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Historical Legacies in Eurasian Diaspora and Compatriot Policies

Abstract: The post-Soviet diaspora and compatriot policies appear to demonstrate that a new phenomenon emerged after the USSR's dissolution. An examination of the Soviet approaches to the "nationalities question" and pre-Soviet imperial governance patterns shows that the imaginaries of expatriate communities were inherent to both periods' perceptions and state action. For various reasons, the issues of ethnicity-based subnational statehood and original ethnic territories were not clearly formulated and articulated; as a result, expatriate issues were not on the surface, but nevertheless materialized in pragmatic arrangements. Since the Soviet Union's dissolution, the newly independent states have pursued diaspora and compatriot policies; generally, they target and favor co-ethnics, but this rationale is often not clearly articulated and is not always consistently followed. The said policies still demonstrate conceptual and terminological ambiguity and eclecticism; the governments avoid a straightforward and strongly worded manifestation of their countries' ethnic underpinning but employ diaspora issues to display ethnic preferences. The practical approaches to diasporas and compatriots to various degrees demonstrate inconsistencies and gaps; flexibility in "talks" and "action" provide the best opportunities in achieving ad hoc pragmatic goals. One can assume that the major features of expatriate policies (as well as ethnic diversity policies) in most Northern Eurasian countries resemble the patterns of Soviet rule.

Diaspora and compatriot policies within the former Soviet Union (also referred to as Northern Eurasia) basically seem to simultaneously follow two lines of logic, namely an ethno-nationalist approach and loyalty to policy guidelines set up by international law and the "global cultural theme"[1] in market economic development. Thus, the region might look similar to many other parts of Europe and the world, but there are some nuances that should be taken into account. One may assume that Marxist–Leninist doctrinal heritage as well as imperial and Soviet policy patterns might ultimately affect

1 Shushanik Makaryan, "Emigration-Diaspora Policy Nexus in Migration Policies of the EU Eastern Partnership Countries and in Russia," *CARIM East – Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration. Analytic and Synthetic Notes*, 2013/03, https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/27893; id., "Construction of Migration Policies in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Union," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 23, Issue 2 (2015): 222–237; Oxana Shevel, "The Post-Communist Diaspora Laws. Beyond the 'Good Civic versus Bad Ethnic' Nationalism Dichotomy," *East European Politics & Societies*, 24, no.1 (2010): 159–187.

public perceptions and state action within the former USSR. This article is about the post-Soviet space; the Soviets' impact upon a broader former communist bloc is beyond the articles' scope.

Briefly, the issue in focus is the broad notion of "expatriate minority communities."[2] The imaginary of an ethnic or culturally distinct group involves the idea of this group's extension beyond its original or core territory and/or polity and, accordingly, the conceptualization of the people constituting the extension as "diaspora" or in another way.[3] The next step following the acceptance of such an imaginary is the recognition that the residence of the group's segment apart from its core and in an alien environment might require special supportive measures on the core's side. Thus, diaspora policies include, first, the construction of the target group and, second, the binding of this group with the state of its origin.[4]

This article is to begin with two disclaimers. First, legacy is a highly demanding notion; in the modern scholarly literature, it denotes either a full and concise transfer of a certain institution or practice across a historical divide[5] or a full or partial continuity of the same institutional pattern or practice.[6] With regard to issues under consideration, one can only presume continuity, and the full adequacy of the term "legacy" remains a hypothesis until the mechanisms behind the continuity and isomorphism are analyzed in each individual case. Here, I employ the word "legacy" rather in a broad and lay meaning as a presumable common origin, resilience and continuity of certain discursive and policy patterns.

Second, by no means am I going to argue that the post-Soviet space is unique. A search for and overview of common features do not imply that there is a gap between the region and other parts of the world. The comparison within the region is merely an attempt to trace back some processes and thus only to better understand the evolutions in the given geographic framework.

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2 William Safran, "Diasporas in Modem Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 83.

3 For an overview of the term's implications and scenarios of appropriation and usage see: Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin, eds. *Diasporas: Concepts, intersections, identities* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2010); Harjinder Singh Majhail and Sinan Doğan, eds. *World of Diasporas: Different Perceptions on the Concept of Diaspora* (Leiden; Boston: Brill-Rodopi, 2019); Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019); Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist, *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

4 Agnieszka Weinar, "Introduction," in *Emigration and Diaspora Policies in the Age of Mobility*, ed. Agnieszka Weinar (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 4.

5 Jason Wittenberg, "Conceptualizing Historical Legacies," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29, no. 2 (May 2015): 366–378.

6 Mark R. Beissinger and Steven Kotkin, eds. *Historical Legacies of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

I intend to outline the features of pre-Soviet and Soviet top-down theoretical and practical approaches to ethnic diversity and migration issues and to list the parallels with the contemporary policies. In the given article, I limit myself to considering the scholarly and lay conceptualizations of what one can call diaspora and compatriots issues possibly inherited from the past. This article does not offer full and substantiated answers but rather points out problematic fields and phenomena that deserve further scholarly attention. As for the policy practices, one can only delineate the areas where the patterns of the Soviet-time and even earlier policies have possibly affected the current state action. Even the authoritarian regimes that persist in most post-Soviet states substantively are too far from the Soviet state-run economy and single-party system. There are similarities in the techniques of governance, but the analysis of whether they are a heritage of the past or merely analogues requires a detailed examination of individual cases that goes far beyond the scope of a single article. One can probably outline problematic fields that deserve further studies in this regard.

Two concepts—diaspora and compatriots—are used below in two ways. First, they both, as well as their analogues, are regarded as categories of practice and as parts of vocabularies employed in Northern Eurasia. Secondly, they both can be instrumental as container terms denoting the attitudes to "expatriate minorities," or simply "expatriates" respectively from a group-centric perspective; as "diaspora," or people residing outside of their ethnic "homeland"; and from a political perspective as individuals somehow linked to a political community but spatially placed outside of it. The attitudes and the modes of framing "expatriate communities" cannot be confined to these two concepts, but they both cover the main issues. Below, the formulation "diaspora and compatriots" as well as the word "expatriates" are used for delineating the entire thematic area unless a specification is required.

Eurasian diaspora-related issues and policies

Fifteen internationally recognized states that were part of the Soviet Union differ in ethnic composition, the number and the state of co-ethnics and citizens resident abroad, as well as the policies concerning these two categories.[7] The existing scholarly literature and handbooks provide more or less detailed overviews of these issues.[8]

7 For overviews and the basic statistics see, for example: *European Union Global Diaspora Facility. Diaspora engagement map*, https://diasporafordevelopment.eu/diaspora-engagement-map/.

8 See Milana V. Nikolko and David Carment, eds. *Post-Soviet Migration and Diasporas. From Global Perspectives to Everyday Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Kjetil Duvold, "Beyond Borders: The Return of Kin-state Politics in Europe," *Baltic Worlds*, no. 1–2 (2015): 19–32; Olga Gulina, "Mesto proshlomu – v nashem nastoyashem" [The place for the past is in our contemporaneity], *International Politics and Society*, May 24, 2021, https://www.ipg-journal.io/rubriki/demokraticheskoe-obshchestvo/mesto-proshlomu-v-nashem-nastojashchem-1302.

