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# Kamaludin Gadzhiev Reflections on the Features of the National Identity of Russia

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**Abstract:** The article attempts to analyze some, in the opinion of the author, peculiarities of Russia's national identity, which can shed additional light on the current state and prospects of the Russian national idea and Russian statehood. In the most brief form touching upon its historical roots, the main attention is focused on those endogenous factors that determined the ambivalent nature of Russia's national identity. It, as shown in the article, is manifested in the organic combination of the most contradictory components of a very complex, multi-layered, heterogeneous sociocultural and political-cultural matrix of Russia. In this regard, it is emphasized that each of its basic elements has its own antithesis. The validity of this thesis provides a number of examples, among which, for example, antitheses: statism-anarchism, conservatism-radicalism, chauvinism-internationalism, discontinuity-continuity, unity-fragmentation, etc. Considerable attention is paid to such a component of Russian identity as fragmentation, which is determined by the whole complex naturally-geographical, ethno-national, socio-cultural and other factors. In many ways, these and other factors related to them explain one of the key features of the Russian Federation, the essence of which lies in its asymmetry, which is expressed in the complex state structure, which more or less significantly differs from most modern federations. It is shown that one of the key endogenous factors arising from these realities is the situation in which the formation of all-Russian national identity is carried out at three different levels: ethnic, intermediate and all-Russian. It is concluded that the Russian national identity and, accordingly, the civil-political national state are still in the process of formation.

**Keywords:** Russia, National Identity, Ambivalence, Unity, Fragmentation

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## 1. Introduction

Before each generation of Russians, the sacramental question arose: "Who are we?" Concerning the "amazing sense of history", as one of the essential features of Russian culture, all generations of Russians in one form or another were interested in the question formulated by the famous chronicler of the first Annals of Ancient Russia "Tale of Bygone Years": "where did the Russian land come from?" A well-known Russian religious philosopher of the late 19th – early 20th centuries V. S. Soloviev in the work "Three talks about war, progress and the end of a world history" wrote: "What are Russians in a grammatical sense? Adjective. Well, and to what substance does this adjective belong? ... The real noun to the adjective Russian is European. We are Russian Europeans, as there are European Greeks, then Roman Europeans, then all sorts of others appeared, first in the West,

then in the East, Russian Europeans appeared" [18]. An outstanding German philosopher O. Spengler adhered to the opposite point of view. In his opinion, "the Russian spirit in its roots is absolutely opposite to the European one. In all his essence, he was from head to toe the personification of that not very common human type, which is called Russian European - a definition in which an adjective is just as important as a noun" [16].

Of interest is the reasoning on this topic of the famous Russian philosopher of the twentieth century N. Berdyaev. "For Western cultural humanity," he wrote, "Russia still remains completely transcendental, something alien East, now attracting with its secret, then repulsive with its barbarism. Even Tolstoy and Dostoevsky attract a Western cultural person as an exotic food, which is unusual for him to be spicy" [3:9]. W. Churchill, distinguished by vivid memorable aphorisms, called Russia "a mystery wrapped in

mystery and placed inside a puzzle." And R. Kipling in his story "The Former" put the question like this: who are the Russians: "the most eastern of European nations or the most western of eastern nations". In 1842, well known German philosopher F. W. J. Schelling, in a conversation with Prince Odoyevsky, said: "Your Russia is a wonderful thing. It is impossible to determine what it is assigned to and where it is going, but it is assigned to something important" [14].

Most often, Russia inspired the world around us with fear, security and mistrust with its incredible size and unpredictability of the vectors of socio-historical development. For centuries, the word-symbols associated with Russia remained and remain unchanged - "vodka", "frost", "bear", "balalaika", "Vanka-vstanka", etc. It is not by chance that they talk about the mysterious Russian soul, the unpredictability of actions and political steps taken by the leadership of Russia in relations with the rest of the world. It is known that the Russians themselves like to call their country mysterious, to the place and out of place quoting Tyutchev's "Mind cannot understand Russia".

