9 Symbolic state imagery, informal state practice

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Introduction

Immigration controls in the Russian Federation (hereafter, Russia) have evolved since 2002, when the government began taking seriously the issue of managing the population of temporary migrant workers entering the country. To manage the millions of Central Asian workers arriving each year, in 2007 the government instituted a quota, or a numerical cap, limiting the number of work permits available. This technocratic solution erected a symbol of immigration control that appealed to rationality. As it became clear that the immigration sphere was resilient to policy change, state actors changed their strategy, utilising more securitised measures of immigration control. During this era, deportation became a policy strategy that used emotive symbols of police raids and blacklists to signal effective immigration control. Persisting across both eras, however, was the widespread use of informal strategies by migrants and state actors alike.

The policies of quotas and subsequently deportations have met with myriad contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies during the implementation process. In this way, Russia's immigration policy sphere shares the seeming pathologies of immigration systems the world over, causing many scholars to render migration impossible to control or plagued by ineffective policy. When state actors are engaged in informal practices, the contradictions inherent in the immigration system seem particularly acute. This chapter, however, questions the ineffectiveness thesis, arguing that despite a cluttered field of immigration control practices, erecting a key symbol of immigration control is a strategy governments use to create a focal point of state activities and to drown out the noise of contradictions on the ground. These symbols become important legitimacy-seeking efforts by the state in order to justify the effectiveness of immigration control policy. Amid these macro-level strategies, state actors rely on readily available informal practices to navigate the nuances of everyday migration management.

Informality and effectiveness immigration control

Drawing upon a range of methods from ethnography to survey, this chapter interrogates the uses of official political power in the regulation of immigration

control—in other words, ‘the state’ and its efforts to manage flows and populations of migrant workers in Russia. However, instead of a reified state, distinct from society or the individuals that make it up, this chapter embraces a view of the state as a resilient and tireless manager of barely contained chaos given that power and decision-making is divided amongst a vast array of agents and institutions acting officially in the name of the state. By engaging the nexus of mobility and spaces of power, this chapter shows how the state is a complex and diverse field of power that pursues a variety of goals simultaneously.

Mainstream political and other social science approaches to the state often begin with a Weberian definition of the state, specifically with the ideal of a legal-rational variety. From this starting point, a normative vision of the state is constructed that uses a set of official written rules to produce clean and distinct boundaries between the state and society (Weber 1946: 78), between official and unofficial, written and unwritten, public and private, relational and impersonal, formal and informal activity (Weber 2019). Mainstream studies often further blur state and regime processes, or as Beissinger (2017) aptly notes, use a ‘neo-Weberian yardstick’ which merges the assumptions of the Weberian state, modernisation theory and state theory to assess modern states. Consequently, many approaches use informal practices as a measurement of state weakness and see informal processes as inimical to the rule of law (e.g., Taylor 2011; Mendras 2012; Sakwa 2011).

Based on this foundation, studies of Russia can come away with the perspective that the political system is weak, backwards or persistently underdeveloped because of informality and corruption; that it cannot modernise unless informal ways of conducting politics give way to formal institutional development (Gel’man 2004, 2012; Hanson 2007; Ledeneva 2013). Amid these predictions, it is important to address the puzzling reality ‘that more states don’t simply fall apart’ (Migdal 2001, 135) despite their seeming dysfunctions. Instead of suggesting that state actors rely on manipulation and façade to legitimise themselves, this chapter argues that a selective (but authentic) picture of state activity is erected symbolically as a focal point for immigration control efforts. This symbolism can serve to smooth over the public image of a field of policy implementation that seems contradictory and can reveal the ways in which state actors who circumvent state regulation can use these unregulated activities to uphold state legitimacy.

Migdal’s (2001) concept of the state as a two-sided ‘field of power’ involving image and practices is a helpful corrective to a Weberian framework. Image, according to Migdal, is the projection of the state as cohesive and in control, also encompassing peoples’ perceptions of this projected image. Practices are the ‘routine performance of state actors and agencies’, which are not particularly cohesive (as the image is wont to represent), and can be contradictory because they are constantly arbitrating between different sets of laws and codes, both formal and informal. Migdal goes as far as saying that ‘theories that do not incorporate the two sides of the paradoxical state end up either over-idealising its ability to turn rhetoric into effective policy or dismissing it as a grab-bag of

everyman-out-for-himself, corrupt officials'. This statement captures the limits of an essentialised picture of the state and informal activities.