In a nutshell, the policies basically depend on the demographic situation and on a certain government's interest either in providing favorable conditions for outward labor migration as a source of remittances or in encouraging the immigration of the titular nation's co-ethnics for correcting the demographic situation.[9] Moreover, governments declare their intention to develop relations with expatriates for humanitarian and economic purposes, such as national consolidation, the promotional of national culture, and international cooperation. Some, such as Russia and Ukraine, declare the protection of the rights of compatriots abroad, and Ukraine explicitly puts forward the principle of reciprocity—in other words, minority protection in Ukraine must be dependent on the treatment of Ukrainians abroad.[10] None of the post-Soviet states except for Russia[11] explicitly demonstrate (with some minor reservations) willingness to instrumentalize their co-ethnics or "compatriots" abroad as political leverage in international relations. Against this mosaic background, the issues of diaspora, co-ethnics, or compatriots figure in symbolic and propaganda exercises targeting both domestic and foreign audiences.

The degree and shapes of diaspora policies' formal institutionalization currently look similar across the region. As a rule, there are constitutional and/or legal provisions concerning citizens living abroad and broader categories of diaspora and compatriots. Most post-Soviet constitutions guarantee state protection to citizens residing or staying abroad; a lesser number refer to co-ethnics or diaspora, and there is a dynamic. The first constitution of independent Kazakhstan (adopted in 1993) contained a provision about the state's obligation towards ethnic Kazakhs,[12] but nothing similar is present in the subsequent and currently effective constitution of 1995. The Russian Constitution of 1993 made no mention of compatriots, only commenting on the protection of citizens abroad (Art.61 [2]), but the 2020 amendments brought about a new Article 69 [3], which stipulates that the country supports "compatriots living abroad."[13] Among the constitutions adopted after the Soviet Union's dissolution, only three, namely those of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan,[14] and Ukraine, directly refer to co-ethnics abroad.

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9 Makaryan, "Emigration-Diaspora Policy Nexus"; Gulina, "Mesto proshlomu".

10 Art. 1–2 (6) of the 2004/2012 Ukrainian law on foreign Ukrainians; Zakon Ukraiiny "Pro zakordonnyh ukraiintsev" (v redaktsii Zakonu No. 4381-VI vid 09.02.2012) [Law of Ukraine "About Foreign Ukrainians"; the version of Law No. 4381-VI of 09.02.2012]. https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1582-15#Text.

11 Agnia Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 57–93.

12 The constitutional and legislative texts of Kazakhstan are available at the official database https://online.zakon.kz.

13 The Constitution of the Russian Federation (official translation), http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-01.htm.

14 In the 2010/2021 Constitution of Kyrgyzstan—only with regard to the simplified acquisition of citizenship.

Most post-Soviet countries have special laws about state policy concerning diaspora and compatriots. The comprehensiveness of these acts varies from generally declarative pieces containing general approaches (like in Russia or Belarus) to detailed instructions about the acquisition of the compatriot status and the registration of compatriots' organizations (such as in Georgia and Ukraine). However, the major operational principles and goals are stipulated in conceptual outlines and target programs issued by the executive.

From the mid-2000s, organizational frameworks also have looked alike across the region. Most countries have established special bodies in charge of diaspora and compatriot issues, but their placement within the executive might be different.[15] On the contrary, policy patterns differ significantly, being dependent on the overall economic situation, available resources, the states' capacity, and basic foreign policy goals. The states engagement with diaspora or compatriots may stretch from isolationism and disregard (Turkmenistan to date and Uzbekistan up until 2017[16]) to the pro-active development and maintenance of cooperative ties (for example, Georgia and Kazakhstan). The emphasis, ways of conceptualization, and the modes of external policies concerning diaspora or compatriots are also changing over time.

What unites all these different and divergent phenomena and which of these unifying features can be further considered as an effect of earlier common history? Below, I overview two domains, namely historical origins and presumable the continuity of past conceptual patterns and imaginaries in the current conceptual and discursive frameworks. Then, I list some organizational and political templates that are presumably affected by conceptual legacies.

Historical background: recognition and conceptualization

The overall intellectual and political developments in Northern Eurasia over at least the last 150 years demonstrate a kind of paradox. On the one hand, the elites' social imagination inherently has contained the vision and ideas of expatriate groups. On the other hand, for a variety of reasons, this imaginary was not conceptualized and politically instrumentalized until the demise of the Soviet Union, and the current diaspora *problematique* looks like an imported commodity or improvisation.

15 See *European Union Global Diaspora Facility*.
16 Gulina, "Mesto proshlomu".

The Russian Empire had a population heterogeneous in terms of language, religion, and affiliation with earlier statehoods;[17] different groups were often intermingled in the same territory. Groups that could be deemed "expatriates" were coming into being out of migration but also because of demographic categorizations in the last decades of imperial and first decades of the Soviet rule.[18] Some population segments having linguistic and cultural commonalities with larger "nationalities" were classified as their parts; for example, some Turkic groups of Siberia were defined as "Tatars" and statistically and administratively became an extension of the Volga Tatars.

Throughout the 19th century, the Russian Empire was going through the process of "nationalization": imperial authorities, public intellectuals, and academia were gradually reinterpreting diversity, mastering the ideas of culturally homogenous groups and/or groups of common descent and thus moving from estate and religious terminology to the notion of "nationality."[19] However, the concept of diaspora or its direct substitutes were not in official use during the imperial period. There were rather remote analogues employed for the pragmatic considerations of security and governability.[20] On the one hand, some groups (partly dispersed) were regarded as "alien," non-assimilable and potentially disloyal and thus were subject to surveillance and discriminatory treatment (primarily Jews and Poles; during World War I, also Germans).[21] On the other, the government treated Orthodox Eastern

17 Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire. A Multi-ethnic History* (London: Routledge, 2001); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914*. (DeKalb, Il: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996).

18 Juliette Cadiot, "Searching for Nationality: Statistics and National Categories at the End of the Russian Empire (1897–1917)," *Russian Review* 64, no.3 (2005): 440–455; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

19 Tania Raffass, *The Soviet Union - Federation or Empire?* (London: Routledge, 2012), 183; Vera Tolz, "Constructing Race, Ethnicity, and Nationhood in Imperial Russia: Issues and Misconceptions," in *Ideologies of Race. Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, ed. David Rainbow (Montreal and Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 48.

20 Peter Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Robert Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111–144; Charles Steinwedel, "To Make a Difference: The Construction of a Category of Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russia," in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Practices, Knowledge*, ed. Yanni Kotsonis and David Hoffman (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 2000), 67–86.

21 Elena Campbell (Vorob'eva), "'Iedinaia i nedelimaia Rossiia' i 'inorodcheskii vopros' v imperskoi ideologii samoderzhaviia" ["United and indivisible Russia" and the "aliens question" in the imperial ideology of autocracy], in *Prostranstvo vlasti: Istoricheskii opyt Rossii i vyzovy sovremennosti* [The Space of Power: The Historical Experience of Russia and the Challenges of Contemporaneity], ed. Boris Anan'ich and Sergei Barzilov (Moscow: MONF, 2001), 204–216; John W. Slocum, "Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia," *Russian Review* 57, no.2 (1998): 173–190.

Slavonic settlers as its instrument of control over the conquered territories and strove to reinforce and socially support the "Russian element."[22]

It is a commonplace in the scholarly literature that under the Soviet rule multi-ethnicity was institutionalized in two major forms, namely territorial and personal.[23] The major ethnic groups were endowed, at least symbolically, with territorial statehood or autonomy of different levels;[24] in other words, ethnonationalism was tamed and incorporated into the discursive and organizational structure of the communist imperial state. Concurrently, the Soviet state elaborated a nomenclature of "nationalities" and attributed ethnicity to each individual through official recordings in personal identity documents.[25] In sum, there were administrative territories designated to certain "titular" ethnicities and the persons belonging to the same ethnic groups but residing outside of these respective areas. For example, the union republic of Georgia symbolically belonged to Georgians, and Georgians living in other republics remained part of the same Georgian ethnonation.

