Chapter Thirteen

Multinationalism, Mononationalism or Transnationalism in Russia?

Sergey Akopov

How multiculturalism and multinationalism have been theorized in Russia

Some may claim that since multiculturalism has never been adopted as an official policy in Russia, the Russian case has no right to be presented in a cross-national book on multiculturalism. In this chapter I would like to show, however, that Russian historic experience of ethnic diversity management is unique and can be of great importance to a comparative analysis of multiculturalism. In addition, Russian society and Russian identity today are facing challenges similar to those found in other European – and Western – countries: economic and cultural globalization; massive migration; weakening of citizens’ exclusive attachment to one nation state; the danger of nationalism; and the rise of extremists. Russia may not have immigration-based multiculturalism if immigration is restricted to the movement of peoples between sovereign states. But it does have a growing multiculturalism based in internal migration across an extraordinarily diverse and expansive territory.

The echo of ‘the collapse of multiculturalism’ announced by a number of European politicians was distinctly heard in Russian media and public life throughout 2010 and 2011 and, particularly, during the 2012 presidential election campaign. In fact it was the critique of multiculturalism that became the starting point for Vladimir Putin’s article entitled ‘Russia: The National Question’ published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta (23 January 2012); it bore the subtitle ‘Self-Determination of the Russian People: A Multiethnic Civilization Sealed with a Russian Core’. According to Putin:

[the] failure of the multicultural project is caused by the crisis of the ‘nation state’ – namely, the state that has historically been built exclusively on the basis of ethnic identity. And it is a challenge to be faced not only by Europe, but many other regions in the world’. (Putin 2012:1)
Tariq Modood describes multiculturalism as ‘the recognition of group differences within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity’ (Modood 2007: 2). Whether we agree or not with the implications stemming from Putin’s article – itself an interesting object for in-depth discourse analysis – in the case of the Russian Federation the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and national identity are understood in a very different way from how they are in the European Union or the United States. There are historical and cultural reasons for Russia being different that are familiar to the Russian specialist. Here I wish to apply Modood’s definition of multiculturalism to the case of Russia.

When considering the public sphere of laws and policies one has to remember that historically Russia emerged as an extremely diverse federative state with a controversial imperial heritage and a very sophisticated federal structure. The political relationships between the centre and regions of Russia became even more problematic during the period of its Soviet history. The current Russian Federation possesses an enormous territory covering eleven time zones and a population composed of over 160 ethnic groups that speak 100 languages and dialects and representing all major world religions. Therefore it may be more appropriate to view the Russian Federation not as a multicultural but as a multinational entity.

The complexity of relations between federal and regional authorities was worsened by economic problems after the fall of the USSR, as well as the absence of strong democratic and parliamentary traditions in the imperial and Soviet histories of the country. These deficits created significant objective difficulties for the development of multicultural policies in the public sphere. On the one hand, the federal government has to guarantee autonomy and decentralization for Russian regions; on the other it is obliged by the constitution to keep Russia’s ‘diversity within unity’ across its vast and underpopulated (particularly by Asian standards) territory.

From a historical perspective the Russian Empire annexed most of its regions before the 1917 revolution. After the abdication of the Tsar and collapse of the Russian Empire new symbols of state identity and nation building were embedded in the Soviet ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The USSR was held up as a vanguard of international working-class solidarity. This was the ideology that largely held Russia’s regions together until 1991. However by the end of perestroika, and encouraged in part by Gorbachev’s policy of
glansnost, resentment of Moscow’s domination over far-flung regions promoted a further growth of regional nationalism and separatism. After the fall of the USSR national antagonisms that had built up over several centuries inside the Russian Empire started to act like ‘delayed land mines’. The model of cultural and ethnic assimilation, and later integration of regional minorities, into *homo sovieticus* – an ideological template obliterating difference – suddenly ceased to exist. Several former regions of the Russian Empire and of the Soviet Union drifted away from the nascent Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to subsequently join NATO and the more economically promising EU.