Migdal's conceptualisation of the state allows for the analysis of the ways in which the image and the practices of states interact. In particular, those practices of state actors that are image-reinforcing, seeking to create and maintain the projection of a strong and effective state, are crucial for building legitimacy.¹ In this sense, it is the efforts to produce an image of a capable state that often become a focal point for official activity. Adopting this perspective, we can leave aside notions present in the state capacity and the rule of law literature that argue stronger state institutions result in less informality because they are capable of producing certain effects valued by and consistent with officially sanctioned procedures and laws. We can also move beyond the idea that the willingness to adopt and implement policies represents a linear process that seeks the same goal and that unimplemented or unenforced policies mark weak institutions (Levitsky and Murillo 2009). Rather, we can embrace the idea that policy (a part of image creation) and implementation (aspects of practice) might have different goals but are inherently legitimacy-seeking activities. Furthermore, the policies issued by state elites at the top and the ways in which policies are practised by street-level bureaucrats are mutually constitutive, because lower-level officials act as the face of the state at the micro level, mediating and interpreting policy vis-à-vis individual migrants (Fassin et al. 2015).

Using Migdal's perspective as a point of departure, it is possible to see that the image and practice of immigration control, and specifically labour mobility, in Russia are at times serving different, although equally essential, purposes. The image of the state is upheld through the rhetoric of officials, by passing of laws and policies and other attempts by officials to legitimise the state. This includes the production of official statistics. Practices refer to how immigration control is enacted or, more generally, how state actors interact with migrants. This chapter explores how a range of practices, both formal and informal, can serve to either uphold the image of immigration control or undermine it. In the following case studies, I survey the complex field of practices associated with two policy mechanisms: quotas and deportations. I demonstrate the ways in which formal and informal practices either uphold or contradict the image of immigration control (see Table 9.1). Both formal and informal practices play an essential role in the immigration sphere, either upholding or supporting official state policy or providing flexibility to migrants, employers and other interested actors who operate in a labour market with a structural need for foreign workers. I suggest that, from this field of varied practices, one practice or set of practices is elevated to the level of the symbol in order to counter any potential criticism that the policy is ineffective due to existing contradictions.

In the first case study, quotas regulated work permits for migrants originating from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries from 2007 through 2014. In this case, the process of planning quotas served as a reinforcing practice that was further erected as a rational symbol of immigration control. In the second case of deportations and reentry bans, the coordinating practice of immigration

Table 9.1 Image and practice

<i>IMAGE</i>	<i>Immigration policy is appropriate and effective</i>
FORMAL PRACTICES	
Reinforcing practices	Reinforce the image of a particular mechanism of immigration control as effective
Contradictory practices	Undermine the image of a particular mechanism's effectiveness for immigration control
INFORMAL PRACTICES	
Compensating practices	Undermine the image of a mechanism's utility for effective immigration control, BUT address structural demands by giving migrants access to the labour market
Coordinating practices	Uphold the image of a mechanism's effectiveness (robustness) for immigration control despite the informal and/or illegal nature of the practice itself

raids and document checks were rendered symbolic, although the reinforcing role of official data was also crucial. While in each case symbols were put on public display, the rational appeal of quota planning and the uses of official data contrast with the emotive appeals of securitised actions by law enforcement.

Many migration analyses end with a discussion of contradictions created by a varied field such as this, but I argue in this chapter that if state officials can erect a primary symbol as a focal point, attention can be drawn away from the contradictions within the system. A symbol takes on an important function in mediating between image and practice since it serves to bolster the legitimacy of an image in light of a varied field of practice.² A symbol, in this exposition, is something that can be used to demonstrate the image of immigration control, encompassing several characteristics. In the two cases I discuss below, a symbol (1) highlights a genuine state activity that has a (2) ritualistic or repeated performative pattern with (3) a visible manifestation that is widely publicised, and which taken together are used to (4) uphold the image of immigration control. Symbols can evoke rational or emotive responses, either of which can be used to make legitimacy appeals. However, I suggest that the combination of rational *and* emotive appeals are important.