Internal dispersed minorities in fact played a significant role in the social life of the Soviet Union; moreover, the USSR can be called an "empire of diasporas."[26] Some minority groups had their kin states outside of the USSR (e.g., Finns, Germans, and Poles) and vice versa—numerous titular as well as non-titular nations within the Soviet Union had co-ethnics abroad. In principle, there was room for the imaginaries of domestic and external diasporas as well as certain opportunities and incentives for the pursuit of diaspora policies. Moreover, the Soviet government assumingly was to somehow address the issue of former imperial nationals and Soviet citizens who fled in millions during the 1917–22 Civil War, subsequent state repressions, and World War II. However, these implications and respective expectations generally did not materialize, and actual discourses and policies were quite different.

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22 Mikhail Dolbilov, Alexei Miller, Liliya Berezhnaya, Oleg Budnitskii, Alexander Makushin, Ekaterina Pravilova, Rustem Tsiunchuk, et al. *Zapadnye okrainy Rossiskoi Imperii* [The Western Margins of the Russian Empire] (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2006); Leonid Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: poliaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol'she* [The Paradoxes of Imperial Policy: Poles in Russia and Russian in Poland] (Moscow: Indrik, 1999).

23 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26–48.

24 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no.2 (1994): 414–452; Gregory Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism: The Struggle for Republican Rights in the USSR* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1990).

25 Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 197–228.

26 Erik R. Scott, *Familiar Strangers. The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Firstly, the issues of diasporas and compatriots were not conceptualized. The "Marxist–Leninist theory of nationalities question" offered an eclectic theorizing about "nation" as a social formation bound by the common territory, economic life, and culture.[27] However, the official Soviet doctrine did not exclude the recognition of "nationality" as a multiplicity of individuals of common origin and cultural traits; in other words, the possibility of expatriate communities was recognized by default without specific theoretical insights. The very topic of diaspora and related theories were virtually non-existent in social scholarship until the very end of the USSR.[28]

Moreover, after World War II, this very phenomenon of co-ethnics abroad was basically silenced. The existence of divided ethnic groups, such as Azeri Turks separated between the USSR and Iran, Turkmen partly living in Iran, or Tajiks and Uzbeks in Afghanistan, was almost a taboo for media and mass literature. The Soviet authorities were doing their best to consolidate the separate Moldovan identity and discourage any utterance of pointing out that Moldovans could be regarded even as a kin group of Romanians.[29]

The theorizing about the "nationalities question" emphasized the socio-economic dimension of "nation," and the idea of ethnic "homeland" did not explicitly assert that historical and cultural ethnic "roots" were the basis for nationality-based statehoods. However, some authors stress that such a vision was part of public attitudes[30] although nationalist Romanticism was not a component of the Bolshevik canonic approach but rather a derived interpretation or an implication. These perceptions about the primacy of "rooted" ethnicities were gradually and pragmatically elaborated at the regional level by the local academia, which was encouraged by the republican communist party bosses to justify tacit "nationalizing policies" and territorial claims by cultural and historical arguments.[31]

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27 Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations. The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union* (Boulder: Westview press, 1991); Walter A. Kemp, *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union: A Basic Contradiction?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

28 Some parallels can be seen in the late Soviet "theory of ethnos" elaborated in the Academy of Sciences and the respective distinction between "ethnos" as "social organism," (i.e., socially and economically bounded entity within a polity and "ethnos'" in a broad sense [or "ethnikos"] or culturally distinct entity). See David G. Anderson, Dmitry V. Arzyutov and Sergei S. Alymov, eds., *Life Histories of Etnos Theory in Russia and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019).

29 Matthew H. Ciscel, *The Language of the Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and Identity in an ex-Soviet Republic* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1999).

30 Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr, Edward Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 139.

31 Viktor Shnirelman, *Voyny pam'ati: mify, identichnost' i politika v Zakavkazye* [Memory wars: myth, identity and politics in Transcaucasia] (Moscow: Akademkniga, 2003).

Secondly, there were virtually no structured policies concerning domestic or internal diasporas, and exceptions are few. In the 1920s and early 1930s, there existed numerous public cultural and educational institutions as well as minority sections in the communist party apparatus and administrative bodies that were serving dispersed minority groups.[32] Later on, from the second half of the 1930s, the number of separate minority institutions significantly diminished,[33] but there still existed some Armenian public schools in Georgia, Uzbek and Kyrgyz schools in Tajikistan, Moldovan schools in Ukraine, and so forth.[34] Some scholars interpret the dominant status of the Russian language and the existence of media, cultural institutions, and schools run in Russian across the country as amounting to an exterritorial status of ethnic Russians and even as Russian cultural autonomy.[35] Such a view rather obstructs a correct understanding of the system's rationales and modes of functioning, although Russians outside Russia were in fact the major beneficiaries. The promotion of the Russian language as the *lingua franca* was a tool of gluing the country together and creating the new "Soviet people" across ethnic divides; the notion of Russians beyond their "homeland" as well as of other nationalities was present neither in official discourse nor in state action.

Although the treatment of dispersed ethnic groups in the USSR remains basically underexplored, the information available allows one to say that these minority arrangements were merely technical solutions. Minority schools were truly supplied with textbooks from the respective eponymous republics, and pedagogues for expatriate minority schools were as a rule trained there. In the same vein, republican authorities may have resorted to ad hoc actions using high-ranked co-ethnics in the USSR capital city as a lobbying tool or prominent artists as role models and brands. However, there was no deliberate comprehensive policies targeting co-ethnics or diasporas within the USSR.

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32 Peter A. Blitstein, "Cultural Diversity and the Interwar Conjuncture: Soviet Nationality Policy in Its Comparative Context," *Slavic Review* 65, no.2 (2006): 273–293; Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union. The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 56–64; Valentina G. Chebotareva, *Natsional'naya politika Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 1925–1938 gg.* [Nationalities policy of the Russian Federation, 1925–1938] (Moscow: Moskovskii Dom natsional'nostei, 2008).

33 Dina Amanzholova, *Formatirovanie sovetskosti: Natsional'nye menshinstva v ethnopoliticheskom landshafte SSSR. 1920–1930-e gg.* [The formatting of the Sovietness: national minorities in ethnopolitical landscape] (Moscow: Sobraniye, 2010); Viktor Donninghaus, *V teni "Bolshogo Brata": Zapadnye natsional'nye men'shinstva v SSSR, 1917–1938 gg.* [In the "Big Brother's" Shadow: The Western National Minorities in the USSR, 1917–1938] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2011); Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 311–393.

34 Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 86.

35 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 40; Will Kymlicka, "Identity politics in multinational states," in *State Consolidation and National Identity*. Science and Technique of Democracy Series. No. 38 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2005), 51.

