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Bowring, Bill (2015) From empire to multilateral player: the deep roots of autonomy in Russia. In: Malloy, T.H. and Palermo, F. (eds.) *Minority Accommodation through Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 133-157. ISBN 9780198746669.

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From Empire to Multilateral Player:

The Deep Roots of Autonomy in Russia

Bill Bowring

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Russia's unlikely experiment in National Cultural Autonomy (NCA). I start with Russia's accession to the Council of Europe (CoE) and the start of its experiment in NCA, both of which took place in 1996. I turn next to history: to the wide variety of forms of autonomy in the Russian Empire, which like other territorial empires, was rarely assimilationist as it expanded. I give an overview of a number of cases: Finland, the Baltics, Russian Germans, Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, Khiva and Bukhara, Tatars and Inorodtsy. Second, I turn to religious diversity in Russia, after Catherine II's reforms. Third, I look at the extensive scholarly literature on the constitutional role of autonomy in the latter years of the Russian Empire. Fourth, I examine Bolshevik nationalities policy before and after the 1917 Revolution, and the creation of the territorial autonomies in 1920–2. Fifth, I have a number of criticisms of Terry Martin's excellent *The Affirmative Action Empire*. Sixth, I return to the new Strategy, and to an apparent retreat from the NCA model. My conclusion emphasizes the deep roots of autonomy in Russia, and expresses concern for the future of non-territorial autonomy in Russia.

This chapter seeks in particular to address the paradox identified by Aleksandr Osipov—why does the concept of NCA sound attractive to ethnic activists?¹ My aim is to show that autonomy has rather deeper roots in Russia than might at first be supposed.²

The Russian Federation has recently grown. Since the illegal annexation of Crimea³ in March 2014 there are now, according to the Russian government website,⁴ eighty-five subjects of the Federation, the Republic of Crimea,⁵ and its capital, the City of

¹ Alexander Osipov, *Natsional'no-kul'turnaia avtonomiia: idei, resheniia, instituty* [National-cultural Autonomy: Ideas, Decisions, Institutions] (St. Petersburg: Tsentr nezavisimyykh sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy, 2004); Alexander Osipov, 'National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law', *Review of Central and East European Law*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2010): pp. 27–57.

² I have been much assisted in this by the late Professor Oleg Kutafin's monumental work on Russian autonomy. Oleg Emelyanovich Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya* [Russian Autonomy] (Moscow: Prospekt, 2006).

³ Crimea had the anomalous status of an autonomous republic in the unitary state of Ukraine. See Bill Bowring, 'The Crimean Autonomy: Innovation or Anomaly?' in *Autonomy, Self-Governance and Conflict Resolution: Innovative Approaches to Institutional Design in Divided Societies*, edited by Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 75–97.

⁴ 'The Subjects of the Russian Federation in Internet', *The Website of the Government of Russia*, accessed 11 November 2014,

⁵ State Council of Republic of Crimea [Crimea?] Website, accessed 11 November 2014,

<http://crimea.gov.ru/>.

Sevastopol, which now have the status of a City of Federal Significance.⁶ There are twenty-one ethnic republics, with the right to an official language in addition to Russian.⁷

Russia's ethnic and linguistic diversity is impressive if not unique. Russia's first Report, of 8 March 2000, to the Advisory Committee under the CoE's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), stated that 'The Russian Federation is one of the largest multinational states in the world, inhabited by more than 170 peoples, the total population being about 140 million.'⁸ Russia also reported that 'The education in Russia's schools is now available in thirty-eight languages. . . . As

⁶ The Charter of the City of Sevastopol is dated 14 April 2014. It is said to be a City of Federal Significance, like Moscow and St Petersburg. See Official State of Government of Sevastopol, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://sevastopol.gov.ru/1-3s-ustav-goroda-sevastopolya.html>.

⁷ See Bill Bowring, 'The Russian Constitutional System: Complexity and Asymmetry', in *Asymmetric Autonomy and the Settlement of Ethnic Conflicts*, edited by Marc Weller and Katherine Nobbs (Place: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 48–74; Bill Bowring, 'Russian Legislation in the Area of Minority Rights', in *Managing Ethnic Diversity in Russia*, edited by Oleh Protsyk and Benedikt Harzl (Routledge, 2012), pp. 15–36.

⁸ Report Submitted by the Russian Federation Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection Of National Minorities (received on 8 March 2000), ACFC/SR(1999)015, accessed 11 November 2014,

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNMdocs/PDF_1st_SR_RussianFederation_en.pdf.

many as seventy-five national languages are a part (including languages of national minorities) of the secondary schools curricula.’⁹ The annexation of Crimea means that there is one more ‘people’, the Crimean Tatars. On 1 October 2014 the CoE’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks, told the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE that his ‘biggest concern’ in Ukraine was the plight of Crimean Tatars who have remained in Crimea since it was annexed by Russia in March.¹⁰

6.1.1 How Does the Russian Federation Seek to Organize and Manage such Complexity?

Russia joined the CoE in 1996, signed the FCNM on 28 February 1996, ratified it on 21 August 1998 and it entered into force on 1 December 1998. The Report highlighted the experiment in non-territorial, personal autonomy initiated by the Federal Law ‘On National-Cultural Autonomy’¹¹ of 17 June 1996.¹²

⁹ Report Submitted by the Russian Federation Pursuant to Article 25, p. 27.

¹⁰ See ‘Europe’s Human Rights Chief Concerned For Crimean Tatars’, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 1 October 2014, accessed 11 November 2014,

<http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-crimea-tatars-council-of-europe/26616091.html>.

¹¹ Federal Law on National-Cultural Autonomy 1996, accessed 11 November 2011,

<http://base.garant.ru/135765/>.

¹² Report Submitted by the Russian Federation Pursuant to Article 25, p. 12 and elsewhere; Bill Bowring, ‘Austro-Marxism’s Last Laugh?: The Struggle for Recognition of National-Cultural Autonomy for Rossians and Russians’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2002): pp. 229–50; Bill Bowring, ‘Burial and Resurrection: Karl Renner’s

My own estimation in 2002 was that this adoption of the NCA form was a dramatic reversal of the Soviet hostility to non-territorial autonomy, dating back to the series of substantial polemics against this Austro-Marxist proposal, written by Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, to name but three.¹³ At the same time it represented a significant victory on the part of Professor Valeriy Tishkov and his co-thinkers, including the

Controversial Influence on the “National Question” in Russia’, in *National-Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics*, edited by Ephraim Nimni (Abingdon [given as London in Biblio]: Routledge, 2005), pp. 191–206; Bill Bowring, ‘The Tatars of the Russian Federation and National-Cultural Autonomy: A Contradiction in Terms?’, *Ethnopolitics: Formerly Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2007): pp. 417–35. [not in Biblio] Since Russia’s first Report in 2000, I have published two journal articles and a book chapter on the question of the Russian experiment in non-territorial autonomy. My particular focus has been the history of the hotly contested struggle in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries between the Austro-Marxist conception of non-territorial personal cultural autonomy, taken up with enthusiasm by the Jewish Bund and by Muslim activists; and the Social-Democratic and Bolshevik orthodoxy of territorial autonomy under Lenin’s banner of the Right of Nations to Self-Determination. See the text with that title, written in February–May 1914, and published in April–June 1914 in the journal *Prosveshcheniye* Nos. 4, 5 and 6. Signed: V. Ilyin. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), Volume 20, pp. 393–454, and <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/>. [not in Biblio] I have traced this contest through to the present day, with particular reference to the Tatars.

¹³ Bowring, ‘Austro-Marxism’s Last Laugh’, pp. 229–50.

politician Gavriil Popov, in their contemporaneous campaign against the very concept ‘nation’.¹⁴ For Tishkov and others, NCA was a viable alternative to the Soviet legacy of territorial autonomy and essentialized concepts of ethnicity and nationhood.

In 2004, Osipov provided the most cogent and searching critique to date of the NCA experiment since 1996 in Russia.¹⁵ There is a paradox. Notwithstanding the evident weaknesses of the NCA form, it is surprisingly popular. In 2010 Osipov noted that:

The concept of ‘autonomy’ still sounds attractive to ethnic activists.

Despite legislative restrictions and bureaucratic burdens, the number of NCAs has grown over the years. By early 1999, 227 NCAs had been registered, of which 160 were local, 60 regional, and 7 federal. The respective figures for the beginning of 2005 were: 315, 173, and 16 (in total, 504). On 1 January 2009, there were 717 organizations, of which: 488 were local, 211 regional, and 18 federal.

