CHAPTER 4
MULTICULTURALISM AND NATION BUILDING

The desirability of a Russian federation structured in part to accommodate ethnic or national minorities, and whether such a model of governance is compatible with a defensible form of social justice, are issues that continue to provoke considerable debate within Russia but which have received little attention within post-Soviet Studies. Much of the focus of this debate centres on the merits of constructing part of what has been labelled 'a mixed federation' on the basis of 21 ethnorepublics and on whether the particular privileges which these constituent units have secured in relation to the federation's remaining administratively-defined regions (oblasti) and other constituent units are compatible with federal maintenance, social stability and distributive justice.

Federalists in Russia who question the value of such a federated multiculturalism tend to focus on two sets of arguments. First, institutionalising part of the federation along ethnorepublic lines promotes a kind of nationalism that increases the likelihood of inter-ethnic violence and eventually the prospects of secession. Not only do such arrangements tend to solidify and make what
might be temporary or partial group identities permanent, they also allow key policy areas to be hijacked by partisan ethnorepublic elites and thus increase the probability of tyranny by the minority, both in relation to federal politics in general and within the ethnorepublics, where in most cases the titular nation constitutes a demographic minority. As Fedorov argues, "such ethnorepublic elites have a tendency to use their federated status to obtain special privileges and rights through bargaining and striking political deals with the centre".¹ Thus they are in a position to ignore basic federal obligations, resulting in inequities in contributions to the federal budget, which is detrimental to the interests both of the federation and of its poorer constituent units. Second, by empowering particular ethnorepublic minorities the federal arrangement imposes limits on genuinely pluralist interests "since the demands and concerns of other forms of identity politics are downgraded or marginalized".² Thus the capacity of the federal system to represent forms of collective identities other than those of the dominant ethnorepublic minority

¹ Valery Tishkov, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The Mind Aflame (Sage, London, 1997).

are invariably disadvantaged. For proponents of a liberal variant of federalism, of uppermost concern is countering domination by either nationalist-minded minorities or the majority national group (Russians) by prioritising the individual rights of citizens regardless of their ethnic or national affiliations. Thus it is deemed best to confine ethnic or national identification to the private sphere. It should not be the function of a federated state to intervene by permitting discrimination against the individual citizen through privileging particular national or ethnic groups.

Those who defend federal-based minority group recognition hold that instead of furnishing the conditions for ethnic instability, a federation constructed on the basis of multicultural difference provides a means of managing inter-group conflicts that might otherwise develop into violence and lead to the proliferation of secessionist demands. "Hence in instituting such a form of multicultural governance, Russia has helped to weaken the drive for nation-statism amongst its minorities by providing an institutional alternative to secession".\(^3\) As importantly, federation is also defended as a means of

\(^3\)Sangari, Kumkum, "Which Diversity?", *Seminar*, No. 484, 1999 (December), pp. 24-39.
accommodating minority demands on the basis of the social value of group liberty. On the grounds that minority cultural self-preservation (as well as political representation) is of fundamental importance for individuals because belonging to a minority culture provides a meaningful context for choice, the retention of minority group rights through federal support is defended as a counterweight to majority group (Russian) cultural assimilation. Any conception of citizen entitlement should therefore be extended to protecting the right of minorities to be culturally different. "Such an arrangement is justified so long as the basic rights of citizens who have different identity commitments to that of the titular ethnorepublic nation, or no such commitments, are protected". 4

Despite the adoption of a federal constitution in December 1993, the need for a multicultural Russia to resolve serious ethnic conflicts is now recognised as of uppermost importance in a polity where there is no tradition of individual freedoms and where demands for group recognition are being played out with often tragic consequences as in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and

North Ossetia. Indeed Deputy Premier Ramazan Abdulatipov, in taking up ministerial responsibility in August 1997 for issues of ethnic relations, federal policy and regional issues, has even gone so far as to assert that "to this day ... there has been no federal nationalities policy". This part of research examines the extent to which Russia is accommodating a federal solution based on a commitment to multiculturalism and whether by so doing it is adopting self-defeating structures liable to the very centrifugal forces federalism is trying to manage. It also looks at whether the adoption of what might be described as a mixed-rights approach to federal politics, that is, one which attempts to reconcile liberalism with both majority and minority nationalisms, can provide the basis for a sustainable federalism that is not only grounded in the usual elements highly valued in democratic federations - toleration, respect, compromise and bargaining - but also allows for mutual recognition of the right to be culturally different. "It is divided into three main parts. First, it explores the federal process that has led to the establishment of the present day multicultural federation. Second, it examines attempts since 1996 to

develop a more coherent federal nationalities policy. Third, focusing on the ethnorepublics, it explores whether a democratised federation can offer an effective counterweight to both minority and majority nationalisms".6

The Federal Process and Multicultural Federalism

Central to shaping federal formation in Russia are three tensions, viz. re-federation, which entails conflict over the appropriate designation of powers between the centre and the ethnorepublics; federal asymmetry, which raises questions concerning the principles of equality and differentiation between the federation's constituent units; and the politics of the subject, that is, whether to structure the federation on the basis of individual or group rights.