## 2. The Antinomies of the National Identity of RUSSIA

The identity of modern Russia, being reproached in a long history, at the same time absorbed and reworked the tragic experience of the twentieth century.

Its contours, some important components and features were formed under the influence of a complex of endogenous factors, and also not without the influence of the surrounding world, Byzantium, the West and the East. All of these factors combined to determine the inconsistency and fragmentation of the national identity of Russia.

The identity of modern Russia, being rooted in a long history, at the same time absorbed and reworked the tragic experience of the twentieth century. Its contours, some important components and features were formed under the influence of a complex of endogenous and external factors that determined the complex, multifaceted, controversial nature of the socio-cultural and political-cultural matrix of Russia. Throughout its history, Russia has included a multitude of peoples living in different climatic and socio-cultural conditions, reaching different levels of development - from the tribal system to modern forms of social and political self-organization. Accordingly, various ethnonational, confessional, sociocultural communities, each of which brought with it its own specific national historical experience, its values, traditions, mentality, commitments, rules and norms of behavior, prejudices, etc. contributed to the formation of common national identity of Russia.

Therefore, it is natural that the complex, multifaceted, contradictory socio-cultural and political-cultural matrix of Russia includes a multitude of layers. Among them are, firstly, multi-layering: the organic combination of elements of the traditionally Russian (etatism, authoritarianism, the perception of power, anarchism, collectivism, solidarity,

nihilism, etc.), Soviet (idealism, leaderism, communist eschatogizm, barricade consciousness, equalization, etc.) and democratic (individualism, human rights and freedoms, orientation to success and competition, market and democracy). Secondly, heterogeneity: the existence of a multitude of ethno-national, regional, confessional and other subcultures. Thirdly, fragmentation: fluidity, uncertainty, lack of structure, incompleteness, discontinuity of attitudes and orientations. Fourthly, conflict nature: lack of basic consensus, rift along the lines - society and power, people and intellectuals, past, present and future, etc. Fifth, antinomicity: statism-anarchism, collectivism-personification, archaism-futurism, conservatism-radicalism, chauvinism-internationalism, discontinuity-continuity, etc.

Russia is truly a specific country in terms of its system characteristics. It is believed that Russia is the successor of the Byzantine Empire, primarily in the fact that it inherited from her a specific imperial state idea and the function of a kind of buffer and mediator between East and West with the desire to synthesize the achievements of Europe and Asia. Among the features borrowed from it, one can single out a kind of cosmopolitanism or ecumenism, a supra-ethnic, supranational character of power and statehood, and also an "internationalist" approach to the formation of the political and intellectual elite.

Russia's peculiarity compared to Western Europe and the United States was that for many centuries the basis of its political order was an autocratic state power. The state acted as the carrier of the most universal principle, which allows turning a diverse conglomerate of regions and peoples, cultures and religions into a single political, administrative, socio-cultural, economic space. The development of society went under the sign of the decisive role of the state. Few things in Russia existed outside and apart from the state. This led to the relatively high level of expectations from the state, peculiar to the Russian man, compared with the European and American people. Moreover, from the state they often expect not so much legal laws establishing the relevant norms and rules of the game, but concrete actions in support of concrete people. In this sense, the Russian person is distinguished by his orientation towards various kinds of benefits and privileges, paternalism and clientelism on the part of the state. As the famous historian G. Vernadsky wrote, autocracy and serfdom were the price that the Russian people had to pay for their national self-preservation.

At the same time, one of the essential characteristics of a Russian person is considered to be a negative attitude towards the state. For a correct understanding of this situation and the identification of possible ways of shaping a new Russian statehood, it is important to take into account that the essential characteristic of the Russian socio-cultural system is that each of its basic elements has its own antipode. Therefore, they speak about the antinomy of the identity of Russia. Thus, in the course of the last three centuries, there has been a constant conflict of subcultures – the westernized and the soil-based, the radical and the patriarchal-conservative, the anarchic and the statist, etc.