NCAs represent more than 60 ethnicities—in particular, federal NCAs have been established on behalf of Armenians, Assyrians, Azeris,

¹⁴ Valery Tishkov, ‘O natsii i natsionalisme’ [On the Nation and Nationalism], *Svobodnaya Mysl*, no. 3 (1996); Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The Mind Aflame* (London: Sage, 1997); Valery Tishkov, ‘Zabyt o natsii. Post-natsionalisticheskoye ponimaniye natsionalism’ [Forget about the Nation. A Post-Nationalist Understanding of Nationalism], *Voprosii Filosofii* (1998): pp. 3–26.[not in Biblio]

¹⁵ See, for example, Osipov, *Natsional’no-kul’turnaia avtonomiia*; Osipov, ‘National Cultural Autonomy in Russia’, pp. 27–57.

Belarusians, Chuvash, Germans, Jews, Karachais, Kazakhs, Koreans, Kurds, Lezghins, Lithuanians, Poles, Roma, Serbs, Tatars, and Ukrainians. Regional and local NCAs have been set up in 72 of 83 constituent units (subjects) of the Russian Federation. Several NCAs represent ethnic groups officially acknowledged as small indigenous peoples of Russia.¹⁶

It is, however, necessary to return first to the history of autonomy in the Russian Empire.¹⁷

6.2 Autonomy in Tsarist Russia

The roots of Russian conceptions of autonomy extend back into the sixteenth century. In an authoritative overview, Robert Suny pointed out that

With Ivan IV's conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan in the mid-sixteenth century, the Muscovite state incorporated ethnically compact non-Russian territories, indeed an alien polity, and transformed a relatively homogenized Russia into a multinational empire . . . when the problem of security was settled, Moscow allowed local elites, though no longer sovereign, to rule and traditional customs and laws to continue in force. As

¹⁶ Osipov, 'National Cultural Autonomy in Russia', pp. 42–3.

¹⁷ In what follows I have revisited the research which I carried out for my chapter: Bill Bowring, 'Minorities Protection in Russia: Is There a 'Communist Legacy'?', in *Institutional Legacies of Communism: Change and Continuities in Minority Protection*, edited by Karl Cordell, Timofey Agarin, and Alexander Osipov (Abingdon: Routledge 2013), pp. 45–58, and Bill Bowring, *Law, Rights and Ideology in Russia: Landmarks in the Destiny of a Great Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 120–39.[45–58 in Biblio]

these frontier regions became integrated in some ways into the empire as borderlands, many of them remained distinct administratively, though always subordinate to the center.¹⁸

Kutafin also made the point that as it expanded the Russian Empire often preserved in the territories it incorporated their local laws and institutions, and accorded them more or less broad autonomy.¹⁹ He reminded his readers that the legal status of Russian regions changed continually over time.²⁰

In the next sections I explore the wide variety of experiences of autonomy in the Russian Empire.

The most famous example of autonomy in the Russian Empire was Finland, about which Russian scholars have conflicting views. Some consider Finland to have been an independent state in de facto union with Russia. Others see it as a province with a high degree of autonomy. A third camp sees Finland as a non-sovereign state united with Russia on the basis of subordination. N. M. Korkunov considered these distinctions to

¹⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, 'The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, "National" Identity, and Theories of Empire', in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Soviet Union, 1917–1953* [full ref for book?], first delivered as a paper for the University of Chicago Conference, *Empire and Nations: The Soviet Union and the Non-Russian Peoples*, 24–6 October 1997, pp. 21–2, accessed 1 June 2014,

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~crn/crn_papers/Suny4.pdf.

¹⁹ Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 41.

²⁰ Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 42.

have enormous practical significance.²¹ Thus, the Grand Duchy of Finland was considered to be a special independent state united with Russia only through the Romanov dynasty.

Finland was incorporated into the Empire in three stages. With the Treaty of Nystad, on 30 August 1721, at the end of the Great Northern War against Sweden, Estonia, Livonia, Ingria, and Southeast Finland (Kexholmsslän and part of Karelia) were transferred to Russia. The Peace Treaty of 1743 transferred more territory; and on 5 September 1809 by the Treaty of Fredrikshamn, the remainder of Finland was annexed to Russia. During 1808–9 Aleksandr I gradually recognized Finnish autonomy, and on 16 March 1809 the Emperor opened the four-chamber *Seim*, or legislature, which had been elected according to Swedish electoral law.

The linguistic situation which resulted is of great interest.²² On 25 October 1858 the Finnish language was allowed to be used in legal disputes and dissertations; on 1 August 1863 the Finnish language received equal status with Swedish for all purposes; and on 9 February 1863 the Russian language ceased to be a compulsory subject in primary schools. On 20 February 1865 the Finnish language became the working language in judicial and administrative institutions along with Swedish, and on 30

²¹ Nikolai Mikhailovich Korkunov (1853–1904), leading scholar at St Petersburg University; Nikolai Mikhailovich Korkunov, *Russkiye gosudarstvennoye pravo* [Russian State Law] (St Petersburg: Publisher?, 1892), p. 134; Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 46.

²² Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 55.

November 1871 the Finnish Senate was given the right to determine the language of secondary education.

Thus from 1863 it could be said that Finland was part of the Russian Empire, but with its own laws and judicial and administrative institutions. On 3 September 1863 Aleksandr II opened the *Seim* with the words that he preserved the basis of a constitutional monarchy reflecting the spirit of the Finnish people. From that date the *Seim* was elected every five years.

Other territories and subjects of the Empire, although not autonomous in the sense that Finland enjoyed, nevertheless had administrative or legal arrangements, which could give the impression that they were on the way to some kind of autonomous status.

The closest example to the experience of Finland is that of the Baltic territories. These were incorporated into Russia in the eighteenth century. Ingeborg Fleischhauer has related that the Peace of Nystadt in 1721 reconfirmed the Baltic Germans' freedom of religion and *cultus*, which they had enjoyed under Swedish rule, that is, Protestantism including a Protestant University at Dorpat, German administration in town and country, and German law.²³ The Baltic territories were divided into the Estlyandskiy, Liflyandskiy, and Kurlyandskiy governorates, as part of one general-governorate with Ostzeiskiy Krai. The inhabitants of these *krais* maintained their own religious observance, as well as their own laws—the German, Swedish, Polish laws in operation before Russian rule.

²³ Ingeborg Fleischhauer, 'The Nationalities Policy of the Tsars Reconsidered—The Case of the Russian Germans', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 53, no. 1 (1981): pp. D1065–90.

With the great judicial reforms of Aleksandr II in 1864, the Baltics obtained their own judicial organs. They had their own system of local government. The Baltic nobility provided the Empire with soldiers, diplomats, senior civil servants, and members of the court.

The Russian Germans were not mentioned at all by Kutafin in his book on Russian autonomy. However, Fleischhauer has pointed out that the Russian Empire's attitude to non-Russians was 'based on pragmatic and not on racial grounds.'²⁴ National groups considered useful for imperial purposes were to be attracted and favoured by the state. The Russian Germans comprised three groups: the Baltic Germans, often called *ostseizskiye nemtsy*; the urban population; and the colonists.

According to the 1897 census the three groups together numbered about two million, with 1.3 million colonists; half a million urban dwellers: 375,000 in industry, 100,000 in trade and commerce, 50,000 in academic professions, and 35,000 in the civil service and army, as well as more than 50,000 belonging to the hereditary or personal nobility, or honorary citizens.²⁵ By the outbreak of World War I the German population was much larger and very wealthy.

According to Fleischhauer, this success was in part the result of the Germans' legally privileged situation. I have already mentioned the privileges of the Baltic Germans. The urban Germans in the Empire enjoyed ten years' exemption from taxes outside the cities and five years' within them; free movement in Russia and the right to leave when they wished; large state loans for new factories; tax-free imports and exports

²⁴ Fleischhauer, 'The Nationalities Policy of the Tsars Reconsidered', p. D1066.

²⁵ Fleischhauer, 'The Nationalities Policy of the Tsars Reconsidered', pp. D1072–3.

in the first years; use of local Russian labour including serfs; and membership of the Russian guilds with all their privileges.²⁶

German peasants settling in Russia had the following privileges. According to the ‘call’ of 1763, every male farmer was given 30 to 60 *desyatiny* of arable land, granted by the Crown as community property belonging to the colony in which the farmer settled; thirty years’ exemption from taxes; exemption from all forms of military service for ever; freedom of movement; the right to acquire goods, chattels, and land in the whole Empire; freedom to leave and to export all legally acquired property; free transition to another social estate, state loans; etc.²⁷

The oldest German colonies were those on the Volga, with about 30,000 settlers after the first two decades of settlement. Colonies were established in other parts of Russia. And at the beginning of the twentieth century colonies were established in Siberia. There were some 300 colonies in all.

