

merely evolve in absence of any civil nationalism, or was it preceded by a long tradition of ethnic Russian nationalism in Russia?

The tradition of Russian nationalism is ethnic. Russian society perceives political and social reality in ethnic terms. Any change of this tradition would require a complete re-education, and that would most likely only affect the generation of the very young, leaving their parents just as they are. Given the political situation, it is only natural that, in general, national passions are likely to flare up. Russian national passions would have to be ethnic – they cannot be anything else. This is what Russian nationalism is all about historically. So **whenever national sentiment flares up for whatever reasons, the one that is to flare up in Russia would have to be of an ethnic nature.**

RJ *Our Prime Minister recently met with a number of likely representatives of Russian nationalists. Do you think that the Russian elite support their views?*

Let's consider an example of a different Russian government – the government of Czar Nicholas I in the XIX century. The state doctrine of that period can be referred to as one of 'official nationalism', with the nationalism in question obviously being ethnic. But at the same time, the official nationalists that constituted the Russian government were rather opposed to the Slavophiles, which was a nativist movement within Russian nationalism. The government did not really support them because they were too radical and revolutionary for the government, and they endangered the order existing in the country. There was some consensus between the two groups on the one hand. However, on the other hand, the real politics of the situation prevented the wholehearted support for such a movement by the government. And this shall always be the case insofar as the government is concerned, whatever views any of its individual representatives may espouse in private. The Russian government is bound to be nationalistic in the ethnic sense – they wouldn't know any better. At the same time, any government would be interested in maintaining order in the country, in preventing violence or the rise of opposition, as well as making a good impression abroad. Russian state figures are thus, unlikely to support the more radical expressions of ethnic nationalism, even if they privately agree with the principles thereof.

Liah Greenfeld was speaking with Yuliya Netesova, Dmitriy Uzlaner and Raisa Barash

RUSSIA IS PLURICULTURAL



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The process of nation and state building in Russia is very different from that in the United States. The United States is a relatively new nation, whereas Russia is one of the oldest. There are two key points to consider: first, the political form of the state; and second, the forging of a modern nation. Regarding the first point, the US devised an effective way of managing a vast territory (although there was a terrible Civil War before it was consolidated), while Russia is still looking for an effective state form to institutionalise its diversity and ensure adequate integration across its territory. Russia's distinctive form of ethno-federalism may not be the most effective system, but to paraphrase Churchill's comment on democracy, it is probably better than any alternative.

As for national diversity, while the United States is multicultural, Russia is pluricultural. Multiculturalism is when you have one

dominant culture and then a number of immigrant peoples. In Russia, on the other hand, there is a large number of different native peoples, each with an equal stake in the development of the nation.

The debate regarding the role of ethnic Russians in all of this is far from resolved, but any attempt to give them an enhanced status as the state-building nation would be ruinous for the whole country. The Russian language is the lingua franca, and Russian culture is predominant. This makes it all the more incumbent upon the 'Great Russians' to be sensitive about the concerns of the minority peoples.

The supranational community can only be based on civic principles of equal and shared citizenship, not on the predominance of any particular ethnic group. A balance has to be drawn between ethnic (and religious) identity, and a common affiliation to the political project that we call 'Russia.' ■