The process of re-federalising Russia following the collapse of the Soviet federation in 1990 and Russia's declaration of state sovereignty has been shaped in large measure by tensions between efforts to preserve Russia's territorial integrity and the empowerment of the ethnorepublics. "In effect, it has reflected a struggle to secure a balance of power between the centre and its

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6Mahajan, Gurpreet, "Rethinking Multiculturalism", Seminar, No.484, 1999 (December), pp.56-61.
constituent subjects that will preserve the sovereign-boundedness of Russia". Thus the policies of the centre are not so much a serious attempt to develop a coherent and well thought out policy of multicultural recognition as an exercise in the management of secession prevention. From the outset, the Yel'tsin administration was faced with the dilemma of how best to secure an appropriate division of powers between the centre and its constituent units, especially in relation to the more vociferous ethnorepublics. Having initially offered the ethnorepublics 'as much sovereignty as they could stomach', a strategy motivated in part by securing for himself a political power base of support in the republics, the Federal Treaty of March 1992 was signed by 19 of the 21 republics, with only Chechnya and Tatarstan refusing to participate. It permitted the ethnorepublics to adopt their own constitutions and laws, elect their own legislatures and heads of state, appoint their own supreme courts and have their own symbols of statehood. While the treaty, which included a scheme to raise their status in relation to the other regions and constituent units, did appease most of the ethnorepublics, it also encouraged

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7 Parekh, Bhikhu, "Common Citizenship in a Multicultural Society", Round Table, 351, 1999 (July), pp.449-60.
them to enact legislation that brought them into increasing conflict with Moscow. "Indeed, the failure to reach a fully workable compromise was one of the reasons that led Yel'tsin in 1993 to dissolve the Russian parliament and to reclaim the initiative by putting the proposed federal constitution to a plebiscite". 8

It was the Federal Treaty, namely those provisions concerned with the delimitation of powers to the ethnorepublics, which formed part of the basis of the December 1993 federal constitution. However the constitution fell short of the scale of sovereignty that many of the ethnorepublics had envisaged. Although it accepts the principle of national self-determination, it does not confer the right to secede, which states that the Russian federation 'ensures the integrity and inviolability of its territory'. "This omission strikes at the heart of centre-ethnorepublic tensions. The right of the ethnorepublics to secession was interpreted by some of the Constitution's framers as an abrogation of Russia as an integral primordial-territorial entity". 9 This, as the ethno-republics see it, is the denial of nations to

9 Nnett, Fred, "Face of the State", Political Studies, Vol.47, No.4, 1999 (September), pp.677-90.
practise, if they so wish, the right of national self-determination, a right which was theoretically available even during Soviet rule to its union republics. Compared with federations in late modern democracies, the federal constitution also contravenes a basic given that central authorities may not unilaterally redefine the powers of constituent units. In the Russian constitution, the President has been given both powers of judicial review (that is, the right to suspend acts issued by the executive bodies in Russia's provinces) and of arbitration between federal and local bodies or between constituent members of the federation.

For many of the ethnorepublics, the constitution was therefore judged as an abrogation of the autonomous rights previously embodied in the Federal Treaty. In the referendum held on 12 December 1993 it received support from only nine of the 21 republics. Seven republics rejected the constitution (Adygea, Bashkoriostan, Chuvashia, Dagestan, Karachaevsko-Cherkessia, Mordovia and Tuva); the plebiscite was declared invalid in Tatarstan where less than 14% of the electorate voted, and Chechnya did not participate at all. "Despite protests from a number of the ethnorepublics that their consent had not been given to this pro-presidential federal variant,
Deputy Premier Sergei Shakhrai was adamant that its introduction was legitimate as it had received endorsement by 58.4% of those who voted: 'The constitution has been approved by citizens, not by the component units. As citizens have approved the Constitution, it is now in force in all component parts of the Russian Federation'.

With all 21 ethnorepublics introducing their own constitutions, an escalation in the so-called 'war of sovereignties' characterised the period following the plebiscite. According to the Yel'tsin administration, "no less than 19 of the 21 ethnorepublic constitutions violate the federal constitution, either by declaring the given republic to be a subject of international law, outlining the parameters of republican monetary systems, or delimiting the republic's borders with other republics and regions, and even foreign countries". Specific violations included the establishment of illegal taxes and dues in a number of the ethnorepublics, the right to decide questions of war and peace in the case of Tuva's constitution, and in Karelia and Sakha (Yakutia) the right to grant citizenship. In an attempt to try and reclaim the

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11 Ibid.
high ground of federal politics, and prompted by fears that the pro-independence policies of the Chechen government encourage other republics, especially in the North Caucasus, to push for secession, the centre began to negotiate a series of bilateral power-sharing treaties while still continuing to claim that the federation was based on equality between all its constituent parts.

Russia is far from unique in the way in which such an asymmetric federation has evolved as part of the federal process. The federal process in Russia demonstrates that 'federating' can involve 'a post-constitutional process of reaching important agreements as much as it may rely on an original compact'. "What distinguishes Russia from other asymmetric experiments is the sheer extent of federal asymmetry: by April 1998 over 40 of its 89 constituent units had successfully negotiated varying degrees of privileged status, with 'work in progress' in a further dozen".12

Not surprisingly, considerable controversy has surrounded the 'question of whether the federation should be based on equality or differentiation of federal subjects. Initially, many federalists had supported the

idea of the so-called 'republicanisation' of Russia, in which Russia's constituent units, following the recommendations of a November 1990 Parliamentary Commission, would be based on 50 or so non-ethnic based constituent units. Under this scheme, the Russian oblasti were to be transformed into republics, ensuring that citizens, irrespective of their place of residence, would be entitled to equal rights. "In the event, the proposals adopted by the Presidium of Russia's Supreme Soviet in January 1992 won the day, in which a distinction was drawn between the ethnorepublics and the regions, with the autonomy of the latter limited to adopting their own charters but not their own constitutions". 13 Although initially envisaged as a stop-gap measure, this system, which is clearly designed to appease the more bellicose ethnorepublics, has formed the basis of both the Federal Treaty and the Constitution. Not surprisingly, it has attracted considerable opposition from the regions, which see it as creating two classes of citizens: those residing in the federation (the ethnorepublics), and those who have to abide by the rules of a unitary state (the regions).