As a marker of genuine state activity, symbols are not erected as facades, but as representations. In other words, they are a type of map of state activity, which is an abstraction or simplification, yet represents something concrete and not fabricated (Korzybski 1958; Scott 1998). In this way, a symbol provides a simplified and selective picture of state activity, although it should not be relegated to window dressing. Symbols are not merely promises that fall short of reality. They are real and authentic aspects of state activity towards specific goals despite contradictions within the system. That is, symbols are more than mere promises because they both mobilise and utilise the state machinery to produce policy, data and activities to illustrate and defend the use of the symbols.

Symbols also involve ritual and performance. These activities may be spectacular and episodic (Cummings 2013; Wedeen 1999) or they can encompass everyday routines. Through the daily activities of state actors, such as the behaviours of judges or the interactions between law enforcement officials and migrants, rituals become embedded in institutions and serve as the raw material for producing outputs such as official statistics.

Work permit quotas

When the government instituted work permit quotas for migrants coming from CIS countries in 2007, they set the limit at six million, which experts estimated was sufficiently large to allow all migrants already in Russia at the time to become documented. Quotas were a part of a larger effort to develop a migration policy amid growing numbers of labour migrants. When quotas were instituted, the package of immigration reforms, which also included bans on foreign workers in certain economic sectors, received wide press coverage.

Following the expert-recommended quota in 2007, quotas were set by regional commissions based on employer requests and a number of other considerations. The 2008 quota of 1.8 million was erected as a symbol of technocratic, rational immigration control. When the quota for 2009 was set at four million based on these same criteria, however, there was an immediate backlash in the media as well as from regional governors and representatives of trade unions who questioned the increase in the quota in the wake of the global financial crisis. The issue entered the national stage during 'A Conversation with Vladimir Putin' in December 2008, when a woman asked Putin why migrant quotas should be so high during a financial crisis. Putin agreed, suggesting 'that the quota be reasonably reduced by no less than 50%'. These statements were widely covered in the press, heralding that the 'quota for migrants decreased twofold', to around two million.

Putin's statement stands as a key moment for how quotas would be used as a mechanism of immigration control. The intervention of a sympathetic leader on behalf of the average worker who felt their labour market position was not being protected by bureaucrats issuing the quotas or market-driven employers interested only in cheap labour erected an appropriate image of immigration control through the quota. Putin superseded bureaucratic procedure and labour market signals but nevertheless demonstrated how emotive logic must be considered alongside rational displays. The quota itself became a lasting image of immigration control since after 2009 it never again increased beyond two million until the mechanism was repealed altogether at the end of 2014, clearly taking a signal from Putin about how high the quota should be set.

To maintain the image of quotas as a display of immigration control (see Table 9.2), the bureaucratic quota planning apparatus moved mountains of documents each year to produce a rational calculation of the labour market need for migrants that would also be accepted by the public. These activities are what Migdal (2001) calls practices, and we can classify them as reinforcing in that they seek to uphold the image of immigration control through the institutional activity of the

Table 9.2 Image and practice of quotas

<i>IMAGE</i>	<i>Quotas are an appropriate and effective mechanism of immigration control</i>
FORMAL PRACTICES	
Reinforcing practices	Quota planning
Contradictory practices	Work permits issued by Federal Migration Service (FMS)
INFORMAL PRACTICES	
Compensating practices	False work permits Legal impunity
Coordinating practices	Sale of quotas

bureaucracy. Quotas are further useful because they uphold the personal promise of Putin. Nevertheless, they continually reinforced a picture of the labour market that did not correspond to reality. While the quotas produced numbers that were publicly palatable, they did not allow enough work permits to legalise all of the migrants working in Russia.

Quotas were determined by the Ministry of Health and then the Ministry of Labour, but it was the Federal Migration Service (FMS) that issued work permits. We could classify the FMS practices as contradictory to the activity of the quota planners, since FMS officials often issued work permits with general disregard to the lists of employers approved to hire migrants compiled during the quota planning process. In many cases, regions obeyed the numerical cap placed on work permits, but in some cases the quotas were flouted quite dramatically. This could be framed as adding flexibility to the system or correcting the estimates of the quota planners by issuing work permits in an on-demand manner. It is notable, however, that though in certain regions FMS officials issued more work permits than the quota allowed, the federally aggregated number of work permits issued annually never exceeded the nationwide quota. As such, the FMS practices contradicted the quota plans, and the contradictions between image and practice were kept in check and, most importantly, out of the public eye.