The legal aspect of Russia’s multinationalism is to a large degree defined by the Russian Constitution and Russian Constitutional Law. At the end of the 1990s the Russian federal government faced the problem of keeping separate regional elites and their Republics – for example, the special cases of Tatarstan and Chechnya – within one state. In 2000, in order to strengthen territorial unity and increase ‘vertical’ federal power over all the Russian regions, seven federal districts were created, each to be administered by an envoy appointed by the President. This signalled the end of the ‘Russia of regions’ that had existed for a brief period in the 1990s. The heads of the seven federal districts serve as ‘liaisons’ between regions and the federal government and are primarily responsible for overseeing the compliance of the regions with federal laws.

The restructuring of the Russian regions also involved a reduction in the number of ‘subjects of the Russian Federation’ from eighty-nine (as identified in the 1993 Constitution) to the current eighty-three; this was carried out through the merging of a number of regions between 2003 and 2007. Moreover, from 2004 the governors of Russian regions – including the twenty-one national or ethnic Republics – were no longer elected but were instead appointed by the President. A more detailed analysis of the dynamics of Russian federalism can be found in the work of Natalya Pankevich. She defines three stages of the evolution of Russia’s federal structure after the fall of the USSR: the first stage was overcoming the ‘secessionist model’ (1990–2); the second comprised the formation of a dualistic model (1993–8); and the final stage involved the restoration of an all-inclusive federal model (from 1999) (Pankevich 2008: 117–78). All these processes led inevitably to further centralization of the Russian federal state. In January 2012, just two months before Putin’s return to the presidency, President Dmitry Medvedev tried to reverse this
course by introducing a bill that would have reinstated the procedure of direct elections of the governors.

Today Russia remains probably the most constitutionally complex, ethnically multifarious and numerically multiple federation in the world. In legal terms Russia is an ‘asymmetric’ federation: although all eighty-three Russian regions have equal representation (two delegates each) in the Upper Chamber of the Russian Parliament – the Federation Council – they differ and are asymmetric in terms of the degree of political autonomy they exercise. For example, the twenty-one ‘Republics’ enjoy the most autonomy among all the ‘subjects of the Federation’ as each has its own constitution, Parliament and, until 2011, President (in that year the title of ‘President’ was replaced by that of ‘Head of Republic’). These Republics are allowed to establish their own official language alongside Russian and they have their own symbols of sovereignty – flag, emblem, anthem and capital city. Article 5 of the Russian Federal Constitution even defines Republics as ‘states’; in practice, they are represented by the federal government in Russia’s international affairs.

Other tiers of the federal system are ostensibly purely territorial and administrative, but as we can see from the account below recognition of ethnic and cultural difference is never far from the surface. Besides the twenty-one Republics there are forty-six ‘oblasts’ (provinces) – the most common type of federal ‘subjects’. Unlike the Republics, oblasts are not national but territorially based entities. Accordingly they merit less political autonomy. Many oblasts are located around the largest Russian cities, for example Nizhni Novgorod Oblast and Sverdlovsk Oblast, located near the city of Yekaterinburg. Another tier in the federal structure is made up of nine ‘krai’ – territories whose designation is mostly historic: the name ‘krai’ was originally given to frontier territories of the Russian Empire such as Krasnodar Krai which, with the Rostov Oblast, constitute the historic homelands of the Cossacks. Four ‘autonomous okrugs’ (districts) were initially autonomous entities within ‘oblasts’ and ‘krais’ that were created for ethnic minorities. Their status was elevated to that of federal subjects in the 1990s after the break-up of the USSR; a notable example is the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug in northwestern Siberia. One autonomous oblast – the Jewish Autonomous Oblast – was established by Joseph Stalin in 1934 ‘in order to allow the Jews of the Soviet Union to receive a territory in which to pursue Yiddish cultural heritage within a socialist framework’ (see Akopov and Razumeyko 2011: 9). Finally among the eighty-three subjects of
the Russian Federation are two federal metropolises, Moscow and St Petersburg, which, significantly, experience the most migration and multicultural development in Russia today.