"In an attempt to appease the regions (and secure their

support in the 1996 presidential election), Yel'tsin did grant them the right to elect their leading officials, including their heads of state (regional governors), who had hitherto been appointed by the state President.\textsuperscript{14} This brought them closer to the ethnorepublics and went some way towards weakening the centre's patronage. However, a decree of July 1997 again upgraded the status and authority of Yel'tsin's so-called presidential representatives in an attempt to reassert central-executive control over regional governors, a move which is interpreted in the regions as reinforcing the centre's commitment to an asymmetric federation.

The signing of the bilateral power-sharing treaties (beginning in February 1994 with Tatarstan, followed by a number of the other ethnorepublics and, from 1996, with some of the regions) has reinforced differentiation. Designed to build bridges and to rectify what the ethnorepublics in particular see as the inadequacies of the 1993 constitution, it has resulted in greater differentiation between the ethnorepublics as well as blurring the hitherto formalised distinction between the ethnorepublics and regions. This is reflected in the

\textsuperscript{14} "Multiculturalism in History", \textit{Orbis}, Vol.43, No.4, 1999 (Fall), pp.531-604.
language that has been used in codifying the treaties, which in its varying terminology ascribes to the federation subjects differing political powers and rights. In this regard Tatarstan has led the way in securing significantly more powers and more concessions and advantages than other subjects of the federation. Thus, "while recognising that the republic is a constituent member of the Federation, there is no recognition in its Treaty of the primacy of the federal constitution and no acknowledgement of article 4",¹⁵ (the inviolability of Russia). In contrast to Tatarstan, which is recognised as 'a state joined with the Russian Federation', neighbouring Bashkortostan is 'a sovereign state within the Russian Federation'. Kabardino-Balkaria is described only as 'a state within the Russian Federation' while Udmurtia is merely deemed to be 'a republic'."¹⁶

Far from being based on a recognition that the ethnorepublics should be treated distinctively, federal asymmetry represents more the anarchy of the political market place than considerations of a coherent nationalities policy. The greater bargaining power at the


disposal of some ethnorepublics and regions compared to others, especially the resource-rich republics, has been particularly evident in influencing political outcomes. After Sverdlovsk succeeded in being the first oblast' to sign a power-sharing treaty, other regions were also given the opportunity to renegotiate sovereignty, although only those which were economic donors to the federal budget and constituted a support base in Russia's 1996 presidential campaign did so. The economically poorer regions, dependent on federal subsidies, seemed to acknowledge that there was little for them in renegotiating relations with the centre as greater sovereignty had usually meant loss of considerable financial assistance from the federal budget, "What, however, bilateral treaty formation is beginning to end has been a form of fiscal federalism that, although it claimed to allocate according to need, had in effect created a system in which the richer republics and regions tended to contribute the least to the federal budget but often received more in terms of federal allocations than the federal average".¹⁷ Such developments have done much to fuel demands, especially amongst Russia's regions, to extend the rights of the

federation's constituent units through equalising their status relative to the ethnorepublics. This scramble to create a more symmetrical federation, however, has not been without its problems.

The federal process has also sat across an uneasy compromise concerning the question of minority rights, of whether the citizen as an individually or group-constituted subject offers the better prospects for realising a democratised and stable federation. While elements of group rights have been incorporated into and recognised by the framers of both constitution and treaties, the former has taken priority, based on the premise that the rights of minorities can best be safeguarded through promoting individual liberties. This is reflected in both the 1992 Federal Treaty, which emphasised above all the rights and liberties of individuals as being paramount, and the Constitution, which is unequivocal in prioritising the equality of citizens irrespective of their place of residence within the Russian Federation. Thus the declared constitutional right to practise a native language is informed largely by such liberal thinking. On the other hand, the federalising process reflects important collectivist principles with
regard to ethnic minorities, not least the right of both sub-units and peoples to self-determination.