A great deal of bureaucratic effort was put into creating the image of immigration control through quotas as well as into producing official data that corresponded with Putin's signals. Consequently, there were never sufficient work documents to legalise migrant workers. Elsewhere, I have called this a scarcity of legal labour (Schenk 2018a). As a result, a number of informal practices arose to mediate a formal space that narrowed in order to create a certain image of the state. These informal practices can be called compensating practices, because they address structural demands in the labour market and facilitate migrants' abilities to operate within the system (either legally or illegally).

Compensating practices include the industry that arose to provide migrants with false work permit documents. In fact, an active sector of migrant intermediaries arose during the quota period to assist migrants with obtaining documents. Those

intermediaries that provided false work permits helped migrants to operate within the system with some degree of legal coverage (in the sense that they were at least able to produce a document when asked, in the hopes that it would be sufficient). At the same time, these practices allowed more 'documented' migrants into the system than the number allowed by the quota. The fact that these false work permits did not appear in official statistics, however, reinforced the quota numbers.

Another informal practice that could be viewed as compensating is when law enforcement officials looked the other way when faced with migration violations. This looking the other way occurred if a migrant paid (either a bribe or sometimes in labour).³ These corruption-related practices allowed migrants to continue operating within the system with legal impunity (although not without consequences), thereby reinforcing a more market-driven population of migrants than the quota numbers allowed.

Other informal practices can be considering coordinating, because they uphold the image of immigration control through the quota despite their informal or even illegal nature. One such practice was the use of quota by intermediary companies. Many times, subcontractors would apply for quota (sometimes in very large numbers), which they would then either sell to other companies or subcontractors, or use themselves by acting as an employment placement agency (sometimes registering themselves as the official employer). The layers between the recipient of quota (named in the Ministry of Labour quota allocations) and the actual employers who interacted with migrants were often shadowy and complex. Nevertheless, they allowed migrants some degree of access to legal work documents, and some legal cover (or plausible deniability) to employers who either did not have a direct relationship with migrants or who hired more migrants than they were strictly allowed (some with work permits and some without). Another coordinating practice can be found in corruption schemes, which provided work permits to migrants if they paid a bribe or unofficial fee. These schemes were extortionist and exploited migrants, yet they upheld the image of the quota as an effective mechanism of immigration control and simultaneously provided a reward to bureaucrats who worked to uphold the image of the quota.

Amid the field of practices that assumed various relationships to the image of immigration control through the quota, the symbol of a technocratically planned quota, based on authentic and routinely practised state activity, was erected as the key focal point of an appeal to effective state policy. The quota was announced yearly in the mass media and was presented as an objective indicator of what the government would do in the coming year. The planned quota was often announced alongside an estimate of how much of the quota was used in the previous year (at the federal level), reinforcing the effectiveness of the mechanism. Putin's intervention in the quota system warrants a few words of reflection, however. If the planning activities of bureaucrats served as a symbol of rational and technocratic immigration control, Putin's announcement to decrease the quota injected an emotive appeal into the symbolic framework. This suggests that rational appeals can gain additional traction when adjustments are made through appeals to emotion.

Though quotas for CIS citizens remained in place until the end of 2014, increasing numbers of migrants were able to obtain work documents through alternative means, namely by buying pay-as-you-go monthly permits called *patents*. Because the number of officially counted labour migrants increased, new mechanisms were needed to re-establish the image of immigration control. Quotas remain for other categories of immigrants (e.g., workers from outside the CIS and temporary residents), thereby retaining the rational appeal of the mechanism albeit on a much smaller scale. In this increasing space, deportations and associated measures emerged as a way to project a new image of immigration control.

Deportations

In 2012 and 2013, legislation was amended to increase the penalties for migrants who committed administrative and other migration-related violations. These changes served as the starting point for a dramatic increase in the number of migrants deported, administratively expelled or put on a reentry ban list (Kubal 2017; Troitskii 2016).⁴ The amendments to the migration law in December 2012 and July 2013 and the administrative code in August 2013 came amid several events that elicited resolute state action to address immigration control problems.⁵ From the beginning of 2012, during Vladimir Putin's re-election campaign, migration issues were mobilised as a priority for government attention. This ushered in a period lasting until the end of 2013 characterised by a dramatic increase in antimigrant rhetoric in the media (Tolz and Harding 2015). Media rhetoric converged with other statements and declarations from state officials, as well as visible migration control activities. Deportation and its surrounding policies became a primary focal point for this image of control, while official data served as an important measure of effectiveness and the foundation for erecting the image. Police raids and mass arrests, I argue below, became particularly symbolic during this period of effective immigration control.