Thirdly, there was also no comprehensive and even articulated policy concerning "external" diasporas. There is ample evidence that the Soviet authorities in the 1920s and early 1930s were in some way employing the "Piedmont principle."[36] In other words, they were expecting that a favorable treatment of minorities (such as Poles in Belorussia or Moldovans in Ukraine) or titular ethnicities (such as Belarusians and Ukrainians) would boost positive attitudes to the Soviet Union among the exploited working class and subjugated minorities. However, the usage of diasporas within the Soviet Union for showcasing the Bolshevism's achievements was not combined with any significant attempts to instrumentalize kin minorities abroad.[37] Moreover, even in the 1920s, the Soviet officialdom refrained from encouraging contact with co-ethnics across borders; for example, although there was a campaigning for the international solidarity of Roma, no steps were made to connect the Soviet Roma activists with foreign Roma.[38]

Later on, in the early 1930s, the issues of nationalities that had kinstates abroad were securitized, and these people were in fact treated as potentially disloyal to the Soviet state and a resource for foreign intelligence.[39] Public institutions and local territorial autonomous entities associated with "Western" minorities (i.e., Germans, Poles, Latvians, Estonians, and Finns) were abolished, and then throughout the 1930s a large part of their elites and even socially active members were physically exterminated.[40] This repressive policy was in line with minimizing all communications with foreign countries and foreigners and persecuting all officially unauthorized contacts. Probably, the only exception was the establishment and functioning of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (1941–1948) used during World War II for mobilizing the Jewish diaspora's solidarity and financial support.[41] However, the Soviet authorities started demonstrating a hostile attitude towards Jews after the war and particularly after the establishment of Israel,[42] and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was executed.

Generally, both emigration and immigration on the grounds of ethnicity (as well as other grounds) were not allowed. However, there were exceptions for pragmatic reasons.

36 Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 8–9.

37 Probably, the only exception was the acceptance of financial and technical aid from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the 1920s and early 1930s.

38 Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "Comments," *Roma Voices in History. A Sourcebook*, ed. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (Brill Group, 2021), 759–767.

39 Donninghaus, *V teni*, 502–628.

40 Ibid.

41 *Yevreiskiy antifascistskiy komitet v SSSR, 1941–1948: Dokumentirovannaya istoriya* [The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, 1941–1948: a documented history], ed. Shimon Redlich (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1996).

42 Laurie P. Salitan, *Politics and Nationality in Contemporary Soviet-Jewish Emigration, 1968–89* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 18–24.

After World War II, the Soviet government arranged for a population exchange with already communist Poland; ethnic Ukrainians were transferred to the USSR, while many Poles from the western regions of the Soviet Union were sent to Poland.[43] There were also campaigns aimed at the "voluntary" repatriation of former Soviet citizens and co-ethnics of some "titular" ethnicities from outside of the Soviet post-war occupation zones.[44] In 1946, the Soviet authorities started the largest operation of this kind—the repatriation of ethnic Armenians to the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. Supposedly, this operation was a part of geopolitical games against Turkey leading to further territorial claims.[45] The "repatriation" concerned up to 110,000 people and was shortly ceased; many Armenian repatriates were later imprisoned or sent into exile.[46]

After Stalin's death in 1953, the official attitudes toward external diasporas and compatriots became less brutal and repressive but substantively remained intact. The development of relationships between kinstates and co-ethnics abroad (in both directions across the Soviet border) was discouraged, and the very topic was almost tabooed. For example, despite the existence of a sizeable Polish minority in Soviet Lithuania and Belorussia,[47] both republics totally disregarded this issue as somehow linked to cross-border cooperation with socialist Poland.[48] The same treatment concerned Germans, Finns, and other groups. There was the only exception, and it was again Armenia that maintained cultural relationships with the Armenian diaspora and from 1964 had even a respective unit within the republican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[49]

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43 Bohdan Kordan, "Making Borders Stick: Population Transfer and Resettlement in the Trans-Curzon Territories, 1944–1949," *The International Migration Review* 31, no. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 704–720.

44 Natalia Ablazhei, "Repatriatsionnaya programma SSSR vo vtoroy polovine 1940-h godov" [The USSR's repatriation programme in the second half of the 1940s], *Vestnik Permskogo Universiteta. Istoriya*, no. 3(42) (2018): 116–124.

45 Ronald G. Suny, *Looking Towards Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 166–177, 225.

46 Natalia Ablazhei, "Armiane-repatrianty kak tselevaya gruppa terrora v poslevoyennom SSSR" [Armenian repatriates as a target group of terror in the post-war USSR] *Sovetskoye gosudarstvo I obshestvo v period posdnego stalinisma. 1945–1953 gg.* [The Soviet state and society during the late Stalinism. 1945–1953], ed. Jorg Baberowski and Alexander Drozdov (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2014), 660–668; Shnirelman, *Voyny pam'ati,* 46.

47 Along with tens thousands Poles previously exiled to Kazakhstan and Siberia.

48 See, for example, Tadevush Gavin, *Pad presingam palityki. Pol'skaya natsyianal'naya men'shast' u Belarusi v 1919–2017 gg.* [Under the pressure of politics. The Polish national minority in Belarus in 1919–2017] (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Prawo i Partnerstwo, 2018), 233, 263; "Robert Mickiewicz: Poland launched its kin-state policies in Lithuania only after democratic transition," *ICELDS Opinions,* February 8, 2019, https://www.icelds.org/2019/02/08/robert-mickiewicz-poland-launched-its-kin-state-policies-in-lithuania-only-after-democratic-transition/.

49 Karine Tirabian, "Diaspora kak actor mezhdunarodnyh otnosheniy v XXI veke (na primere armianskoy diaspory)" [Diaspora as an actor of international relations in the 21st century (the case of Armenian diaspora)] *Evraziyskiy Souyz Uchenykh. Politicheskiye Nauki*, no 11(20) (2015): 107.

A kind of breakthrough was the opening in the late 1960s of limited opportunities for Jews and Germans to leave the USSR for Israel (and in fact for the U.S.) and Germany, respectively,[50] which can be regarded as an undirect recognition of the kinstate principle. However, the relations with kin diasporas and emigrants across the USSR borders started during the "restructuring" period (*perestroika*) in the late 1980s and the country's opening. At that time, the Soviet authorities also declared and legally entrenched the protection of people "residing outside of their national-territorial entities."[51] At the same time, intelligentsia and the general public of the union and autonomous republics called for a special care of the "titular" co-ethnics in other parts of the Soviet Union and beyond. Comprehensive diaspora and/or compatriot policies later emerged after the Soviet Union's dismemberment; also in the 1990s, diaspora issues as relationships between the core and expatriates became debatable in local academia.

To sum up, the image of external ethnic communities was present in elites' imagination and policies of the tsarist as well as Soviet time, but this notion was not clearly conceptualized and instrumentalized. Under the tsarist rule, nationalist conceptualizations of ethnicity and territoriality did not have enough time to mature and become part of public politics. Under the Soviet rule, the imaginary of external communities could have followed from the two major forms of ethnicity organization: personal and territorial. Another important circumstance that could have generated similar effects was the securitization of diaspora and co-ethnics issues. However, the Soviet rules avoided all kinds of speech and actions that could recognize the very issues of co-ethnics abroad along with claims of immigration or emigration or irredentist demands. The outcome is that what one would call diaspora was muted or recognized de facto as merely technical issues. The academic debates followed these tacit priority settings and taboos.

