RUSSIAN COMPATRIOTS IN THE NEAR ABROAD AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIAN IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

RUSSIAN COMPATRIOTS IN THE NEAR ABROAD AND
THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIAN IDENTITY

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This thesis examines the impact of the existence of multimillion Russian diaspora in the former-Soviet republics on the nation building policies of the post-Soviet Russia. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, twenty-five millions of ethnic Russians found themselves beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The responsibilities of the newly independent Russian state toward the Russian communities in the Near Abroad and regarding them as an integral part of the Russian state and nation have bocome the core issue of the political and intellectual debates in the post-Soviet Russia. In this thesis, it is argued that there are three important dynamics that affect the post-Soviet political oritentaions and self identification of Russian individuals in the Near Abroad: their Soviet and pre-Soviet historical experiences, policies of their host states towards them in the post-Soviet era, and the policies of the Russian Federation as a homeland toward them. In this thesis after examining briefly the first and the second dynamics, the main focus is devoted to the third one. Within this scope, firstly I evaluate the policies of Russian Federation toward Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad; then, examine how the existence of multimillion Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad and efforts to count them as an integral part of the

Russian nationhood have affected the nation building policies of the post-Soviet Russia.

Keywords: Russian Federation, Russian compatriots, Russian nation-building, Russian diaspora, Russian identity

ÖZ

YAKIN ÇEVRE'DEKİ RUS AZINLIKLAR VE
SOVYET SONRASI RUS MİLLİ KİMLİĞİNİN İNŞASI

KAYA, Rüştü

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Bu tez, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla eski Sovyet cumhuriyetlerinde kalan yirmi beş milyon Rus azınlığın varlığının Sovyet sonrası dönemde Rus milli kimliğinin inşasına etkisini incelemektedir. Yeni kurulan Rus devletinin Yakın Çevre'de bulunan milyonlarca soydaşına karşı sorumlulukları Sovyet sonrası dönemde Rusya'nın siyasi ve entelektüel tartışmalarının en hassas konularından biri olmuştur. Bu tezde, Sovyet sonrası dönemde Yakın Çevre'de bulunan Rus azınlıkların siyasi yönelimlerini ve kimlik algılarını etkileyen üç temel faktör olduğu savunulmaktadır: bu toplulukların Sovyet ve Sovyet öncesi döneme dair tarihsel tecrübeleri; Sovyet sonrası dönemde bulundukları ülkelerin kendilerine yönelik politikaları; anavatan olarak Rusya Federasyonu'nun bu topluluklara yönelik politikaları. Bu tezde ilk iki faktör kısaca ele alındıktan sonra temel odak noktası olarak üçüncü faktör incelenmiştir. Bu kapsamda, öncelikle Rusya Federasyonu'nun Yakın Çevre'deki Rus azınlıkların kendilerini Rusya'nın ve Rus milletinin bir parçası olarak hissetmelerini pekiştirmek adına bu topluluklara yönelik politikaları değerlendirilmekte, ardından ise Rusya'nın yakın çevredeki Rus azınlıkları Rus

milletinin doğal bir parçası olarak nitelendirme noktasında yaşadığı zorlu süreç değerlendirilmekte ve Sovyet sonrası Rus milli kimliğinin inşa sürecine Rusya dışında bulunan Rus azınlıkların etkisi tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya Federasyonu, Rus diasporası, Rus azınlıklar, Rus milli kimliği, Rus ulus inşası

Pek çok şeyi borçlu olduğum, rahmetli annem Seyyibe Kaya'ya

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The collapse of the Soviet Union was one of the twentieth century's great tragedies. Above all this was a humanitarian tragedy. The Soviet collapse left 25 million Russians abroad. This just happened overnight and no one ever asked them. The Russian nation became the world's biggest divided nation, and this was unquestionably a tragedy."

(Vladimir Putin, October 22, 2015)[1]

The seven-decades of Soviet rule had left behind various political, social and economic legacies in the post-Soviet space. One of the most significant outcomes of the Soviet period had been the political-administrative borders which do not overlap with the boundaries of the ethno-national communities residing within them. The forcible and systematic replacement of people, internal labor migration and irrelevantly drawn national borders resulted in the dispersion of ethnic groups outside of their titular republics. By the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the little correspondence between the state borders and the boundaries of ethno-national communities emerged as a serious international problem which has the potential to endanger the regional security and peace in the post-Soviet space. Almost all Soviet successor states had minorities within their borders and some of them had also co-

[1] Vladimir Putin, "Vladimir Putin took part in the final plenary session of the 12th Annual Meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club. Transcript of Vladimir Putin's speech and Q&A session", October 22, 2015, http://valdaiclub.com/opinion/highlights/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-discussion-club-transcript-of-the-final-plenary-sess/

ethnics abroad. The political, social and cultural issues in respect to these minority groups of the newly independent states arose as a fundamental question immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The question of what kind of a policy should be pursued toward their minorities at home as well as the co-ethnics abroad initially became a major problem in these newly independent former Soviet republics.

Among all Soviet successor states, the Russian Federation was the most remarkable one in terms of its twenty-five million Russians that had remained beyond the borders of the post-Soviet Russian Federation with the dissolution of the Union. As the core nation of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, Russians had been settled or migrated in non-Russian peripheral regions for political, economic and security motives during both Tsarist and Soviet period. When the Soviet Union collapsed, these Russian communities in the non-Russian Soviet republics constituted the largest post-imperial diaspora group in the world. At the same time, the Russian nation became the biggest 'divided nation' as Vladimir Putin claimed.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new Russian state found itself responsible for its co-ethnics in the 'Near Abroad' and adopted the role of being a homeland for these Russian minority groups living in the former Soviet republics. Increasing pressure on the Russian minorities in the new nationalizing states and the violation of their political, cultural and linguistic rights put the issue of Russian diaspora into the center of Russia's domestic and foreign politics. On the other hand, the possible policy approaches of the Russian Federation in engaging with its

diaspora in the Near Abroad became one of the main issues of concern in the newly independent former Soviet republics which held large Russian minorities within their borders. It was not clear in these years whether Russia would use its co-ethnics abroad as a tool in order to maintain its hegemony in the post-Soviet space by a neo-imperialistic approach or it would deal with the problems regarding its diasporas in peaceful ways.

On the other hand, another important question arose regarding the issue of Russian minorities in the Near Abroad: could the Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics be defined as diaspora and do they have a collective diasporic identity? At this point it is essential to evaluate the concept of diaspora with an emphasis on diasporic identity and diasporic stance. The term diaspora is simply defined by Walker Connor as "a segment of a people living outside the homeland".[2] The Jewish and the Greek diaspora, which were dispersed outside of their homeland as a result of forced or voluntary migrations, were two the oldest diaspora groups classified in the literature as the classical diaspora. The term "diaspora" originates from the Greek language and was firstly used by Greeks for defining the dispersion of the Greek people for colonizing Asia Minor and the Mediterranean region in ancient times.[3] The term contemporary or modern diasporas, on the other hand, defines the diaspora groups of the modern era. The reasons behind the dispersion of people in modern times and behind the forming of contemporary diasporas are more complex than the classic times. As a result of developments in the transportation and communication

[2] Walker Connor, "The Impact of Homelands upon Diasporas" in Gabriel Sheffer (ed), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, New York: St. Martins, 1986, p. 16

[3] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London: UCL Press, 1997, p. 2

technologies, the mass movement of people has become more common in recent times than the classical period. Geopolitical repartitioning, forced migrations as well as the refugee and exile populations of wartime periods have created diaspora groups outside their homelands. Also, in recent times, people may choose to "migrate of their own free will, leaving to study, work or join their family abroad".[4] Armenians, Africans, Palestinians, Turks, and many other communities living outside their homeland for various reasons could be counted in this type of diaspora groups.

Gabriel Sheffer, a prominent scholar of diaspora studies, makes a comprehensive and broader definition of diaspora by emphasizing the fundamental features of a diasporic community such as the solidarity among diaspora members and an emphasis on an external state as the homeland:

> An ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in host countries, but to maintain a common identity, diasporans identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres.[5]

[4] Michele Reis, "Theorizing Diaspora: Perspectives on Classical and Contemporary Diaspora", *International Migration*, 42:2, 2004, p. 45-46 and Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse", *Diaspora*, 10:2, 2001, p. 190

[5] Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 9-10

William Safran, on the other hand, argues that the term diaspora could also be applied to "expatriate minority communities" whose members have the following characteristics:

> 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[6]

In his definition, Safran raises the myths and memories of a particular homeland; the desire for an eventual return to the homeland and a collective diasporic identity mainly influenced by the homeland as the main features of diaspora. James Clifford criticized this 'strict' diaspora definition of Safran by arguing that asserting the orientation to a specific homeland and desire for return to homeland as major characteristics of diaspora communities is debatable as many diaspora groups do not have such homeland myths and return motives.[7]

According to Rogers Brubaker, there are three core elements constituting the diaspora: dispersion of ethnic communities, orientation to a homeland, and boundary

[6] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1:1, 1991, pp. 83-84

[7] James Clifford, "Diasporas", *Cultural Anthropology*, 9:3, 1994, pp. 304-306

maintenance. The dispersion of ethnic communities results in a situation that part of the nation lives outside its ethnic homeland as a minority. This occurs when the political-administrative borders of states do not overlap with the natural boundaries of ethnic communities. According to Brubaker, orientation to the homeland is a sense of loyalty of diaspora community toward its homeland and is a source of identity, value and support for their needs. For Brubaker, the boundary maintenance as the last element of diaspora refers to diasporic groups' constituting a separate society and having a distinct sense of identity in their host states.[8] Brubaker categorizes the members of diaspora as the 'core', 'marginal', and 'dormant' ones and he raises the question whether all the members of a distinct ethnic group in the host state should be perceived as the members of the diaspora or not. Should the members of diaspora who are assimilated or integrated into host state society and who do not have a sense of loyalty to the homeland be counted as the real members of putative diasporas? Brubaker argues that diaspora should not be defined "in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim."[9]

Diaspora communities do not always refer to the migrant groups, which migrated outside their homeland. In some cases, diaspora groups arise from "the movement of borders over people" rather than the migration of people over borders. From this perspective, ethnic communities, which remain separate from their national homelands as a result of the changing state borders, are also defined as diaspora.[10]

[8] Rogers Brubaker, "The 'diaspora' diaspora", *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* January 2005, 28:1, pp. 5-7

[9] Ibid., pp. 11-12

[10] Ibid., p. 3

Especially, the remnants of imperial powers, who constitute the core nation of imperial times acquired the status of diaspora when they found themselves in the newly founded alien states after the borders of the empire withdrew. David Laitin calls this type of diasporas as 'beached diaspora'.[11] Russians in the former Soviet republics and Turks in the Balkans and the Middle East are two examples of the type of beached diaspora.

Given the above discussion on the definition of diaspora, regarding the Russian communities in the former Soviet republics as a single diasporic community which has strong political orientation toward Russian Federation is not so fruitful. As they had lived in fourteen different Soviet republics under different social, economic and political conditions, Russian communities in the Near Abroad had developed different social and political identities, and they did not constitute a single, homogenous diaspora group. Also, immediately after the dissolution of the Union, outside Russians continued their attachments to the Soviet Union, and considered the Soviet Union as their homeland rather than the Russian Federation. However, all these characteristics of the Russian diaspora were the realities of the first years of the post-Soviet era, and it was not certain how their self-identification would evolve in the post-Soviet era.

In this thesis, I argue that there are three main factors that shape the post-Soviet identities and political stances of Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics. First one is their Soviet experiences: the social status of Russian individuals,

[11] David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: the Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca: CornellUniversity Press, 1998, p. 29

economic conditions they lived in, geographic distance of their place of residence to Russia, numbers and compactness of them in a given region, their rootedness and political and social atmosphere in various republics had all affected the self-identification of individuals of Russian communities in the non-Russian republics. Some of the elements of these established identities in the Soviet era have been retained in the post-Soviet period. Second one is their post-Soviet experiences in host states: the political and economic circumstances as well as the policies towards them in their host states determined to some extent the degree of their successful integration into the host state society or their marginalization with a sense of distinct Russian ethnic identity. The third dynamic that influences the diasporic identity and diasporic stance among the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad is the policies of the 'homeland' state – Russia towards them.

In this thesis, the historical factors and the post-Soviet dimensions which had affected the self-identification of Russian minority groups in the post-Soviet era are evaluated in the first and second chapters briefly, but the main focus is devoted to the Russian state's policies towards its diaspora in the Near Abroad. Considering the lack of diasporic features among Russian minority groups in the former Soviet republics, Russian state has pursued various policies toward Russian diaspora in order to strengthen their political orientations to the Russian Federation. The main aim here was to make them feel as part of Russian state and Russian nation. Within this scope, firstly I will evaluate the policies of the Russian Federation towards the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad. Then, I survey Russian nation building policies in the post-Soviet Russia by focusing on the efforts to include Russian

communities living outside the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet Russian national identity.

This thesis argues that the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad has become an important determining factor in the definition of the post-Soviet Russian identity. Immediately after the independence, Russian government sought to construct a non-ethnic, civic Russian nation on the basis of citizenship and the borders of the Russian Federation. However, this policy had to be revised due to the fact that such a definition could have excluded the twenty-five million Russians living outside the borders of the Russian Federation. Especially, the political and intellectual pressure on the government prompted the Russian leadership to shift its nation building policies. Various formulations have been developed in order to include Russian minorities in the post-Soviet Russian nationhood. Firstly, as also stated in the title of this thesis, the Russian communities in the Near Abroad were defined as compatriots, the fellow countrymen of the Russian Federation. Through dual citizenship policies it was sought to issue them Russian passports and to make them Russian citizens. In Putin era, the Russian nationhood has been defined on the basis of civilizational elements such as common history, common culture, language, political affiliation to Russia and self-identification of individuals, not on the bases of citizenship or state borders. The main aim here was to comprise Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad within the post- Soviet Russian national identity.

In this thesis, besides the published literature such as books and articles on the issue of Russian diaspora, official documents published by Russian government and

presidency between 1992 and 2015 have been used. Also, speeches made by Russian presidents and other official figures, as well as, the articles written by President Vladimir Putin were utilized. Official websites of the institutions related with the compatriot policies in the Russian Federation were investigated. Lastly, other internet sources and news portals were also used.

This thesis is composed of five chapters. After the introduction chapter, the second chapter surveys the main motives behind the settlement and the migration of Russians into the non-Russian peripheral regions during both Tsarist and Soviet period. This chapter indicates that while in the Tsarist era the main reasons behind the Russian settlement into the peripheral lands had been the security and social aspects, in Soviet era economic motivations had been more dominant. Also this chapter shows that, Tsarist era Russian settlements had also an important role in the post-Soviet dimensions, since the most compact Russian regions in the post-Soviet era are the ones which had been settled by Russians in the period of the Russian empire. Also, in this chapter nationalities policy of the Soviet Union and the status of the Russian settlers in the non-Russian republics are examined.

In the third chapter, I analyze the conditions of the Russian diaspora in the post-Soviet states and the policies of the Russian Federation towards its diaspora. Firstly, I examine briefly the diasporic identity among Russian communities in the near abroad in terms of their collectivity, homeland orientations and diasporic identity among them. Also, I discuss how nationalizing policies of their host states could affect their sense of identification. On the other hand, I propound the argument that the policies

of homeland toward diaspora is one of the most important dynamic that would affect the post-Soviet sense of belonging of the Russian diaspora members in the former Soviet republics. Thus, in the second section of this chapter, I examine the policies of the Russian Federation toward the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad both under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, and the efforts of Russian state to make Russian communities in the Near Abroad to feel as a part of the Russian state and nation.

In the fourth chapter, I demonstrate how the efforts of counting Russians and Russian-speaking minorities in the Near Abroad as an integral part of the post-Soviet Russian nationhood affected the nation-building policies of the Russian Federation. Firstly, I analyze the dilemma between attempts of Yeltsin government to construct a non-ethnic and civic Russian nation within the borders of the Russian Federation and ethnic governmental responsibilities toward Russian minorities living outside the Russian Federation. Here, I indicate how the political and intellectual pressure on the government pushed the Russian leadership to shift its nation building policies. Secondly, I evaluate the efforts of Putin government in order to regard Russian compatriots abroad as an integral part of the Russian nation by the definition of nationhood on the basis of civilizational elements such as common history, common culture, language, and political affiliation to Russia, not on the bases of citizenship or state borders.

CHAPTER 2

RUSSIAN OUT MIGRATION TO THE PERIPHERY DURING THE TSARIST AND THE SOVIET PERIOD

The dispersion of Russians across the Eurasian space is the direct outcome of the policies of the Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. Since the sixteenth century, when the Russian state began to expand into the non-Russian territories, Russian people had begun to migrate or had been settled by the state to those newly captured lands. It was not only the borders of the Russian state to move, but the Russian people moved as well. This process, the settlement and migration of Russians into the non-Russian periphery had lasted until the last decade of the Soviet Union. For centuries, millions of Russians moved and dispersed through different territories all around the vast Eurasian region for various reasons. In order to evaluate the current situation of those Russians outside the Russian Federation, it is crucial to begin with analyzing this historical context of the Russian settlement. In this chapter, I will examine the main motives behind the settlement and the migration of Russians into the non-Russian peripheral regions during both Tsarist and Soviet period. Then, I will evaluate nationalities policy of the Soviet Union and the status of the Russian settlers in the non-Russian republics.

2.1. Russian Settlement and Migration Policy in the Tsarist Era

By the end of the fifteenth century, after an approximately 40-year reign, Ivan III, who was the first user of the title 'Tsar', had managed to unite all core Russian lands and Russian people under the Muscovy Principality. During the Ivan III era, the Muscovy Principality had almost become a homogenous Russian state in ethnic, linguistic and cultural terms with the core Russian lands and Russian people in it. In the reign of Ivan IV, the institutionalization of the Tsardom was mainly completed and the capital of northern Tatar khanate, Kazan, was conquered in 1552. This conquest did not only make Russian state a multinational empire, but also opened the gateway for further Russian expansion into the non-Russian territories. After the conquest of two important Tatar cities, Kazan and Astrakhan, Russian state firstly expanded east – into the Siberian region, then west – toward the Ottoman lands along the northern coast of the Black Sea, and finally south – into the Kazakh steppes and Turkestan. All three stages of expansion led to a significant Russian migration and settlement in those newly captured lands.[12]

In the Tsarist era, the expansion of the state was one of the main reasons behind the movement of the Russian people into the non-Russian territories. Some of those newly occupied regions were not densely populated by indigenous peoples and they offered lands for Russian peasants. Eventually, Russians started to settle in those regions – especially the vast steppes of Siberia while the share of Russian population in these territories had increased from day to day. Historian Vasili Kliuchevskii

[12] Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995, pp. 14-19

underlined the correlation between the state expansion and the Russian migration by his popular quote: 'The history of Russia is the history of a country which colonizes itself.' Indeed, the contemporary Russian country had mainly colonized and Russified by Russian migrants as a result of the massive migration waves and settlement policies of the state which had begun in the seventeenth century and lasted until the end of the Soviet era. However, this colonization process was not quite a process of colonizing itself, but of colonizing the lands of other peoples – Finns, Turks and many other peoples living in those regions.[13]

Firstly, the eastward expansion of the Russian state was completed in the seventeenth century. Russians had finally reached to the Pacific Ocean by conquering the entire northern Asian continent, including Urals, Siberia, the Far East and parts of northern Kazakhstan. In that time, this vast territory was not densely populated by indigenous peoples; therefore, the Russian settlement in this region became large.[14] Most of those eastern acquisitions are now within the borders of the contemporary Russian Federation; thus, Russians living in this region are not counted as part of the diaspora population.

The expansion towards the west, on the other hand, was much more complicated and compelling in terms of military and political aspects. On the way to westward enlargement, the Russian empire was challenged by big powers such as Sweden, Poland and the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, the Baltic region was acquired from

[13] Richard Pipes, "Reflections on the Nationality Problems in the Soviet Union", in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 455

[14] Paul Kolstoe, "*Russians in the Former…*", pp. 19-20

Sweden in 1721 after the Northern War, and this region remained under the control of the Russian Empire until the First World War. Under Russian control, the administration of the Baltic region was entrusted to Baltic Germans, who declared loyalty to the Russian Empire, and the region was governed by the German elite. Thus, ethnic Russians could not possess significant political and economic positions in this region. The Russian migration and settlement in the region was also modest. After the First World War, after a two-year power struggle between Bolsheviks, Germans and local forces, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians seized the political control in their regions and declared their respective independent states.[15]

In 1654, Ukrainian Cossacks in the east bank of Dnieper River recognized the authority of the Tsarist Russia by the Treaty of Pereiaslavl. In eighteenth century, the lands of contemporary Belorussia, Lithuania and some parts of the west bank of Dnieper River were acquired from Poland. The Russian Empire saw the acquisition of these former Polish lands as an opportunity to unify the Slavic lands and peoples of Ukrainians, Belorussians and Russians. Those newly acquired lands were densely populated by Cossacks and other Slavic peoples, and the Russian migration to this region was low. Approximately 250.000 Russian settlers moved to this territory as mostly officers and officials of the central government.[16] The other expansion route was into the Ottoman lands. The annexations of Crimea in 1783, the left bank of Dniester River in 1793 and the west Bank of Dniester River - Bessarabia in 1812 introduced the northern coast of the Black Sea to the Russian Empire. Those former

[15] Neil Melvin, *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1995, pp. 27-28

[16] Paul Kolstoe, "Russians in the Former…", pp. 20-21

Ottoman lands, which were populated by non-Slavic indigenous peoples, became the target of systematic Russification policies. These newly acquired lands were named as 'Novorossiya' – 'New Russia' and a large amount of Russian settlement into the region was promoted by the state. Russians, Ukrainians and other European peoples were encouraged to migrate to this region through various privileges. By the year 1917, the Russian share of the total 'Novorossian' population rose to 30 percent.[17]

The occupation of Transcaucasia and Central Asia constitutes two different phases of the Russian expansion towards the south. The annexation of Caucasia and Transcaucasia had been completed by the middle of the nineteenth century. These former Ottoman lands had a high density of indigenous population. The northern Caucasus was mainly occupied by local Muslim people while the southern part of the region, Transcaucasia was home to a mix population of Turks, Armenians and Georgians. As a result of this high amount of indigenous population as well as the lack of arable lands, migration of ethnic Russians into the region remained relatively limited around 474.000 ethnic Russians.[18]

The occupation of Central Asian lands by the Russian empire began with the incorporation of the Kazakh steppes into the imperial lands in the eighteenth century and had been completed by the subordination of the Khivan Khanate in 1878. After the conquest of Kazakh steppes, Russian empire settled ethnic Russians along the periphery of Kazakh territories as bases for further expansion. The occupation of the

[17] Paul Kolstoe, "Russians in the Former…", p. 21

[18] S. I. Bruk and V. M. Kabuzan, "Dinamika Chislennosti i Raseleniia Russkogo Etnosa (1678-1917 gg.)", *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, No: 4, 1982, p. 17 cited in Paul Kolstoe, "Russians in the Former…", p. 45

rest of Turkestan mostly relied on those settler networks and military bases established in northern Kazakhstan. After the acquisition of the whole Central Asian region, the settlement of Russians and other Slavic people into the region was accelerated.[19] Central Asian people were different from Russians in terms of ethnic, linguistic and religious aspects. Until the Russian occupation, they had a different historical experience from Russians. Therefore, Russians as the new masters of the region were seen as colonizers by the indigenous people of the region. Indeed, the Russian presence in Central Asia shared many similarities with the colonial rules of British, French and other Europeans in their overseas possessions.

