3 it was discovered that the relative democratic gains made by Nashi and the Young Guard on a unitary level translated negatively to the development of Russian civil society more broadly in terms of plurality and contestation, but that state-sponsorship enabled the youth movements to develop extensive 'networks of trust' between young people across Russia and thus make a significant

contribution to building ‘social capital’ among what was previously considered to be one of the most disaffected and atomised sectors of the population.

Looking ahead to Part 2 of this thesis, having begun by examining the public-sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard where state-sponsorship is presumed to have a particularly negative effect, Part 2 explores the impact of state support on the *institutional* democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard – the area in which state-sponsorship is considered to be most likely to have some positive democratic effects. The juxtaposition of Parts 1 and 2 of this thesis will be interesting in the final analysis as prevalent accounts of the democratic effects of participation purport that the positive institutional democratic effects that might be gained through proximity to the state come at the expense of undermining the potential public-sphere democratic effects of participation.

PART TWO - INSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC  
EFFECTS OF NASHI AND THE YOUNG GUARD

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## INTRODUCTION

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As the Habermasian conception of the public sphere continues to influence academic thought and policy development, institutional democratic effects of participation have tended to be eschewed in favour of an emphasis on preserving associations' autonomy from the state.<sup>84</sup>

The underlying logic being that the pursuit of greater representation and influence in formal political institutions brings associations closer to the state and in doing so undermines other preferred potential democratic effects of participation, namely public sphere effects relating to the development of a functioning civil society and the formation of public opinion.<sup>85</sup>

According to Cornwall (writing on NGO-led participatory initiatives in the developing world), “developing an autonomous public sphere outside the domain of the state is a *precondition* for citizen engagement that does not simply serve to legitimate the existing political system” (2002, p.4 – emphasis added). By implication, therefore, the potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participation are commonly disregarded on the grounds that any positive democratic effects (public sphere, developmental and indeed institutional) are necessarily limited by proximity to the state.

However, acknowledging the potential power of the state to remove obstacles to participation and to use its influence to facilitate access to decision-making processes, there is a discernible strain within the literature on participation and democratisation that identifies

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<sup>84</sup> As set out in Chapter 1, the ‘institutional democratic effects’ refers to the manner in which associations may “influence the extent to which the institutions of voting and representation work in democratic ways [...] by providing political representation, enabling pressure and resistance, organizing political processes, facilitating cooperation, and serving as alternative venues for governance” (Warren, 2001, p. 61).

<sup>85</sup> Noting the contribution that Habermas originally made to the literature on associational life by drawing attention to the public sphere effects of associations and in particular the role of associations in forming public opinion, Warren expresses concern that “this democratic effect of associational life has become, in some philosophical circles, so dominant that it threatens to crowd out the more ‘classical’ [here read institutional] democratic functions of associations” (2001, p.35).

institutional democratic effects as the field in which state support could have significant benefits. For example, contrary to the assumption implicit in Cornwall's above assertion that state-sponsored participation produces 'weak publics' and inhibits any positive democratic effects, Fraser contends that it is precisely the institutional democratic effects of participation, enabled via engagement with the state and institutions of governance, that are the key to developing 'strong publics'. 'Strong publics' are defined by Fraser as "publics whose discourse encompasses both opinion formation and decision making [...]. The 'force' of public opinion is strengthened [Fraser asserts] when a body representing it is empowered to translate such 'opinion' into authoritative decisions" (1993, pp.24-5).<sup>86</sup>

Part 2 of this thesis investigates whether the institutional democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard have been confined to legitimising the state, as proponents of the fundamental need for associations to maintain their autonomy from the state would profess, or whether state-sponsorship has in fact empowered these youth movements by facilitating access to decision-making bodies and thus creating 'strong publics' in Fraser's sense of the term. It is divided into two chapters, designed to give proper consideration to each of the approaches to the potential institutional democratic effects of state-sponsored participation referred to above – on the one hand, that state involvement inherently *limits all* positive democratic effects of participation (*including* institutional effects) and, on the other hand, that state support may in fact *boost* certain positive *institutional* democratic effects. Firstly, Chapter 4 on 'Participation and legitimisation' examines the ways in which youth political participation via Nashi and the Young Guard has served to 'legitimise the existing political system', as Cornwall might expect the democratic

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<sup>86</sup> Several authors in a 2006 edited volume on Russian civil society contend that "organizations in Russian civil society are likely to make more progress in changing state policies and behaviour in their issue areas by forming avenues of cooperation with state organizations than by opposing the state directly" (Evans, Henry & McIntosh Sundstrom, 2006, p.317).

effects of state-sponsored participation to be restricted to. Recognising that providing legitimacy for the state can have a *positive* democratic effect, Chapter 4 asserts that, *as well as* reinforcing the incumbent Russian regime, Nashi and the Young Guard have simultaneously contributed to providing *democratic* legitimacy<sup>87</sup> for the state in the eyes of participants by encouraging support for political processes and institutions as part of their bid to secure youth allegiance to the regime at election-time. The motivations for and significance of Kremlin support for these youth movements are investigated specifically in order to assess whether or not the state has a vested interest in promoting mass youth participation in politics via Nashi and the Young Guard beyond securing the incumbent regime. Secondly, allowing for the possibility that having state-sponsorship may *directly* support positive outcomes in the field of institutional democratic effects, Chapter 5 on ‘Power to youth’ explores the potential for the state to promote the development of ‘strong publics’, as Fraser suggests, by facilitating access to decision-making processes and representation in the formal political arena. It evaluates Nashi and the Young Guard’s efforts to get young people into political office in order to assess the relative influence of these youth movements in the formal political arena and the degree to which having state support has facilitated or hindered this.

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<sup>87</sup> Warren describes one of the potential institutional democratic effects of associations as being the ‘capacity to provide democratic legitimacy for the state’ (2001, p.91). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4 - PARTICIPATION AND LEGITIMISATION

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In the run up to the 2007-8 Russian electoral cycle both Nashi and the Young Guard embarked upon an intense campaign to stimulate youth interest in the elections and to get young people involved in politics. The pro-Kremlin youth movements each adopted different approaches to combating youth apathy towards politics but with the common aim of securing the incumbent regime from the perceived potential threat of political instability during the elections. On the one hand, Nashi drew on inspirational rhetoric of the power of youth from the ‘Orange Revolution’ and evoked grandiose sentiments of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ by urgently calling for young Russians to defend the motherland against external malevolent influences.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, in keeping with its more formal political standing as the youth branch of United Russia, the Young Guard made the same pleas for young Russians to stand up and be counted, but in the rather less vicarious manner of promoting the importance of young people taking responsibility for determining the future course of their country.<sup>89</sup> Despite the potential positive democratic effects of these rallying calls for young people to take part in the elections, unsurprisingly the existing literature on Nashi and the Young Guard has tended to discount the movements’ efforts to encourage youth political participation as simply being a means of extending the incumbent regime’s domination by further marginalising the opposition. As we have seen in the previous chapter, similar negative assessments of the Young Guard and particularly Nashi’s impact on the opposition and civil society as a whole were not unwarranted. Yet, while securing the regime’s unchallenged authority may well have been the primary intention behind Nashi and the Young Guard’s

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<sup>88</sup> Nashi, 2005, ‘*Manifest*’, available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

<sup>89</sup> The Young Guard, 2005, ‘*O gvardii*’, no longer available online since the youth movement replaced it with a new manifesto in 2008.

campaign to increase youth participation in politics, this chapter endeavours to explore whether the democratic effects of this campaign have been limited to reinforcing the regime (and all the negative connotations associated with that in relation to Russia) or whether, in fact, some positive democratic effects have ensued, in particular regarding the legitimacy of democratic processes and institutions of state.

The chapter begins by providing the context of Nashi and the Young Guard's campaign to encourage political participation among young Russians. It asserts that the reason behind Kremlin support for this campaign was not a genuine desire to promote mass political engagement in its own right, if indeed this was the intention of Nashi or the Young Guard themselves.<sup>90</sup> Instead, the drive to increase youth political participation in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle was a response to the perceived threat posed to the regime at that time by political *disengagement* among young Russians. As such, state support for youth participation via Nashi and the Young Guard reflected an ongoing desire to preserve the incumbent regime rather than any shift in attitude towards mass political participation. The chapter then establishes what it considers to be the crucial difference between legitimising the existing political regime and providing democratic legitimacy for the state, before proceeding to assess the extent to which Nashi and the Young Guard have been able to contribute to both by examining youth participation in the 2007-8 electoral cycle.

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<sup>90</sup> It is important to distinguish here between young Russians' engagement in the politics of the everyday, which it might be argued the Kremlin seeks to encourage, and the Politics of power, which refers to young Russians' engagement in the formal political arena and which, it is contended, the Kremlin does not genuinely desire.

### Political disengagement and regime support (1999-2004)

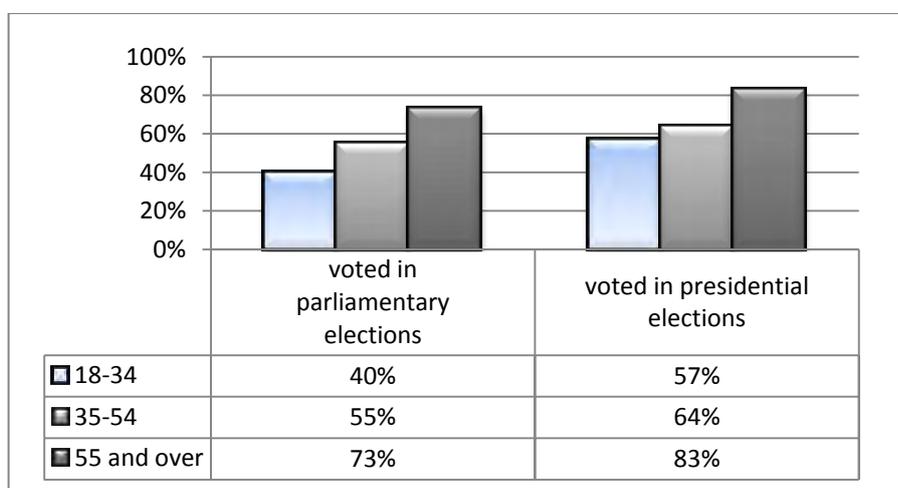
Mass political disengagement has been a ubiquitous feature of post-Soviet politics in Russia. Russians' widespread estrangement from politicians and institutions of governance and their relatively low levels of participation in traditional political activities, such as voting or membership of a political organisation, have been well documented by numerous studies comparing the post-communist region with Western Europe and America.<sup>91</sup> Based on data gathered prior to the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine, these studies note that (alongside Ukraine and Belarus) political disengagement in Russia is among the highest in Europe and America and has been slowly increasing with the passage of time since the collapse of Communism. For example, the 'Inclusion without Membership' surveys conducted in 2004 show that "if the average representative adult is a member of 2.4 civil or political organisations in Western democracies [...] and 0.9 in the post-communist states [...] in the 'outsider states' [Russia, Ukraine and Belarus] it is significantly lower still: 0.26 and 0.27 in Russia and Ukraine, respectively, and a slightly higher but still underwhelming 0.50 in Belarus" (Hutcheson & Korosteleva, 2006, p.35).

Furthermore, cross-comparison of basic indicators of political engagement in Russia with socio-demographic variables highlights that political disengagement has been more pronounced among the younger generation. In the 2003/4 federal electoral cycle, voter turnout was significantly lower among 18-35 year olds compared to the rest of the population (see Figure 3 below).

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<sup>91</sup> For example, see Furusawa 2007, Hutcheson & Korosteleva 2006, Korosteleva 2006.

Figure 3 – Voter turnout in the 2003/4 Russian electoral cycle by age



Source: 'Forum Obshestvennovo Mnenie', available at

[http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/policy\\_interest/attendance/voter\\_turn\\_2004/ed041231](http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/policy_interest/attendance/voter_turn_2004/ed041231).

Moreover, according to the 5<sup>th</sup> wave of the World Values survey conducted in Russia in 2006, 74.1% of respondents aged between 18 and 30 considered themselves to be not very or not at all interested in politics, compared to 61.2% among those aged over 30 (the same is true for young Russians' propensity to take part in political actions such as attending a political demonstration – see Appendix One). A more recent study, conducted in 2006/7 by the Swiss Academy for Development in conjunction with the Levada Center, affirmed that young Russians were still less likely to be interested in politics than the population in general.<sup>92</sup>

Yet, despite the validity of these statements it is important to note that, although higher than in the United States or France, political disengagement in Russia is no higher than in Poland, Latvia, or even Great Britain. Neither is the attenuation of political disengagement

<sup>92</sup> Dafflon, 2007, *Youth in Russia – A generation in transition, A research report by the Swiss Academy for Development, SAD*, p.22, available at: <http://www.sad.ch/images/stories/Publikationen/sad-youth-in-russia.pdf>, last accessed 3 May 2009.

among the younger generation new or unique to Russia.<sup>93</sup> Thus, without seeking to problematise the level of political disengagement in Russia, this study notes that relatively low and dwindling levels of political participation among young people in particular have been a feature of much of the post-Soviet era in Russia: The significance being that, despite the longstanding nature of the phenomenon, no clear action was taken by the Kremlin to reduce rising levels of youth political disengagement before the development of Nashi and the Young Guard in 2005.

In order to understand why the Kremlin did not previously strive to curb rising youth political disengagement and ultimately why it then supported Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to encourage youth political participation in 2005, we must look to the relationship between political disengagement and regime support in contemporary Russia and begin by identifying what the advantages of fostering political disengagement might have been for the Kremlin prior to the 'Orange Revolution'. This study contends that as well as undermining protest against the regime (including support for the opposition), rising political disengagement in Putin's Russia served to reinforce the regime's standing at election time by contributing to the reliability and number of votes cast in favour of the incumbent regime.

Writing shortly after the 2003/4 electoral cycle on the dynamics of regime support in the post-Yeltsin period, Rose, Mishler and Munro assert that a significant section of the Russian electorate was comprised of what they call 'floating supporters', who can be characterised equally by their alternating support for and criticism of the regime as by their resigned acceptance of the existing political set up and lack of desire to challenge it (2006,

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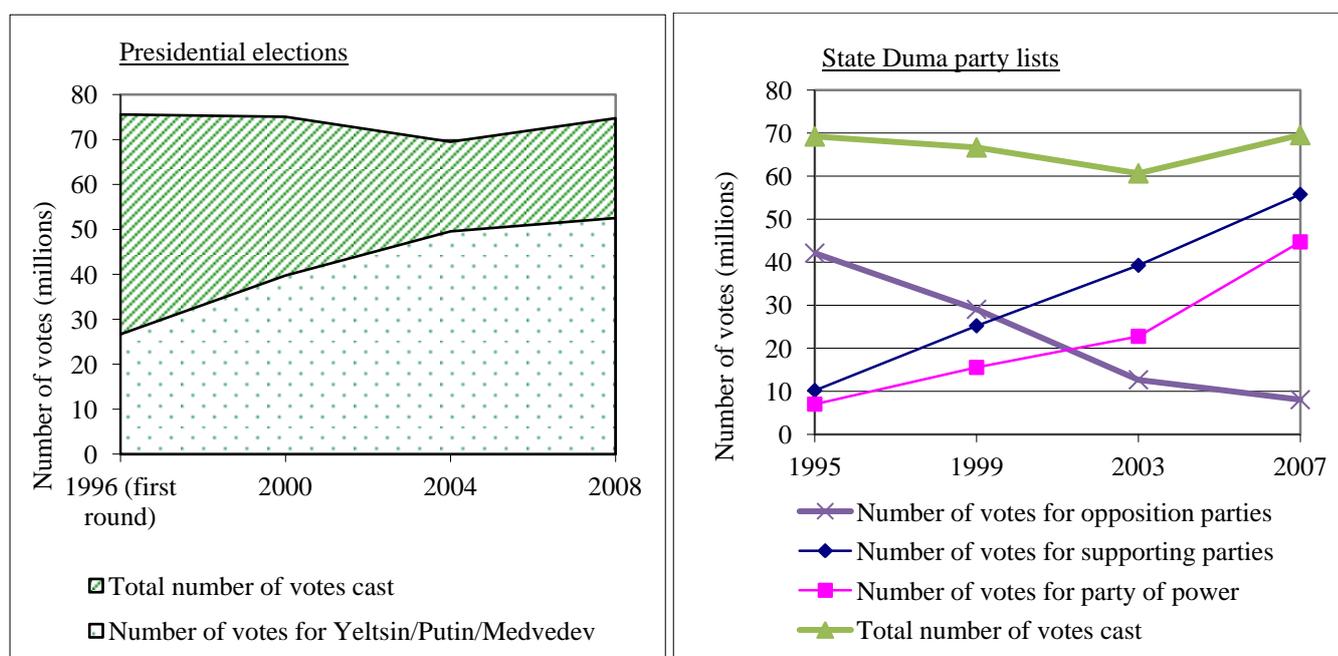
<sup>93</sup> For a comparison of youth political participation indicators from various countries see Appendix One. For information on the generation gap in political participation in Britain see Henn, Weinstein & Wring (2002).

pp.92-7). Despite criticising aspects of the regime that impinge on their immediate day-to-day lives, according to Rose, Mishler and Munro ‘floating supporters’ can be relied upon to vote for the incumbent regime at election-time, because their varying attitude towards the regime renders them “unlikely to invest the time and effort needed [to challenge it]” (2006, p.93). This lack of accountability acts as a powerful stabilising force for regime support, buffering it and rendering it less susceptible to fluctuations in public satisfaction that might have naturally given rise to increased protest against the incumbent regime. With an increasingly remote governing polity and Putin’s personal appeal, any public discontentment with regime performance or unpopular policies, such as the monetisation of state benefits for pensioners in 2005, is directed first and foremost at the faceless state bureaucracy and authorities and does not affect votes for the incumbent regime. Under Putin, regime support rose alongside growing political disengagement and with it the proportion of the electorate that might be called ‘floating supporters’.

Comparison of voting records from the 2003-4 electoral cycle with those from the 1999-2000 cycle corroborates the assertion that political disengagement and regime support enjoyed a positive relationship at this time. Analysis of data from the Central Electoral Commission for the Russian Federation for the 2003-4 elections indicates that the regime’s victory did not happen in spite of political disengagement, but was in fact buoyed by it. In both the presidential and parliamentary elections, while voter turnout dwindled the absolute number of votes for the incumbent regime increased. In the 2004 presidential elections the total number of votes cast was over 5 million less than in the 2000 elections that brought Putin into office, yet over the same period the number of votes for Putin increased substantially by nearly 10 million. Similarly, while voter turnout decreased by over 6 million

between the 1999 and 2003 parliamentary elections the number of votes in the State Duma party lists for the party of power (Unity/United Russia) rose by over 7 million (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Voting trends



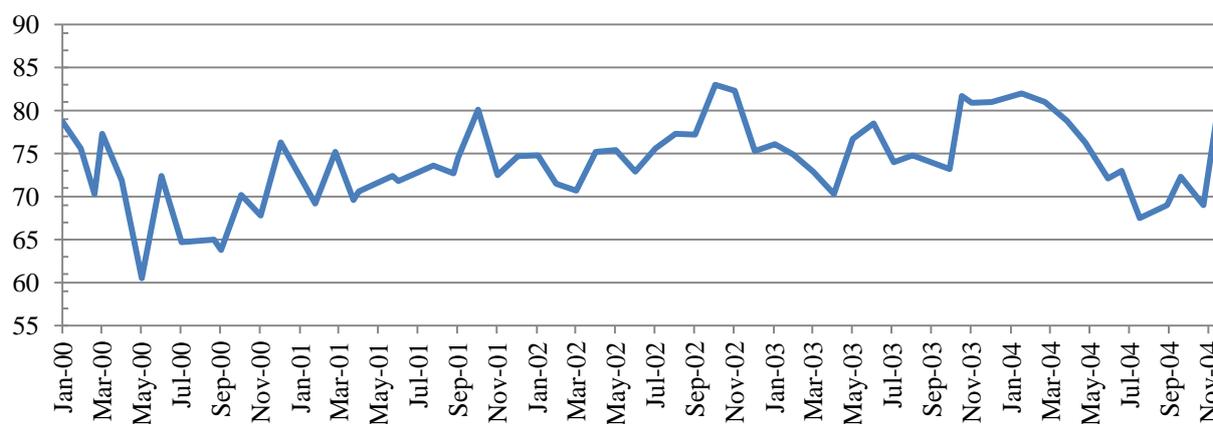
Source: calculations based on data provided in Appendix Two

Moreover, further exploration of the data available suggests that alongside growing political disengagement under Putin a significant number of voters switched their allegiance from the opposition to the incumbent regime. Votes for the opposition in the presidential and parliamentary elections decreased more sharply than voter turnout and, although it is possible that the simultaneous drop in the number of votes for the opposition and gains in support for the incumbent regime could be completely unrelated,<sup>94</sup> the sheer size of the numbers involved

<sup>94</sup> The decline in votes for the opposition could be completely unrelated to the rise in votes for the incumbent regime if everyone who had voted for the opposition in 1999/2000 but not in the 2003/4 electoral cycle had abstained from voting altogether and thus the increase in votes for the incumbent regime came from people who had not voted in the previous elections.

makes it more than likely that many or at the very least some voters transferred their support from the opposition to the incumbent regime over this period. For example, in the elections to the State Duma in 2003, votes for opposition parties fell by 16.3 million compared to the 1999 elections – well over twice as much as the decrease in voter turnout between these elections. Putin’s personal popularity or public satisfaction with his performance in office cannot entirely account for this shift in electoral support towards the incumbent regime, as the difference between the rise of just under 18% in valid votes cast for Putin in the 2004 presidential elections compared to the 2000 elections and the increase in Putin’s approval ratings over the same period of just 7% attests to (see Figure 5 below).

[Figure 5 - Presidential approval ratings \(percentage approval\)](#)



Source: Levada center (formerly VCIOM surveys), available at <http://www.russiavotes.org/xlfiles/file190.xls>

Thus, without attempting to argue that political disengagement *alone caused* the shift in allegiance from the opposition to the incumbent regime during Putin’s presidency, it is fair to say that political disengagement certainly *supported* the reinforcement of the regime’s electoral standing. Moreover, the magnitude of the shift in voters’ allegiance between the 1999/2000 and 2003/4 electoral cycles, noted above, indicates that regime support was the

overwhelmingly predominant outcome of political disengagement at election-time under Putin. As such, until 2005 at least, the Kremlin had no motive to encourage mass political engagement of any kind.

### The 'orange' effect (2005-8)

From the Kremlin's perspective, political disengagement took on a new face after the wave of youth-sponsored political instability in the Former Soviet Union. Following the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine, politicians recognised not only the potential threat presented by disengaged youth being recruited by opposition groups and mobilised against the regime, but also the possibility for young people to be exploited as a powerful political resource.

Having benefitted from the fruits of political disengagement under Putin described above, the events in Ukraine brought the inherent threat that high levels of political disengagement contain to the Kremlin's attention – that is the capacity for mass 'perverse politicisation'.<sup>95</sup>

Having embraced mass alienation from politics and settled for the electorate's resigned acceptance,<sup>96</sup> the resultant disconnection between politicians and their estranged electorate had allowed the incumbent regime a high degree of unaccountability, as noted above.

However, it also meant that, with high levels of anomie and without the scope to register discontentment or become actively involved in mainstream politics, politically disengaged Russians were susceptible to recruitment by radical elements seeking to undermine the regime. Rather than boosting the regime's standing, as evident in the 2003-4 electoral cycle, political disengagement was now seen as a possible threat to future regime support if young

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<sup>95</sup> Blum uses the term 'perverse politicisation' to refer to youth engagement in radical groups (2006, p.97).

<sup>96</sup> Rose, Mishler and Munro advocate the idea that the Kremlin consciously "accepted a degree of dissociation between governors and governed [...] and regarded it as sufficient for Russians to show resigned acceptance to the regime as a fact of life" (2006, pp.2-3).

Russians were to mobilise outside the Kremlin's control and engage in subversive political activity directed against the regime. Providing incentives for young Russians to ally themselves with the regime thus became a priority for the preservation of political stability. For this reason, and no other, the Kremlin supported the development of the pro-regime youth movements Nashi and the Young Guard and their campaigns to promote youth political engagement.

Presidential aide, Vladislav Surkov's address to United Russia's Centre of Party Training and Cadre Preparation in February 2006 on the concept of 'sovereign democracy' (referred to in Chapter 3) provides a unique insight into the Kremlin's attitude towards mass political disengagement following the 'Orange Revolution'.<sup>97</sup> In his address, Surkov assumes that an elite structure of governance and decision-making is desirable and that the Russian masses do not have sufficient understanding to be involved in politics beyond electoral participation.<sup>98</sup> The emphasis placed by Surkov on installing an 'effective leading class' and reinforcing the elite structure of political influence already present in Russia supports the assertion that Kremlin sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard does not represent any positive shift in the state's attitude towards extending mass participation in politics. Moreover, it suggests that, in the post-'orange' environment, the Kremlin's intentions have been rather to secure existing patterns of elitist participation at the expense of mass political engagement. According to Surkov, the masses are required to engage in politics only insofar as they are called upon to legitimise the newly-formulated ruling elite (Surkov's 'effective leading class') and to validate the ideology held by Putin and United Russia as the sole basis

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<sup>97</sup> Surkov, V. (2006) 'Suverenitet – eto politicheski sinonim konkurentosposobnosti' 7 February 2006 – available at <http://www.er.ru/news.html?id=111148>, last accessed 16 August 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Elite theories of democracy share a similar logic (see Schumpeter 1976, p.269 and Sartori, 1987), but are criticised by Bachrach (1967) and Putnam (1995), among other, who argue that democracy must be firmly rooted in society and based on continuous engagement and interaction beyond the electoral framework.

for achieving Russia's potential and for moving forwards towards a greater democracy. The perceived threats posed to Russia's sovereignty by globalisation, terrorism, and not least 'orange technology' are portrayed as further justification of the urgency of the need for the public to empower the governing elite to act on their behalf in Russia's best interests; the implication being that by pledging their allegiance to the incumbent regime at election time the public should then refrain from interfering in politics.<sup>99</sup>

Echoing a similar sentiment, but with specific regard to young people, the 'Strategy of State Youth Policy in the Russian Federation 2006-16' outlines measures aimed at creating "the conditions for young people's successful socialisation and effective self-realisation."<sup>100</sup> By encouraging *civic* engagement, state youth policy seeks to integrate young Russians into the existing framework and thus encourage their legitimisation of the incumbent regime and reduce the likelihood of them becoming involved in antisocial or politically subversive activities *without politically* engaging them. Although it was drafted well before the 'Orange Revolution', the state strategy for youth policy 2006-16 was finally adopted by the Russian government on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006 and thus the approach set out in the strategy should be viewed as indicative of the Kremlin's ongoing intentions concerning youth socialisation and political activity. If we consider this strategy, like Surkov's address, as reflective of the Kremlin's purpose in supporting the development of Nashi and the Young Guard, then the significance is clear and consistent – The Kremlin does not seek to engage the masses in politics: Its concern lies in securing support for the incumbent regime, but it aims to do this by providing incentives for loyalty to the regime (in this case through supporting 'socially

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<sup>99</sup> Surkov, V. (2006) 'Suverenitet – eto politicheski sinonim konkurentosposobnosti' 7 February 2006 – available at <http://www.er.ru/news.html?id=111148>, last accessed 16 August 2007, pages 8 and 10.

<sup>100</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2006, *Strategiia gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, No. 1760, p.4. Available at: <http://ed.gov.ru/files/materials/393/strat.doc>, last accessed 1 September 2008.

positive' youth initiatives) rather than by promoting mass political participation.<sup>101</sup> In this light, state-support for Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to promote youth political engagement should be perceived as a disingenuous ploy to attract young Russians, who have been inspired by the role played by youth in the 'Orange Revolution', away from oppositional youth movements. For the same reason, state-sponsorship should be expected to limit the youth movements' institutional democratic effects here to legitimising the incumbent regime as far as possible.

### Defining democratic legitimisation

There is an important distinction to be made between legitimising the incumbent regime at the implied expense of democratic alternatives and the potential ability for associations to 'provide democratic legitimacy for the state' (to borrow Warren's terminology - 2001, p.91). Cornwall's reproach of state involvement in participatory initiatives for resulting in participation that "serves simply to legitimate the existing political system" (2002, p.4) clearly relates to the first understanding of an association's capacity to provide legitimacy in the sense of reinforcing the incumbent regime's standing. Moreover, it is this assumed function of Nashi and the Young Guard to serve as a bulwark for the regime to the exclusion of the opposition that drives widespread criticism and disregard for these state-sponsored youth movements.<sup>102</sup> However, it is the second understanding of an association's capacity to provide legitimacy by boosting the democratic legitimacy of the state that interests this

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<sup>101</sup> Blum notes the important and clear distinction made in the Strategy of State Youth Policy between "highly desirable politically screened and officially registered 'socially positive' youth organisations, and unimportant or even undesirable 'informals', whose activities are not consistent with the state's objectives" (2006, p.104).

<sup>102</sup> The Young Guard and particularly Nashi's impact on the marginalisation of political alternatives has been discussed previously in Chapter 3.

analysis of the impact of state support on the institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard most; not only because this potential has been singularly overlooked by the existing literature but also because it is possible that, even with the Kremlin's lack of genuine desire to incite mass political participation, the mere act of encouraging more young people to vote in the 2007-8 elections might have had multiple positive democratic effects in this area.

In Warren's conceptualisation of the democratic effects of association, he notes that "ideally democratic legitimacy would flow directly from public spheres: institutions are [democratically] legitimate if the policies they enact enjoy the support of public opinion" (2001, p.91). Yet this is only one form of democratic legitimacy that associations can provide and, given the established difficulties in discerning whether the youth movements have been able to develop a public agenda as opposed to a state agenda and their inherent shortcomings in facilitating the 'formation of public opinion' (discussed previously in Part 1), Nashi and the Young Guard's contribution to this aspect of democratic legitimacy is not the focus of analysis. In addition to providing legitimacy for state *policies*, Warren underlines the significance of associational life in supporting the legitimacy of political *processes* and *institutions*:

Associations seem to be uniquely important in tying participation to the experience of efficacy, which in turn should lead individuals to be more supportive of political processes and their outcomes. Associations may in this way underwrite the 'process legitimacy' of political institution. (Warren, 2001, p.92)

Nashi and the Young Guard's drive to get young people interested and involved in the elections has direct relevance to this aspect of democratic legitimacy, in terms of attaching value to the election process for participants as well as promoting faith in the institutions of

the State Duma and the presidency and the authority of those elected to office. Consequently, investigation of the youth movements' contribution to the democratic legitimacy of the state in this chapter centres on the manner and extent to which Nashi and the Young Guard have been able to encourage youth electoral participation and its corresponding effect on promoting the legitimacy of 'political processes and their outcomes' in the eyes of Nashi and Young Guard members.

Nonetheless, while seeking to disentangle an association's capacity to provide legitimacy for the incumbent regime from its capacity to support the democratic legitimacy of the state and, moreover, to draw out the ways in which Nashi and the Young Guard have contributed to the latter in particular, it ought to be recognised upfront that the youth movements' campaign to encourage youth electoral participation encompasses both of these functions. Therefore, throughout the analysis, alongside exploration of how the pro-Kremlin youth movements may have been able to contribute to the democratic legitimisation of the state from participants' perspectives by 'underwriting the process legitimacy of political institutions', reference is also made to Nashi and the Young Guard's often cited, yet nonetheless veritable, function to reinforce the incumbent regime's standing. Moreover, the relationship between these two functions and their resultant outcome in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard is extrapolated, i.e. does Nashi and the Young Guard's reinforcement of the incumbent regime to the detriment of the opposition undermine any 'process legitimacy' for political institutions engendered by the youth movements and, if so, to what extent?