Ukraine, by contrast, lost all of its initial autonomy by degrees. Thus, the *Pereyaslavskaya Rada* (Pereyaslavskaya Council) of 8 January 1654 decided upon the union of the Ukrainian-Cossack formation of Bogdan Khmelnytsky and Russia (in 1954 Khrushchev celebrated its anniversary by transferring Crimea from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR).²⁸ Also known as the *Martovskiy Stati*, this created the autonomous

²⁶ Fleischhauer, ‘The Nationalities Policy of the Tsars Reconsidered’, p. D1078.

²⁷ Fleischhauer, ‘The Nationalities Policy of the Tsars Reconsidered’, pp. D1082–3.

²⁸ N. N. Soleinik, ‘Pereyaslavskaya Rada 1654 goda: Sovremennoye politico-pravovoye issledovaniye’ [The Pereyaslavskaya Rada of 1654: Contemporary Political and Legal

status of Ukraine within Russia, together with the rights and privileges of the Cossack elders, and Ukrainian institutions and clerics. The territory of Ukraine was divided into three parts: Left Bank Ukraine, divided into *polka*; Slobodskiy Ukraine, also divided into five *polka*; and the Zaporozhskiy Sech, the most autonomous part of Ukraine. *Polki* and ‘hundreds’ (*sotni*) were the territorial administrative units of Ukraine. Power was concentrated in the hands of the *hetman*, who commanded military forces and made and administered the laws. Control over the activities of the Ukrainian authorities was instituted in 1663 by the *Malorossiiskaya Prikaz*, replaced in 1722 by the *Malorossiiskaya Kollegiya*.

In 1734 the power of the *hetman* was abolished, and the Cossack forces came under Russian command. However, in 1747 the *hetman* institution was revived, with control over the *Zaporozhskiy Sech*.

In 1764 the *hetman* was again abolished, and the *Malorossiiskaya Kollegiya* was once more put in charge of Ukraine, with a presidency of four Russians and four Ukrainians. However, Ukrainians were not able to participate, and the General Governorate of *Malaya Rossiya* was created. The laws effective in Ukraine were the second and third Lithuanian Statutes, and Magdeburg (town) law. In 1728 a commission was established for the codification of Ukrainian law, which in 1743 completed preparation of the *Svod* ‘Law by which the *Malaya Rossiiskaya* people are to be judged.’ It had three books: Lithuanian Statute, Saxon *Zertsala*, and the book ‘Order’. Courts were established in 1763 on the basis of the Lithuanian Statutes. In 1796 Left Bank Ukraine

became the Malorossiiskaya *Guberniya* (governorate); and Slobodskaya Ukraine became the Slobodsko-Ukrainsko *Guberniya*. Right Bank Ukraine was divided into the Kiev, Volynsk, and Podolsk governorates, in 1832 re-named the Kiev General Governorate.

In this way Ukraine lost all of its autonomy, and re-emerged as an independent state only after World War I, as a Soviet Union republic after World War II, and as an independent state after 1991.

Georgia has a very long history of independence, and was for long, in opposition to the Ottoman Empire, seen as a state under Russia's protection. Closer ties were instituted by the Treaty of 1783, according to which Tsar Irakli of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti²⁹ recognized no authority higher than himself save the Russian Empress, who for her part undertook to protect him from external foes.³⁰ The final unification of Russia and Georgia took place in 1801 at the request in 1800 of Tsar Georgiy to Paul I. On 12 January 1801 Aleksandr I explained to the Georgian people in a Manifesto that although he desired to preserve the independence of Georgia, he was obliged by force of circumstances to preserve the Tsardom of Georgia for Russia. The *Ulozheniye* of Tsar Vakhtang was preserved as the law of Georgia.

²⁹ Created in 1762 by the unification of two eastern Georgian kingdoms, which had existed independently since the disintegration of the united Georgian Kingdom in the fifteenth century.

³⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Place?: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 57–9.

Much blood was shed subsequently for Georgia's independence: as Moshe Lewin has shown, Lenin's last struggle was against Stalin, on the question of independence for Georgia, which Lenin supported despite the fact that Mensheviks would be in power.³¹

Even more tragically than Ukraine and Georgia, Poland continuously lost its autonomy, largely through the actions of the Russian Empire, and in the end disappeared completely.

As a result of the three Partitions of the eighteenth century and the decision of the Congress of Vienna in 1814, Russia gained part of the territory of Poland, on which the Polish Tsardom (kingdom) was organized. In 1815 Poland within the Empire received a constitutional charter and the status of a kingdom. The Russian emperor became also the king of Poland. Its legislature was the *Seim*, with elections in 1820 and 1825. The *Seim* contained a senate, composed of the Polish nobility, and the *Posolskiy Izby*, elected in the localities. The *Seim* had full legislative competence, including fiscal. The official state language was Polish.

However, after the Polish uprising of 1830, the Organic Status was published, amending the Polish constitution, and making Poland an inseparable part of the Empire. The customs border between Russia and Poland was abolished in 1850.³²

After the further uprisings of 1863–4 the last traces of autonomy were extinguished. Nevertheless, even after the end of autonomy the *Code Civil* of Napoleon I and other French legislation were preserved, with obligatory force in the Duchy of Poland from 1 May 1808, and extended in 1810 to the governorates taken from Austria.

³¹ Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

³² Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, pp. 44–5.

As Kutafin points out, not all the states incorporated into Russia lost their autonomy. For example, Khiva, now in Uzbekistan, was to a large extent independent even though de facto fully subordinated to Russia.³³ According to the Treaty of 12 August 1873 Said-Mukhamed Rakhim-Bogodur Khan maintained executive power. Bukhara, also now in Uzbekistan, had even higher autonomy. Its status was defined in a Treaty of 28 September 1873. The emir of Bukhara exercised power from Tashkent, and from 1893 Russia maintained an ambassador. Of course, neither Khiva nor Bukhara were formally part of the Russian Empire. They were considered to be states under Russia's protection.

Kutafin says little about the Tatars, who have been the focus of some of my own work.³⁴ In contemporary Russia the Tatars not only have their own republic of Tatarstan, the most autonomous and one of the wealthiest regions in the Russian Federation, but are the largest ethnic and linguistic minority with some 5.5 million members.

Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) conquered Kazan in 1552, and incorporated the khanate of Kazan into the Grand Duchy of Moscow's territory. Ivan followed his victory with a policy of Christianization and Russification of his Tatar subjects and other indigenous peoples, which was not reversed until the reign of Catherine the Great. But the Tatar language and Muslim religion were not eliminated. Schamiloglu in 1990 provided elements of a more complete picture.³⁵ His article concerned Sihabäddin

³³ Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 45.

³⁴ Bowring, 'The Tatars of the Russian Federation', pp. 417–35.

³⁵ Uli Schamiloglu was born in New York of Kazan Tatar ancestry, and is now professor at Wisconsin-Madison See his home page <http://www.turko-tatar.com/uli/>, and

Märcani (1818–89), the father of modern Kazan Tatar historiography, who wrote in the nineteenth century, during the Tatar revival within the Russian Empire. Schamiloglu examined the process by which the ‘modern identity of the Kazan Tatars was created’.

If, then, the creation of Tatar national identity was crystallized in the nineteenth century, that is proof positive that the tsarist Empire had not destroyed Tatar consciousness: on the contrary. Thus, Märcani was one of the leading Kazan Tatar intellectuals of the nineteenth century: following early education in a village *madrassa* in Taşkiçü, he received an Islamic education in Bukhara and Samarkand, and returned to positions in a mosque and *madrassa*, and was appointed teacher at the Russo-Tatar Teacher’s School.³⁶

Schamiloglu observed that the name ‘Tatar’ was ‘originally not the self-appellation of the Muslim Turks of the Middle Volga region’. Before the Mongol conquests they were known as ‘Bulğars.’ The name ‘Tatar’ was introduced during the Mongol period, and gained broad acceptance by the Kazan Tatars only in the nineteenth century. Märcani wanted, for nationalist reasons, to emphasize that under the ‘Tatar Yoke’ (1223–1480) ‘the Russian dukes could not act without the permission of the Tatar Khans’, and emphasized the Russians’ role as tax collectors.³⁷ It is no surprise that many Russian words—for money, treasury, horse, etc.—are of Turkic origin.

http://lca.wisc.edu/new_web/?q=node/50. Uli Schamiloglu, ‘The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness: Sihabäddin Märcani and the Image of the Golden Horde’, *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1990): pp. 39–49.

³⁶ Schamiloglu, ‘The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness’, pp. 41–2.

³⁷ Schamiloglu, ‘The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness’, p. 45.