An additional component of Modood’s definition of multiculturalism involves the question of national identity. In this respect we observe that alongside the evolution of Russian federalism, the country has also undergone significant changes in the theoretical understanding of what a nation is. During the Soviet era Stalin’s ‘primordial’ theory of the nation dominated thinking. Primordialism, or essentialism, is the argument that nations are ancient and natural phenomena. The assumption was that the community would have a fixed, unchangeable nature over time. In 1912 Stalin, the future head of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities, contended that ‘the nation is a historically stable community of people that emerged on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and mentality, manifested in commonality of culture’ (Stalin 1946: 296).

Primordialism, however, became the target of massive criticism in the West after World War II. Influenced in particular by the works of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, many scholars have come to treat the nation as a community constructed by the technologies and politics of modernity. Nevertheless, the primordial conception continued to dominate Soviet policies and discourses. This approach was widely accepted by Soviet scholars, in particular by the director of the influential Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences and notable Russian historian Lev Gumiliev. The prevailing philosophy in the USSR about nations could be generally characterized as assuming that individual nations, nationalities and ethnicities were defined in similar categories and all of them were controlled by the centralized Soviet state.

Today scholars and officials in Russia are slowly moving away from primordial understandings of the nation towards a constructivist approach in their explanations of the nature of national identity. For Olga Malinova, identity is a very effective mechanism for political mobilization and it is regularly used to shape collective political claims. Yet, once we attribute identity to a group, there is a risk that this identity will be transformed into some innate objective reality – in other words, it undergoes a process of reification – which often becomes cluttered with myths (especially about ‘national character’). In fact those myths are the result of competition between different narratives of identity (Malinova 2005: 13). The latter can be dangerous and can lead to separatist nationalism inside a country.
An attempt to position nations as existing naturally and eternally often enables elites to capitalize on xenophobic moods, making enemies out of immigrants and ethnic minorities. That has been an argument advanced by Valerii Tishkov (2007), director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. His concern has been to stop ‘the race for regional identities’ and instead promote them by way of one strong identity of ‘Rossiyanin’ – a citizen of multicultural Russia. (The best translation of ‘Rossiyanin’ would probably be the German Russländer.) According to Tishkov this implicit stress on a multicultural experience would best help preserve both the unity and diversity of contemporary Russia. In many ways this model resembles the French conception of ‘le citoyen avec l’identité civique’.

Since the ‘invention’ of the doctrine of ‘sovereign democracy’ in 2006, the idea of strengthening the sovereignty and unity of Russia and rebuilding its status as a great civilization has been paramount in official discourse. The consolidation of Russia’s general identity rather than privileging separate multicultural identities within the state is the predominant objective. So, in this respect, Putin’s article ‘on the national question’ reshapes the doctrine of ‘sovereign democracy’ by attempting to toe a fine line between preventing both Russian nationalism and anti-Russian nationalism, each of which has the potential to be a destructive force. ‘I am deeply convinced that attempts to expound on the idea of building a Russian “national”, mono-ethnic state is contrary to the whole of our thousand-year history,’ Putin wrote. ‘Moreover, it is the shortest path to the destruction of the Russian people and Russian statehood and any viable sovereign state on our land’. By the same token, Putin also noted the danger of excessive pandering to individual ethnic groups – the danger of multiculturalism. He advocated that all Russians should espouse a ‘civic patriotism’ and conform to a ‘single cultural code’ (Putin 2012: 1). He also cautioned against the growth of regional national parties which he viewed as susceptible to separatist agendas.

In the case of Russia the transformation to le citoyen has been considerably delayed and questions remain unanswered. For example, how can we strengthen the development of ‘Rossiyanin identity’ without suppressing long-standing Russian regionalism? How can we cement ‘civic patriotism’ in conditions of global migration? Finally, what does all this tell us about the future of multicultural theories and the liberal values they rest on (see Chapter 3) in Russia?
MULTINATIONALISM IN RUSSIA?

Before offering answers to these challenging questions let us review empirical evidence bearing on the issue of multiculturalism.