Nation-state and diaspora: from past to present

One can regard diaspora and diaspora policies as derivatives of the idea of nation-state, as the state's ethno-national core's extension, ideally patronized by the country of origin. The Soviet-style national statehood, its meaning, implications, and outcomes are often

50 Salitan, *Politics and Nationality*, 30–37, 78–83.

51 A landmark piece of legislation was the all-Union law "O svobodnom natsional'nom razvitii grazhdan SSSR, prozhivayuschih za predelami svoih natsional'no-gosudarstvennyh obrazovaniy ili ne imeyuschih ih na territorii SSSR" [On free national development of the USSR citizens residing outside of their national-territorial units or not having such on the territory of the USSR"] No. 1452-I of April 26, 1990, http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ESU&n=58#02499404353117578.

regarded in the literature as something given and intuitively understandable.[52] Meanwhile, the idea of the explicit belonging of a certain administrative territory to the "titular" ethnicity was never stipulated in constitutions and laws. At best, the constitutive declarations of the 1920s and 1930s contained the notion of "nation-states" and referred to the socialist Soviet statehoods as the outcome of certain nationalities' self-determination. The practical implications of nationality-based statehood were not specified in legal acts and political declarations throughout the Soviet rule; this idea was rather common knowledge, or *doxa*. The general principle of titular nationalities' symbolic role as the holders of the right to self-determination and the bearers of state sovereignty was commonly acknowledged by default and taken for granted, but it was not emphasized and rather muted.[53] It was never elevated to an explicit distinction between first- and second-class nationalities ("titulars" vs "non-titulars") within a certain republic or another autonomous region; on the contrary, the Soviet constitutions, laws, and communist party statements contained strong rhetoric on human equality regardless of ethnicity. This partly explains why internal diaspora issues were not acknowledged and articulated in public—it was implied that every Soviet citizen was at home in every part of the country and that ethnic nations did not have real power capacities.

In practical terms, this loose doctrinal and legal framework of ethnicity-based statehood contained a variety of policies changing over time and in connection with the regional authorities' preferences and aspirations. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet authorities pursued the policy known as *korenizatsiya* (literally "rooting") or "nativization"—the expansion of local languages as the major means of communication in education and the officialdom and the promotion of cadres belonging to titular nationalities.[54] This policy was basically phased out throughout the 1930s; in particular, the usage of the local languages was gradually curtailed in favor of Russian.[55] From the late 1930s and until the very end of the Soviet Union, the notion of state or official language disappeared from the USSR constitutions as well as constitutions or laws of union and autonomous republics (except for South Caucasus).[56] Some elements of the previous nativization regarding preferences to national cadres as well as the very idea of autonomous regions' ethnic underpinning survived.

52 Ian Bremmer, "Introduction. Reassessing Soviet nationalities theory," in *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 5–6, 13–17; Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet federalism and ethnic mobilization," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991), 204–208.

53 Alexander Osipov, "Implementation Unwanted? Symbolic vs. Instrumental Policies in the Russian Management of Ethnic Diversity," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 13, no. 4 (2012): 433–437.

54 Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 10–12.

55 Ibid., 344–393.

56 The texts of the 1924, 1936 and 1977 Constitutions of the USSR at the officially authorized legal database Garant, https://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/.

Their scale and effectiveness were dependent on the capacities and bargaining potential of individual republics; however, the principle of "titular" nationalities' primacy within their designated administrative territories was not articulated and specified, rather remaining a matter of practice.[57]

The case of nation-statehood demonstrates the major features of the Soviet diversity policies, and broader, the institutionalization of multi-ethnicity. These are conceptual uncertainty, eclecticism, and the muting of potentially controversial issues. During the period of *perestroika* and overall liberalization of the late 1980s, the authorities of the union and autonomous republics (partly because of the pressure from local nationalist movement but largely for the purpose of getting a new legitimacy and stronger positions vis-à-vis Moscow) started rearticulating the ethnic underpinning of their regions. Given that in most republics the population was multi-ethnic, the regional policymakers did not discard the principle of double (i.e., ethnic and civic) legitimacy. The declarations of state sovereignty adopted by all union and most autonomous republics across the USSR in 1988–1991 acknowledged in different wording that the sovereignty belonged to all citizens regardless of ethnicity, and that titular ethnicities play a special leading role in state-building or were under a focused state protection. Afterwards, in law-making and other rhetoric, most governments refrained from overt discriminatory gestures towards "non-titulars," and the overall post-Soviet approach could be termed, following Alexander Motyl, as "inclusive nationalism."[58]

The new leadership shortly discovered that diaspora issues were a suitable means of flagging their concerns about "titular" ethnicities and thus reinforcing their statehoods' ethnic profile without provoking the unrest of "non-titulars." The most striking example was probably the Russian Federation along with its constituent republics. In the late 1980s, a coalition of activists and social movements that stood for a multi-party democratic rule, a market economy, and thus the dismantling of the communist system brought to power in the Russian Federation their de facto leader, Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin and the Russian "democrats" were in opposition to the central authorities and demanded republican "sovereignty," (i.e., the supremacy of Russian law over the Soviet Union's). They were seeking public support but for a variety of reasons (particularly for not ruining relations with the "ethnic" autonomous regions) were neither able nor willing to stir

57 Ben Fowkes, "The National Question in the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev: Policy and Response," in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, ed. Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 68–89.

58 Alexander J. Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence. Ukraine after Totalitarianism* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1993), 80.

up and exploit Russian ethno-nationalism.[59] A way to demonstrate that the new Russian leadership under Yeltsin was concerned about Russians as an ethnic category was raising the issue of Russians outside Russia.[60] In part it was done proactively, and in part as a response to the criticism, claims, and initiatives of the pro-communist and conservative nationalist opposition to Yeltsin.[61]

Russia's specificity is the existence of nominally ethnicity-based regions among the federation's constituent entities; according to the 1993 Constitution there were 21 republics, one autonomous province, and 10 autonomous districts out of 89 regions in total. Large parts of the republics' titular nationalities live outside of these "core" regions; for example, about 62% of Tatars live outside Tatarstan; 66% of Mordovians outside of the Republic of Mordovia (the Volga region) and 26% of Bashkirs outside of Bashkortostan (in the Urals).[62] On the contrary, almost all of the republics' populations are multi-ethnic. Moreover, in most, the "titular" nationalities do not constitute the numerical majority. For example, Mordva comprise 40% of the population of the Republic of Mordovia and Bashkirs 29% of the population of Bashkortostan.[63]

The regional authorities from the late 1980s were trying to play an ethnic card and gain support of the "titulars" for reinforcing their legitimacy and acquiring more weight in their bargaining with the Russian center.[64] The authorities and particularly regional lawmakers were to be cautious in articulating the primacy of the eponymous ethnicity, and the constitutions and codes of the republics and other autonomous regions either refrain from emphasizing the region's ethnic profile or contain ambiguous formulations.[65]

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59 Cristiano Codagnone and Vassily Filippov, "Equity, exit and national identity in a multinational federation: the `multicultural constitutional patriotism' project in Russia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000): 267–269; Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims. The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 372–403.

60 George W. Breslauer and Catherine Dale, "Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention of a Russian Nation-State," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 13, no. 4 (1997): 303–332; Lena Jonson, "The foreign policy debate in Russia: In search of a national interest," *Nationalities Papers* 22, no. 1 (1994): 175–194.

61 John B Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

62 Vserossiyskaya perepis naseleniya 2010 goda. Tom 4. Natsionalnyi sostav i vladeniye yazykami, grazhdanstovo [The 2010 All-Russian Population Census. Vol.4. Nationalities composition, the command of languages, and citizenship], https://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/vol4pdf-m.html.

63 Ibid.

64 Dmitry P. Gorenburg, *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Valentin V. Mikhailov, *Respublika Tatarstan: demokratiya ili suverenitet?* [The Republic of Tatarstan: democracy or sovereignty?] (Moscow: Institute of African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2004).

65 See Osipov, "Implementation unwanted?"; in most cases, the regional constitutions limit themselves to a mention of the titular group as a historical feature of the region and stress the commitment of the state to safeguard its identity. Some refer to the titular group's self-determination in the past as the historic basis of the statehood; some refrain from references to ethnicity.