N. Berdyaev called Russia "the most stateless, most anarchic country in the world". In his opinion, "all of our truly Russian, our national writers, thinkers, and publicists were all stateless, original anarchists". He saw the paradox of Russian history in the fact that "the anarchist ideology was primarily created by the highest stratum of the Russian nobility" [2]. Anarchists, in his opinion, were Slavophiles and Dostoevsky, such were the most extreme anarchist Bakunin, Prince Kropotkin and religious anarchist Count L. Tolstoy. The Russian intelligentsia, "our ideology of autocracy", were infected with a stateless spirit. At the same time, Berdyaev argued, "Russia is the most statist and the most bureaucratic country in the world" [3]. "Russia is a country of infinite freedom and spiritual avenues, wanderers and seekers, a rebellious and terrible country in its elemental nature". At the same time - "Russia is a country of unheard of servility and eerie submission". "Russia is the most nationalist country in the world". In his opinion, "in the Russian nature there is truly some kind of national disinterestedness, sacrifice unknown to Western nations" [3].

With the same reason, it can be assessed as a state-despotic and anarchic-freedom-loving people, as a people inclined to nationalism and national self-conceit, and a people of universal spirit, most all inclined to all-human, cruel and unusually humane, inclined to cause suffering and compassionate to pain.

In other words, according to Berdyaev, for the Russians the combination of antinomies, polar opposites is characteristic. Russia and the Russian people can only be characterized by contradictions. With the same reason, the Russians can be assessed as a state-despotic and anarchic-freedom-loving people, as a people inclined to nationalism and national self-conceit, and a people of universal spirit, inclined to the all-human, cruel and unusually humane, inclined to cause suffering and at the same time being compassionate". Pointing to the antinomic and contradictory character, the duality and irrationalism of the Russian soul, N. Berdyaev characterized it as a striking symbiosis of anarchism and etatism; readiness to give life for freedom and unheard of servility; chauvinism and internationalism; kindness and cruelty; asceticism and hedonism; self-deprecation and national pride; altruism and egoism, etc.

On the contradictions of the Russian character, wrote the French diplomat P. Pascal, who spent 17 years in Russia (from 1916 to 1933), first in the French diplomatic mission, and then, remaining in Russia and working in various Soviet institutions. In a report made at the French Institute in Petrograd on October 27, 1917, he, in particular, focused on the characterization of the Russian soul. In his opinion, the soul of the Russian people, if we ignore the intelligentsia, consists of three interrelated components: solidarity, indecision and craving for the absolute. Solidarity includes the theory of "catholicity" ("sobornost")<sup>1</sup>, or the union of all

believers (in philosophy and religion), a sense of collective responsibility, humility, lack of trust in the upstarts, commitment to democracy, distrust of authority, etc. Indecision is manifested in the reluctance to follow the rules precisely or to obey coercion, the tendency to constantly change occupations and crafts, aversion to monetary calculations, disdain for logic, sentimental patriotism without admixture of nationalism, religiosity without dogmatism, intuitive morality without clear rules, commitment to the principle of "will" (a word "volya" that in Russia means not at all that Will" in English or "volonté" in French), etc.

The pursuit of the absolute consists of the need, when considering any question, to get to the bottom of the roots, the inability to work the difference between the morality of the individual and the morality of the state. If westerners follow maxima: "His own shirt is closer to the body", then the Russian is ready to give his life to save others, in politics - Bolshevism, in philosophy the disregard of objective reality, in practical life - the rejection of any instrument, if even a tiny imperfection is noticed in it, etc. [15]

From these assumptions P. Pascal concluded: in the Russian system of values, the soul is more important than reason and volitional principle. Here, the mind is subordinate to the soul, unlike the West, where ingenuity is often put far above kindness. "The Russians recognize as truth the most opposite statements. They are devoid of prejudice, but often are not able to distinguish good from evil. Russians prefer the principle of finalism to the principle of causality, which they use very skillfully and because of this they achieve deeper results than those that rationalists achieve". Considering the Russian people as "the most Christian of all", Pascal was convinced that "the Russians feel the human weakness and, most importantly, the weakness of the individual person" [15].