Like the other colonial powers of the time, the Russian empire chose the way of settling its loyal units, the ethnic Russians in the Central Asia in order to consolidate its power in those newly captured lands. The Russian settlement into the region based on two main motives: political-administrative needs and the military security aspects. In order to meet the former one, the urban segments of the Russian settlers were sent to the region, as administrators, engineers, teachers, doctors etc. On the other hand, for military requirements, Cossack military units were settled in the region to maintain security and order in the borderlands. Cossacks were mainly stationed in territory of Kazakhstan.[20] In terms of security needs, the Russian government also sought to increase Russian population in the region to provide manpower in case of an uprising of the indigenous people. Also, Russian peasants

[19] Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 103

[20] Shirin Akiner, "Towards a Typology of Diasporas in Kazakhstan", in Touraj Atabaki and Sanjyot Mehendale (ed), *Central Asia and the Cacucasus: Transnationalism and Diaspora*, Routlage, London; New York, 2005, p. 28

were settled into the region in order to provide food for military units and to make them less dependent on the local farmers. Many of the rural migrants were also settled in strategic places along the transportation and communication roads in order to secure military logistics.[21]

For the Muslim people of Turkestan and Kazakhstan, Russians were regarded as aliens; likewise, the newly acquired territories and people were also alien for Russian people. Migrating to these unfamiliar lands was not largely welcomed by Slavic peoples, and migration to the region was mostly promoted and encouraged by the state through various instruments such as exemption from taxes and military service. By the year 1861, serfdom was abolished in Russia which accelerated the peasant migration to the region. Furthermore, with the Stolypin reforms between 1906 and 1912, 19 million hectares of land were set for farming which prepared a convenient environment for further peasant settlement into the region, especially into the Kazakh steppes.[22] As a result, the total number of Russian settlers had reached approximately to 1.250.000 in Kazakhstan and to 250.000 in Turkestan by the year 1917.[23] The large amount of Russian settlement into the region and the ethnic and religious differences between the native population and Russian migrants occasionally resulted in ethnic clashes. A major revolt by the local population broke out in 1916 as a result of a conflict between the local people and Russian settlers over the confiscated lands

[21] Alexander Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and the 'Civilising Mission' in Russian Turkestan, 1865-1917", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 2015, 43:3, pp. 392-393

[22] Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 103

[23] S. I. Bruk and V. M. Kabuzan, "Dinamika Chislennosti …", p. 17 and Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 104

and water sources. In this revolt 3.709 settlers were killed by the indigenous people.[24]

As mentioned above, Russian state actively encouraged and regulated the movements of Russians from the core areas to the peripheral lands for various reasons. Particularly in the case of newly captured lands being thinly populated, Russian government promoted the migration of Russians to those regions, in order to secure borderlands from foreign invasions. However, low population rates were not the only threat in those peripheral lands. The fact that these territories were densely populated by indigenous peoples, who could be hostile to the Russian administration, was also regarded as a potential danger by the Russian government. The borderlands which were vulnerable to a possible internal rebellion were also tried to be demographically and culturally Russified via Russian migration. Russians in those non-Russian peripheral lands acted as clients of the imperial regime and were considered as the most fundamental instrument that could make the Russian regime dominant in those lands permanently.

Along with such organized and systematic migration policies, there were also spontaneous or irregular migration movements. Before the abolition of serfdom, the peasant population of Russia was tied to land that they live. Therefore, it was not possible for them to migrate anywhere. Still, in those times, the peasants who had managed to abandon their villages illegally escaped mostly to the borderlands. Those fugitives, who called themselves Cossack, meaning 'free man', settled into those peripheral lands and mixed with the local population. To maintain their freedom,

[24] Alexander Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and…", pp.401-404

they were organized as military-agricultural colonies and in time, they had developed a distinct identity of their own. Due to their military skills, Cossack communities then became the main force assisting to the expansion of the Russian state as the Tsar employed them as border guards in the newly captured lands.[25]

Expulsion of the undesirable components of the population by the central government was another element behind the Russian migration toward the peripheral lands. In this scope, the religious dissenters and political opponents became the main groups who were affected from the Tsarist policy of forced migration and exile. The Old Believers and religious sectarians were usually forced to migrate and their main destinations were Baltics, Transcaucasia, Bessarabia and Siberia. Also, the regime opponents and other political rebels were banished by exile and they were settled in the peripheral regions. By this way, the Tsarist regime sought to influence those dissenters' beliefs by placing them into an alien culture. It was hoped that, in those alien regions they might develop a stronger sense of Russianness when they encountered with different people and cultures. In the final phase, rebels were intended to be turned to loyals of the state, similar to the case of Cossacks.[26]

One important factor contributing to the pace of Russian migration was the abolition of serfdom in 1861. For various economic reasons, such as falling behind the European powers in economic terms, the Tsarist regime abolished the serfdom and Russian peasants got their freedoms. However, the substituting system - *mir* actually did not let the peasants to live on their lands. In this system, agricultural lands were

[25] Paul Kolstoe, "*Russians in the Former…*", pp. 25-26

[26] Ibid., p. 31

given to the peasant communes, and for cultivating those lands, the peasants in those *mir* communes had to pay for their new lands by annual instalments over a period of 49 years. Namely, the new system did also tie the peasants to the land for half a century.[27] On the other hand, as part of the Tsarist settlement policy, liberal regulations on settlement in 1889, 1896 and 1904 contributed strongly to migration and settlement of Russians into the newly acquired lands. The liberation of serfs and encouragement of their migration by legal status accelerated and eased the movements of people across the imperial lands. By those acts, government favored the settlement of peasants who were engaged in cultivation of lands into the areas which were suitable and designed for new settlements.[28] It could be argued that, beside other motives, the most significant factor contributing to the migration of Russians to the newly acquired lands was the policy of the Tsarist administration that promoted such movements.

2.2. Russian Settlement and Migration in Soviet Era and Nationalities Policy of the Soviet Union

A newly established state would mostly prefer to discredit many of the policies and practices of its predecessor state upon whose ruins it is built on. It is essential for the successor state, to deny and disgrace the former one in order to justify its existence in the eyes of its citizens. Especially, significant ideological fractions between the former and successor states emerge over several main issues. On the other hand, the successor state could prefer to maintain some of the fundamental

[27] Paul Kolstoe, "*Russians in the Former…*", p. 27

[28] Alexander Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and…", p.388

policies of the former one. Actually, this is quite sensible since the successor state emerges on the bases of the same geography, the same sociological and economic realities as well as a common historical experience and political heritage. It could be argued that the newly established state actually chooses the way of maintaining most of the essential policies of the former one, by applying them with different methods under different ideological covers. Thereby, one can find both continuity and breakup elements between the former and successor states.

This assumption is also valid for the relation between the Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. The encouragement and promotion of the Russian migration to the non-Russian periphery was the most fundamental political legacy that the Soviet Union inherited from the previous Tsarist regime. On the other hand, the policies of the two regimes on the nationality issue constituted one of the most fundamental differences between them. Despite its policy change, Soviet regime also could not manage to deal with the nationality issue, and multinational character of the state became one of the main triggers of the dissolution of the Union. And this time, more than twenty million Russians migrated to the peripheries of the new Russian state.

The flow of Russian migrants into the non-Russian periphery from the core lands further accelerated in Soviet era. The Soviet Union was founded almost on the same lands with that of the Tsarist Russia, but the Russian settlers had expanded both numerically and geographically during the Soviet era. Russian migrants, this time by larger numbers, continued to carry out similar functions in the non-Russian periphery as they had in Tsarist era. They served to strengthen the power of the central

government, to assist economic and political change in titular republics and to contribute building a common Soviet nation via linguistic Russification.

After the consolidation of the Soviet power in the non-Russian lands and the foundation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the migration of Russians in those republics accelerated. Between 1926 and 1939, with the first two five-year plans and rapid industrialization, there had been a great increase in the Russian population of non-Russian republics. For example, by the end of 1930s three million Russian migrated to Ukraine. One million of them were settled in 1930s in the region as factory workers, administrators and managers. After the Second World War, millions of Russians migrated to the country's industrial eastern regions to assist with the postwar industrial reconstruction. Russian share of the total population in Ukraine had risen to 16.9 percent by 1959 with 7.1 million Russians. When it comes to 1989, the total number of Russian minorities in Ukrain had gone up to 11.36 million with the percentage of 22.1 percent. Russian residence in Ukraine concentrated mostly in the eastern and southern regions. In Crimea, Russians consisted of majority of total population and the Russian share of the population was 43.6 percent in Donetsk, 44.8 percent in Luhansk, 33.2 percent in Kharkiv and 27.4 percent in Odessa. Russians mainly lived in urban areas as administrators, industrial workers and technical persons.[29]

Another republic with a remarkable amount of Russian immigrants, the Kazakh SSR, inherited a large amount of Russian minority, approximately 1.5 million, from the Tsarist era. It is argued that the Soviet authorities intentionally drew Kazakh

[29] Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 87

republic's borders as it included the Russian predominant regions in order to diminish Kazakh dominance in the republic.[30] By the establishment of the Soviet rule in Kazakhstan, more Russian and European migrants began to settle in Kazakhstan. During the Second World War, many large industrial plants were transferred to Kazakhstan from the western parts of the Union because of the war conditions in those regions. With this industrial replacement, large numbers of Russians, Ukrainians, Germans and other European communities were settled in the republic in order to work in those new enterprises as workers, engineers and technicians.[31] Also, many deported peoples such as Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans, Poles and Meskhetian Turks were forced to migrate to Kazakhstan. Beside this increase in non-titular population, the number of Kazakhs in the republic had decreased in 1930s as a result of deaths and out-migration after the rural collectivization policy. In 1950s, under the Virgin Land Scheme, which opened vast Kazakh lands to cultivation, Russian and other Slavic peoples were promoted to migrate to Kazakhstan.[32]

Between 1926 and 1989, the number of Russians in Kazakhstan rose to 6.2 million and they consisted 37.8 percent of the total population in 1989. Also, there were approximately 1.5 million non-Russian, Russian speaking minority populations such as Ukrainians, Germans, Jews and other nationalities.[33] According to these figures, Kazakhstan was the only Soviet republic where Russians outnumbered the titular

[30] Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 104

[31] Shirin Akiner, "Towards a Typology of Diasporas in Kazakhstan", p. 28

[32] Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", pp. 104-105

[33] Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, 2001, p. 96

nation. Other Central Asian republics had also received significant numbers of Russian settlers. Kyrgyzstan was the most remarkable one among them by the ratio of Russians to the total population being 21.5 percent, with the number of 916.000 by 1989. Uzbekistan also had 1.653.000 Russian migrants with the ratio of 8.3 percent of the total population, while Turkmenistan and Tajikistan held Russian migrants by 9.5 percent and 7.6 percent respectively.[34]

Baltic states lost their independence and were annexed by the Soviet Union with the Second World War. After 1945, large numbers of Russians were sent to those republics in order to establish political control and to provide manpower to the postwar economic reconstruction as administrators, engineers, technical personnel and workers. Among the three Baltic republics, Estonia and Latvia had the highest proportions of Russian migrants, while Russians in Lithuania remained more modest. In Latvia, approximately 400.000 Russian immigrants arrived between 1945 and 1959. Their share of the population had risen to 26.6 percent in 1959, 32.8 percent in 1979 and finally 34 percent in 1989 with a total number of 905.000. In Estonia, these figures were 20.1 percent in 1959, 27.9 percent in 1979 and 30.3 percent in 1989 by the number 474.000 in total. In Lithuania, these numbers remained lower and by 1989, only 9.4 percent of the population was Russian.[35] Russians migrants in the Baltic republics were mostly industrially oriented and settled in urban areas. By 1989, Russians outnumbered the titular population in the seven largest cities of

[34] "*Naselenie Rossii. Ezhegodny, demograficheskii doklad*", The Centre for the Demography and Ecology of Man, Moscow, 1993, p. 15 cited in Neil Melvin, "Russians Beyond Russia…", p. 134

[35] "*Naselenie Rossii. Ezhegodny, demograficheskii doklad*", p. 15, and Paul Kolstoe, "*Russians in the Former…*", p. 47

Latvia, and in the Latvian capital Riga Latvians shared only 36.5 percent of the population.[36]

Moldova is the most prominent republic for its divided political experience during the Soviet era and for its migrant minority groups' characteristics. In the interwar period, the eastern bank of Dniester River – the Transdniester region of the contemporary Moldova belonged to the Soviet Union. It was established as an autonomous republic under the Ukrainian SSR with the name of Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The western bank of the Dniester River – Bessarabia, on the other hand, belonged to Romania. In the interwar period, the left bank of the Dniester River, under the Soviet rule, enjoyed a rapid industrialization process, which was accompanied by the flow of the Russian and Ukrainian emigrants into the region. By the end of the Second World War, Bessarabia was annexed by the Soviet Union, after which Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic was established as a constituent part of the Soviet Union including both Bessarabia and Transdniester region. After that time, Bessarabian part of the republic began to receive Russian and other Slavic migrants.

Nevertheless, the sociological and economic division of the two parts of the republic had continued until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and even continues today. Transdniester part of the republic had remained mostly as linguistically and culturally Russified and economically a more industrialized territory, while Bessarabia had been culturally and linguistically Romanized. It is remarkable that, in Moldova the total number of the Ukrainian minority was more than the number of

[36] Neil Melvin, "Russians Beyond Russia…", p. 31

the Russian minority. Moldova was the only Soviet republic that Ukrainians outnumbered Russians, except Ukraine where the Ukrainians were titular nation. In 1926, the Ukrainian share of the population in Transdniester was 27.2 percent, in 1936 it became 28.7 percent and in 1989 it rose to 28.3 percent. On the other hand, the Russian proportion of population in Transdniester was 13.7 percent in 1926, and rose to 14.2 percent in 1936 and to 25.5 percent 1989.[37] Within the total population of Moldovan republic, there were about 600.000 ethnic Ukrainians and 562.000 ethnic Russians which constituted 13.8 percent and 13 percent respectively.

Table 1: Russians as Percentage of Total Population of Republics (%)

	1926	**1959**	**1970**	**1979**	**1989**
Ukraine	-	16,9	-	-	22,1
Belarus	4,9	8,2	10,4	11,9	13,2
Moldova	8,2	10,2	11,6	12,8	13,0
Estonia	3,5	20,1	24,7	27,9	30,3
Latvia	8,0	26,6	29,8	32,8	34,0
Lithuania	2,6	8,5	8,6	8,9	9,4
Kazakhstan	21,2	42,5	42,4	40,8	37,8
Kyrgyzstan	11,6	30,2	29,2	25,9	21,5
Uzbekistan	5,2	13,7	12,5	10,8	8,4
Turkmenistan	7,4	17,3	14,5	12,6	9,5
Tajikistan	0,6	13,3	11,9	10,4	7,6
Georgia	3,6	10,1	8,5	7,4	6,3
Azerbaijan	9,6	13,6	10,0	7,9	5,6
Armenia	2,3	3,2	2,7	2,3	1,6

Source: S. I. Bruk and V. M. Kabuzan, "Dinamika Chislennosti i Raseleniia Russkogo Etnosa (1678-1917 gg.)", *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, No: 4, 1982, p. 17 and Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, 2001, p. 96

[37] Helge Blakkisrud and Paul Kolstoe, From Secessionist Conflict Toward a Functioning State: Processes of State- and Nation-Building in Transnistria, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 27:2, May 2013, p. 183

One of the results of the settlement of Russians in the non-Russian republics was linguistic and cultural Russification of the peripheral lands, especially the urban areas. Indeed, as a result of the large numbers of Russian migration to the urban areas, Russian language had become a lingua franca in those places. It was widely used in business life, education and daily life. Non-Russian minorities in titular republics also adopted the Russian language over time. Some even fully adopted Russian in their social and family lives and some of them forgot their own language. Ukrainians in Moldova were the most significant example of this situation. Although they outnumbered the Russians in this republic, almost all of them were linguistically Russified: about 554.000 out of 600.000 Ukrainians had a good command of Russian, while 220.000 of them had no knowledge of Ukrainian language according to the 1989 census. Not only the minorities formed due to Soviet era migrations, but the non-Russian and non-Slavic resident minorities of the republics had also adopted Russian in their daily life. On the other hand, command of the titular nations' language was much lower among the minority groups. For example, again in Moldova, command of the Moldovan language among Ukrainians was only 12.8 percent, among Russians 11.2 percent and among Gagauz 4.4 percent. This situation can be explained by the education system of the Soviet Union. Minority groups had to either attend Russian schools, or schools offering education in the language of the titular nation. There were almost no schools offering education in their own language. [38]

[38] Paul Kolstoe, "Russians in the Former…", pp. 144-145

Between 1957 and 1961, there were some attempts to offer education to minority groups in their own language, but these initiatives were abandoned by 1961 and few such schools were all closed. In this environment, not only ethnic Russian minorities sent their children to Russian schools, but also other minority groups did the same. There were several reasons behind this choice of the non-Russian minorities. Firstly, attending Russian schools would be more advantageous for their children in terms of their personal career as Russian language dominated almost all political and economic life. Also, the resident minority groups were inclined to prefer Russian schools rather than the schools of the titular nation's language as a result of their unfavorable attitude towards their titular nations. Indeed, some of the resident minority communities saw Russians as the liberators who saved them from the assimilationist policies of the titular nation. The resident minority groups such as Europeans, Jews and Slavic people preferred education in Russian for economic and practical motives as well. As a result of these reasons, most of the minority groups favored Russian schools, and therefore, Russian language became dominant among minority communities.

The presence of Russians in non-Russian republics and dominance of Russian language in urban spaces also resulted in the linguistic Russification of some segments of the titular population, albeit at different levels. Actually, in the first years of the Soviet rule, under Lenin, Russians in non-Russian republics were advised to learn titular language as part of the policies of national rapprochement. But the figures had remained at very symbolic level.[39] In Stalin era, especially after

[39] Richard Pipes, "Reflections on the Nationality Problems…", p. 464

the Second World War, Russians had gained the status of 'first among equals' or 'elder brothers' and the Russification process accelerated. Russian language was promoted as lingua franca through the education system.[40] Year by year, even the number of Russian speaking titular nationalities had risen to significant levels. Especially in Slavic republics such as Ukraine and Belarus, a high number of titular population claimed Russian as their native tongue. Also, millions of Russian speaking titulars who reported their native language as titular language used Russian dominantly in their daily life. As a result, when the Soviet Union collapsed, there were eleven million Russian-speaking people in non-Russian republics along with twenty-five million ethnic Russian migrants.[41]

[40] Neil Melvin, "The Russians: Diaspora and the End of Empire" in Charles King and Neil Melvin (ed), *Nations Abroad: Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colo, 1998, p. 32

[41] Igor Zevelev, "Russia and Its…", pp. 94-95

Table 2: Ethnic Russians and Russian-Speakers in the Soviet Republics in 1989

	Ethnic Russians		Russian-speakers	
	Estimated Total	**As % of population**	**Estimated Total**	**As % of population**
Ukraine	11,355,000	22,1	16,898,000	32,8
Belarus	1,342,000	13,2	3,243,000	31,9
Moldova	562,000	13,0	1,003,000	23,1
Estonia	474,000	30,3	544,000	34,8
Latvia	905,000	34,0	1,122,000	42,1
Lithuania	344,000	9,4	429,000	11,7
Kazakhstan	6,227,000	37,8	7,797,000	47,4
Kyrgyzstan	916,000	21,5	1,090,000	25,6
Uzbekistan	1,653,000	8,4	2,151,000	10,9
Turkmenistan	333,000	9,5	421,000	12,0
Tajikistan	388,000	7,6	495,000	9,7
Georgia	341,000	6,3	479,000	8,9
Azerbaijan	391,000	5,6	528,000	7,5
Armenia	51,000	1,6	66,000	2,0

Source: Naselenie Rossii. Ezhegodny, demograficheskii doklad, The Centre for the Demography and Ecology of Man, Moscow, 1993, p. 15 cited in Neil Melvin, “Russians Beyond Russia…”, p. 134

2.2.1. Nationalities Policy of the Soviet Union and Russian Migrants in Titular Republics

Despite the linguistic Russification of non-Russian communities in significant numbers, this policy did not lead to a total ethnic assimilation of the non-Russians. One important element that enabled maintaining these ethnic communities' sense of belonging was the 'nationality section' in the internal passports of Soviet citizens. In 1932, a new internal passport system was introduced with a section registering the 'official nationality' of individuals. When the citizens obtained their first passports, they were free to report whatever nationality they want. In later years, children automatically inherited their parents' nationality. The children of interethnic marriages could choose the nationality of one of the parents. By this passport system, national identification of individuals was determined by the ethnic origins of their ancestors, not on the bases of residence, language or subjective identity.[42] Thanks to the registration of official nationality in internal passports, the national consciousness of individuals had survived during the Soviet era. Even linguistically and culturally Russified segments of the non-Russian population had retained their ethnic and national identification.

Besides the personal and ethno-cultural definition of nationhood by the passport regime, nationhood was also institutionalized on territorial base; in other words, territorial administrative units were established on national basis. The Soviet Union was not a nation/Russian nation state in terms of its administrative structure. Union

[42] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambrigde; New York, 1996, pp. 31-32

was divided into hierarchal territorial units such as union republics, autonomous republics, regions (oblast), areas (okrugs), territories (krais), and districts (raions) on the bases of ethnic, linguistic or ethno-religious criteria.[43] In order to undermine the nationalist sentiments of the non-Russian communities, Bolsheviks promoted the institutionalization of nationalities. In the period of the Civil War, between 1917 and 1920, Bolsheviks were aware of that the only way of getting non-Russian peoples' support was to promote the idea of national self-determination. Lenin, who defined Tsarist Russia as "the prison of nations", thought that nationalist sentiments among the elites of national minorities arise from the historic second-class treatment toward them under the Tsarist rule and thus; sought to get these nation's supports by giving them assurance about national rights.[44]

It was hoped by the early Soviet leaders that the rapprochement policy (*sblizhenie*) toward national groups; establishing their own national republics, promoting national language and giving political and cultural rights to them would diminish the nationalist sentiments and eventually nations would merge in an international Soviet society in time.[45] All those national apparatus should be used in the service of Sovietization. This policy was later named by Stalin as "national in form, socialist in

[43] Charles King, "Introduction: Nationalism, Transnationalism, and Potcommunism", in Charles King and Neil Melvin (ed), *Nations Abroad: Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colo, 1998, p. 18

[44] Walker Connor, "Soviet Policy towards the non-Russian Peoples in Theoretic and Historical Perspective: What Gorbachev Inherited" in *Post-Soviet Nations: Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 31

[45] Simon Gerhard, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society,* Boulder: Westview Press, 1991, pp. 22-23

content".[46] Namely, nationalities policies were thought, in some way, as a tool of Sovietization in the long run.