### Nashi and the Young Guard's contribution to youth electoral participation

In a basic conceptualisation of the impact of Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to promote youth electoral participation on participants' perceptions of the legitimacy of the electoral process and its outcomes, the higher the level of young Russians' participation encouraged by the youth movements, the greater the benefit for legitimacy. Conceiving of three levels of possible youth participation at election-time, voting is the lowest level of participation and has the least but by no means inconsequential influence on the 'democratic legitimacy of the state'. Beyond voting, campaigning and election monitoring entail a higher degree of engagement in the elections and correspondingly the potential impact on providing legitimacy is greater. Finally, young Russians may participate fully in the elections by putting themselves forward to stand as candidates and this has the most profound effect on legitimacy of the three levels of participation set out here. This chapter proceeds to examine the manner and extent to which Nashi and the Young Guard have contributed to each of these levels of possible youth participation at election-time in order to assess the youth movements' impact on the democratic legitimacy of the state under the terms set out previously - namely the legitimacy of the electoral process and the institutions of the State Duma and presidency as well as the authority of those elected to office – all from the perspective of Nashi and the Young Guard participants. In light of the state's ulterior motives for supporting Nashi and the Young Guard's campaign to increase youth political engagement noted above, this chapter considers whether state-sponsorship has thereby limited the scope of the youth movements' potential institutional democratic effects to those which primarily serve to secure the regime.

### 1 - Youth voter turnout

According to Nashi and the Young Guard, the 2007/8 electoral cycle witnessed a dramatic improvement in the level of youth voter turnout. In turn, this is portrayed as a success of the political awareness/civic duty drive conducted by the state and pro-Kremlin youth organisations. Finding similar claims from other internet sources to be equally vague and unsubstantiated, the only definite statistic to latch onto regarding youth voter turnout is Andrei Turchak's assertion, in his summary of the Young Guard's achievements, that exit polls following the State Duma elections in December 2007 showed that a third of the voters were aged between 18 and 34.<sup>103</sup> To put this into perspective, in the 2003 elections to the State Duma, confirmed voter turnout among 18-34 year olds was significantly lower than for the 35-54 and over 55 age categories, representing just under 24% of voters.<sup>104</sup> It should be noted, however, that Turchak is the coordinator of youth politics for United Russia and thus is highly vested in presenting a positive image of the Young Guard and the success of efforts made by pro-Kremlin youth initiatives. In lieu of any suitable means of judging the actual democratic outcomes in this area, aside from the unsubstantiated claim that youth voter turnout was up in the 2007-8 electoral cycle compared to the 2003-4 cycle, this study must satisfy itself with examining the content and function of the youth movements' campaigns to get young Russians involved in politics. Being thus confined to assessing the *likely* democratic effects of participation in terms of legitimisation, the purposes and motivations behind Nashi and the Young Guard's campaign (including the Kremlin's intentions in supporting them) acquire an additional importance in the final analysis. Given the Kremlin's

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<sup>103</sup> Turchak, 2008, *Molodezh kak polnotsennyi sub'ekt politiki*, The Young Guard of United Russia, available at: [http://www.molgvardia.ru/vazhnaya\\_tema/andrei\\_turchak\\_molodezh\\_kak\\_polnocennyi\\_subekt\\_politiki.html](http://www.molgvardia.ru/vazhnaya_tema/andrei_turchak_molodezh_kak_polnocennyi_subekt_politiki.html), last accessed 14 November 2007.

<sup>104</sup> 'Forum Obshchestvennogo Mnenie', 2004, available at [http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/policy\\_interest/attendance/voter\\_turn\\_2004/ed041231](http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/policy_interest/attendance/voter_turn_2004/ed041231).

afore-mentioned desire to secure youth support for the incumbent regime at election-time, it may be assumed that the Kremlin would do everything in its power to ensure the success of Nashi and the Young Guard's bid to increase youth voter turnout. Moreover, although there is no data publicly available on voter turnout in the 2007/8 electoral cycle by age, according to the data that is available on the website of the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation, voter turnout *in general* was up in the 2007/8 electoral cycle compared with the previous cycle. While voter turnout in the 2004 presidential elections was a respectable 64.32%, in the 2008 presidential elections this figure had increased to 69.71%. Even more impressive, the increase in voter turnout between the 2003 and 2007 elections to the State Duma was just over 8% (from 55.67% in 2003 to 63.71% in 2007 – see Appendix 2). The fact that these improvements in voter turnout came in the wake of successive cycles of decreasing turnout in Russia adds to their triumph (see Figure 4 previously).<sup>105</sup>

Assuming that youth voter turnout did increase as part of the overall increase in voter turnout in the 2007-8 Russian electoral cycle, this might still have had multiple outcomes, which may themselves have served to produce different and even counter democratic effects. Following Warren's general outline of the possible democratic effects of associations, the link between the rise in electoral participation (to which Nashi and the Young Guard contributed) and strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the state is evident: In essence, simply by participating in the elections and voting for a candidate or party the electorate are legitimising the election process and also validating the office of institution that they are voting for, be that the presidency or the parliament (the option of voting against all was no longer available in

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<sup>105</sup> For the purposes of comparison, in the 2008 American presidential elections youth voter turnout increased by 4-5%, moreover, the trend for youth voter turnout was already upwards in America and had been so since the 1996 American presidential elections. For American voter turnout statistics see Circle (Young Voters in the 2008 Presidential Election, 19 December 2008, available at [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS\\_08\\_exit\\_polls.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_08_exit_polls.pdf), last accessed 1 March 2011).

the 2007-8 federal elections). At the same time, the efforts of the pro-Kremlin youth movements to encourage young people to vote were not only an attempt to get out the youth vote but also were overtly targeted at helping the incumbent regime to win the votes of the younger generation. Again, in the absence of data on voter allegiance by age, the general trend in support for the Kremlin's favoured presidential candidate between the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections is taken as an indicator of the likely pattern of voting habits among young people. According to the Central Electoral Commission for the Russian Federation, the number of votes for Medvedev in 2008 was 52.53 million compared with 49.56 million votes for the incumbent President Putin in 2004, while over the same period the number of votes for the party of power, United Russia, practically doubled from 22.78 million to 44.71 million, thus increasing the incumbent regime's popular mandate (see Appendix Two). The fact that higher youth voter turnout was directed in support of the regime is no cause for concern in itself from the point of view of the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.<sup>106</sup> However, the youth movements' impact on providing democratic legitimisation for state processes and institutions needs to be qualified by the methods employed to persuade people to vote.

Campaigns by the pro-Kremlin youth movements to make young people aware of the importance of exercising their right to vote and taking an active part in shaping their future were continuously backed up by references to the immediacy of the potential threat to Russia of an electoral revolution funded by America and its allies among the Russian opposition.<sup>107</sup> Cultivating fear of what might happen if young Russians did not come out and register their

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<sup>106</sup> The net increase in youth voter turnout in the 2008 American presidential elections has been heralded as a positive outcome and an implied plus for democracy even though pleas for young Americans to vote were directed at winning over the youth vote for a particular candidate.

<sup>107</sup> Details of Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to promote youth engagement in politics and society more broadly will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

assumed support for the regime at election time, Nashi and the Young Guard thereby restricted the perceived options available to young Russians. In practical terms, the predominant strategy for getting young Russians to vote in the elections and to support the incumbent regime was to threaten and undermine the opposition while providing incentives for allegiance to the regime. In the run up to the 2007/8 electoral cycle, the aggregate of *Nashi Vybori*'s efforts ('Our Elections' – a subgroup within the Nashi movement responsible for leading the movement's campaign to increase electoral participation among youth) can be described as promoting youth support for Putin and his chosen successor and maintaining a visible presence on the streets ahead of the election in order to physically intimidate the opposition and ensure the 'smooth running' of the elections.<sup>108</sup> Initially *Nashi Vybori* was called *Grazhdanskii kontrol*' ('Civic control') – the original name indicating the group's true emphasis on securing order at election-time rather than citizens making a choice or asserting their rights. In addition, *Dobrovolnaia Molodezhnaia Druzhba* (Voluntary Youth Service- a division of Nashi accused of recruiting football hooligans to join its ranks) has acted as a security service or militia for the movement, policing Nashi rallies and demonstrations as well as harassing members of the opposition.<sup>109</sup> While the Young Guard's activities in this respect were rather more confined to the rules and decorum of political campaigning (i.e. without the physical violence associated with some of Nashi's alleged heavy handed actions), the youth branch of the United Russia party is not without its own reprehensible tactics to encourage young people to vote. Aside from their educational efforts to raise civic responsibility and awareness of the importance of voting among young people, the Young Guard allegedly promised cinema tickets to first-time voters. By offering material incentives for young

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<sup>108</sup> *Nashi Vybori* was formed in 2005 ahead of the 2008 Russian presidential elections. According to its website, its aim was to stop foreign influences from stealing the elections and preventing Russia from regaining its great power status (<http://nashivybory.ru/>).

<sup>109</sup> The role played by Nashi's Voluntary Youth Service will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis alongside Nashi's tactics of intimidation and aggression.

Russians to vote, the Young Guard may have artificially increased youth voter turnout and the extent to which this is the case is impossible to determine. Moreover, news of the Young Guard's strategy to win young people's votes might have a hidden counter-productive effect of undermining the significance and validity of the electoral process as well as the legitimacy of the election outcome in the eyes of young Russians, despite increasing the actual number of youth votes for the regime.

## *2 – Campaigning and electoral monitoring*

Perhaps more significantly then, to support the idea that Nashi and the Young Guard have made a positive contribution to youth perceptions of the democratic legitimacy of state processes and institutions as well as the incumbent regime's standing, both pro-Kremlin youth movements have set up projects to work specifically at encouraging youth political participation beyond voting alone.

In the run up to the 2007/8 electoral cycle, the afore-mentioned *Nashi Vybori* set up an election monitoring corps and conducted exit polls with the explicit aim of reinforcing the legitimacy of the electoral process and the election results. In fact, these activities appear to have been as important to the youth movement as getting young people out to vote in the elections. According to Sergei Belokonev (former leader of *Nashi Vybori* and current State Duma deputy) speaking in an interview with *Vzgliad*, in order to prevent anti-Kremlin forces from provoking political instability by creating an atmosphere of distrust in the election results and raising doubts over electoral fraud, *Nashi Vybori* activists were required to conduct exit polls and take part in monitoring the elections to ensure that there were no irregularities during the 2007-8 electoral cycle.

[Nashi Vybori] wants to ensure that the 2007-8 parliamentary and presidential elections are carried out in strict accordance with the law, in order to prevent any attempt at inciting an ‘orange revolution’ or any other attempt to destabilise the situation should this arise.<sup>110</sup>

As early as November 2005 Russian newspaper *Gazeta* reported that Nashi was to receive support from the Presidential Administration and the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation to “monitor all major elections in the country, including presidential and parliamentary ones.”<sup>111</sup> 2,500 *Nashi Vybori* (then Civic Force) activists were involved in the elections to Moscow City Duma on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2005, acting as observers to monitor the elections across Moscow’s 122 polling stations and surveying 50% of the electorate in their exit polls.<sup>112</sup> While Nashi’s highly visible presence on polling day may be criticised for applying undue pressure on the public to vote for the incumbent regime and for intimidating members of the opposition, by launching major projects in 8 regions to get *Nashi Vybori* activists involved in campaigning and election monitoring Nashi has stimulated participants’ engagement in the electoral process and interest in the outcome. The close involvement of *Nashi Vybori* activists in the technicalities of the electoral process legitimises the process and its outcome in their eyes and to a lesser extent also in the eyes of all Nashi participants and their supporters. Moreover, from a longer-term perspective, *Nashi Vybori* has sought to encourage young people to pursue a political career under its guidance, choosing one of three pathways; either aiming to eventually become a political technologist involved in running PR

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<sup>110</sup> Belokonev, Sergei (2007), interview with Irina Romancheva for *Vzgliad*, ‘*Nashi s budil’nikom*’, 12 November 2007, available at <http://www.vz.ru/politics/2007/11/12/124052.html>, last accessed 23 August 2009.

<sup>111</sup> *Gazeta*, ‘Pro-Kremlin youth to replace independent observers at elections’, 3 November 2005, available at: <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20051103/41981439.html>, last accessed 23 April 2008.

<sup>112</sup> Belokonev, Sergei (2007), interview with Irina Romancheva for *Vzgliad*, ‘*Nashi s budil’nikom*’, 12 November 2007, available at <http://www.vz.ru/politics/2007/11/12/124052.html>, last accessed 23 August 2009.

campaigns, a lawyer involved in the work of the electoral committee and electoral staff, or a candidate for parliament.<sup>113</sup>

Similarly, in their own attempt to engage young Russians in politics beyond voting alone and to get them involved in the electoral process, in February 2007 the Young Guard developed a program called *Faktor Gvardii*. Working in 6 regions (St. Petersburg, Pskov, Stavropol, Samara, Tomsk and Orlov) as well as at a federal level in Moscow, *Faktor Gvardii* conducted its own electoral campaign in the March 2007 regional elections and in the 2007-8 federal electoral cycle, mirroring that of United Russia but aimed specifically at targeting young voters and supporting young candidates. Engaging in agitation and counter-propaganda, much of the Young Guard's efforts were focused on street actions, targeting students at Higher Education Institutes and using internet blogs and social networking sites to encourage young people to become interested in the elections and to get involved. Though it might be noted that Young Guard activists were not given the opportunity to work alongside United Russia's electoral staff, representatives of the Young Guard have sought to portray their electoral staff's 'autonomy' from the party as the optimum scenario – an 'unprecedented project' allowing young people to participate in the elections 'on the same level as the main party' and to 'work independently'.<sup>114</sup> Again, while getting youth actively involved in the electoral process has benefitted the Kremlin by encouraging young Russians to use their vote and moreover to vote for the incumbent regime, providing that Young Guard activists have not become disillusioned in the electoral process and the value of their input through their

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<sup>113</sup> [http://nashivybory.ru/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=30&limit=1&limitstart=1](http://nashivybory.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=30&limit=1&limitstart=1), last accessed 23 April 2008.

<sup>114</sup> Author's interview with Andrei Tatarinov, member of the political council of the Young Guard of United Russia, Moscow, 10 July 2008

experience,<sup>115</sup> the level of youth engagement noted here boosts the legitimacy of the elections and the elected institutions for those involved. Kremlin support for Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to encourage young people to participate in the elections beyond voting might be explained by the regime's interest in securing the public integrity of the electoral process and results in order to prevent any revolution sparked by allegations of electoral fraud.

### *3 - Young candidates*

Finally, both Nashi and the Young Guard have striven to stimulate youth electoral participation at the highest level by encouraging and supporting young people to stand as candidates for election themselves. Following United Russia's announcement in April 2006 that no less than 20% of all of its future party lists at both regional and federal level should be comprised of under 35 year olds,<sup>116</sup> the Young Guard introduced *PolitZavod* ('Political Factory'), a program aimed at recruiting and grooming young people to join United Russia's ranks. Essentially, *PolitZavod* encourages young people from all regions of Russia to compete to be put forward as potential candidates for United Russia party lists. The competition for the federal project *PolitZavod* began in April 2007 and involved both Young Guard and Nashi activists as well as young people not affiliated to either youth movement. According to Andrei Turchak, coordinator of youth politics for United Russia, each region put forward 2 candidates, who then went on to a five-day national final, which sorted them into order of

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<sup>115</sup> At least one prominent Young Guard activist, Alexei Radov, did become disillusioned following his experience of the 2007-8 electoral cycle and quit the youth movement. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

<sup>116</sup> Initially the age threshold for United Russia's youth quota was set at 28 for elections to all levels, but this was subsequently raised to 35 for the federal elections. For the purposes of cross-comparison between elections to regional and federal legislative assemblies the proportion of under 35 year olds is used throughout this study.

rank to be proposed as potential candidates for United Russia's party list for the 2007 State Duma elections under the region that had originally put them forward.<sup>117</sup> Given that in 2003 United Russia won 310 of the 450 seats in the State Duma and had just under 7% of its Duma deputies aged under 35, the 20% youth quota on future United Russia party lists represented a significant commitment to increasing the number of young people in politics. Moreover, the youth quota was perceived as a major boon to Nashi's and particularly the Young Guard's efforts to provide access for young people to formal political institutions and consequently to attract youth support:

In Russia, and possibly in global practice, there is no precedent for the project 'PolitZavod'... The party of power in a country like Russia where 145 million people live is pretty big and it has allocated 20% of its party lists to a youth quota. This has been promised to young activists in other youth organisations, yet nowhere can young Russians realise their potential like they can in our party.<sup>118</sup>

By encouraging young people to put themselves forward as candidates for elections and supporting them in their candidacy, the Young Guard's *PolitZavod* program invests young people in the political process – giving them a stake in the outcome and thus a respect for and concern in elections, beyond that which might be achieved through efforts to simply encourage young people to vote or even to participate in campaigning or election monitoring.

Yet, despite the 20% pledged to youth and the benefits of having Kremlin support that this seemed to express, in the 2007 State Duma elections only 12.2% of United Russia's

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<sup>117</sup> Turchak, Andrei, 15 May 2007, 'V Rossii startoval regional'nii tur PolitZavoda 2007', *Smolenskii Novosti*, available at <http://www.smolnews.ru/news/13648>, last accessed 18 June 2009.

<sup>118</sup> Author's interview with Andrei Tatarinov, member of the Young Guard's Political Council, Moscow, 10 July 2008

official party list was comprised of under 35 year olds (73 people).<sup>119</sup> Although an anonymous member of Nashi's leadership claimed that the problems encountered with meeting the benchmark set by United Russia for the State Duma elections were confined to only a few regions, in fact in 34 of the 83 regions contributing to United Russia's party list for the State Duma elections no candidates aged under 35 were put forward. In the regional legislative assemblies held at the same time as the elections to the State Duma in December 2007, fulfilment of the youth quota among United Russia's party lists was much better on the whole. In 7 of the 9 regional elections held in December 2007 under 35 year olds made up just under or even in excess of 20% of United Russia's party list (see Figure 6 below). However, looking at United Russia's party lists for elections to regional legislative assemblies over the entire period since the announcement of the introduction of the youth quota in April 2006 suggests that this is not part of any discernible trend of increased youth representation at the regional level (see Figure 7 below). Although the proportion of under 35 year olds included on United Russia's party list in some regional elections between Autumn 2006 and Autumn 2010 exceeded 20%, painstaking examination of the data from all of the elections to legislative assemblies (both regional and federal) since the announcement of the youth quota by United Russia reveals no rhyme or reason to variation in adherence to the quota. For example, United Russia's party list for elections to the regional legislative assembly in Sverdlovsk in Oct 2006 included 25% under 35-year-olds, yet in March 2010 included only 10%.

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<sup>119</sup> Author's own calculations based on data available on the website for the Central Electoral Commission, available at [www.izbirkom.ru/izbirkom.html](http://www.izbirkom.ru/izbirkom.html), last accessed 18 June 2009. For all calculations of ages of Duma deputies the age which they turned in election year is used, i.e. for ages of Duma deputies in the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation deputies age is simply 2007 minus their year of birth. Nashi and the Young Guard's bid to increase youth representation in legislative assemblies will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

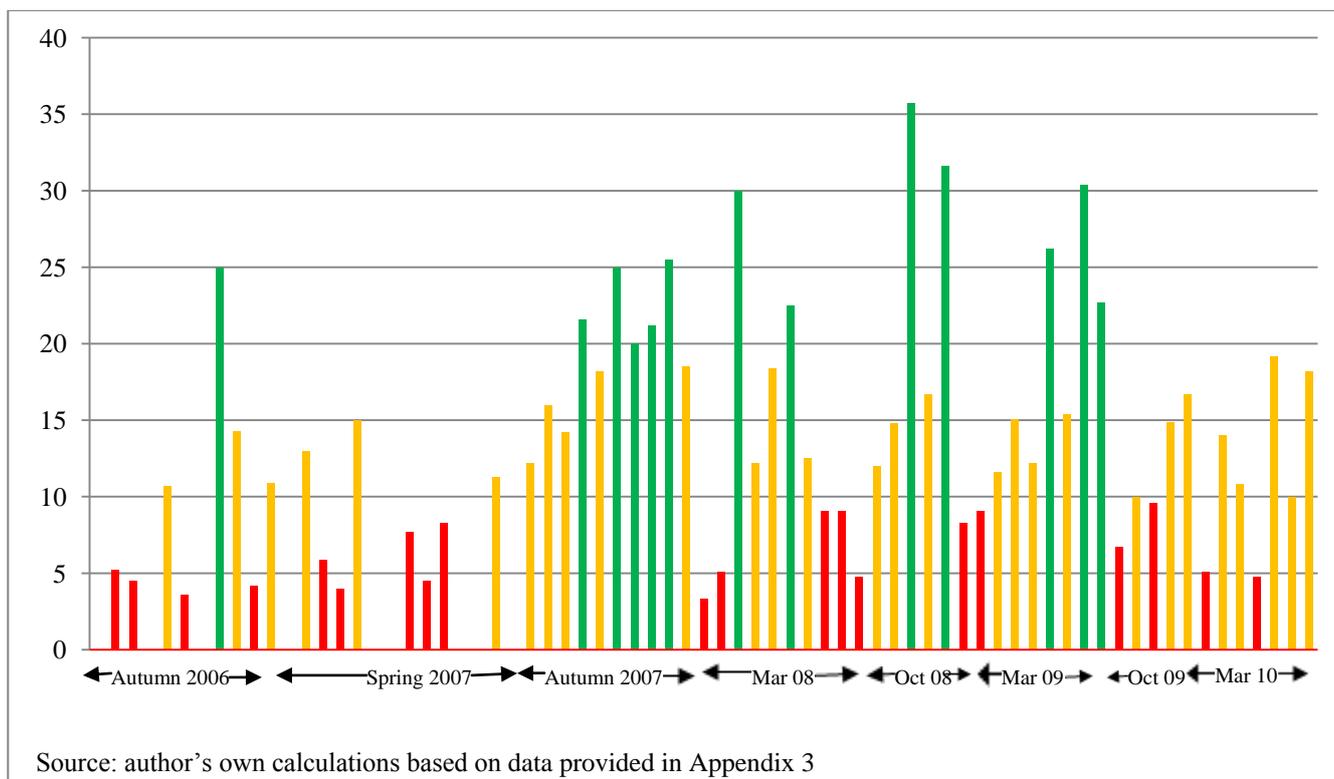
Figure 6 – Evaluating the success of United Russia’s youth quota in the December 2007 elections to legislative assemblies

<i>Legislative Assembly</i>	<i>Regional level</i>									<i>Federal level</i>
	Buryatiya Republic	Mordovia Republic	N.Ossetia-Alania	Udmurtia Republic	Krasnodar Area	Penza region	Kamchatka Area	Saratov region	Smolensk region	State Duma
<i>Convocation</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> conv.	1st conv.	4 <sup>th</sup> conv.	4 <sup>th</sup> conv.	5 <sup>th</sup> conv.					
<i>Date of election</i>	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07	2/12/07
<i>Count &lt;35yr olds listed on United Russia’s party list (UR PL)</i> <sup>120</sup>	8	17	9	18	9	6	10	7	10	73
<i>Count all listed on UR PL</i>	50	120	37	99	36	30	54	33	52	600
<i>% &lt;35 of total listed on UR PL</i>	16	14.2	21.6	18.2	25	20	18.5	21.2	19.2	12.2
<i>Count &lt;35 who won a seat on UR PL</i>	2	1	4	6	3	0	0	2	3	23
<i>Count all who won a seat on UR PL</i>	24	22	25	31	26	10	18	14	15	315
<i>% &lt;35 of all who won a seat on UR PL</i>	8.3	4.6	16	19.4	11.5	0	0	14.3	20	7.3
<i>% of &lt;35 listed who won seat on UR PL</i>	25	5.9	44.4	33.3	33.3	0	0	28.6	30	31.5
<i>% of all listed who won a seat on UR PL</i>	48	18.3	67.6	31.3	72.2	33.3	33.3	42.4	28.9	52.5

Source: Author’s own calculations based on information available at <http://www.izbirkom.ru/izbirkom.html>, last accessed 18 June 2009.

<sup>120</sup> When a mixed electoral system was used, the calculations here are based only on deputies listed and elected on United Russia’s Party List, not on SMD.

Figure 7 - Percentage aged under 35 on United Russia party lists since April 2006



Furthermore, of the 73 young candidates who received a place on United Russia's party list for the 2007 State Duma elections, only 23 went on to become elected deputies; a much lower success rate than older candidates. Whereas 52.5% of all candidates on United Russia's party list were elected to office, only 31.5% of under 35s listed went on to become deputies in the State Duma (see Figure 6 above). This indicates that, even where there was an attempt made to adhere to United Russia's youth quota in the regional primaries held to select candidates for the party's list for the State Duma elections, young candidates were never really considered for entry into the State Duma and were thus awarded token places on the party list, as United Russia Duma deputy Chernishenko's account of his experience of the primaries in Murmansk bears witness to:

From the experience of my region, United Russia's announcement of the need to include a 20% youth quota in the primaries did not really change the configuration of the top three places on the list for Murmansk region as a whole. Young party members, who took part in the primaries in my region won 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> place.<sup>121</sup>

In practice, this meant that even the overall winner of *PolitZavod* in Murmansk region, Aleksandra Komissarenko, had no real chance of becoming a United Russia Duma deputy, despite the party's landslide victory in the 2007 parliamentary elections, having been awarded 5<sup>th</sup> place on Murmansk's contribution to the federal party list when only the top three places from Murmansk went through.<sup>122</sup> What is more, this tendency for young candidates to be awarded lower places on United Russia's party lists with less chance of being elected than older candidates who command the higher positions is not unique to elections at the federal level, but is common to regional elections to legislative assemblies across the board since April 2006 (see Appendix 3). In all but one of the elections to regional legislative assemblies held in December 2007 (Udmurtia Republic), the proportion of under 35 year olds among those elected to office was significantly less than the proportion of under 35 year olds among those listed as United Russia candidates.

In terms of the implications of the failure of the Young Guard's *PolitZavod* project to effect any significant increase in the proportion of young people elected to the State Duma for the movements' contribution to the democratic legitimacy of the state, Tamir suggests that "the opportunity to seek influence, even if it fails or is only partially effective, can nonetheless provide legitimacy for both processes and outcomes" (1998, p.224 cited in Warren, 2001,

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<sup>121</sup> Chernishenko, I. K., United Russia State Duma deputy since 4/12/2000, born 1945. Correspondence with this author, 20 April 2009. The term 'primaries' here refers to the regional competitions held to gain a place on United Russia's party list for the 2007 State Duma elections.

<sup>122</sup> See Loskutova, 2008, pp.135-39 for details of winners of *PolitZavod* and their subsequent fortunes.

p.92). By this logic, regardless of the actual implementation of the youth quota in practice and its relative success or otherwise in providing greater youth representation in legislative bodies, young Russians inspired by this opportunity will have greater respect for the office of Duma deputy and the validity of decisions made by the parliament. Moreover, despite having promoted themselves as a gateway to political power, the movements' inability to deliver United Russia's promised youth quota has not noticeably affected their credibility in the eyes of young Russians (despite the 'Radov' incident – to be discussed further in Chapter 6). In the March 2009 regional elections to legislative assemblies, participation in *PolitZavod* was consistent with the previous elections at this level in March 2006.

It should also be noted that the failure of United Russia's youth quota is not necessarily a bad thing for democracy, in the sense that the introduction of a youth quota should not automatically be considered to be a positive democratic development. Indeed, the democratic credentials of United Russia's youth quota are highly contestable. Not least, the process of elevating a particular group (whether that be defined by age, gender, ethnicity, class or otherwise) and raising their chances beyond their merits alone by virtue of belonging to that group fundamentally contradicts the basic democratic notion of equality, regardless of whether it was intended to correct an existing bias or prejudice. Allocating places to young people on the basis of their age is itself a form of discrimination, albeit positive discrimination, and is not altogether dissimilar in method if not intention to the principles of a gerontocratic ruling system. Furthermore, the Soviet example indicates how the introduction of a youth quota may assist in the consolidation of a non-democratic regime by providing undue legitimacy for the regime.

However, the fact that United Russia's youth quota was not implemented gives credence to the assertion, made at the beginning of this chapter, that the Kremlin has no

genuine desire to instigate mass youth political participation beyond what it deems necessary in order to boost support for the incumbent regime and secure it from the perceived potential threat of youth-led instability during the 2007-8 electoral cycle. Typifying the attitude towards the development of pro-Kremlin youth movements held by the liberal-democratic opposition to the Russian regime, Ilya Yashin (then leader of the opposition group Youth Yabloko) referred to Nashi as a “very expensive electoral toy,” which would be “put on ice [after the 2008 elections] so that it can be reanimated in case of an emergency.”<sup>123</sup> Perhaps more significantly and with regard to the youth quota in particular, longstanding United Russia Duma deputy, Anatoli Ivanov, appears to share this disparaging opinion of the Kremlin’s intentions towards Nashi and the Young Guard, declaring that “the introduction of a youth quota for the elections to the State Duma was a populist decision aimed at encouraging young people to take part in the elections.”<sup>124</sup> In this way, the primary incentive for United Russia’s introduction of a youth quota was to use it, first, as a means of getting young people involved in politics in the short-term in order to gain their support and get out the vote in the 2007/8 electoral cycle and, second, as a way of providing incentives for young, aspiring politicians to join United Russia and build up a select cadre reserve to reinforce the party’s ongoing dominance.

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<sup>123</sup> Ekaterina Savina, Yuliya Taratura, and Mikhail Shevchuk, ‘Nashi stali chuzhimi’, *Kommersant* (29 January 2008) available at <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=846635>, last accessed 20 September 2010. Youth Yabloko is the youth branch of the democratic opposition party Yabloko, which has not held any seats in the State Duma since the 2003 elections.

<sup>124</sup> Correspondence between this author and Anatoli Ivanov, 17 April 2009. Born in 1949, A.S.Ivanov has been a United Russia State Duma deputy since 19/12/99.

## Conclusion

State support for Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to encourage youth political *engagement* in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle was motivated by the same desire to maintain regime support and prevent instability as previous efforts by the Kremlin to cultivate political *disengagement*. Moreover, judging by the position indicated in Surkov's speech and the State Strategy for Youth Policy 2006-16 as well as the prospective benefits for the regime's electoral standing accrued through continued mass political disengagement, it is safe to say that the Kremlin's response to the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine was designed to limit the potential impact of youth political engagement in Russia rather than to assist its development. Critically, the Kremlin's actions to support youth political engagement via Nashi and the Young Guard have not heralded any change in its attitude towards the desirability of mass participation in politics or indeed youth political engagement in its own right. As one would expect, therefore, Nashi and the Young Guard have excelled as far as participatory youth initiatives that directly reinforce the incumbent regime's standing are concerned, such as increasing youth voter turnout and staging mass actions campaigning for the regime or for a particular young United Russia candidate.

However, as this chapter has demonstrated, Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to increase youth electoral participation in the run-up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle have contributed to *both* reinforcing the existing political regime *and* providing democratic legitimacy for the state in the eyes of Nashi and the Young Guard participants. Youth voter turnout, participation in election monitoring, conducting exit polls and attempts to stand as candidate for parliament all encourage participants' support for the electoral process and respect for political institutions and the authority of those in office. Thus, in seeking to reinforce the incumbent regime's dominance, state support for the youth movements' drive to

increase youth electoral participation and political engagement has simultaneously conferred a certain degree of legitimacy on the political processes and institutions of state among young participants. Being the product of a desire to shut out political alternatives, this positive institutional democratic effect of Nashi and the Young Guard therefore represents a case where vested state interests of an undemocratic nature have necessitated some positive democratic effects (as hypothesised in Chapter 1).