The elevation of deportation to a primary mechanism of immigration control through changes in legislation and enforcement came as Russia was preparing for the free movement of labour likely to follow Kyrgyzstan's entry into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and amid calls to move towards the adoption of a visa regime. By using increasingly security-oriented immigration control measures, the government could move forward with plans for the EAEU while still assuring the public that border control would be tightened, keeping out the 'wrong kinds' of migrants (presumably, criminals, although in actual fact many migrants were added to a reentry ban list for relatively minor administrative violations).⁶ The timing in response to critical voices and corresponding media coverage amid greater geopolitical securitisation more generally are important for creating the symbolic image of immigration control.

Certain activities of state officials and agencies can be considered image-reinforcing practices, upholding the image of immigration control through deportation (see Table 9.3). These practices include the construction of migrant detention centres, the increased prosecution of administrative expulsion and deportation

Table 9.3 Image and practice of deportation

<i>IMAGE</i>	<i>Deportation is an appropriate and effective mechanism of immigration control</i>
FORMAL PRACTICES	
Reinforcing practices	Detention centres Increased prosecutions (deportations) Official data Blacklists
Contradictory practices	Blacklist database uncoordinated
INFORMAL PRACTICES	
Compensating practices	Corruption schemes Legal impunity
Coordinating practices	Self-executed deportations Visible document checks Raids and arrests

cases and the production of official data. In particular, the production of data became crucial for upholding the image of immigration control.

In August 2013, the FMS submitted draft legislation proposing the construction of 83 new detention centres in 81 regions of Russia.⁷ This proposal was reported in the Russian- and English-language media, although it was not adopted into law at that time. Nevertheless, according to the Global Detention Project, of 88 detention centres currently operating across Russia, 76 were established in 2014.⁸ Though government documents have never specified the number of detention centres that should exist, from the end of 2013 government orders and orders issued by the FMS and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) began providing much more explicit instructions for how migrant detention centres should be used.⁹

The number of court decisions on deportations (administrative expulsions) also provides image-reinforcing practices on the part of the judicial system. The number of decisions increased from 40,396 in 2011 to 137,097 in 2013 and 198,371 in 2014, before declining slightly to 177,821 in 2015 (Troitskii 2016). An increase in arrests (Abashin 2017) leading to these court decisions signified systematic activity by the police in upholding the image of immigration control. However, the flow of 20 to 30 million foreigners across Russia's borders each year has remained steady and even increased in more recent years. This suggests that, contrary to the image, deportation policies do not have a marked impact on migration flows.¹⁰

The numbers of foreigners placed on reentry ban lists (blacklists) parallel court decisions, increasing from 65,000 in 2011 to a peak of 645,000 in 2014. This might seem natural, since deportation comes with an automatic five-year reentry ban. However, many of the practices constituting the entry-ban list are contradictory to its image as effective immigration control.

Research on the entry bans reveals a lack of institutional coordination (Bahovadinova 2016). The legal basis for applying an entry ban rests on a web of interlocking legislation and legal terms (Schenk 2016). A number of agencies

can declare foreigners ‘undesirable’ or add them to a blacklist for any number of reasons. The migration services can also cancel a visa, the courts can order expulsion or deportation, and the border agency can deny a foreigner entry. Therefore, the mechanisms for foreigners being removed from or denied entry into Russia are many and varied, and not captured in a single set of statistics or within a single ‘blacklist’. Government agencies have different lists, which may or may not show up in the border agency’s records, and therefore may or may not result in an individual flagged by a particular agency being prevented from entering the country. This lack of coordination works against the image of immigration control and, therefore, can be seen as a contradictory set of practices.

It is also important to note that many banned migrants are placed on the list while in Russia for any number of administrative violations. These migrants may be placed on the reentry ban list without even knowing it. Many of these migrants remain in Russia even though they are prohibited from entering the country. To the degree that the blacklist encourages migrants to stay in Russia rather than risk being barred reentry, the mechanism itself serves to reinforce illegal migration rather than act against it. While these migrants may appear in the official statistics of the blacklists *and* remain in Russia to continue working, and thereby address structural rigidities in similar ways to coordinating practices, in this case it is not the routine informal actions of state officials that allow migrants to remain in the system. Rather, migrants’ activities are either based on a lack of knowledge or a desire to utilise existing loopholes. These types of activities of migrants, while important in the immigration sphere, are not the focus of this chapter.