A policy tool of the early 1990s was the mobilization of co-ethnics living outside of the autonomous republics. Such intentions of supporting diasporas have been enshrined in some subnational constitutions in Russia.[66] The Constitution of Adygea (North Caucasus) in Art. 10 recognizes the "right to return" of "compatriots" living outside Russia and conceptualizes "compatriots" as the Adyghe diaspora and all people originating from the republic regardless of their ethnicity. The Constitution of the Mordovian Republic (Art. 42[3]) contains a provision that the region helps in supporting cultural and educational needs of Mordva living outside of the republic. The Constitution of Chuvashia (Art. 41[3]) declares that the republic satisfies the cultural and educational needs of the Chuvashs living outside its borders. Similar provisions are present in the constitutions of Tatarstan (Art. 14) and Udmurtia (Art. 1[2]); Khakassia (Art. 12) declares its care for its permanent residents staying outside of its borders. In all these cases, such declarations are counterweighted with the provisions about the obligation to care for cultures of all ethnicities within the respective region. The Constitution of the Republic of North Ossetia– Alania (Art. 16) also stipulated that the republic was to maintain ties with South Ossetia (in Georgia) on the basis of "historical-territorial unity" and "integration." Both the republics that have constitutional provisions about diaspora and those that do not have such provisions stipulate such goals in governmental executive decrees, programs, and policy statements.

Although the legislation and policy declarations concerning diasporas and compatriots abroad generally place a stronger emphasis on ethnicity than official narratives pertinent to the meaning of national statehood domestically, the authorities nevertheless avoid a full ethnicization of the compatriots issue and also strike some balance. Most countries use reservations, and the official acts pertinent to expatriates name all people originating from the country as addressees of the said policy along with co-ethnics. The governments also resort to Soviet-style terminological and conceptual fluidity and ambiguity, and the most striking case is Russia.

Generally, the Russian government has strived to position the country as a multiethnic polity both in domestic issues and abroad and to refrain from emphasizing its majority ethnicity; the outcomes bear multiple and hidden meanings and do not fit in the dichotomy between "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism.[67] The same approach extents to expatriates, and it is a commonplace in the literature to emphasize the eclecticism,

66 The Russian constitutional acts are quoted from the officially authorized legal database *Garant*, https://constitution.garant.ru/.

67 Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic or Purposefully Ambiguous?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 2, (2011): 179–202; Marlene Laruelle, "'Russkaya diaspora' i 'rossiiskiye sootechestvenniki'" [Russian diaspora and 'Rossian compatriots'], in *Demokratiya vertikali* [The democracy of the vertical], ed. Alexander Verkhovski (Moscow: Sova-Center, 2006), 185–212.

fluidity, and uncertainty of conceptualizations and policy strategies with regard to diaspora and compatriots.[68]

As mentioned, before the Soviet Union's dissolution, the word "diaspora" was virtually unknown to the officialdom and academia. Shortly afterwards, it became part of both of their vocabularies. While the usage is wide, the meanings and implications vary significantly. The first official programs targeting protected categories abroad[69] employed the category of "R**o**ssian[70] diaspora" (*Rossiyskaya diaspora*; in the meaning of diaspora of Russia as a country but not Russian as an ethnic category). In the meantime, the same concept of "diaspora" since the early 1990s has figured in federal and regional conceptual outlines and programs (for example, in the 1996 Concept of Nationalities Policy of the Russian Federation) for denoting ethnic minorities within Russia. Any search in Russian legal databases brings about hundreds of official documents with this term; most are regional and municipal programs for the provision of public security, and diasporas in the meaning of migrant minorities are routinely referred to as a source of instability and crime.

The growing scholarly literature on diaspora issues in Russia rather contributes to the ethnicization of the term. While a few individual scholars, such as Valery Tishkov, criticize an essentialist approach to diasporas and call for regarding them as a constructed phenomenon and as a set of interactions and representations,[71] for most scholars, diaspora means, first, ethnic groups outside of the "original'" ethnic territories and, second, internally cohesive and organized communities.[72]

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68 Natalya Kosmarskaya, "Russia and Post-Soviet 'Russian Diaspora': Contrasting Visions, Conflicting Projects," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, no. 1 (2011): 54–74; Jakub M. Godzimirski, "Putin and Post-Soviet Identity: Building Blocks and Buzz Words," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 5 (2008): 14–27; Graham Smith, "Transnational politics and the politics of the Russian diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 3 (1999): 500–523; Shevel, "The Post-Communist Diaspora Laws."

69 The State Duma Declaration "About the Support to Rossian Diaspora and Patronage over the Rossian Compatriots" of 08.12.1995.

70 I borrow this trick of emphasizing the difference between Russian in the meaning of belonging to the state and Russian in ethnic sense by a direct transliteration of the country's original Russian name from Valery Tishkov; Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

71 Valery Tishkov, "Istoricheskiy fenomen diaspory" [The historical phenomenon of diaspora], *Etnograficheskoye Obozreniye* no.2 (2000): 43–63; id., "Uvlecheniye diasporoy" [Enthusiasm for diaspora], *Diaspory* no.2 (2003): 160–184; Vera Peshkova, "Postsovetskaya migratsiya i diaspory cherez prizmu laminal'nosti" [The post-Soviet migration and diasporas through the prism of laminality], *Zhurnal issledovanii sotsialnoy politiki* 16, no.4 (2018): 701–710.

72 Yurii Semenov, "Etnos, natsiya, diaspora," *Etnograficheskoye Obozreniye* no.2 (2000): 64–74; Sergei Arutyunov, "Diaspora – eto protsess" [Diaspora – it is a process], *Etnograficheskoye Obozreniye* no.2 (2000): 74–78; Zhan Toschenko amd Tatiana Chaptykova, "Diaspora kak obyekt sotsiologichaskogo issledovaniya" [Diaspora as an object of sociological study], *Sotsiologichaskiye Issledovaniya* no.12 (1996): 33–42.

The ethnicization of diaspora and compatriot issues in Russia took place by other means. The 1996 Concept of Nationalities Policy of the Russian Federation contained the concept of "ethnic Rossians" as part of a broader category of "compatriots." Ethnic Rossians within the concept's context mean those who belong to "native" peoples, or categories that emerged as ethnic communities on Russia's territory. For some years, it used to be even an operational category for the Russian authorities, particularly for the Ministry on Nationalities Affairs.

The 1999 Federal Law "On State Policy of the Russian Federation towards Compatriots Abroad"[73] introduced a special legal status applicable both to Russian citizens and some categories of foreign nationals and stateless persons originating from the Russian Empire/the USSR/the Russian Federation. The granting of the "compatriot" status was restricted on ethnic grounds, and people who were not Russian nationals and belonged to "the titular nations of foreign states" were excluded. However, the law remained basically on paper, and the status of "compatriots" was not operationalized. The notion of ethnically native Rossians was abandoned in the late 1990s, but then surfaced again in 2010 after significant amendments to the compatriots law (in fact, the adoption of the new law).[74] Ultimately, the law defined compatriots as those people residing abroad who originated from the Russian Empire, the USSR, or the Russian Federation; belonged "as a rule" to "peoples" historically resident in Russia; and maintained cultural and spiritual ties with Russia. In other words, for avoiding a direct ethnic attribution of the diaspora issue, the Russian authorities introduced a seemingly neutral denomination of "compatriots" but in certain cases were unable to fully eliminate overt or tacit ethnic implications and emphasized a leading role and special needs of Russians and "ethnic Rossians" as patronized categories.[75] Moreover, from the 2010s, the agent organizations of the Russian government that deal with diaspora issues clearly articulate that they give preference to ethnic Russians and disregard others.[76]

Another strategy of avoiding the emphasis on ethnicity was shifting it to language and culture. Both official and non-official vocabularies in Russia contain the notion of "the

73 Federalny Zakon "O gosudarstvennoi politike Rossiiskoi Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom" [Federal Law "On State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning Compatriots Abroad"] May 24, 1999, No. 99-FZ, http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_23178/

74 Federalny Zakon "O vnesenii izmeneniy v Federalny Zakon 'O gosudarstvennoi politike Rossiiskoi Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom'" [Federal Law "On Amendments to Federal Law 'On State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning Compatriots Abroad'"] July 23, 2010, No. 179-FZ. http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_102927/.