Firstly, nations who deserved to have their own union republics were determined, and then national Soviet republics were established which bore the name of these respective nations. There were fifty three national administrative territories including fifteen union republics, with the names of different nationalities. Those territories belonged to the respective nations and individuals of various nations had their national and ethnic rights only within their own national territories, but the nationalities of their residents were determined by their ethnic origins in their passports, not by their place of residence. Thus, the Soviet citizens with ethnic nationalities different from titular nationality fell into minority position in those republics. Moreover, the state's sponsoring migrations and the historically mixed settlements further increased the mismatch between national territories and distribution of nationalities.[47] Creating national republics and giving them the right of territorial jurisdictions, while on the other hand, regulation of the nationality of persons on the basis of their descent but not residence, triggered tensions between titular nationalities and ethnic minorities in the republics.

As mentioned above, one could only have his/her language and ethnic rights in one's own national territorial units and the national political unit of Russians was the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. Nevertheless, as Paul Goble argues, Russians identified not with one particular republic – the RSFSR – but with the

[46] Walker Connor, "Soviet Policy towards…", p.32

[47] Rogers Brubaker, *"Nationalism Reframed…"*, p. 33

Union as a whole. Since the Russian language was the state language and the language of interethnic communication as lingua franca, and the Russian culture was the core element of Soviet identity, Russian felt at home in any republic of the Union and enjoyed extra-territorial status.[48]

Russian communities in the titular republics had almost developed a non-ethnic, socio-cultural identity as suitable with their economic and political positions and roles within these republics. However such a sense of identification was more prevalent in the Slavic republics. In non-Slavic republics, especially in Central Asian ones, Russians were more conscious of their ethnicity. Since 1970s, as a result of the rise of national sentiments among the titular nations, ethnic consciousness among Russians had also increased.[49] In the final years of the Soviet rule, the political campaign in Russia, seeking independence from the Soviet Union, damaged the link between the Soviet and Russian identities. Russians in titular republics showed various tendencies against the independence movements. Some of them supported the independence of their host republics while some opposed the independent movements by participating the anti-independence movements such as Interfront and OSTK (United Council of Workers Collectives).[50]

[48] Paul Goble, "Russia and Its Neighbours",Foreign Policy, Issue 90, 04/01/1993, p. 2 and Nikolai Rudensky, "Russian Minorities in the Newly Independent States: an International Problem in the Domestic Context of Russia Today", in Roman Szporluk (ed), *National identity and ethnicity in Russia and the new states of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 63

[49] Rogers Brubaker, "*Nationalism Reframed…",* p. 49 and Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 9

[50] Nikolai Rudensky, "Russian Minorities …", p. 64 and Neil Melvin, "*Russians Beyond Russia*…", p. 10

To sum up, on the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, millions of Russians were living in the non-Russian republics as a result of the settlement policies of both Tsarist and Soviet regime. The regions in which had begun to settle by Russians during the period of the Russian empire had become the most compact Russian areas. During the Soviet period the Russian settlers had expanded both numerically and geographically in order to strengthen the power of the central government, to assist economic and political change in titular republics and to contribute building a common Soviet nation via linguistic Russification. Russians in non-Russian republics enjoyed extra-territorial status, and identified themselves not with one particular republic, their host republic or RSFSR, but with the Union as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIAN COMPATRIOTS IN THE NEAR ABROAD AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S POLICIES TOWARDS THEM

As mentioned in the first chapter, one of the major outcomes of the Tsarist and Soviet era policies was the outmigration of large numbers of Russians to the peripheral lands. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these Russian communities found themselves in minority status in the newly independent former Soviet republics. Indeed, Russians were the most affected national group from the collapse of the Soviet rule as they had spread almost all around the Eurasian space for centuries in both Tsarist and Soviet periods. As a result of the dissolution of the Union, approximately 25 million Russians, which constituted 17 percent of the total Russian population, were living outside of the Russian Federation. This was a traumatic change for the Russian communities in the non-Russian republics. While Russians enjoyed being "the first among equals" and "elder brothers" during the Soviet period, under the new circumstances, they fell into minority position and even to second-class citizen positions in some republics.

Russian minorities in the Near Abroad became also one of the main problems that the Russian Federation should have dealt with. The Russian Federation as a new state adopted the role of being a homeland for the Russian minority groups living in the host states of the newly independent, non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union. Suddenly, the new Russian state found itself responsible for its co-ethnics in

the Near Abroad. Increasing pressure on the Russian minorities in the new nationalizing states and the violation of their political, cultural and linguistic rights put the issue of Russian diaspora into the center of Russia's domestic politics. In this chapter, I will analyze the conditions of the Russian diaspora in the post-Soviet states and the policies of the Russian Federation towards its diaspora.

3.1. Russian Diaspora in the Near Abroad

Given the definition of the diaspora concept, which is mentioned in the introduction chapter, an important question arises regarding the issue of Russian minorities in the Near Abroad: Can the Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics be defined as diaspora and do they have a collective diasporic identity? Russian minorities in the Near Abroad are communities living in fourteen different former Soviet republics, which results in different experiences of life on the basis of different social, political economic conditions in their relevant republics. Also historically they developed different social and political identities during the Tsarist and Soviet periods. Russian diaspora is far from being homogenous and therefore arguing about the existence of a single Russian diaspora in the post-Soviet space is misleading. Kolstoe argues that, seeing them as fourteen different diasporas, rather than one homogenous diaspora group is more fruitful.[51] He also underlines the weak mobilization and fragmentation as the main characteristics of Russian diaspora while arguing that there are no strong

[51] Paul Kolstoe, "Territorialising Diaspora…", pp. 615-616

links between them. According to Kolstoe, Russian diaspora "do not have common enemy or common dreams for the future".[52]

There is also a weak sense of communal identity and a lack of collective action among Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad. Russian diaspora is unable to mobilize effectively.[53] Natalia Kosmarskaya defines diaspora as "consolidated entities led by diaspora leaders and unified by collective responsibilities, goals, loyalties, and an ethnicity ascribed at births", and argues that, considering this description, the Russian diaspora abroad could be identified as "virtual diaspora" and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad could hardly be categorized as diasporic communities with the features ascribed to them by Russia.[54] She mentions that the Russian diaspora organizations in the former Soviet republics are not popular among ordinary Russian speaking people and these people are not satisfied with the activities of these organizations[55] This situation is valid especially in Central Asia as a result of the post-Soviet political conditions in these countries. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asian states, especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, adopted more inclusive politics, sought to integrate the Russian minorities in their societies, and hesitated to alienate them because of economic and political rationales. While ethnic awareness of the Russian communities in these countries was considerably high in

[52] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming Local: Trajectories of adaptation to the fall of the Soviet Union among ethnic Russians in the former Soviet Republics", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2011, 2:2 p. 157

[53] Graham Smith, "Transnational Politics and the Politics of the Russian Diaspora", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22:3, May 1999, p. 501

[54] Natalya Kosmarskaya, "Russia and Post-Soviet "Russian Diaspora": Contrasting Visions, Conflicting Projects", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 17:1, 2011, pp. 54-56

[55] Natalya Kosmarskaya, "Russia and Post-Soviet..", pp. 67-68

the Soviet period compared to the other Slavic and Baltic republics of the Soviet Union due to the cultural and religious differences with the Central Asian societies, after the collapse of the Soviet Union ethnic tensions between Russians and Central Asians eased as a result of the mostly inclusive policies of the Central Asian governments. According to the survey, conducted by Natalya Kosmarskaya, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the titulars indicate that they have far more commonalities with Russians in their countries than with Kyrgyz/Kazakh and Uzbek minorities living in their states.[56]

On the other hand, contrary to the Soviet times, Russian communities in the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Moldova developed a strong diasporic identity in the post-Soviet period. There are several reasons behind this situation. First, in some of these states, Russian communities live in particular regions in high proportions and this led to an effective mobilization of diaspora members politically and socially. In some regions such as Transnistria (Moldova), Crimea and Donbas (Ukraine) and North-East Estonia, Russian minorities sought to obtain political autonomy, and were even involved in irredentist politics. Russian communities in these regions share most of the diasporic features.[57] Also, in two Baltic states – Estonia and Latvia, Russian minorities could not get citizenship and was exposed to discriminatory and exclusive politics by their host states. This situation led to the development of a distinct and strong sense of ethnic identity among Russians in these states. Therefore, diasporic

[56] Natalya Kosmarskaya, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia: More Cold than the Others? Exploring (Ethnic) Identity Under Different Sociopolitical Settings", *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35:1, 2014, p. 22

[57] Graham Smith, "Transnational Politics…", p. 501

stance is dominant among the Russian minorities in these two Baltic countries, and diaspora organizations are more popular there.[58]

When the Soviet Union collapsed, there were two dynamics that have a possible effect on the identity choices of Russian minorities in the Near Abroad. First one is the existing sense of identity among Russian individuals, which was shaped during the Soviet period under the political, economic and social circumstances of their titular republics. Besides the general political and economic conditions of their host republics, the economic conditions and social status of Russian individuals had also led to a different personal sense of belonging among the individuals of each Russian community in these republics. Even their professions, place of residence – urban or rural - and duration of residence in respective host states had an effect on their self-identification.[59] While some Russians had developed a strong sense of belonging to Russian ethnos, some of them had little awareness of their ethnic affiliations. Most of them regarded themselves as Soviet citizens rather than being Russian. Also most of them claimed the Soviet Union as their homeland rather than the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. According to the surveys conducted in the final years of the Soviet Union, 70 percent of Russians claimed the Soviet Union as their homeland rather than Russia.[60]

[58] Natalya Kosmarskaya, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia…", p. 16

[59] Edwin Poppe and Louk Hagendoorn, "Types of Identification Among Russians in the 'Near Abroad'", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53:1, 2001, pp.59-60

[60] David Laitin, İdentity in Formation, p. 308

Despite the growing nationalism in titular republics and the discriminatory policies especially in the linguistic area in the last two decades of the Soviet rule, which had strengthened the ethnic awareness of Russians in titular republics, the sense of collectivity was still weak. Even in the late Soviet times there was not a consolidated ethnic identity among Russians in the titular republics. Kolstoe argues that this loose group identity of Russians in the Soviet Union was an important element for the peaceful dissolution process.[61] Nevertheless, there was a strong pro-Soviet stand among the Russian minority. According to a survey conducted in 1998 among the Russian communities in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Kazakhstan, 29 percent of the respondents explained their feelings about the dissolution of the Soviet Union as 'will never accept' and 54 percent as 'pity but accepted', while only 17 percent of them said that they feel 'no pity'.[62]

In the light of these results, it could be said that the 'continued attachment to the former Soviet Union' was strong among many Russians in the first years of independence. In the same survey, respondents were also asked to explain how they identify themselves. Only 13 percent of the respondents identified themselves as 'mainly Russian', while 23 percent as 'Soviet', 28 percent as 'citizen of the republic', 20 percent as 'titular national' and 16 percent as 'divided loyalty' and 'marginal'.[63] These results indicate that the pure Russian identity among the Russian minorities is considerably low and attachment to their respective host states is

[61] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming Local…", p. 157

[62] Edwin Poppe and Louk Hagendoorn, "Types of Identification…", p. 67

[63] Ibid., p. 62

notably at high levels. It could be also interpreted from these outcomes that there is not a common sense of identity among the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad.

Also, a considerable majority of Russian speaking communities of Near Abroad do not consider the Russian Federation as homeland in the post-Soviet era. As I mentioned above, the orientation toward the homeland is one of the main components of diasporic identity. However, Russians in the post-Soviet states are divided on the homeland issue too. Initially after the dissolution of the Union, outside Russians continued their attachments to the Soviet Union, and consider the Soviet Union as their homeland rather than the Russian Federation. At that time, Mark Beissinger defined Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad as "a diaspora in search of a homeland".[64]

In recent years, regarding the Soviet Union as the homeland is not common among Russian diaspora; while the number of Russians who consider their host states as homelands is much higher than the number who regards the Russian Federation as their homeland. In a survey conducted in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus in 1998, the respondents were asked: "Where do you consider to be your homeland?" and according to this research, 58.4 percent of Russians in Kazakhstan declared Kazakhstan as their homeland, while only 22.4 percent consider Russia as their homeland. In Kyrgyzstan, these figures were 60.8 percent and 20.7 percent respectively. Interestingly, in the two Slavic states – Ukraine and Belarus, the percentage of Russians who regarded their host state as homeland was lower than Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In Ukraine, 43.7 percent of Russians consider Ukraine

[64] Mark Beissinger, "Persistent Ambiguities of Empire", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 11:2, 1995, p. 170

as their homeland while 16.4 percent of them declare Russia as their homeland. In Belarus these figures were 42.1 percent and 35.7 percent respectively.[65] On the other hand, in the same survey, Russians in these states were also asked 'whether they consider themselves as a national minority in their host state'. 59.3 percent of the respondents in Kazakhstan and 67 percent in Kyrgyzstan said 'yes'; however, only 18.8 percent of the Russians in Ukraine and 9.2 percent in Belarus declared that they feel as national minority in their host state.[66] On the basis of these results, it could be argued that compared to the Russians in Slavic states, Russian minorities in Central Asia have developed stronger awareness of being a distinct ethno-national minority in their states. It is reasonable considering the fact that in Central Asian republics they lived in an alien culture and society. However, when comparing the homeland considerations of Russian communities in Slavic and Central Asian states, we face the fact that percentage of Russians who consider Russian Federation as homeland is lower than the Russians in the Slavic republics. These results demonstrate that although the Russians in Central Asia developed a stronger awareness of ethnic identity compared to Russians in Slavic countries, they had developed a different sense of Russianness as result of living in an alien society, and they have moved away from regarding Russian Federation as their homeland.

Indeed, a different perception of identity and a separate sense of Russianness were developed among the Russians of Russia and Russians of the Near Abroad. Members of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet republics feel different from the

[65] Lowell W. Barrington, Erik S. Herron, and Brian D. Silver, "The Motherland is Calling: Views of Homeland among Russians in the Near Abroad," *World Politics,* 55:2, 2003, p. 296

[66] Ibid., p. 299

Russians in Russia, especially in Central Asian and Baltic countries. In a survey held by Paul Kolstoe conducted in Kazakhstan and Latvia, people were asked "Do Russians in your country differ from Russians in Russia?" more than two thirds of all respondents chose the option "significantly different" or "somewhat different". 49 percent of Russians in Kazakhstan choose the option that Russians in Kazakhstan and in Russia are "significantly different" or "somewhat different", while 33 percent of them choose the option "not different". In Latvia, 76 percent of Russians choose the "significantly different" or "somewhat different" options, while only 11 percent of them say "not different".[67] Also, Russians who returned to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union perceived that they had developed a different sense of identity. They regarded themselves as the chosen ones who were sent to backward parts of the Soviet Union to improve the economic and social conditions in those regions. As they felt themselves as superior people, they despised the local Russians by seeing them as rude, disrespectful and lazy.[68] On the other hand, the local Russians regarded them as aliens and as different from them. The returnees mostly complained that they were excluded by the local residents.[69]

The second dynamic that shaped the sense of identity and political affiliations of Russian diaspora in the former Soviet space is the politics of their host states toward them. In most of the former Soviet republics, nationalizing policies in the first years of independence affected negatively the condition of Russian minorities both

[67] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming Local…", p. 161

[68] Hilary Pilkington and Moya Flynn. "A diaspora in diaspora? Russian returnees confront the 'homeland'", *Refuge*, 23:2, 2006, pp. 58-62

[69] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming Local…", p. 157

economically and socially. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russians were discriminated against at different levels in various post-Soviet states, and have gradually been removed from their top-level positions in administration and in some technical professions. Especially in Baltics, members of titular nations have acquired jobs in public administration.[70] This situation was a bit different in the Central Asian states: although Russian minorities lost their previous privileged status and their top level positions in the administration, they maintained their role in the economic field as their technical skills were still required for the economies of these states.[71] Nevertheless, in most of the post-Soviet states, Russians were the most affected group from the dissolution of the Union in economic terms as they were mainly represented in industrial plants which were tied to the all-Union ministries. After the dissolution, most of them were closed and Russians working in these enterprises lost their jobs.[72] As a result of these new economic circumstances, some Russians chose to leave their host republics and migrated to Russia.

Along with the changing economic conditions, another problem that caused anxiety and large-scale migration waves is the military confrontations in some of these regions that Russian minorities live in. Initially after the dissolution of the Union, Russian communities found themselves in armed conflicts in the Transdniester region of Moldova, Abkhazia and Tajikistan. In all these conflicts, Russians in these

[70] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming Local…", p. 156

[71] Charles E. Ziegler, "The Russian Diaspora in Central Asia: Russian Compatriots and Moscow's Foreign Policy", *Demokratizatsiya*, 14:1, 2006, p. 109

[72] Aadne Aasland, "Russians Outside Russia: the New Russian Diaspora" in Graham Smith (ed), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London: Longman, 1996, p. 489

territories were negatively affected from these incidents. Thus, a considerable amount of them had to migrate to Russia as a result of these conflicts.[73] For instance, half of the Russian minorities in Tajikistan had left the country during the bloody civil war which lasted from 1992 to 1997.[74]

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian minorities in the former Soviet states, except for Estonia and Latvia, were automatically granted citizenship and voting rights, and in some republics they enjoyed political representation in the state organs in proportion to their share in the total population. However, in Estonia and Latvia, Russians were denied to get citizenship automatically. These states claimed that they were sovereign states before the Second World War but illegally incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940, therefore the immigrants between 1940 and 1991 were also illegal, and they could not have the right to citizenship automatically. They were subjected to application for citizenship, expected to fulfill strict criteria and to have the full command of the titular language. At those times approximately 60 percent of the Russians in Estonia and 40 percent in Latvia had no command of the titular languages in their host states.[75] Consequently most of these Russians could not become citizens and remained as stateless people. This development also led to their exclusion from the privatization process.[76]

[73] Aadne Aasland, "Russians Outside Russia…", p. 490

[74] Charles E. Ziegler, "The Russian Diaspora in Central Asia…", p. 108

[75] Graham Smith, "Transnational Politics…", p. 509

[76] Ibid., pp. 510-511

As a result of the pressure from the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), both countries, Estonia in 1997 and Latvia in 1998, agreed to naturalize all stateless children, who were born in these republics since 1992. Therefore, the children of Russian minorities who were born in these republics after the dissolution of the Soviet Union had the right to get citizenship.[77] Some of the Russians, who could not get citizenship, chose the option of returning to Russia, while some of them continued to live in these countries as stateless people or by obtaining Russian passports. The percentage of stateless people has decreased year by year as some Russians received citizenship upon learning the state language, and as their children who were born in these republics acquired citizenship automatically. In Estonia, immediately after independence, the share of stateless people was 32 percent of the total population, but this proportion has dropped to 7 percent by 2014, while Russians constitute the 25.1 percent of the total Estonian population.[78] According to the Latvian official numbers, as of 2015, 62 percent of Russians in Latvia are citizens and 84 percent of Latvian population are citizens of Latvia, indicating that 16 percent of the population is still stateless in the country. These official statistics also indicates that 94 percent of the Latvian society

[77] Graham Smith, "Transnational Politics…", p. 516

[78] "Integration in Estonian Society", *Estonia.eu*, http://estonia.eu/about-estonia/society/integration-in-estonian-society.html

can speak Latvian language[79] However, it is estimated that approximately 300.000 Russians still do not have Latvian citizenship.[80]

Consequently, Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad is not a homogenous community; it consists of individuals whose sense of identification, political affiliations and homeland orientations varied from one region or state to another. The post-Soviet political and economic dimensions they faced with, and the policies of their host states toward them have also established different forms of political and identity orientations. As I argued above, there are three main factors that shape the post-Soviet identities and political stances of Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics. First one is related to their Soviet experiences: the social status of Russian individuals, economic conditions they lived in, geographic distance of their place of residence to Russia, numbers and compactness of them in a given region, their rootedness and political and social atmosphere in various republics had all affected the self-identification of individuals of Russian communities in the non-Russian republics. Some of the elements of these established identities in the Soviet era have been retained in the post-Soviet period. Second one is related to their post-Soviet experiences: the political and economic circumstances as well as the policies towards them in their host states determined to some extent the degree of their successful integration into the host state society or their marginalization with a sense of distinct Russian ethnic identity. The third dynamic that influences the diasporic identity and

[79] "Facts Regarding Society Integration in Latvia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia*, http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/society-integration/facts-regarding-society-integration-in-latvia

[80] "Latvia Holds Referandum on Russian Language", *RFE/RL*, 18 February 2012, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/24488274.html

stance among the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad is the policies of the 'homeland' state – Russia. Especially from the perspective of politicians, it is not so essential whether there is a diasporic identity or a diasporic stance among the putative diaspora group. The important thing here is how their 'homeland' defines them, and to what extent it seeks to utilize its diaspora in its domestic or foreign politics. As Charles King and Neil J. Melvin argue, "diasporas are constructed by political and cultural elites like nations" and "diaspora and identity politics is more about politics than about identity".[81] Therefore, it is essential to examine the politics of Russian state towards the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad.

3.2. The Russian Federation's Policy toward the Russian Compatriots in the Near Abroad

It could be easily noticed the terminological shift in the title of this section. As I indicated before, when evaluating the diaspora from the perspective of the homeland state, it is essential to consider how a state defines its diaspora. The Russian Federation defines the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad as 'Russian Compatriots' (s*ootechestvenniki)* rather than 'Russian Diaspora' in its official documents. In this respect, from this point on, I will adopt the term 'Russian Compatriots' instead of Russian diaspora.

States can engage in diaspora politics in various ways. Some of them can use their diasporas or co-ethnics abroad as an instrument in their state-building and nation-building processes. Some states also utilize their ethnonational diasporas as a tool in

[81] Charles King and Neil Melvin, "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia", *International Security*, 24:3, Winter 1999/2000, p. 109

their involvements with the regional or global issues in their foreign relations, while some others evaluate diaspora politics just for supporting their diasporic communities in foreign countries. In order to protect their co-ethnics abroad, states can introduce new citizenship laws which allow their diaspora members to obtain dual citizenship and dual nationality. For some strategic reasons such as strengthening the position of the core nation in its domestic demographic balance and increase the labor force in its own country, kin state may encourage their diasporas to return to homeland by legal guarantees for the right of return. On the other hand, kin states usually choose the way of establishing cultural centers, consulates or quasi-governmental institutions in host countries in order to support their diasporas in their cultural and linguistic needs. Also the kin states can defend their co-ethnic population's rights in international organizations or forums. Moreover, the kin state can mediate with the host state or directly interfere in the host state militarily or politically in order to protect the cultural and political rights of its co-ethnics.[82] Diaspora communities could also be used by the kin states in order to strengthen the political and economic relations with the host state.

Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the question of "Which of these alternatives would be chosen by Russia in engaging with its diasporas in the Near Abroad?" was one of the main issues of concern. Would Russia use its co-ethnics abroad as a tool in order to maintain its hegemony in the post-Soviet space by a neo-imperialistic approach or would it deal with the problems regarding its

[82] Charles King and Neil Melvin, "Diaspora Politics…", p. 114

diasporas in peaceful ways? What would be the possible future trajectories about the Russian communities abroad?

These questions were widely discussed in many scientific studies. For instance, in an early article, Paul Kolstoe expressed concern about the possible success of the right wing-nationalist political groups in Russian politics and their possible role in leading the army to intervene in the post-Soviet states on behalf of the Russian diaspora.[83] In another early study on the Russian diaspora, Rogers Brubaker focuses on Russian minorities in respective host states, and when examining the possible future trajectories about them he argues that the post-Soviet Eurasia will face a considerable wave of migration of Russian communities from the Soviet successor states towards the Russian Federation. He makes this argument on the basis of the earlier instances of huge migration movements, which occurred after the dissolution of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires.[84] Some of these early expectations have been realized to some extent in the past twenty years, and many of the policy alternatives of kin states mentioned above have been implemented by the Russian Federation toward the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad from time to time.

[83] Paul Kolstoe, "The New Russian Diaspora: Minority Protection in the Soviet Successor States", *Journal of Peace Research*, 30:2, May 1993, p. 197

[84]Rogers Brubaker, "Aftermaths of empire and the unmixing of peoples: historical and comparative perspectives", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18:2, April 1995

3.2.1. The Russian Federation's Policy toward Russian Compatriots in the Near Abroad between 1991 and 2000

Immediately after independence, political elites of the Russian Federation chose to deal with the problems within the borders of the Russian Federation and avoided involving in the regional issues in the post-Soviet space. However, after a very short period, this conception had to be abandoned in 1992 as the Russian minorities in some of the former Soviet republics were discriminated against and even pulled into military conflicts. Due to such incidents Yeltsin government shifted its policy on behalf of the protection of rights and freedoms of Russian-speaking communities in the Near Abroad.[85] In June 1992, the Fourteenth Russian Army which was located in the Transnistrian region of Moldova as a remnant of the Soviet period intervened in the military conflict between Moldovan and the separatist Transnistrian forces on behalf of the latter with a claim to protect the Russian-speaking population.[86] Besides this incident, the adaptation of the new citizenship laws in Estonia and Latvia, which limited the citizenship rights of Russian minorities in these states made the issue of Russian communities in the Near Abroad as the most sensitive topic of Russian politics at the time.

Another contributing element that brought the Russian diaspora issue into the center of Russian domestic politics was due to the nationalist Russian political elites. Problems of Russian communities in the Near Abroad became a tool of political

[85] Mark Beissinger, "Persistent Ambiguities of Empire", p. 165

[86] Michael S. Bobick, "Separatism Redux: Crimea, Transnistria and Eurasia's De Facto States", *Anthropology Today*, 30:3, June 2014, s. 6

struggle in internal politics as the nationalist and neo-communist opposition parties use the status of Russian compatriots abroad as an emotional subject to attack the government.[87] These nationalist political parties, such as the Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Congress of Russian Communities (Kongress Russkikh Obshchin - KRO) pursued an active state policy toward the Russian communities abroad. The strong stance of these parties in support of Russian compatriots abroad, urged the Russian government to adopt a more active policy toward the Russian compatriots.[88]

KRO, which is founded in 1993, pursued an irredentist policy by aiming to reunite all Russian communities within a single, enlarged Russian state, and sought to promote radical national minority stances among the Russian diaspora abroad.[89] The president of KRO – Dimitri Rogozin defined the Russian minorities in the post-Soviet space as 'Foreigners of Native Land' in an article he wrote. This definition indicates that KRO view the regions where Russian minorities live in the non-Russian republics as parts of the Russian Federation, thus these lands should be integrated to the Russian Federation again. The main aim of the organization was to become 'the leading all-ruskaya (Russian nation) supra-party organization'.[90] In accordance with this aim, KRO created member organizations among Russian

[87] Charles King and Neil Melvin, "Diaspora Politics…", p. 132

[88] Alan Ingram, **"**Broadening Russia's Borders? The nationalist challenge of the Congress of Russian Communities", *Political Geography*, 20:2, 2001, pp. 215-216

[89] Alan Ingram, "'A Nation Split into Fragments': The Congress of Russian Communities and Russian Nationalist Ideology", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51:4, 1999, p. 687

[90] Alan Ingram, "'A Nation Split into Fragments'…", p. 690

minorities in the former Soviet republics and organized annually the All-World Congress of Russian Communities in order to collect the delegates of these member organizations. In 1994, it was declared by the KRO that it has 44 member organizations in all over the former Soviet republics except for Turkmenistan. Through these member organizations KRO aimed to support Russian minorities in the Near Abroad, and to create a 'geopolitical minority stance' among them, especially among Russians in Ukraine, Moldova and Kazakhstan, which were more vulnerable to irredentist goals.[91] However, it should be emphasized that the effectiveness of the KRO organizations was mostly limited to the radical segments of the diaspora communities. It was a notably symbolic political move by the KRO to nominate Aleksander Lebed in the presidential election of 1996, who is the commander of the Fourteenth Army in the Transdniester region of Moldova in 1992 (the army which intervened in the armed conflict between Moldovan and Transnistrian forced on behalf of the Russian-speaking population of Transdniester).

Besides the KRO organizations, the networks of the Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky also had strong ties with the Russian communities in the post-Soviet republics. The success of the nationalist parties, especially the party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky in the parliamentary elections of 1993 pushed the Russian government to adopt a more active policy toward the Russians abroad.[92] Considering that the representation of the Russian communities abroad should not be left to the monopoly of radical nationalists, the Russian government established the officially

[91] Alan Ingram, **"**Broadening Russia's Borders?...", pp. 206-209

[92] Neil Melvin, "The Russians: Diaspora and the End of Empire", pp. 38-39

backed organization 'the Assembly of Russian Compatriots' in September 1994. Through this body, the government sought to coordinate Russian organizations abroad, and to provide economic and financial assistance to the Russian minorities to help with the establishing of their own business.[93]

Another view with regard to the Russian communities in the Near Abroad was the instrumentalization of them in establishing political influence on the former Soviet republics. Some experts and politicians were in favor of the opinion that Russian minorities in the Near Abroad should be used for geopolitical interests of Russia, and they sought to urge Russia to adopt politics in that way. Sergei Karaganov, who is one of the leading figures in this view, became an advisor to President Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin later. Karaganov wrote in 1992 that Russia should turn back to its traditional character and play a post-imperial role in its Near Abroad by various methods such as 'sending troops to rescue someone'. He argued that Russia should keep these communities in the countries where they live in; support them in linguistic, educational and cultural areas, and utilize them as channels of influence.[94] This point of view was also shared by many officials from the Russian government and by the members of the non-governmental organizations related with Russian compatriots abroad. Most of them viewed the existence of Russian compatriots in

[93] Alan Ingram, "Broadening Russia's Borders?...", p. 210

[94] Sergei Karaganov, "Problemy zashchity interesov rossiiskogo orientirovannogo naseleniya v 'blizhnem' zarubezhe", *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, 15-30 November 1992, No: 21-22, pp. 43-45, Available at: https://latvianhistory.com/tag/karaganov-doctrine/

former Soviet republics as a big advantage to maintain influence in the post-Soviet space.[95]

In order to be influential in the former Soviet space and to protect the rights of Russians legally, the Russian government introduced the policy of dual citizenship in 1993. Through this policy, Russia sought to issue Russian passports to Russian minorities in the post-Soviet states. Russian officials thought that citizenship policy toward the compatriots abroad may serve Russia in many ways. Firstly, the citizenship policy was more 'civilized' than the 'co-ethnics' approach. By this way Russia could have adopted a 'civic' discourse rather than an ethno-national one. Also the dual citizenship could have been an effective tool for the defense of the compatriots' rights. On the other hand, it would serve Russia as an instrument to have influence on the former Soviet republics as the protection of its citizens is a legal practice.[96] However, this policy could only be realized by bilateral agreements between Russia and the respective former Soviet countries. In order to issue Russian passports to the Russians in these countries, first the host states had to remove the ban on dual citizenship which would permit Russian minorities to obtain Russian citizenship. Many of the related countries avoided such moves. Agreements were signed only with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in 1993 and 1995 respectively.[97] Later

[95] Mark Beissinger, "Persistent Ambiguities of Empire", p. 169

[96] Igor Zevelev, Russia and Its New Diasporas, pp. 133-134

[97] Igor Zevelev, Russia and Its New Diasporas, p. 135

Kyrgyzstan in 2006 and Armenia in 2007 adopted laws, which removed the ban on dual citizenship.[98]

This means that Russia could not achieve its objectives through the dual citizenship policy since the countries, which lifted the ban on dual citizenship and give the Russian minorities the permission of getting Russian passports are the ones that have small Russian population. Not being able to achieve similar dual citizenship agreements with Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus, where totally three quarters of ethnic Russians of the Near Abroad live in is an indicator of the failure of the dual citizenship policy. However, Russia encouraged the de facto dual citizenship and there are around 1-2 million Russians who have de facto dual citizenship in former Soviet republics.[99] The failure of the dual citizenship policy creates a legal standoff for Russia's attempts, which aim to protect its dual citizens in these countries and act in their name in the Near Abroad.

While the implementation of dual citizenship policy could not be carried out with most of the former Soviet republics, this initiative opened the way for developing a 'compatriot concept'. In order to implement dual citizenship policy with a broader strategy, the Russian government launched the concept of 'compatriots' in 1994. Under this concept, "Russian citizens residing in the Near Abroad, former Soviet citizens who do not have any citizenships and those who obtained citizenship of the host country but wish to maintain their own culture and ties with Russia" were

[98] Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Policy toward Compatriots in the Former Soviet Union", *Russia in Global Affairs*, 6:1, January-March 2008, p. 50

[99] Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Policy toward p. 50

qualified as compatriots of Russia.[100] With this formulation, Russian state defined its Russian diaspora as 'Russian compatriots', and in the compatriot concept any former Soviet citizen who 'wish to maintain their own culture and ties with Russia' fits in to this definition regardless of their ethnicity or nationality.

In 1994, a government program was adopted concerning the compatriots abroad, which defined 'the strategic line of Russia's policy toward the compatriots'. Within this program, the Russian government declared that it will promote the integration of its compatriots into their host states, but will also support them to preserve their own culture as well. Also the government stated that it will defend the rights and interest of its compatriots by using the international human rights instruments. In 1997, the Governmental Commission on the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad prepared the document 'The Concept of the Russian Federation's State Policy toward the Compatriots Abroad'. It was pointed out in this document that, Russia would provide organizational help to its compatriots and try to raise their political and cultural rights issues with their respective governments.[101] In 1999, the 'Federal Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation toward Compatriots Living Abroad' was adopted. According to this law, the Russian compatriots abroad would get support from the Russian Federation in order to realize their political, social, cultural and economic rights. By this law the Russian compatriots abroad were given the right to get financial support for cultural and educational institutions and facilities. Also they

[100] Igor Zevelev, Russia and Its New Diasporas, p. 143

[101] Igor Zevelev, Russia and Its New Diasporas, p. 145

were guaranteed to get diplomatic support from Russia when their rights are violated.[102]

The Law also redefined the 'compatriot concept', and more inclusive definition of compatriot was adopted. According to the Law, the people who could be regarded as compatriots are the following: 1) Russian citizens living abroad, 2) individuals and their descendants who live abroad and are linked to the peoples historically residing on Russian Federation territory, 3) people whose ancestors previously resided on the Russian Federation's territory [including former Soviet citizens now living in states that were part of the Soviet Union and people who emigrated from Russian state, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation, regardless of whether they became citizens of another state or are stateless], 5) people living outside the Russian Federation who made a free choice in favor of a spiritual and cultural affinity to Russia.[103] As seen, the concept of 'compatriots' involves all individuals in the Near Abroad who has cultural and historical links to Russia. It also formulates qualifying people as compatriots on the basis of self-identification of individuals rather than their citizenship or ethnicity. With amendments in 2004, 2006 and 2010, the Law is still in force and constitutes a legal base for Russia's politics toward compatriots.[104]

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[102] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming local…", p. 159

[103] "Federal'nyi zakon o gosudarstvennoi politike Rossiiskoi Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom", http://archive.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dgpch.nsf/1a268548523257ccc325726f00357db3/8440d36903c217a4c3257776003a73f5!OpenDocument

[104] "Amendments to the law on state policy toward compatriots living abroad", http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/32/events/8429

On the other hand, during the term of Boris Yeltsin, one of the main problems related with the Russian compatriots abroad was the repatriation of large numbers of Russians into the Russian Federation. Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russians who lived outside the Russian Federation were exposed to the nationalizing policies of their host states and most of them faced with the danger of losing their jobs and citizenship rights. Also, poor economic conditions in their newly independent host states and the security threats in some regions affected their living conditions negatively.[105] In these political and economic circumstances, hundreds of thousands of Russians began to leave their countries and migrate to Russia. As mentioned before, the migration of Russians to Russia had already started in the final years of the Soviet Union, and between 1989 and 2002, the net migration to Russia was approximately 3.8 million.[106] However overall number of Russians in the Near Abroad reduced by 7.5 million since 1989. The main reason here is that approximately 2.5 million Russians in Ukraine and 1 million Russians in Kazakhstan were registered as titulars, or changed their identity for practical reasons.[107]

[105] Rogers Brubaker, "Aftermaths of empire…", p. 209
[106] Timothy Heleniak, "Migration of the Russian Diaspora After the Breakup of the Soviet Union", *Journal of International Affairs*, 57:2, 2004, p. 103
[107] Valery Tishkov, Valery Tishkov, "Russian World – Changing Meanings and Strategies", Carnegie Endowment, August 2008, p. 25

Table 3: Russian Population in the CIS and Baltic Countries, 1999–2004

	1989 (in thousands)	**Post-Soviet count**	**Year**	**Loss**
UKRAINE	11356	8334.0	2001	-26.6%
KAZAKHSTAN	6228	4479.6	1999	-28.1%
UZBEKISTAN	1653	1362.0	Estimate	-17.6%
BELARUS	1342	1141.7	1999	-14.9%
LATVIA	906	703.2	2000	-22.4%
KYRGYZSTAN	917	603.2	1999	-34.2%
ESTONIA	475	351.2	2000	-26.1%
LITHUANIA	344	219.8	2000	-36.1%
MOLDOVA	562	198.1	2004	-64.8%
TURKMENISTAN	334	156.8	Estimate	-53.1%
AZERBAIJAN	392	141.7	1999	-63.9%
TAJIKISTAN	388	68.2	2000	-82.4%
GEORGIA	341	67.7	2002	-80.1%
ARMENIA	52	15.0	2001	-71.2%
TOTAL	**25290.0**	**17842.2**		**-29.4%**

Source: Valery Tishkov, Valery Tishkov, "Russian World – Changing Meanings and Strategies", *Carnegie Endowment*, August 2008, p. 24

The main motivations behind these migrations were mostly political and economic, rather than any emotional desire to return to the homeland. Such migrations accelerated considerably from 1991 to 1995 but sharply declined after 1995. As a result of these migrations, Tajikistan and Armenia lost almost half of their Russian population while Georgia and Azerbaijan lost nearly as much.[108] Also, a quarter of Russians in Central Asia, 10-15 percent in Baltic States, and only 1-3 percent in Ukraine and Belarus migrated to Russia.[109] In order to deal with the problems of these returnees, a special 'Law on Forced Migrants' was adopted in 1992 'to create a legal base for these migrations and to provide them with institutional and material support'.[110] Also, the Federal Migration Service was established in the same year, to control and regulate these migrations, to protect the rights of migrants, and to help with their resettlement.[111]

3.2.2. The Russian Federation's Policy towards the Russian Compatriots in the Near Abroad after 2000

With the beginning of the new century, the policy of the Russian state toward its compatriots has changed and gained new dimensions under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. Comparing with the circumstances of the first decade of the post-Soviet period, problems of the Russian minorities in the Near Abroad have changed, and therefore the policy of the Russian Federation was also updated in line with these

[108] Charles King and Neil Melvin, "Diaspora Politics…", p. 123

[109] Paul Kolstoe, "Beyond Russia, becoming local…", pp. 159-160

[110] Natalya Kosmarskaya, "Russia and Post-Soviet...", p.6

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[111] Hilary Pilkington and Moya Flynn. "A diaspora in diaspora…", p. 60

new dimensions. For instance, while in the first years of the post-Soviet period, the irregular immigration of large numbers of Russians into Russia was a fundamental problem that the Russian state should have dealt with. However in 2000s Russia began to encourage the voluntary migration of the compatriots to Russia in order to compensate for its population decrease. On the other hand the state gave priority to protect compatriots' rights and interests, and supported them in cultural, economic and linguistic spheres. According to an official from the Department for Relations with the Compatriots Abroad of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the policy of Russian state toward its compatriots abroad has mainly focused on four areas since the year 2000: "1) promoting the consolidation of compatriots' organizations, including the preservation of ethno-cultural identity of the Russian diaspora and its links with the historical homeland; 2) promotion of the Russian language and culture; 3) creation of conditions for the voluntary resettlement of those compatriots to the Russian Federation, who would make such a choice; 4) protection of the rights and legitimate interests of compatriots living abroad".[112]

During a speech in 1999, Putin was giving the signals of his future policy regarding the compatriot issu:

> "The protection of the interests of Russians outside the country is a high priority. We cannot allow the rights of our compatriots to be trampled; we cannot allow them to be considered second-class citizens. We have a broad array of measures available in this area, ranging from traditional diplomatic measures to harsh trade and economic

[112] Tatiana Smirnova, "State Policy of the Russian Federation in Respect of Compatriots Living Abroad", Paper Presented in 'Disapora Ministerial Conference', 2013, https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/idm/workshops/IDM-2013-Diaspora-Ministerial-Conference/Diaspora-Ministerial-Conference-Statement-T-Smirnova.pdf

sanctions. Our diplomats must act more energetically and aggressively in this area. It must be made clear to everyone that it is unwise and disadvantageous to oppress Russians."[113]

In 2000s, one of the major policy changes in Russia regarding the compatriots was the institutionalization of the compatriot policy. In Yeltsin era, despite various presidential decrees, governmental programs, official documents and action programs, the compatriot policy was not well institutionalized. Under Putin's presidency, the organizational attempts of nationalist parties in the 1990s, such as the 'All-World Congress of Russian Communities' and the member organizations of the KRO, were all adopted by the state, and the nationalist approach of right wing parties toward the Russian compatriots abroad has mainly become the state policy of Russia. Those policies started to be implemented by the state apparatus. Also, some of the political figures of those parties have been employed in the high level political positions in the government or in the presidential bodies. For instance, Dimitri Rogozin, who was the leader of KRO between 1994 and 1997, was appointed as the Special Representative of President by Vladimir Putin in 2002 and by Dimitri Medvedev in 2011. Since 2012, he has been serving as the Deputy Prime Minister, also as the Special Representative of President Putin for Transnistria.[114]

Similar to the KRO-organized "All-World Congress of Russian Communities", "World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad" was created by the government in

[113]Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 17.08.1999, in Rachel Le Noan, "The Strategic Use of Diaspora Politics in Russia's National Security Policy: Evidence from the Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-2010", Phd.Thesis, 2012, p. 110

[114] Dimitri Rogozin, *The Russian Government*, http://government.ru/en/gov/persons/170/events/

2000 as the supreme representative body of the Russian compatriots abroad. The Congress meets every three years and the first meeting was held in 2001 with the participation of President Vladimir Putin.[115] Also, coordinating country councils were established in each country in order to coordinate the compatriot organizations in respective countries. In 2005, the World Coordination Board of Russian Compatriots was created as the coordination body of national and regional level compatriot organizations abroad. Also, some state bodies such as "the Government Commission on the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad (GCCA)" and "the Department for Work with Compatriots Living Abroad" under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia was formed. [116]

Growing internal demand for labor force and the population decrease in certain regions brought policies encouraging the migration of the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad to Russia in order to solve such problems. In this respect, President Putin launched 'The State Program of Voluntary Resettlement to the Russian Federation of Compatriots Living Abroad' in 2006 in order to constitute a legal basis for this voluntary return campaign. Within this program, it was planned to attract 450.000 migrants, but as of 2014 the numbers remained at 125.000. Indeed, the Russians who needed or wished to live in Russia had already migrated earlier in the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Also the housing and job opportunities provided in the selected regions within this program were not attractive

[115] "Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the Compatriots Congress", http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/40497

[116] Tatiana Smirnova, Ibid.

enough therefore the number of return migrants on this program remained very low.[117]

Under the presidency of Dimitri Medvedev, *Rossotrudnichestvo,* "The Federal Agency for the C.I.S Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation", was created in 2008. This agency serves under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is designed as a the main governmental body responsible for the compatriots abroad. *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s key activities mainly focused on Russian-language education, promoting Russian culture, the popularization of cooperation in research and technology, and serving for the needs of the Russian compatriots abroad by its 93 representative offices in 80 countries.[118] In a booklet prepared by Rossotrudnichestvo, the mission of the institution regarding the Russian compatriots abroad is explained as "the interaction with other federal authorities as to the implementation of public policies to support compatriots abroad: to defend their educational, linguistic, social, labor, humanitarian and other legitimate rights and interests."[119]

Not only the governmental bodies, but also the quasi-governmental organizations and government-supported foundations have been playing a significant role as instruments in the compatriot policy of the Russian Federation. One of the noteworthy institutions - *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World Fund) was established in 2007

[117] Marlene Laruelle, "The "Russian World": Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination", *Center on Global Interests*, May 2015, p. 11

[118] "O Rossotrudnichestvo", http://rs.gov.ru/home/about

[119] Rossotrudnichestvo, 2014, http://russian-embassy.org/wp-content/rossotr/RosSotrud_buklet_210x210_eng.pdf

in order to promote Russian language around the world by supporting Russian language teaching programs abroad.[120] On the other hand, Putin administration also seeks to use Russian Orthodox Church to build ties with the Russian compatriots abroad. Within his speech in the fifth World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad in November 2015, Vladimir Putin said that "Russian Orthodox Church is playing a great role in expanding humanitarian ties between the compatriots and Russia."[121] Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, who also attended to the fifth World Congress of Compatriots indicated that "the Church was of great importance for the multimillion Russian Diaspora, for it became a unifying force and major attraction for our brothers and sisters living abroad, offering them consolation and support."[122]

It should be also emphasized that Russia has used both soft power and hard power elements in its state policy toward the Russian compatriots. On one hand, Russia seeks to support its compatriots' cultural, political and economic conditions through legitimate ways, such as governmental bodies, non-governmental and quasi-governmental institutions; on the other hand, Russia uses the instrument of the protection of rights and interests of the Russian compatriots, as a tool of maintaining its leadership and realizing its foreign policy interests in the former Soviet territory. The discourse of protecting the rights of Russian compatriots was used by Russia as

[120] Ruskiy Mir, http://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php

[121] "Vladimir Putin took part in the plenary session of the fifth World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad", http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/32/events/50639

[122] "Patriarch Kirill Speaks at the Opening of the 5th World Congress of Compatriots", https://mospat.ru/en/2015/11/05/news124772/

a tool of legitimizing its desire to impose control over domestic and foreign policies of the respective post-Soviet countries.