As seen with the quota case, informal or off-the-books practices by state officials can compensate for the rigidities created by formal immigration control policies in the context of a structural labour market need for migrant workers. Compensating practices include judicial and law enforcement practices that do not prosecute migrants to the full extent of the law and, therefore, allow migrants to remain in Russia. These include a number of practices, often involving the police, that offer migrants legal impunity via various corruption and extortion schemes.

Azamat,¹¹ a return migrant interviewed in Bishkek, explained to us that there are often police officers in each district of a city who take it upon themselves to know the registration status of migrants. If a migrant has a registration in one place, but physically lives in another, these district police officers (*uchastkovyi*) know. ‘If one is lucky’, Azamat explained, ‘he can pay that *uchastkovyi* 2000 to 3000 roubles each month (at the time of the interview \$30–50 USD), so that the officer does not bother him.’ These relationships between the *uchastkovyi* and migrant can even approach a sort of friendship, as Azamat recounted the story of a friend and housemate of his who, over time, became ‘friends’ with his *uchastkovyi*. This type of scenario has been well documented in ethnographic accounts of migrants in Russia (Reeves 2015) and represents an informal practice that contradicts the image of migration control in that it avoids channelling migrants who violate registration procedures through official channels so that they can appear in certain enforcement statistics. Yet, these regular interactions provide some means

for migrants to mitigate risk and remain in Russia without their migration violations being discovered. As Azamat says, 'the *uchastkovyi* is interested in keeping you safe from other police officers', allowing migrants to live in relative peace and avoiding the consequences of deportation regardless of their legal status.

Other informal practices by state officials may include corruption, or they may simply result from navigating the decision-making implicit in their professional duties. To the degree that any of these practices uphold the image of immigration control through deportation, they can be considered coordinating practices.

The initial results from a new project compiling a database of court cases related to migration violations indicate that women are more often allowed to 'self-execute' their expulsion, whereas men are more likely to be remanded to a migration detention centre to await removal from the country by state officials. The decision of a judge to assign self-executed versus forcible removal is well within the scope of judicial discretion. However, to some degree, assigning self-executed departure allows migrants the possibility of remaining in the country, even if it is not the intention of the judge. Thus, this practice can serve to address the structural demands of the labour market, while simultaneously contributing to robust prosecution statistics, thereby serving to uphold the image of the deportation policy as effective immigration control.

Other informal practices that uphold the image of immigration control include occasions when state officials might allow migrants to enter Russia even if they are on the blacklist. Some illegal entry practices may be migrant-driven as in the case of return migrants in Kyrgyzstan. These migrants told us stories of obtaining a new passport with a different name or a different spelling, crossing the border using passport stamps from friends or even crossing the border without a passport altogether. If officials deliberately allow irregularities, however, this is a coordinating practice that does not interrupt (and thus upholds) the image of immigration control through deportation and entry-ban procedures and statistics. In Kyrgyzstan, Altair told us about a friend of his who was on the blacklist:

[He] decided to cross the border by car. How he was able to cross the border, I have no idea. He got his documents there and now he is working. When I asked him how he was able to do that, he told me that he paid a fine. When I asked how much, he told me nothing but the fact that it was expensive.

Strategies like this do not disrupt deportation or blacklist procedures, or the official construction of statistics. Yet, they allow migrants to find ways to remain engaged in the Russian labour market.

Certain activities of state officials have a complicated relationship with the categories of formal and informal practices I have outlined thus far in this chapter. The practices surrounding document checks and raids are official, formal reinforcing practices that uphold the image of immigration control through deportation policy. Officials also regularly engage in compensating practices, for example, when migrants are extorted during document checks and raids, and subsequently allowed to return to the labour market. Raids also have a symbolic function

irrespective of whether they channel migrants through formal legal channels into deportation proceedings or the blacklist mechanism. As a symbol of immigration control, raids use the official position of the police and military actors, enacting routines that can be visibly displayed to the public to uphold the image of immigration control.

Visible public document checks and arrests of migrants are frequently framed as extortion schemes, where police detain migrants until they either pay a bribe or are remanded to the courts for deportation (Urinboyev 2018; Round and Kuznetsova 2018). While the migrants who are willing to pay are not in the end included in the court, deportation and blacklist statistics, they may be recorded in police reports and certainly offer a type of rent or reward to state officials for producing visible displays of immigration control such as street arrests. Large migration raids take this logic a step further. Raids covered in the media become a dramatic exemplar of state activity in pursuit of immigration control.