There are a number of probable reasons why minority rights have been framed in this way. In the desire to democratise, the Western liberal model, especially during the formative period in constructing the federation (1990-93), was held up as the only effective and proven alternative to a former state ideology which, in both institutionalising and practising collectivism, had suppressed individualism and stifled individual freedom. For post-Soviet Russia this meant embracing a conception of liberal democracy summed up in terms of the economic freedom of the market place replacing the repressive and economically stifling collectivism of Soviet socialism. But it also implied creating a non-ethnic secular state in which individual citizens, for the first time in Russia's history, could participate directly in the polity irrespective of their ethnicity. However, for Russian nationalists, liberal individualism has also been used as a convenient smokescreen for promoting and safeguarding a majority which wants to relegate expression of minority ethnicity to the private sphere and advance Russian ethnicity in the public sphere, based upon restoring Russian dignity and the spirituality of the Russian
people. Thus, for Russian nationalists, the rejection of group rights and the promotion of individual rights is also bound up with reclaiming their own national homeland of Russia from a Soviet regime which was perceived as promoting the territorial rights of national minorities. In contrast to the ethnorepublics, which felt that the Soviet federation, in granting most of them autonomous republic status, had paid only lip service to furnishing the necessary institutional supports to ensure the reproduction of their homeland cultures, the feeling amongst ethnic Russians was that such a nationalities policy had been far too accommodating. In short, many Russians felt that Soviet nationalities policy had made them an underprivileged majority in the Russian republic (RSFSR), their own national homeland. This was also reinforced by a widely held fear that the continuation and expansion of such preferential treatment for minorities would result in discrimination against Russians both nationally and especially in the ethnorepublics. Finally, for Moscow's federal-builders, there is the recurring theme that support for collective rights promotes geopolitical chaos and fragmentation. In order to contain the envisaged anarchy of nation-statism, the centre has shown a willingness to entertain concessionary rights to
only the presently constituted ethnorepublic federal units, in an attempt to thwart further group demands. It is a strategy which has also received a receptive audience amongst those ethnorepublic elites concerned about ensuring the hegemony of their own titular nations in ethnorepublics where they are not in a demographic majority.

In actuality, then, the politics of the subject have been caught up in promoting the rights of either the majority or minority national groups. "Collectivist values are still as much part of Russia's culture as liberalism is in the West: 'today, collective rights for the people of Russia have not less but probably more meaning than individual rights, although the priority of the latter could be realised in the future. At least in Russia, individual rights will not become an absolute value as in the West, where this was achieved through the elimination of whole peoples and tribes notwithstanding 'sacred devotion' to humanistic values. Thank goodness that the Russian nation has historically been lacking such Western hypocrisy". 18

Despite claims that Russia has still to perfect a coherent and viable nationalities policy, a series of laws and decrees since 1996 have been introduced that constitute an attempt to rethink the relationship between federation and diversity. The most important and wide-ranging of these attempts is summed up in Presidential decree 909 of June 1996. Although a non-binding legal document, it represents the outcome of a compromise between the centre and constituent subjects on the most appropriate way forward to achieve a fairer and more equitable form of federate justice. Rather than simply looking towards a Western-liberal model as a building bloc, it shows an effort to develop a conception of distributive justice which encapsulates a variety of principles and solutions reflecting what might be more appropriately labelled as Russia's attempt to go beyond a liberal or nationalist solution by finding a third way. In addressing both equality and difference between both the federation's constituent units and citizens, and in attempting to stake the federation's future on what can be best interpreted as a mixed rights perspective on multiculturalism, it lays out a more integrated approach, albeit a scheme which political theorists such as S. Ya.
Matvccva rightly interpret as 'a hybrid, an eclectic mixture of values'.

One powerful normative conception the decree proposes is to construct the federation around a Eurasianist vision of Russia. A term first mooted by Russian emigres in the 1920s, it is based on the notion that Russia is a continent unto itself, located between Europe and Asia, and is geopolitically and culturally different from both. As Russia occupies a special and unique place within Northern Eurasia, it is therefore held that Russia must find its own particular niche and solutions to its multicultural diversity. Accordingly, the goal of a multiethnic Russia is to ensure 'the cultural self-preservation and further development of national traditions and co-operation of Slavic, Turkic, Caucasian, Finno-Ugric, Mongolian and other peoples of Russia within the framework of Eurasian national-cultural space'.' Both European and Asian experiments with state building are therefore rejected as inappropriate to what is deemed to be a more viable Eurasian way of 'harmonising the development of nationalities'. No doubt reflecting a concession to the majority culture, what is more problematic is the part ascribed to the Russians in this process, in which due to the unifying role of the Russian...
people, a unique diversity, spiritual community and union of various peoples has been maintained. "Inter-ethnic relations in the Russian Federation will in large part be determined by the general national situation of the Russian people, a buttress of Russian Federation statehood".  

Embedded in the ambiguity of Eurasianism are two conflicting normative interpretations of Russia. One conveys a sense of federation working towards multicultural coexistence. Here the centuries-long intermingling of European and Asian cultures is seen as a positive, beneficial and enriching force, providing the potential for national coexistence on a variety of scales - from the federal to the neighbourhood - based upon mutual recognition of the equal value of all national cultures. It is one which within the public sphere at least is generally supported by the political leaders of the ethnorepublics. The other one which ascribes to the cultural Russians 'a leading role' is more problematic. In its more extreme form, it attempts to ascribe a mission and identity to the majority nation within post-Soviet

Eurasian space. "And herein lies much of the problem in reviving a conception of Eurasianism that at least in terms of its original theory draws heavily upon Slavophile thinking and notions of the spiritual and organic qualities of the Russian nation".²⁰ It is a conception which holds that Russia's Eurasianist mission should be to promote not only the Russian language, culture and values but also, in some versions, to reallocate a special role for the Russian Orthodox Church. In defining the nature of Eurasianism, it also raises the issue of Russia's territorial boundedness, which many Russian nationalists also interpret as connecting up with an idealised pre-Soviet past.