But Schamiloglu points out that there is a dearth of historical sources for the period of the khanate of Kazan from the 1430s to 1552, when Kazan was conquered by Ivan IV, not least because of Russian destruction of libraries and archives. He reminds us that

Following the fall of the Khanate in 1552 as the first foreign conquest of the emerging Russian Empire, elements of the dynastic and tribal elite of the Khanate of Kazan either fled to other states, were incorporated into the developing Russian aristocracy, or were simply vanquished. The indigenous Muslim Turkic population in or around the city of Kazan was resettled beyond a perimeter extending many kilometres away from the city. The indigenous and newly-resettled population of the surrounding territories (again including the former core territories of the Volga Bulgarian state) would later form the core group of the modern Kazak Tatars. In the 19th century these Muslim Turks of the Middle Volga region began to acquire a shared identity under the name ‘Kazan Tatar’.³⁸

Mărcani’s work was not only an astonishing achievement in adverse circumstances, but more importantly a classic nineteenth-century ‘creation of an ideology of national identity’, as described by Eric Hobsbawm.³⁹ It was also an essential ingredient for the creation of the Tatar ASSR in 1920–1.

³⁸ Schamiloglu, ‘The Formation of a Tatar Historical Consciousness’, pp. 40–1.

³⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914’, in *Inventing Traditions*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Publisher?, 1983), pp. 263–307.

The situation of the so-called *inorodtsy*, the non-Slavic populations of the Empire, was defined in Russian legislation.⁴⁰ These included the *samoyedy* of Arkhangelsk *guberniya*, the ‘*kocheviye inorodtsy*’ of Stavropol *guberniya*, the Kalmyks of Astrakhan and Stavropol, the Kyrgyz of the Inner Horde, the *inorodtsy* of the Akmola and Semipalatinsk regions of present-day Kazakhstan, and the Urals and Turgan regions, the *inorodtsy* of the Zakaspiian regions, and Jews.⁴¹ *Inorodtsy* enjoyed local government differing from the norm according to need. *Inorodtsy* in different localities used the *Kitaiskoye Ulozheniye* of 1725, the *Mongolskoye Ulozheniye* of 1798, and the *Ulozheniye* of the Mongol and Kalmyk peoples of 1690.

The Bashkirs were semi-nomadic tribes inhabiting the territory, forest and steppe, beyond the Volga. Robert Baumann has pointed out that ‘despite its relative proximity to Moscow Bashkiria remain unassimilated by the late nineteenth century . . . an apt indication of Russia’s inability to impose civil administration on the vast realms to which it had laid claim’.⁴² Ivan IV penetrated the Bashkir lands following his conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan in the 1550s, and a fort was established at Ufa in 1586. There were Bashkir uprisings in 1662–4, in 1676, from 1681 to 1683, and from 1705 to 1711. Following the creation of the fortified town of Orenburg on the Ural River in 1735, Empress Anna’s agent Ivan Kirillov mercilessly crushed the consequent uprising. Finally, after the influx of many Russians, bringing the population of Orenburg to 884,787, and

⁴⁰ Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 77.

⁴¹ *Svod* of laws of the Russian Empire, v. 9, Art1.

⁴² Robert F. Baumann, ‘Subject Nationalities in the Military Service of Imperial Russia: The Case of the Baskirs’, *Slavic Review*, vol. 46, no. 3–4 (1987): pp. 490–491.

the defeat of the Pugachev rebellion (1773–5), the Empire established a military administration for the Bashkirs similar to that of the Cossacks, named the *Bashkirskiye voisko* or Bashkir Host, with 11 cantons, each with a *nachalnik*. Bashkir light cavalry fought splendidly in the war against Napoleon.⁴³

In this way, paradoxically, the Bashkirs maintained their identity into the Soviet period, and the creation of present-day Bashkortostan.⁴⁴

Suny also observed that ‘some elites like the Tatar and Ukrainian nobles, dissolved into the Russian *dvoryanstvo*, but others, like the German barons of the Baltic or the Swedish aristocrats of Finland, retained privileges and separate identities’.⁴⁵

6.3 Religious Autonomy in Tsarist Russia

In the period immediately after World War I, Muslims enthusiastically adopted ‘national-cultural autonomy’ as a means of asserting a separate identity in post-Imperial Russia.

Crews points out that, as he was informed by a Tatar interlocutor, Islam arrived in Russia before Orthodox Christianity, so that Islam is the most ‘traditional’ of Russian religions.⁴⁶

By the tenth century there were substantial Muslim communities along the Volga River, in Siberia, in the Caucasus, and the oasis towns of Central Asia.⁴⁷ By the reign of

⁴³ Baumann, ‘Subject Nationalities in the Military Service of Imperial Russia’, p. 493.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Alexander Osipov for the observation that the way in which a pre-modern ‘identity’ translated into a national one is a complex story.

⁴⁵ Suny, ‘The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia’, p. 27.

⁴⁶ Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, p. 11.

Catherine II Russia had ruled the Muslim peoples settled along the Volga River for more than two centuries, while she incorporated the Muslims of Crimea and the regions north of the Caucasus and Caspian Sea. By the late nineteenth century Muslims resided in eighty-nine provinces and territories of the Empire, together with the protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara. The first Imperial census held in 1897 registered 14 million Muslims, although the true number was probably 20 million. Three and a half million lived in European Russia; twelve million spoke languages of the 'Turkic-Tatar' group.⁴⁸

While Peter the Great had oppressed the Muslim, especially Tatar, nobility, Catherine the Great, inspired by Enlightenment rationality, ordered in 1787 the printing of the Qur'an for distribution free of charge to Kazakhs on the frontier, and in September 1788 ordered the establishment in Ufa of an 'Ecclesiastical Assembly of the Muhammedan Creed' (*Dukhovnoye sobraniye Magometanskovo zakona*).⁴⁹ Mukhamedzhan Khusainov was given the title mufti, with a salary, and was to be aided by 'two or three Mullahs chosen from the Kazan Tatars'. By 1800 the mufti and three judges attached to the Assembly administered oral examinations for more than 1,900 clerics.⁵⁰ The first mosque was built in Moscow in 1823, despite protests from the Orthodox Church.⁵¹ Kazan had Tatar language schools in the time of Catherine II.⁵² In this way the foundations were laid for contemporary Tatar autonomy.

⁴⁸ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, pp. 12–14.

⁴⁹ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, pp. 52–3.

⁵⁰ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, p. 56.

⁵¹ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, p. 93.

⁵² Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, p. 200.

It was evident in the late tsarist period that the Empire must pay institutional and constitutional regard to its ethnic and linguistic complexity, outlined in part in the preceding section, or face the possibility of disintegration. The responses to these issues were surprisingly contemporary in their language and tone. Leading Russian scholars argued at length as to the nature of autonomy in the Russian Empire. In 1892 N. M. Korkunov discussed the various forms of autonomy, preserving local laws and institutions, to a greater or lesser extent.⁵³ V. V. Sokolovskiy also sought to prove that the existence of autonomy did not contradict the integrity of the Russian Empire.⁵⁴

A significant number of publications followed the first Russian Revolution of 1905, which almost brought an end to the Empire. This was a time for serious re-thinking of the Empire's foundations. F. F. Kokoshkin argued in a book published in 1905 that regional autonomy did not mean the creation of a state within a state.⁵⁵ For Kokoshkin, if there were to be local laws, as existed in Russia, there must be local legislatures. The State Duma could legislate for all-Russian matters, and local legislatures on the local

⁵³ Korkunov, *Russkiye gosudarstvennoye pravo*, p. 133; Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ V. V. Sokolovskiy, *Ktrakiy uchebnik russkovo gosudarsvennovo pravo* [Short Textbook of Russian State Law] (Odessa: Publisher?, 1890), pp. 231–2; Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Fyodor Fyodorovich Kokoshkin (1871–1918), jurist, leading member of the Constitutional Democratic (Cadet) party, member of the provisional government in 1917. Fyodor Fyodorovich Kokoshkin, *Oblastnaya avtonomii I yedinstvo Rossii* [Regional Autonomy and the Unity of Russia] (Moscow: Publisher?, 1905), p. 3.

scale.⁵⁶ The Empire must retain its legislative supremacy.⁵⁷ According to him, regional autonomy was the highest stage of the development of decentralization. In a further publication in 1908 he distinguished between autonomous *krai* and autonomous *oblast*.⁵⁸ Kokoshkin returned to this question in 1917, and emphasized its close connection with the national (ethnic) question.⁵⁹ He argued that decentralization to a greater or lesser extent was a powerful means for satisfying the demands of ethnic groups to self-determination, especially cultural self-determination, and that this could take the form of territorial decentralization, but also other forms. He made the case that in the Russian Empire it would be impossible to build a federation on the basis of national territorial autonomy. For example, Ukraine with a population of 25–30 million, more than Spain, would far outweigh other regions of Russia. To give unequal competences to the component parts of Russia would also lead to a blind alley, he thought;⁶⁰ or rather than a federation, to confederation.