'Ensuring comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad' was stated as one of the basic goals of the Russian Foreign policy in "the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" which was declared in 2013.[123] In the last ten years, Russia has involved in military conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine on behalf of its compatriots. In 2008, Russia intervened militarily to Georgia by the claim of protecting the Russian compatriots in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Also, in 2014 Russia supported the secessionist movements of Russians in the Crimean peninsula of Ukraine, and admitted the Crimean separatists' demand of annexation with Russia. Also, there has been an armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine between the Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces since 2014. It is claimed that Russia backs the former one. When addressing the State Duma, Vladimir Putin claimed that the Russian speaking people in Crimea were threatened with repression after the coup in Kiev and demanded help from Russia in defending their rights and lives. Putin stated that "naturally, we could not leave this plea unheeded; we could not abandon Crimea and its residents in distress". He also stressed that "Millions of Russians and Russian-speaking people live in Ukraine and will continue to do so. Russia will always defend their interests using political, diplomatic and legal means. But it should be above all in Ukraine's own interest to ensure that these people's rights and interests

[123] "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation", 12 February 2013, http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D

are fully protected. This is the guarantee of Ukraine's state stability and territorial integrity".[124]

Consequently, as demonstrated above, Russia uses both soft power and hard power instruments in its state policy regarding the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad. Also, the issue of compatriots serves for the Russian government in both domestic and foreign politics. For instance, according to the surveys, with the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the approval of Putin by the Russian citizens increased from 65 percent in February 2014 to 86 percent in June 2014.[125] On the other hand, Russian minorities in the Near Abroad and the definition of diaspora within the concept of 'compatriots' became central in defining the Russian national identity as reflected in the nation-building process of Russia. In the next chapter, this issue – the relation between the Russian compatriots and Russian nation building process will be discussed.

[124] "Address by President of the Russian Federation", March 18, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603

[125] "Indexes: Aprroval of Putin", Levada-Center, http://www.levada.ru/eng/indexes-0

CHAPTER 4

NATION-BUILDING IN THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIA AND RUSSIAN COMPATRIOTS IN THE NEAR ABROAD

Russian communities in the Near Abroad and Russian Federation's responsibility in ensuring their well-being had become a central element for Russian foreign and domestic policy. Besides that, the issue of Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad was also one of the main factors in the construction of the post-Soviet Russian national identity. The most crucial problem in the first years of independence was to determine the borders of the Russian state and the Russian nation. Russia had never existed as a state with its current borders, and had also never been a nation state. As mentioned in the second chapter, neither Tsarist Russia, nor the Soviet Union had been founded on nationality. The former one – the Russian empire was founded on loyalty to the Tsar and on the basis of Orthodox faith, and the Soviet Union, on the other hand, was founded on communist ideology, and the main component of this ideology was internationalism.[126] Nevertheless, Russian nation was the state-forming nation in both entities, and Russian language and Russian culture was the primary elements of political and social life. However, Russians as the 'elder brothers' of other peoples, had not developed a separate and strong sense of ethnic identity, and mostly identified themselves with the whole Union or Empire rather than a particular

[126] Anatol Lieven, "The Weakness of Russian Nationalism", Survival, 41:2, 1999, p. 63

national community. Thus, the national identification remained weak among Russian people.[127]

On the other hand, the multinational character of the Russian Federation has made the national question as one of the most important issues in the post-Soviet era. Actually, as the ethnic Russians constituted 81.5 percent of the population, Russia is the third most homogenous republic in the Soviet Union after Armenia and Azerbaijan.[128] Nevertheless, the post-Soviet federal structure of the Russian Federation, which divides the state into federal units on ethnic/national basis, attributed a multinational character to Russia. These non-Russian federal units and the institutionalization of ethnic and national identities through the ethno-federal structure of the state made the national question a much more complicated issue. Another question in the first years of independence was about determining the political boundaries of the Russian Federation. It was the first time that Russia emerged as a political entity with its current borders, and these borders correspond neither to the borders of the Soviet Union, nor the Russian Empire. Most of the 'imperial' lands were not anymore part of the Russian Federation including the historically and demographically Russian lands, and there was confusion over the 'just borders' of the newly founded Russian state.[129] In these circumstances, both the borders of the state and the boundaries of the nation were at the center of intellectual

[127] Anatol Lieven, "The Weakness of…", pp. 64-65

[128] John B. Dunlop, "Russia: in Search of an Identity?", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post Soviet Nations,* NewYork: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 29

[129] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post Communist Russia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50:6, 1998, p. 993

and political debates. As Paul Goble mentioned, in those years Russians asked themselves two "existential questions": "what is Russia and who is Russian".[130] The existence of 25 million ethnic Russians and 11 million non-titular Russian speakers in the Near Abroad was at the center of the debates regarding these questions.

The elites and the intellectuals of Russia were divided on the statehood and the borders of the Russian state, and there were four main different views regarding the statehood question. The first group of intellectuals argued that the Russian Federation should take the initiative of rebuilding the Union by participation of as many of the former Soviet republics as possible. The second group was the supporter of unification of 'indigenous Russian lands'. They advocated building a new Russian state by including three eastern Slavic states – Russia, Ukraine and Belarus – and also the northern Kazakhstan, where Russian communities live by high proportions. The members of a third group supported the idea of formation of a republic of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers by incorporating the lands of the newly independent former Soviet states which were populated by ethnic Russian and Russian speaking minorities. According to some of the advocates of this idea, the non-Russian areas within the Russian Federation should be allowed to separate from Russia.[131] The fourth group was defending the idea that the current borders of the Russian state is final and these borders should determine the boundaries of Russian nation; therefore,

[130] Paul Goble, "Russia and Its Neighbours",Foreign Policy, Issue 90, 04/01/1993, p. 79

[131] Vera Tolz, "Conflicting "Homeland Myths" and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia", *Slavic Review*, 57:2, Summer 1998, pp. 268-269

Russians and Russian speaking populations in the Near Abroad should remain in their current host states and become the members of those nations.[132]

It should be noted that many of the advocates of the first three revisionist views and their ideas on the boundaries of the Russian state were mostly intertwined. For instance, among the supporters of the restoring of Union with former Soviet republics, could be cited the members of Communist Party of Russian Federation, Liberal Democratic Party, imperial nationalists and Eurasianists. However, considering some other thoughts of these people, most of them could also be classified as the supporters of the Slavic Union idea or even as ethno-nationalist. For instance, the leader of the Communist Party Gennadii Zyuganov, who advocated restoring the former Soviet Union; meanwhile, promoted the eastern Slavic identity by including Ukrainians and Belarusians into the Russian nation. He also counted all Russians and Russian speaking communities in the Near Abroad as an integral part of the Russian nation and argued that "without the reunification of the currently divided Russian nation, the Russian state will never rise from its knees".[133]

Another important figure, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who is the founding father of the Russian ethno-nationalism is both the champion of the idea of unification of Slavic peoples and the incorporation of the Russian populated lands of Near Abroad into the Russian Federation. He was against the imperial tradition due to the multinational character of imperial rule. He argued that the imperial experience of Russian state had destroyed the national and spiritual character of Russians for centuries and had

[132] Ibid., p. 267

[133] Ibid., p. 1011

wasted the country's resources.[134] In 1990, in his publication of 'Rebuilding Russia', he argued that the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union should be free to separate from the Union and it should be recognized their desire for independence. However, he demanded that the territorial boundaries of the republics should be redrawn and the Russian populated lands of these republics, such as the northern parts of Kazakhstan should be given back to Russia. Also, he pleaded with Ukraine and Belarus to remain in the Russian state. If these countries wished to separate from Russia, he demanded that some parts of these republics such as Crimea and Donbas, which were historically Russian lands and populated by Russians and Russian-speaking communities should be abandoned to Russia.[135]

4.1. Nation Building Alternatives in the Post-Soviet Russian Federation

The confusion over the borders of the post-Soviet Russian Federation and the debates on the revision of the borders on behalf of the Russians and Russian speakers living in the Near Abroad, or in the name of reconstruction of Slavic Union or the former Soviet Union also represents the confusion over the boundaries of the national identity of Russia. The alternative views on the borders of Russia mainly correspond with the different approaches on the question of national identity. Russians are the people who had become an empire before they became a nation, and this imperial heritage led to many challenges and ambiguities in determining the post-imperial

[134] Andrew C. Kuchins and Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Contested National Identitiy and Foreign Policy", in Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (eds), *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 194

[135] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals*, trans. Alexis Klimoff, New York, 1991, pp. 7-17 cited in David G. Rowley, "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Russian Nationalism", J*ournal of Contemporary History*, 32:3, July 1997, p. 324

borders of the Russian national identity. One the one hand, the multinational character of the society and state within the current borders; on the other hand, the existence of multimillions of co-ethnics abroad make the nation building process much more complicated in Russia.

Nation building policies basically classified as ethnic and civic nation building according to the membership criteria of the nationhood. In ethnic nation building process, the nation is defined on the basis of ethnicity, language, culture or religion of the dominant nationality, while in civic one the membership of the nation is acquired through the citizenship, irrespective of the individuals' ethnic, religious or cultural characteristics.[136] Despite this binary categorization of nationalism, in practice, states mostly adopt a combination of elements of both ethnic and civic nationalisms.[137] In civic nationalism, the main determinant of the nation is the territory of the state, which means that people who live within the political borders of the state are regarded as members of the nation. The advantageous of the civic nationalism is the congruence between the national and political units. The civic definition of nation does not exclude the national minorities of the state, but it could exclude the co-ethnics outside the political borders of state.[138] On the other hand, if states adopt a nation building policy on the basis of ethnic, cultural or religious characteristics of the dominant nationality, they can include the co-ethnics abroad in

[136] Liah Greenfeld, Five Roads to Modernity, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 11 and Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", p. 993

[137] Alexei Miller, "The Nation as a Framework for Political Life", *Russian Social Science Review*, 51:1, January-February 2010, p. 24

[138] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building From Yeltsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic or Purposefully Ambiguous?", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63:2, March 2011, p. 181

the boundaries of the national identity, but this time the ethnic minorities within the borders of the state could feel as excluded from the national body of the state.

In the Russian case, both the ethnic and civic definitions of national identity are problematic. In the case of adoption of a civic nation building policy in Russia, arise two challenges. Definition of the nation by the current territory of the Russian state may exclude millions of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers living in the Near Abroad. The other problem is the determining the borders of the state, which will constitute the basis of national identity. Russia as a former imperial state may define the nation on the basis of the territory of the current state or on the basis of the former empire's territory (or a part of the territory of former empire).[139] On the other hand, in ethnic, religious or cultural definition of the nationhood, the non-Russian minorities of Russian Federation may feel alienated. Also there are various alternatives of ethnic and linguistic nation building for Russia. On which bases would be defined the post-Soviet Russian nation: Russian ethnicity and culture, Russian language or Slavic identity? Oxana Shevel argues that there are five alternatives of Russian nation building: two alternatives of civic definition on the bases of territory of Russian Federation or the USSR and three alternatives of ethnic definition as ethnic Russians, eastern Slavs or Russian speakers. Only the definition of nation by the territory of the current Russian Federation could be categorized as non-irredentist view, but the other four alternatives pose the risk of irredentism. Also, the definition of the nation as ethnic Russians and as eastern Slavs could threaten the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, while conceptualizing the nation as

[139] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", p. 180

Russian speakers and territorial definitions of the nation (both by the territory of USSR and RF) do not pose any threat to the integrity of Russian Federation.[140]

As mentioned above the supporters of the five different alternatives of the national identity mainly coincide with the advocates of the different views on the statehood of the Russian Federation. Communists, imperial nationalists and Eurasianists were the main advocates of the Union identity. They support the restructuring of the former Soviet Union in any form, and argue that Russians experienced an imperial history for centuries and the peoples of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union had one common national identity. According to them, the new Russian nation should be defined by the territory of the former Soviet Union.[141] The second alternative for the nation building process was to define the Russian nation as a community of eastern Slavs. The supporters of this view point out that three branches of eastern Slavic people, Great Russians (*velikorossy*, Russians), Little Russians (*malorossy*, Ukrainians), and White Russians (*belorussy,* Belarussians), are the same nation and originated in the medieval principality of the Kievan Rus. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the Russian empire reunited these brother peoples and indigenous Russian lands by incorporating Ukraine and Belarus into the empire. Therefore, these people should be considered as part of the Russian nation.[142] The main question here is whether Ukrainians and Belorussians regard themselves as part of the Russian nation. Especially according to many Ukrainian historians and intellectuals, Russians

[140] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", pp. 180-181

[141] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", pp. 995-996

[142] Ibid., p. 999

and Ukrainians are different peoples, and Russians should trace their origins to Muscovy Principality, not to Kievan Rus.[143] However, the main problem here is not the dispute over the common ethnic origins or historical ties. A different sense of national identity was developed by Ukrainians and Belarussians as result of living under different political entities. They have had their own republics since the beginning of the Soviet period as titular nations, and the borders, which separated these ethno-national republics, had also determined the sense of national belongings of the titular nations of each republic.

Proponents of the idea of defining nation as ethnic Russians claim that Russians had sponsored the development of other ethnic groups during the Soviet period, but remained institutionally underprivileged. Even today, in the Russian Federation, their representation in the state organs is lower than their proportion in the population. According to them, considering the fact that Russians constitute over 80 percent of the population, describing Russia as a multinational state and dividing the state into ethno-federal structures is not reasonable. They demand that Russian *(russkie)* people should be recognized as the state-forming nation and Russia should be a unitary state rather than an ethno-federal one. They also point out that, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian nation was divided as 25 million Russians fell outside the borders of Russia and their right of unification should be recognized.[144] As a more inclusive conceptualization of the national identity, the definition of the nation as Russian speakers *(russkoiazychnye)* was another alternative for Russian elites.

[143] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", p. 999

[144] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", pp. 186-187

Determining the borders of nationhood by the criterion of Russian language may have not been opposed by most of the non-Russian nations of the Russian Federation. Also, the Russian speaking concept does not exclude Russians and Russian speaking communities in the Near Abroad. By such a conceptualization, both the people who live within the territory of the Russian federation and the Russian speaking people living in the Near Abroad could find place for themselves in the Russian nationhood. However, the main challenge to this project was the fact that most of the former Soviet citizens, even if not the native language, had command in Russian language and speak Russian in daily life, especially in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Kazakhstan. Therefore the Russian speaking population concept was not welcomed by the former Soviet republics. For instance, the president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said "I do not accept the concept of 'Russian-speaking population.' Which of us is not a Russian speaker? After all, the whole of Kazakhstan speaks Russian, including 99 percent of Kazakhs."[145]

Definition of the nation by the current borders of the Russian Federation was the other option. In this view, the new Russian nation was wished to be built on the loyalty to the state and to its constitution regardless of the ethnicity, language or religion of the individuals. The territorial definition of the nation does not exclude the national minorities of Russia from the body of civic Russian *(rossiskaia)* nation. However, drawing lines of nation by the current territory of the Russian state was seen as a sign of rejection of the Soviet past and denial of the succession of the

[145] Izvestiia, April 29, 1994, cited in Mark Beissinger, "Persistent Ambiguities…", p. 170

Soviet Union.[146] Also, the most important challenge to such a definition of the nation was the existence of millions of Russians and Russian speakers outside the territory of the current Russian state, and the main reason behind the failure of the civic nation building project was the exclusion of Russian diaspora from the boundaries of the nation by this concept.

4.2. Nation Building under Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Compatriots in the Near Abroad

All these mentioned alternatives have been discussed in intellectual and political debates, and all of them had an impact on the nation building policies of the Russian Federation with one or the other options prevailing in different times. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the intellectual elites in Russia were mostly Western-oriented and they were committed to liberal and democratic Western values. They supported alliance with the West and they promoted the political and economic transition period in Russia from Stalinism to democracy and from the planned economy to the market economy, under the motto – 'There Is No Other Way'.[147] One main area of this transition period was the nation building process and as a part of this Western-oriented transformation process, a Western type of liberal and civic nation building policy adopted in the first years of the independence. The supporters of the civic nation building agenda were opposing the ethnocentric definition of the Russian nation and promoted the idea of a civic Russian (*Rossiskaia*) nation to which all

[146] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", p. 181

[147] Aleksandr M. Verkhovskii and Emil A. Pain, "Civilizational Nationalism: The Russian Version of the 'Special Path'", *Russian Social Science Review*, 56: 4, July–August 2015, p. 4

citizens of the Russian Federation belong.[148] In Russian language there are two words corresponding to the word 'Russian': *Rossisskii* and *Russkii.* The first one is used to define the state and the citizens of Russia; the second one refers to ethnic Russians describing the culture and language of them.

The most prominent advocate of the civic nation building was Valery Tishkov who was the Minister of Nationalities in 1992 and the director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. Tishkov define Russia as "a nation state of Russian citizens, who include representatives of all ethnic groups living in the territory of Russia and hold Russian citizenship".[149] According to him, a supra-ethnic, or non-ethnic, and territorial Russian national identity should have been introduced on the basis of civil allegiance to the Russian state, and a set of common values which would have meaning for all citizens of Russia should be developed under this civic identity project.[150] He strongly opposed to the ethnicity line in the passports (the Soviet practice which date back to 1932), and argued that individual ethnicity should be invisible and ethnicity should be removed from the passports.[151] As part of constructing a civic nation, he was also against the federal structure of the state

[148] Vera Tolz, "The Search for a National ıdentity in the Russia of Yeltsin and Putin", in Yitzhak Brudny, Jonathan Frankel, Stefani Hoffman (eds), *Restructuring post-Communist Russia*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 164

[149] Valery Tishkov, "What are Russia and the Russian People", *Russian Politics and Law*, 47:2, March–April 2009, p. 30

[150] Şener Aktürk, "Regimes of Ethnicity: Comparative Analysis of Germany, the Soviet Union/Post-Soviet Russia, and Turkey", *World Politics*, 63:1, January 2011, p. 147 and Vera Tolz, "The Search for…", p. 164

[151] Şener Aktürk, "Passport Identification and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Russia", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 26:4, 2010, p. 335

which had been formed by ethnically based autonomous territorial units.[152] Russia has maintained its ethno-federal structure, but removed the ethnicity line from the passports in 1997. It was an important step in the way of creating a non-ethnic civic Russian (*Rossiskaia*) nation.[153] In that time, attempts to build a de-ethnicized civic nation created a discontent among the non-Russian people of Russia: "what would become of our 'real nations' making up what the Constitution describes as Russia's 'multinational people'?".[154] When the new passports issued in 1997 without having any space for ethnicity, protests erupted in the non-Russian federal republics.[155]

After independence, from the late 1991 to the end of 1992, Yeltsin government adopted civic nation building policies and sought to construct a nation of *Rossiiane* within the borders of the Russian Federation.[156] He promoted a non-ethnic but civic definition of nationhood and in his speech, referred the nation as *Rossiiane* (the citizens of Russia), not *Russkie* (ethnic Russians).[157] He said "Over time we will move toward a Russian (*Rossiskaia*) nation, understood as a community of citizens".[158] After seven decades of communist experience, he endeavored to strengthen individualism among the citizens of Russia and sought to end prevalence

[152] Valery Tishkov, "What are Russia…", p. 42

[153] Şener Aktürk, "Regimes of Ethnicity…", p. 147

[154] Valery Tishkov, "What are Russia…", p. 31

[155] Şener Aktürk, "Passport Identification…", p. 329

[156] Vera Tolz, "The Search for a National…", p. 164

[157] George W. Breslauer and Catherine Dale, "Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention of a RussianNation-State", *Post-Soviet Affairs,* 13:4, 1997, p. 315

[158] Valery Tishkov, "What are Russia…", p. 31

of any ideology in the Russian political and social life. In 1992, he stated that "we do not need a new *–ism* to solve Russia's problems, and that, in the new Russia, people would be liberated from arbitrariness and ideological chains".[159] And according to him, the new liberal and democratic values should replace those ideologies: "there would be no further ideology in Russia, but rather the primacy of democracy, human rights and freedoms, legal and moral standards, and political and civil rights"[160]

However, there was a significant challenge to the construction of a civic Russian (*rossiskaia*) nation on the basis of the current borders of the Russian Federation. It was the existence of 25 million Russians and an additional about 11 million non-titular Russian speakers outside the Russian Federation, who left beyond the borders of Russia with the collapse of the Soviet Union. How does it fit the definition of the nation by the citizenship and by the borders of Russian Federation and the existence of multimillion Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad?[161] Majority of the government and the parliament (Duma) was in the view that the Russian speaking population in the Near Abroad was not part of the R*ossiskaia* nation, which was defined by the territory and citizenship of Russian Federation.[162] The leader of the Communist Party Zyuganov stated that Russian and Russian speaking population in the Near Abroad should be considered as an integral part of the Russian nation regardless of their

[159] TASS, October 6, 1992, cited in George W. Breslauer and Catherine Dale, Ibid., p. 316

[160] Rossiiskaya Gazeta, February 3, 1992, cited in George W. Breslauer and Catherine Dale, Ibid., p. 316

[161] Alexei Miller, "The Nation as a Framework…", p. 31

[162] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", pp. 1008-1009

citizenship.[163] Political parties such as the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO) put pressure on government, and the intellectuals and political elites such as Sergei Karaganov and Sergei Stankevich tried to convince the Yeltsin administration that Russians in the Near Abroad should be seen as part of the Russian nation.[164]

Most of the proponents of the idea that the Russians and Russian speaking populations in the Near Abroad should be regarded as part of the nation, use the word *Russkii* rather than *Rossisskii* when defining the Russian nation. For instance, the most prominent advocate of the issue of the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad – the Congress of Russian Communities, was against the idea of building the *Rossiskaia* identity and they argued that by this way "the nation could lose its ethno-cultural originality".[165] According to them "the creation of an ideology of the unification of Russian (*Russkie*) people is the only way to secure the survival of the Russian nation (*Russkaia natsiya*), Russian culture (*Russkaia kultura*) and the Russian state (*Rossiiskoe gosudarstvo*)". In their 'Manifesto for the Rebirth of Russia', they define the Russian people as the ones "who accept Russian (*Russkaia*) culture, feel the link with Russian (*russkaia*) history and realize responsibility for the future of Russia".[166] The other opposition party - the LDPR of Vladimir Zhirinovsky also referred the nation as *Russkii* rather than *Rossisskii*. Their ideology had two key