Empirical evidence on multiculturalism in contemporary Russia

In accordance with governmental order No. 1074 of the Russian Federation from 23 December 2009 the All-Russia population census was conducted in October 2010. Although the official results of the census ‘on national composition’ were only finalized in June 2012, the Department of Federal State Statistics published preliminary results (Table 13.1) enabling us to observe key trends in the dynamics of the Russian Federation’s ethnic configuration. Since the Russian Constitution grants citizens the right of free choice in terms of their national belonging, the data were based on respondents’ self-evaluation. The 2010 census also provided information on the language skills of the respondents.

Although the overall population of Russia decreased from 145 million in 2002 to 142 million in 2010, Russians who are Russian Orthodox have remained the preponderant majority, at 81 per cent both in 2002 and 2010. Many believe that this fact justifies describing Russia as a mono-national (mono-ethnic) state and, as such, it creates difficulties for establishing an equal dialogue between Russians and other ethnic groups. We have to take into account, however, the fact that the Russian population is spread around the territory unevenly. For example, in the Republic of Tatarstan the Russian population is barely 40 per cent, with Tatars representing 53 per cent of the total population. In the Chuvash Republic Russians are an even smaller minority (27 per cent) with Chuvash making up 68 per cent. In two Russian Federation Republics in the Caucasus, the minoritarian status of Russians is dramatic: 2 per cent in Chechnya (compared to 95 per cent ethnically Chechen) and 0.8 per cent in the Republic of Ingushetia (Federal Department of State Statistics Report 2011).

Since the mid-2000s the demographics of the migration flow to Russia have been changing. The share of labour migrants from Ukraine and China is declining while the independent states in Central Asia (in particular, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and the Caucasus region are now the leading sending countries. According to the 2010 census the largest diaspora living in the territory of Russia is from Uzbekistan (131,000 compared to only 71,000 in 2002). The Ukrainian diaspora has decreased from 231,000 (in 2002) to only
### Table 13.1 The largest self-identified ethnic groups in Russia and their language abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic groups and languages</th>
<th>2002 All-Russia Census (millions) / % from total population</th>
<th>2010 All-Russia Census (millions) / % from total population</th>
<th>2010 All-Russia Census % of respondents speaking languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian(s)</td>
<td>115.89 (80.64%)</td>
<td>111.02 (80.90%)</td>
<td>99.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatar(s)</td>
<td>5.55 (3.87%)</td>
<td>5.31 (3.87%)</td>
<td>3.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian(s)</td>
<td>2.94 (2.05%)</td>
<td>1.93 (1.41%)</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bashkir(s)</td>
<td>1.67 (1.16%)</td>
<td>1.58 (1.15%)</td>
<td>0.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuvash(s)</td>
<td>1.64 (1.14%)</td>
<td>1.44 (1.05%)</td>
<td>0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chechen(s)</td>
<td>1.36 (0.95%)</td>
<td>1.43 (1.04%)</td>
<td>0.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian(s)</td>
<td>1.13 (0.79%)</td>
<td>1.18 (0.86%)</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>insignificant (0.00%)</td>
<td>insignificant (0.00%)</td>
<td>5.48% (7,574,303)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German(s)</td>
<td>0.597 (0.41%)</td>
<td>0.394 (0.29%)</td>
<td>1.50% (2,069,949)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>insignificant (0.00%)</td>
<td>insignificant (0.00%)</td>
<td>0.45% (616,394)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>insignificant (0.00%)</td>
<td>insignificant (0.00%)</td>
<td>0.11% (152,147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0.034 (0.02%)</td>
<td>0.028 (0.02%)</td>
<td>0.05% (70,722)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MULTINATIONALISM IN RUSSIA?

93,000 (in 2010), while the Tajikistani diaspora has increased from 64,000 to 87,000 (Rossiiskaya gazeta 2011: 14).