The English writer M. Baring, who lived for some time (from 1905 to 1912) in Russia, working as a correspondent for the Morning Post and The Times, wrote several books about her, including: "With Russians in Manchuria" (1905), "Russian people" (1911) and "Milestones of Russian literature" (1910, Russian translation - 1913). For the Russian reader, they are of undoubted interest due to the fact that in them the author cited a number of peculiarities of the character of the Russian people noticed by him. "If the Russians are passionate about the card game", he wrote, "then they will be engaged in it until they get enough of it; no one will say: "Enough, it's too late" or "Well, enough, it's time to sleep". In the same way he treats food and drink. In the field of ideas, the Russian is enterprising and brave. He does not recognize generally accepted limits and boundaries and develops his thought to its logical conclusion. When the conclusion seems to be threatening reductio ad absurdum, he simply jumps over "absurdum" with the words "Why not?" [1]. According to Baring, "the contradictory qualities do not just get along in Russian - often their manifestations replace each other very quickly". In his opinion, "there is something convulsive in this; Russian is rapidly moving from one mood to another: from despair to unrestrained merriment, from

<sup>1</sup> This concept is very difficult, moreover it is impossible to adequately translate into foreign languages. In the Russian understanding, especially regarding the interrelationship of the various components of society and the state in their Orthodox interpretation, it can be conditionally designated as unity.

apathy to vigorous activity, from humility to rebellion, from indignation to humility" [1].

It is important to take into account that throughout its centuries-old history, Russia faced serious security threats coming from all directions: Mongols and Turks from the South and East, Poles, Lithuanians, Swedes, French and Germans from the North and West. The very geographical position of Russia in the vast expanses of two parts of the world caused the uncertainty of the answer to the question of what it actually represents: Europe or Asia? Or does it serve as a bridge between East and West, or is it a synthesis both of them? This uncertainty was first reinforced by the Golden Horde yoke, as a result of which, in fact, for a long time Russia was cut off from Europe and, accordingly, outside the zone of the influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation, as well as their results. After liberation from the Golden Horde yoke, autocratic power was established in Russia, which, in turn, made the Russian people immune to the free thinking of the Reformation, and the influence of the Enlightenment in the XVIIIth century affected only a narrow circle of the educated part of the nobility and part of the ruling class headed by Empress Catherine II.

### 3. Catholicity (Sobornost) or Fragmentation

As A. P. Kochetkov pointed, "the indisputable fact is that each nation has its own values and ideals, its own ideological and integration paradigm, on the basis of which the worldview is formed among members of the society, their guides in the surrounding reality are determined, and participation in politics becomes meaningful" [9]. In this context, the idea of the so called conciliarism or Catholicity, which the Russian Orthodox philosophers of the XIX - early XX centuries have considered to be the basis of the identity of Russia and the Russian nation, as an expression of the popular outlook of the people, the basis of all social life, is of key importance. It can neither be reformulated nor revised, according to the conviction of the adherents of this idea, without destroying the very foundations of the Russian culture, since it is a basic component that determines the content and order of all forms of public life and political self-organization of the people. The concept of "Catholicity" is connected with the question of understanding the essence of life, its spiritual character as the basis of the very being. "Russia", wrote one author, "is the Catholicity of the land, state and church, that is, unity of spirit, kingdom and civil society". It is alleged that the unity of the "top" and "bottom", the government and the people, ideals and interests is inherent in it.

A comprehensive analysis of this concept was given in the works of A. S. Khomyakov, S. N. Bulgakov, I. A. Ilin, N. O. Lossky, V. V. Rozanov, V. S. Solovyov, P. A. Florensky, N. A. Berdyaev, S. L. Frank, V. V. Bychkov and later continued in the works of S. S. Averintsev, A. V. Gulyga, I. S. Kolesov, S. F. Smagin, L. E. Shaposhnikov etc. It would be premature to

say that nowadays the idea of Catholicity has become the property of history, since certain circles of the intelligentsia of the so-called patriotic orientation and representatives of the Orthodox Church offer their own way.