Nonetheless, although the fact that youth electoral participation via Nashi and the Young Guard intentionally served to reinforce the incumbent regime's standing does not necessarily detract from its positive democratic effect of contributing to legitimising the institutions of state, the conflated dominance of pro-regime forces enforced by tactics of intimidation and repression challenges that same legitimacy. The tactics of manipulation, physical intimidation and bribery employed by Nashi and the Young Guard as part of their strategy to increase youth voter turnout in support of the regime undermine what would have otherwise represented a significant contribution to the 'process legitimacy' of the state (assuming that the youth movements were indeed successful in their bid to increase youth voter turnout as they claim). Furthermore, the noted failure to implement United Russia's 20% youth quota in the party's list for the 2007 State Duma elections is indicative of the restrictive impact of the Kremlin's lack of genuine desire to encourage mass youth political engagement (beyond that which it perceives to be absolutely essential to the preservation of the incumbent regime) on the institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.

Such commentary has clear parallels with Cornwall's assertion that failure to develop an "autonomous public sphere outside the domain of the state" restricts the effects of participation to legitimising the "existing political system" (2002, p. 4), suggesting that any attempt by Nashi and the Young Guard to lock in the success of their efforts to get young

people involved in politics with any concrete and lasting measure is doomed to fail unless the state deems it necessary for regime security. Indeed, although it has been shown that the institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard here have not been limited to legitimising the incumbent regime, instances where the youth movements' have contributed positively to young people's perceptions of the democratic legitimacy of the state have always been in tandem with reinforcing the regime's standing. It may therefore be concluded that the reductionist tendency of existing portrayals of Nashi and the Young Guard's relationship with the Kremlin notwithstanding, their assessment of the youth movements' impact on the regime's standing is valid: Nashi and the Young Guard have predominantly contributed to reinforcing the regime's dominance using whatever means possible at their disposal in the run up the 2007-8 electoral cycle with scant regard for the democratic effects thereof.

## CHAPTER 5 - POWER TO YOUTH: REPRESENTATION & RENEWAL

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Despite the traditional prejudice against the democratising potential of state-sponsored participation, representation in formal political arenas and decision-making bodies is an area of institutional democratic effects where having state sponsorship and support is recognised to be potentially beneficial (as noted in the introduction to Part 2). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, youth representation in politics has formed an integral part of both Nashi and the Young Guard's platforms. Already, at the time of their formation in 2005, both youth movements pitched rejuvenation of the incumbent political elite as key to initiating their agenda for change with the ultimate ambition of modernising Russia and improving the country's global standing. In other words, both Nashi and the Young Guard identified the elevation of young activists to positions of power as being the critical step towards furthering their overall objectives:

Having created a cadre reserve for the realisation of our ambition to modernise the country, we should provide strong support for getting this new generation of leaders into positions of power in the political, economic and administrative elite of this country. Our task is to replace 'en masse' the political, economic and informational power in this country. We will take every opportunity that we have to do this connected with the electoral process, developing recruitment programs, existing youth programs, and possibilities for social mobilisation.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Nashi, 2005, '*Manifest*', available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

We are fighting two main threats to Russia – oligarchic and communist revanche. They both represent a step backwards and we want to move forwards. For this we need to bring a new generation to power and for this reason our main slogan is ‘Power to youth!’<sup>126</sup>

Having established in Chapter 4 how state-sponsorship has only supported Nashi and the Young Guard’s contribution to providing democratic legitimacy for the state as far as it was deemed necessary to secure the incumbent regime, Chapter 5 proceeds to consider the ways in which state-sponsorship might have had a more positive impact on the institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard by enabling representation in the formal political arena. It investigates whether state-sponsorship has provided Nashi and the Young Guard with access to formal political institutions (beyond the failure to implement United Russia’s youth quota noted in the previous chapter) and, if so, in what manner, to what extent and with what democratic implications.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section begins by assessing the youth movements’ efforts to rejuvenate Russia’s political elite and analysing the significance of their failure to increase youth representation in legislative assemblies. It identifies the role of the state in these events and evaluates what this implies for the impact of state-sponsorship on the institutional democratic effects of participation as far providing representation is concerned. The second section sets out the benefits of state support for Nashi and the Young Guard’s ability to access positions of political authority and to assert their influence within the formal political arena. It compares the failed youth quota to the youth

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<sup>126</sup> The Young Guard, 2005, ‘*O gvardii*’, no longer available online since the youth movement replaced it with a new manifesto in 2008.

movements' relative success in positioning their most trusted members in positions of political power in order to identify the precise nature of the relationship between state support and youth political representation in contemporary Russia. Finally, the third section questions whether the installation of Nashi and Young Guard leaders into prominent political posts by virtue of their loyalty to the Kremlin can really be considered to render the youth movements' 'strong publics' in Fraser's sense of the word (i.e. empowered to be able to 'translate their opinion into authoritative decision-making'). Has the elevation of Nashi and Young Guard leaders to federal political office helped to further the youth movements' ultimate objectives of asserting the influence of the younger generation on politics or has this been an end in itself?

### [Rejuvenation of Russia's political elite](#)

In the previous chapter it was noted that the *PolitZavod* program, which was the key instrument for the pro-Kremlin youth movements to launch young people's political careers as parliamentary deputies, did not manage to effect any significant increase in the proportion of young people standing as United Russia candidates for election to legislative assemblies. United Russia's declaratory 20% youth quota for its party lists was not implemented and it was suggested that this reflected the lack of genuine desire on the part of the Kremlin to support mass youth political engagement beyond what it deemed to be essential to securing the longevity of the incumbent regime. This chapter moves away from critique of the failure to implement United Russia's youth quota to evaluate the overall results of Nashi and the Young Guard's attempts to rejuvenate Russia's political elite. The youth movements' shortcomings as far as their inability to increase youth representation in legislative

assemblies are concerned are analysed in terms of what they reveal about the impact of state-sponsorship on the ability of Nashi and the Young Guard to gain access to formal political institutions.

*Nashi and the Young Guard's contribution to youth political representation in comparative perspective*

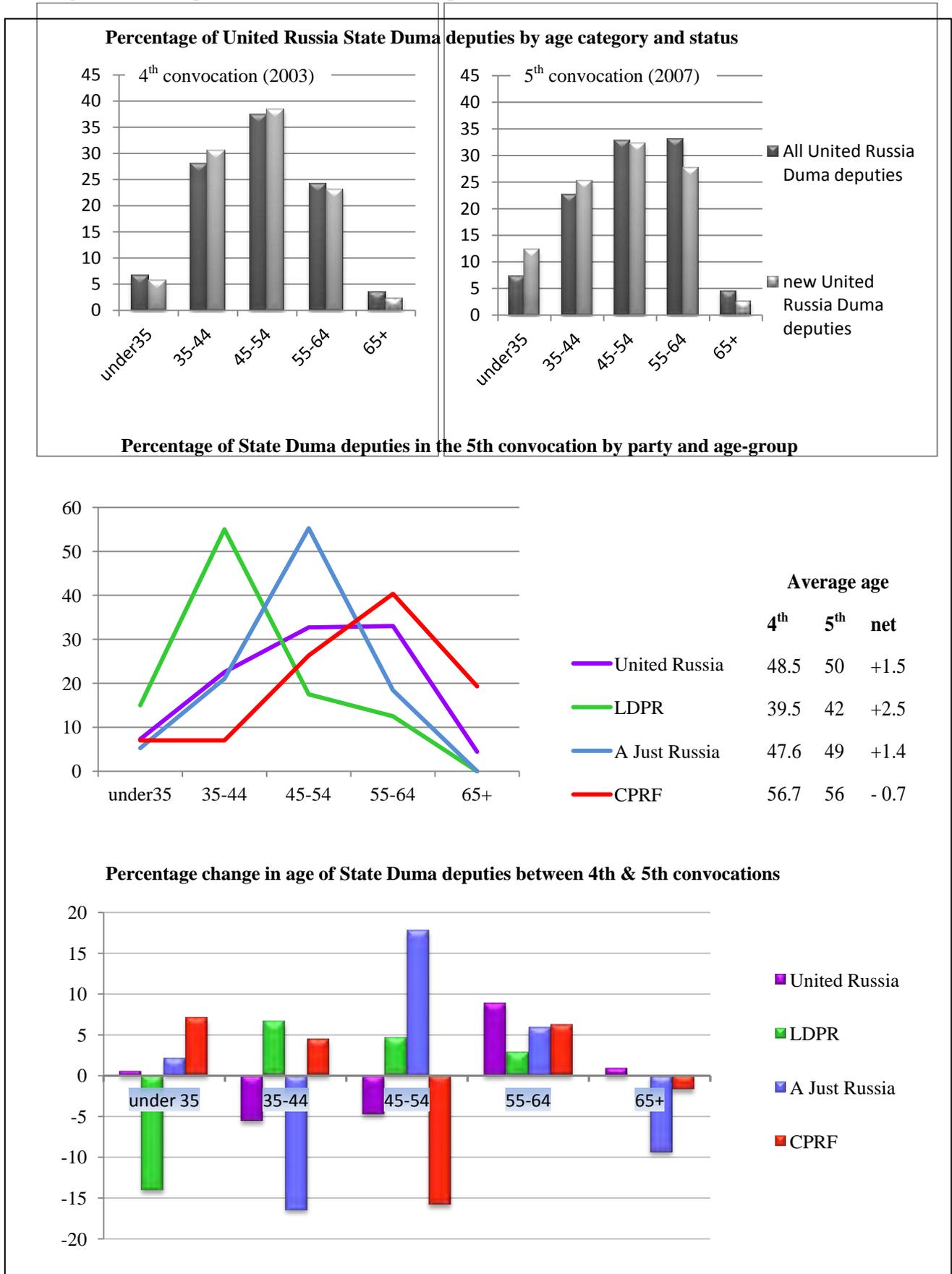
Regardless of the shortfall in fulfilling United Russia's youth quota, the impact of Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to increase youth representation in the State Duma were negligible. 7.3% of United Russia deputies elected to the State Duma in 2007 were aged under 35, which, when compared with the 6.8% of United Russia deputies aged under 35 in the previous convocation of the State Duma (4<sup>th</sup> convocation – elected 2003), is only a slight increase of 0.5% (see Figure 8 below). Although the proportion of State Duma deputies aged under 35 increased more among *new* United Russia deputies (by 6.6% - from 5.6% in 2003 to 12.2% in 2007), over the same period the average age of United Russia deputies actually *increased* from 48.5 to 50 years. In practice the party retained many of its older deputies, effectively swapping the relatively young for the even younger: The proportion of those aged below 35 and above 55 increased, whereas those aged between 35 and 54 decreased, thus implying that the principle of Nashi and the Young Guard's campaign for 'power to youth' was not fully endorsed by United Russia.<sup>127</sup> To put this into perspective, if we look at other political parties,

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<sup>127</sup> Just under 60% of United Russia deputies of the 4<sup>th</sup> convocation, who did not stay on in the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation were aged between 35 and 54. At the same time, as one might expect, in the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation of the State Duma, the percentage of new deputies in each age category decreased with age. So while 82.6% of those aged under 35 were new, 56.3% aged 35-44, 48.5% aged 45-54, 41.3% aged 55-64 and 28.6% over 65 were new. It is worth noting in passing that the Russian State Duma has a relatively high level of turnover of its deputies: 52.8% of deputies elected in 2007 to the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation of the Russian State Duma were new, compared to 32% of deputies in the 13<sup>th</sup> convocation of the French National Assembly (also elected in 2007) and only 19% of MPs elected to the British parliament in 2005 (author's own calculations based on material available at

then in the 2007 State Duma elections the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) saw a 7% increase in the proportion of its deputies aged under 35 compared to the 2003 elections and was the only party to see a net *decrease* in the average age of its deputies (although the CPRF still has the oldest deputies on average of all the parties). Furthermore, in absolute terms, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) still has far younger deputies on average than United Russia (42 compared to 50 years), although it has seen an increase in the average age of its deputies since the 4<sup>th</sup> convocation of the State Duma with just over 14% fewer under 35 year olds.

Figure 8 - Composition of State Duma deputies



Source: Author's own calculations based on data available at: <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>, last accessed 1/11/08.

Figure 9 – Age distribution of deputies by party and convocation (percent by row)

State Duma of the Russian Federation		Age turned in election year ( 1993, '95.. 2007)					N
	Convocation	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
<i>All deputies</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> (1993-5)	14.5	33.4	34.1	16.3	1.7	461
	2 <sup>nd</sup> (1995-9)	9.8	29.1	38.7	20	2.4	491
	3 <sup>rd</sup> (1999-2003)	10.6	24.5	43.6	18.4	3	436
	4 <sup>th</sup> (2003-7)	7.2	28.7	35.8	22.9	5.4	428
	5 <sup>th</sup> (2007-11)	7.8	23.3	32.4	30.9	5.6	450
<i>Party of Power</i> (1993 = 'Choice of Russia' & 'Party of Russian Unity and Consent'; 1995 = 'Our Home Russia'; 1999 = 'Fatherland-All Russia' & 'Unity'; 2003 = 'United Russia' & 'Rodina'; 2007 = 'United Russia')	1 <sup>st</sup>	3.3	47.9	29.2	12.5	2.1	48
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	10.7	29.3	38.7	16	5.3	75
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10.6	29.8	41.7	14.6	3.3	151
	4 <sup>th</sup>	6.8	28.1	37.4	24.2	3.6	310
	5 <sup>th</sup>	7.3	22.5	32.7	33	4.5	315
<i>Liberal Democratic Party of Russia</i> (Zhirinovskiy Bloc)	1 <sup>st</sup>	27.9	23.5	30.9	14.7	2.9	68
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	41.5	20.8	30.2	7.5	0	53
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	47.1	29.4	17.6	5.9	0	17
	4 <sup>th</sup>	29.0	48.4	12.9	9.7	0	31
	5 <sup>th</sup>	15	55	17.5	12.5	0	40
<i>A Just Russia</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	4 <sup>th</sup>	3.2	37.5	37.5	12.5	9.4	32
	5 <sup>th</sup>	5.3	21.1	55.3	18.4	0	38
<i>Communist Party of the Russian Federation</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4	24	42	28	2	50
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2	21.1	44.2	29.9	2.7	147
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	6.8	10.7	46.6	31.1	4.9	103
	4 <sup>th</sup>	0	2.6	42.1	34.2	21.1	38
	5 <sup>th</sup>	7	7	26.3	40.4	19.3	57
<i>The Union of Right Forces (Democratic Choice of Russia, Democratic Russia)</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	15.5	29.3	25.9	24.1	5.2	58
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	17.9	50	25	3.6	3.6	28
	4 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	5 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Yabloko</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	17.9	35.7	32.1	14.3	0	28
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	16.7	47.9	29.2	6.3	0	48
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	0	42.1	52.6	5.3	0	19
	4 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	5 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Other</i> (1995 = 'Agrarian', 'People power' & 'Russian regions'; 1993 = 'Agrarian', 'New Regional Politics-Duma 96', 'Russia', 'Stability' & 'Women of Russia')	1 <sup>st</sup>	8.3	36.1	41.4	13.6	0.6	169
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2.5	35.6	35.6	23.7	2.5	118
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	4 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
	5 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>No registered party affiliation</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	35	37.5	17.5	10	0	40
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8	28	48	14	2	50
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8.5	20.3	50	19.5	1.7	118
	4 <sup>th</sup>	0	47.1	29.4	17.7	5.9	17
	5 <sup>th</sup>	--	--	--	--	--	--

(Source: author's own calculations based on information available at <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>, correct as of 1/11/08)

Yet, it should be noted that, even with the failure of Nashi and the Young Guard to instigate any significant increase in the proportion of young people among United Russia deputies, on average Russian parliamentary deputies are not much older than in Ukraine and are younger than MPs in Britain and considerably younger than deputies in the French parliament.

Figure 10 - Comparative table of age distribution of deputies (percent by row)

	Convocation	Age of deputies at opening of parliament						N
		< 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 +	
<i>Russian State Duma</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> (1993-5)	4.56	24.51	40.35	23.86	6.72	0	461
	2 <sup>nd</sup> (1996-9)	2.85	18.94	43.38	26.88	7.33	0.61	491
	3 <sup>rd</sup> (2000-3)	2.75	19.95	32.57	33.26	10.78	0.69	436
	4 <sup>th</sup> (2004-7)	2.1	18.69	28.04	41.12	8.64	1.40	428
	5 <sup>th</sup> (2007-11)	2.44	17.56	25.78	38.89	12.89	2.44	450
<i>French National Assembly</i>	11 <sup>th</sup> (1997-'02)	0	2.91	15.30	46.63	26.05	9.11	549
	12 <sup>th</sup> (2002-7)	0	1.92	14.34	37.94	37.06	8.74	572
	13 <sup>th</sup> (2007-12)	0	2.78	19.65	39.13	34.61	3.83	575
<i>Polish Sejm</i>	6 <sup>th</sup> (2007-11)	4.35	17.17	34.13	35.22	8.70	0.43	460
<i>Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada</i>	6th (2007-??)	2.89	19.78	32.67	30	13.33	1.33	450
<i>British parliament</i>	(1992-1997)	0.15	12.60	39.78	32.41	14.59	0.46	651
	(1997-2001)	1.52	13.96	38.54	34.45	10.32	1.21	659
	(2001-2005)	0.15	11.99	35.81	37.48	12.59	1.52	659
	(2005-2009)	0.46	13.78	29.57	38.54	15.48	2.17	646

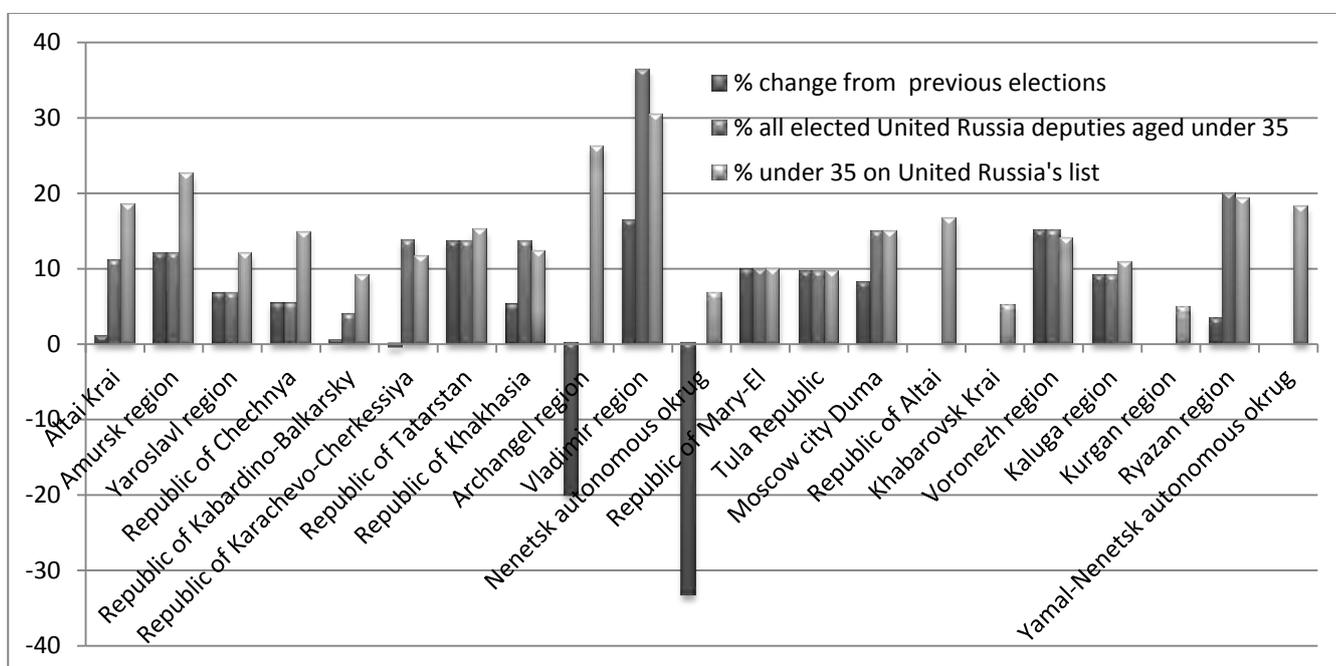
Source: Author's own calculations from material provided on legislative assembly websites correct as of 7/11/08.<sup>128</sup>

As far as youth rejuvenation in *regional* legislative assemblies is concerned, the youth movements have fared little better. Despite a clear increase in the proportion of under 35 year olds elected to office on United Russia's list in some regions, there has been no systematic

<sup>128</sup> Russia - <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>; France - <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/qui/>; Poland - <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/poslowie/lista6.htm>; Ukraine - [http://gska2.rada.gov.ua/pls/site/p\\_deputat\\_list](http://gska2.rada.gov.ua/pls/site/p_deputat_list); and for Britain - <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/notes/snsg-01528.pdf>.

increase overall (see Figure 11 below) and thus it is difficult to accredit Nashi or the Young Guard with achieving any kind of rejuvenation across regional legislative assemblies. The average percentage of under 35 year olds among United Russia deputies elected to regional legislative assemblies since April 2006 is 7.8%, only slightly better than the 7.3% of young United Russia deputies elected to the federal State Duma.

[Figure 11 – Comparison of elections held 2008-10 with previous elections to regional legislative assemblies prior to introduction of United Russia’s youth quota<sup>129</sup>](#)



Source: author’s own calculations based on data provided in Appendix 3

<sup>129</sup> Comparing the proportion of United Russia deputies aged under 35 in regional legislative assemblies before and after the introduction of the youth quota was limited by the fact that detailed information on candidates for elections prior to 2004 was frequently unavailable and elections held before the creation of United Russia in 2003 were unsuitable for comparative purposes. It is also worth noting that some of the dramatic percentage changes shown in Figure 10 are misleading in terms of the magnitude of shift that has occurred given the low number (*n*) involved in some cases. For example, there were 33.3% fewer under 35-year olds elected in Nenetsk in 2009 than there were in 2005, but this was only a decrease from 1 young deputy to none, as the 1 young deputy was 1 of only 3 United Russia deputies elected from party lists in Nenetsk in 2005.

Furthermore, when implementation of United Russia's youth quota is considered alongside the percentage change in regional deputies aged under 35, there are several discrepancies that caution against assuming that Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to increase the number of young candidates on United Russia's party lists have had a positive impact on the proportion of young deputies elected to regional legislative assemblies. Despite the fact that over 25% of all those listed on United Russia's party list for the March 2009 elections to Archangel's legislative assembly were aged under 35 (i.e. in excess of the 20% youth quota), none of these were actually elected to office, which represented a 20% decrease in the proportion of young United Russia deputies for Archangel since the previous elections in December 2004. A similar disparity between successful implementation of United Russia's youth quota and a failure to increase the proportion of elected deputies aged under 35 is apparent in the case of Yamal-Nenetsk autonomous region and the Republic of Altai (see Figure 11 above).

However, getting young people into power is not only about the State Duma and the *legislative* branch. As one of Nashi's leaders was keen to point out, their 'cadre lift' also operates, and even primarily operates, in the *executive* branch.

Legislative power in Russia traditionally holds less weight than the executive branch and now more than ever. For this reason, many activists of Nashi and the Young Guard prefer to stand for places in the executive branch, whether that is at the federal, regional or local level.<sup>130</sup>

Nevertheless, despite Nashi's claims, youth upward mobility in the executive branch appears to have been no more successful than attempts to increase the proportion of young United Russia deputies in legislative political institutions. Of the 582 elections across the Russian

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<sup>130</sup> Correspondence between this author and one of Nashi's leaders, who wished to remain anonymous, 25/3/09

Federation in 2007 and 2008 to positions within the executive branch (at federal, regional and local level), only 10 resulted in a person aged under 35 gaining office (1.7%). Whether or not 1.7% under 35 year olds is actually low for the executive branch in relative terms (in comparison with other countries for example) or indeed whether the proportion of under 35 year olds in the executive branch can be fairly compared at all with the proportion of young deputies in the legislative branch in Russia, the true measure of Nashi and the Young Guard's influence on youth representation in the executive branch is the differential between the proportion of under 35 year olds elected to office in the executive branch prior to the development of Nashi and the Young Guard and since then. In this respect, the youth movements' efforts at increasing youth representation in the executive branch have fared poorly. The percentage of elections that resulted in a person aged under 35 being appointed to executive office in 2007-8 actually appears to have decreased slightly from 2003-4 when 1.8% of all elections to the executive branch were won by under 35 year-olds.<sup>131</sup>

Overall, it is possible to say that, despite Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts, there has been no significant increase in the proportion of United Russia deputies aged under 35 at a federal or regional level nor any discernible rejuvenation of the executive branch. Taking into account comparison with previous convocations of the State Duma and the age distribution of other political parties (in particular judging by the considerable increase in the proportion of under 35 year olds among the Communist Party's deputies in the State Duma over the same period as well as the far larger proportion of under 35 year olds among LDPR deputies), it becomes apparent that the youth movements' failure to increase youth representation in formal political institutions cannot be primarily attributed to any factor

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<sup>131</sup> Calculation based on collation of data on elections between 1/1/03 - 31/12/04 and 1/1/07 - 31/12/08 available on the website for the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation - <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>. In 2003-4, 895 elections were held to posts within the executive branch at all levels, however, for 353 of there was insufficient data for analysis.

common to all parliamentary parties in Russia such as the general socio-political environment. Whether or not state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard, not to mention for United Russia, has been significant in hindering the youth movements' efforts to increase youth representation in the formal political arena remains to be seen.

### *The strictures of state-sponsorship*

Following on from the assertion made in the previous chapter that the Kremlin had no genuine desire to cultivate mass youth engagement in politics due to the benefits accrued to the incumbent regime from political *disengagement*, this chapter contends that the Kremlin has not been fully behind Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to increase youth representation because this too represents a challenge to the foundations of regime support. It argues that state involvement *has* been the critical factor in determining Nashi and the Young Guard's *inability* to increase the proportion of young people elected to office in Russian legislative assemblies. Moreover, the youth movements' silence in defeat indicates their deference to the Kremlin. This is not to suggest that without state-sponsorship Nashi and the Young Guard would have been able to more effectively push for increased youth representation in politics, but rather that the state's own interests have determined the outcome of the youth movements' bids to rejuvenate the political elite.

Since 2003, Russia may be classed as a dominant party regime in Reuter and Remington's definition of the term referring to a two-sided commitment based on balance of powers and division of resources between regime leaders and other political elites, including regional governors, big business and prominent politicians (Remington & Reuter, 2009, p.503). With the strength of the Kremlin vis-a-vis other political elites gaining, in 2003 Putin

backed United Russia in the Duma elections and provided incentives for regional elites to do the same. The current situation provides the regime with a constitutional majority in the parliament and security in its electoral support, and provides the established political elite with guaranteed access to the spoils of state and a means through which to lobby their own interests. This situation holds so long as both the regime and the political elite maintain their commitment to the party and each remains convinced that they have more to lose from reneging on their commitment than could potentially be gained outside of the party. In terms of where youth representation fits in to this system of patronage and loyalty,<sup>132</sup> the systematic awarding of a set quota of places on United Russia's party list to young people would have represented a break with the underlying logic behind the 'two-sided commitment' that characterises Russia's dominant party regime and thus threatened the fragile bargain that holds United Russia together. The proposed pre-allocation of 20% of United Russia's party lists to young people would have challenged existing patterns of patronage practised by United Russia and the informal influence of business powers and regional elites on the formation of the party's electoral lists.<sup>133</sup> For this reason, as well as its lack of genuine commitment to promoting mass youth political engagement, it is unlikely that the Kremlin would have supported the implementation of United Russia's youth quota and, consequently, without full state support, Nashi and the Young Guard's bid to increase the proportion of

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<sup>132</sup> Patronage is used here in the traditional understanding of the term simply to refer to 'particularistic exchanges' whereby the party reinforces its network and garners support by making appointments on the basis of loyalty. In keeping with the 'traditional literature' on the subject, United Russia's use of a patronage strategy has been 'demand-driven' and propagated by local and regional party elites predominantly as a means of reward (Kopecký, Scherlis & Spirova, 2007, *Party Patronage in New Democracies: Concepts, Measures and the Design of Empirical Inquiry*, paper presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 30 August – 2 September, pp. 1-9'. Available at [http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/2/1/1/4/2/pages211424/p211424-1.php](http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/1/1/4/2/pages211424/p211424-1.php).

<sup>133</sup> According to Shefter, patterns of patronage once established are difficult to break down and are likely to entail some costs for the party should it attempt to renounce its patronage strategy: "The way in which a party initially acquires a popular base is a character-forming or 'critical' experience" (1977, p.414). Having drawn heavily on the patronage of regional elites during its formative stage, it would be extremely problematic for United Russia to now 'eschew a patronage strategy', should it indeed wish to.

young people in formal political institutions was destined to flounder. Nashi and the Young Guard were ultimately unable to convince United Russia party elites or the Kremlin that greater youth representation in formal political institutions was necessary or desirable.

Further indicative of the strictures of state-sponsorship, despite pitching youth representation in formal political institutions as a central plank of their manifestos (as noted at the beginning of this chapter), Nashi and the Young Guard have not criticised the Kremlin or United Russia for their lack of commitment to greater youth representation and have not publicly acknowledged the failure of the youth quota. The youth quota is increasingly referred to as a symbolic commitment by United Russia to promoting greater youth representation and participation in the future, rather than as a concrete mechanism to ensure that at least 20% of those listed on United Russia party lists are aged under 35. Speaking in July 2008, Andrei Tatarinov (member of the Young Guard's political council) still praised United Russia's commitment to youth and even lauded its ability to deliver on its promises to get youth into power compared to other political organisations:

The slogan 'youth in power' is the slogan for United Russia and the slogan for the Young Guard and we can really help young people to get into politics proper [...] Others have promised to do the same thing, they have promised 10% and so on, but nothing's come of it. For example, the liberals, Yabloko, made such a promise, but haven't got in anywhere. We're the only ones who have managed to do it and through us young people now hold high political positions all over the place – in the regions, in the executive branch, the legislative branch.....<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Author's interview with Andrei Tatarinov, Moscow, 10 July 2008

Although such self-congratulatory rhetoric from the Young Guard and United Russia deputies may seem like a harmless attempt to save face, in fact this rhetoric may actually be detrimental to further efforts to provide the conditions for young people's full and genuine participation in politics, because by creating a semblance of youth representation it undermines the importance of ongoing efforts to this end. The resultant attitude is that, as long as young candidates are serious about pursuing a career in politics, it is only a matter of time before the youth movements' campaigns to get youth into power bear fruit. According to the Young Guard, it was a lack of prior regional experience that prevented young people from becoming candidates on United Russia's party list for the State Duma elections:

[The youth organisation's] efforts [to rejuvenate the incumbent elite] have only just started and you cannot expect such things to happen overnight [...] Many young people are now putting themselves forward to become deputies in their local administration and from there on going on to become regional deputies. If they begin at around 21-22 years of age, as is happening more and more often now, then by the time they are 30 they will be well-experienced and will be worthy candidates for office at a federal level regardless of the youth quota. For this reason, it is possible to say with great confidence that there will be a greater proportion of young deputies in the next convocation of the State Duma and it will not be long before the 20% youth target is achieved and exceeded.<sup>135</sup>

Not only is this a blatant denial of the facts of the matter, because there has been no discernible trend of greater youth representation in legislative assemblies at a regional level either (as noted above), but it also ignores the true and immutable obstacle to realising the youth movements' goal of rejuvenating the incumbent political elite – lack of state support for

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<sup>135</sup> Response from the Young Guard's press office to this author, 20 May 2009

this objective and the stifling impact of having state-sponsorship on the youth movements' abilities to contest this issue. Although Nashi was prepared to admit privately that United Russia had let young Russians down in failing to deliver its promised 20% youth quota, it did not publicly hold the party to account and did not acknowledge the hindrance of state sponsorship to this end.<sup>136</sup>

### Infiltration of Russia's political elite

While Nashi and the Young Guard have been unable to initiate an increase in the proportion of young people holding office in formal political institutions in general, the Kremlin-sponsored youth movements have proven highly capable of providing unique access to political power for their own, most prominent, members. Furthermore, the same logic that explained the *adverse* effect of state sponsorship on Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to increase the proportion of young people in formal political institutions, discussed above, also accounts for the *beneficial* impact of having state support on the youth movements' ability to gain entry for their leaders in decision-making bodies. In this way, it is argued that having state support *has* enabled Nashi and the Young Guard to become 'strong publics' invested with the power to translate opinion into authoritative decisions (Fraser, 1993, p.25).