⁵⁶ Kokoshkin, *Oblastnaya avtonomii I yedinstvo Rossii*, pp. 9–10.

⁵⁷ Kokoshkon, *Oblastnaya avtonomii I yedinstvo Rossii*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ Fyodor Fyodorovich Kokoshkin, *Russkoye gosudarstvennor pravo* [Russian State Law] (Moscow, 1908), pp.154–5[not in biblio]; Fyodor Fyodorovich Kokoshkin, *Lektsii po obsehmu gosudarstvennomu pravu* [Lectures on General State Law] (Moscow: Publisher?, 1912), pp. 305–6.

⁵⁹ Fyodor Fyodorovich Kokoshkin, *Avtonomiya i federatsiya* [Autonomy and Federation] (Petrograd: Publisher?, 1917), pp.3–5.

⁶⁰ Kokoshkin, *Avtonomiya i federatsiya*, pp. 9–10.

In 1906 a collection *Autonomy, Federation and the National (Ethnic) Question* appeared, edited by V. M. Gessen, arguing that national autonomy should precede the establishment of a parliamentary, rule of law, state.⁶¹ Autonomy or other forms of political independence were the best way of resolving ethnic tensions. The authors pointed out that notwithstanding the centralized political government of Russia, it preserved within itself a series of local laws.⁶² Thus, in the *Privislenskiy Krai* (in Poland) the *Code Civil* of Napoleon I had been in force since 1808, while in the *Ostzeiskii Krai* (in the Baltic) a whole range of laws including Roman law were in force. In Finland the Swedish laws of 1734 were in operation. Because of its Byzantine past Bessarabiya had laws with Byzantine roots. In the Governorates of Chernigov and Poltava the Lithuanian statutes remained in force. In the Caucasus and many other places, special, particular laws were applied. Whole regions of the Russian Empire lived and had lived their own juridical life. In another chapter of the work, the question of the unity of the state was also addressed by E. Pimenova, who argued that regional autonomy could be an efficient way of resolving the national (ethnic) problem in Russia.⁶³

⁶¹ Vladimir Matveevich Gessen, ed., *Avtonomiya, federatsiya i natsionalniy vopros* [Autonomy, Federation, and the National (Ethnic) Question] (St Petersburg: Publisher?, 1906). Vladimir Matveevich Gessen (1868–1920) doctorate from Moscow State University, official of the Ministry of the Interior.

⁶² Gessen, *Avtonomiya, federatsiya i natsionalniy vopros*, pp. 21–2; Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 19.

⁶³ E. Pimenova, *Yedinstvo gosudarstvo i avtonomiya* [The Unity of the State and Autonomy] (St Petersburg: Publisher?, 1906).

In another key text published in 1906, G. Novotorzhskiy argued that the contemporary Russian state had come into being through conquest, and therefore consisted of a whole range of regions, formed on a national as well as administrative basis.⁶⁴ In Russia these were Finland, Poland, Ukraine, Caucasus, the Pribaltiskiy Krai, Lithuania, Siberia, and finally ‘Great Russia’. He wrote:

Finland at the present time has almost complete autonomy. The question of Polish autonomy demands resolution in the shortest possible time, as soon as the police state is abolished. The question of autonomy for the Caucasus is more complex, since many ethnicities are living there, mixed with each other. The Jewish question can be resolved by giving the Jews the full rights enjoyed by other ethnicities in Russia, and by guaranteeing the rights of the minorities which they will constitute in Poland, Ukraine, Great Russia and Byelorussia. As concerns the autonomies of Ukraine,

⁶⁴ G. Novotorzhskiy, *Natsionalniy vopros, avtonomiya i federatsiya* [The National Question, Autonomy and Federation] (Moscow: Publisher?, 1906), pp. 14–15; G. Novotorzhskiy, *What is a Rule of Law State?* (Paris: Publisher?, 1914); G. Novotorzhskiy, *The Significance of the Right to Land for the Working Class*, G. Novotorzhskiy, *The Socialisation of Land*[is it possible to have the full publishing details?]*]*—all still in print, see

<http://http.www.epubbooks.ru/books.php?author=%CD%EE%E2%EE%F2%EE%F0%E>

<http://http.www.epubbooks.ru/books.php?author=%CD%EE%E2%EE%F2%EE%F0%E6%F1%EA%E8%E9,%20%C3>.[don’t think the link is working – please check]

Siberia autonomous regions in Great Russia, they can be created as required. As, so to say, autonomies of the second rank.⁶⁵

This passage has a distinctly contemporary ring.

Other works of the same nature included A. T. Snarskiy's 1907 *Autonomy or Federation?*, and the survey published in 1907 by the Pole K. Kulchitskiy (Mazovetskiy) *Autonomy and Federation in Contemporary Constitutional States*.⁶⁶

Non-territorial autonomy was also intensively debated in this period. Kulchitskiy was one of a number of Russian authors who reflected on 'cultural-national autonomy'. In 1917, M. Y. Lazerson wrote a book entitled *Autonomy and Federation* which argued forcefully for 'personal autonomy'—that is, non-territorial autonomy—drawing on Karl Renner's writings.⁶⁷ In his view, one should not, in a contemporary state, consider the population as tied to particular territories. Such a state, with many ethnicities, cannot be divided into territories in each of which there is a single ethnicity.⁶⁸ However, he argued

⁶⁵ Novotorzhskiy, *Natsionalniy vopros, avtonomiya i federatsiya*, p. 21; Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 28.

⁶⁷ Maksim Yakovlevich Lazerson (1887–1952) sociologist and professor at St Petersburg then Petrograd State University, member of the *Saime* (Parliament) of inter-war independent Latvia, leader of the Jewish *Ceire Cion* party; from 1939 lectured at Columbia University, New York; Maksim Yakovlevich Lazerson, *Avtonomiya i federatsiya* [Autonomy and Federation] (Petrograd: Publisher?, 1917).

⁶⁸ Lazerson, *Avtonomiya i federatsiya*, pp. 23–4.

strongly against the term ‘national-cultural autonomy’, which in his view confused the territorial principles and the personal principle.⁶⁹

6.4 Lenin and Bolshevik Concepts of Territorial Autonomy

Kutafin makes the point that the Bolsheviks, as convinced centralists, approached the idea of national (ethnic) autonomy very cautiously.⁷⁰ I have investigated in detail the way in which Lenin developed his position on the right of nations to self-determination in fierce argument with those such as the Jewish Bund who espoused non-territorial personal cultural autonomy on the Austro-Marxist model.⁷¹ His understanding of self-determination followed the positions taken and language used by Marx and Engels in relation to Ireland and Britain, and Poland and Russia. For them and for Lenin there were indeed Irish and Polish nations with a right to statehood. The concept of ‘nation’ did not require further explanation or analysis.

In October 1913 Lenin, having stated that ‘The right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form independent national states, will be dealt with elsewhere’ declared himself in favour of local autonomy:⁷²

⁶⁹ Lazerson, *Avtonomiya i federatsiya*, pp. 25–6; Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 704.

⁷⁰ Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, p. 81.

⁷¹ Bowring, ‘Austro-Marxism’s Last Laugh’, pp. 229–50; Bowring, ‘Burial and Resurrection’, pp. 191–206.

⁷² V. I. Lenin, ‘Centralisation and Autonomy’, accessed 28 March 2011,

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/crnq/6.htm#v20pp72-045>.

Obviously, one cannot conceive of a modern, truly democratic state that did not grant such autonomy to every region having any appreciably distinct economic and social features, populations of a specific national composition, etc. The principle of centralism, which is essential for the development of capitalism, is not violated by this (local and regional) autonomy, but on the contrary is applied by it *democratically*, not bureaucratically.⁷³

And further:

Why national areas with populations, not only of half a million, but even of 50,000, should not be able to enjoy autonomy; why such areas should not be able to unite in the most diverse ways with neighbouring areas of different dimensions into a single autonomous ‘territory’ if that is convenient or necessary for economic intercourse—these things remain the secret of the Bundist Medem.⁷⁴

This was Lenin’s argument for territorial autonomy and against non-territorial autonomy.

Lenin returned to this question in 1916, in the midst of World War I and before the October Revolution, summing up issues of self-determination, when he wrote that it was autonomy which could enable a nation, hitherto forcibly retained within an existing state (such as the Russian Empire) to ‘crystallise into a nation’. He had in mind Norway’s declaration of sovereignty from Denmark in 1814, and envisaged a declaration by the Polish nation that they would no longer be ruled by the Russian Tsar. He wrote:

⁷³ Lenin, ‘Centralisation and Autonomy’.