A July 2013 fight in a Moscow market led to a number of migration raids and mass detentions, to the extent that police station holding facilities were filled and a makeshift camp was created. Moscow Mayor Sobyanin, himself in the midst of an election campaign that frequently focused on migration-related issues, defended the crackdown, saying ‘in any society, in any country, if an emergency situation happens, then the government and society begin to act more harshly’ (Myers and Roth 2013). The fact that the original fight was between Dagestanis (Russian citizens) and the police, yet the migration raids and detentions primarily targeted Vietnamese, belies the image-making nature of the episode. Both the mass detentions and an ensuing announcement by the FMS that 83 new detention centres would be constructed the following year were covered in the Russian-language media as well as by international English-language media and rights groups.

During a research trip to Moscow, I accompanied human rights activists to the site where a migration raid had been conducted in the run-up to the FIFA World Cup in summer 2018. While talking to migrants, it became clear that law enforcement had strategically chosen the timing of the raid. After sundown during Ramadan, many migrants were breaking their fast in cafes near a market on the outskirts of the city. Police separated Central Asian migrants from other restaurant patrons, sending away those of other nationalities. Some migrants were taken to holding facilities, some were beaten and others were let go after paying a bribe. Other raids take place during the daytime, as in a recent raid in Tula in October 2018, which was widely publicised in regional newspapers and on social media. Photos showed migrants organised in long lines, while masked special forces troops stood guard with large guns in hand. As a symbol, raids provide a highly visible display of routine and authentic (i.e., according to the official position) state action.

The spectacular show of securitisation used during migration raids plays a role in symbol- and image-making, even though the exercise of catch and release (for bribes) rather than a systematic implementation of policy as written could call the effectiveness of a policy into question. The key element relies on visibly and loudly displaying the activities of state officials in a selective way that crowds

out attention from the informal activities those same state actors may be performing on the side. Making visible public displays of authentic (albeit selective) routinised state activity becomes a primary tool to make legitimacy appeals. In other words, the symbols are integral to demonstrating that immigration control is effective, by focusing on a limited measure of control that can be more easily controlled and projected for public consumption.

Discussion and conclusions

Two policy mechanisms—quotas and deportations—provide a window into the image and practice of immigration and labour mobility control in Russia. Symbolic immigration control mechanisms are lifted up to dominate the landscape and absorb any attention from inconsistencies or contradictions that make the policy appear ineffective. Contradictions in the system should not be used to argue for policy ineffectiveness in and of themselves, since both formal and informal practices by state officials work together to coordinate a complex field of human interactions and mediate between conflicting goals. The two cases suggest that, despite policy changes, informal practices adapt to new policy spheres to ensure migrants can remain and address structural labour demand. This picture of immigration control is quite different from a typical estimation of policy effectiveness based on how closely enforcement matches policies on paper. Rather, this view demonstrates that informal strategies are essential to mediate and compensate for a seemingly uncoordinated and arbitrary space when state image and practice diverge.

Symbolic control policies that produce visible displays for the public are based on official, routine activities of state agents, ranging from the everyday to the spectacular. Together these aspects of symbol serve a legitimacy function, highlighting policy mechanisms (or certain aspects of these) that are effective, even for the limited goal of producing official statistics. Thus, they serve specific immigration control goals.

It is equally important that the policy landscape is sufficiently porous to allow sufficient numbers of workers to satisfy labour demands and help decision-makers balance the disparate needs of various actors in Russia seeking different outcomes from migration policy. Policies are perhaps most effective at controlling the proportion of migrants who have access to legal documents and a secure status, although they do not ultimately reduce the numbers of immigrants in the country. Tracing outcomes over a number of policies suggests that while symbolic policies are erected to serve a certain policy goal, the management of migration depends on the continuity of a mixture of formal and informal practices. While policies may change rapidly, stability stems from a resilient understanding of this formal–informal mix. Informality is necessary because it allows the system to flexibly adapt to new policies and ensures migrants can find ways to remain in Russia and continue contributing to the economy.

This chapter utilises a view of the migrant population as a mass of mobile labour rather than a perhaps more authentic view of a dynamic group of individuals.