[163] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", p. 1011

[164] Neil Melvin, Russians Beyond Russia…, p. 14 and Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", p. 1013

[165] Alan Ingram, "A Nation Split into Fragments…", p. 693

[166] Ibid., pp. 688-689

principles: the primacy of *Russkii* people and the re-establishment of the Russian empire within the borders of former Soviet Union.[167]

As a result of this strong political and intellectual pressure on the government, after 1992, the policies of Yeltsin administration shifted from civic *Rossisskii* nation building toward a more ethnic conceptualization of the nation under the scheme of Russia as the homeland for Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad.[168] In the discourse of the politicians, Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad began to be defined as an integral part of the Russian nation. With the announcement of dual citizenship policy in 1993, Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad were encouraged to get Russian citizenship, and defined as part of the Russian nation beside the citizens of Russia under the concept of 'compatriots'. In 1994 Yeltsin underlined the unity of Russian compatriots and residents of the Russian Federation as inseparable parts of one nation by saying "Dear compatriots! You are inseparable from us and we are inseparable from you. We were and we will be together".[169]

As Breslauer and Dale argued, Yeltsin administration revised its de-ethnicized, civic nation building agenda due to the ethnicized governmental responsibilities toward Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad.[170] The nationalist and neo-imperialist political campaign of opposition parties and their significant success in

[167] Alan Ingram, "A Nation Split into Fragments…", p. 701

[168] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", pp. 189-190 and George W. Breslauer and Catherine Dale, "Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention…", pp. 320-321

[169] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", p. 1009

[170] George W. Breslauer and Catherine Dale, "Boris Yel'tsin and the Invention…", p. 330

elections were the most important factor that reminded this responsibility to the government. For instance, Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, which is neither democrat nor liberal, won the parliamentary elections of 1993 and this result was an important warning for Yeltsin government to adopt more nationalist and neo-imperialist policies. In the presidential elections of 1996, the total votes of candidates of Communist Party, Gennadii Zyuganov, and of KRO, Aleksandr Lebed, exceeded the votes of Boris Yeltsin. If, nationalists and neo-imperialists had nominated a joint candidate it was not improbable of a change in the presidential post. Therefore, Yeltsin administration had adopted a more active policy toward the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad, and also toward the former Soviet republics in order to counteract the opposition wave. For instance, by 1994, attempts to reintegrate the newly independent former Soviet republics under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) had increased, and after failure of dual citizenship policy toward the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad, Russian government began to advocate CIS citizenship, which could strengthen the Union identity among Russians and citizens of the former Soviet republics.[171]

It is possible to see the reflections of all these post-imperial nation building attempts in the citizenship policy of the Russian Federation. Citizenship policy is one of the most important instruments of identity building agenda. On the one hand, it determines who enjoys the rights and obligations of being member of a state, on the

[171] Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation…", p. 1010

other; it is an indicator of being a member of a national community.[172] Therefore, under the post-Soviet nation building policies of Russia, it is essential to examine citizenship policies of the Russian Federation. The Citizenship Law of Russian Federation came into force in 1992, and according to this Law, Russian citizenship was offered to any citizen of the former Soviet Union, who permanently resided on the territory of the Russian Federation plus who lived in other former Soviet republics, and did not in the meantime take the citizenship of any other former Soviet state. Those who lived outside the territory of the Russian Federation could simply register with the Russian authorities within three years (this deadline was subsequently extended until 2000) to get Russian citizenship.[173] With an amendment to the Law in 1993, Russian citizenship was extended to the entire population of the former Soviet Union, even to those who had already acquired citizenship of one of the other former Soviet states.[174] This amendment was a compliment of dual citizenship policy toward Russian compatriots abroad, which aimed to issue Russian passport to Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad, even if they had acquired the citizenship of their host states.

Considering this citizenship law, it could be claimed that the new Russian state defined the boundaries of its nation on the basis of the territory of former Soviet

[172] *Jacqueline M. Miller, "*Imperial Designs? Citizenship and Russia's Policies in the Former Soviet Union", *PONAR Policy Memo,* No. 240, January 25, 2002, p. 2

[173] Elizabeth Teague, "Citizenship, Borders, and National Identity," in Alexander Motyl, Blair Ruble, and Lilia Shevtsova, (eds), *Russia's Engagement with the West: Transformation and Integration in the Twenty-First Century*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2005, p. 21 and Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship Policy in Post-Soviet Russia", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 28:1, 2012, p. 121

[174] Elizabeth Teague, Ibid., p. 21

Union by offering Russian citizenship to the entire population of the former Soviet Union. However, ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad was the intended beneficiaries of the 'former Soviet citizens' terminology in this law. The chairman of the parliamentary commission on citizenship Yuriy Zaytsev said that "of course we have in mind the Russian speaking population, although this is not stated anywhere".[175] An additional dual citizenship policy toward Russian speakers in the Near Abroad in 1993, and the related amendment to the Citizenship Law in the same year, is another indicator of this intention. Despite this intent, it was not stated formally in the law, the ethnic or linguistic references, since it could have posed problems both in foreign relations with the Soviet successor states and in non-ethnic, civic nation building policies in domestic realm.

As understood from these policies, by 1992, Russian nation had been seen as the community of Russian speakers. Here the aim was not necessarily to reintegrate all Russians within one state, but to gain recognition for the right of the Russian state to act as a spokesman for them even if they live in other states.[176] Nevertheless, it should be noted here that, while Yeltsin adopted a broader definition of the Russian nation by including the Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad, he also maintained his non-ethnic and civic nation building efforts as well. The confusion between ethnic and civic definition of nationhood created a contradictory and

[175] Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship…", p. 118

[176] Geoffrey Hosking, "Can Russia become a nation-state?", *Nations and Nationalism* 4:4, 1998, p. 457

ambiguous character for the Yeltsin-era nation building policies.[177] This contradiction and ambiguity was also reflected in (and institutionalized in) the fuzzy definition of the compatriots in the 1999 Law on Compatriots.

4.3. The 1999 Law on Compatriots and the Definition of Nation and Compatriots

On the one hand, the existence of the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad became a determining factor in the definition of the post-Soviet Russian nationhood; on the other hand, the multi-ethnic (or multi-national as stated in the constitution) character of the Russian state also had an impact on the definition of the compatriots concept. Considering the multinational character of Russia, and not to alarm ethnic minorities in the Russian Federation, a non-ethnic, cultural and political definition of the Russian compatriots was employed. In 1994, when the compatriots concept was firstly defined, those people were regarded as compatriots: 1) Russian citizens residing in the Near Abroad, 2) former Soviet citizens who did not have new citizenships and 3) the former Soviet citizens who obtained citizenship of the host country but wish to maintain their own culture and ties with Russia.[178] As is the case in the Citizenship Law, it was not referred any ethnic or linguistic component. All the former Soviet citizens who wish to maintain their own culture and ties with Russia were considered as Russian compatriots regardless of their citizenship, ethnicity, language and religion.

[177] Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", p. 190

[178] Igor Zevelev, *Russia and Its New Diasporas*, p. 143

In 1999, the 'Federal Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation toward Compatriots Living Abroad' was adopted. In the firs article of the Law, compatriots are defined as "people who were born in one state and share common language, history, cultural heritage, traditions and customs, and as well as descendants of these people". Compatriots abroad, on the other hand, are defined as: 1) Russian citizens living abroad, 2) individuals and their descendants who live abroad and are linked to the peoples historically residing on Russian Federation territory, 3) people whose ancestors previously resided on the Russian Federation's territory [including former Soviet citizens now living in states that were part of the Soviet Union and people who emigrated from Russian state, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation, regardless of whether they became citizens of another state or are stateless], 5) people living outside the Russian Federation who made a free choice in favor of a spiritual and cultural affinity to Russia.[179] Moreover, all former Soviet citizens as well as their descendants (except the descendants of the fourteen former Soviet titular nations, which have their independent states now) are regarded as compatriots of Russia.[180] It means that, non-titular minority groups of the former Soviet republics, who are also referred as Russian speaking population, are considered as Russian compatriots. For instance, Gagauz people in Moldova, Crimean Tatars in Ukraine and other European minorities in former Soviet republics is sought to be categorized as Russian

[179] "Federal'nyi zakon o gosudarstvennoi politike Rossiiskoi Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom", http://archive.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dgpch.nsf/1a268548523257ccc325726f00357db3/8440d36903c217a4c3257776003a73f5!OpenDocument

[180] Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Policy Toward…", p. 52 and Oxana Shevel, "Russian Nation-Building…", p. 192

compatriots. However, it depends on their free choice of self-identification and their sense of cultural, spiritual, historical affinity to the Russian state.

Igor Zevelev argues that the definition of compatriots in the Law "applies first and foremost to ethnic Russians, but the Russian authorities refrain from mentioning this directly and include in this category all of the non-titular groups living in former Soviet Union".[181] Indeed, in the third clause of the definition, it is intended to refer to the Russian settler communities which were settled outside RSFSR in Soviet era. But on the other hand, including in the compatriot definition, the other non-Russian and non-titular communities in the Near Abroad may not necessarily be an effort of concealing ethnic definition. Including as many ethno-national groups as in compatriot concept could serve Russia in its foreign policy interests in the Near Abroad. Besides ethnic Russians in the Near Abroad, the aim of gaining the right of acting as spokesman of Abkhazians, Gagauz, or even Crimean Tatars could enable Russia to pursue a broad range of policies in the former Soviet space. Such a non-ethnic definition of the compatriots could ease the justification of Russia's involvement in the regions such as Transnistria, Abkhazia and Ossetia which are not predominantly populated by ethnic Russians.

In the second clause of the definition, the compatriots abroad defined not as the ethnic Russians but the *ethno-Rossiiane*, which refers to all ethno-national groups living in the territory of *Rossia* (Russia). It means that, not only the ethnic Russians, but the people from all ethno-national groups residing in the territory of the Russian Federation such as Tatars, Bashkirs, Yakuts, Chuvash, i.e. living abroad are regarded

[181] Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Policy Toward…", pp. 52-53

as compatriots of Russia. It could be interpreted from this that the Law avoids any indication that it had been designed for ethnic Russians alone, but speaks for all nationalities living within the territory of Russia. Such a definition is a sign of the intention to make all national groups in the Russia to feel as part of the Russian state and nation. For instance, in the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, acting on behalf of the South Ossetian people, who are the relatives of the North Ossetian people living in the territory of Russia, was the responsibility of Russian state according to this Law. Natalia Kosmarskaya cited in her article that, in Kyrgyzstan, an official from the Russian embassy attended a meeting of a Russian compatriot organization and said to the participants: "You have just told us how many of our own Russians lived here; could you tell us now how many of our own Tatars and Bashkirs do you have here".[182] It could be seen from this anecdote that Russian state considers not only the ethnic Russians as its compatriots, but also the members of all other ethno-national groups living in the Russian Federation.

Beyond all these relatively precise definitions, in the fifth clause of the definition, people living outside the Russian Federation who made a free choice in favor of a spiritual and cultural affinity to Russia are also regarded as compatriots of the Russian Federation. This categorization makes the borders of compatriots much more fuzzy and ambiguous. The Law firstly defines the term 'compatriots' before defining the 'compatriots abroad', and this definition could be perceived as the definition of 'nation' in the view of the Russian state. According to this description, the compatriot (meanwhile the nation) is the community of "people who were born in

[182] Natalia Kosmarskaya, "Russia and post-Soviet…", p. 54

one state and share common language, history, cultural heritage, traditions and customs". Besides those multiple definitions in the Law, compatriots abroad, on the other hand, could be categorized briefly as people who were born and live in other states, but share these common values and traits, and culturally and spiritually oriented toward Russia.

Oxana Shevel argues that the 1999 Law on Compatriots do not solve the nation-building dilemmas and contradictions in post-Soviet Russia, but instead institutionalized the ambiguity in the borders of Russian nationhood:

> "The designation of fuzzily defined compatriots as the 'us' group in Russia was not so much a manifestation of defeat in the face of an unsolvable nation-building dilemma, but a conscious state policy of institutionalizing ambiguity and capitalizing on it. By defining the group the state formally recognizes as its "us" ambiguously in the law, the government can avoid vexing and potentially explosive debates on the question of the nation's boundaries, while at the same time being in a position to pursue a broad range of policies in the name of compatriots and admit into the body of the official nation only those whom it sees as desirable".[183]

Actually, the ambiguous definition of the borders of Russian nationhood is understandable, since Russians as post-imperial people experienced multinationalism for centuries. It is not appropriate to define Russian nationhood by precise and strict criteria such as ethnicity and religion. On the other hand, it is also not possible to define the nation by only civic elements and by current borders, since through imperial times many fellow countrymen had migrated or settled in the peripheral

[183] Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship…", p. 142

lands, those which are not part of the current state now. Moreover, again as a result of the imperial history, a multinational society has been formed for centuries in the current borders of the state. Therefore, the best fit definition of the Russian nationhood, in my opinion, could be the one which is defined on the bases of political affiliation, common history, common culture which had been formed collectively through the history, and common political and moral values. In Putin era, initially, such a definition of nationhood is employed, but the dilemma and confusion between civic and ethnic definition of the nationhood have continued.

4.4. Russian Nationalism in Putin Era and the Russian Compatriots in the Near Abroad

In the first years of his presidency, Vladimir Putin maintained his predecessor Yeltsin's efforts of building a civic *Rossiskaia* nation. At the end of the year 1999, he published an article titled 'Russia at the Turn of the Millennium' in which he described the lack of social consolidation and civil harmony of Russian (*Rossiskaia*) society as one of the main reasons that make reforms so slow and difficult in Russia. In order to provide social consolidation, he offered a new system of values under the name of Russian idea (*Rossiskaia idea*). For him 'the new Russian idea' should be a combination of universal, panhuman values and traditional/primordial Russian values (*rossiiskimi tsennostyami*). These traditional Russian values, according to him, are patriotism ('sense of pride in the country, its history and achievements, and the desire to make the country more beautiful, richer, stronger and happier'), statism (a belief in a strong state that the 'source and guarantor of order, and the initiator and main

driving force of reforms'), great powerness (Russia as a great power) and social solidarity.[184]

What is new in this project, compared to the Yeltsin era, is the introduction of traditional Russian values to civic Russian nation building efforts besides the Western values such as individualism, democracy, freedom of speech, political rights and freedoms. In order to consolidate a common national identity among all ethnic groups of the Russian Federation, Putin also sought to strengthen central power in ethno-national federal units by eliminating their republican authorities. The more power is allocated to ethno-national republics, the more local identities are promoted and this was in conflict with the idea of building *Rossiskaia* identity. On the other hand, he attempted to establish symbolic ties with the history of Russia, by acknowledging the Soviet red flag as the official flag of the Russian armed forces and the double headed eagle of Russian empire as the national emblem.[185]

Although the dilemma and ambiguity between civic, ethnic and neo-imperial nation building policies was continuing in the Putin presidency, one important attempt was interpreted as that the civic *Rossiskaia* nation building predominated over the other nation building alternatives in the first half of 2000s. It was the new citizenship law, adopted in 2002, which abolished the 1992 Law on Russian Citizenship. As mentioned above, according to the 1992 Law on Citizenship, all former Soviet citizens could take Russian citizenship just by registration, even they had already

[184] Vladimir Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe tysiacheletii", Nezavisimamaia Gazeta, 30.12.1999, http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millenium.html

[185] Vera Tolz, "The Search for a National…", pp. 171-172

acquired citizenship of the other Soviet successor states. By the law of 2002, former Soviet citizens who were born in the territory of the Russian Federation were regarded as citizens of Russia, but those who were not born on the territory of Russian Federation after 1992, but acquired Russian citizenship by the 1992 law, were equated as foreigners and were subjected to new citizenship requirements, such as permanent residency for a minimum of five years, a submission of a legitimate source of income, proficiency in Russian language, legal proof of no criminal conviction, renunciation of prior citizenship etc.[186] As a result of the 2002 citizenship law, it is estimated that between one and a half million (three million according to human rights groups) former Soviet citizens in Russia found themselves as de-nationalized.[187]

Changes in the citizenship regime of the Russian Federation by the 2002 law, which ended the open-door citizenship policy of 1990s, could be seen as an indicator of the official will to redefine Russian nation by the borders of the Russian Federation, rather than by the territory of former Soviet Union or by the demographic or cultural borders of ethnic Russians and Russian speaking population living in the Near Abroad. Indeed, such a desire existed among some of the officials. For instance, the chairman of the Presidential Commission on the Questions of Citizenship, Oleg Kutafin, pointed out that "the word compatriot should not be applied to any Russian speaker in the Near Abroad, but only to the citizens of Russia who live outside its

[186] Elizabeth Teague, "Citizenship, Borders...", pp. 24-25 and Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship…", pp. 129-130

[187] Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship…", p. 131

borders".[188] Although, such ideas were prevailing among some segments of the elites, it should be noted here that, from the beginning of his presidency, Putin put a premium on the policies toward Russians abroad. For instance, 'World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad' was created by the government in 2000 and in the first meeting of the Congress, in 2001, Putin firstly declared the Russian World (*Russkii Mir*) concept.[189] Despite that, when the new citizenship regime was introduced in 2002, the opposition parties criticized the government for abandoning the compatriots abroad and also for violating the principle of Russia's being of a successor and continuer state of the Soviet Union and Russian Empire.[190] On the other hand, by considering the changes in the citizenship regime, some scholars inferred that these changes "could in the long term have lead Russia to think of itself no longer as a Eurasian empire but rather as a member of the European civilization".[191]

The narrow and strict citizenship policy was not actually a reflection of the desire of defining the borders of the nation by the territory of the Russian Federation; rather, it was driven by practical, realpolitik concerns. Socio-economic and security interests were at the top of the agenda, and by ending up the open-door citizenship policy toward the former Soviet citizens it was mainly aimed to control the flow of

[188] *Rossiskaia Gazeta*, April 20, 2002 cited in Vera Tolz, Vera Tolz, "The Search for a National…", p. 172

[189] Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii V.V.Putina na Kongresse sootechestvennikov", October 11, 2001, http://old.nasledie.ru/politvnt/19_44/article.php?art=24

[190] Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship…", p.129

[191] Elizabeth Teague, "Citizenship, Borders...", p. 29

undesirable migrants to Russia.[192] In 2003, with the amendments to the citizenship law, those four specific categories of former Soviet citizens were identified as eligible to get Russian citizenship by a simplified procedure: "1) former Soviet citizens who arrived in Russia before July 2002 and received a permanent or temporary residency registration (*propiska*) stamp in their passports; 2) World War II veterans who had Soviet citizenship and who now lived in Russia; 3) former Soviet citizens who served in the Russian armed forces for three years or more; and 4) former Soviet citizens who received higher education in Russia after July 2002".[193]

By these amendments, it was sought to prevent the negative effects of 2002 regulations on brain drain and demographic decline. These amendments, on the other hand, cannot be seen as a return to open citizenship policies of 1990s, only the former Soviet citizens of Russia, who had acquired Russian citizenship after 1992, but de-nationalized by the 2002 law, returned to Russian citizenship. Now, the Russian citizenship under simplified rules (without permanent residency for five years, submission of legal document of income, i.e.) is open only to the Russian compatriots who participate in the 'State Program of Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots to the Russian Federation'. After this program launched, a new amendment to the citizenship law in 2008 enabled those compatriots to get Russian citizenship.[194]

[192] Oxana Shevel, "The Politics of Citizenship…", p.137

[193] Ibid., p. 136

[194] Ibid., p.139

The changes in the citizenship policies of Russia by the 2002 law on citizenship should not be considered as a component of the nation building policies of Putin's presidency. By introducing a more strict citizenship regime, Putin government simply sought to build a more clearly defined and a well-guarded (not open to all former Soviet citizens) nation. Security and socio-economic concerns was the main reasons behind this policy. Namely, it was not the aim to introduce a narrow definition of the Russian nation by the borders of current state.

During the 2000s, Putin employed all three uses – ethnic, civic and imperial – of Russian national identity without fully committing to any of them. In these years, especially in the second term of Putin's presidency (2004-2008) ethnic Russian nationalism had gained popularity among Russians as result of growing non-Slav, labor immigration to central Russian areas from both former Soviet states and non-Russian periphery of the Russian Federation. This anti-immigrant ethno-nationalism was so dominant in the Russian community that the largest Russian nationalist organization in these years was the Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI).[195] In these circumstances, as Yuri Teper stated, "the gap between the official reluctance to openly address the question on the role of Russian ethnicity in the Russian collective identity and the popular, increasingly ethnic perception of Russianness widened".[196] Indeed, nationalist groups were demanding the recognition of Russian (*Russkie*) people as the state forming people, and fighting against the civic nation-

[195] Paul Kolstoe, "Introduction: Russian nationalism is back – but precisely what does that mean?" in Paul Kolstoe and Helge Blakkisrud (eds), *The New Russian Nationalism: Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism 2000–15*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2016, p. 2

[196] Yuri Teper, "Official Russian identity discourse in light of the annexation of Crimea: national or imperial?", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 32:4, 2016, p. 381

state building. They were also supporting the use of the term *russkie* and opposed the concept *Rossiiane.*[197]

Under these circumstances, ethno-national tongue became prevailing in intellectual and political discourse. The term *Rossiskii* was began to be seen as a marker of non-Russian ethnicity, not as a unifying concept.[198] Also, the *Rossiskii* concept was mostly associated with the negative impressions of failed Westernization attempts of Yeltsin era.[199] Thus, the use of *Russkie* became more common when speaking of the nation. However, unlikely the ethno-nationalist groups, ruling political elites have employed a more inclusive and broader interpretation of the term *Russkie*. When explaining the Russian Project of the United Russia, Andrei Isayev, member of the Presidium of the ruling United Russia party, stated that according to the nationalist the Russianness is determined by blood, but for United Russia party, people 'who speak and think in Russian and adopt Russian culture' are considered as Russian (*Russkie*).[200]

[197] Paul Kolstoe, "The ethnification of Russian nationalism", in Paul Kolstoe and Helge Blakkisrud (eds), *The New Russian Nationalism: Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism 2000–15*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2016, pp. 34-36

[198] Alexei Miller, "The Nation as a Framework…", p. 30

[199] Marlene Laruelle, "Misinterpreting Nationalism: Why Russkii is Not a Sign of Ethnonationalism", *PONARS Eurasia*, Policy Memo:416, January 2016, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/misinterpreting-nationalism-russkii-ethnonationalism and Paul Kolstoe, "Introduction: Russian nationalism…", p. 3

[200] Andrei Isayev, Gazeta.ru, 7 February, 2007, http://www.gazeta.ru/2007/02/07/oa_230946.shtml

Since the 2008 economic crisis and especially after the 2011 liberal protests against government, Putin sought to use nationalist mobilization in his political campaign.[201] On the other hand, the government also tried to transform radical ethno-nationalists' thoughts into a more acceptable position. By these years, there has remained no doubt in the official view on the name of the nation; it is *Russkie*, and the *Russkii* people is the state forming nation. However, unlikely ethno nationalist, officials interpreted the term *Russkie* through inclusive elements such as culture, language and civilization, not by ethnic references. They also has not refrained from mentioning the multi-ethnic and multicultural character of Russian state and nation, but positioned the *Russkie* culture and values at the center, as the main constituent, which unify different ethnicities. Before the 2012 presidential elections, Putin wrote an article titled 'Russia: National Question', and in this article, he opposed to the ethno-nationalists' demand of '*Russkie*'s right to self-determination' by stating that "*Russkii* people had used their self-determination right long ago, by establishing a multi-ethnic civilization which is brought together by Russian (*russkie*) cultural core". He described Russian (*russkii*) people as the state forming nation, and when talking about the Tatars, Armenians living in Russia, referred to them as *Russkie* Tatar and *Russkie* Armenian.[202]

Similar views also reflected in the program of 'State Strategy on Nationalities Policy for the Period through 2025', which was launched in December 2012 by Vladimir

[201] Yuri Teper, "Official Russian identity discourse…", p. 381

[202] Vladimir Putin, "Rossiia: natsional'nyi vopros", January 23, 2012, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html

Putin. In this official program, it was declared that *Russkii* people is the main constituent of the multi-ethnic community of the Russian Federation:

> The Russian state was created as a union of peoples, the backbone core of which has historically played by the Russian (*russkii*) people. Thanks to the unifying role of the Russian (*russkii*) people, centuries of intercultural and interethnic interaction in the historical territory of the Russian state have formed a unique cultural diversity and spiritual community of various peoples.[203]

Both in Putin's writings and in this official document, the civilizational character of the Russian culture and nation was underlined. Accordingly, Russian culture was formulated as a composition of historical and cultural heritage of all people living in the historical territory of the Russian state, and this civilizational culture had been established in a thousand-year of common history; so the people who share this civilizational culture constitute the Russian nation.