However, an unbiased analysis of the history of Russia does not give grounds for confirming such an idyllic vision of it. Moreover, it does not correspond to the current realities. The history of Russia is characterized by a tragic feature of development through a radical break with the past. Russia is a classic country of riots and anarchic movements. Having challenged the positions of the Slavophiles, who defended the idea of the organic nature of Russian society, N. Berdyaev wrote, not without reason: "Russia is a country of great contrasts mainly - nowhere are there such opposites of height and lowness, blinding light and primeval darkness. That is why it is so difficult to organize Russia, to arrange chaotic elements in it. All countries combine many ages. But the immense size of Russia and the peculiarities of its history gave rise to unprecedented contrasts and opposites. We have almost no middle and strong social stratum, which everywhere organizes the life of the people. The immaturity of the deaf province and the rottenness of the state center are the poles of Russian life. And Russian social life is too pushed aside for these goals" [3]. Therefore, Berdyaev said, "Russian history is characterized by discontinuity" [2].

And indeed, throughout its history, the Russians experienced many dramatic interruptions: the transition from paganism to Christianity, the disintegration of Kievan Rus into myriad principalities, the Golden Horde yoke, the transition from Muscovy to Peter's Russia, from Tsarist Russia to the Bolshevik Soviet Union, and then the entry into the new Russia. Moreover, each time the transition from one state to another was accompanied by dramatic transformations.

The absence of a certain median culture capable of uniting the extreme poles of national consciousness into a single organism resulted in splits and catastrophic interruptions, which became one of the peculiarities of Russian history. It is significant that the very notion of "split" ("raskol"), which cannot be adequately translated into any other language, denotes reality of Russian life - the difference between power and people, people and intelligentsia, intelligentsia and power, between different religions and political forces.

This feature was particularly clearly manifested in the fateful periods of the history of Russia. So it was, for example, with the adoption of Christianity, when the Russians indiscriminately dumped pagan idols into the rivers. As noted by the well known American historian J. H. Billington, "The Russian princes accepted Orthodoxy with uncritical enthusiasm of converts and sought to transfer the greatness of Constantinople to Kiev with the nouveau riche insatiability ... Kiev more frankly than Byzantium itself, declared that Orthodox Christianity resolved all the major problems of faith and worship" [4]. So it was with the revolution of Peter the Great, which, without prior arrangement, imposed modernization or Europeanization of Russian society. Here it was essentially a phenomenon that

N. Berdyaev called "religious maximalism". "Darwinism, which in the West was a biological hypothesis", wrote Berdyaev, "becomes more dogmatic in the Russian intelligentsia, as if it were about saving for eternal life. Materialism was the subject of religious faith, and its opponents in a certain epoch were treated as enemies of the liberation of the people ... Passion for Hegel had the character of a religious hobby, and even the resolution of the fate of the Orthodox Church was expected from Hegelian philosophy. Hegel's fascination had the character of a religious hobby, and even the fate of the Orthodox Church was expected from Hegelian philosophy. They believed in the phalansters of Fourier, as in the coming of the kingdom of God. Young people spoke of love in the terminology of Shelling's natural philosophy" [2].

In Russia, G. P. Fedotov, not without reason, noted, "idols are prayed as icons, in the Orthodox manner". The Russian intelligentsia, with all extremes peculiar to it, perceived and mastered Marxism as a non-criticized faith. Having cast down the Christian god, it put new, already atheistic idols in his place. Marxism, essentially regarded as the completion of the history of the development of the whole world philosophy, was taken out of criticism, and its provisions were made the criterion for evaluating all other philosophical systems. True, F. Engels laid the foundation for the position that placed Marx outside of criticism, as the infallible prophet of the new teaching. In the eyes of subsequent supporters of the teachings, Marx acquired, as it were, the status of the holy father of the church, and his works - the status of holy scripture, which does not fall under the generally accepted rules and norms of rational critical analysis.

This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that one of the obvious characteristics of the Russian intelligentsia is its principled opposition to the institutions dominant in society, first of all, the government and the political regime. Moreover, it arose as a result of opposition to the tsarist autocracy, whatever compromise with which it was categorically rejected. With the change of existing institutions, the nature, form and direction of opposition itself are changing. It can be argued that the tradition of opposition is one of the most important factors that unite the Russian intelligentsia.