75 Raisa Barash, "Kontseptsiya sootechestvennikov – smysl i znacheniye v kontekste rastushego etnicheskogo natsionalisma v Rossii" [The conception of compatriots – the meaning and significance in the context of growing ethnic nationalism in Russia], *Monitorimg obschestvennogo mneniya* no.6 (2011): 15–24.

76 For example, the Foundation for the Support and Protection of the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, https://pravfond.ru/ and the official portal of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for compatriots "the Russian Century", https://www.ruvek.ru/.

Russian-speaking population" embracing people of different ethnic origins but with common cultural and communicational preferences. The concept of the "Russian World" that emerged in the mid-2000s also bears cultural implications. Despite some ambiguity in usage, the term initially denoted people and institutions adhering to the Russian language and culture and striving to maintain ties with Russia; later on, the emphasis shifted to loyalty and subordination to Moscow.[77] One should add that the meanings of all the listed concepts are changing over time and across contexts.[78]

The other post-Soviet countries demonstrate less ambiguity but still ambiguity in concepts and approaches. In a nutshell, there are variations in official terminology, but as a rule the words "compatriots" or "diaspora" mean people belonging to the core ethnicity. The 1995 Constitution of Armenia (Art. 19) contains the term "Armenian Diaspora," which is not specified in law; it is placed in the context of the promotion of Armenian culture and language domestically and abroad and thus bears a clear ethnic subtext.[79] Article 12 of the Ukrainian Constitution stipulates that the state provides for the "national-cultural and linguistic needs of Ukrainians residing beyond the borders of the State."[80] The word "Ukrainian" is not specified, but the context clearly tells that the group is envisioned as an ethnic and/or cultural category. The 2004/2012 Ukrainian law "About Foreign Ukrainians"[81] (Art. 1) defines a foreign Ukrainian as an alien national or stateless person of Ukrainian ethnic origin or originating from Ukraine.

The Georgian law "On Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organizations"[82] employs the term "compatriot" and defines it (Art. 3[b]) as "a citizen of Georgia who has been living in another state for a long time or a citizen of another state who is of Georgian origin and/or whose native language belongs to the group of the Georgian-Caucasian languages."[83] Moreover, "Georgian origin" is (Art.3[c]) "the attribution of a person or his/her ancestor to any ethnic group residing in the territory of Georgia and the recognition of Georgia by such a person as the country of his/her origin." In other words, the law rests

77 Mikhail Suslov, "'Russian World': Russia's Policy Towards Its Diaspora," *Russie. Nei. Visions*, NO 103, Ifri, July 2017, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/suslov_russian_world_2017.pdf; Laruelle, "Russkaya diaspora", 210–212.

78 David J Smith, "One Russia, many worlds: balancing external homeland nationalism and internal ethnocultural diversity," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. 62. no 3 (2021): 372–396.

79 Quoted from: Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015/

80 Konstitutsiya Ukraiiny [The Constitution of Ukraine]. https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=254%EA%2F96%2D%E2%F0#Text.

81 Zakon Ukraiiny "Pro zakordonnyh ukraiintsev".

82 Law "On Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organisations" No.5301-IIს of 24/11/2011, https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/1524714?publication=8.

83 This category is unknown to linguists and it's unclear whether it included all native groups, for example, the Abkhaz.

on a combination of criteria based on ethnic origin, self-identification, citizenship, and territorial origin; however, in a formal sense, accusations of granting privileges to ethnic Georgians are rebuttable.

In conclusion, most laws and other acts about compatriots abroad contain reservations about people originating from the country regardless of ethnicity,[84] but in fact these provisions have little if any practical effect. The governments and the agencies in charge collaborate with civil society organizations representing the titular ethnicities and/or fund cultural institutions and programs also promoting the core ethnicity. The same is basically true for the "ethnic" republics within the Russian Federation. In sum, one can observe the patterns similar to the Soviet mode of governing diversity: conceptual ambiguity, eclecticism, and the non-articulation or muting controversial and conflict-prone issues. Conceptually, the approaches to understanding diaspora and compatriot issues recurrently manifest ethnonationalist albeit tacitly.

From conceptualizations to policy patterns

Little can be said about practices in relation to legacies; in diaspora-related issues, it is still a matter of hypothesis and future research. This inevitable complexity of organizational settings and policy goals along with their variability cannot but generate a number of gaps between "talks" and "action" or between actions of different parts of the state apparatus. This phenomenon has been termed as "systemic hypocrisy,"[85] and it was a feature of the Soviet rule, particularly, in ethnic diversity governance. Most manifestations related to diaspora issues can be characterized as unfilled promises. Sometimes "hypocrisy" evolves into cynical pragmatism independent of policy declarations.

According to the Russian government's declarations of the 1990s, the major priority was the protection of the right of "compatriots" abroad rather than the encouragement of their resettlement since immigrants' influx was deemed as an unaffordable burden for the country. Later on, in the mid-2000s, the government's stances changed; after the talks about population decline and demographic crisis, Russia launched the program of compatriots'

84 Interestingly, the Law of Kyrgyzstan "Ob osnovah gosudarstvennoy podderzhki sootechestvennikov za rubezhom" [About the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Support of Compatriots Abroad] No. 183 of August 2013, http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/203992?cl=ru-ru, only defines compatriots as those Kyrgyzstani nationals who reside outside of the country notwithstanding their ethnicity. The law also places emphasis in the protective policy on the satisfaction of cultural, linguistic. and educational needs on the basis of the Kyrgyz language.

85 Neil Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy. Talk, decisions and actions in organizations* (Chichester, NY, John Wiley & Sons, 1989).

"return."[86] In practice, neither goal was pursued consistently partly because of the distance between promises and the available resources, and partly because of discordance in the activities of different state agencies. Many scholars point out that at every period of the Russian compatriot policy, the state action was always lagging behind official rhetoric, the compatriot policy was mainly declarative, and most promises and threats of the Russian government were never fulfilled.[87]

In the early 1990s, Russia in a legal respect was open to immigration from the other ex-Soviet countries, and former Soviet nationals could acquire Russian citizenship almost automatically. Moreover, the legal framework for outward migrants rested on two concepts—refugees and "forced re-settlers." The latter were defined as Russian nationals or people going to apply for Russian citizenship in the course of their flight. In other words, the lawmakers aimed at easing and facilitating the process of "compatriots'" resettlement and naturalization.[88] At the same time, as mentioned, the government opted for the containment of external migration. In practice, although the law about "forced re-settlers" was in effect, real people regardless of ethnicity who were coming to Russia bumped into numerous obstacles; most barriers were created by the bylaws and routine practices of the restrictive passport and residence registration system.[89]

Although the official propaganda and the mainstream media placed emphasis on the vulnerable position of ethnic Russians abroad, Russian re-settlers inside the country had no advantages and faced multiple forms of xenophobia and discrimination encouraged by official restrictive policies.[90] On the contrary, from 2000 on, the Russian government using the formal opportunity provided by the 1999 compatriots law started disbursing the Russian passports among the residents of internationally unrecognized Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria.[91] Most of the new Russian nationals in these polities were not ethnic Russians, and many did not even belong to "ethnic Rossians." In other circumstances,

86 Vladimir Mukomel', *Migratsionnaya politika Rossii: postsovetskiye konteksty* [The migration policy of Russia: post-Soviet contexts] (Moscow: Dipol-T, 2005), 11–65, 114–160; Godzimirski, "Putin and Post-Soviet Identity".