⁷⁴ Lenin, ‘Centralisation and Autonomy’.

But as everyone knows, in practice a reform is often merely a step towards revolution. It is autonomy that enables a nation forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state to crystallise into a nation, to gather, assess and organise its forces, and to select the most opportune moment for a *declaration* . . . in the ‘Norwegian’ spirit: We, the autonomous diet of such-and-such a nation, or of such-and-such a *territory*, declare that the Emperor of all the Russias has ceased to be King of Poland, etc.⁷⁵

Thus it is clear that before the October Revolution Lenin was in favour of the idea of creating broad regional autonomies in Russia.

In May 1917 the issue of independence for Poland and Finland was again at the top of the agenda, and Lenin drafted a *Resolution on the National Question*. His starting point was clear, namely recognition of the right of all nations forming part of Russia freely to secede and form independent states. To deny them such a right, or to fail as a Russian government to take the necessary measures to guarantee the realization of the right to secede in practice, would be in effect to support a policy of forcible seizure or annexation.⁷⁶

From secession from the Russian Empire Lenin turned to the issue of autonomy. He meant territorial autonomy: he opposed the non-territorial ‘national cultural

⁷⁵ V. I. Lenin, ‘The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up’, accessed 28 March 2011, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jul/x01.htm>.

⁷⁶ V. I. Lenin, ‘Resolution on the National Question’, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1917, 1964), pp. 302–3, Supplement to *Soldatskaya Pravda*, no. 13 (1917): p. 302. This is not to be found in the Internet Archive.

autonomy' formulated by the Austro-Marxists Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, and espoused by the Jewish Bund. He made it clear that autonomy meant support for broad regional autonomy. Moreover, he advocated the abolition of supervision from above, and the abolition of a compulsory official language, both of which were features of the assimilationist policies of the late tsarist regime. Above all, the local population itself must decide on fixing the boundaries of the autonomous territory.⁷⁷

In 1916, Lenin wrote in relation to Poland:

All those who want to stand for the freedom of nations, for the right of nations to self-determination, not hypocritically, not in the Südekum, Plekhanov, Kautsky fashion, but sincerely, must be opposed to the war because of the oppression of Poland; they must be in favour of the right of secession from Russia for those nations which Russia is now, oppressing: the Ukraine, Finland, etc.⁷⁸

Thus, before the October Revolution Lenin was in favour not only of a right of secession from Russia by nations, but also of territorial autonomy for minorities.

These policies were key components of Bolshevik policy from the moment of Bolshevik success in October 1917. In 'The Tasks of the Revolution', published in October 1917, Lenin declared that a democratic peace would be impossible without an explicit renunciation of annexation or seizure. He emphasized that every nationality

⁷⁷ V. I. Lenin, 'Resolution on the National Question', p. 303.

⁷⁸ V. I. Lenin, 'Peace Without Annexations and the Independence of Poland as Slogans of the Day in Russia', *Sotsial-Demokrat*, no. 51 (1916), accessed 11 November 2014,

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/feb/29.htm>.

without exception in Europe and in the colonies should have the right to decide for itself whether it should form a separate state.⁷⁹

This right was enshrined in the 1918 Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Every people should decide whether they wished to participate in the RSFSR and on what basis. This was the only basis for creating a free and voluntary state. In this spirit the 1918 Constitution of the RSFSR⁸⁰ provided in Article 1, Chapter 4:

8. In its effort to create a league—free and voluntary, and for that reason all the more complete and secure—of the working classes of all the peoples of Russia, the Third Congress of Soviets merely establishes the fundamental principles of the Federation of Russian Soviet Republics, leaving to the workers and peasants of every people to decide the following question at their plenary sessions of their soviets, namely, whether or not they desire to participate, and on what basis, in the Federal government and other Federal soviet institutions.

And in Article 2, Chapter 5

11. The soviets of those regions which differentiate themselves by a special form of existence and national character may unite in autonomous

⁷⁹ V. I. Lenin, 'The Tasks of the Revolution', *Rabochy Put*, nos 20 and 21 (1917), accessed 3 June 2014, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/09.htm>.

⁸⁰ Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic 1918, English translation, accessed 28 March 2011,

<http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/constitution/1918/index.htm>.

regional unions, ruled by the local congress of the soviets and their executive organs.

These autonomous regional unions participate in the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic upon a Federal basis.⁸¹

On this basis, the Labouring Commune of Germans of the Volga was organized at the end of 1918, and in 1924 became an autonomous republic. The Bashkir ASSR was established within the RSFSR in 1919, followed in 1920–1 by the Kirgiz (Kazakh) ASSR, and the Tatar, Dagestan, and Gorkiy autonomous republics, the Karelian Labouring Commune, and the Chuvash, Kalmyk, Marii, Votskaya (Udmurtskaya) autonomous *oblasts* (regions). In 1921–2 the Yakutsk ASSR, and the Karachaev-Cherkess, Kabardino-Balkar, Komi, Mongol-Buryat, and a series of other autonomous *oblasts* were created.⁸²

In early 1918, as the civil war raged, Lenin explained why in his view centralism was not incompatible with autonomy and federation:

We are for democratic centralism. And it must be clearly understood how vastly different democratic centralism is from bureaucratic centralism on the one hand and from anarchism on the other. The opponents of centralism continually put forward autonomy and federation as a means of struggle against the uncertainties of centralism. As a matter of fact,

⁸¹ General Provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, accessed 28 March 2011,

<http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/constitution/1918/article2.htm>

⁸² Kutafin, *Rossiyskaya avtonomiya*, pp. 133–4.

democratic centralism in no way excludes autonomy, on the contrary, it presupposes the necessity of it . . . The example of the Russian Soviet Republic shows us particularly clearly that federation, which we are introducing and will introduce, is now the surest step towards the most lasting union of the various nationalities of Russia into a single democratic centralised Soviet state.⁸³

Outside Russia, the principle of self-determination was put into practice. Independent states on the Baltic territories appeared in 1920, with the Treaty of Tartu in February of 1920 which accepted Estonian independence; the Treaty of Moscow in July of 1920 which accepted Lithuanian independence; and the Treaty of Riga in August of 1920, which accepted Latvian independence. In November 1920 Lenin declared:

Of the small states formerly belonging to the Russian Empire, Poland has been among those that have been most of all at odds with the Great-Russian nation during the last three years, and made the greatest claims to a large slice of territory inhabited by non-Poles. We concluded peace with Finland, Estonia and Latvia also against the wishes of the imperialist Entente, but this was easier because the bourgeoisie of Finland, Estonia and Latvia entertained no imperialist aims that would call for a war against the Soviet Republic, whereas the Polish bourgeois republic had an eye, not only to Lithuania and Byelorussia but the Ukraine as well.

⁸³ V. I. Lenin, ‘Original version of the article “The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government”’, accessed 11 November 2014,

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/mar/23b.htm>.

Latvian ruling circles were also compelled to sign peace with the RSFSR, following the defeat of the foreign interventionists and the whiteguards in 1919 and the resulting consolidation of Soviet Russia's international position. On March 25, 1920, the Latvian Foreign Ministry approached the Soviet Government suggesting that peace talks be started. On April 16, the Soviet and Latvian representatives started peace talks in Moscow and on August 11 a treaty was signed with Latvia in Riga.⁸⁴

I contend that the appearance, for the first time in history, of three independent states in the Baltic region was the consequence of the implementation of political principle, and not an opportunistic response to military defeat.

I also argue that Lenin, unlike Stalin, had no intention of extending the boundaries of Soviet Russia to include the former possessions of the tsarist Empire. His principled position did not change at the end of his life. In his letter of 26 September 1922, at the time of increasing conflict with Stalin as to the right of Georgia to gain independence outside the USSR—to secede—Lenin wrote:

we consider ourselves, the Ukrainian S.S.R. and others, equal, and enter with them, on an equal basis, into a new union, a new federation, the Union of the Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ V. I. Lenin, 'Our Foreign and Domestic Position and Party Tasks' Speech Delivered To The Moscow Gubernia Conference Of The R.C.P.(B.)', accessed 11 November 2014, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/nov/21.htm>.

⁸⁵ V. I. Lenin, 'On the Establishment of the U.S.S.R.', accessed 28 March 2011, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/sep/26.htm>.

In his Last Testament, written in 1922–3, Lenin wrote, warning against Stalin:

It is quite natural that in such circumstances the ‘freedom to secede from the union’ by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is.⁸⁶

Lenin by then regarded Stalin as just such a Great-Russian chauvinist.