4.4.1. Civilizational Nationalism and the 'Russian World' Concept

The employment of the term *Russkie* rather than *Rossisskii* in national discourse by not referencing to ethnicity, but to language, common culture and common history provide Russian leadership in drawing the borders of the nation with a broader range. Through such a definition of nationhood, the borders of Russian nation could overreach the boundaries of both Russian ethnicity and the territory of the Russian Federation. On the one hand, ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad could place themselves in this type of nationalism, on the other hand, it could

[203] "O Strategii gosudarstvennoi natsional'noi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda", December 19, 2012, http://base.garant.ru/70284810/#friends

provide basis for acculturation of the non-Russian minorities of Russia in the long term. In foreign policy, Russia could play diverse ethnic, Slavic or even imperial cards of identity. The notion of Russia as a center of distinct civilization, which had been constructed together with other brother people through thousand-years of common history on the basis of Russian language and Russian culture, could provide Russia in its positioning both in Eurasian space and global sphere.

By the late 2000s, especially among the proponents of the great power status for Russia, which constitute almost all of the Russian elites, the civilizational approach became popular. Since the independence, two civilizational approaches have been formulated in Russia. One of them is the notion of Russia as one of the three branches of European civilization alongside the European Union and North America.[204] The second approach is the view that Russia is a unique civilization apart from the Western civilization, having its own 'special path'. This approach has been the most widely accepted notion among Russians and Russia's intellectual and political elites especially since the start of 2000s. As Emil Pain and Alexander Verkhovskii argued, under Putin presidency, the concept of special thousand-year-old civilization that destined the 'special path' for Russia is being evaluated to the rank of a state ideology to replace Marxism/Leninism.[205]

There are three pillars of special Russian civilization approach including Eurasian, Slavic/Orthodox and Russian World. In the first notion, former Soviet space is considered as a common civilizational space, which had been constructed on the

[204] Igor Zevelev, "Russia's contested national…", pp. 189-190

[205] Aleksandr M. Verkhovskii and Emil A. Pain, "Civilizational Nationalism…", p. 6

bases of common culture and language (Russian) during Soviet period. The will of utilizing these commonalities and reintegrating those former Soviet republics under the Eurasian Union is one of the top priorities of Putin's foreign policy agenda. Secondly, the notion of Russia as the center of 'Holy Russia', which includes Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and on a broader scale all Orthodox Christians, is the other civilization projection of the Russian Federation. This idea is inherited from the Russian empire, which had the claim of being the Third Rome, and the main impetus of this approach is the Russian Orthodox Church.[206]

Thirdly, the Russian World scheme, which is the main concern of this study, was for the first time officially conceptualized as a civilizational space by Vladimir Putin in the World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad in 2001. In the opening speech of the meeting, Putin stated that: "The concept of Russian World extends far from the geographical borders of Russia and even far from the borders of the Russian ethnicity".[207] When the concept was launched, the main concern was to create connection between Russia and Russian compatriots abroad, and to reinforce Russian compatriots' identification with Russia. Also, by establishing a Russian World notion, it was aimed to keep them considering themselves as part of the Russian

[206] Igor Zevelev, "Russia's contested national…", p. 191

[207] Vladimir Putin, "Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii V.V.Putina na Kongresse sootechestvennikov", October 11, 2001, http://old.nasledie.ru/politvnt/19_44/article.php?art=24

World. By this way, The Russian government sought to react against the threat of assimilation and extinction of the Russian diaspora.[208]

As Putin stressed, the Russian World concept extends the borders of Russian ethnicity. Indeed, the concept does not target only ethnic Russians, but all those people who maintained ties of culture and identity with Russia. In this regard, the Russian World concept has a historical, cultural, linguistic, and civilizational character.[209] Vyachaslav Nikonov, the member of the United Russia party and the head of Russian World Foundation, describes Russian World as "a civilization and community of 300 million people around the world encompassing both the current and the historical Russian state".[210] According to Tishkov, political and ideological identities should be the main identifier of being a member of the Russian World. He argues that the Russian youths in Estonia and Latvia, "can scarcely be considered to be part of the Russian World when they do their national military service as part of NATO's forces"[211] On the other hand, Putin pointed out that belonging to Russian world depends on free choice and self-identification of individuals: "When I say Russian (*russkii*) people and Russian speaking citizens, I mean people who sense that they are a part of the broad Russian World, not necessarily of Russian ethnicity, but

[208] Valery Tishkov, "Russian World – Changing Meanings and Strategies", *Carnegie Endowment*, August 2008, p. 14 and Marlene Laruelle, "The Russian World…", p. 24

[209] Valery Tishkov, "Russian World…", p. 3

[210] Yuri Teper, "Official Russian identity discourse", p. 387

[211] Valery Tishkov, "Russian World…", p. 14

everyone who feels to be a Russian (*russkii*) person".[212] When answering the questions of Russian people in the Direct Line program on TV, Putin further blurred the borders of Russian nationhood and Russian World by defining "a Russian person or, on a broad scale, a person of Russian World" is the one who bears highest moral values.[213] The striking point here, in my opinion, is that Putin feel the need of using the extra phrase of "a person of Russian World" in addition to "a Russian person".

As seen, the Russian World notion has been the most dominant component of the nationalist discourse of Russian leadership, and in time, it has turned into a state ideology. This trend has peaked by the Crimean crisis, and after the annexation of Crimea, Putin describe the Russian (russkie) nation as "one of the biggest, if not the biggest, nation in the world to be divided by borders"[214] and said that Russia defends the rights of people in Ukraine who feel themselves as part of the Russian World: "we shall always protect the ethnic Russians in Ukraine, as well as that part of Ukraine's population that feels inseparably linked with Russia ethnically, culturally and linguistically, that feels to be a part of the broader Russian World".[215]

[212] Vladimir Socor, "Putin Inflates 'Russian World' Identity, Claims Protection Rights", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 11:120, July 2, 2014

[213] Vladimir Putin, "Priamaia liniia s Vladimirom Putinym", April 17, 2014, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796

[214] Vladimir Putin, "Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii", March 18, 2014, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603

[215] Vladimir Socor, Ibid.

It was interpreted by some scholars that Putin's promotion of the Russian World concept represents the collapse of the civic *Rossiskaia* identity.[216] Indeed, considering the prevailing nationalist discourse, which places the Russian World concept to the center of Russian national identity, it is possible to assert that the definition of Russian nation just on the basis of the territory of Russian Federation has no longer been a publicly and politically widely accepted perception in Russia. As a result of the nationalist discourse of Putin government since 2012, which put a special emphasis on the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad under the concept of Russian World, broader definition of Russian nationhood including the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad, has become a commonly-held nation approach among Russian people and elites. It could be argued that, by the mid-2010s, the question on the borders of Russian nationhood, the long-standing debate of Russia, has come to a certain end: the borders of Russian nationhood correspond to the borders of Russian World. It is difficult to make certain predictions on the future evolution of the national question of the Russian Federation, but to my mind, from now on, it is not so probable to withdraw the borders of Russian nationhood from the borders of Russian World concept.

[216] Paul Goble, "Russian national identity and the Ukrainian crisis", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 49:1, 2016, pp. 39-40

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Millions of Russians had been settled or migrated into the non-Russian peripheral lands for centuries in both Tsarist and Soviet period for various political, economic and security reasons. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, about 25 million Russians found themselves beyond the borders of the Russian Federation and fell into minority position in their newly independent Soviet successor host states. The Russian Federation adopted the role of being a homeland for the Russian minority groups living in these states, and regarded these communities as the new Russian diaspora. However, there were two main problems in referring to the Russians as the diaspora group of the homeland Russian Federation. Firstly, as discussed in the second chapter, they had enjoyed an extra-territorial status during the Soviet period, and most of them did not identify themselves with the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, but with the whole Soviet Union. Therefore, in the post-Soviet era, as examined in the second chapter, the view of the Russian Federation as a homeland was weak among the Russian communities in the Near Abroad. Secondly, each of them had lived in fourteen different Soviet republics under different economic and social conditions during the Soviet period; as a result, they had developed different identities. Thus, they were far from constituting a homogenous, single diaspora.

In the face of these realities, the Russian Federation has pursued various policies to make them feel as part of the Russian state and Russian nation. Firstly, through the dual citizenship policy in the 1990s, the state sought to issue Russian passports to Russians and Russian speaking minorities in the Near Abroad. Although this policy failed as a result of the reluctance of the other former Soviet states, the Russian citizenship had remained open until the year 2002 to all former Soviet citizens, which was mainly intended for the members of Russian diaspora. Besides that, Russians and Russian speaking minorities in the near abroad were defined as compatriots (s*ootechestvenniki),* the fellow countrymen. In Yeltsin era, in addition to the dual citizenship policy, various government programs were launched with respect to the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad. Also, some other opposition parties, especially the Congress of Russian Communities – KRO, established many diaspora organizations in the areas that were populated by Russians in the Near Abroad, and sought to strengthen diasporic stance among Russians and Russian speakers.

In Putin era, all these efforts were taken on by state and began to be implemented by the state apparatus. In this respect, Putin era could be characterized as the period of institutionalization of compatriot policies. The 'World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad' was created by the government in 2000 and all compatriot organizations abroad were consolidated under the newly founded governmental body *Rossotrudnichestvo* - 'The Federal Agency for the C.I.S Compatriots Living Abroad', and 'International Humanitarian Cooperation'. Moreover, the Russian World Foundation (*Ruskiy Mir*) was established in order to promote Russian language among compatriots by supporting Russian language teaching programs. By

all these efforts, it has been aimed to create a strong diasporic identity and geopolitical diasporic stance, as well as, an image of Russia as the homeland among Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad. Moreover, through the concept of Russian World and the notion of Russians as a divided nation it was sought to make them feel as part of the broad Russian nation.

However, counting the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad as an integral part of the Russian nation has been the most challenging issue in the post-Soviet Russia. Under Western-oriented liberal and democratic tendencies, the Russian government initially aimed to create a non-ethnic and civic Russian (*Rossiskaia*) nation within the territory of the Russian Federation, on the bases of citizenship and constitutional patriotism. Actually, considering the multinational character of the Russian state, such a definition of nationhood was reasonable, but it could have excluded Russians and Russian speakers living outside the borders of the Russian Federation. Almost all of the opposition parties and many intellectuals raised the Russian diaspora question and advocated a broader definition of nationhood, which also includes Russians and Russian speakers in the Near Abroad.

There were five alternative definitions of the post-imperial Russian nation: definition of the nation by the borders of the Russian Federation or by the borders of the former Soviet Union, as well as, defining nation as ethnic Russians, Russian-speakers or eastern Slavs. In Yeltsin era, I argue that a combination of all of these alternatives was reflected in the nation-building policies. While Yeltsin government aimed to define the nation by civic criteria, the citizenship of the Russian Federation was

formulated in accordance with the ethnic and imperial responsibilities of the Russian state. As a result, Russian citizenship was opened to the entire former Soviet citizens. Additionally, through dual citizenship policy it was aimed to issue Russian passports to Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad, even if they had acquired the citizenship of their host states.

In Putin era, a new and modern citizenship law was adopted in 2002 which eliminated the openness of Russian citizenship to all former Soviet citizens. The fundamental reasons behind this policy shift were socio-economic, security and realpolitik motives. By the new citizenship policy, it was not desired to redefine Russian nation by the borders of the Russian Federation. I argue that in Putin era, Russian nation was not defined by citizenship, and citizenship policies did not become any longer as a component of the nation building policy. Although Putin government adopted a strict citizenship regime, Russian nationhood was defined with broader perspective. Putin described Russian state as a civilization-state and Russian nation as a civilization-nation. Therefore, the Russian nation was defined on the basis of civilizational elements such as common culture, language, and common history, not by the borders of state or citizenship.

This thesis argues that on the one hand, the existence of the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad became a determining factor in the definition of the post-Soviet Russian nationhood; on the other hand, the multi-ethnic (or multi-national - as stated in the constitution) character of the Russian state also had an impact on the definition of the compatriots concept. Considering the multinational character of Russia, and

not to alarm ethnic minorities in the Russian Federation, a non-ethnic, cultural, and political definition of the Russian compatriots was employed in the 1999 Law on Compatriots Abroad. According to this law, not only the ethnic Russians, but the people from all ethno-national groups residing in the territory of the Russian Federation (*ethno-Rossiiane)*, as well as, all the non-titular groups living in the former Soviet space (Russian-speaking minorities), and those people who maintain spiritual and cultural affinity to Russia were regarded as compatriots of Russia.

I argue that the definition of compatriots in the 1999 Law on Compatriots Abroad also represents the official commitment on the borders of the new Russian nation. In Putin era, as mentioned above, in accordance with the compatriot definition, and in order to include Russian compatriots abroad in the Russian nationhood, the Russian nation was defined on the basis of civilizational aspects such as common culture, language, and common history, not by the borders of state. This definition of nationhood was also popularized under the concept of 'Russian World'. By the Ukrainian crisis, as a result of the increasing nationalist discourse of Putin government, which put a special emphasis on the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad under the concept of Russian World, broader definition of Russian nationhood including the Russian compatriots in the Near Abroad has become a commonly-held nation approach among Russian people and elites. This thesis argues that, by the mid-2010s, the question on the borders of Russian nationhood, the long-standing debate of Russia, has come to a certain end: the borders of Russian nationhood correspond to the borders of Russian World.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: TURKISH SUMMARY

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından 25 milyon Rus bugünkü Rusya Federasyonu sınırları dışında, yeni kurulan bağımsız devletlerde azınlık olarak kaldı. Sovyetler zamanında hâkim milletin bir parçası olarak Ruslar, bulundukları Sovyet Cumhuriyetlerinde Moskova rejiminin çevre bölgelerdeki sadık uzantıları olarak önemli iktisadi ve siyasi pozisyonları işgal etmekteydiler. Yeni durumda ise kendilerini ulus ve devlet inşasının en hararetli yıllarını yaşamaya başlayan yeni post-Sovyet ulus devletlerinin içinde azınlık durumunda buldular. Onlar artık hâkim milletin mensupları ve hâkim dilin kullanıcıları olan, Sovyet rejimin imtiyazlı unsurları değil, bulundukları Cumhuriyetlerde eski sömürge rejiminin olumsuz hatıralarını üzerinde taşıyan azınlık gruplarıydılar. Vaktiyle etnik cumhuriyetlerdeki yerel elitler devlet kademelerinde, siyasi ve iktisadi hayatta kendilerine yer bulabilmek için Rusçayı öğrenmek zorundayken şimdi onlar bulundukları ülkelerin devlet dilini öğrenmek zorunda kalabilirlerdi. Şüphesiz tüm bu yeni şartlar yeni devletlerdeki Rus azınlıklarda büyük bir sarsıntı ve tedirginlik yarattı.

Eski Sovyet coğrafyasının tek sorunsalı Rus azınlıklar da değildi. 25 milyon Rus azınlığın yanı sıra, etnik cumhuriyetlerde toplam 11 milyon kadar Rusça konuşan diğer azınlık grupları da mevcuttu. Yani, Rusya Sovyet Federal Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti dışındaki cumhuriyetlerde yaşayan Rus olmayan azınlıkların 11 milyon kadarı da lisan bakımından Ruslaşmış durumdaydı. Dolayısıyla, Sovyetler Birliği

dağıldığında Rusya Federasyonu dışındaki eski Sovyet cumhuriyetlerinde toplam 36 milyon Rusça konuşan azınlık bulunmaktaydı. Ayrıca özellikle de Ukrayna, Belarus gibi Slav cumhuriyetlerde yerli halkın önemli bir bölümü de Rusçayı ana dili olarak kullanmaktaydı.

Bu tezde Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından eski Sovyet Cumhuriyetlerinde kalan Rus ve Rusça konuşan azınlıklara yönelik Rusya Federasyonu'nun politikaları ve eski Sovyet coğrafyasında bulunan Rus azınlıkların Sovyet sonrası Rus milli kimliğinin inşasına etkisi incelenmektedir. Tez üç temel bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde, milyonlarca Rus'un Çarlık ve Sovyet dönemlerinde Rus olmayan çevre bölgelere yerleştirilmesinin veya göç etmesinin tarihsel arka planı incelenmektedir. İkinci bölümde ise Sovyetlerin dağılmasının ardından eski Sovyet cumhuriyetlerinde kalan Rusların içinde bulundukları siyasi ve iktisadi şartlar kısaca değerlendirilmekte ve Rus azınlıklarının kimlik ve anavatan algıları ile Rusya'ya siyasi yönelimleri ele alınmaktadır. Bu bölümde ayrıca Rusya'nın eski Sovyet cumhuriyetlerindeki Rus azınlıklar arasında Rusya'ya dair güçlü bir anavatan algısı yaratmak için bu topluluklara yönelik politikaları incelenmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde ise Rusya'nın yakın çevredeki Rus azınlıkları Rus milletinin doğal bir parçası olarak nitelendirme noktasında yaşadığı zorlu süreç değerlendirilmekte ve bu kapsamda Sovyet sonrası Rus milli kimliğinin inşa sürecine Rusya dışında bulunan Rus azınlıkların etkisi tartışılmaktadır.

Sovyetlerin dağılmasıyla birlikte Rusya Federasyonu dışında kalan 25 milyon Rus azınlığın bugünkü aidiyet hislerini ve siyasi yönelimlerini değerlendirirken tarihi

sürecin şekillendirmiş olduğu toplumsal ve siyasi şartlara değinmemek büyük bir eksiklik olacaktır. Her tarihi tecrübe bir toplumun kimliğinin şekillenmesinde, aidiyet algılarının değişmesinde mühim ve kalıcı etkiler bırakır. Eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki Rus topluluklarının da bugünkü karakteristikleri büyük oranda Çarlık Rusya'sı ve Sovyetler Birliği zamanlarında, içinde yaşamış oldukları sosyal, iktisadi ve içtimai şartların etkisinde şekillenmiştir ve bu tarihi sürecin etkileri günümüzde de etkisini sürdürmektedir. Çarlık döneminde milyonlarca Rus, özellikle de 16 yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren devletin Rus olmayan toprakları içine katacak şekilde bir genişleme sürecine girmesiyle beraber yeni fethedilen bölgelere çeşitli sebeplerle yerleştirilmişler veya kendileri göç etmişlerdir. Özellikle de bugünkü Rusya Federasyonu'nun dışında kalan Ukrayna'nın doğu ve güney kesimleri, Kazakistan'ın kuzeyi ve Türkistan bölgelerine yoğun Rus göçleri yaşanmıştır. Rus nüfusun yeni fethedilen bu topraklara yerleştirilmesindeki temel gerekçeler söz konusu bölgelerdeki merkezi hükümetin etkisini güçlendirmek, bu coğrafyalardaki güvenlik sorunlarını ortadan kaldırmak ve özellikle de nüfusun yoğun olmadığı ve tarıma elverişli bölgeleri Rus nüfus ile takviye etmek olmuştur. Bu gibi gerekçelerle yoğun Rus göçüne maruz kalan Ukrayna'nın güney ve doğu, Kazakistan'ın kuzey kesimleri Sovyetler Birliği dağıldığında sayısal ve belli bir bölgedeki yoğunluk bakımından en göze çarpan Rus yerleşimleri olmuşlardır.