The religious composition of migrants is also changing: about 41 per cent are Muslim or come from Muslim countries. Nowadays 70 per cent of migrant workers come from small towns and villages rather than large cities and capitals. The educational level of migrants is rapidly decreasing: half of the newcomers have no professional qualifications and the percentage of workers who speak Russian at a basic level is also declining. Many Russian scholars argue that the preconditions for ethnic conflicts in Russia are now rooted not so much in economic competition as in the sphere of sociocultural differences. The situation of growing ethnic imbalances and lack of integration mechanisms for migrants results in a rise in the level of xenophobia. But unlike the situation in Germany or France, Russian residents demonstrate a negative attitude towards not just immigrants from outside Russia (Central Asia, Moldova, China, Vietnam, the Caucasus and so on), but also towards their fellow Russian citizens coming from other parts of the same country (especially from the North Caucasus region) simply because they are perceived as ‘visible minorities’. According to public opinion polls, visible minorities evoke a strongly negative attitude towards newcomers in Russia generally and the cities of St Petersburg and Moscow in particular (see Akopov and Rozanova 2010: 78–9).

In December 2010 thousands of youth representing football fans of Spartak-Moscow and chanting nationalist slogans held a rally at Manezhnaya Square in Moscow which turned violent. It resulted in rioting and ethnically motivated violence across Moscow and made the square’s name synonymous in the media with the growth of nationalist sentiments in Russia. According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM)1, 65 per cent of those aware of the ethnic conflict in Manezhnaya Square responded that they did not support the participants. This attitude was spread across the supporters of political parties: 68 per cent of both United Russia and A Just Russia expressed opposition to the troublemakers. The numbers were not much different for other demographic groups: elderly citizens (74 per cent), residents of medium-sized cities (71 per cent) and of rural areas (69 per cent). The majority of respondents (79 per cent) replied that they would not take part in such actions. This was the response of supporters of United Russia (83 per cent), the elderly (87 per cent), citizens educated to post-secondary level (81 per cent) and the population of the north-west of Russia (87 per cent).
By contrast, a more supportive attitude to the rioters was expressed by 18 per cent of the survey sample among whom were followers of the Liberal Democratic Party LDPR (41 per cent), inhabitants of large agglomerations (St Petersburg and Moscow at 27 per cent) and young people under thirty-four (22–4 per cent). Moreover, 11 per cent of respondents replied that they might take part in such violent actions: LDPR (32 per cent), young people under thirty-four (16 per cent), the less educated (14 per cent), people from the Far East (15 per cent), from the Urals and the central parts of Russia (14 per cent), from the North Caucasuses (13 per cent) and from the south of Russia (12 per cent).

Other public opinion polls directly and indirectly confirm these tendencies. For example, a survey conducted by VCIOM on ‘Russians’ attitude towards international marriages’ vividly illustrated how the most favoured marriages are those between Russians (70 per cent). More ‘neutral’ attitudes were found regarding marriages between Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians (45 per cent), Slavs or Europeans (44 per cent), citizens of the Baltic States (43 per cent) and Americans (41 per cent). As hostile attitudes we can classify reactions to marriages between Russians and Chechens (65 per cent), Arabs (63 per cent), people from Central Asia (60 per cent), Caucasians (54 per cent) and Jews (46 per cent).

In another survey Russian citizens were asked: ‘Please name the nations and peoples that make you feel irritation or resentment’. Most often, respondents’ negative emotions were directed at Caucasian peoples (29 per cent). The next most negative choice, with a much lower percentage, was people from Central Asia (6 per cent). Only 3 per cent of respondents – a surprisingly low proportion – stated that they did not like Chinese or Jews. One respondent in two could not name specific reasons for rejecting other peoples and nations. Those who could come up with such a reason often expressed their concerns about the threat of terrorist attacks (13 per cent) and the reluctance of newcomers to take into account the norms and practices followed in Russia (11 per cent).