More than anything else, bound up with what has become a populist nationalist vision of Eurasia is a crisis of national identity, of what it means to be ethnic Russian in a redesignated multiethnic homeland. Russians, in short, have had far greater difficulties compared with the ethnorepublic titular nations in coming to terms with the loss of 'the big homeland', the Soviet empire. In contrast to Tatars or Buryats, who possessed their own designated administrative homeland during the previous regime, the institutional-territorial frame for Russians

²⁰ Ibid., pp.90-92.
was not so much the Russian republic (the RSFSR) but the Soviet Union. The Soviet state did not furnish the RSFSR with the institutional trappings of nationhood. Rather, Russians were encouraged to think of the Soviet Union as their homeland. Thus for Russians what and where is their homeland remains ambiguous in two senses. First, just as Soviet nationalities policy discouraged institutional ethnic Russian nation building within the RSFSR, so too the post-Soviet federation has worked towards building up nation-building institutions for the minorities. For Russians, regionalisation in the form of the oblasti has provided only limited scope for an alternative to minority nation building. "What ethnic Russians require more than anything else is a sense that they feel at home in their homeland and that neither their identities nor cultures are perceived as threatened or imperilled by a federation protecting the rights and identities of national minorities". Second, for many ethnic Russians, Eurasianism leaves fluid the sovereign boundedness of Russia, which might again include the full extent of the Russian historical community, including Ukraine, Northern Kazakhstan and North-east Estonia. It is a conception of

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the boundedness of Russia which is given some legitimacy by the Presidential Decree, which links domestic nationalities policy with Russia's interests in looking after its broader historical community, in which it is claimed Russia should 'defend the rights and interests of citizens outside the federation, and provide help for compatriots in preserving and developing the language, culture, traditions and links with Russia'.

"Besides emphasising the federation's commitment to the preservation and national self-determination of the ethnonations, the decree also offers the prospect for further regions to enter into power-sharing agreements with the centre, thus coming closer to Spain's model of offering autonomy to all constituent units which desire greater control over their affairs. This, however, does not mean that the aim is the "gubernisation" [creating regions modelled on tsarist guberniyas] of the republics or the "republicanisation" of the regions (oblasti) and territories (kraya)."22 Rather, the goal is to recognise 'the striving of peoples for self-determination and objective processes of integration into Russian Federation society. It is a statement reminiscent of the dialectical policy of the Soviet regime, which envisaged the national

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22 Ibid.
cultures of its ethnorepublics both flourishing through federal institutional supports and at the same time moving closer together through the federation's commitment to greater socio-economic equalisation between its constituent parts. The decree thus emphasises the importance of 'equalising the level of socio-economic development of federation subjects', of a federation allocating resources according to need and developing measures to boost especially the economy of depressed regions, notably of Central Russia and the North Caucasus: Thus federation is to promote the redistribution of wealth, in a manner reminiscent of the way in which the policy functioned during the Soviet period.

The goal of rectifying socio-economic inequalities embedded in this vision of federation raises an important aspect that has become marginalised in discussions of the politics of multiculturalism. As Fraser argues with regard to questions of social justice in late modern democracies, "the dislodging of material inequalities from considerations of group rights has impoverished any coherent understanding of distributive justice. Rather, she argues, '... justice today requires both
redistribution and recognition'".23 Hence in any consideration of multicultural federation one needs to rethink group rights so that attention is paid not only to the right to be culturally different but also to ensuring that such a politics of recognition does not exclude considerations of the economically and socially disadvantaged. This is in effect where Walzer's proposition falls down: "If some sort of union--federation or confederation--is our goal, 'the best way to reach it is to abandon coercion and allow the tribes to separate and then to negotiate their own voluntary and gradual, even if only partial, adherence to some new community of 'interest'."24 Within the Russian context such advice can be interpreted as an invitation to the economically powerful and advantaged to effectively renegotiate and reshape the fiscal framework of federation to their own benefit and so to the detriment of the less powerful and more economically disadvantaged constituent units. Moreover, while some of the poorest constituent units are ethnorepublics (in terms of per capita produced income,


for example, at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder are Ingushetia, Dagestan, Adygeya, Tuva and Kalmykia), many of the non-ethnic based regions also suffer from severe economic displacement (notably Kostroma, Ivanovo and Pskov). Any understanding of federate distributive justice should not therefore lose sight of rectifying such socioeconomic inequalities for, to do otherwise is likely to weaken support amongst the poorer Russian regions and ethnorepublics alike for recognition of the value of a multicultural federation.

Finally, and probably most innovative of all, the decree attempts to broaden the merit of who qualifies for self-determination by focusing on those ethnic minorities who either do not possess their own administrative homeland or live outside the ethnorepublic claimed by their titular co-nationals. The attempt is therefore to broaden the concept of federation by recognising 'multiple forms of national self-determination', including acknowledging the rights of those not represented as constituent federal subjects to national-cultural autonomy. In particular, each citizen of the Russian Federation would declare his or her national affiliation in an electoral register, and national groups would then be represented in a second chamber of parliament that
should take responsibility for matters such as language education in schools. "In drawing upon such a principle, the federal authorities acknowledge that the national minorities and especially 'the small scattered peoples' of the Siberian Northlands should be able to decide questions concerning 'the preservation and development of their customs, language, education, culture'." According to Anthony Smith, Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era (Oxford Polity Press, 1995), the Federation has proposed setting up an Assembly of the Peoples of Russia which would include representatives of dispersed minorities and could provide scope for promoting the ideal of deliberative democracy amongst otherwise conflicting ethnic groups. In addition, in proposing a form of cultural subsidiarity within the localities, national-cultural autonomy signals not only the potential role that local government can play in 'directly reflecting residents' interests and allowing a more flexible response to national needs but also the participatory role that minorities and diaspora are encouraged to perform in creating 'self-governing public organisations in places of compact settlement' and in promoting their own 'local language media', which would be buttressed through state financial support. As far as the
highly mobilised Social Organisation and Movements for the People of the North is concerned, despite both federal and ethnorepublic constitutions proclaiming support for indigenous rights, neither the resources nor effort are being put into ensuring the cultural protection of their communities or into providing the supports necessary, to safeguard their traditional lifestyles and distinctive local economies from the impact of the transition to a market economy.