Accounts that look at the individual experiences of migrants in response to policies create a very different picture of the impact of migration policy in Russia. My aim is to demonstrate how the state, writ large, sees the migration situation and how it reacts accordingly. From this perspective, focusing on individual migrant experiences does not help to determine how the state system views migrants primarily as official statistics (or through the interactions that produce those statistics).

Taking this view shifts our focus from a state that is actively working to produce illegality or deportability (De Genova 2002) as some (Reeves 2015; Kubal 2017) have argued. Rather, this view shows that the state is working through myriad actors and processes to produce a certain picture of legality. Managing the balance between the picture of legality (image) and the on-the-ground reality (practice), which requires a reliable stock of migrants (regardless of their legality), is often devolved to lower state agents (Schenk 2018a). Examples of the activities of bureaucrats, courts and law enforcement in this chapter demonstrate the importance of these non-elite state officials. In their interactions with state officials, migrants are variously made legible through fake or real documents (Reeves 2013). But, from the view within the state, legibility is not attached to the individual personhood of a migrant. Rather, legibility emerges in terms of numbers that can be recorded and preserved in official statistics and documents.

While the consequences for migrants on the ground may be the same (illegality and vulnerability), this ‘migrants as a mass’ view, whereby statistics are the end goal, reveals important attributes of the state. The state is not merely decision-makers in Moscow who design policy and enact it through laws and implementing orders. It is also not primarily street-level bureaucrats who interact with migrants and employers and write reports that are then aggregated into statistics. The field of the state extends to those agents that mediate between various goals and needs of the state, iterated at different levels. For all state agents, the availability of both formal and informal strategies is essential to creating an image of immigration control while still providing the space for migrants to remain in Russia, engaged in the labour market (either formally or informally). Thus, because the state can rely on informal practices, actors can use symbolic policies to meet some goals, while not upsetting the general migration governance landscape. This chapter further suggests that combining rational appeals, such as that to state planning or official data, with emotively oriented displays, such as the personal intervention of the President or highly securitised policy actions, is a powerful combination that can be mobilised in support of legitimacy appeals. The examples of quotas and deportation policies and practices suggest that state actors have learned across policy periods how to combine various elements of symbolic displays in their routine activities.

Notes

- 1 Similar concepts call image-making efforts by the state symbolic (Edelman 1967), spectacular (Cummings 2013; Adams 2010), political theatre (Pisano 2014) and performance (Reeves, Rasanayagam and Beyer 2014; Reeves 2014). Other scholars talk

- about the mythical or ceremonial nature of formal politics or state function (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Migdal 2001).
- 2 Verdery (1993) discusses the legitimacy function of symbols in the context of nations and nationalism.
 - 3 See Bahovadinova (2016). This topic also came up with the author's own interview with a migration expert in Krasnodar in 2012.
 - 4 While administrative expulsion, deportation and reentry bans are separate legal mechanisms, migrants in our field interviews (summer 2017) often referred to them synonymously as deportation, blacklist (*chernyi spisok*) or entry ban (*zapret na v'ezd*). I use 'deportation' to refer to this package of policy mechanisms.
 - 5 Elsewhere, I have called this an 'invented crisis' of illegal immigration, where 'the invented nature of the crisis at hand is not the fact of illegal immigrants on the ground, but rather the characterisation of why migrants are illegal, what potential dangers these illegal populations pose to society and what mechanisms will reduce illegal migration' (Schenk 2018b).
 - 6 Some have also suggested that the timing of the legislation was aimed at reducing the numbers of migrants in the country during the 2018 FIFA World Cup. If there is any merit to this argument, perhaps it stems from a desire to avoid the type of international coverage criticising migrant exploitation and discrimination during the preparation for the Sochi Olympics in 2014. It is also plausible, however, that accompanying increases in administrative expulsion–deportation proceedings were aimed at removing migrants who had worked on Olympic construction projects.
 - 7 The proposal can be found at <http://regulation.gov.ru/projects#npa=13509>, accessed 25 October 2018.
 - 8 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/russian-federation>, accessed 31 October 2018.
 - 9 These efforts to reinforce the image of immigration control have a parallel in later efforts to consolidate the issuing of *patent* documents through the construction of numerous government migration centres (Schenk 2018a).
 - 10 These figures for the total number of foreigners crossing into the country are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the media.
 - 11 All names are pseudonyms.

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