Poll results published by VCIOM in 2012 (24 January) were based on surveys conducted among the residents of Moscow and St Petersburg. They confirmed that among the ethnic groups that evoke most resentment were all the people of Caucasian origin (31 per cent of negative answers in Moscow and 28 per cent in St Petersburg). The second most negatively regarded group were people from Tajikistan (23 per cent of negative answers in Moscow and 24
per cent in St Petersburg). Ranked next in terms of negative attitudes expressed were those targeting Azerbaijans (17 per cent in Moscow) and Uzbeks (18 per cent in St Petersburg).4

In February 2012 VCIOM released the results of their poll on reactions to Putin’s suggestions that stricter immigration laws be adopted and criminal liability be assigned to violators of such rules and regulations regarding migrant registration. It turned out that 77 per cent of Russians supported this idea while 79 per cent endorsed Putin’s idea about preventing closed national enclaves from appearing on the political map of the Russian Federation.5 These attitudes did not represent ripe conditions for the spread of liberal, multicultural values.

**Normative implications**

What are the normative implications of the apparent decline in multiculturalism for liberal values in Russia? The question takes on greater importance given the absence of liberal political parties in the State Duma since 2003; these parties are generally considered to be the Russian United Democratic Party (Yabloko) and the Union of the Right Forces. Or is it the case that an inverse relationship exists: multiculturalism is not very popular in Russia because of the lack of wide support for liberal values?

Meeting in St Petersburg in April 2011, the Russian Association of Political Sciences held a round table discussion on ‘the role of the St Petersburg political science epistemic communities in an era of crisis of multiculturalism in Europe’.6 The proceedings indicated that even within the academic community the attitude towards the future of multiculturalism in Russia could be characterized as very cautious. The circumspect approach towards multiculturalism in Russia is reflected in a number of works. In his paper entitled ‘Why should Russia have multiculturalism?’ Vladimir Malakhov, a specialist in nationalism and citizenship studies at the European University in St Petersburg, expressed

concerns about the policy of cultural pluralism (multiculturalism) caused by the forms in which multiculturalism was implemented in some Western states, namely the ethnocentrism of such policies. Since the term ‘multiculturalism’ is now firmly associated with ethnically and religiously motivated isolationism, it seems inappropriate to try to release this term from its negative connotations and give it a new civic-democratic sense. (Malakhov 2002: 57)
For Yekaterinburg academic Victor Martyanov, multiculturalism has failed to solve the problem of the coexistence of different identities and interests within a framework of competition and hierarchy. In practice multiculturalism therefore turns into an ethnonationalism while the demands for cultural equality, pluralism and tolerance remain only abstract imperatives. Instead of integration of group interests on the basis of universal transnational values and institutions, multiculturalism has helped set in motion processes of diffusion of sovereignty and nation-state identity (Martyanov 2007: 267).

As we can infer, both Malakhov and Martyanov do not argue against the philosophy of multiculturalism as such. They recognize the emergence of multicultural communities even in the absence of corresponding values. Thus, Malakhov notes how

today the major Russian cities, in their ethnic, linguistic, religious and life-style diversity, more and more resemble the mega-cities of the West. There is no doubt that the cultural diversity of the Russian people under the influence of migration will only increase. In this situation to hold on to the monocultural ideals would mean to stay dreadfully deaf . . . Therefore, the question is not whether to encourage or not to encourage, promote or not to promote cultural diversity, but what forms should be promoted. (Malakhov 2002: 58)

In considering the normative implications of weak multiculturalism in Russia, it may be constructive to consider changing the philosophy of multinationalism or of mononational civic patriotism in Russia in the direction of transnationalism. I suggest that the concept of transnationalism and the values it embodies might be the appropriate way to explain how we can override a fear of foreigners, the challenges of migration and in general the neo-Schmittian paradigm of politics. Raymond Taras has provided the following definition of the term:

*Transnationalism* – a condition where national interests are subordinated to wider ones involving promotion of a national common good – is a term that meets with widespread approval in the EU . . . The assumption of most theories of transnationalism is that citizens have multiple, nested, situational and fluid identities – not a single fixed one. Moreover transformative political processes have challenged traditional, restrictive notions of national citizenship. Economic and cultural globalization has further weakened citizens’ exclusive attachment to the nation-state . . . The paradigmatic form of transnationalism today is Europeanness. (Taras 2009: 69–70)
MULTINATIONALISM IN RUSSIA?