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<sup>136</sup> In contrast to the Young Guard, one of Nashi's leaders (who wished to remain anonymous) admitted that, although the quota was more an informal agreement and a declaration of intent than a formal commitment, the quota simply was not fulfilled and consequently there has been some degree of discontentment about that within Nashi (Personal correspondence between this author and one of Nashi's leaders, 25 March 2009).

### *Nashi and the Young Guard in the formal political arena*

To begin with the *legislative* branch, although the proportion of young United Russia deputies did not increase, the results of the 2007 State Duma elections demonstrated the relative influence of Nashi and the Young Guard on the formation of United Russia's party list: Nashi and the Young Guard's presence among young United Russia Duma deputies is considerable. Of the 19 new United Russia deputies elected to the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation of the State Duma aged under 35, 6 were prominent members of pro-regime youth organisations and the others were all either celebrated sportsmen and women, were influential in the media, or had previous experience of working in the executive or legislative branch. Robert Shlegel (Nashi commissar) and Sergei Belokonev (Nashi ideologue and former head of *Nashi Vybori – Our Elections*) were elected as new state Duma deputies for United Russia in December 2007. Belokonev then went on to become vice-chair of the Duma's State Committee on Youth Affairs. From the Young Guard's political council, Pavel Zyrianov, Tatiana Voronova and Evgenii Samoilov became new State Duma deputies.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, 5 of the 6 members of pro-regime youth organisations elected to the State Duma had no previous experience of political office and became federal deputies simply by virtue of their loyalty to the Kremlin. In comparison, prior to Nashi and the Young Guard's existence, pro-Kremlin youth movements (including the Young Guard predecessor – Youth Unity) did not enjoy such privileged access to State Duma positions and young people who became United Russia deputies previously could be said to have done so on the merit of their political experience. None of the young United Russia deputies in the 4<sup>th</sup> convocation of the State Duma were members of a youth organisation and, of the 11 new United Russia deputies aged under 35, all had previous

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<sup>137</sup> The sixth member of a pro-regime youth organisation elected as a United Russia deputy was Maksim Mishenko, leader of the youth movement *Rossiiia Molodaia* (Young Russia –commonly referred to as *RuMol*).

experience of working in politics. Thus, clearly, Nashi and the Young Guard represent effective channels through which to enter formal politics at a federal level.

Similarly, what has been noticeable in terms of Nashi and the Young Guard's impact on youth representation in the *executive* branch is the injection of key youth leaders into federal level positions. For example, in February 2009, Medvedev's replacement of four regional governors saw 33 year old Andrei Turchak, coordinator of youth politics for United Russia, appointed governor of the Pskov region. Moreover, in an interesting reflection of the logic behind appointing prominent youth leaders to political power, which will be discussed in detail below, former leader of the opposition youth movement *My (We)*, Maria Gaidar, became deputy governor of the Kirov region in February 2009 alongside Medvedev's appointment of Nikita Belykh (former opposition leader) to the post of governor of the region. On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007, Vasily Yakemenko (Nashi's founder and member of the movement's Federal Soviet) was declared head of the State Committee for Youth Affairs,<sup>138</sup> which secured Nashi a significant role in budgetary control over youth projects.

Having successfully established footholds in federal political institutions with state support, Nashi and the Young Guard are well placed to increase their future influence in the formal political arena and are actively seeking to do so. According to Nashi's manifesto, "acting as a network of mutual support [the youth movement will] make the most of the capabilities of its members, who have gained access to positions of power in order to promote new members."<sup>139</sup> Speaking to a group of Nashi activists at the movement's summer camp in July 2008, newly elected Duma deputy and Nashi ideologue Sergei Belokonev urged his audience to be on the alert for any elections in their regions so that the movement and

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<sup>138</sup> The State Committee for Youth Affairs later became the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs under President Medvedev and is now more commonly referred to as *RosMolodezh*.

<sup>139</sup> Nashi, 2005, '*Manifest*', available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

*RosMolodezh* (the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs) could assist them in their endeavours to be elected to positions of authority in political institutions in their regions.<sup>140</sup> The youth movements' ability to provide access to political institutions and decision-making bodies for its most prominent members is a considerable positive democratic effect and one which has been reliant on having state support. The logic behind Kremlin promotion of Nashi and Young Guard leaders to formal political office is the subject of further discussion below.

### *The fruits of state sponsorship*

Contrary to the Kremlin's indisposition towards encouraging mass youth engagement in politics or increasing youth representation across federal and regional political institutions, the privilege by which Nashi and the Young Guard are able to provide access to political power for their leaders and most loyal members is in keeping with the Kremlin's preferred political strategy of client-patron relations. Thus, rather than being a hindrance, state-sponsorship has had a positive effect on the pro-regime youth movements' efforts to establish their exclusive influence in the formal political arena.

If we return to the earlier discussion on Russia being a dominant party regime and the impact of this on the strategies supported by the Kremlin regarding youth political participation, then it is possible to set out precisely why the Kremlin has boosted Nashi and the Young Guard's abilities to gain access to political authority for its own elite while simultaneously undermining their attempts to increase youth representation en masse. From the Kremlin's perspective, Nashi and the Young Guard's purpose here was to underwrite the

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<sup>140</sup> Author's own observation of a meeting between Sergei Belokonev and leaders of the following projects *Nasha Ekonomika* (Our Economy), *Novoe Obrazovanie* (New Education'), *Start-Up* (Start-Up), *Kadry dlia Modernizatsiia Stranii* (Cadres for the Modernisation of the Country) and *Nashi Stroiteli* (Our Builders) which took place on 22 July 2008, Lake Seliger, Moscow.

informal rules of play that govern the current dominant party regime that exists in Russia by making it clear to young Russians that influence on politics and society can be gained only through allegiance to the incumbent regime – in this way extending a similar deal to youth leaders as had been imposed upon regional elites and prominent business men previously. Rather than challenging the existing political set-up, rewarding individual pro-Kremlin youth leaders for their loyalty with positions of authority represents an extension of the regime's particularistic methods and is symptomatic of the United Russia party's persistent use of a patronage strategy. In contrast, Nashi and the Young Guard's unsuccessful efforts to increase the proportion of young people in politics (by means of United Russia's youth quota in the case of the legislative branch) would have represented a reduction in the prize of political power available to regional and business elites upon whose support United Russia depends and upon which commitment the dominant party regime's stability is based.

Ultimately, despite Nashi's desire to attract as many young people as possible to its ranks in order to dominate the youth political scene and despite the openness of the Young Guard's *PolitZavod* program, in practice, the youth movements' interpretation of 'power to youth' is highly exclusive. The process of filtering through aspiring youngsters to select an elite group, a handpicked, trained and tested, loyal few, who will then go on to receive the fruits of representation that the youth movements are capable of providing with Kremlin-backing, should perhaps have been expected given the commonalities between Nashi's ideology and that of the Kremlin. Evoking the spirit of elitist theories of democracy espoused in Surkov's speech on sovereign democracy (discussed in Chapter 3), only the chosen few of Nashi and the Young Guard's members gained positions in the executive or legislative branch of government. As suggested in Chapter 4, the introduction of United Russia's youth quota was just another means of attracting young people's attention and was never intended by the

Kremlin or the party to create systematic channels of influence for young people in formal political arenas. Instead, with state support, the youth movements perpetuate a more particularistic distribution of power to youth – extending the existing system of patronage in operation in Russian politics, but nonetheless with considerable positive democratic effects for Nashi and the Young Guard in terms of their access to political institutions and decision-making bodies and thus their credentials as ‘strong publics’ (Fraser, 1993).

### Empowerment or institutionalisation?

The final qualification required on the institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard’s attempts to get young people into power is to emphasise that institutional access does not necessarily translate into empowerment. As Cornwall notes, “having a voice clearly depends on more than getting a seat at the table (2004, p.84). Including disadvantaged groups in the deliberation process is not enough to enable them to participate effectively and have equal influence (Young, 2002; Kohn, 2000, p.474). Indeed, it is argued that, when accompanied by continued discrimination against them during the process of deliberation, formally allowing entry to previously excluded groups may exacerbate the problem of their subordination by creating the illusion of democratisation and inclusion.<sup>141</sup> The youth quota that existed in the Soviet era ensured that the formal representation of young people was relatively high on paper. Yet, although the importance of youth engagement was bandied around during the Soviet period and despite the pervasiveness of the Komsomol, the Soviet

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<sup>141</sup> In studies of participation and development in Less Economically Developed Countries cases have been recorded where the authorities have used the creation of new participatory spaces in order to co-opt the opposition – enjoying the legitimacy created by being able to attach the names of respected members of the opposition or leaders of particular interest groups, race or class identification, without actually affording these groups any real influence or alternative public platform (White, 1996, p.6). Parallels may be drawn here with attempts by the Kremlin under Putin to co-opt the political opposition.

Union was remarkable for its increasing rule by gerontocracy, which lingered on into the post-Soviet era. Writing in 1995, Sharonov remarks: “Behind the slogan ‘Young people are free to do anything’, there is often nothing more than demagogy and political time-serving” (1995, p.67). In this way, even those young candidates that were successful in being elected to the State Duma on United Russia’s party list in 2007 may not necessarily have found themselves empowered to participate fully and freely in the legislative process.

Analysing the creation of participatory spaces in the developing world, Cornwall and Gaventa have repeatedly sought to emphasise that gaining an understanding of the “power relations that surround and fill new spaces for democratic engagement is critical for an assessment of their transformative potential” (Gaventa, 2004, p.39).<sup>142</sup> Thus, in many ways the issue of whether participation in formal political arenas is genuinely empowering for Nashi and Young Guard members relates back to the discussion in the previous chapter on participation and legitimisation, because the core questions really are on what grounds have these young people been invited to participate in these political forums and what is the purpose or function of their participation for the party and for the regime in general? Following the conclusions drawn in Chapter 4 that there has been no change in the Kremlin’s attitude towards the desirability of mass political engagement along with the conclusions drawn so far in this chapter that the Kremlin has perpetuated its existing patronage strategy by rewarding key individuals with political office rather than facilitating the youth movements’ bid for increased youth representation in general, it appears that the underlying purpose of Kremlin support for Nashi and the Young Guard has been to maintain the status-quo. It is therefore likely that, having rapidly gained access to formal political institutions, Nashi and Young Guard members will find it difficult to make any significant difference to Russian

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<sup>142</sup> Also see Cornwall 2002 and 2004.

politics. If young people are being assimilated into existing power structures specifically in order to preserve the status quo, then the ability of Nashi or Young Guard members that have gained seats in legislative assemblies or have been awarded positions in the executive branch to champion the interests of young Russians from inside is likely to be curtailed, unless of course those interests coincide with the Kremlin's wishes. Furthermore, if youth action is perceived as a potential threat to the stability of the incumbent regime, then it should be expected that the reality of any policy of youth representation by the Kremlin would translate into a subordinated form of participation for young people despite United Russia's claims to the contrary.<sup>143</sup>

As it stands, the monopoly on political power in Russia, held by the Putin administration and United Russia, ensures that youth in the opposition remain in the political shadows, forced to engage in contentious political actions such as protests, conferences, and the occasional building occupation. Youths who choose to join the authorities through groups such as Nashi can only hope to become bureaucratic tools in a politically uncompetitive, corporatist nomenklatura. In neither case will the political culture of Russia's youth mature. (Schwartz, 2007, p.82)

In an effort to assist young people to participate effectively in formal political institutions over the long-term the Young Guard has created several projects. In February 2007, the Young Guard created the *Molodezhnoe Federal'noe Sobranie* (Youth Federal Assembly) in order to provide a support network for young deputies in local and regional legislative assemblies across Russia. Essentially the Youth Federal Assembly comprises young deputies

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<sup>143</sup> Gryzlov speaking on the occasion of the announcement of the youth quota – “We hope that there will be representatives from the Young Guard in the next convocation of the State Duma, who will promote the interests of young people during the discussion and passage of legislation” (United Russia, 2006, *Vlast' molodeet*, available at <http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=112262>, last accessed 16 January 2008).

from across Russia and simulates the State Duma by meeting several times a year and discussing new legislative initiatives, albeit only in the framework of an advisory body. In addition, the Youth Federal Assembly has an online portal which enables young deputies across Russia to communicate with other young deputies, share advice, and plan and develop legislative initiatives together.<sup>144</sup> According to the United Russia Duma deputies that took part in this author's survey into attitudes towards the adoption of the youth quota and towards the party's new young deputies,<sup>145</sup> while it is true that it is tough for these young deputies, this is due to the difficulties encountered by all deputies when they first enter the State Duma and are trying to find their feet and is not necessarily related to their age.

Overall, this author agrees with Schwirtz' above statement to the extent that the repressive political environment that exists in Russia does impose constraints upon those who are able to gain entry to the formal political arena as well as those who are forced to the margins. For this reason we should expect young Nashi and Young Guard members gaining positions of political authority to be subject to the same impositions or limitations as any other politician holding office in contemporary Russian. However, any implication that pro-Kremlin youth leaders, who have been rewarded with political positions by the Kremlin are being held at arm's length and are not privy to the same rights as older colleagues (or that all politicians in office in Russia are mere bureaucratic tools subject to the whims of the Kremlin) are unsubstantiated.

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<sup>144</sup> The website for the Young Guard's 'Youth Federal Assembly' is available at [www.1mfs.ru](http://www.1mfs.ru).

<sup>145</sup> Further findings of this survey will be discussed in Chapter 6.

## Conclusion

The dominant party regime that exists in Russia today has a significant bearing on the Kremlin's strategy for supporting youth political participation via Nashi and the Young Guard and thus on the ensuing democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in this case. State-sponsored youth participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard extends the existing patronage strategy employed by the regime and eschews the introduction of any systematic form of representation for young people in politics. There has been no general increase in youth representation in the formal political arena in either the legislative or executive branch despite the priority given to rejuvenating the political elite among the youth movements' goals. Moreover, the failure to implement United Russia's youth quota indicates the extent of Kremlin control over the degree and kind of youth political representation that Nashi and the Young Guard may provide as well as the weakness of their position in relation to the state.

However, the inflow of Nashi and Young Guard leaders into positions of political office across the board, including at a federal level, has been impressive. Though this is indicative of the Kremlin seeking to reward the youth movements' loyalty to the regime rather than of any political sway on the part of the youth movements, it nonetheless results in the considerable representation of Nashi and Young Guard personnel in formal political institutions and by Fraser's definition thus renders the youth movements 'strong publics' capable of accessing political decision-making bodies. In the previous chapter the youth movements' positive contribution to providing democratic legitimacy for the processes and institutions of state was the *secondary* outcome of the Kremlin's strategy to defeat any potential opposition in the run-up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle. Significantly, this chapter has found that Kremlin support for Nashi and the Young Guard has *directly and deliberately* resulted in their unique access to formal political institutions and decision-making bodies.

## OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC EFFECTS OF NASHI AND THE YOUNG GUARD

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Having approached this study's analysis of the institutional democratic effects of state-sponsored participation from the perspective that this was an area in which having state support might reasonably be expected to be beneficial for Nashi and the Young Guard, overall, it must be acknowledged that on this score the results are mixed. As was the case with regard to the public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard, state- sponsorship has had both a positive and negative impact on the youth movements' institutional democratic effects. Moreover, as well as secondary democratic effects (which were a necessary part of the Kremlin's plans for the youth movements although not the primary aim or motivation for the Kremlin), again the Kremlin has directly and deliberately supported some positive institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard, albeit in pursuit of its own vested interests. Thus this study's analysis so far of the public sphere and institutional democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard supports the conclusions that, firstly, the impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation is more complex than simply being cast in Manichean terms of good or bad and, secondly, the state may even be the direct source of some of the positive democratic effects of participation.

In addition, Part 2 of this thesis has served to corroborate the importance of the *socio-political environment* as a factor in shaping the impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. More specifically, analysis of Nashi and the Young Guard's institutional democratic effects has identified mass political disengagement and the dominant party regime that exists in Russia as key determinants for

the Kremlin's motivations in supporting the youth movements' efforts to increase youth political participation and consequently for the impact of having Kremlin support on the youth movement's democratic effects in this regard. In Chapter 4 it was noted that the benefits of mass political disengagement for regime support made the Kremlin loathe to promote youth political engagement beyond what it deemed necessary in order to prevent youths' perverse politicisation and the potential threat of instability at election-time. Similarly, in Chapter 5, we found that the two-sided commitment of patronage and loyalty that characterises Russia's dominant party regime dictated the nature of political representation that Nashi and the Young Guard were able to provide with state support. Interestingly, the importance of *agency* as a factor in shaping the impact of state sponsorship on the *public sphere* democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, noted in Part 1, was not mirrored with regard to the *institutional* democratic effects of participation in Part 2. Despite their noted ability in Part 1 to secure the benefits of having state-sponsorship for the movement's ability to gain publicity and funding beyond the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle, neither Nashi nor the Young Guard have been able to compel the Kremlin to support their campaigns to increase youth representation in the formal political arena via the implementation of United Russia's youth quota.

Putting aside the complexities of state-sponsored participation for a moment in order to address the issue of whether the positive institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard have come at the expense of the youth movements' public sphere democratic effects, it is possible to conclude that these two areas of possible democratic effects of participation are not necessarily antagonistic. Having state-sponsorship has had a negative and positive impact on both the institutional and public sphere democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. Thus, it is misleading to suggest that the proximity to the state necessary for

certain institutional democratic effects precludes all positive public sphere democratic effects of associations. The socio-political environment that exists in contemporary Russia renders Nashi and the Young Guard as dependent on Kremlin approval and support for public-sphere democratic effects such as access to the media as they are for institutional effects such as representation in decision-making bodies. Furthermore, it is feasible that the very institutional democratic effects, which were enabled by state support, may themselves provide opportunities for and facilitate other positive democratic effects, including in the realm of public-sphere democratic effects. For example, regardless of their contribution to perpetuating the existing system of patronage practised by the regime and United Russia, those Nashi and Young Guard activists who have been awarded positions of power within the legislative and executive branch are able to make public presentation of their cause owing to the public platform that simply being in the State Duma or governor of a region provides.

Part 3 of this thesis will move away from the debate concerning the impact of state-sponsorship on the relative institutional and public-sphere democratic effects of participation to consider the final area of potential democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard according to Warren's conceptualisation – the developmental democratic effects. It hopes to corroborate the above conclusions derived from Parts 1 and 2 while also highlighting the significance of agency for the developmental democratic effects of participation. Following on from the discussion at the end of Chapter 5 concerning whether or not young activists have been empowered by entry into the formal political arena, Chapters 6 and 7 examine the impact of participation in Nashi and the Young Guard on individual members. What does participation in these state-sponsored youth movements mean for them and what are the developmental democratic effects of this in terms of youth engagement in Russian politics and society as well as the civic virtues promoted by the youth movements?

PART THREE – DEVELOPMENTAL DEMOCRATIC  
EFFECTS OF NASHI AND THE YOUNG GUARD

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## INTRODUCTION

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Part 3 of this thesis investigates the impact of state support on the *developmental* democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. As set out in Chapter 1, the developmental democratic effects of participation refers to the ways in which associations may have a formative influence on participants' skills and abilities as well as their behaviour and beliefs. The developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard considered in this study are the youth movements' contribution to participants' political efficacy and critical skills as well as to their tolerance and respect for law and order. Unlike the earlier discussion of the *public sphere* and *institutional* democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard, which engaged directly with existing debates regarding the democratic trade-offs of participation and the perils of state-sponsorship, the sphere of *developmental* effects has not been the focus of arguments concerning the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation. This is interesting for two reasons: Firstly, it is interesting because there are therefore no prevalent assumptions regarding the impact of state support on the developmental democratic effects of state-sponsored participation, which must form the starting point for this study, other than the general notion that state-sponsorship impedes all democratic effects of participation. Secondly and more importantly, it is interesting because it is possible that the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard may be less affected by having state support than the other categories of democratic effects, which have been held up as a case in point of the negative or positive impact of state-sponsorship. In other words, it is suggested that the developmental democratic effects of state-sponsored participation are not the centre of controversy for scholars precisely because the impact of state support may be less important in this field than other factors, such as the decisions and actions taken by the youth

movements and activists themselves. According to Bellin, “an association might be subject to state control and hence incapable of hedging state power yet be sufficiently mobilizational to school citizens in public spirit and political participation” (1995, p.125).

Part 3 is divided into two chapters. Chapter 6 examines Nashi and the Young Guard’s contribution to youth engagement in politics and society in Russia. Whereas Chapter 4 discussed youth political engagement in terms of electoral participation in quantifiable terms, Chapter 6 considers youth engagement more broadly and in qualitative terms of the value attached to participation by young people themselves as well as how others perceive the role of young people in politics and society. In addition to setting out the ways in which the youth movements’ campaigns and the opportunities provided as a result of having state support affect participants’ political efficacy and critical awareness, Chapter 6 also explores the propensity for participants’ own personal agendas to influence outcomes. Having concluded in Part 2 that the Kremlin had no genuine desire to promote mass political engagement beyond what it deemed necessary to ensure regime security and having noted the consequences of this in terms of imposing constraints upon the *institutional* democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard, Chapter 6 investigates the limits of the impact of state support in the field of the *developmental* democratic effects of participation. Chapter 7 then proceeds to investigate the youth movements’ capacity to promote or hinder the development of civic virtues such as tolerance and respect for law and order. It assesses the democratic credentials of the ethos of Nashi and the Young Guard as projected in the youth movements’ strategies and actions. Any changes in the methods employed by each of the youth movements as well as variation between the two movements are isolated and analysed in order to identify the primary factors influencing Nashi and the Young Guard’s contribution to civic virtues and to evaluate the relative significance of having state support.

## CHAPTER 6 – ENGAGED CITIZENRY: RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

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Chapter 6 considers the impact of state-sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard on the developmental democratic effects of participation in terms of youth engagement in politics and society. The Kremlin's drive for greater youth engagement, begun under Putin in 2005, cannot be understood without reference to participants' own agendas or to the broader socio-political context. In Chapter 1 it was noted that assumptions of the detrimental impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation imagined the state to have more power than it actually possesses. In a similar fashion, it is unrealistic to imagine that simply the state's resources and its desire to assist in the stimulation of pro-regime youth organisations are enough to sustain youth participation and mobilisation; youth motivations and societal and cultural drivers must also be considered. Logically then, these other factors must also be taken into account when considering the democratic effects of participation. As Cornwall notes:

Spaces created with one purpose in mind may be used by those who engage in them for something quite different. Efforts to control outcomes can only be partial, and the impotence of initiating agencies to direct or close down emergent processes is part of their inherent dynamism. Factoring in the agency of those who are invited to take up, or come to inhabit, spaces suggests that nothing can be prejudged. (2004, p.81)

Thus, regardless of the Kremlin's designs to simultaneously promote and limit youth political participation via Nashi and the Young Guard (discussed in Part 2), the extent to which young participants become politically engaged and take to heart the youth movements' campaigns and ultimately the significance of their experience for participants themselves could never be

controlled by the state. Undoubtedly, the impact of state-sponsorship and the socio-political environment on the outcomes of Nashi and the Young Guard's campaigns to promote youth electoral participation, noted in Part 2, indirectly affect the value of participation for members and thereby the youth movements' contributions to developing youth political efficacy. Yet, unlike gaining publicity or being awarded positions in political institutions, which were well within the Kremlin's power to grant or deny, the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard here may be only *partially* attributed to and even less so *determined* by state-sponsorship.

In order to demonstrate the lesser significance of state support for the developmental democratic effects of participation here, this chapter refrains from simply setting out the ways in which Nashi and the Young Guard have influenced the development of political efficacy among participants in favour of emphasising the relative independence of these democratic effects from state-sponsorship. It begins by examining the youth movements' campaigns to encourage youth engagement, noting the residual good of their efforts to integrate young people into politics and society regardless of the motives behind their leaders' adoption of this strategy or Kremlin support for it. The chapter then considers the shortcomings of Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to improve perceptions of young people in Russia and whether they may be attributed to the impact of having state support. Finally, the chapter finishes by highlighting what might be termed the unintended or even unexpected contribution of Nashi and the Young Guard to increasing youth political engagement beyond the direct control of the state or the youth movements' leaders.

### Redefining the youth of today

Concerns in Russia over the existence of a moral vacuum particularly affecting the nation's youth have been raised throughout the post-communist period. Problems of drugs, drinking, crime and HIV infection were prevalent among the younger generation in the late Yeltsin – early Putin period. The term *poterannoe pokolenie* ('lost generation') has long been used to refer to the younger generation that were the product of the culmination of the nineties, of the mercenary, atomised society that followed the end of communism and the hardship of 'shock therapy' and crash privatisation under Yeltsin. While to a certain extent the terminology used is indicative of the negative perception of young people in Russia at this time, it should also be recognised as representing acknowledgement that greater attention to young people was required. Youth socialisation programs and the development of a coherent youth policy were deemed necessary during Putin's first term, but progress was slow going pre-2004, perhaps in part because youth disengagement did not threaten the incumbent regime in the short-term and in fact mass *political* disengagement helped to maintain the status quo and even boost support for the incumbent regime (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Following the wave of 'coloured revolutions' in the Former Soviet Union and in particular the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in Winter 2004/5, addressing the issue of youth social and political anomie was pushed up the agenda. Young people on the fringes of society were perceived to be most susceptible to persuasion by 'radical' groups seeking to overthrow the incumbent regime. Moreover, with the upcoming presidential elections of 2008, in which Putin was unable to stand as a candidate himself, the immediacy of the threat posed by the potential for the 'perverse politicisation' of young Russians became apparent.<sup>146</sup> Partly in

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<sup>146</sup> The term 'perverse politicisation' has been referred to and discussed previously in Chapter 4. The term originates from Blum's article where he uses it to refer to youth engagement in radical groups (2006, p.97).

response to this push from above for youth socialisation programs, the ‘Strategy of State Youth Policy in the Russian Federation’ was finally adopted in December 2006, representing Russia’s first post-Soviet policy relating specifically to young people at a federal level.<sup>147</sup> Without directly referring to the role of youth in the ‘Orange Revolution’, it makes reference to the importance for young people to be ‘ready to resist political manipulation and extremist calls’.<sup>148</sup> Although the 2006 Strategy for State Youth Policy does not suggest that young Russians should be encouraged to be *politically* engaged (as noted in Chapter 4), it does detail a programme for supporting young people’s reintegration into society and providing opportunities for them to realise their potential.

This section on ‘redefining the youth of today’ sets out the ways in which Nashi and the Young Guard have not only been able to translate state youth policy into action via their youth socialisation initiatives, but have also attempted to enact such change as to leave a lasting legacy that would be unaffected by the prospect of declining state interest in this area following the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle. It begins by examining Nashi and the Young Guard’s contribution to improving *attitudes towards youth* in Russia, as far as their social status and the idea that young people need to be nurtured and provided with opportunities for their self-realisation are concerned. It then proceeds to investigate the ways in which the youth movements have sought to change *young people’s perception of themselves* in terms of their responsibilities both socially and politically.

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<sup>147</sup> The State Youth Policy, discussed previously in Chapter 4, had been long in the pipeline prior to the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine, but was not adopted until December 2006.

<sup>148</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2006, *Strategiia gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, No. 1760, p.4. Available at: <http://ed.gov.ru/files/materials/393/strat.doc>, last accessed 1 September 2008.

### *Rehabilitating Russia's youth*

The Young Guard and Nashi in particular have done much to support the state's policy to reintegrate disaffected youths into society and to encourage a more inclusive and supportive attitude towards young people in Russia.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, such youth initiatives are the primary means of putting state youth policy into action and are key to its effective implementation by engaging young people in the process. One of the youth movements' major successes has been to convey the message to young people that there are opportunities available to them regardless of their background. In an interview with this author, one of Nashi's leaders explained the purpose of the movement's annual summer camp to be to equip all those interested with the necessary tools to participate effectively and to realise their potential, in contrast to the free-for-all that existed in the nineties when young people whose families could not support their advancement were left to fend for themselves:

A few years ago in Russia youth policy did not exist in principle, because there was simply no inclination for it and also because the idea of 'neo-liberalism' was in vogue – the idea of 'help yourself', 'make yourself'. Either you managed to make something of yourself and you were a winner, or else you failed and were branded a loser. But not everyone has the same capabilities or equal opportunities, some do not have the necessary information. Even now, few people understand the concept of a youth policy at all. Here we are trying to get the message across that young people need to be provided with opportunities, they need to be brought together, given the technology and so on.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Due to its purely political focus, the Young Guard has been unable to adopt the more inclusive approach embodied in Nashi's wide-ranging societal initiatives.

<sup>150</sup> Author's interview with an anonymous Nashi leader, Lake Seliger, 21 July 2008.

Both Nashi and the Young Guard have attracted young people from a variety of backgrounds to their leadership and the resounding achievement of Nashi's 2008 summer camp was its notable ability to provide all participants with equal opportunities for their self-realisation – for example, enabling young people outside of Russia's central regions to raise funds to start their own business or social initiative. In an embodiment of Nashi's efforts to provide opportunities for young people from across Russia, as well as the youth movement's spread and expansion in the post-electoral environment (noted in Chapter 3), since 2008 Nashi has held an annual youth forum called *SeliSakh* in the Far-Eastern Sakhalin region of Russia in addition to its forum at Lake Seliger (midway between Moscow and St. Petersburg). The importance of such opportunities and the wider inspiration that they provide for young people's efficacy and self-realisation amidst the disparity that exists in Russia cannot be underlined enough.