87 Suslov, "Russian World"; Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas* (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press, 2001).

88 Mukomel', *Migratsionnaya politika*, 54–57.

89 Galina Vitkovskaya, "Vunuzhdennaya migratsiya i migrantofobia v Rossii" [Forced migration and migrantophobia in Russia], in *Neterpimost' v Rossii: starye i novye fobii* [Intolerance in Russia: old and new phobias], ed. Galina Vitkovskaya and Alexei Malashenko (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 1999), 151–192.

90 Ibid., Hilary Pilkington and Moya Flynn, "A Diaspora in Diaspora? Russian Returnees Confront the 'Homeland,'" *Refuge* 23, no. 2 (2006): 56.

91 Olga Gulina, "Passport expansion," *Riddle*, July 14, 2021, https://www.ridl.io/en/passport-expansion/; Thomas Hoffmann and Archil Chochia, "The institution of citizenship and practices of passportization in Russia's European neighbourhood policies," in *Russia and the EU: Spaces of Interaction*, ed. Thomas Hoffmann and Andrey Makarychev (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 223–237.

cynical pragmaticism leads to exclusion on ethnic grounds. The Russian legislation and official statements acknowledge that the "native" ethnicities of Russia should enjoy some preferential treatment; nevertheless, the 2006 repatriation program did not apply to Circassians wishing to resettle to their homeland in the North Caucasus within contemporary Russia; small-scale Circassian resettlement projects run by regional authorities in fact failed.[92] Along with this, the federal government tolerates the diaspora policies of North Caucasian republics among Circassians resident in the Middle East.[93]

An interesting phenomenon is the combination of state paternalism with talks and actions aimed at encouraging, orchestrating, or at least imitating popular will and bottom-up mobilization. This approach sometimes resembles a replica of a Soviet governance technique. As a rule, most post-Soviet governments strive to pursue their diaspora policies through non-governmental organizations and thus to keep them under some degree of control. The involvement of external co-ethnics was partly done through the institution of "peoples' congresses." It rests on the idea that an ethnic nationality as a whole regardless of its territorial distribution can discuss and to some extent run its own affairs through a convention of publicly elected delegates who in turn form a vertically integrated corporation.

This idea was tested as a bottom-up arrangement in various parts of the Russian Empire during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Later on, the Bolsheviks intercepted and exploited it as a device for mobilization and demonstrating support of loyal "laborers" belonging to certain ethnicities.[94] This organizational setting was revived in the late 1980s and early 1990s first as a bottom-up arrangement. Shortly, the authorities of the Russian constituent republics hijacked the mechanism of "congresses" and turned the conventions of "titular" ethnicities and their permanent governing bodies into their support mechanism. For example, the World Congress of Tatars, the World *Kurultay* of Bashkirs, and the Congress of the Komi People function in such a capacity under the auspices of the respective republican governments. The role of the nationalities' congresses is entrenched in some republican constitutions, namely of the Khakass, Komi, and Mordovian republics. As a rule, the congresses are convened according to the act of regional executive and orchestrated by the executive.[95]

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92 Irina Molodikova, "Russian Policy Towards Compatriots: Global, Regional and Local Approaches," in *Post-Soviet Migration and Diasporas. From Global Perspectives to Everyday Practices*, ed. Milana V. Nikolko and David Carment (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 156.

93 See Mezhdunarodnaya Cherkesskay Associatsiya – International Circassian Association. http://intercircass.org/.

94 Alexander Osipov, "The 'Peoples' Congresses' in Russia: Failure or Success? Authenticity and Efficiency of Minority Representation." *ECMI Working Paper No. 48*. 2011. https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/redakteure/publications/pdf/Working_Paper_48_Final.pdf.

95 Ibid.

Other post-Soviet countries also employ this institution and involve co-ethnics from abroad through the convention of world congresses. The most consistent policy of this kind in Central Asia since 1991 has been pursued by Kazakhstani authorities.[96]

Conclusion

Almost all post-Soviet countries pursue diaspora and compatriot policies. At first glance, they look like relatively new phenomena that emerged after the Soviet Union's dissolution. An examination of the Soviet approaches to the "nationalities question" and pre-Soviet imperial governance patterns shows that the imaginaries of expatriate communities were inherent to both periods' perceptions and state action. These imaginaries rested on an eclectic understanding of nationhood within the Bolshevik theory of the "nationalities question"—as a territorially based social formation and concurrently a descent-based collectivity. For certain reasons, the issues of ethnicity-based subnational statehood and original ethnic territories were not clearly formulated nor articulated; as such, expatriate issues were not on the surface, but nevertheless materialized in pragmatic arrangements. Among the reasons for poor and loose conceptualizations during the Soviet time were also security considerations—the desire to restrict contact with foreign countries and not to even symbolically encourage potential irredentist or emigration claims.

The overall transformation of the Soviet system of the late 1980s made the issue of ethnicity-based statehood visible and consequently brought into being the previously latent diaspora and minority *problematique*. After the Soviet Union's breakdown, the newly independent states in their pursuit of diaspora and compatriot policies have targeted and favored primarily co-ethnics, but this rationale is often not clearly articulated and not always consistently followed. The governments (including the authorities of autonomous entities within the Russian Federation), on the one hand, avoid a straightforward and strongly worded manifestation of their polities' ethnic underpinnings; on the other, they employ diaspora issues to demonstrate ethnic preferences without provoking discord of the domestic minorities.

The practical approaches to diasporas and compatriots in various degrees demonstrate inconsistencies and gaps between official rhetoric and state action that can be termed as "systemic hypocrisy." One can look upon this phenomenon from another angle—flexibility

96 Olivier Ferrando, "The Central Asian States and their Co-Ethnics from Abroad: Diaspora Policies and Repatriation Programs," in *Migration and Social Upheaval as the Face of Globalization in Central Asia*, ed. Marlene Laruelle, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 245–248.

in "talks" and "action" provides the best opportunities for achieving *ad hoc* pragmatic goals. Briefly, the major rule in the post-Soviet diaspora and compatriot policies is "no rules" despite all kinds of rhetorical smokescreens.

To sum up, among the major policy features are conceptual and terminological uncertainty, eclecticism targeting multiple audiences, the non-articulation of controversial issues (such as ethnic preferences), and inconsistencies between rhetoric and action. One can assume that the major features of expatriate policies (as well as ethnic diversity policies) in most Northern Eurasian countries resemble the patterns of the Soviet rule. The continuity and resilience of the Soviet settings and operational modes is a hypothesis; however, there is growing empirical evidence and theoretical considerations buttressing this presumption. Anyway, taking the listed features into account helps one better understand the post-Soviet developments.