European nations, Taras points out, are not what they used to be: with the integration of millions of non-Europeans, host societies have been substantially transformed. Rather than using the terms assimilation or integration, Taras supports the proposal made by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance to use the category ‘integrated society’. Hence he refers to successful integration as a two-way process, one of mutual recognition and inclusion of majority and minority groups. Many people are also increasingly involved in transnational politics through their discourse, networks, commerce and organizations. In the process, they have developed identities of a supranational kind (Taras 2009: 70).

Describing the same transformations in Europe, Spanish academic Luis Moreño notes that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, national state identities are openly questioned and have become problematic. A parallel development to this is a noticeable strengthening of sub- and supra-state identities. In plural polities, decentralization, federalization and subsidiarity seek to provide an institutional response to the stimuli of their internal diversity (Moreño 2006: 2). Following Moreño, I suggest that parts of his typology can be applied to an analysis of pluralism in contemporary Russia. The notions of ‘dual’ or ‘compound’ identity – or perhaps ‘shared citizenship’ from Modood’s definition – can help explain the process of devolution and decentralization not only in Britain and Spain (reflecting the Scottish and Catalan cases respectively), but also in Russia regarding the historically complex cases of regional identities.

We can perhaps even apply Moreño’s terminology (2006) of ‘cosmopolitan localism’ to Russian agglomerations such as Moscow and St Petersburg. When employing the term transnational community, I consciously distinguish it from postnationality, which presumes the complete erosion of nationality-anchored identity. I agree with Taras that postnational values spread unevenly – more so in the Western part of Europe where it utterly challenges the raison d’être of the nation state. Accordingly, in the case of European Russia it is not postnationalism but transnationalism that seems a more balanced and appropriate principle governing identity construction than nationalism and xenophobia.

Many scholars have stressed the negative effects of globalization, claiming that the interests and agendas of transnational corporations, major banks and financial institutions, and media organizations result in a market-driven globalism that crushes cultural diversity and turns the citizen into a mere consumer. This perspective
is often replicated in media coverage (see Petersson 2006). However, Paul Hopper has persuasively argued that globalizing processes contribute to a more profound cosmopolitanism by affording us the opportunity to experience a greater range of cultural influences and traditions to mix and match in the process of self-constitution (Hopper 2006: 65). In this respect Russia’s ‘opening up’ to the West is always a trade-off for elites but is also an inevitable and constructive process promoting the educational and economic interests of Russian citizens.

Negotiations aimed at abolishing visa regimes between Russia and the EU, and Russia and the US, is incontrovertible evidence that Russia is a far more transnational society than it used to be – or appears to be. Although the results of the 2012 Russian presidential elections show that the vast majority of the population (64 per cent) supports Putin’s philosophy of geopolitics, it is of great significance that the runner-up in Moscow (with 20 per cent) and St Petersburg (16 per cent) was Mikhail Prokhorov. In his election programme Prokhorov emphasized the need to ‘develop and launch strategies to integrate the EU and Russian Federation into a single geoeconomic area with common economic and visa regulations, a common currency based on the euro and the ruble, and compatible legal systems’. On the subject of multiculturalism, Prokhorov called for an elimination of ‘the existing division of Russia’s federal districts and, after a referendum, the implementation of a programme of consolidation of the Russian Federation to create between twenty-five and thirty units, each with its own strong economic and historical identity’ (Prokhorov 2012). This consolidation could have the effect of institutionalizing pluralism in a more effective and rational way which, in turn, could at some point produce twenty-five to thirty embryonic multicultural regions in Russia.