Furthermore, by increasingly focusing on the message that young people need to be nurtured and supported by the state in order to realise their potential, alongside the idea that the younger generation has a *duty* to protect and secure Russia (to be discussed below), Nashi has translated the Kremlin's more supportive approach towards youth in the run-up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle into a more enduring phenomenon. While the need for young people to take action in order to defend Russia or to validate its institutions may be tied to a particular point in time and thus may be expected to logically decline after this period (in this case the need for young Russians to rally in the defence of the motherland was strongly associated with the 2008 presidential elections and the perceived threat of 'malevolent' efforts to overthrow the incumbent regime), the notion of greater support for young people is more generic and conducive to a lasting shift in state policy and societal attitudes towards youth. In this way, Nashi has sought to consolidate the improved status of youth in Russia by raising

young people's expectations of the state and increasing their sense of entitlement to certain rights, such as the right to education and training, which would be less easy for the state to subsequently deny once the perceived immediacy of the need for the Kremlin to engage young Russians passed. Moreover, Nashi has further endeavoured to ensure that the new status of young people in Russia becomes a lasting legacy by claiming an ongoing justification for continued state interest and support for youth work. By pitching youth as a key resource for modernisation and innovation, Nashi has attempted to place the cultivation of young Russians' self-realisation at the forefront of securing Russia's future prosperity and global standing. The establishment of the State Agency for Youth Affairs (successor of the State Committee for Youth) is perhaps the greatest example of the movement's bid to consolidate the change in perceptions of young Russians among politicians and society that it has encouraged. In testimony to Nashi's particular influence here, the movement's founder, Vasily Yakemenko, was made head of the agency (as noted previously in Chapter 5) with several other Nashi commissars receiving positions within the agency. Two years on since the completion of the 2007-8 federal electoral cycle and the obligation of the state towards youth in Russia has not ended. 2009 was dedicated the year of youth in Russia.

### *Citizen – y*

In line with the Kremlin's bid to get young people on board for the 2007-8 federal electoral cycle and to maximise youth voter turnout in favour of the incumbent regime, Nashi and the Young Guard have both encouraged young Russians to become socially and politically responsible: To cast their vote at election-time in order to prevent 'western-sponsored radical' influences from asserting their influence over Russia, but also to play a part in improving

conditions for themselves and those around them by becoming actively involved in their communities. As far as political engagement in particular is concerned, the Kremlin's lack of genuine support for mass youth political engagement has been discussed at length in Part 2 and the extent to which young people have become politically engaged regardless of this will be discussed later in this chapter. However, it is the immutable good of the youth movements' efforts to instil young people with an understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen, irrespective of the state's motivation in supporting this, which interests the analysis here. Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar refer to this field of activity as 'cultural politics' and seek to highlight its importance in the democratisation process:

Social movements not only have sometimes succeeded in translating their agendas into public policies and in expanding the boundaries of institutional politics but also, significantly, have struggled to resignify the very meanings of received notions of citizenship, political representation and participation, and, as a consequence, democracy itself. (Alvarez et.al. 1998, p.2)

A common thread to Nashi and the Young Guard's message is the repeated assertion that the younger generation's time has come: that Russia's youth of today has a unique opportunity to make a difference and to be masters of their own destiny, but also that they are obliged to stand up and be counted because they are being relied upon. Slogans such as *VremJa Prishlo* (*My time has come*) reinforce Nashi's message (epitomised in the grandiose rhetoric of its manifesto below) that Russia's future depends on the actions of young people today and that every single young person has a patriotic duty or responsibility to take an active part in determining their own future:

We live in difficult times. Freedom, justice, cooperation – that is how we envisage Russia in the future. But we live in a country where world history has been written and will continue to be written over the next ten years. We can make Russia as we would like it to be and in doing so we can make the whole world a better place.

Not everyone has the chance to do that in their lifetime.<sup>151</sup>

To a certain degree this can be seen as a ploy simply to get young people to vote for the incumbent regime and to reject the opposition by giving adherents an artificially inflated sense of importance. For example, in the run up to the elections, the Young Guard developed slogans that portrayed voting for the regime as a vote for young people themselves – *Vremia vibirat' vremIa* (It is time to choose *my* time) and *Preemnik – eto Ia* (I am [Putin's] successor). In a similar fashion, Nashi has hi-jacked the celebration of Victory Day, handing over the torch from Russia's esteemed veterans of the Great Patriotic War to Nashi activists in a symbolic gesture intended to associate pro-regime youth political participation with patriotism and national duty. Nashi's first Victory Day parade in May 2005 attracted around 50,000 participants and has continued to be one of the youth movement's main events, involving 65,000 young people in honour of the occasion's 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010.

Electoral slogans aside, however, and the wider significance of the youth movements' campaigns to engage young people in politics and society must be acknowledged. Whether or not the opportunity is genuinely there for young people *en masse* to influence politics and determine Russia's future, the lasting impact of work to engage young people in community projects at a local and regional level by Nashi in particular is evident.

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<sup>151</sup> Nashi, 2005, '*Manifest*', available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

Before I joined Nashi there wasn't much for me to do back home [...] Now, I am able to help to improve young people's school experience [...] and work out my own ideas to help our local community.<sup>152</sup>

In the above statement this 20 year-old Nashi member from Voronezh demonstrates both the relevance of Nashi's activities to himself and also the degree to which he feels that he is able to input into Nashi's objectives in his region. This statement was typical of Nashi activists that this author encountered, including those who were disillusioned with the pomp and spectacle of Nashi's mass actions but still viewed the youth movement as a means by which they could have an impact in improving their future and the future of Russia. This is the longer-term reality of the youth movements' efforts to invest young people in their future – a change in the mindset of participants, redefining what it means to be a young citizen in Russia and what their roles and responsibilities are.

### Sticking points

Despite the noted positive developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to improve perceptions of young people in Russian politics and society and to increase youth activism in the community, there are some areas where it is possible to identify significant shortcomings; shortcomings that go some way towards undermining the positive impact noted above. Having set out areas in which Nashi and the Young Guard were able to make more of a lasting improvement in the status of young people than might otherwise have been the case given the short-term nature of the Kremlin's interest in supporting this

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<sup>152</sup> Author's communication with Nashi activist, 2 February 2009.

endeavour (i.e. positive democratic effects attributable to the agency of the youth movements themselves and distinguished from the impact of having state-sponsorship per se), this section considers whether the shortcomings identified here should be attributed to the impact of having state support or not. It focuses on two main areas where the youth movements have not had a positive impact on the development of participants' political efficacy and critical skills: Firstly, lingering negative stereotypes of young people among United Russia politicians, which reflect the Kremlin's own lack of genuine support for youth political engagement beyond voting and electioneering. Secondly, the manner in which internal dissent and members' ability to engage in meaningful debate with the opposition is stifled by the youth movements themselves.

### *Entrenched stereotypes*

The impact of state-sponsorship on the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard may be felt in the limits of the youth movements' abilities to overcome negative stereotypes of youth held by United Russia State Duma deputies, as apparent in their negative attitudes towards young candidates for elections to the 5<sup>th</sup> convocation of the State Duma. The overwhelming majority of United Russia Duma deputies surveyed (and indeed Young Guard representatives themselves) placed the blame for the lack of any significant increase in youth representation in legislative assemblies on young people themselves: This was despite the party's trumpeted commitment to helping to prepare young candidates for political duties at all levels and to working with the Young Guard to get "young people ready so that they [could] realistically participate in all the organs of electoral power in [the]

country.”<sup>153</sup> The most common reason cited by United Russia State Duma deputies for why young candidates did not fare better in the 2007 elections to the State Duma was young people’s own deficiencies, namely their apparent inexperience and lack of commitment. Typically, United Russia deputies contended that there was not a sufficient calibre of young people able to undertake parliamentary duties to allow the party to bestow 20% of its list to under 35 year-olds. Most young people at present, it was argued, simply “are not ready for political duties at a federal level” having not yet built up the necessary political experience “at the local and regional level.”<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, it was implied that the majority of young people who aspire to become parliamentary deputies are not suitably committed to the level of work required of a State Duma deputy, being “insincere” and incapable of “understanding that the work of a deputy is not about self-promotion, but is a daily struggle with lots of hard work”.<sup>155</sup>

Although it might be somewhat unfair to blame state-sponsorship of Nashi and the Young Guard for these negative perceptions of aspiring young politicians, it is reasonable to suggest that the Kremlin’s lack of support for the youth movements’ bid to increase the proportion of young people in legislative assemblies (noted in Chapter 4) has given United Russia members *carte blanche* to reject the efforts of young people to get into politics (whether this be based on genuine prejudice towards young people or simply a desire to prevent an influx of new people into United Russia who might threaten the benefits of patronage for existing members). Some United Russia deputies spoke of the implicit understanding that the Kremlin was only paying lip-service to the importance of youth

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<sup>153</sup> Gryzlov, United Russia (2006) *Vlast molodeet*, available at <http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?id=112262>, last accessed 16 January 2008

<sup>154</sup> Correspondence between this author and Anatoli Ivanov (United Russia State Duma deputy since 19/12/99, born 1949), 17 April 2009.

<sup>155</sup> Correspondence between this author and A. Semenov on behalf of Vyacheslav Kushchev (new United Russia State Duma deputy of the 5th convocation, born 1948), 24 March 2009.

politics in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle and that there was little real substance behind its support of Nashi and the Young Guard's efforts to get more young people into politics. This has a knock-on effect on the commitment of United Russia's leaders to supporting aspiring young politicians (the party's empty promises of implementing a 20% youth quota were discussed in Part 2 of this thesis). According to one former United Russia deputy, who wished to remain anonymous:

Today the politics of United Russia is defined by politicians of the older generation. These politicians do not really want to let young people into the real world of politics and that is why only 12.2% of the party's list [for the 2007 elections to the State Duma] was comprised of under 35 year olds.<sup>156</sup>

From this quotation it is possible to see the manner in which perceptions of a reluctance to change the status quo from higher up within United Russia and the Kremlin leadership have encouraged widespread disregard for the implementation of United Russia's declared youth quota. Moreover, following the Kremlin's lead, United Russia deputies at all levels have little incentive to embrace the role of youth in politics and to question their own attitudes towards young people.

Indeed, as noted in Chapter 4, even the Young Guard itself displayed such resigned acceptance of United Russia's failure to implement its declared youth quota and of the difficulties faced by aspiring young politicians as to indicate the perceived inevitability of these things and the futility of appealing to the Kremlin for support on this. In response to questions from this author, the Young Guard asserted that the youth quota should be viewed as a platform to allow *competent* young candidates to compete fairly with older candidates.

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<sup>156</sup> Correspondence with the author, 25 March 2009.

“Who needs politicians who have gained power without any competition, without a struggle and without experience?” the Young Guard asks.<sup>157</sup> Thus, from this perspective it is only right that those young candidates, who the Young Guard supported and prepared to take up United Russia’s 20% youth quota on its party list for elections to the State Duma, should have found it difficult to get a place on the list and even that most of them should not succeed on this occasion. According to the Young Guard, the quota is a tool to assist younger candidates *in addition* to other resources and candidates’ own skills and abilities. It is not a means in itself of getting young people into power. The emphasis here is again placed on young people’s own ‘deficiencies’ to realistically expect to gain a place on United Russia’s party list even with the introduction of the youth quota. And again there is the same tendency, even among youth representatives, to push the blame away from United Russia and onto young people. In this respect, some of the blame for these shortcomings must lie with the youth movements themselves for failing to attempt to push for further youth representation and for accepting instead the reward of a few key political positions for its leaders (noted in Chapter 5).

### *Critical thinking*

The second significant shortcoming, as far as the youth movements’ contribution to participants’ political efficacy and critical skills is concerned, is the lack of scope for internal debate provided by Nashi and the Young Guard. Despite encouraging young people to take an active part in politics and society as well as seeking to provide them with equal opportunities for their self-realisation, Nashi and the Young Guard both restrict the scope for internal debate

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<sup>157</sup> Response from the Young Guard’s press office to this author, 20 May 2009

within the youth movements. This is a throwback to the discussion of Nashi and the Young Guard's contribution to pluralistic politics in Chapter 3 where the youth movements' impact on the marginalisation of opposition groups was considered. Similarly, though the lack of scope for internal debate is exacerbated by the youth movements' dominance and the degree of legitimacy gained from having state support, it must also be attributed to the ethos of the youth movements themselves and their own desire to eliminate alternatives and ingratiate themselves with the incumbent regime.

The severity of Nashi's attack on opposition groups alone (discussed previously in Chapter 3) is enough to deter internal dissent within the youth movement and thus to stifle democratic debate and the expression of individual beliefs. Yet, in addition, Nashi's portrayal of the immediate threat of Russia being taken over by imperialists should young people not support the incumbent regime and stave off the Western-sponsored opposition at election-time attaches grave danger to the prospect of young people's failing political support.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, Nashi's repeated conflation of the expression of alternative political viewpoints with being unpatriotic reinforces participants' implicit understanding that there is no room for questioning the youth movement's political stance on any level. Although Nashi leaders sought to emphasise their encouragement of genuine debate and discussion among participants at Seliger in an interview with this author, personal experience of Seliger 2008 can attest to the doctrinaire nature in which the youth movement requires acceptance of its political beliefs among participants. While there was much debate and scope for independent thinking and initiative as far as business, innovation and modernisation were concerned, questions of politics or the incumbent regime's performance were sacrosanct. Such

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<sup>158</sup> Wilson uses the term 'green gates stratagem' to refer to "the artificial polarisation of choice, usually involving the threat of *après moi, le deluge*, and/or 'greater evil' myths of democracy in danger or scarecrow nationalists taking power" (2005, *Virtual Politics: Political Technology and the Corruption of Post-Soviet Democracy*, available at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9324-5.cfm>, last accessed 11 August 2011).

dogmatism and its negative impact on the developmental democratic effects of Nashi, as far as promoting members' capacity for critical thinking is concerned, is as much the result of the youth movement's own strictures and intolerance (although these may themselves represent an attempt to ingratiate itself with the regime) as it is of having state-sponsorship and the Kremlin's general strategy of marginalising the opposition.

While the Young Guard has adopted a far less aggressive attitude towards the opposition than Nashi, it nevertheless requires a similar level of unquestioning loyalty from its members. In fact, being a smaller, more hierarchical group, under the direct watch of United Russia and with an exclusive focus on politics, it would be fairer to say that the Young Guard places greater demands on the behaviour and beliefs of its members. When asked how the Young Guard deals with internal conflicts or differences of opinion within the youth movement, Andrei Tatarinov (member of the Young Guard's political council) declared there to be "no internal conflicts at all" in the Young Guard:

We share a common task, common aims, so we don't have any serious conflict, not like Yabloko thank God and I hope there won't be any in the future.<sup>159</sup>

Tatarinov's statement makes an interesting allusion to the trade-off between greater freedom of opinion and group unity by comparing Yabloko and the Young Guard – the suggestion being that expecting members to adhere to a certain set of political beliefs and to always support the movement's stance makes the group more unified and therefore stronger in pursuing its ambitions and seeing off the opposition. However, the artificiality of such complete unity and commonality becomes apparent when the 'Radov incident' (referred to previously in Chapter 5) is considered. Former member of the Young Guard's Central Staff

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<sup>159</sup> Author's interview with Andrei Tatarinov, Moscow, 10 July 2008

and Political Council, Alexei Radov, quit the movement in December 2007 after becoming disillusioned with United Russia's broken promises and rhetoric of greater power to youth.<sup>160</sup> Unwilling to admit that United Russia had let the youth movement down, the Young Guard condemned Radov's actions and, via a series of interviews and articles published on the movement's website, prominent Young Guard leaders and activists attacked Radov for his criticism of United Russia.<sup>161</sup> In the case of the Young Guard, the youth movement's dependence on the United Russia party compounds its intolerance of alternative opinions or unsanctioned behaviour among its members. Radov's criticism of United Russia not only aggravated tensions between the party and the Young Guard by displeasing United Russia, but also potentially undermined the Young Guard's position in terms of its support from United Russia and its stature in the eyes of young Russians. It is worth noting, however, that such restrictions on internal debate imposed by Nashi and the Young Guard are not confined to state-sponsored associations. For instance, the liberal democratic opposition party *Yabloko* also requires strict loyalty from its members. In December 2009 Ilya Yashin (leader of *Molodezhnoe Yabloko* – Youth Yabloko) was compelled to leave the party over his involvement with 'Solidarity' (a coalition opposition group) when there were no such public accusations or criticisms as Radov had made of United Russia.<sup>162</sup>

Overall, it is possible to say that the ability of Nashi and the Young Guard to change perceptions of young people in Russian politics and society has been determined primarily by the state. Although the youth movements have played a significant role in framing perceptions

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<sup>160</sup> Kommersant, No.2 (3819), 15 January 2008, '*U liudei net shansov stat' dazhe pomoshchnikami deputatov*', available at [www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=842206&print=true](http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=842206&print=true), last accessed 4 September 2010.

<sup>161</sup> For example, see [www.molgvardia.ru/ideologicheskiy\\_otdel/nadezhda\\_orlova\\_hrutno\\_kogda\\_nastoyazhii\\_buntar\\_prevrashaetsya\\_v\\_pogremushku.html](http://www.molgvardia.ru/ideologicheskiy_otdel/nadezhda_orlova_hrutno_kogda_nastoyazhii_buntar_prevrashaetsya_v_pogremushku.html) or [www.molgvardia.ru/peredovaya\\_gazeta/detskii\\_sad\\_pryamo\\_i\\_nalevo.html](http://www.molgvardia.ru/peredovaya_gazeta/detskii_sad_pryamo_i_nalevo.html)

<sup>162</sup> For details of Yabloko's decision to ban its members from participating in certain political groups, see <http://www.theotherussia.org/2009/12/21/yabloko-bans-members-from-other-political-groups/>, last accessed 28 February 2011.

of youth since 2005, realistically, any shift in perceptions of the role of young Russians noted in this chapter is attributable first and foremost to heightened Kremlin interest in youth following the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine and the desire of political groups to tap in to youth as a potential source of support. Moreover, in the face of a lack of genuine Kremlin support for any systematic increase in youth political representation, the youth movements were unable to alter negative perceptions of aspiring young politicians among State Duma deputies belonging to the United Russia party (their supposed ally in their campaign to give ‘power to youth!’). Finally, although both Nashi and the Young Guard have imposed tight constraints on the scope for internal debate within the youth movements beyond that which is strictly necessary to retain state approval and have done so on their own initiative, this is clearly in accordance with the Kremlin’s wishes and is influenced by precedents of the state’s castigatory action towards wayward political groups as well as the desire to ingratiate the youth movements with the Kremlin and United Russia.

### Out of control

The final section of this chapter asserts that the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard on individual participants are as much dependent on young people themselves as they are on the youth movements’ strategies, the socio-political environment or on having state sponsorship. This argument is advanced by three key points, which will be discussed in turn below. Firstly, that despite expectations of their demise in the post-electoral environment, the youth movements *have* remained active in the face of dwindling Kremlin interest. Secondly, that the propensity for activists to become politically engaged regardless of the state’s intentions or the will of Nashi and Young Guard leaders must be considered.

Finally, in the case of Nashi, that increasingly the members themselves have gained some degree of control over the movement's development and have thus reduced the scope for either the Kremlin or the youth movement's leaders to determine its future.

### *Post-election sustainability*

With the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle and the elimination of the immediate threat of a Russian 'coloured revolution', rumours began to circulate of the Kremlin's fading interest in supporting the youth movements' development and consequently of the movements', and in particular Nashi's, imminent demise.<sup>163</sup> These rumours were fuelled when Yakemenko stepped down as Nashi's leader in December 2007 in order to take up a position as head of the newly created State Committee for Youth Affairs and, at the end of January 2008, new leader Nikita Borovikov announced the movement's reorganisation (referred to previously in this thesis), which involved closing down all but five of Nashi's fifty regional branches. At Nashi's annual camp at Lake Seliger in July 2008 the total number of participants was less than five thousand, half as many as at the previous camp in 2007. Taken together with the conspicuous absence of high-profile Kremlin figures in comparison to previous years, the depleted number of participants added weight to earlier suppositions of Nashi's post-electoral

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<sup>163</sup> For example, see Heller (2008), Savina, Taratuta & Shevchuk (2008) *Nashi stali chuzhimi*, *Kommersant*, 29 January, Halpin, T. (2008) 'Vladimir Putin's youth army Nashi loses purpose', *The Times*, 22 July; and Sean Guillory, 'Nashi: Is it really the end?', *The Exile* (22 April 2008) available at [http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE\\_ID=18776&IBLOCK\\_ID=35&PAGE=4](http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE_ID=18776&IBLOCK_ID=35&PAGE=4), last accessed 2 Feb 2011. Predictions of the Young Guard's imminent demise were less forthcoming, probably owing to the less controversial and lesser publicised status of the Young Guard in comparison to Nashi as well as the fact that, being youth branch of United Russia, the Young Guard is far more likely to continue to exist in one form or another even when state sponsorship dries up for pro-regime youth movements. Consequently, this section focuses on Nashi and not the Young Guard.

downfall and led to comments that Nashi was outdated, without purpose and struggling to attract participants or state recognition. However, two years on and Nashi has survived the post-election period and has even expanded its reach into Russia's regions. In light of the ostensible decline in Nashi's favour with the regime and with the benefit of hindsight, this study contends that expectations of the movement's post-electoral demise have not come to pass because they failed to take into account the agency of Nashi leaders and activists themselves in influencing the Kremlin's decisions and actions towards the youth movement. Expectations of the demise of Nashi were based on the flawed assumption that members of these state-sponsored pro-regime youth movements are passive agents of the Kremlin's will and therefore incapable of sustaining the movement in the longer term should state support wane. This assumption is prevalent in existing narratives on Nashi and is common to both dominant discourses regarding the youth movement identified by this author – the 'creeping authoritarianism' discourse, held by opposition to the incumbent Russian regime, which views Nashi as an attempt by the Russian state to undermine the development of independent youth political movements; and the 'defending Russia' discourse, which portrays Nashi as a legitimate response to external threats to the sovereignty of the Russian nation and is favoured by the Kremlin and those who support the incumbent Russian regime.<sup>164</sup>

According to the 'creeping authoritarianism' discourse, the development of Nashi is considered to be symptomatic of the Russian regime's ongoing strategy to crush internal dissent and reinforce its own dominance. From this perspective, Nashi is perceived to be part of an internal political quest to disarm any potential rivals and to stamp out dissent.<sup>165</sup> As such, the movement's development is not seen as a legitimate response to external threats to

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<sup>164</sup> These dominant discourses were first identified and elaborated in a previous publication by this author (Atwal, 2009, p.744).

<sup>165</sup> Examples of Western academic work that may be described as belonging to the 'creeping authoritarianism' discourse on Nashi include Vinatier (2007) and particularly Schwartz (2007).

Russia's sovereignty, as it claims to be. Instead, it is believed that the movement was initiated by the increasingly authoritarian regime in order to capitalise on Russian youth energies inspired by the 'coloured revolutions' and to use the apparent 'orange' threat as a catalyst for achieving its ambition of political domination. In a wry appraisal of the role played by Nashi activists, the 'creeping authoritarianism' discourse holds that, through Nashi, the state sought to use young Russians themselves to close down any opportunity for independent youth political participation. In this way, the state's interest in youth after the 'Orange Revolution' was only a ploy to incorporate potentially subversive young Russians into the service of the state, boosting regime support and diverting vital energy, resources and attention away from genuinely engaging youth political endeavours. Instead, an aggressive patriotic solidarity was encouraged amongst Nashi activists, which could be manipulated and directed against any perceived potential political rivals at the behest of the state. The Soviet *Komsomol* Youth League and the Hitler Youth have been used as points of reference in 'creeping authoritarianism' analyses of Nashi, thus betraying the sinister and rather grandiose dynamic bestowed upon Nashi by proponents of this discourse: "For most people around the world, an organisation like [Nashi] evokes the worst aspects of totalitarianism – where youth are mobilized to blindly fulfil the whims of a repressive regime."<sup>166</sup> Following this logic, should the state no longer have any need for Nashi, then, as a hub of youth activity in an otherwise barren political landscape, it would begin to view the movement as a threat to its authority and Nashi would become the latest victim of the highly repressive, authoritarian regime that it helped to strengthen.

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<sup>166</sup> Sean Guillory, 'Nashi: Is it really the end?', *The Exile* (22 April 2008) available at [http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE\\_ID=18776&IBLOCK\\_ID=35&PAGE=4](http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE_ID=18776&IBLOCK_ID=35&PAGE=4), last accessed 2 February 2011. Schwartz also highlights similarities between Nashi and the *Komsomol* (2007, p.80).

The ‘defending Russia’ discourse invokes a more positive perspective on Russia’s political course than the ‘creeping authoritarianism’ discourse discussed above. Whereas the ‘creeping authoritarianism’ narrative views Nashi first and foremost as a means of extending the incumbent regime’s political dominance within Russia instigated by the Kremlin itself, according to the ‘defending Russia’ narrative, Nashi simply represents a defensive strategy adopted in response to external threats to the beleaguered Russian nation. In this way, advocates of the ‘defending Russia’ discourse assert that Nashi’s development was supported by the state solely in order to resist attacks on Russia from foreign enemies, as opposed to itself representing part of an offensive on legitimate political alternatives within Russia. As such, Nashi declared its enemy not to be Russian opposition parties alone, but rather the loosely identified external threat of a Western-sponsored ‘liberal-fascist alliance’ who are against a strong, autonomous Russia. According to Nashi’s manifesto, the West hopes to gain control over Russia by inciting a ‘coloured revolution’ to overthrow the incumbent regime and “return [Russia] to the era of ineffective and weak government and collapsed society.”<sup>167</sup> Consistent with the urgent and imperialist nature of the threat to Russian state sovereignty set out by the ‘defending Russia’ narrative, Nashi’s rightful priority and best means of defence was to gather together as large a number of young Russians as possible and instil them with a sense of patriotic duty to protect Russia from immediate danger. Consequently, during this period young Russians acquired a unique importance in the defence of the Russian nation. However, at the same time, the necessity of young Russians’ unity and unquestioning support during this time was underlined, thus sacrificing the development of autonomous political thinking amongst Nashi activists and consequently their active engagement. The terms of play, the identity of the enemy as well as the nature of the threat were already predefined and

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<sup>167</sup> Nashi, 2005, ‘*Manifest*’, available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

Nashi called upon young Russians to stand united against this external threat to the well-being of the entire nation. According to Nashi's former leader, Vasilii Yakemenko, Nashi activists had a "thorough understanding of whom they should fight and how."<sup>168</sup> In this way, the onus is placed on the 'enemy' rather than on any desire on the part of the regime itself to maintain a politically disengaged populace. Yet again, like the 'creeping authoritarianism' discourse, the 'defending Russia' discourse infers Nashi's post-election demise at the hands of the state. By contending that Nashi received state support by virtue of its value in terms of a defensive strategy, the 'defending Russia' discourse renders continued state support for Nashi contingent on the movement's status as guardian of state sovereignty and thus dependent on the continued existence of the perceived external threat to the Russian nation in the form of a youth-sponsored electoral revolution. With the passing of the period of risk, state support for the movement would naturally come to an end and, as a result, Nashi activists, mobilised solely on the basis of the specific threat posed to the nation by the 'orange threat', would simply dissipate.

Thus, despite their opposing stance on the motivation behind state-support for Nashi's development, both dominant discourses presume the passivity of Nashi activists and the absolute ability of the state to determine the movement's development. For this reason, their expectations of Nashi's post-election demise were ill-conceived and have not been realised. The fact that Nashi has continued to flourish in the post-election environment in the face of dwindling state interest is further testimony to the significance of factors other than state-sponsorship in shaping the outcomes of participation, not least the agency of participants themselves.

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<sup>168</sup> *Izvestiya*, 2 March 2005, cited in Topalova, 2006, p.32

### *Personal political engagement*

Both of the dominant discourses identified above regarding Nashi assume that because the state did not desire the development of youth political engagement or did not consider it necessary in order to prevent a Russian ‘coloured revolution’, therefore Nashi activists are categorically not politically engaged. According to the ‘creeping authoritarianism’ discourse, the political engagement of Nashi activists would have been necessarily suppressed by the state because the consequent emergence of genuine political debate and accountability would have been anathema to the authoritarian ambitions driving Nashi. Following an inverse logic, the ‘defending Russia’ discourse contends that activists’ political engagement would have been suppressed by the state because Russia’s interests would be best served at this time by portraying unity and strength in the face of external threats to the nation. However, despite the reality of the Kremlin’s disinclination towards mass youth political engagement for reasons discussed previously in Chapter 4, there are many indications that, on an individual basis, young participants have become politically engaged. In drawing attention to the ways in which Nashi and the Young Guard have supported youth political engagement, this study emphasises not only that it would be incorrect to assume that Nashi and Young Guard activists are not politically engaged but also that whether or not participants become genuinely engaged in the political process cannot be determined by the state or the youth movements’ strategies alone. Such an assumption represents a simplistic, one-dimensional reading of the relationship that exists between the Russian state and its subjects, imagining that the state has the power to prevent or even to reverse the political engagement of Nashi activists and/or that activists themselves are incapable of becoming politically engaged without the state’s direction. This author asserts that political engagement can be nurtured or discouraged by its environment, but never decisively created or prevented.

Regardless of the motivations or intentions that may have been behind Nashi and the Young Guard's development, simply by virtue of their identification of youth as the critical agent in preventing a 'coloured revolution' and propelling Russia's future development, the youth movements have helped to boost the internal political efficacy of participants.<sup>169</sup> Having been disregarded as a valuable political subject in post-Soviet Russia prior to the 'Orange Revolution', following the events in Ukraine young Russians found themselves bestowed with a new status as political vanguard of the nation. In what has been described as their "political coming of age" (Topalova, 2006, p.23), power and responsibility were thrust upon young Russians:

Two years ago there existed a very powerful stereotype in Russia, a widely held perception that pensioners were the most important political force. But I would say that over the past two years the situation has changed towards youth, not only as regards the level of attention received by youth from the state and from the authorities, but also in terms of society's attitude towards youth.<sup>170</sup>

Characteristic of their emergent political engagement at this time, in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle many Nashi activists went above and beyond assisting the prevention of a Russian 'coloured revolution' and set about actively carving a political niche for themselves and pursuing a career in politics. Many Nashi and Young Guard activists (as well as young people not affiliated to either youth movement) have sought to pursue a career in politics by

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<sup>169</sup> According to Karaman, internal political efficacy refers to a person's perception of his own ability to understand and participate in politics, while external political efficacy refers to a person's perception of the ability of political institutions to respond effectively to and satisfy their needs (2004, p.31-2). It is participants' *internal* political efficacy that interests this analysis of the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard.

<sup>170</sup> Author's interview with Roman Romanov, Federal Staff of the Young Guard of United Russia, Moscow, 10 July 2008.

participating in *PolitZavod*.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, as noted previously, a number of Nashi commissars and Young Guard leaders have gone on to take up positions in formal political institutions including the Federal State Duma. In testimony to activists' political engagement as well as the unanticipated nature of their dynamism and political aptitude, Nashi commissar Maria Drokova asserts that the youth movement's purpose transformed from the singular and short-term task of organising mass rallies of patriotic young people who support the current political course and doing everything possible to prevent an 'orange revolution' from happening in Russia, to helping activists carve political careers for themselves and position themselves at the forefront of Russia's development.

[...] As far as I am aware, at the beginning at least, [Nashi's] sole task was to prevent an 'orange revolution' [...] but then there was so much power and energy and bright, young political personalities began to emerge from Nashi that it became clear that this was not the organisation's only task ....<sup>172</sup>

Further indicative of their genuine engagement, beyond the thrill of participating in the pomp and spectacle of mass rallies in Moscow, many Nashi activists have worked hard at a local level, using the movement's funding and network of similar-minded young people in order to support social issues that affect them personally, such as the need for better housing and education as well as to provoke discussion on the military conscript, Russia's demographic crisis and other political questions. For instance, Nashi has actively campaigned to raise awareness of the problems of corruption in the education system (as noted in Chapter 2). Yet, this is not to say that all of Nashi's activities on a local level are driven by members'

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<sup>171</sup> Discussed previously in Part 2 of this thesis, *PolitZavod* ('Political Factory') is the competition organised annually by the Young Guard, in which the winners become assistants to parliamentary deputies or else are themselves awarded a place on United Russia's party list as part of its youth quota with the prospect of potentially becoming regional or even federal parliamentary deputies.