Lenin died on 21 January 1924. The 1924 Constitution of the USSR⁸⁷ of 31 January 1924, which incorporated the Treaty of December 1922 creating the USSR, contained the following, fully consistent with the principles on which Lenin insisted:

Chapter II Sovereign Rights of the Member Republics

Article 3.

The sovereignty of the member Republics is limited only in the matters indicated in the present Constitution, as coming within the competence of the Union. Outside of those limits, each member Republic exerts its public powers independently; the USSR protects the rights of the member Republics.

Article 4.

⁸⁶ V. I. Lenin, ‘The Question of Nationalities or “Autonomisation”’, accessed 28 March 2011, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/autonomy.htm>.

⁸⁷ Constitution of the USSR 1924, English translation, accessed 28 March 2011, <http://www.answers.com/topic/1924-constitution-of-the-ussr>.

Each one of the member Republics retains the right to freely withdraw from the Union.

Article 5.

The member Republics will make changes in their Constitutions to conform with the present Constitution.

Article 6.

The territory of the member Republics cannot be modified without their consent; also, any limitation or modification or suppression of Article 4 must have the approval of all the member Republics of the Union.

Article 7.

Just one federal nationality is established for the citizens of the member Republics.

The remaining history of the USSR was marked by a strong tension between regional and ethnic autonomy on the one hand and the dictatorship of the Party and its General Secretary on the other.

This leads me to my (friendly) criticism of Terry Martin. In his book of that title, Martin starts with the question ‘Why did the Bolsheviks adopt this radical strategy?’⁸⁸ He asserts first of all that ‘When they seized power in October 1917, they did not yet possess a coherent nationalities policy.’⁸⁹ As we have seen above, that is not quite right. He acknowledges that the Bolsheviks had a ‘powerful slogan’ but states that this slogan

⁸⁸ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 2.

was shared with Woodrow Wilson: to me, this is a surprising proposition. It seems that Martin is not sufficiently aware of the passionate debates of the pre-war years on the question of the right of nations to self-determination, as against personal cultural non-territorial autonomy.⁹⁰

According to Martin, the content of Soviet nationalities policy was ‘finally delineated’ at the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923, and at a special Central Committee conference on nationalities policy in June 1923.⁹¹ That is, in the very last months of Lenin’s life, and after his conflict with Stalin over independence for Georgia.

Martin, therefore, cannot explain how, well before April 1923, most of the territorial autonomies which have continued in existence until the present day had already been created.

Nor does Martin have anything to say about the rich history of autonomy in the tsarist Empire, which I have explored above.⁹² The obvious point is this: Soviet nationalities policy did not come from nothing. It had deep roots not only in Bolshevik ideology, but also in tsarist history.⁹³

However, Martin does provide a series of case studies showing in detail how the Bolsheviks responded to the rising tide of nationalism ‘by systematically promoting the

⁹⁰ Although he cites a number of Lenin’s key works at footnote 10 on p. 3.

⁹¹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 9.

⁹² Alexander Osipov has a different point of view. He refers to the reconceptualization of feudal heterogeneity into ethnic pluralism in the Russian Empire.

⁹³ See Bowring, ‘Minorities Protection in Russia: Is There a ‘Communist Legacy’?’, pp. 45–58.

national consciousness of its ethnic minorities and establishing for many of them the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state.⁹⁴ Thus, he notes that:

The Tatar national movement was among the strongest in the Soviet Union, and certainly the strongest in the Soviet era. The Tatar nationalist elite lobbied aggressively for and vigorously supported to Soviet policy of *korenizatsiya*: the formation of a Tatar republic, the promotion of Tatars into leadership positions, the use of the Tatar language in government and education, and support for Tatar national culture. However, this movement also faced formidable resistance. Tatars formed a narrow plurality in their own republic (48.7% Tatar and 43.1% Russian).⁹⁵

Martin had not seen Schamiloglu's work, apparently, since this showed that the roots of Tatar self-consciousness extended back into the tsarist period.

6.5 A Retreat from National-Cultural Autonomy—or 'Autonomy' as an Empty Shell?

I have already referred, above, to Russia's accession to the CoE's FCNM, and the emphasis given in its first Report of 2000 to its experiment in NCA. On 9 April 2010

⁹⁴ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 58.

Russia published its Third Periodic Report to the Advisory Committee (AC) on the FCNM.⁹⁶ In particular, a new development in NCA was highlighted. Russia asserted that the end of 2005 saw some changes introduced to the Federal Law ‘On National and Cultural Autonomy’ concerning determining of the federal executive body under which a consultative council on national and cultural autonomies was to be created. In execution of this law, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted a resolution no. 527-R of 17 April 2006 assigning the role of the above executive body to the Ministry of regional development of the Russian Federation.⁹⁷

Further in the Report, Russia continued:⁹⁸

Among specialized bodies ensuring interaction between national public associations and governmental authorities on the federal level, we can name the Consultative Council on National and Cultural Autonomies Affairs under the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation. Federal Law No 146-FZ of 30 November 2005 introduced changes to Article 7 of the Federal Law ‘On national and cultural autonomy’ that authorized the Government of the Russian Federation to determine the executive body under which a consultative council on

⁹⁶ Third Report Submitted by the Russian Federation Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (received 9 April 2010), ACFC/SR/III(2010)005.

⁹⁷ Third Report Submitted by the Russian Federation Pursuant to Article 25, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Third Report Submitted by the Russian Federation Pursuant to Article 25, pp. 27–9.

national and cultural autonomies affairs, acting on a voluntary basis, is to be created.

. . . The Council comprised leaders of all federal national and cultural autonomies. The first session of the Consultative Council on National and Cultural Autonomies Affairs took place on 15 June 2006.

Sessions of the Consultative Council are held twice a year.

This rather positive message was sharply contradicted on 25 July 2012 by the FCNM's AC, in its Opinion. The AC had taken the opportunity to visit Russia from 12 to 16 September 2011, and to meet a large number of official, NGO, and ethnic minority interlocutors.⁹⁹

They turned to the topic of NCAs,¹⁰⁰ and reminded their readers¹⁰¹ that in the first two cycles:

In the previous monitoring cycles, the Advisory Committee encouraged the authorities to restore, in collaboration with stakeholders, the central position of national cultural autonomies in federal legislation and to take measures to ensure the effective implementation of the competences of

⁹⁹ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Russian Federation (adopted on 24 November 2011), ACFC/OP/III(2011)010.

¹⁰⁰ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Russian Federation, pp. 35–6.

¹⁰¹ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Russian Federation, para 71.

national cultural autonomies, especially in the field of language, education and culture.¹⁰²

Russia was in this way put on the spot with regards to its NCA policy. The amending NCA Law of 2009 had enabled regional and local authorities to make payments to NCAs, but without imposing an obligation; and the new law imposed no requirement to consult.¹⁰³ Practice therefore varied widely from region to region. The AC continued that taking account of the great importance given to NCAs by state nationalities policy, in fact NCAs were restricted to ‘manifestations folkloriques’ and Sunday schools, thus discouraging minority communities from taking part in the much more extensive debates as to the future of Russian society, and preventing their effective participation in public life in general.¹⁰⁴ These concerns were reinforced¹⁰⁵ when the AC turned to Article 7 of the FCNM.¹⁰⁶ They expressed particular concern over the dissolution of the Ukrainian NCA in 2011, pursuant to an order made by the Ministry of Justice and confirmed by the

¹⁰² My translation from the French.

¹⁰³ Law No.11 FZ, accessed 11 November 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/2009/02/11/kult-avtonomia-dok.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Russian Federation, para 74.

¹⁰⁵ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Russian Federation, pp. 35–6.

¹⁰⁶ ‘The Parties shall ensure respect for the right of every person belonging to a national minority to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.’

Supreme Court.¹⁰⁷ The Ukrainian NCA was said to have exceeded its competence by engaging in politics, but for the AC this was an unfortunate consequence of limiting NCAs to cultural matters. To this they added their disagreement with the federal legislation which forbids the formation of political parties on ethnic or religious grounds.

The AC criticized the Consultative Council, of which the Russian Report had made so much.¹⁰⁸ It regretted that by virtue of the rules governing the creation of NCAs, the Council's mandate was limited to questions of the preservation and promotion of the cultures of minorities. It could say little about the financing of NCAs.

For the AC, it was clear that the numbers of NCAs continued to grow largely as a result of the desire of the individuals creating them to attract possible finance and to gain status.

6.6 Recent Developments—The Decay of NCAs?

There have been significant changes in Russia in recent years. On 19 December 2012 President Putin signed Decree No. 1666 confirming the new 'Strategy of State National Policy for the Period to 2025' (the Strategy).¹⁰⁹ By 'national' is meant 'ethnic', and the two words are used interchangeably in Russian. The Strategy replaced the 'Concept of State National Policy' confirmed by President Yeltsin's Decree No. 909 of 15 June 1999.