Missionary zeal of a chosen nation, and as a result a deep-seated and widespread nationalism, seems characteristic of many former empires, including Russia. However, Marlene Laruelle writes that:

as paradoxical as it may at first seem, the Kremlin interprets nationalism as an instrument in the service of Russia’s triple goal: modernization, normalization and Westernization . . . even if this is achieved by military or totalitarian means, as once occurred under Peter the Great. (Laruelle 2009: 203)

Or, as Russell Bova concisely puts it, ‘no one in China, India or the Arab world, to take but a few examples, would ask whether they
MULTINATIONALISM IN RUSSIA?

were Europeans, let alone state as unequivocally as did Gorbachev and Putin . . . that “we are Europeans”” (Bova 2010: 37). As a result, contemporary Russia’s path should lead not to an ‘enemy’-based militarized patriotism or ‘enlightened conservatism’ but rather to ‘cosmopolitan patriotism’ – at least claiming European heritage.

My normative preference for the development of a cosmopolitan patriotism that subsumes Western liberal and multicultural experiences reflects ideas found in Martha Nussbaum’s desiderata for the US system of education:

As students here grow up, is it sufficient for them to learn that they are above all the citizens of the United States but they ought to respect the basic human rights of citizens of India, Bolivia, Nigeria, and Norway? Or should they – as I think – in addition to giving special attention to the history and current situation of their own nation, learn a good deal more then they frequently do about the rest of the world in which they live, about India and Bolivia and Nigeria and their histories, problems and comparative successes? Should they learn only that citizens of India have equal basic human rights, or should they also learn about the problems of hunger and pollution in India, and the implication of these problems for the larger issues of global hunger and global ecology? Most important, should they be taught that they are, above all, citizens of the United States, or should they instead be taught that they are, above all, citizens of the world of human beings, and that, while they happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world with citizens from other countries? I suggest . . . arguments for the second concept of education, which I call cosmopolitan education. (Nussbaum 1996: 6)

Actors in contemporary international politics, Martyanov observes, ‘usually prefer boxing to chess, and situational tactical pragmatism to long-term normative strategy. Therefore the world is experiencing a deficit of normative politics, in other words, a lack of widely-accepted long-term goals and values’ (Martyanov 2007: 282). The politics of fear based almost exclusively on power exposes the absence of both political trust and transparency. World politics today is carried out ‘behind closed doors’. The situation in contemporary international relations is similar to the one in Russian domestic politics described by Michael Urban – a lack of communicative space for the opposition. He argues that such opposition must be part of or ‘loyal’ to some entity greater than either itself or that which it opposes (Urban 2010: 187). I conclude, then, that we need space for loyal opposition and political trust transcending images of the
‘enemy’ – whether projected on the international arena or at home targeting ethnic minorities (see Akopov 2010).

Storytelling is a universal anthropological phenomenon for conveying meaning. While humankind is a storytelling creature, not all professional storytellers provide ‘good case narratives’. For better or for worse, today’s media as well as blogospheres make the narratives spun by public intellectuals more widespread and influential than ever before. Some narratives promote intercultural understanding and dialogue, others conflict and cultural wars. Intellectuals on the edge of multiple national cultures and boundaries, that is, intellectuals with transnational identities and values, can bridge political ‘walls’ and raise ‘curtains’ that divide cultures.

Transnational intellectuals are equipped to transcend the nationalism of their nation states. But – of special importance at a time of a supposed retreat from multiculturalism – they can also narrate an alternative to old-style multiculturalism – understood negatively as the triumph of relativism and diversity over human universality. The dialectics between the global and the local – ‘the paradox of our times’, in David Held’s apposite phrase – involve a grappling with collective issues that are increasingly global yet using means to resolve them that remain national and local, weak and incomplete (Held 2010: 143). Multicultural theories seem, therefore, inadequate in addressing global issues, including those of international migration, that are best resolved by translocal or transnational actors.

Notes
2. VCIOM, 3–4 July 2010; 1,600 people in 140 towns in 42 regions of Russia. See http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=268&uid=13774
3. VCIOM, 1–2 May 2010; 1,600 respondents from 140 towns in 42 regions of Russia. See http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=268&uid=13515
6. The report on this seminar is available at http://rapn.ru/?grup=595&doc=3656
MULTINATIONALISM IN RUSSIA?

References


Laruelle, M. (2009), In the Name of the Nation. Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.


CHALLENGING MULTICULTURALISM