<sup>172</sup> Author's interview with Maria Drokova, Lake Seliger, 24 July 2008

interests. A brief look at the movement's activity over a defined period of time in one region illustrates this point: During April 2007 in Voronezh Nashi activists organised at least nine seminars/roundtables on politics including the development of civil society, the meaning of democracy, Putin's Munich speech and Russia's political course; seven training sessions aimed at developing activists political skills such as public speaking; 18 actions aimed at reducing racism, 17 actions to denounce the opposition and incite patriotism, four actions to encourage healthy living, and scores of incidents of volunteering and helping society in one way or another (in particular children's homes, the elderly, blood donation and giving free legal advice).<sup>173</sup> While some of these actions have clearly been determined by the social needs of that particular community or the interests of young people, others appear to have been 'artificially' stimulated from above, such as discussion on the 'meaning of democracy' or Putin's Munich speech! Evidently, Nashi members are aware of their obligations towards their sponsors and of the political reason for the youth movement's development. Nonetheless, the sheer volume of activity in Voronezh alone attests to the level of participation and input by Nashi activists above and beyond any campaign to marginalise the opposition that may have been foisted upon them from above.

### *Autonomy and agency*

Finally, in a way that has not been possible for Young Guard members, this thesis asserts that Nashi activists have gained a degree of autonomy from the state. Moreover, this degree of autonomy stems from activists' political engagement (noted in the previous section), which itself extends Kremlin support beyond its initial intentions. Before proceeding any further, it

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<sup>173</sup> Author's own reckoning based on reports of Nashi's activity in Voronezh published on Nashi's official website, available at <http://www.nashi.su/voronezh>, last accessed 8 January 2009.

is important to make it clear that this element of a growing autonomy from the state of Nashi activists operates strictly within certain limits, which result from having state sponsorship. Emphasising the role of activists' agency here is not intended to deny the ultimate ability of the Kremlin to shut the youth movement down or hinder its activity (although the potential repercussions may cause it to think twice before doing so). Discussion of Nashi activists' growing autonomy refers only to their emergent ability to increasingly shape the course of the movement's development and to set the agenda for regional activity – an ability which nonetheless fundamentally challenges existing perceptions of state-sponsored participation.

While confirming the unexpected nature of activists' political engagement, in the afore-mentioned quotation, Nashi commissar, Maria Drokova, also portrays this as a positive and revitalising development, which has seen activists themselves become the driving force with Nashi as a structure serving simply as the vehicle or means of activists' self-realisation. However, although it may be that the emergence of political engagement among Nashi activists was genuinely welcomed by Nashi leaders, in fact, at least until the elections were over, neither Nashi leaders nor the state had much choice but to accept this development as part of the course for preventing a Russian 'coloured revolution'. Having enabled the youth movement's rapid mobilisation, the Kremlin was rendered powerless to take any aggressive action to halt the development of activists' political engagement before the elections were over for fear of triggering instability. Being thus unable to clamp down on the movement's development at this time, it became in the state's best interests to be seen to support the promotion of youth political engagement through Nashi on some level in an attempt to channel its powerful energy into support for the incumbent regime and to maintain some control over the movement during the elections. Similarly, for Nashi leaders, reflecting

activists' aspirations for political self-realisation became essential in order to sustain activists' interest and support.

Nevertheless, it is argued that the welcoming response of Nashi leaders to the emergence of political engagement among its members represented more than just a need to accommodate this turn of events and pay lip service to young Russians' political self-realisation until the completion of the elections. Once they realised that the state was powerless to suppress the development of activists' political engagement or rein in the movement before the elections were over, Nashi leaders took immediate steps to take advantage of this opportunity by reorganising the movement with the aim of strengthening its position in relation to the state and hence securing its future.<sup>174</sup> Discussing the movement's reorganisation in an interview with this author, Nikita Borovikov (Yakemenko's successor as Nashi leader) explained:

The state should only act as a facilitator for youth politics. It should not try to over-organise things. The State Committee for Youth Affairs should not implement measures at the regional level; it should only provide the opportunities for youth's self-realisation by creating institutions for development and not try to do everything itself.<sup>175</sup>

However, while seeking to reduce the state's ability to control the movement, the action taken by Nashi's leadership has simultaneously undermined its own influence over Nashi activists and has thus provided the conditions for the development of bottom up youth participation in Russia. Having delegated oversight of the movement's development in the regions to federal

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<sup>174</sup> The significance of Nashi's reorganisation for the democratic effects of participation has been discussed at various points in this study as appropriate to the particular area of democratic effects focused on.

<sup>175</sup> Author's interview with Nikita Borovikov, Lake Seliger, 21 July 2008

project coordinators and abolished almost all regional branches from which Nashi commissars previously monitored activists at close quarters (as described in Chapter 2's discussion of the movement's reorganisation), Nashi leaders have set up a chain of command which distances not only the state but also themselves from grass root activism. In this way, the same difficulty of controlling the movement's development in the regions following the dismantling of the movement's centralised structure befalls Nashi's leaders as well as the state. As Drokova acknowledges, it is "simply not possible for all of the projects in the regions to answer to the centre."<sup>176</sup> Released from the pressure of direct oversight, Nashi activists are thus able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the youth movement while having the space to develop as politically autonomous individuals.<sup>177</sup>

There is a notable difference between the centre and the regions in this respect. With the development of Nashi's projects in Moscow, St. Petersburg and the central regions it seems that many of those involved were members of Nashi during the 2007-8 electoral cycle and have simply taken on a different role in the newly-configured movement. Moreover, the close-knit nature of Nashi's central group has invariably resulted in some reliance on friendship networks for recruiting federal heads for the new projects. However, in the regions, to where Nashi extended its activity following its 2008 reorganisation, many participants are relatively new to Nashi. In these regions, Nashi's projects have often attracted young Russians already involved in some kind of youth initiative in their hometown or possessing expertise in relevant fields such as business or economics. These new activists, or at least a significant number of those present at the movement's annual camp at Lake

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<sup>176</sup> Author's interview with Maria Drokova, Lake Seliger, 21 July 2008

<sup>177</sup> As always, in the case of these Kremlin-sponsored organisations, any such 'autonomy' operates strictly within certain limits. If Nashi activists in a particular region developed a project that the Kremlin did not approve or which contravened Nashi's political stance on a particular issue and this was discovered, then their activities would be curtailed by Nashi's leadership if not by the Kremlin.

Seliger in 2008, take what they want from Nashi according to their own agendas, not necessarily subscribing to the movement's political stance on certain issues or its methods. For example, some participants at Seliger 2008 went as far as to say that they came to the camp to network and learn about funding opportunities for youth initiatives in their region, and were willing to put up with Nashi's "ridiculous artifice and regimented approach so as to receive Nashi's support and funding for their regional projects", after all they "believe in Russia's future and the potential which they personally possess to improve things."<sup>178</sup>

As noted in Chapter 3, as a result of Nashi's reorganisation much of the movement's activity is now conducted at the micro-level with limited coordination by federal Nashi staff beyond securing funding and development support. Activists are thus able to steer their own course of political participation, not only opting in or out of various Nashi projects but also feeling free to adapt the projects to the needs of their area as they perceive them. For example, on return from Nashi's 2008 summer camp, young people from Novosibirsk already involved in working with youth in their region decided to develop only three of Nashi's projects: *Mishki* (Little Bears – a project aimed at working with children), Cadres for the Modernisation of the Country and Start-Up. As one young activist from Novosibirsk put it, "we shouldn't think that it is our duty to do everything exactly as [Belokonev] or other managers of Nashi want us to do. It is enough just to catch an idea and update it for our region."<sup>179</sup> Ironically, contravening Western portrayals of the youth movement as well as Kremlin and even Nashi leaders' accounts, one of the participants at Seliger 2008 (among the 12 with whom this author set up camp) revealed that she was receiving funding from both Nashi and a prominent American NGO to continue developing youth initiatives in her region after witnessing the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

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<sup>178</sup> Informal talks with participants at Nashi's annual camp, Lake Seliger, 21 July 2008

<sup>179</sup> Author's personal correspondence with Nashi activists from Novosibirsk, 22 December 2008

Seeking to ensure young activists remain loyal to the regime by effectively buying their allegiance to Nashi and by implication also to the state, Nashi's role now is increasingly that of a facilitator, providing access to a vast network of support and sponsorship that activists themselves can employ to develop youth initiatives in their region as they see fit. At Seliger 2008 hundreds of initiatives developed by participants found sponsors from within the government, regional authorities or the business community. For example, the project *Molodezhnaia Shkola Predprinimatel'stva* (Youth School of Enterprise) managed to secure funding to enable it to "begin training 100,000 young people in 2009. These young people [were to] be trained in starting up their own business and business planning and the winners [were to] receive credits to begin their own business venture."<sup>180</sup> In this way, it is possible to note the willingness of the Kremlin and Nashi leaders to allow participants a degree of autonomy in order to retain youth support.

## Conclusion

Above all else, Chapter 6 has demonstrated the limits of the state's ability to control the outcomes of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. While other chapters in this thesis have highlighted the significance of factors other than having state support in shaping the democratic effects of state-sponsored participation and/or have demonstrated the capacity of state sponsorship to support some positive democratic effects of participation alongside exploring the constraints of state sponsorship (conclusions which are all corroborated in this chapter too), it is only really this chapter that has pushed the assertion of the inability of the state to fully control the outcomes of participation that was put forward in

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<sup>180</sup> Nashi 'Itogom foruma Seliger-2008 stali sotni partnerskikh soglashennii s pervymi litsami gosudarstva', 25 July 2008, available at: <http://www.nashi.su/news/25658>, last accessed 12 January 2009.

Chapter 1. Rejecting dominant depictions of Nashi members as passive vehicles of the Kremlin's will, this chapter has contended that many Nashi and Young Guard participants have become politically engaged *regardless* of the lack of state support for mass political engagement: They are *active* participants who are genuinely interested in politics, whether that be in terms of becoming a politician or in terms of community work tackling social issues of concern to them in their local region. However much the Kremlin is able to direct the nature and results of participation, as has been demonstrated on numerous occasions in the course of this study, it cannot determine the value attached to participation by young people themselves.

Further unique to this chapter is the evidence of participants themselves influencing the democratic effects of participation. Previously, discussion of the significance of agency has referred only to decisions made and actions taken by the youth movements' leaders; the input of rank and file activists themselves has not factored in investigation of the impact of state support on the public sphere or institutional democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard. In contrast, Chapter 6 has identified the growing autonomy of Nashi activists from the state. Enabled by the emergence of activists' political engagement, measures taken by Nashi leaders to reorganise the movement with the aim of securing its future have contributed to a discernible shift in the balance of power away from both the state and Nashi leaders in favour of Nashi activists. Given the decreased ability of the state and Nashi leaders to assert top-down control over the movement, activists have a unique opportunity to influence the movement's development and the terms of their own participation *within certain limits*. Should Nashi leaders seek to secure their own positions and preserve the movement's integrity they would need to take their direction from below now and act in accordance with activists' interests and desires. In the absence of heavy handed state intervention or the

withdrawal of state support, in the foreseeable future Nashi would then act as an umbrella organisation offering support and oversight from afar and effectively providing politically engaged young Russians with a framework within which they can develop their own initiatives.

## CHAPTER 7 – CIVIC VIRTUES: FROM STREET POLITICS TO PARTY POLITICS?

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Chapter 7 considers the democratic credentials of Nashi and the Young Guard themselves in terms of the youth movements' ethos, i.e. what the youth movements stand for and the way that they go about trying to achieve this. Though this might perhaps have been a more obvious starting point for considering the democratic effects of participation in Nashi and the Young Guard than an end point, one of the central tenets of this thesis is that the democratic effects of participation should not be prejudged based on the intentions of those involved in initiating participation. In the same way that the Kremlin's motivations for supporting the development of Nashi and the Young Guard alone cannot determine the democratic effects of participation, so the designs of the youth movements' leadership do not dictate the outcomes of participation. As noted in Chapter 1, the best of intentions may fail to achieve the positive results expected of it and even have a negative impact if factors such as the socio-political environment and the agency of participants themselves are not taken into account. Similarly, it has been asserted that the pursuit of non-democratic ends may unintentionally support or even necessitate some positive democratic effects. For this reason, analysis of the democratic credentials of Nashi and the Young Guard's ethos and methods has been deliberately left until the end of this thesis in order to reinforce the message that the democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard are not dependent on this and also to avoid prejudicing the earlier analysis of public sphere and institutional democratic effects.

Rather than offer a breakdown of the youth movements' declared goals and formal setup, this chapter takes Rosenblum's lead and focuses on "the way the day-to-day activities of [Nashi and the Young Guard] promote or inhibit characteristically liberal democratic virtues – tolerance, say, or fairness" (1998, p.4). According to Rosenblum, previous studies of

civil society and the effects of associational life have been “disturbingly inattentive to the *dynamics* of membership [...] Standard approaches assume that a group’s formative effects on members can be predicted on the basis of its express purpose or formal organisation” (1998, p.47).<sup>181</sup> There is a certain degree of overlap with the previous chapter in the sense that Nashi and the Young Guard’s contribution to civic engagement and promoting young people’s rights and responsibilities, working in the community with voluntary projects and so on might all be considered civic virtues. Moreover, the lack of scope for internal dissent and the practice of stifling debate on political issues within Nashi and the Young Guard as well as the youth movements’ intolerance towards the opposition, all considered previously in this study, could also come under the heading of the youth movements’ day to day activities and certainly have implications for their contribution to the development of ‘liberal-democratic virtues’.

In order to avoid repetition and to put forward a coherent and persuasive analysis of the impact of state support on the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard as far as civic virtues are concerned, this chapter adopts a more specific approach to the subject. It explores the development of Nashi and the Young Guard from the perspective of the political behaviour and associated norms cultivated by the youth movements. Their political activity between 2005 and 2010 is tracked in order to build up a profile of the forms of political participation which they promote. Three distinct chronological phases in the youth movements’ development over this period are outlined and analysed in turn.

- Firstly, the period 2005-7 when Nashi and to a far lesser extent the Young Guard were engaged in street politics. Newly organised and keen to make their mark, at this time

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<sup>181</sup> “The significance of association depends on the experiences individuals bring to it [...] So I caution against the unwarranted assumption that the effects of an association on members can be predicted on the basis of a group’s formal purpose or system of internal governance” (Rosenblum, 1998, p.7).

the youth movements' actions were to a large extent driven by the recent experience of the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine.

- Secondly, the period 2007-8 when the event of the elections to the State Duma and the completion of the youth movements' task to thwart any potential youth-sponsored 'coloured revolution' appeared to offer the potential for the youth movements' to retire from street politics and settle into the world of party politics with all the rules and restrictions that accompany entry into the formal political arena.
- Thirdly, the period 2008-10 when, struggling to adapt to the post-election environment, Nashi has sought to confer a sense of legitimacy and authority to its actions, but at times has resorted to tried and tested tactics of intimidation in order to achieve its goals and draw attention to its cause.

Variations in the methods employed by the youth movements are investigated in order to identify the relative significance of state-sponsorship in shaping the youth movements' developmental democratic effects as far as their 'civic virtues' are concerned.

### [Street warfare \(2005-7\)](#)

Several analyses of politics in Russia since 2005 have drawn attention to the rising significance of 'street politics'.<sup>182</sup> For example, Ilya Yashin (former leader of Yabloko Youth) asserts that young political leaders today need to be 'street orators', able to lead

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<sup>182</sup> For example, see Vremia Novostei, *Ulichnaia Politika* (2 April 2007) available at [www.vremya.ru/2007/56/13/175169.html](http://www.vremya.ru/2007/56/13/175169.html), last accessed 19 June 2010; Schwirtz 2007; Yashin 2006; and Yashin, 2007 'Rossii segodnia nuzhny ulichnye oratory', *Rosbalt*, (19 March 2007) available at [yabloko.ru/Publ/2007/2007\\_03/070320\\_rosb\\_yashin.html](http://yabloko.ru/Publ/2007/2007_03/070320_rosb_yashin.html), last accessed 19 June 2010.

people onto the street and to stand in front of police cordons.<sup>183</sup> The origins of the rise in street politics at this time appear to be straightforward: Firstly, their engineered exclusion from the formal political arena forced opposition groups onto the streets in an attempt to gain publicity for their cause and the pro-Kremlin youth organisations followed as a Kremlin-sponsored counter-measure. Speaking in April 2007, Alexei Mitrofanov, LDPR State Duma deputy offered an interesting commentary on street politics in contemporary Russia noting: “In normal countries a person runs around on the street for 10-15 years and then becomes prime-minister, but [in Russia] we have someone who used to be prime-minister and now runs around on the streets.”<sup>184</sup> Secondly, the example of the potential power of ordinary people taking to the streets *en masse* during the ‘Orange Revolution’ set a precedent and opened up opportunities for mobilisation in the run up to the elections that proved too tempting to be denied by the opposition or the Kremlin alike. In demonstration of its power and resources Nashi launched its mass actions with a gathering of around 50,000 young people in Moscow on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2005 entitled *Nasha Pobeda* (Our Victory) in a symbolic act of veterans of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ handing over the baton of the struggle to maintain Russia’s independence to Russia’s youth. Since then the youth movement has regularly staged such mass actions, including organising a ‘Russian March’ to celebrate National Unity Day in Moscow on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2009 which attracted 20,000-30,000 participants<sup>185</sup> and also continuing its annual ‘Our Victory’ rally by reportedly gathering more than 65,000 young

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<sup>183</sup> Yashin, 2007 ‘Rossii segodnia nuzhny ulichnye oratory’, *Rosbalt*, (19 March 2007) available at [yabloko.ru/Publ/2007/2007\\_03/070320\\_rosb\\_yashin.html](http://yabloko.ru/Publ/2007/2007_03/070320_rosb_yashin.html), last accessed 19 June 2010.

<sup>184</sup> Vremia Novostei, *Ulichnaia Politika* (2 April 2007) available at [www.vremya.ru/2007/56/13/175169.html](http://www.vremya.ru/2007/56/13/175169.html), last accessed 19 June 2010 – presumably Mitrofanov is referring to Mikhail Kasyanov (former prime-minister of the Russian Federation 2000-2004) or Boris Nemtsov (deputy prime-minister 1997-8).

<sup>185</sup> Nashi, *Na russkom marche Dvizheniia Nashi Vse Svoi* (4 Nov 2009) available at [www.nashi.su/news/27600](http://www.nashi.su/news/27600), last accessed 19 June 2010.

Russians to commemorate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory Day on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010.<sup>186</sup> In accordance with its lesser size and stature as well as its emphasis on attracting a certain calibre of young cadres capable of pursuing a successful political career rather than on taking the battle to the opposition on the streets, the Young Guard has held fewer mass street actions than Nashi and these have been attended by fewer participants. Nonetheless, the Young Guard did hold rallies and marches in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle, most notably its ‘March of the Contented’ rally in April 2007, which gathered around 10,000 supporters on the outskirts of Moscow in response to the series of ‘Dissenters Marches’ organised by the opposition. The Young Guard also staged a protest on the highway in Vladivostok in July 2007 against the state of Russia’s roads, complete with a monument of a broken wheel.

In the above sense, ‘street politics’ refers simply to mass rallies and public demonstrations that make use of slogans, posters, symbols and other theatrical elements, and would include incidents such as the pensioners’ protest against the monetisation of welfare benefits in January 2005. Moreover, it is in this sense of the term that the Young Guard may be said to have engaged in ‘street politics’. However, with regard to youth politics in contemporary Russia, and more specifically the role of groups such as Nashi in street politics, it is the physicality of the battle between the opposition and Kremlin loyalists that stands out. Street politics in this sense alludes to the rough, no-holds-barred politics of the street compared to the ‘columned halls’ and privileges of party politics (Schwartz, 2007, p.75). Head of the analytical department of VTsIOM, Leonti Byzov, suggests as much in his 2007 assessment of the rise in street politics in Russia, where he identifies the purpose of street politics for pro-Kremlin groups to be combative and destructive:

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<sup>186</sup> Nashi, *Na aktsii ‘Nashi Pobeda’ razdali 70 tysiach patronov* (15 May 2010), available at [www.nashi.su/news/31633](http://www.nashi.su/news/31633), last accessed 19 June 2010.

If we analyse which political forces benefit from holding marches then it becomes evident that for United Russia, for example, such marches are not necessary.

However, [United Russia] has combat youth brigades such as Nashi, which are able to specialise in precisely that which United Russia is unable to. Mostly, though, their slogans are negative – always trying to deal someone a blow.<sup>187</sup>

The Young Guard's position as youth branch of United Russia subjects the youth movement to many of the constraints and rules of decorum of the formal political arena. For this reason, the Young Guard has played no part in the tactics of intimidation bordering on the illegal, discussed below, that Nashi has engaged in under the heading of 'street politics' broadly defined. In contrast, the true essence of Nashi's role in street politics in Russia has been its more contentious activities when the movement has pursued a strategy of direct conflict with and intimidation of the opposition. The most likely explanation for this initial variation between the methods employed by Nashi and the Young Guard is the Kremlin's desire to have a powerful youth presence on the streets in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle in order to intimidate protest groups inspired by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine without harming United Russia's standing by association to any potential civic disorder. In this sense, it could be argued that it suited the Kremlin for Nashi to act in a more intolerant and aggressive way than the Young Guard for fear of tainting United Russia in the process of seeking to eliminate opposition to the regime.

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<sup>187</sup> Leontii Byzov, *Ulichnaia Politika*, (2 April 2007: VTsIOM) available at [wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/4317.html?no\\_cache=1&L%5B1%5D=&cHash=cb781b60f6](http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/4317.html?no_cache=1&L%5B1%5D=&cHash=cb781b60f6), last accessed 19 June 2010.

### *Intimidation: Policing the streets*

Under the task heading of ‘developing a functioning civil society’ in Nashi’s manifesto, the following statement revealing Nashi’s explicit strategy of intimidation can be found:

We must set an example of social solidarity. Every oligarch or civil servant, street punk or member of a totalitarian organisation that raises its hand to one of our members should know that tomorrow he will have to deal with all of us.<sup>188</sup>

Infamously, after speaking at a conference of the opposition coalition *Drugaiia Rossiia* (Other Russia) in July 2006, British ambassador, Anthony Brenton, was repeatedly followed and harassed by Nashi activists in a prolonged campaign of intimidation over a period of a year and a half. Nashi demanded an apology from Brenton for apparently ‘insulting Russia’ by suggesting that the club of ‘fascists, totalitarians and thieves were a part of civil society’ and for allegedly pledging a million pounds to support their cause. Nashi celebrated victory when Brenton was finally replaced by Anne Pringle as British Ambassador in March 2008.<sup>189</sup> In a similar incident, in May 2007, Nashi activists staged protests outside the Estonian embassy in Moscow and harassed Estonian ambassador Marina Kaljurand. Nashi protestors tore down the Estonian flag from the embassy building, forced entry into a hall where the Estonian ambassador was speaking and bombarded her car, physically intimidating the ambassador until she also left her post.

In addition to the campaigns against specific individuals carried out by the youth movement in reaction to a particular incident, Nashi also formed two groups – *Dobrovol’naia*

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<sup>188</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> task stated on manifesto - Nashi *Manifest*, available at: <http://img.nashi.su/nashi.su/admin/data/3/9/manifest1.doc>, last accessed 31/01/10 .

<sup>189</sup> Nashi, *ReBrentding Britanskovo Posolstvo* (31 March 2007), available at <http://nashi.su/news/23678>, last accessed 19 June 2010.

*Molodezhnaia Druzhina* (Voluntary Youth Militia – hereafter ‘DMD’) and *Molodezhnoe Patrioticheskoe Dvizhenie - Stal’* (Youth Patriotic Movement – Steel – hereafter ‘*Stal’*)<sup>190</sup> – both dedicated to intimidating the opposition on the streets. DMD is a splinter organisation of Nashi, established by the youth movement under Vasily Yakemenko’s leadership in 2005 and remaining very much Nashi’s project, despite formally being a separate entity.<sup>191</sup> Ostensibly created to work with law enforcement agencies in order to reduce crime, DMD’s activities have included patrolling the streets with police officers and engaging with disaffected gangs of youths to help them to turn away from drugs and crime. Unofficially, DMD acts as Nashi’s ‘muscle’ providing security and maintaining order at Nashi’s mass actions and major events.<sup>192</sup> DMD has been at the centre of numerous allegations of provocation and violence carried out by Nashi against the opposition.<sup>193</sup> Nashi patrols were mobilised by the authorities to counter opposition activity on the streets in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle. More significantly, according to Moscow city law, Nashi’s patrols were legally empowered to use force as a last resort should a lawbreaker be ‘actively disobedient’.<sup>194</sup>

Whereas DMD focuses on enforcing civic order in the loosest possible sense, *Stal* is of a more political bent and could be described as a radical nationalistic group. *Stal* views patriotism as a ‘matter of national security’ and demands that patriotism should be active not passive.<sup>195</sup> In practice, this translates into the adoption of wartime rhetoric and the

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<sup>190</sup> Despite its name, *Stal’* is currently still recognised as being a project within Nashi.

<sup>191</sup> DMD’s website is available at: <http://druzhina.su/>

<sup>192</sup> At Nashi’s summer camp ‘Seliger 2008’, some of the participants themselves felt intimidated by DMD who, tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that everyone was following the rules of the camp, patrolled the camp with uniforms with the slogan *la vizhu kak vy ne rabotaete!* (I see that you are not working!).

<sup>193</sup> For details of DMD’s alleged violence and provocation of peaceful opposition rallies, see Guillory, ‘Nashi: Is it really the end?’, *The Exile* (22 April 2008) available at

[http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE\\_ID=18776&IBLOCK\\_ID=35&PAGE=4](http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE_ID=18776&IBLOCK_ID=35&PAGE=4), last accessed 2 Feb 2011.

<sup>194</sup> David Nowak, ‘Nashi brigades to enforce public order’, *Moscow Times* (24 September 2007) available at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/nashi-brigades-to-enforce-public-order/194123.html>, last accessed 20 September 2010.

<sup>195</sup> *Stal*, *O Proekte*, available at <http://nashi.su/projects/51>, last accessed 20 September 2010.

justification of violence and all means necessary in the ‘defence’ of Russia. According to the movement itself, *Stal* is dedicated to using all methods and technologies available to ‘control street politics’ and thus secure Russia’s future as a global power and world leader.<sup>196</sup>

According to the internet blog entry of one *Stal* activist, the group’s name is ‘no accident’:

Steel is a very strong metal used to make weapons and armour [...] *Stal*’ is Russia’s armour, protecting her from encroachments on her sovereignty. It is also Russia’s weapon in the modern world [...] providing the support of active patriotic youth who are not afraid of taking decisive action.<sup>197</sup>

Commissar of the Estonian division of *Stal*, Mark Siryk, was arrested by police in Tallinn in April 2007 on charges of inciting disorder. The charges relate to the riots that took place in Tallinn known as the ‘Bronze nights’ on April 26-28<sup>th</sup> 2007 when ethnic Russians protested against the decision to relocate a Soviet war memorial and burial site in the city. The protest rapidly deteriorated into riots, which were dispersed by the Special Forces and resulted in the death of one ethnic Russian. Siryk was held in custody for 2 months before being released on parole. He was subsequently acquitted in court in January 2009 on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence that the defendant had been involved in organising the continuation of the riots on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April, which according to the Judge was the point at which the activities became unlawful.

Thus Nashi has contributed to the militarisation of street politics in contemporary Russia such that the term ‘street politics’ no longer refers only to the locus of political activity but also to the combative and often brutal methods employed by many of those involved. In a bid to silence the opposition during this period, Nashi’s tactics revolved around the

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<sup>196</sup> *Stal*, *O Proekte*, available at <http://nashi.su/projects/51>, last accessed 20 September 2010.

<sup>197</sup> [http://community.livejournal.com/stal\\_ru](http://community.livejournal.com/stal_ru)

persecution of anyone who challenged or offended the incumbent regime as well as the systematic intimidation of all political opposition. The boldness of Nashi's actions peaked in 2007 when, acting with impunity, the youth movements launched its vicious campaign against the Estonian government and stepped up its assault on opposition rallies in advance of the parliamentary elections.

### *Cyber attacks*

In addition to physical intimidation, Nashi's efforts to eradicate all active political opposition to the incumbent regime have taken on an electronic form. Not content with impeding opposition activities and harassing certain prominent individuals, Nashi has been linked to cyber attacks on the websites of groups unsympathetic to the youth movement's cause.

In May 2007, the work of the Estonian government was impeded by a sustained attack on the country's internet network lasting more than 3 weeks and prompting a response from NATO. The websites of government ministries, parliament, prominent media distributors and banks were all severely disrupted by the cyber attack, which followed the afore-mentioned repositioning of the Soviet Bronze Soldier war memorial from central Tallinn to a local cemetery. Estonian officials pointed the finger at the Russian government, which had been vociferous in condemning what it considered to be the desecration of the Soviet war memorial and burial site, but such accusations were repeatedly denied by the Russians. Although, at present, NATO does not consider cyber attacks to constitute a military action for which Article 5 would be invoked (extending the principles of collective self-defence to the NATO member under attack), a NATO press-release confirmed that the organisation pledged its

political support for Estonia and considered the matter to be ‘an operational security issue’.<sup>198</sup> NATO sent at least one expert to help efforts to repel the attacks and, in May 2008, set up the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn. Nashi commissar and Duma deputy aide, Konstantin Goloskokov, subsequently claimed to have organised the DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attack, which crashed the Estonian government’s internet network by overloading it with multiple requests. Goloskokov claims that he carried out the ‘act of civil disobedience’ together with a network of loyal sympathisers and without the knowledge of Nashi or the authorities.<sup>199</sup> For their part, the Kremlin and Nashi deny any involvement in the cyber attack on Estonia, yet neither has explicitly condemned the attack and no action has been taken against Goloskokov.

On a far smaller scale, following an article published by Kommersant in January 2008, Kommersant’s website was the victim of a cyber attack which crashed the website for 5 hours. The article in question, published on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2008 suggested that Nashi was becoming an embarrassment for the Kremlin and had outlived its purpose.<sup>200</sup> The attack on Kommersant’s website in March 2008 was combined with the distribution of rolls of toilet paper printed with the Kommersant logo, quotes from the newspaper article in question and the phone number of the article’s author, leading Kommersant to accuse Nashi of responsibility for hacking into its website. Although Nashi denies any involvement in these incidents, according to a leaked internal email allegedly written by Nashi’s press secretary Khristina Potupchik, Nashi called upon its activists to ‘block [Kommersant’s] work’ and to

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<sup>198</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *173 DSCFC 09 E bis - NATO and Cyber Defence* (2009) available at <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1782>, last accessed 19 June 2010.

<sup>199</sup> RFERL, *Kremlin loyalist says launched Estonia cyberattack*, (12 March 2009) available at [http://www.rferl.org/content/Kremlin\\_Loyalist\\_Says\\_Launched\\_Estonia\\_Cyberattack/1508923.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Kremlin_Loyalist_Says_Launched_Estonia_Cyberattack/1508923.html), last accessed 20 September 2010.

<sup>200</sup> For the original article in Russian, see Ekaterina Savina, Yuliya Taratura, and Mikhail Shevchuk, ‘Nashi stali chuzhimi’, *Kommersant* (29 Jan 2008) available at <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=846635>, last accessed 20 Sept 2010.