Moreover, laudable as the aims of the decree may be in extending the meaning of self-determination, it has not gone hand in hand with addressing the question who qualifies for self-determination and under what conditions. The decree seems to operate on the assumption that any national group designated a nationality (a legal definition) at the time of the last 'census of 1989 has a right, if it wishes to exercise it, to self-determination. By extension, those minorities excluded from the census do not appear to be able to exercise this right. The problem with such vague criteria is that there is a tendency to invite highly mobilised cultural Elites whose purported imagined communities often number only a few thousand strong to overplay their sense of shared cultural community and common identity when that identity is under
threat, giving an impression of imagined community that may not be as coherently imagined or supported as its cultural Elites claim. If it can be proven that especially those groups of the Northlands who have abandoned their native language have chosen to do so then the right to linguistic self-protection might be considered as less strong. If, however, individuals have been coerced into abandoning their culture, a claim made by activists with some justification given the lack of support for non-ethnorepublic-based nationalities by the previous regime, then the argument for measures to support linguistic revival should be considered supportable.

While Decree 909 has generated a variety of debates concerning the balance to be struck between competing visions of a multicultural federation, a more recent government resolution, concerning the abolition of nationality from the new internal passports, has rekindled tension between liberalism and nationalism. As probably the most significant development in federal nationalities policy since the introduction of the Federal Constitution in December 1993, the controversy focuses on a July 1997 Resolution, following a Presidential Decree four months earlier, to remove the nationality entry - 'line 5' - from new internal passports which were introduced towards the
end of 1997 and are to be completed by 2005". Its aim is to bring the new passports into line with the Russian federal constitution, which states that citizens should not be obliged to decline or declare their nationality. In purporting to re-secure the importance of individual over group rights, it has been hailed especially by supporters of a more liberalising multicultural federation as refocusing on the importance of the individual over collective rights and as central to weakening the manipulation of multiculturalism by nationalist-minded ethnorepublic elites. Opposition, not surprisingly, has come from a number of the ethnorepublics, including Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, Dagestan and Marl El, but it is particularly in Tatarstan, whose State Council adopted an October 1997 Resolution halting issuance of the new documents in that ethnorepublic, where the issue has been especially controversial. Regarded as a culturally-assimilating resolution by Moscow, it has been widely interpreted in the republic as 'depriving ethnic groups of their identity', and as intending to 'destroy ethnic harmony'. In addition, it is also seen as representing yet another victory for those federalists who wish to replace

the ethnorepublics with the 'gubernisation of Russia'.

While compatible with the universal practice in other multiethnic federations, opposition to the proposed reform reflects the continued significance that many ethnorepublic leaders attach to the presence of line 5 as ensuring the formal reproduction of collective identities.

Federation as Counterweight to Nationalism

The ethnorepublics display many of the features of 'nationalising regimes', a term coined by Brubaker to describe those emergent multiethnic post-communist regimes whose political elites have a tendency to promote the culture, language and even political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation, to make the state what it is judged properly and legitimately destined to be, a fully realised and culturally more homogeneous nation-state. While political elites within the ethnorepublics also display such nationalising practices, they differ in the extent of their engagement in such practices. What however is common within the ethnorepublics is the way in which multicultural differences are culturally essentialised and taken as absolute, in which there is little or no room for recognition of those individuals with overlapping or multiple senses of identity who
through inter-ethnic marriage inhabit more than one community's life world. Moreover, exclusivist claims by ethnorepublic elites to historical rights over the ethnorepublic homeland imply that, for example, Russians who settled during recent decades have fewer political rights because of their later arrival than the ancestors of the so-called titular homeland-nation. For nationalising elites holding such exclusionist principles, promoting expulsion, limiting immigration or assimilating co-nationals are therefore often 'tactics' to ensure ethnic homogeneity and numerical dominance of the titular nation. On this basis of infringing upon the liberties of others, such a primordialist nationalism can hardly be justified with reference to group rights. Such a practice contrasts with a civic nationalism (or civic national identity) in which 'the nation is regarded as a territorial community of citizens bound by common laws and a shared public culture' in which the aim is 'to unify the citizen community in its national territory around a set of shared symbols, myths and memories and fuse it with an identifiable culture community'. "While evidence for the development of the latter is limited, nonetheless there are some encouraging signs which include the way in which most of the ethnorepublics have reformulated their opening
declarations of 'state sovereignty' in their revised constitutions from framing them in terms of a particular national group to declaring (as in the case of Sakha's most recent constitution), 'We, the multinational people of the Republic of Sakha ...'.

The most effective means of weakening such primordialist and exclusivist nationalisms and developing a more civic sense of national identity may well be through federation. For weakly developed democracies like Russia, Walzer's formula therefore seems apt: "the best hope for restraint lies ... in federal or confederal checks and balances and in international pressure". This is not an argument that denies the principle of the right of nations to independent statehood as an alternative to federation but rather one which acknowledges there are grounds to suggest that nation-statehood would for the moment at least lead to the far greater infringement of the rights of others particularly minorities. Thus, if it can be shown that secession would be likely to limit the liberties of others or even, through certain cultural practices, the liberties of some members of the titular

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nation, then there may be a priori case for not supporting ethnorepublic secession. There are two points that are important to make in this regard.