¹⁰⁷ See the judgment of the Supreme Court on 24 November 2010 and judgment of the Cassation Chamber of the Supreme Court of 27 January 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Russian Federation, p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ 'Strategy of State National Policy for the Period to 2025', accessed 3 June 2014,

<http://graph.document.kremlin.ru/page.aspx?1;1644521>.

On 20 August 2013, by Order No.718, the Russian government confirmed the Federal Strategic Programme ‘Strengthening the unity of the Rossiiskiy (civic Russian) nation and the ethnocultural development of the peoples of Russia (2014–2020)’, intended to implement the Strategy.¹¹⁰ The latter document makes no mention of NCA, apart from a reference to the 1996 Law.

Further insight into government strategy was given by President Putin’s introductory remarks to the meeting of the Presidential Council on Inter-ethnic relations on 19 February 2013. He insisted that the main task of nationality policy must be to ‘strengthen harmony and accord’ among Russian citizens, so that they will see themselves as ‘citizens of a single country’.¹¹¹ He outlined five key concepts of the new policy. First, he declared that the Russian language is ‘the fundamental basis of the unity of the country’. Second, he called for the preparation of a single standard national history textbook. Third, he said that he supports the work of the 989 NCAs. Fourth, he opposed the return of cultural monuments confiscated by the Soviets to their original owners. Finally, he emphasized the importance of major sports events such as the Winter Olympics at Sochi in helping to fuse the many peoples of the Russian Federation into one.

¹¹⁰ Presidential Decree of 19.12.2012, no. 1666 on the Strategy of State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period of the Year 2025, accessed 3 June 2014, <http://government.ru/media/files/41d4862001ad2a4e5359.pdf>.

¹¹¹ ‘Putin on Rossiiskiy identity and Russian language’, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://www.odnako.org/blogs/putin-o-rossiyskoy-identichnosti-i-russkom-yazike/>.

The then Minister of Regional Development, Igor Slunyayev, responded to President Putin. First, he gestured to the Plan for Implementation of the Strategy drawn up by his Ministry and signed by Prime Minister Medvedev on 1 March 2013.¹¹² He promised reports on progress twice a year. Only a few minutes later he was to concede that practically nothing had been done.

Next he turned to statistics which showed that in 2013 there were 224,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the Russian Federation, but only 15 NCAs at the federal level, 245 at the regional level, and 639 at the local level. He continued that ‘the activities of some NCAs, unfortunately, at times remind one of elements of family business.’

In addition, he said, it was important not to miss the practical results of the activities of NCAs, and in this connection he announced that he planned to ‘actualize’ the work of the Consultative Council mentioned above. To be honest, he continued, the Council practically did not work. In 2011–12 it met only three times, and, unfortunately neither representatives of federal organs nor representatives of NCAs took part.

Mr Slunyayev had been in office for only 18 months, but this was a dismal account of inactivity since the Consultative Councils were created in 2006. The misgivings of the FCNM’s Advisory Committee seemed to be entirely borne out.

¹¹² Prior to his appointment as Minister in October 2012 he was Governor of Kostroma Oblast. He is ethnic Russian and Russian Orthodox, and a career *chinovnik*, civil servant. He had no previous experience of work with minorities. Regulation on 15 July 2013, no. 1226, accessed 1 June 2014, http://www.minnac.ru/res_ru/0_hfile_1173_1.pdf.

For one commentator, Vladimir Dergachev, writing in *Izvestiya*, it was plain that Mr Putin was proposing to make the inhabitants of Russia into one nation.¹¹³ But for the veteran historian Aleksandr Yanov, writing in *Novaya Gazeta*, Putin had not yet learned to ‘distinguish patriotism from nationalism’, and was seeking to replace the classic tsarist trinity of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality (*Narodnost*) proposed by Count Uvarov in 1833 and taken up by Nikolai I in the deep reaction which followed the Napoleonic Wars, with Patriotism, Sovereignty, and Tradition. Putin is a nationalist ‘of the purest water’, and his new trinity will fall apart in front of our eyes.¹¹⁴

Putin’s five concepts and his ‘triad’ are anathema to the leaders of Russia’s ethnic and linguistic minorities, and their entrenched territorial autonomies. Ironically, and Putin does not understand this, the continued attraction of NCAs is based in large measure on their connection with the idea of autonomy, so deeply rooted in Russia.

On 8 September 2014 the Ministry of Regional Development, founded just ten years earlier on 13 September 2004, was dissolved by decree of President Putin, and its functions distributed between the Economic Development Ministry, the Ministry of

¹¹³Vladimir Dergachov, ‘Residents of Russia Offered to Make One Nation’, *Izvestia.ru*, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://izvestia.ru/news/545167>.

¹¹⁴Aleksandr Yanov, ‘The Collapse of the Putin “Triads”’, *Novaya Gazeta*, no. 19, 20 February 2013, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/comments/56546.html>. ‘The President has not learned to distinguish patriotism from nationalism.’

Construction, Housing and Utilities, and the Culture Ministry.¹¹⁵ The Ministry of Culture would be responsible for the protection of the rights of national minorities and indigenous peoples, and would guarantee state support for the ethno-cultural development of peoples. The Ministry of Justice would have powers in the sphere of the territorial structure of the Russian Federation, and would also look into questions of the division of powers between Federal executive authorities, and the subjects of the Federation and local authorities.¹¹⁶

The news was broken to Mr Slunyayev half an hour before he was due to start a meeting in St Petersburg of a presidium of his Ministry colleagues.¹¹⁷ According to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, reported on 11 September, the recent establishment of specialized ministries for the Crimea, the Far East, and the North Caucasus had made the Regional Development Ministry superfluous.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ ‘Putin Liquidates Regional Development Ministry’, *Russian News Agency*, September 2008, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/748551>.

¹¹⁶ ‘Putin Signed a Decree on the Abolition of the Ministry of Regional Development and Rosoboronpostavki Rosoboronzakaz’, *Newsru.com*, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/08sep2014/kabinet.html>.

¹¹⁷ ‘Slunayev: Ministry of Regional Development Was a Significant Body of the Executive Power’, *Baltinfo*, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://www.baltinfo.ru/2014/09/08/Slyunyaev-Minregion-byi-znachitelnyim-organom-ispolnitelnoi-vlasti-448246>.

¹¹⁸ ‘Moscow Kicks Regional Development Out of Ministry’, *Barentsobserver*, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://barentsobserver.com/en/politics/2014/09/moscow-kicks->

6.7 Conclusion

It should be no surprise at all that the word ‘autonomy’ resonates so strongly in contemporary Russia. I have shown that this was no Soviet trick or show, but that territorial and indeed the concepts of non-territorial autonomy have deep roots in Russia and its history.

However, the Russian experiment in non-territorial autonomy, the NCAs, was evidently the topic of severe misgivings by no less than the (now deposed) Minister responsible for implementation of the state policy towards minorities.

And the attention of the federal government has turned elsewhere. In the May-June 2014 issue of the *Pro et Contra*, Alexander Verkhovskiy wrote a rather pessimistic article under the title ‘The ethnopolitics of the federal authorities and the activation of Russian nationalism.’¹¹⁹ His article is summed up: ‘The federal authorities place before [regional-development-out-ministry-11-09](#). ‘Russian government management of High North developments, indigenous peoples and cross-border cooperation faces a reshuffle as President Putin abolishes the Ministry of Regional development.’

¹¹⁹ Verkhovskiy founded that authoritative SOVA Centre: ‘SOVA Center for Information and Analysis is a Moscow-based Russian nonprofit organization founded in October 2002. SOVA Center conducts research and informational work on nationalism and racism, relations between the churches and secular society, and political radicalism. We are also interested in human rights issues, especially government misuse of counter-extremism measures.’ See SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, accessed 2 June 2014, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/>; Council under the President of the Russian Federation the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, accessed 2 June 2014,

themselves a fully meaningful task in the sphere of ethnopolitics, but do not make any efforts which even theoretically could be sufficient for achieving a result.’

His article does not once mention non-territorial autonomy, or its Russian variant, national-cultural autonomy. The key issue is now Putin’s new-found nationalism, encapsulated in his conservative ‘triad’. This will come into sharp conflict with both territorial and non-territorial autonomy.

<http://www.president-sovet.ru/composition/3057/>. Verkhovskiy is also a member of the President’s Council on the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights; Alexander Verkhovskiy, ‘The Ethnopolitics of the Federal Authorities and the Activisation of Russian Nationalism’, accessed 2 June 2014,

http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ProEtContra_62_19-33.pdf.