‘psychologically and physically pester them’. ‘Revenge is essential’, the email reportedly read.<sup>201</sup>

### *Nashi and the far right*

Finally under the heading of ‘street politics’, despite officially calling itself a ‘democratic, anti-fascist youth movement’, Nashi has been frequently compared to radical far-right groups and at times referred to as a fascist group itself. While Nashi is infamous for its aggressive campaigns against non-patriotic elements’ and its unrelenting political stance, it is not a racist organisation by any stretch of the imagination. Under the heading of securing Russia’s sovereignty in the movement’s manifesto, Nashi declares:

Cultural diversity is Russia’s greatest asset in the modern world. Religious and ethnic cooperation empowers our country to develop further [...] Our generation’s task is to prevent the spread of fascist ideas, aggressive nationalism, religious intolerance and separatism that threatens the unity and territorial integrity of Russia.<sup>202</sup>

On November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 Nashi staged mass anti-fascist rallies in Moscow in honour of National Unity Day. In a significant show of strength 20-30,000 young Russians came together in Moscow for Nashi’s ‘Russian March’ in defiance of right-wing and extreme nationalist organisations marching under the same banner elsewhere in Moscow. According to Nashi, the

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<sup>201</sup> For further information on this incident see Sean Guillory, ‘Nashi: Is it really the end?’, *The Exile* (22 April 2008) available at [http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE\\_ID=18776&BLOCK\\_ID=35&PAGE=4](http://www.exile.ru/articles/detail.php?ARTICLE_ID=18776&BLOCK_ID=35&PAGE=4), last accessed 2 February 2011 and Shaun Walker, ‘Pro-Kremlin youth group blamed for attacking paper’, *The Independent* (6 March 2008) available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/prokremlin-youth-group-blamed-for-attacking-paper-792074.html>, last accessed 2 February 2011.

<sup>202</sup> Nashi, 2005, ‘*Manifest*’, available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

march underscored the youth movement's commitment to defending human rights in Russia by undermining extreme-right wing groups that it alleges have been overlooked by human-rights watchdogs, who prefer to focus on Nashi's methods. Nashi is keen to dispel any suggestion that it a far-right movement and for this reason has clamped down on media use of the term 'nationalistic' to refer to Nashi.

The confusion over Nashi's fascist/anti-fascist credentials becomes apparent when one considers the youth movement's utter intolerance of alternative political ideas coupled with its appropriation of the concept of patriotism to refer to support for the incumbent regime. Nashi's declared strategy of tackling fascism by increasing the dominance of its ideas among the younger generation further muddies the issue:

Only by spreading our ideological influence over the younger generation can we prevent young people from being drawn into extremist organisations of a fascist and liberal tendency [...] We must fight fascism in all its manifestations and support ethnic, religious and cultural unity for the good of our common home – Russia. The war on fascism is part of the fight for Russia's integrity and sovereignty.<sup>203</sup>

Conflating fascism and extremism with liberalism and indeed any political opposition to the regime, Nashi's anti-fascist drive becomes primarily a campaign to shut out any alternatives and thus takes on a fascist element of its own. "A closer look at the rhetoric of the leaders of Nashi shows that anti-orange and anti-fascist definitions are often used in their arguments as synonymous" (Topalova, 2006, p.33). This is no mistake. While seeking to promote inter-ethnic tolerance and cooperation within Russia, Nashi's brand of anti-fascism denounces all foreign influence.

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<sup>203</sup> Nashi, 2005, '*Manifest*', available at: <http://nashi.su/manifest>, last accessed 16 June 2010.

Furthermore, the sincerity of Nashi's apparent efforts to quell radicalism and extremism at all is questioned, as the youth movement appears to deliberately play on nationalistic sentiment in order to attract and inspire young Russians to its cause. In this way, Nashi taps into and cultivates nationalism, despite the danger which it acknowledges youth chauvinism presents to Russia. Academics such as Pilkington, Zorkaia & Diuk and others note the development of a radical youth sub-culture in Russia, with an increasing propensity for aggressive nationalism and susceptibility to militaristic rhetoric.<sup>204</sup> According to the State Youth Policy (referred to previously in Chapters 4 and 6), 51% of 18-35 year olds said that they would support evicting certain ethnic groups from their region.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, according to the latest crime statistics for Russia, radical nationalism is already exhibiting its potential to develop outside the Kremlin's control. In its most recent report in July 2007, the Panorama group reported an average 25-30% annual increase in reported racially motivated acts of violence, with spring 2007 alone already showing a 14% increase on the previous year's total.<sup>206</sup> Yet, despite this real threat, Nashi consciously courts nationalistic sentiment. The youth movement's combined effort with the Young Guard to counter the series of opposition 'Dissenters' Marches' in 2007 was entitled 'Russia for the Russians', which although representing the movements' desire to keep out foreign influences on Russian politics and to associate the opposition marches with Western sponsorship, is also known to be a slogan of extremist far-right groups: A poll of young Russians conducted in 2004 in order to identify the "latent presence of openly xenophobic, nationalistic, and chauvinistic sentiments among

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<sup>204</sup> See Pilkington et.al. 2002, p.113; Topalova, 2006, p.32, Zorkaia & Diuk, 2004, p.5, and Smith, 2005, Putin's Nationalist Challenge. *UK Defence Academy Russian Series Paper, 5* (20), May, available at <http://da.mod.uk/CSRC>, last accessed 16 August 2007. In addition, the Panorama Group maintains a wealth of up-to-date information on nationalism in Russia (<http://www.panorama.ru/>).

<sup>205</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2006, *Strategiia gosudarstvennoi molodezhnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi Federatsii, No. 1760*, p.4. Available at: <http://ed.gov.ru/files/materials/393/strat.doc>, last accessed 1 September 2008.

<sup>206</sup> Panorama Group, summary of report available at <http://xeno.sova.center.ru/29481C8/96A2I47#r1>, last accessed 25 July 2007.

the young” asked respondents whether they supported the same slogan ‘Russia for the Russians’ (Zorkaia & Diuk, 2004, p.24). Thus, being used to encapsulate and measure chauvinistic tendencies, this slogan is commonly perceived to represent a nationalistic sentiment. In contrast, the rally organised by the Young Guard alone in response to the Dissenters’ Marches was called the March of the Contented. It is possible to argue that Nashi may seek to appropriate such nationalistic rhetoric in order to channel patriotic and militant sentiment in a pro-regime fashion and ultimately to draw young people away from xenophobic and other hate-based groups. However, a more cynical approach would be that Nashi, with Kremlin support, is happy to attract and promote nationalism as long as it is expressed in a pro-regime fashion. In this way, Nashi’s strategy is a means for the Kremlin of embracing Russian patriotism and nationalism in its own ranks in order to reduce the likelihood of nationalism becoming a force capable of uniting Russia’s youth in a subversive manner. Either way, Nashi’s explicit adoption of an ‘anti-fascist’ stance is used as a front to justify moves by pro-regime forces to secure their own political dominance.

### [Incorporation into Party Politics? \(2007-8\)](#)

With the completion of the elections to the State Duma in December 2007 and the passing of the period of intense campaigning and rivalry between the opposition and pro-regime forces there seemed to be an opportunity for Nashi and the Young Guard to retire from street politics and for its more prominent members to graduate to the formal political arena and to the world of party politics.<sup>207</sup> Both Nashi and the Young Guard supported the progression of its

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<sup>207</sup> The term ‘party politics’ is used here as a spatial and behavioural concept to refer to the structure and rules associated with inclusion in the formal political arena as distinguished from the informal and relatively unrestrained politics of the street.

members into positions of political power, having promoted efforts to increase the proportion of young people in political office (discussed in Part 2), and thus both ostensibly viewed entry into the formal political arena as desirable. During this period, Nashi and the Young Guard initiated changes (discussed previously in this thesis), which might be described as an attempt to rebrand themselves and which have a bearing on the democratic credentials of the youth movements in terms of their strategies and the methods they employ: Nashi reorganised itself structurally and the Young Guard issued a new manifesto. These changes represent a response by the youth movements' leaders to the potential decline of state support in the changing socio-political environment. Consequently, their impact on the developmental democratic effects of participation is attributed to the agency of youth movement leaders and the socio-political environment as much as to state-sponsorship.

#### *A more constructive Nashi?*

Nashi's 2008 reorganisation has been referred to at different points in this thesis for its strategic design to position the movement so as to continue to be a useful tool for the Kremlin beyond the completion of the 2007–2008 electoral cycle as well as for its impact on the development of 'social capital' and on the emergence of some degree of autonomy from the state for Nashi activists. Yet, the youth movement's reorganisation holds further significance pertaining to this analysis of Nashi's methods, because it represents a decision on the part of Nashi's leadership to attempt to move away from the contentious street politics of old with its sheer physicality and tactics of intimidation and to embrace the formal political arena and the associated adoption of a more consensual approach along with an agreement to play by the rules (written or unwritten).

Firstly, Nashi's restructuring signified the youth movement's decentralisation.<sup>208</sup> This was a deliberate decision on the part of Nashi leaders to not only prevent the youth movement from being over-organised by the state, but also to prepare it to carry out a different role in the post-electoral environment. Prior to the movement's restructuring in 2008, Nashi was a highly centralised force geared to the rapid mobilisation of masses of young people. The youth movement's activities were coordinated from Moscow and its commissars recruited bands of sympathetic young people from university campuses, sports clubs and other youth venues to be bussed to the capital to participate in Nashi's mass actions. Directly answerable to the centre as well as often dependent on funding from the youth movement to support their education, Nashi commissars in the regions effectively took orders from the centre and mobilised their troops accordingly to support the movement's latest campaign. Nashi's reconfiguration drastically scaled back the role of the central leadership, facilitating local initiative and stimulating micro-level activity. That is not to say that Nashi is no longer capable of organising mass rallies, as the gathering of 65,000 young people in honour of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War in May 2010 attests to. Moreover, it is not the intention of this author to imply that the motivations of Nashi's leadership in driving the movement's decentralisation process are necessarily honourable or based on a desire for greater democracy. After all, as noted previously, by undergoing a process of decentralisation Nashi sought to capitalise on the emergence of activists' political engagement to make it more difficult for the Kremlin to clamp down on the youth movement, but equally Nashi remodelled itself around new projects derived largely from state priorities rather than from consultation with members. Nevertheless, regardless of the motivations behind this, the positive democratic *outcomes* of decentralisation and greater bottom-up participation remain

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<sup>208</sup> The significance of the decentralisation drive that formed part of Nashi's reorganisation for the autonomy of Nashi activists as well as its implications for the movement's relationship with the state and ultimately its future sustainability has been discussed previously in Chapters 6 and 3 respectively.

and these are ultimately attributed to the decisions of Nashi leaders taken within the context of the confines of state-sponsorship and the restrictive political environment that exists in Russia as well as the reality of activists' emerging political engagement.

Secondly, although the movement's official manifesto did not change, Nashi's new emphasis on modernisation, enterprise and innovation indicated a far less combative approach. Nashi now sought to support the government's plans for modernisation in a constructive manner through promoting the development of innovative new business ideas. In this way, Borovikov's announcement of the movement's reorganisation in January 2008 marked the beginning of a period in which Nashi would seek to diversify its activities and seemed set to leave behind its former destructive practices. Nashi commissar, Maria Drokova, sums up this shift from a combative strategy to a constructive approach in her assessment of the youth movement's changing purpose: "At the beginning Nashi's sole task was to *prevent* an 'Orange Revolution' [...] Now in Russia it is imperative to *create* something new."<sup>209</sup> While Nashi's 2007 summer camp was infamous for its hard-line political ideology and ruthless degradation of the opposition, one year later the primary focus of Seliger 2008 was on finding sponsors to support the development of youth enterprise initiatives. Although Nashi's new focus on innovation and modernisation following its reorganisation is aligned with the Kremlin's own priorities in the post-election period and thus represents a blatant attempt by the youth movement to retain state support, this shift in emphasis was instigated by the youth movement itself in response to the changing socio-political environment.

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<sup>209</sup> Author's interview with Maria Drokova, Lake Seliger, 24 July 2008 – emphasis added.

### *A more conformist Young Guard?*

At its third congress in summer 2008 the Young Guard passed a new manifesto emphasising its proximity to the party of power, United Russia, and positioning the youth movement firmly in the field of party politics rather than street politics:

The Young Guard **together with United Russia** has triumphed in the parliamentary elections of 2007 – among the elected deputies of the State Duma now there are numerous young people [...] **We are the young supporters of United Russia** and so the party's debate on modernising the country and Russia's political future is our task too.<sup>210</sup>

In terms of its democratic effects, at first glance, the Young Guard's new emphasis on publicly asserting its relation to the formal political arena and distancing itself further from Nashi's aggressive street politics (which has been commonly associated with all state-sponsored pro-regime youth movements in contemporary Russia) is less of a change than Nashi's re-organisation. After all, the Young Guard's new manifesto did not alter the structure of the youth movement or diversify its activities by setting out new goals as Nashi's reorganisation did. Instead, the revised manifesto emphasised the ongoing pursuit of its goals by working with United Russia. However, the significance here rests on what the Young Guard omitted during its revision and what this signifies for the democratic implications of the youth movement's new-found desire to acknowledge its status as youth branch of United Russia.

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<sup>210</sup> Young Guard, 2008, *'Manifest Molodoi Gvardii Edinoi Rossii 2008*, available at [www.molgvardia.ru/convention/manifest](http://www.molgvardia.ru/convention/manifest), last accessed 13 September 2010 – emphasis added

As noted previously in Chapter 2, in contrast to its original manifesto, the Young Guard's revised manifesto dropped all criticism of the existing elite and the older generation of politicians. While this may simply indicate that the youth movement's fervent criticism of the existing polity in its original manifesto was a ploy to draw disillusioned young Russians away from potentially subversive anti-regime groups, it seems to also suggest the Young Guard's realisation of the need to ingratiate itself with United Russia in order to secure its support in the post-election environment and its realisation that entry into the formal political arena requires a certain degree of conformism. This is particularly interesting when it is considered that Nashi's 2008 reorganisation represented a positive democratic outcome in replacing the contentious politics of old with a far more constructive approach: Here the Young Guard's adjustment to the post-electoral environment represents a negative democratic effect because of its replacement of contention (to whatever degree) with utter conformity. While Nashi's reconfiguration is notable for its apparent move away from 'street politics' and the associated tactics of intimidation and aggression, the Young Guard's embrace of party politics is notable for its acceptance of the status-quo. Where the significance of the Young Guard's revised manifesto echoes that of Nashi's reorganisation is in its reinforcement of the significance of agency, in addition to having state sponsorship, for determining the developmental democratic effects of participation. The conformist approach evident in the Young Guard's revised manifesto is the product of the youth movement's decision that the best course of action to ensure its success in the post-electoral environment would be to ally itself more closely with United Russia. Again, this change in strategy recognises the importance of maintaining state support and operating within the constraints of the repressive socio-political environment in Russia, but nevertheless represents a decision taken by the youth movement itself.

### Law and order? (2009-10)

In recent times there have been several incidents which indicate that, despite Nashi's apparent reorientation towards more constructive activities and desire to present itself as a reliable political force suitable for entry into the formal political arena, on occasion the youth movement has reverted to the aggressive street politics practised in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle. The most notable incident has been the Podrabinek affair in October 2009, which saw the return of Nashi using physical intimidation to stifle alternative views by targeting 'unpatriotic' individuals. This time the target of the campaign was Moscow-based journalist and human rights activist Aleksandr Podrabinek - author of a controversial article published online on *Ezhednevnyi Zhurnal* (Daily Journal), which criticised what it saw as the Russian authorities' systematic and enforced glorification of the Soviet period. Nashi viewed Podrabinek's article as offensive to war veterans and the youth movement's ensuing campaign against the journalist was condemned by human rights watchdogs for amounting to harassment and physical intimidation. This was accompanied by a series of violent street fighting and attacks between rival youth organisations (Nashi and the National Bolshevik Party allegedly being the main protagonists) culminating in an arson attack on Nashi's Moscow headquarters in the early hours of November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009.

Thus, despite taking the opportunity to gain influence in the formal political arena as a reward for its loyalty to the incumbent regime in 2007-8, Nashi has not eschewed its former aggressive street politics methods altogether. Yet, this should not be perceived as indicative of the movement's rejection of the formal political arena or of its failure in this respect, but rather as further evidence that Nashi's strength and relative influence originates from its

power on the streets. Nashi's function has been and continues to be to engage in activities that United Russia and even the Young Guard are unable to owing to the constraints of operating within the formal political arena. For this reason, Nashi has deliberately sought to keep one foot in 'street politics' while dipping its other in the world of 'party politics' in order to maximise its advantage and corresponding influence in both spheres. In contrast to the movement's original tactics of intimidation in the period 2005-7, Nashi's ongoing use of such methods is attributable to the agency of Nashi leaders themselves, seeking to attract attention and assert the movement's significance in the post-electoral environment, rather than to the Kremlin's afore-mentioned desire for a powerful presence on the streets following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

Significantly, Nashi's latest controversial antics have publicly failed to receive the full support of the authorities. In March 2009 Mark Siryk's solitary protest outside the Estonian embassy in Moscow was stopped by police and Siryk arrested (Siryk is the Estonian commissar for Nashi's 'Stal' program and was noted above for his involvement in the Bronze Nights riots in Tallinn in April 2007). The Kremlin's own Human Rights Council issued a statement criticising Nashi's campaign against Podrabinek and accusing the movement of violating four articles of the Russian constitution. Moreover, despite calls for Ella Pamfilova to be dismissed from her post as chair of the Council on Human Rights, Medvedev refused to sack Pamfilova on the basis of the council's investigation into the legality of Nashi's activities. Ultimately, however, it is difficult to judge the significance or indeed sincerity of Medvedev's attempts to publicly distance himself from Nashi. In both of the cases referred to here where the Kremlin has not openly supported Nashi's actions and has made a show of seeking to quell the youth movement's excesses, this might be explained by Medvedev's possible desire to avoid reigniting previous diplomatic tensions with Estonia or with Western

European countries. Nonetheless, whether in response to Medvedev's signals or simply in recognition of changes in the political environment in Russia post-2008, Nashi has begun to adopt a new strategy which seeks to move away from the informality if not the brutality of street politics by seeking to legitimise the movement's activities through formal political and legal accreditation. It is in this light that Nashi's latest strategy of taking to the courts should be seen – as an attempt by the youth movement to provide some sense of legitimacy and formality to what remains a mission to intimidate the opposition and to control the streets.

### *Taking to the courts*

Although Nashi previously sued the newspaper *Kommersant* in 2006 for publishing inaccurate information about the youth movement, the use of litigation against unsympathetic media outlets only became Nashi's preferred modus operandi in 2009. Since 2009 Nashi has been using the legal system and the threat of litigation as a thinly-veiled means of continuing to stifle alternative views and to intimidate the opposition behind a facade of righteousness and the letter of the law. On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009 Nashi won its case against *Gazeta.ru* for allegations published on its website that Nashi activists were involved in a physical assault on the prominent liberal opposition leader Boris Nemtsov that took place in Sochi on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009. The editors of *Gazeta.ru* were ordered to publish a retraction of their statement and pay the youth movement 20,000 roubles compensation. Yet, the real turning point came in the aftermath of the Podrabinek affair when, for the first time, Nashi filed lawsuits against Western as well as Russian media outlets for their coverage of the youth movement's campaign against the journalist. In late October 2009, amidst a blizzard of legal action taken by the youth movement relating to the Podrabinek affair, Nashi launched libel suits against 4

international newspapers including France's *Le Monde* and the U.K.'s *Independent* for their apparent misrepresentation of the youth movement and its campaign against the journalist. While the youth movement's campaign of intimidation against Podrabinek was reminiscent of its actions in its earlier years, the legal foray that followed was more significant in appearing to mark the emergence of a new strategy by the pro-Kremlin youth movement and one which raises many questions as to the values and norms promoted by Nashi as well as the extent of the youth movement's influence and political sway. As a result of Nashi's legal action, in January 2010, Podrabinek was ordered by the courts to make an official apology to veterans offended by his article. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010, 'Russian Newsweek' was ordered to pay \$5000 compensation to Nashi for tarnishing the movement's reputation and to retract their claims that the youth movement had hounded Podrabinek. Moreover, in a groundbreaking ruling, in April 2010, the Russian courts ordered the French *Le Journal du Dimanche* to retract its previous comments about Nashi and to pay the youth movement 250,000 roubles as compensation for printing defamatory information about the youth movement. Britain's *Independent* newspaper has settled out of court with Nashi and published a retraction of its article likening Nashi to the Hitler Youth. Damages of 500,000 roubles (about £10,500) are still being sought from France's *Le Monde* and Germany's *Frankfurter Rundschau* for 'insults to [Nashi's] dignity and honour'. Nashi's recent recourse to litigation is thus an extension of its previous attempts to silence its critics, but one which seeks the facade of going through the proper channels in accordance with the law.

*All-Russia Voluntary Militia* <sup>211</sup>

In a rather different and perhaps more ambitious attempt to provide a semblance of legitimacy to the tactics of intimidation and persecution of the opposition practised by the youth movement, at Nashi's 2009 summer camp DMD and representatives of other groups linked to law enforcement held the inaugural conference of the new 'All-Russia Association of Volunteers'.<sup>212</sup> The creation of this new organisation marked the expansion of Nashi's youth militia (noted above) and represented a bid to legalise the youth militia and enable it to work in an official capacity alongside the police in the prevention of crime. Were this to be achieved, then the impunity enjoyed by Nashi patrols policing the streets in Moscow in the run up to the December 2007 parliamentary elections would effectively be routinised indefinitely across the Russian Federation. At the end of 2009 the 'All-Russia Association of Volunteers' claimed to have established branches in more than 45 of Russia's regions – this represents more than half of Russia's regions and is the requirement imposed by the 'Law on Public Associations' for an organisation to be allowed to call itself an 'All-Russia' association and to be able to work with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Ultimately, the 'All-Russia Association of Volunteers' aims to have 100,000 volunteers patrolling the streets and working with the community to prevent crime by 2012. As far as legalising the youth militia, Nashi has been pushing for the adoption of a bill on 'the participation of citizens in ensuring the rule of law', which was first proposed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs back in 2007 and which would give Nashi activists belonging to the new 'All-Russia Association of Volunteers' the

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<sup>211</sup> For further details of the voluntary youth militia group see the organisation's website available at <http://druzhina.su/>.

<sup>212</sup> On the occasion of the agreement to set up the new organisation on 3 August 2009, Vasily Yakemenko (founder of Nashi, head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs and reported to be the head of the new association of volunteers) declared that RosMolodezh would supply funding to launch the organisation as well as provide administrative support in the regions (Nashi, *RosMolodezh podderzhit' DMD*, 3 August 2009, available at <http://www.nashi.su/news/27124>, last accessed 20 September 2010).

right to stop members of the public, inspect vehicles, and generally carry out duties associated with the prevention of crime in the presence of a police officer as well as to carry non-lethal weapons to be used in self-defence.<sup>213</sup> Following the launch of the new all-Russia youth militia at Seliger 2009, United Russia promised to look at the law, but as of summer 2010 there is still no sign that the law has been officially been submitted to the State Duma for consideration. Though the apparent lack of success in progressing the Duma's consideration of the proposed bill might indicate that this is a step too far for Nashi and is unlikely to be approved by the parliament, the fact that Nashi is pursuing this legislation demonstrates Nashi's new-found desire to be seen to be on the side of law and order whilst continuing to pursue a form of vigilante justice to groups and individuals whose only 'crime' was to challenge or offend the incumbent Russian regime.

It is difficult to say whether these latest strategies of taking to the courts and seeking official legitimisation for its actions are indicative of Nashi's show of strength and demonstration of the extent of its backing from the authorities, or whether they represent the youth movement's efforts to regain a sense of legitimacy and security in the increasing absence of active state support. The latter seems more likely.

## Conclusion

Chapter 7's investigation of the democratic credentials of Nashi and the Young Guard, in terms of the youth movements' ethos and contribution to the development of civic virtues, has uncovered significant differences between the methods employed by the two youth

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<sup>213</sup> Details of the proposed bill on are available on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (<http://www.mvd.ru/news/12234/>). A commentary on the proposed bill is available from 'Rossiiskaya Gazeta' (<http://www.rg.ru/2009/01/20/drujiny.html>).

movements as well as variance over time. This alone supports the conclusion that state-sponsorship for the development of Nashi and the Young Guard is not the only, and indeed at times not the primary, factor in determining the youth movements' developmental democratic effects. The three distinct chronological phases in the strategies employed by Nashi and the Young Guard between 2005 and 2010, discussed in this chapter, demonstrate the importance of the changing socio-political environment in shaping the impact of state sponsorship on the youth movements' behaviour and the civic virtues thereof. As far as the variation in methods between the two state-sponsored youth movements is concerned, while this may have originally (in 2005) resulted from differences in the Kremlin's designs for each of the youth movements, in the more recent period (since 2007) this variation is due largely to decisions taken by the youth movements' leaders based on their reckoning of the best way to secure ongoing state-sponsorship in the future and to adapt to lesser Kremlin attention and support in the post-electoral environment.

However, unlike the investigation of youth engagement and the significance of participation for activists themselves in the previous chapter, this chapter's analysis of Nashi and the Young Guard's methods does *not* find that the impact of state sponsorship is lessened with regard to the developmental democratic effects of participation in this case. While supporting the conclusion that the changing socio-political environment in Russia following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the agency of youth leaders and activists themselves have impacted upon the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard (in both a positive and negative manner), this chapter recognises the fundamental role of the Kremlin in shaping the youth movements' initial development and behaviour and the subsequent precedent that this set for the movements' future path. Although the state cannot dictate Nashi or the Young Guard's behaviour, as with the youth movement's impact on opportunities for contestation

discussed in Chapter 3, the Kremlin is ultimately able to ensure that Nashi and the Young Guard's behaviour meets its approval under threat of withdrawing its support for the youth movements and curtailing their activities. This is a powerful incentive for Nashi and the Young Guard to adhere to the Kremlin's wishes and to try to favourably influence the Kremlin's attitude towards them as they see fit.

## OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL DEMOCRATIC EFFECTS OF NASHI AND THE YOUNG GUARD

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Investigation of the impact of state sponsorship on the developmental democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard in Part 3 has confirmed the findings from Parts 1 and 2 and has further made its own contribution to this thesis by identifying the *limits* of state control over the democratic effects of participation. In particular, Part 3 has noted the inability of the state to control the value of participation for those involved as well as the distinction between the growing autonomy of Nashi activists and the increasing conformity of the Young Guard.

In the introduction to Part 3 of this thesis it was suggested that the developmental democratic effects of state-sponsored participation are not the centre of controversy for scholars precisely because the impact of state support may be less important in this field than other factors, such as the decisions and actions taken by the youth movements and activists themselves. Upon reflection, investigation of the developmental democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard has found that the notion of the relative inability of the state to determine the developmental democratic effects of participation compared to the public sphere or institutional democratic effects only holds for those developmental effects that are concerned with *individual* autonomy, as compared to the focus on the *collective* that is characteristic of the public sphere and institutional democratic effects of participation.<sup>214</sup> While the Kremlin was unable to prevent Nashi activists from becoming politically engaged or the knock-on effect of this on Nashi activists gaining a

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<sup>214</sup> Warren notes how the public sphere and the institutional democratic effects of participation tend to focus on the 'collective' ("developing public opinion and forming collective judgments" and being able to influence the "institutions through which collective decisions are made and collective actions are organised" respectively – Warren, 2001, p.82), while the developmental democratic effects focus more on 'individual disposition' (Warren, 2001, p.91).

degree of autonomy from the state in Chapter 6 (where the emphasis was on the value attached to participation by activists personally and on an individual basis), it was able to influence the behaviour and methods employed by Nashi in Chapter 7's discussion of the youth movement's mass actions.

Nonetheless, this discovery of the limits of state control is highly significant given that, up until Part 3, the main conclusion of this study was that the impact of state-sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation is affected by the socio-political environment and the agency of youth movement leaders. Any positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard noted in Parts 1 and 2 of this thesis were examples of the state having a vested interest in supporting such outcomes. For example, Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to gain publicity in Part 1 was the direct result of the state's desire to stimulate the development of pro-regime youth movements in order to sideline opposition efforts to attract youth in the run up to the 2007-8 electoral cycle. Although the socio-political environment and the actions of youth movement leaders influenced the Kremlin's interests, the final decision lay with the state and thus it was able to exercise a large degree of control over the public sphere democratic effects of participation. Similarly, in Part 2, the elevation of Nashi and Young Guard leaders to political office at a federal level was directly attributable to the Kremlin's desire to perpetuate its use of a patronage strategy to reward its most loyal young supporters, although in this instance the youth movements' leaders had little opportunity to exert any influence over the state's actions with regard to the institutional democratic effects of participation. In contrast, the impotence of the state to prevent Nashi or Young Guard activists from becoming politically engaged, noted in Part 3, supports the conclusion that the state is unable to determine the significance of participation for those involved and is thereby unable to fully control the democratic effects

of participation on a personal or individual level. These represent democratic effects that are beyond state control and thus emphatically affirm the folly of dismissing the democratic effects of participation on the sole basis of state involvement.

Furthermore, although differences in the nature of participation between Nashi and the Young Guard and also in the relationship between each of the youth movements and the state have been noted at various points over the course of this study, the extent of the limitations imposed on the Young Guard as a result of having state-sponsorship compared to Nashi has only become clear in Part 3. In Chapter 2 it was suggested that the Young Guard was unable to adopt some of the more controversial tactics used by Nashi to attract media attention in the post-electoral environment, but also that it had no need to do so because of the security and stability afforded to it as youth branch of the 'party of power'. However, in Chapters 6 and 7 it became apparent that the Young Guard has been unable to assert itself in its relations with the state in the same way as Nashi has. While Nashi activists have demonstrated an emerging degree of autonomy from the state and are able to develop regional and local initiatives based around their own interests and concerns, the Young Guard has aligned itself more closely with the United Russia party and routinely subordinates the interests of its members to those of the party. A key example of this was the Radov incident when, being unable to acknowledge that United Russia had let them down by failing to implement its promised youth quota, the Young Guard lost one of its more prominent members. The Young Guard's position as youth branch of United Russia no longer seems adequate explanation for this distinction between itself and Nashi: Instead, the precedent set by 'Youth Unity' (United Russia's former youth wing) might offer a further explanation for the restrictions imposed on the Young Guard's behaviour. While Nashi was a new youth development, which only came in to existence as a result of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and was not bound to any pre-existing structures,

methods or ideas, the Young Guard represented a revamp of an existing Kremlin creation. This meant that the dynamics between the Young Guard and the Kremlin were based on the foundations laid by the former youth branch of United Russia and thus were not as open to influence at this favourable juncture in Russian youth politics following the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine. In contrast, Nashi’s relationship with the Kremlin at the time of its creation in 2005 was as yet undetermined and the youth movement has developed beyond the Kremlin’s expectations or desires.

Speaking in 2008, United Russia deputy, Sergei Markov, commented on the ‘danger posed by an unsupervised Nashi’: “They will survive, because the Kremlin understands very well that if you give people a political education and then abandon them, they will move on to a different political groups, including the radical opposition.”<sup>215</sup> This idea of Nashi being some kind of Frankenstein’s monster evokes images of the youth movement being physically out of control, particularly when the continuation of its aggressive tactics of intimidation, noted in Chapter 7, is considered. However, the reality of comments about the ‘dangers of an unsupervised Nashi’ refers predominantly to the emergence of activists’ political engagement and growing autonomy from the state. While the state can control Nashi’s behaviour *en masse* and could shut the youth movement down, it has been unable to prevent participants’ from becoming politically engaged and could not determine the significance of participation for those involved even if it did shut down the youth movement.

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<sup>215</sup> Matt Siegel, ‘Nashi’s summer camp tries a new message’, *Moscow Times* (21 July 2008) available at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/nashi-summer-camp-tries-a-new-message/369047.html>, last accessed 24 March 2011.

## CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSIONS

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Having begun this thesis by justifying the need for research into the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard and setting out the starting point for this investigation, this conclusion reflects upon the finished research project and considers its value and wider significance as well as draws together its main findings.

In Chapter 1, it was emphasised that this thesis sought to establish the relative impact of state support on the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard, and was *not* dependent on uncovering *positive* democratic effects in order to denounce the practice of dismissing state-sponsored participation from academic scrutiny.<sup>216</sup> Having completed my research into the youth movements, it is fair to say that many aspects of existing negative portrayals of Nashi and the Young Guard *are* accurate. Moreover, this thesis should by no means be perceived as an attempt to contend that Nashi and the Young Guard have had a positive democratic impact overall or as being in favour of Kremlin-sponsorship for youth participation. Although there are *some* positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard (most notably the development of social capital and the potential for young people to become politically engaged), there are *many more* examples of the *negative* impact of state support on the youth movements' democratic effects, such as the movements' dominance at the expense of alternative groups,

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<sup>216</sup> As set out in Chapter 1, the term 'democratic effects' has been used in this study to refer to the youth movements' impact on democracy, of which there may be both positive and/or negative democratic effects. The framework used to assess the democratic effects of participation in this study was borrowed from Warren's categorisation of the potential democratic effects of association into 3 broad areas – public sphere, institutional and developmental (Warren 2001).

state restrictions on the development of a public agenda, and the sanctioned thuggery of Nashi towards political opponents.

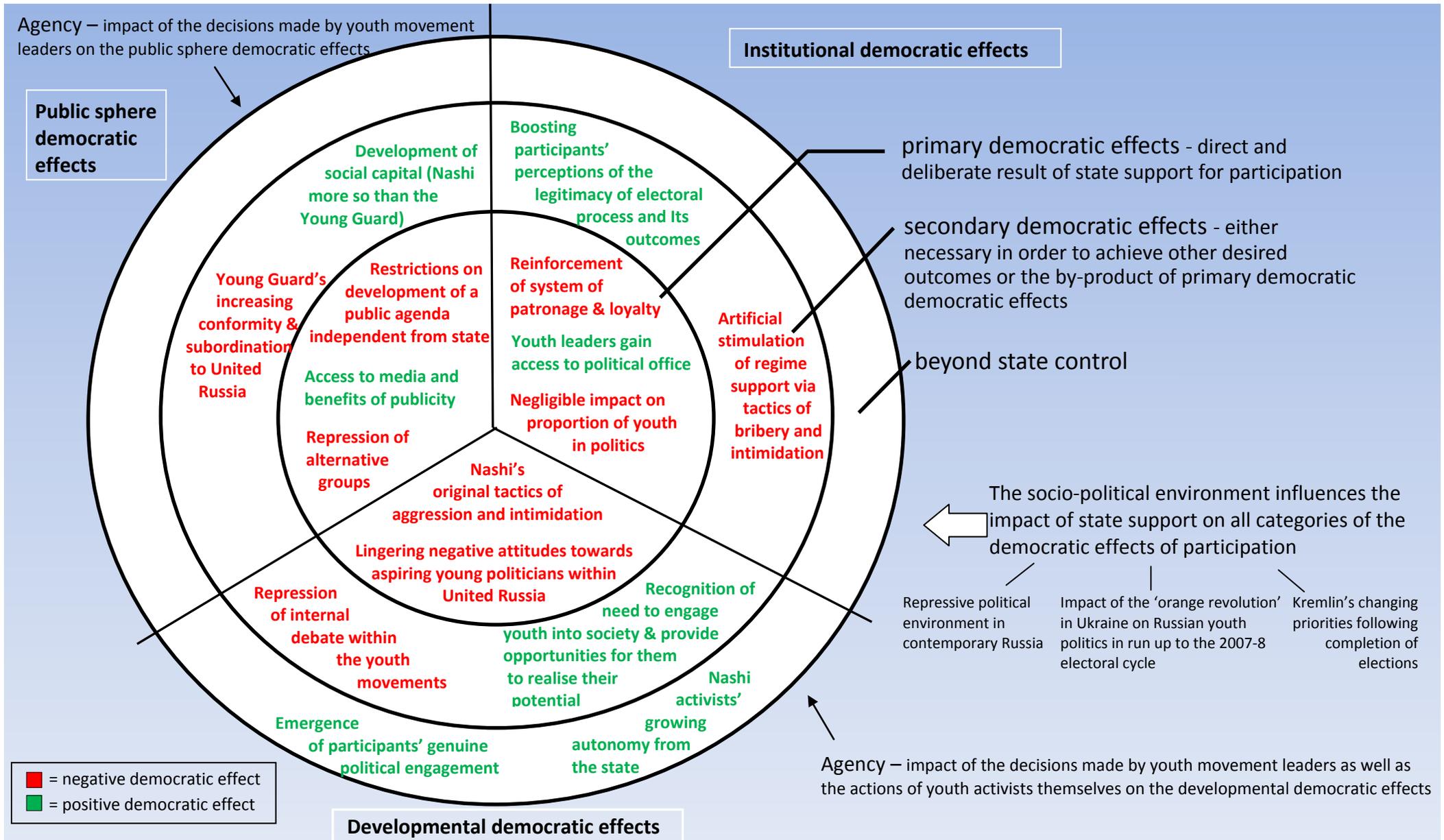
Nonetheless, when I embarked upon my research into Nashi and the Young Guard I instinctively began to look for positive examples out of a desire to more forcefully counter the noted bias against investigating these Kremlin-sponsored movements among the literature on youth participation in Russia. Yet, as the research progressed, it became increasingly evident that what was more compelling than any positive democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard was the nature and variance of the relationship between each of these youth movements and the state. Not only was the initial impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation different with regard to Nashi compared to the Young Guard in some areas, but in 2008 the youth movements each adopted different survival strategies for the post-electoral environment, which saw their corresponding relations with the Kremlin dramatically diverge: Nashi asserted its authority while the Young Guard became more subservient. As such, the primary value of this research is not only that it provides a unique in-depth understanding of these state-sponsored youth movements and their relationship with the Kremlin (hitherto overlooked by Western academic literature), but also that it documents and analyses the dynamics between Nashi and the Kremlin over a very interesting period following the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle. At this time, there was some uncertainty as to the youth movement's future and Nashi leaders responded by reorganising the movement with far reaching implications for its potential democratic effects.

Rather than reiterate the dominant democratic effects (both positive and negative) of Nashi and the Young Guard discovered during this course of this study, the emphasis is placed instead on the conclusions that they have supported throughout this thesis, the two central arguments of which are as follows:

- The potential democratic effects of state-sponsored participation should not be disregarded solely on the basis of the state's involvement. Whether participation is state-sponsored or NGO-led, it is unrealistic to imagine that any architect of a participatory initiative is able to fully control the outcomes or significance of participation. Other factors have influenced the impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, in particular, the socio-political environment and the agency of youth leaders and activists' themselves.
- While state sponsorship imposes certain constraints on participation, particularly in terms of restricting the development of a public agenda independent from the state, its impact is not necessarily entirely negative. State-sponsorship may support some positive democratic effects of participation and has done so in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard.

The relative impact of state-sponsorship on the dominant democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard is presented graphically below. It is not intended to be a general framework of the impact of state support on the democratic effects of participation, but rather a visual summary of the main findings of this investigation into Nashi and the Young Guard.

Figure 12 - Conceptualisation of the relative impact of state support on the democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard



In addition to the *primary* democratic effects of Nashi and the Young Guard, which were the direct and deliberate result of state support for the youth movements, this thesis has also identified *secondary* democratic effects of participation, some of which were the result of the strategies employed by the youth movements in 2008 in anticipation of the different political climate and shift in Kremlin priorities following the completion of the 2007-8 electoral cycle – namely, the Young Guard’s revision of its manifesto and Nashi’s reorganisation, which have been discussed at length at various points in this thesis. In addition, the propensity for Nashi and Young Guard members to become politically engaged regardless of the state’s intentions demonstrates the inability of the state to fully control the outcomes of participation, although it is true that state support for the youth movements enabled youth political engagement regardless of whether this was the Kremlin’s primary intention or desire. The emergence of Nashi’s activists’ growing autonomy from the state, arguably the most contentious finding of this thesis, further illustrates the limits of state influence and also indicates the dynamic relationship between Nashi and the Kremlin.

At times in this thesis, especially chapters 3, 6 and 7, I have focused more on Nashi and used the Young Guard instead as a point of comparison. This is, firstly, because a number of the democratic effects of participation discussed (both negative and positive) were stronger for Nashi than for the Young Guard. For example, Nashi has employed a much more aggressive and far-reaching approach towards intimidating the opposition than the Young Guard, but has equally made a more significant contribution to the development of social capital by building networks of reciprocity among young participants. Secondly, it is because, during the course of this research, the dynamics of the relationship between Nashi and the Kremlin have developed in a more interesting manner than for the Young Guard, which has followed a more predictable path of increased conformism with the passing of 2007-8

electoral cycle. While Nashi is by no means impervious to the influence of the Kremlin and remains vulnerable to the potential for Kremlin disapproval and castigatory action to shut down the movement, it has developed a certain degree of ownership over the democratic outcomes of participation in the sense that decisions made by its leaders have influenced the course of the movement's development beyond that dictated solely by the state's agenda. Nashi has become more than just a vehicle for the Kremlin to mobilise youth in support of the incumbent regime. Many Nashi members are active participants, pushing for greater involvement in politics (beyond that being asked of them in order to secure the incumbent regime) or else seeking to shape the development of youth projects in their region and tackle social issues of concern to them in their local region. Furthermore, in a way that has not been possible for Young Guard members, Nashi activists have gained a degree of autonomy from the state. Enabled by the emergence of activists' political engagement, measures taken by Nashi leaders to reorganise the movement with the aim of securing its future have contributed to a discernible shift in the balance of power away from both the state and Nashi leaders in favour of Nashi activists. Having delegated oversight of the movement's development in the regions to federal project coordinators and abolished almost all regional branches from which Nashi commissars previously monitored activists at close quarters, much of Nashi's activity now is conducted at the micro-level with limited coordination by federal Nashi staff beyond securing funding and development support. Freed from direct oversight, Nashi activists are thus increasingly able to shape the course of the movement's development and to set the agenda for regional activity, albeit always within certain limits set by the Kremlin. The fact that the state could, and would, shut down Nashi or the Young Guard if it so wished does not equate to state control over the nature and direction of the youth movements' development. Although the Kremlin is entirely capable of curtailing Nashi's activities and influence, it does

not have the power to ensure that the youth movement develops in the way that it wants it to. In fact, state action to clamp-down on the Village Scout Movement in Thailand in 1976 following rising conflict between movement activists and local government officials (noted in Chapter 1) demonstrated the ultimate inability of the Thai state to dictate the outcomes of participation according to its own intentions.<sup>217</sup>

In terms of the broader significance of this study and what it tells us about the nature of the Russian political system, the findings of this thesis support the idea that the Kremlin is not necessarily as powerful as depictions of Putin's iron fist would have us believe. In chapter 1 it was argued that the belief that state-sponsored participatory initiatives have an inherently negative democratic effect was in part founded on overblown assessments of the power of the state. Certainly, perceptions of the omnipotent state are rife with regard to Russia. Moreover, worsening assessments of the democratic credentials of the Russian regime increase fear of the 'active state' in civil society in the Russian context in particular. The fact that the Kremlin has been unable to fully control the outcomes and significance of participation in the case of Nashi, and to a lesser extent the Young Guard, calls into question such perceptions of the omnipotent state. That Nashi activists, mobilised on the Kremlin's terms in order to secure the incumbent regime, have become increasingly able to shape the movement's development in their region away from direct oversight by the Kremlin or Nashi leaders belies existing depictions of the relationship between the Russian state and society. The ability of any state to set the terms of participation or shape its future course is limited by socio-cultural norms and power structures as well as the political environment and participants' own agendas. The idea

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<sup>217</sup> In the period before it was shut down by the state, the Village Scout Movement had begun to take on its own dynamic. The movement had begun to be used as a "political base for various politicians seeking national-level positions of power in the capital and increasingly caused political complications for the state rather than offering solutions" (Bowie, 2005, p. 56). Therefore, although the Thai state played a key role in both establishing and halting the activity of the Village Scout Movement, it could not control the direction of the movement's development.

of Nashi as some kind of ‘Frankenstein’s monster’ – created, unleashed, and ultimately representing a dangerous element for its creator – provides a powerful image of the limits of Kremlin control over the youth movement.

At the beginning of this thesis it was stressed that the case-studies used here would generally be considered to be the epitome of the negative democratic effects of state-sponsored participation owing to the repressive nature of the Russian regime. Yet, while this remains true, it does not necessarily imply that any positive democratic effects of Nashi or the Young Guard uncovered here represent a greater challenge to prevalent perceptions of the negative impact of state sponsorship than any such positive effects of state-sponsored citizen consultative bodies in, for instance, the Netherlands would (as was suggested previously in the introduction to Part 1). At times, the *relative* positive democratic effects of state-sponsored participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard, such as the youth movements’ ability to gain publicity or their contribution to the development of social capital, were more significant precisely because of the repressive socio-political environment that exists in contemporary Russia. Thus, using state-sponsored youth participation *in Russia* as the case study for this thesis unexpectedly turned out to make the discovery of the relative positive impact of state-sponsorship on the democratic effects of participation in some areas more likely! For example, in the absence of alternative means of access to the mass media, the logic of rejecting state support on the basis that this prevents the expression of public interests is less persuasive. Nashi and the Young Guard’s abilities to communicate their message to the public have not only benefitted from state support but have been entirely dependent on it. The repressive actions of the state towards other groups have boosted the *relative* benefit of state sponsorship for Nashi and the Young Guard.

It cannot be emphasised enough that this study is not an attempt to reject existing commentary on Nashi and the Young Guard or to argue that having state-sponsorship does not impinge upon the youth movements' potential democratic effects. Nashi and the Young Guard *are* dependent on maintaining state support for their survival. Yet, there is much more to these Kremlin-sponsored youth movements than existing portrayals allow. State-sponsorship is not the only factor influencing the democratic effects of participation in the case of Nashi and the Young Guard. Accounts that dismiss these youth movements from academic scrutiny because they are sponsored by the Kremlin are based on facile arguments, which deny the complexity and variety of state-sponsored participation. The central point around which assumptions of the negative impact of state involvement in participation appear to converge is that proximity to the state impedes an organisation's ability to act in the interests of its members. While it is true that state-sponsorship does necessarily denote a dominant top-down influence and the subordination of societal interests to those of the state, this does not preclude the potential for some positive democratic effects where it is in the state's vested interests to support such outcomes, such as Nashi and the Young Guard's ability to gain publicity for their cause or the youth movements' contribution to the development of social capital. Furthermore, the state is unable to control the value attached to participation by activists personally on an individual basis and, consequently, beyond threatening punitive action and the withdrawal of state support, the subsequent development of participatory initiatives and the democratic effects thereof are far more complex than simple top-down control would imply.

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*References to internet sources, interview data and such like are included in footnotes within the main body of the thesis and are not listed here.*

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1- Political engagement in Russia in comparative perspective

**Table 1 - Political actions: Attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations by country (percent by row)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Attend political meeting or rally</i>			N
	Have done	Might do	Would never do	
United States	15.1	54.8	30.2	1216
France	37.5	31.8	30.7	992
Great Britain	16.6	44.8	38.6	998
Russia	15.9	28.5	55.6	1367
Poland	10.2	30.4	59.4	948
All	18.5	37.3	44.2	6068

**Table 2 - Level of personal interest in politics by country (percent by row)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Level of personal interest in politics</i>				N
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	
United States	13.7	45.4	27.0	13.9	1225
Great Britain	11.2	32.9	27.0	28.9	1038
France	9.0	27.9	32.1	31.1	1000
Russia	6.9	32.0	41.0	20.2	1997
Poland	5.1	35.1	35.0	24.7	1262
All	9.0	34.6	33.6	22.8	6253

**Table 3 - Political actions: Attend lawful/peaceful demonstrations by age and country (percent by row)**

		<i>Attend political meeting or rally</i>			N
		Have done	Might do	Would never do	
<i>Country</i>					
United States	<b>youth (15-29 yrs)</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>60.8</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>262</b>
	all ages	15.1	54.8	30.2	1216
France		<b>40.7</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>191</b>
		37.5	31.8	30.7	992
Great Britain		<b>13.1</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>216</b>
		16.6	44.8	38.6	998
Russia		<b>8.2</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>527</b>
		15.9	28.5	55.6	1913
Poland		<b>8.4</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>236</b>
		10.2	30.4	59.4	948
All	<b>youth (15-29 yrs)</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>1433</b>
	all ages	18.5	37.3	44.2	6068

**Table 4 - Level of personal interest in politics by age and country (percent by row)**

		<i>Level of personal interest in politics</i>				N
		Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	
<i>Country</i>						
United States	<b>youth (15-29 yrs)</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>264</b>
	all ages	13.7	45.4	27.0	13.9	1225
France		<b>5.3</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>191</b>
		9.0	27.9	32.1	31.1	1000
Great Britain		<b>7.5</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>228</b>
		11.2	32.9	27.0	28.9	1038
Russia		<b>2.3</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>551</b>
		6.9	32.0	41.0	20.2	1997
Poland		<b>4.8</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>243</b>
		5.1	35.1	35.0	24.7	993
All	<b>youth (15-29 yrs)</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>1478</b>
	all ages	9.0	34.6	33.6	22.8	6253

Source: World Values Survey – online analysis of data from fifth wave of surveys 2005-8, available at <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAalyzeQuestion.jsp>, last accessed 4 March 2011.

## Appendix 2– Electoral Data

**Table 5 – Trends in voting for presidential elections**

	1996 (1 <sup>st</sup> round)	2000	2004	2008
Electorate	108,495,023	109,372,046	108,064,281	107,222,016
Total votes cast	75,587,139	75,070,776	69,504,278	74,746,649
Voter turnout	69.67%	68.64%	64.32%	69.71%
Total valid votes	74,515,019	74,369,773	68,925,431	73,731,116
Number of votes for Yeltsin/Putin/Medvedev	26,665,495	39,740,434	49,563,020	52,530,712
Number of votes against all	1,163,921	1,414,648	2,396,550	n/a

**Table 6 – Trends in voting for State Duma Party Lists**

	1995	1999	2003	2007
Electorate	107,496,558	108,072,348	108,906,249	109,145,517
Total votes cast	69,204,819	66,667,647	60,633,177	69,537,065
Voter turnout	64.38%	61.69%	55.67%	63.71%
Total valid votes	67,884,200	65,370,655	59,684,742	68,777,136
Number of votes for party of power	7,009,291	15,548,707	22,776,294	44,714,241
Number of votes against all	1,918,151	2,198,667	2,851,958	n/a

**Table 7 – Breakdown of voting for State Duma Party Lists in 1995**

Parties gaining over 3% of the vote	Number of list votes	% of list votes	Political allegiance
CPRF	15,432,963	22.3	Opposition
LDPR	7,737,431	11.18	Opposition
Our Home is Russia	7,009,291	10.13	Supporter
Yabloko	4,767,384	6.89	Opposition
Women of Russia	3,188,813	4.61	Supporter
Communists & Working Russia – for the Soviet Union	3,137,406	4.53	Opposition
Congress of Russian communities	2,980,137	4.31	Opposition
Party of workers’ self-government	2,756,954	3.98	Opposition
Democratic Russia’s Choice – United Democrats	2,674,084	3.86	Opposition
Agrarian Party of Russia	2,613,127	3.78	Opposition
Total votes won by supporters = 10,198,104			
Total votes won by opposition = 42,099,486			

**Table 8 – Breakdown of voting for State Duma party lists in 1999**

Parties gaining over 3% of votes	Number of list votes	% of list votes	Political allegiance
CPRF	16,195,569	24.29	Opposition
Medved (Unity)	15,548,707	23.32	Supporter, Party of Power
Fatherland-All Russia	8,886,697	13.33	Opposition
SPS	5,676,982	8.52	Supporter
Zhirinovskiy Bloc	3,989,932	5.98	Supporter
Yabloko	3,955,457	5.93	Opposition
Total votes won by supporters = 25,215,621			
Total votes won by opposition = 29,037,723			

**Table 9 – Breakdown of voting for State Duma party lists in 2003**

Parties gaining over 3% of votes	Number of list votes	% of list votes	Political allegiance
United Russia	22,776,294	37.56	Supporter, Party of Power
CPRF	7,647,820	12.61	Opposition
LDPR	6,944,322	11.45	Supporter
Rodina	5,470,429	9.02	Supporter
Yabloko	2,610,087	4.30	Opposition
SPS	2,408,535	3.97	Opposition
Agrarian Party of Russia	2,205,850	3.63	Supporter
Russian Party of Pensioners and party of Social Justice	1,874,973	3.09	Supporter
Total votes won by supporters = 39,271,868			
Total votes won by opposition = 12,666,442			

**Table 10 – Breakdown of voting for State Duma party lists in 2007**

Parties gaining over 3% of votes	Number of list votes	% of list votes	Political allegiance
United Russia	44,714,241	64.3	Supporter, Party of Power
CPRF	8,046,886	11.6	Opposition
LDPR	5,660,823	8.1	Supporter
A Just Russia	5,383,639	7.7	Supporter
Total votes won by supporters = 55,758,703			
Total votes won by opposition = 8,046,886			

Source for Appendix Two: Collated from data available at Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation, available at <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom> for elections from 2003 onwards, [http://www.cikrf.ru/vib\\_arhiv/president/index.jsp](http://www.cikrf.ru/vib_arhiv/president/index.jsp) for earlier presidential elections, and [http://www.cikrf.ru/vib\\_arhiv/gosduma/index.jsp](http://www.cikrf.ru/vib_arhiv/gosduma/index.jsp) for earlier parliamentary elections, last accessed 24/7/09

### Appendix 3 – Implementation of United Russia’s youth quota since its announcement in April 2006 until April 2010

Regional Legislative Assemblies	Date of election	Method of election	Candidates			Elected deputies			Success rates		Comparison with previous elections				
			Count <35yrs listed	Count all listed	% <35 of all listed	Count <35 elected	Count all elected	% <35 of all elected	% <35 elected of total <35 listed	% all elected of total listed	Date of election	Count all listed	% <35 of all listed	Count all elected	% < 35 of all elected
Republic of Karelia	08/10/2006	mixed	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	25					
Republic of Tiva	08/10/2006	mixed	6	116	5.2	4	55	7.3	66.7	47.4					
Republic of Chuvashia	08/10/2006	mixed	1	22	4.5	1	17	5.9	100	77.3					
Primorskii Krai	08/10/2006	mixed	0	12	0	0	9	0	0	75					
Astrakhan region	08/10/2006	mixed	3	28	10.7	1	18	5.6	33.3	60.7					
Lipetsk region	08/10/2006	mixed	1	28	3.6	1	25	4	100	89.3					
Novgorod region	08/10/2006	mixed	0	13	0	0	9	0	0	69.2					
Sverdlovsk region	08/10/2006	proportional	5	20	25	1	7	5.9	20	35					
Evresiskii autonomous okrug	08/10/2006	mixed	1	7	14.3	0	6	0	0	85.7					
Perm krai	03/12/2006	mixed	1	24	4.2	0	17	0	0	70.8					
Republic of Dagestan	11/03/2007	proportional	19	175	10.9	1	47	2.1	5.3	26.9					
Republic of Komi	11/03/2007	mixed	0	15	0	0	12	0	0	80					
Stavropol Krai	11/03/2007	mixed	3	23	13	2	9	22.2	66.7	39.1					
Vologod region	11/03/2007	mixed	1	17	5.9	1	15	6.7	100	88.2					
Leningrad region	11/03/2007	mixed	1	25	4	1	13	7.7	100	52					
Moscow region	11/03/2007	proportional	9	60	15	2	33	6.1	22.2	55					
Murmansk region	11/03/2007	mixed	0	16	0	0	11	0	0	68.8					
Omsk region	11/03/2007	mixed	0	22	0	0	22	0	0	100					
Orlov region	11/03/2007	mixed	1	13	7.7	0	3	0	0	23.1					
Pskov region	11/03/2007	mixed	1	22	4.5	1	18	5.6	100	81.8					
Samara region	11/03/2007	mixed	2	24	8.3	1	14	7.1	50	58.3					
Tomsk region	11/03/2007	mixed	0	16	0	0	16	0	0	100					

Tyumen region	11/03/2007	mixed	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0					
City of St. Petersburg	11/03/2007	proportional	6	53	11.3	4	24	16.7	66.7	45.3					
Krasnoyarsk Krai	15/04/2007	mixed	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0					
<b>Federal State Duma</b>	<b>02/12/2007</b>	<b>proportional</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>07/12/2003</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>no data</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>no data</b>
Republic of Buryatiya	02/12/2007	mixed	8	50	16	2	24	8.3	25	48	pre 2003				
Republic of Mordovia	02/12/2007	mixed	17	120	14.2	1	22	4.6	5.9	18.3	07/12/2003	24	no data	16	no data
Republic of N. Ossetia-Alania	02/12/2007	mixed	9	37	21.6	4	25	16	44.4	67.6	pre 2003				
Udmurtia Republic	02/12/2007	mixed	18	99	18.2	6	31	19.4	33.3	31.3	pre 2003				
Krasnodar Krai	02/12/2007	mixed	9	36	25	3	26	11.5	33.3	72.2	pre 2003				
Penza region	02/12/2007	mixed	6	30	20	0	10	0	0	33.3	pre 2003				
Saratov region	02/12/2007	mixed	7	33	21.2	2	14	14.3	28.6	42.4	pre 2003				
Smolensk region	02/12/2007	mixed	13	51	25.5	3	15	20	23.1	29.4	pre 2003				
Kamchatka Krai	02/12/2007	mixed	10	54	18.5	0	18	0	0	33.3	pre 2003				
Republic of Bashkortostan	02/03/2008	mixed	6	182	3.3	1	55	1.8	16.7	30.2	pre 2003				
Republic of Ingushetia	02/03/2008	proportional	2	39	5.1	1	20	5	50	51	07/12/2003	6	no data	6	no data
Republic of Kalmikiya	02/03/2008	proportional	9	30	30	4	17	23.5	44.4	56.7	07/12/2003	16	no data	11	no data
Republic of Saha (Yakutiya)	02/03/2008	mixed	6	49	12.2	2	20	10	33.3	40.8	pre 2003				
Altai Krai	02/03/2008	mixed	7	38	18.4	2	18	11.1	28.6	47.4	14/03/2004	29	3.4	10	10
Amursk region	02/03/2008	proportional	11	49	22.5	3	25	12	27.3	51	27/03/2005	18	0	4	0
Ivanovo region	02/03/2008	mixed	3	24	12.5	3	14	21.4	100	58.3	04/12/2005		no data		
Rostov region	02/03/2008	mixed	4	44	9.1	1	20	5	25	45.5	pre 2003				
Sverdlovsk region	02/03/2008	proportional	2	22	9.1	0	10	0	0	45.5	08/10/2006	14	42.9	6	16.7
Ulyanovsk region	02/03/2008	mixed	1	21	4.8	0	10	0	0	47.6	07/12/2003	13	no data	4	no data
Yaroslavl region	02/03/2008	mixed	3	25	12	1	15	6.7	33.3	60	14/03/2004	7	0	3	0
Republic of Chechnya	12/10/2008	proportional	9	61	14.8	2	37	5.4	22.2	60.7	27/11/2005	16	6.3	9	0
Irkutsk region	12/10/2008	mixed	15	42	35.7	6	15	40	40	35.7	10/10/2004	21	no data	9	no data
Kemerovo region	12/10/2008	mixed	5	30	16.7	1	17	5.9	20	56.7	pre 2003				
Sakhalin region	12/10/2008	mixed	6	19	31.6	3	9	33.3	50	47.4	10/10/2004	9	no data	2	no data
Zabaikal krai	12/10/2008	mixed	4	48	8.3	0	14	0	0	29.2	pre 2003				
Republic of Kabardino-Balkarsky	01/03/2009	proportional	11	121	9.1	2	50	4	18.2	41.3	07/12/2003	43	2.3	29	3.4

<i>Republic of Karachevo-Cherkessiya</i>	01/03/2009	mixed	8	69	11.6	4	29	13.8	50	42	14/03/2004	17	17.7	7	14.3
<i>Republic of Tatarstan</i>	01/03/2009	proportional	8	53	15.1	6	44	13.6	75	83	14/03/2004	41	0	38	0
<i>Republic of Khakhasia</i>	01/03/2009	mixed	6	49	12.2	3	22	13.6	59	44.9	26/12/2004	29	3.4	12	8.3
<i>Archangel region</i>	01/03/2009	mixed	16	61	26.2	0	20	0	0	32.8	19/12/2004	27	14.8	10	20
<i>Bryansk region</i>	01/03/2009	mixed	6	39	15.4	1	19	5.3	16.7	48.7	05/12/2004		no data		
<i>Vladimir region</i>	01/03/2009	mixed	7	23	30.4	4	11	36.4	57.1	47.8	20/03/2005	14	21.4	5	20
<i>Volgograd region</i>	01/03/2009	mixed	10	44	22.7	1	12	8.3	10	27.3	07/12/2003		no data		
<i>Nenetsk autonomous okrug</i>	01/03/2009	proportional	1	15	6.7	0	6	0	0	40	06/02/2005	5	40	3	33.3
<i>Republic of Mary-El</i>	11/10/2009	mixed	4	40	10.0	1	18	5.6	25.0	45.0	10/10/2004	24	0	17	0
<i>Tula Republic</i>	11/10/2009	proportional	7	73	9.6	2	29	6.9	28.6	39.7	03/10/2004	16	6.3	3	0
<i>Moscow city Duma</i>	11/10/2009	mixed	7	47	14.9	2	15	13.3	28.6	31.9	04/12/2005	15	6.7	15	6.7
<i>Republic of Altai</i>	14/03/2010	mixed	6	36	16.7	0	10	0	0	27.8	12/03/2006	11	0	5	0
<i>Khabarovsk Krai</i>	14/03/2010	mixed	2	39	5.1	0	6	0	0	15.4	11/12/2005	11	0	11	0
<i>Voronezh region</i>	14/03/2010	mixed	8	57	14	3	20	15	37.5	35.1	20/03/2005	18	5.6	12	0
<i>Kaluga region</i>	14/03/2010	proportional	7	65	10.8	2	22	9.1	28.6	33.8	14/11/2004	9	11.1	4	0
<i>Kurgan region</i>	14/03/2010	mixed	5	105	4.8	0	8	0	0	7.6	28/11/2004	13	0	5	0
<i>Ryazan region</i>	14/03/2010	mixed	10	52	19.2	2	10	20	20	19.2	20/03/2005	13	7.8	6	16.7
<i>Sverdlovsk region</i>	14/03/2010	proportional	4	40	10	0	6	0	0	15	02/03/2008	22	9.1	10	0
<i>Yamal-Nenetsk autonomous okrug</i>	14/03/2010	proportional	4	22	18.2	0	7	0	0	31.8	27/03/2005	6	0	2	0

Source: Author's own calculations based on information available at <http://www.izbirkom.ru/izbirkom.html>, last accessed 8/08/10.