First, demands for secession are not widespread. As O.V. Mozorov, Deputy Chairman of the Duma Committee on the Affairs of the Federation and Regional Policy, notes, "one of the central myths of federal politics is that Russia's territorial integrity is threatened by secessionism". 29 Only two republics, Chechnya and Tatarstan, have since 1990 demanded independence from Moscow. The other ethnorepublics seek only greater autonomy. Although no referenda on secession have been held to test the ethnorepublic democratic will, the absence of other possible indicators of support for secessionism, such as secessionist-nationalist organisations, would suggest that like their political elites most ethnorepublic constituents see their future best served as part of a federation, or in the case of Tatarstan, possibly a confederation. The reasons why secession is so weakly developed would certainly include perceptions of being materially worse off outside the federation. On the basis of rectifying a recent past injustice of involuntary

incorporation, a criterion generally acknowledged as legitimate ground for secession, only one republic, Tuva, would qualify. As a sovereign state between 1921 and 1944, it was incorporated into the Soviet Union without the consent of its constituent majority. However, as one of the poorest republics of the federation, it is highly dependent on federal subsidies, one probable reason why secession has little support.

Second, the Chechen experience warrants consideration. Although Chechnya is not archetypal, its experiences before and after the war (1994-96) do illustrate the problems of secessionism in illiberal polities. "It is difficult to establish whether there was a democratic mandate for Chechnya's declaration of independence in November 1991: both parliamentary and presidential elections did occur in October 1991, but turnout was only about 10-12% and voting took place in only 70 of the 360 electoral districts".30 Even before the war began in December 1994, about, one-sixth of the population had fled the republic, primarily ethnic Russians for whom individual and group rights had been violated. "Now, after the signing of a Peace Accord

between Moscow and Chechnya in May 1997, in which the two sides agreed to postpone a resolution to the republic's status until 2001, and presidential and parliamentary elections in January 1997, neither individual nor group rights are widely respected". Although post-1996 human rights violations cannot be separated from the experiences of the 21 month war, their scale and intensity should not be ignored. Of particular concern to Western human rights organisations (as well as to Moscow's politicians) has been the recent introduction and use of the Shariat Criminal Code, which allows for an alarming level of violent punishment, invasions of privacy, and violations of other basic, internationally recognised human rights. In August 1997 the Chechen parliament also passed a law making Chechen the republic's sole official language. It is the only ethnorepublic to have enacted such legislation. Of course, given the increasing impact of Islamic militantism on the making of post-war Chechnya, it is only too easy to fall into the trap of the liberal critique of minority ethnocentrism by defending the values of occidental culture and a secular federation that should be accepted by all minorities without, acknowledging that

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such a stance mirrors the very image of fundamentalism that it perceives in Chechnya's leaders. But when such practices are conducted against those who do not share this culture (Chechnya's minorities) or who have not consented to the election of its representatives, then the issue becomes more complex and not easily addressable.

The question is whether individual and group rights are more likely to be protected in a far from democratic federation than in an illiberal state. And in this regard there are a number of ways in which federation and federal politics can act as a counterweight to primordialist nationalism. First, there is federal intervention. Set up in 1995, the Federal Constitutional Court has acted as a means of curbing or reversing exclusionary practices. In June 1997 Khakasia was successfully brought before the Court for introducing a republic electoral law that required a five to seven-year period of minimum residence in the republic for candidates to the republican legislature and the post of republican governor while federal legislation stipulated that the requirement for minimum residence could not exceed one year. (All such residence requirements have now been outlawed by the centre). "In other instances, power-sharing treaties have contributed to curbing exclusivist local citizenship
policies". Nonetheless, despite federal pressures, issues that strike a fine balance between individual and group rights have not always been resolved. Thus, "as part of its 1996 power-sharing agreement, Krasnodar krai managed to negotiate the right to regulate migration into its region". Although not based on issues of cultural protection but grounded in the desire to introduce a local admissions policy in a district that has received a disproportionately large share of refugees from the North Caucasus, it has triggered off a debate about the role the federal centre should play in providing resources and employment opportunities in localities of immigration and thus pre-empt encouragement by local political elites to treat membership of their ethnorepublic or region as a private club. Some other ethnorepublics, however, defend such actions on the basis of providing a balanced self-preservation of cultures. "In instituting republic citizenship, Sakha makes it clear in article 12 of its constitution that citizenship is open to all those 'born and permanently residing within the republic': however,

the same document stipulates that only a republic citizen who was born in the republic, who has lived in the republic continuously for 15 years and who is fluent in both state languages (Yakut and Russian) can stand for the most senior political offices".34