Sovyetler Birliği, imparatorluk Rusya'sından siyasi, ideolojik ve iktisadi anlayış bakımından pek çok alanda önemli bir kırılmayı temsil ediyor olsa da belli noktalarda iki siyasi dönem arasında önemli devamlılık unsurları da mevcuttur. Bunlardan en öne çıkanı Sovyetler Birliği'nin tıpkı Çarlık Rusya'sında olduğu gibi

Rus olmayan çevre bölgelere yönelik Rus göçünü teşvik etmiş ve bu bölgelerdeki siyasi varlığını buralara yerleştirdikleri geniş Rus nüfus üzerinden pekiştirmeye çalışmış olmasıdır. Sovyetler Birliği döneminde çevre bölgelerdeki Ruslar hem coğrafi hem de sayısal olarak ciddi bir genişleme kaydetmişlerdir. Çarlık dönemindeki Rus göçlerinin ardındaki gerekçeler Sovyetler zamanında da büyük oranda devam etmiş olmakla birlikte bu dönemde iktisadi kaygılar daha ön planda çıkmıştır. Yeni kurulan Sovyet cumhuriyetlerindeki iktisadi kalkınmayı desteklemek ve modern iktisadi teşekküllerde istihdam edilmek üzere milyonlarca Rus işçi, teknik ve idari personel olarak diğer cumhuriyetlere yerleştirilmişlerdir. Özellikle de bu cumhuriyetlerdeki büyük kentlerde yoğun Rus göçü sebebiyle Rusça'nın toplumsal alana hakim olduğu, büyük oranda Ruslaşmış bir kent ortamı inşa edilmiştir. Rus olmayan cumhuriyetlere yerleştirilen Ruslar aracılığıyla Rus dili etrafında ortak bir Sovyet toplumu inşa edilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin milliyetler politikası hem farklı milletlerin ve etnik grupların hem de Sovyet cumhuriyetlerindeki azınlık gruplarının, kendilerini toplumun diğer kesimlerinden farklı kılacak olan aidiyet hislerini pekiştirmeye ve korumaya ziyadesiyle imkân sağlamaktaydı. Bir yandan farklı milletler için cumhuriyetler oluşturularak bu cumhuriyetlere kendini oluşturan hakim milletin adı verilmiş, böyle bir millet yoksa da yaratılmış, diğer yandan da bireylerin etnik aidiyeti pasaportlardaki etnisite kısmında kayıt altına alınarak fertlerin etnik bilincini muhafaza ettirmesinin önü açılmıştır. Böylelikle ikili ve çelişkili bir milliyetler politikası ortaya çıkmıştır. Bir taraftan milli kimlikler kurumsallaştırılarak milliyetler bazında bölgesel idari birimler (cumhuriyetler, otonom bölgeler, oblastslar vs.)

oluşturulmuş ve her bir etnik grubun kendi dilsel, kültürel ve etnik haklarını ancak o bölgede elde edebileceği bir siyasi ortam inşa edilmiştir. Diğer taraftan ise bireylerin milliyeti yaşadıkları bölge üzerinden değil, soy devamlılığı esası çerçevesinde pasaportlardaki etnisite bölümü vasıtasıyla tanımlanmıştır.

Bu şartlarda etnik cumhuriyetlerdeki Rusların da aslında kendi cumhuriyetleri olarak sayılabilecek Rusya Sovyet Federal Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti (RSFSC) dışında yaşayan gruplar olarak bulundukları bölgelerde etnik azınlık statüsünde sınıflandırılmaları anlaşılabilir bir durum olacaktır. Fakat diğer cumhuriyetleri Ruslar bölgeselliği aşan bir milliyet statüsünü haizdiler. Her ne kadar Rus olmayan cumhuriyetlerde yaşasalar da Rusça'nın devlet dili ve etnik gruplar arası iletişim dili olması itibariyle Ruslar kendilerini diğer cumhuriyetlerde azınlık statüsünde görmemekteydiler. Büyük bir bölümü kendini ne Rus cumhuriyeti ne de yaşadığı etnik cumhuriyet ile tanımlıyordu; daha çok bir bütün olarak Sovyetler Birliği'nin bir vatandaşı olarak görüyorlardı. Ayrıca büyük oranda, etnik referansları zayıf olan ve daha çok sosyo-ekonomik bir kimlik algısı geliştirmişlerdi. Tüm bunlar Sovyet sonrası dönemde diğer cumhuriyetlerde bulunan Rus azınlıkların asabiye algılarının şekillenmesinde etkili olan önemli siyasi ve sosyolojik, tarihsel faktörlerdi.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla yeni kurulan bağımsız cumhuriyetlerde azınlık olarak kalan Rus toplulukların Sovyet sonrası dönemde geliştirecekleri kimlik algıları ve siyasi yönelimlerini etkileyecek üç temel faktör vardı. Bunlardan birincisi yukarı da bahsedilen, onların Çarlık ve Sovyet dönemlerindeki tarihsel tecrübeleriydi. Her birinin sosyal statüleri, içinde yaşadıkları ekonomik ve sosyal

koşullar, yaşadıkları belli bir bölgedeki sayıları ve yoğunlukları, yaşadıkları bölgelerin Rusya'ya mesafesi, bulundukları ülkelerde ne zamandan beri yaşadıkları ve kökleşmiş olup olmadıkları, tüm bunlar Rus azınlık gruplarının Sovyet sonrası dönemde aidiyet hislerini besleyen tarihsel faktörler olarak önemli bir mevkie sahipti. İkinci olarak, Sovyetler Birliği dağıldıktan sonra, yaşadıkları ülkelerin kendilerine yönelik izleyecekleri politikalar bu azınlık gruplarının kendilerini nasıl tanımlayacakları ve hangi ülkenin bir parçası olarak görecekleri hususunda önemli bir etkiye sahip olacaktı. Üçüncü olarak ise Rusya'nın bu topluluklara karşı politikaları, eski Sovyet ülkelerindeki Rusları Rusya'nın ve Rus milletinin bir parçası olarak görüp görmeyeceğini, bu insanların Rusya'ya bakış açılarını ve kendi kimliklerini Rusya üzerinden tanımlayıp tanımlamayacaklarını belirleyecek olan en önemli etkenlerden biriydi.

Tarihsel faktörlerden yukarıda bahsedilmişti, ikinci etmen olarak bulundukları ülkelerin Rus azınlıklara yönelik politikaları konusunda öne çıkan en belirleyici husus, bu ülkelerin Rus azınlıklara yönelik kapsayıcı ya da dışlayıcı politikalardan hangisini tercih edeceğiydi. Şüphesiz ki yaşadıkları ülkenin onları ötekileştirmeden siyasi ve iktisadi hayata entegrasyonunu hedefleyen kapsayıcı politikalarına muhatap olan Ruslar kendilerini Rusya'dan ziyade bu ülkelerle bağlantılı hissedecek ve bu insanlar nezdinde Rusya'ya dair anavatan algısı daha düşük seviyelerde kalacaktır. Öte yandan, bulundukları ülkelerde toplumsal, siyasi ve iktisadi hayata entegrasyon konusunda sıkıntılarla karşılaşan, devletin ayrımcı ve dışlayıcı politikalarına maruz kalan Ruslar arasında ise Rusya koruyucu ve kurtarıcı bir rol üstlenecek ve bu azınlık grupları arasında Rusya'yı kendilerinin anavatanı olarak görenlerin oranı daha

yüksek olacaktır. Bu tezde, yaşadıkları ülkelerin politikalarının Rus azınlıkların kimlik algıları üzerindeki etkisine kısaca değinilmiş bu hususta özellikle de Letonya ve Estonya gibi Baltık ülkeleriyle, Kazakistan ve Kırgızistan gibi Orta Asya ülkelerinin politika tercihlerinin bu ülkelerde yaşayan Ruslar üzerindeki etkileri karşılaştırılmıştır. Özellikle de Kazakistan ve Kırgızistan'da yaşayan Ruslar arasında, sosyolojik olarak kendilerinden farklı toplumların içinde yaşadıkları için, kendini yaşadığı devlet içinde farklı bir etnik azınlığa mensup olarak algılayanların oranı bir hayli yüksektir. Buna rağmen, bu iki ülkenin iktisadi ve siyasi sebeplerle bünyesinde bulunan Rus azınlıklara yönelik kapsayıcı politikalarının bir sonucu olarak söz konusu ülkelerdeki Rus azınlıklar arasında Rusya'yı anavatan olarak görenlerin sayısı yaşadığı ülkeyi anavatanı olarak görenlerin sayısından daha azdır.

Sovyet sonrası dönemde kendilerini eski Sovyet cumhuriyetlerinde azınlık olarak bulan Rus topluluklarını diaspora olarak tanımlamanın pek çok zorlukları bulunmaktadır. Her şeyden önce bu insanlar on yıllarca, hatta Çarlık döneminden kalanlar yüzyıllarca, farklı ülkelerde, farklı toplumsal, siyasi ve ekonomik koşullar altında birbirlerinden farklı kimlikler inşa etmişlerdir. Bu bakımdan 25 milyon Rus'un tamamını tek bir diaspora grubu olarak tanımlamak bu farklılıkları göz ardı etmek anlamına gelecektir. Yukarı da belirtildiği üzere, özellikle de Sovyet zamanında, diğer cumhuriyetlerde bulunan Rusların kendilerini Rus cumhuriyetinden ziyade Sovyetler Birliği ile tanımlamaları ve etnik kimlik algısının bu bireyler arasında zayıf olmasından dolayı Sovyet sonrası dönemde bu insanlar arasında Rusya'yı anavatan olarak görenlerin ve kendini her şeyden önce etnik Rus olarak tanımlayanların sayısı oldukça düşük seviyelerde kalmıştır. Ayrıca farklı ülkelerde

farklı tarihi tecrübelere sahip bu insanlar arasında kolektif bir kimlik algısının bulunmaması da bu grupları tek bir diaspora çatısı altında tanımlamayı zorlaştırmaktadır.

Bu sebepten dolayı, bu tezde yukarıda da belirtildiği üzere Rus azınlıkların Sovyet sonrası dönemde kimlik algılarının inşasında üçüncü bir faktör olarak Rusya'nın bu azınlık gruplarına yönelik politikaları üzerinde durulmuştur. Yakın Çevre'deki Rus azınlıkların tek bir Rus diasporası oluşturma hususundaki dezavantajlı özelliklerinin farkında olan Rusya, bu topluluklar arasında Rusya algısını güçlendirmek ve Rusya dışında bulunan Rusların kendilerini Rusya'nın ve Rus milletinin bir parçası olarak hissetmelerini sağlamak adına bu topluluklara yönelik izlenecek politikalar, Sovyet sonrası Rusya'sının en hassas konularından biri olmuştur. Bu çerçevede tezin ikinci bölümünde Rusya'nın dış Ruslara yönelik politikaları değerlendirilmiştir.

Yeltsin döneminde, özellikle de 1992 yılından itibaren, muhalefet partilerinin de baskısıyla dış Ruslara yönelik aktif bir politika izlenmeye başlanmıştır. Öncelikle eski Sovyet ülkelerindeki Rusların ve Rusça konuşan azınlıkların Rus vatandaşı olabilmeleri için çifte vatandaşlığın önü açılmış, diğer ülkelerin de Rus azınlıkların çifte vatandaşlığına izin vermeleri için girişimlerde bulunulmuştur. Fakat Türkmenistan, Tacikistan, Ermenistan ve Kırgızistan gibi az sayıda Rus azınlığı barındıran bu dört ülke dışında diğer eski Sovyet ülkeleri siyasi nedenlerden dolayı çifte vatandaşlığa izin vermemişlerdir. Bunun yanı sıra Rus yönetimi dış Rusları 'Rus yurttaşlar' (Rusça: sootechestvenniki, İngilizce: compatriots) olarak tanımlamış ve bu yurttaş tanımını kendini Rus devletinin bir parçası hisseden bütün eski Sovyet

vatandaşlarını kapsayacak şekilde geniş yorumlamayı tercih etmiştir. Buradaki temel amaç bu insanların kendilerini Rusya'nın bir parçası olarak görmelerini pekiştirmek olmuştur. Ayrıca Rus hükümeti Yakın Çevre'deki Rus azınlıkların haklarını korumak, onların ülkelerinde karşılaştıkları ayrımcılık veya zorluklara karşı haklarını savunmak için pek çok hükümet programı açıklanmış ve yürürlüğe koymuştur. Yeltsin döneminde dış Ruslara yönelik politikalar konusunda değinilmesi gereken bir diğer husus da Rus Toplulukları Kongresi (Rusça: Kongress Russkikh Obshchin – KRO, İngilizce: Congress of Russian Communities) gibi bazı siyasi partilerin dış Ruslar arasında Rusya yanlısı jeopolitik bir diaspora duruşu inşa etmek için çeşitli kurumsal çabalarıdır. Özellikle de KRO eski Sovyet ülkelerinde bulunan Rus toplulukların yaşadığı bölgelerde diaspora organizasyonları kurmuş ve diaspora temsilcilerini bir araya getirmek üzere her yıl Dünya Rus Toplulukları Kongresi adında bir kongre düzenlemiştir.

Putin döneminde tüm bu çabalar devlet tarafından üstlenilmeye başlanmış ve milliyetçi muhalefet partilerinin Rus azınlıklara yönelik politikaları bu dönemde devlet politikası haline getirilerek bizzat devlet kurumları aracılığıyla uygulanmaya başlanmıştır. 2000 yılından itibaren Yurtdışında Yaşayan Yurttaşlar Dünya Kongresi (World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad) oluşturulmuş ve her üç yılda bir yurtdışındaki Rus azınlıkların temsilcilerini bir araya getirmek üzere toplanmaya başlamıştır. Ayrıca diğer ülkelerde bulunan bütün diaspora organizasyonları Rossotrudnichestvo (İngilizce: The Federal Agency for the C.I.S and Compatriots Living Abroad) adıyla Dış İşleri Bakanlığı bünyesinde kurulan devlet kurumu altında toplanmıştır. Böylelikle yurtdışındaki diaspora temsilcileriyle devlet arasındaki

iletişim güçlendirilmeye çalışılmış ve diaspora organizasyonlarının faaliyetleri devlet tarafından desteklenmeye ve denetlenmeye başlanmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, yurt dışındaki Rusların Rusçayı ve Rus kültürünü öğrenmesini desteklemek için yurt dışında Rus dili eğitimi programları düzenleyen Rus Dünyası Vakfı (Ruskiy Mir) kurulmuştur.

Putin dönemi, Yakın Çevre'deki Rus azınlıklara yönelik politikalar bakımından diaspora politikalarının kurumsallaşma dönemi olarak tanımlanabilir. Tüm bu kurumsallaşma çabaları ile eski Sovyet coğrafyasında yaşayan Rus azınlıklar arasında güçlü bir Rusya algısı ve siyasi bir diaspora tutumu yaratılması hedeflenmiştir. Ayrıca, zamanla yaşadıkları ülkelerin toplumu ve kültürü içerisinde eriyerek yok olma tehlikesi barındıran Rus diasporası arasında Rus kimliğini, Rus kültürünü, Rus dilini ve anavatan olarak Rusya algısını diri tutmak ve diasporanın yok oluşunun önüne geçmek istenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, ayrıca bir de Rus Dünyası tasavvuru ortaya atılmış ve dış Rusların kendilerini Rus Dünyası'nın ve Rus milletinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak hissetmeleri sağlanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Fakat, Yakın Çevre'deki Rus azınlıkların Rus milletinin bir parçası olarak tanımlanması Sovyet sonrası Rusya'sının en tartışmaları meselelerinden biri olmuştur. Post-Sovyet Rus milli kimliğinin inşasında eski Sovyet ülkelerinde bulunan Rus azınlıklar en temel belirleyicilerden biri olmuştur. Bağımsızlığın ilk yıllarında Yeltsin yönetimi, liberal ve demokratik Batılı eğilimlerin de etkisiyle Rusya Federasyonu sınırları içerisinde yaşayan ve Rusya vatandaşı olan herkesi kapsayacak, etnik ve kültürel referansları olmayan, vatandaşlık temelli bir Rus

(*Rossisskaia*) milleti inşa etmek istedi. Böyle bir millet tanımı Rusya Fedrasyonu'nun çok-etnikli (anayasada ifade edildiği şekilde çok-milletli) yapısı düşünüldüğünde gayet anlaşılabilir bir girişimdi. Fakat Rus milletinin vatandaşlık ve mevcut Rusya Federasyonu'nun sınırları çerçevesinde tanımlanması Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla Rusya Federasyonu dışında kalan 25 milyon etnik Rus'un ve milyonlarca Rusça konuşan azınlık gruplarının bu millet tasavvurunun dışında kalması anlamına gelmekteydi. Neredeyse bütün muhalefet partileri, ülkenin entelektüel ve siyasi elitleri bu sebepten dolayı sivil *Rossiskaia* milleti tanımına karşı çıktılar.

Sovyetler Birliği dağıldığında post-emperyal bir devlet ve millet olarak Ruslar kendilerine şu hayati soruyu sormak durumunda kaldılar: Rus kimdir ve Rus milli kimliğinin sınırları ve bileşenleri ne olmalıdır? O dönem için Rus devletinin önünde beş alternatif millet tanımı bulunmaktaydı: 1) Rusya Federasyonu'nda yaşayan ve Rusya vatandaşı olanların Rus milletinden sayılması, 2) bütün eski Sovyet vatandaşlarının Rus milletinin sınırları içerisinde tanımlanması, 3) Rus milletinin yalnızca etnik Ruslardan müteşekkil bir yapı olarak görülmesi, 4) Rusça konuşan herkesin Rus milletinin bir parçası telakki edilmesi, 5) Belarus ve Ukrainleri, yani doğu Slavlarını da kapsayacak şekilde Rus milli kimliğinin Slav temelli bir anlayışla tanımlanması. Yeltsin döneminde, bu alternatifler arasında gidip gelen, zaman zaman bunların bazılarının karışımından müteşekkil bir millet inşası süreci yaşandı ve Rus milli kimliğinin sınırları muğlak ifadelerle tanımlandı.

Yeltsin yönetimi milleti vatandaşlık temelinde tanımlamakta ısrarcıydı. Fakat bu sefer de, Rusya'nın Yakın Çevre'deki etnik ve emperyal sorumluluklarına uygun bir vatandaşlık rejimi uygulandı ve sonuç olarak bütün eski Sovyet vatandaşlarının basit bir kayıt işlemi ile Rusya Federasyonu vatandaşı olabilmelerine imkan tanıyan bir vatandaşlık kanunu çıkarıldı. Bazı siyasilerin mülakatlarından da anlaşıldığı üzere buradaki asıl amaç eski Sovyet ülkelerinde yaşayan Rusların ve Rusça konuşan azınlıkların Rus vatandaşlığı alabilmelerinin önünü açmaktı. Buna ek olarak çifte vatandaşlığı mümkün kılan bir vatandaşlık rejimi ile diğer ülkelerin vatandaşlığını almış olsalar dahi Yakın Çevre'de bulunan Rusların ve Rusça konuşan toplumların Rus vatandaşı olabilmelerine zemin yaratılmaya çalışıldı.

Putin döneminin henüz başlarında, 2002 yılında çıkarılan vatandaşlık kanunu ile Yeltsin döneminin vatandaşlık rejimi terk edilerek Rusya vatandaşlığının bütün eski Sovyet vatandaşlarına açık olması durumu ortadan kaldırıldı. Bu değişiklikle birlikte, artık sadece Rusya'da en az beş yıldır ikamet etmekte olan, belli bir gelir seviyesine sahip olan, Rus diline hakim olan vs. kişiler vatandaş olma hakkını kazanabilirdiler. Bu politika değişikliğinin temelinde daha çok güvenlik, sosyo-ekonomik ve reel politik kaygılar bulunmaktaydı; değilse Rus milletini Rusya Federasyonu'nun sınırları ile tanımlamak kaygısı yoktu. Yeltsin'li yılların aksine Putin döneminde vatandaşlık artık Rus milli kimliğinin tanımlanmasında bir bileşen olmaktan çıkmıştır. Sıkı bir vatandaşlık rejimine rağmen, bu dönemden itibaren Rus milli kimliği daha geniş bir yelpazede tanımlanmaya başlandı. Rus devletini bir medeniyet devleti, Rus milletini de bir medeniyet-millet olarak tanımlayan Putin, Rus milli

kimliğini Rusya'nın siyasi sınırları ve Rus vatandaşlığı etrafında değil, ortak kültür, ortak tarih, ortak dil gibi medeniyet unsurları ile tanımlamaya başladı.

Böyle bir millet tanımı Yakın Çevre'de bulunan Rusları ve Rusça konuşan toplulukları da kapsayabilecek geniş bir çerçeveye sahipti ve aynı zamanda 1999 yılında yürürlüğe koyulan Yurtdışında Yaşayan Rus Yurttaşlarına Dair Kanun'da (Law on Compatriots Abroad) yer alan millet tanımına da uygundu. Bu kanundaki dış Ruslar tanımına göre sadece tarihi süreç içerisinde Rusya'dan göç etmiş olan etnik Ruslar değil aynı zamanda Rusya sınırları içerisinde yaşayan bütün halkların yurtdışındaki akrabaları, eski Sovyet coğrafyasındaki bütün Rusça konuşan azınlık grupları ve Rusya ile manevi ve kültürel bağı olan bütün halklar ve bireyler yurtdışındaki Rus yurttaşlar olarak tanımlanmıştı. Bu tanımlama aslında post-Soviet Rus milli kimliğinin sınırları üzerine resmi bir mutabakatı temsil etmekteydi. Bu tezin en temel savlarından biri şudur: Bir yandan, Rusya Federasyonu'nun sınırları dışında milyonlarca Rus ve Rusça konuşan topluluğun bulunması ve Rusya'nın bu topluluklara karşı etnik ve tarihsel sorumluluğu Sovyet sonrası dönemde Rus milli kimliğinin tanımlanmasında ve inşasında en önemli belirleyici etken olmuştur. Yakın Çevre'deki milyonlarca soydaşın ve yurttaşın varlığı, vatandaşlık ve mevcut siyasi sınırlar çerçevesinde bir millet tanımının taraftar bulamamasına sebep olmuştur. Diğer yandan ise, Rusya'nın tarihi imparatorluk tecrübesi ve hali hazırda da çok uluslu bir devlet oluşu eski imparatorluk coğrafyasında kalan soydaşlarının ve yurttaşlarının tanımlanmasında etnik değil, kültürel, dilsel ve siyasi referansların kullanılmasını gerekli kılmıştır.

Putin döneminde bu tanıma ve anlayışa uygun olarak, Rus milli kimliği ortak tarih, ortak kültür, ortak dil gibi medeniyet unsurları ile tanımlanmıştır. Bu millet telakkisinin sınırlarını somutlaştırmak için ise bir medeniyet havzası olarak Rus Dünyası tasavvuru ortaya atılmıştır. Putin'in de belirttiği gibi Rus Dünyası, sınırları hem Rus etnisitesinin, hem de Rusya Federasyonu'nun sınırlarını aşan geniş bir medeniyet mekânıdır. Özellikle de 2014 yılında patlak veren Ukrayna krizinden sonra, Rus Dünyası kavramını ve Yakın Çevre'deki Rus ve Rusça konuşan (ya da daha geniş ve muğlak tanımıyla kendini Rus Dünyası'nın bir parçası hisseden) azınlıkları merkeze koyan milliyetçi söylemin de etkisiyle Rus milli kimliğinin dış Rusları ve Rusça konuşan toplulukları da kapsayacak şekilde geniş bir perspektiften tanımlanması Rusya'da yaygın olarak kabul gören millet telakkisi haline gelmiştir. 2010'lu yılların ortaları itibariyle, Sovyet sonrası Rusya Federasyonu'da yıllardır süregelen, Rus milli kimliğinin sınırları üzerindeki tartışma nihayete ermiş gibi görülmektedir: Rus milli kimliğinin sınırları Rus medeniyetinin ve Rus Dünyası'nın sınırlarına tekabül eder.

Appendix B: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	X
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	
Enformatik Enstitüsü	
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Kaya
Adı : Rüştü
Bölümü : Avrasya Çalışmaları

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : RUSSIAN COMPATRIOTS IN THE NEAR ABROAD AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE POST-SOVIET RUSSIAN IDENTITY

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans [x] Doktora [ ]

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. [x]
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. [ ]
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. [ ]

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: