

## SYSTEM OF REGIONAL NATIONAL POLICY

Rostislav Turovsky



ROSTISLAV TUROVSKY is a doctor and professor of political science at the M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, and a professor of applied political studies at the Higher School of Economics. He is the author of *Political Geography* (1999) and *Political Regionalism* (2006).

The absence of anything in the way of a thought-out, conscious national policy is typical for the overwhelming majority of Russian federal subjects. Such policies are generally considered very low-priority due to the fact that ethnic Russians consider themselves to be the absolute majority in many parts of Russia, and immigration has been affecting them rather unevenly. Regions that have seen a great deal of immigration over the last couple of years have so far been failing to deliver a policy to address the growing ethnic heterogeneity in their cities or provinces. The conception of a clearly-defined model is largely dependent on the personal agenda of the governor, who may or may not deem it necessary to address the issue of ethnic diversity. The regional leader may

fancy himself a Russian patriot or a pragmatist to whom ethnic issues are of little consequence.

There are growing a number of such regional leaders who see themselves as pragmatists. The older generation of governors, those who were in power or came to power during the 1990's — which can be considered the late Soviet generation — would have normally addressed issues of nationalism, patriotism, or the brotherhood of nations at some point in their career, whereas the 2000's has seen a decline in the ideological treatment of said issues. This decline is most prominent in those republics that are normally quite sensitive to the national agenda, for the reason that economic issues have now taken precedence. **This is why the agenda that is currently being formed by the federal government is a challenge for the majority of the regional elites**, who are largely ignorant of possible solutions, be they technological or ideological in nature.

Nevertheless, if we are to consider the situation in certain federal subjects, it is apparent that many local elites are a great deal more sensitive to national policy issues, yet understand them in a very subjective way. For instance, if

tions of Russian populations had conducted a great deal of work in order to ensure their dominance ideologically, via a biased propaganda of ethnic history with the possible editing of the latter, and by conducting a search for any grounds for the legitimisation of the existing regime by way of finding historical roots and ethno-cultural bases of every sort. In regions with multiple ethnic groups the national policy was understood as the distribution of power between the primary ethnic groups, which could never be completely proportional. Therefore, there is always a power-hungry opposition — consider the situation in Dagestan or Karachayev-Circassia. But even this much would be a technopolitical approach to national policy issues since, in this case, we are considering the distribution of power with ethnicity as a major criterion.

The latest events and waves of immigration, and the changes in the ethnic composition of regions as a result of immigration from the Caucasus and Central Asia, is contributing to a whole new set of problems. Many regional leaders have already hinted as much, and indeed people began wondering about such changes in the early 2000's, warning of the effects of a

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a dominant ethnic group exists in a given federal subject, the national policy is to ensure its further dominance, as is the continued practice in Tatarstan, Bashkiria, and Yakutia. The ethnic elites of republics with significant propor-

growing Caucasian migrant populace in a formerly homogeneous Central Russia. They have refrained from causing trouble for now, but there is a certain growing strain that may prove troublesome, especially if the representatives of

these ethnic minorities begin to carve out significant economic niches for themselves.

Another issue that is of great importance here is the compatibility between national and economic policies. This issue is very poignant for Moscow, for instance, because the representatives of the Caucasus diaspora often control substantial economic resources. Seeing as how **most regions adopted a pragmatic stance, there was a symbiosis between the Caucasus businesses and the local elites.** When the problem becomes public and voters grow uneasy, regional leaders are caught between the necessity of retaining popularity and keeping on good terms with businesses, most of which are viewed by the

populace in a negative light. Most of them still don't know how to deal with the situation.

We are very likely to see a scenario where the regional leaders will publicly profess their support for the dominant position of the ethnic Russians, and privately rely on the support of the Caucasian businesses. The use of nationalist rhetoric by the representatives of various political parties that we see today is nothing but a pre-election publicity stunt. **The Manezhnaya Square factor has become important in Russian politics, and political parties are not really trying to fight against it — they are trying to win the votes of that part of the population,** realising its true potential. Basically, what we see is an ideological

struggle to grab the vote of the nationalists. Every party has its own agenda — the Communist Party of the Russian Federation has always promoted a fusion between leftist and nationalist ideas, while Yedinaya Rossiya finds nationalism to be the natural extension of conservatism. We may see more parties or movements of a more radical nature. For the moment, it appears that every party is ready to use nationalist rhetoric at least to the extent that is necessary to have an edge over the competition in the next election. Yet they realise that the issue of Russian nationalism is one to be addressed with the utmost diligence and over a very long term, which is also important to any party-wide strategy. ■

## 'THE YUGOSLAV SCENARIO' IS NOT POSSIBLE IN RUSSIA



VIEKOSLAV PERICA is a Croatian historian, a journalist and a writer specialising in the modern history of religions in the former Yugoslavia. Viekoslav Perica is the author of the book 'Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in the Yugoslav States' (New York, 2002; revised and expanded version published in 2006 in Belgrade). Perica is currently Associate Professor of History at the University of Rijeka, Croatia

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**T**he collapse of the socialist Yugoslavia demonstrated that it was a project that completely failed in terms of nation or state building. It is debatable as to whether this was simply a failure or whether this downfall was somehow supported by external forces. This issue inevitably brings us to the role of the elites. **As I see it, Yugoslavia was primarily destroyed namely from within by various nationalistic movements, and the elites in Yugoslavia undoubtedly played a crucial role in terms of their actions.**

The small number of people, including those who capably used the mass media, were able to successfully destroy the Yugoslav Federation by playing on its structural weaknesses and, primarily, owing to its constitution of 1974. This document essentially turned Yugoslavia into a confederation, which was highly depended on the concept of mutual agreement amongst its constituent republics. If there had

been no such agreement, the country would basically no longer exist. The elite subsequently started to build a new national form, effectively leading to the emergence of new countries — there would be the new Croatia, the new Slovenia, the new Serbia and so forth. All of these nations, as countries, are new. Within each of them, one can find only a little continuity with the previously existing Yugoslavia. Thus, these nations are relatively young and the new nation-building that occurred within each of them is what basically caused the outburst of hatred and animosity between these groups. It is namely for this reason that a full-scale war ended up breaking out.

I cannot imagine that something like what happened in Yugoslavia could ever happen in the Russian Federation. Russia may encounter problems on its territory with various nationalities and so forth, but **in the core of the ethnic and national mosaic, Russia is built on the majority being comprises of ethnic Russians — Russia remains Russian.** This country is so large that it would be impossible that things could happen in the way that they happened in Yugoslavia, where several peoples and several groups were taking sides. In Yugoslavia, there were essentially small groups fighting against each other, and it is namely due to this fact that the war dragged on so long and why it turned out to be so bloody. It is virtually impossible that something like that could ever happen in Russia. ■