Second, negotiating bilateral power-sharing treaties with the centre has helped to encourage 'territorialising' rather than 'nationalising' practices in which political elites seem more willing to play the role of topocratic rather than ethnocratic actors. As Hanauer notes in relation to Tatarstan, "where the titular nation comprises only some 49% of the republic's population and both Russians and Chuvash constitute large minorities, '... the fact that political struggles have been framed as centre-periphery rivalries rather than inter-ethnic ones has contributed to a strong sense of Tatarstani civic identity."35 There is evidence to suggest that such strategies of communal inclusiveness, an attempt to build a more acceptable civic nationalism, have strengthened a sense of solidarity amongst its Russian minority of being part of Tatarstan rather than Rossiiskii (a civic loyalty

to the Russian state). Other studies of civic identities also show that ethnicity is not quite the 'community of fate' that primordialist nationalists would wish to portray. In a survey of four ethnorepublics (Tatarstan, Sakha, North Ossetia and Tuva) it was found that "most Russians saw their identities either as lying equally with the ethnorepublic and Russia or just with the ethnorepublic, while only a small proportion saw it as just with Russia. Similarly, in 19 of the 21 republics more respondents placed themselves in the category of citizen with equally shared loyalties (Russia and the republic) than in any other category". Somewhat paradoxically, the formation of such cross-cutting identities must also owe something to the legacy of Soviet nationalities policy, which promoted an internationalising culture leading to high levels of inter-ethnic marriage and multilingualism.

Third, federation has required ethnorepublic elites to adopt a more balanced approach to language issues, especially between the titular nation and local Russians. Most republics have endorsed both the titular language and Russian as official state languages (the latter as the

language of 'federal communication') as mandated by the federal constitution. In the case of some ethnorepublics, a special, state programme exists outlining strategies for broadening the use of the titular language in the political, economic and cultural life of the republics, a policy that is defensible on the grounds of cultural survival and in reversing linguistic colonialism. It would therefore seem morally defensible that Russians should be able to speak the indigenous language for, despite high levels of multilingualism amongst the titular nations (according to the 1989, census, 70% of the titular nationals of the ethnorepublics could speak Russian), Russians' knowledge of the titular languages is poor. At the same time, federation has helped to protect the linguistic needs and sensitivities of Russians. In one of the most multicultural republics, Bashkortostan, where Turkic-speaking Bashkirs make up 22% of the population, Tatars 28% and Russians 39%, the authorities purposely put off a decision concerning what languages should be adopted and encouraged a public debate. Consequently, ethnic group representatives agreed to promote what is labelled 'the cult of the native language' in which all vernaculars - not just the three major spoken languages - 'deserve equal protection and development under the law'. Moreover, while
it is acknowledged that the ethnorepublic has a role to play in promoting the equal worth of some 13 languages, 'the cult of the native language' is also based on the assumption that the most vital work for linguistic revival should be delegated to the family, more specifically the mother. "By moving the focus of language politics and obligation for all languages from the ethnorepublic to the private sphere, political elites have therefore attempted to avoid making language a politically charged issue". 37

Finally, international pressures have also played an important part in shaping a more democratic and less ethnic conflict-ridden federation. Global economic and financial institutions, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank, have played a direct role in linking aid and development to ensure that Russia protects its minorities and works towards a more sustainable federalism. More specific human rights organisations, notably the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, have played an important part as mediators in ethnic tensions and in ensuring that Russia complies with

recognised international human rights norms, while the European Union has been effective in using punitive trade measures to insist that Russia allow the OSCE access to monitor the volatile situation in Chechnya. In short, the price of international recognition and trade is linked to minority accommodation.

Towards a Sustainable Multicultural Federalism

For a sustainable multicultural federalism to be realised in Russia, two conditions in particular would seem to be necessary. Firstly, central to building a democratised and stable federation is one that provides the space for promoting individual liberties as well as accommodating group rights. As part of the federal process, group rights are being realised primarily through asymmetric federalism; provided that the federal process also offers the unfolding opportunity for all constituent units, ethnorepublics and others, to renegotiate their federal status in a way in which no autonomy claims are slighted, then there is the prospect of ensuring fulfilment of both ‘a politics of multicultural recognition’ and ‘federal stability’. Essential also for a democratic trajectory in Russia is an acceptance that citizens have had little experience with political associations that normally provide important linkages or
mediating networks for individuals in liberal societies and [have] had little or no opportunity to try out their interactive skills in the political arena. Thus, if multicultural federation is to succeed in acting as a counterweight to the primordial nationalism of either the cultural majority or minority, it also needs to provide the conditions necessary for creating a plurality of identities and political actors based upon guarantees of free association and access to public forums of the sort that a civil society and economic liberalisation can help generate.

Secondly, by redefining national self-determination to include the right, to national-cultural autonomy, the authors of Decree 909 raise the prospects of a potentially more democratic and flexible version of the term, a cultural-based non-territorial self-determination. "There is a particular advantage in this notion of promoting a cultural and non-exclusive territorial understanding of national self-determination for not only is it more inclusive in accommodating the rights of a wider range of cultural groups but it also offers the opportunity of 'the right to national self-determination a particular case of the right to culture', ensuring that individuals within all ethnic and national groups are provided with cultural
choice". Particularly in the present period of social flux, in which identities are especially fluid, federation needs to be flexible enough not only to devolve powers to smaller, autonomous national groupings but also to recognise that the federation's further economic regionalisation - into new and larger associations of the sort that have emerged through the Siberian Agreement, the Greater Volga Association and in the North Caucasus - should also be welcomed. Although in part motivated by considerations of economic self-interest, their development also highlights the point that regional identities need not necessarily, remain static and that institutional arrangements must be flexible enough to recognise both the fluidity and benefits to be gained from institutional recognition of multiple and overlapping identities. It could well be that such a sustainable multicultural federalism, provided that it is not stillborn, will provide the best counterweight to both majority and minority nationalisms and help largely in the process of nation-building.