With regret, we have to admit that G. P. Fedotov, not without reason, characterized the Russian intelligentsia as "a group, movement and tradition, united by the ideological orientation of their tasks and the groundlessness of their ideas". Under this groundlessness, Fedotov understood the separation from the state, national culture, religion, organic social and spiritual formations. In its extreme forms, it leads to naked nihilism for everyone and everything. Accordingly certain groups of intelligentsia do not accept not just any particular political regime, but any power and any regime in general.

For a correct understanding of the essence of this question, of interest are the arguments of the well-known Russian philosopher S. L. Frank. Nihilism, he argued, "is not only a separate, historically conditioned form of the Russian

worldview, but also constitutes the long-lasting state of Russian spiritual life, the other side, the negative pole of this spiritual radicalism. The Russian spirit knows no middle ground: either all or nothing — this is its motto. Either Russian has the true "fear of God", true religiosity, clarity - and then he at times reveals the truths of surprising depth, purity and holiness; either he is a pure nihilist, does not value anything, does not believe in anything else, believes that everything is permissible, and in this case is often ready for horrific atrocities and vileness". At the same time, Frank considered to be one-sided to describe typical Russian nihilism solely as denial and disbelief. "Russian nihilism", he wrote, "is not at all simple disbelief — in the sense of religious doubt or indifference; he, if I may say so, is a belief in disbelief, a religion of denial. If we consider it on the other hand, it is generally not so much a theoretical denial of spiritual values, but rather a passionate desire to practically destroy them ... A passionate spiritual search is embedded in Russian nihilism, a search for the absolute, although the absolute here is zero" [6].

In this context, of interest are the arguments of the Russian philosopher B. Uspensky who noted that "the Russian intelligentsia is atheistic in religious society (as it was in imperial Russia) and religious in atheistic society (as it was in the Soviet Union). In this, generally speaking, is rooted the weakness of the Russian intelligentsia: it is united not so much by an ideological program, as by the tradition of opposition, i.e. not positive, but negative signs". It is also important to note that the ideal of "freedom" was often defined in Russia as "will" («volya»), by which one often understood the absolute freedom of a person to do whatever he pleases, without bearing responsibility for his actions.

In this context, the paradox of the Russian reformers is that, by drawing the intelligentsia into the orbit of politics, they permanently re-create opposition for themselves. It is necessary to take into account that, as a rule, in political battles, it is representatives of the intelligentsia who show the greatest ideological stubbornness and readiness to go to extremes. However, it is largely due to the efforts of those who identify themselves as democrats that the most perverse ideas about democracy and its design are formed: the party for the sake of elections, the elections for parliament, the parliament for democracy, democracy for parties, etc.

The collapse of the USSR and the total crisis caused by it, undoubtedly, dealt a powerful blow to Russian statehood itself. The single territory of a centuries-old power was torn into many fragments, and not only along the lines of state borders, but also into ethno-national, regional, religious and other components. Moreover, in the conditions when, following the collapse of the USSR, Russia itself also faced a real threat of balkanization, the preservation of territorial integrity turned into one of the key problems, on the solution of which the prospects of the Russian statehood itself depend. In other words, having lost the imperial and communist ideals, Russia seemed to have lost its national identity, which was divided into many local, regional, ethnic, confessional and other identities. "The crisis of Russian identity", "the

fragmentation of identity”, “Russia in search of identity” - these and similar assessments have become commonplace in modern scientific, especially, publicist literature and the media.

As a result, Russia was faced with the need to re-evaluate values, define its national identity, its, so to speak, national-state project, re-formulate its strategic goals and priorities appropriate to the new realities. Reality itself imperatively requires the Russian people to answer the questions: “who are we?” And “where are we going?”. It can be argued that, from this point of view, the significance of the problem of identity for Russia today is extremely great and, perhaps, is not inferior to the importance of purely economic problems.

In order to properly understand this problem, it is necessary to take into account the irony of the history which consists in the fact that the USSR became a victim of its own contribution to the further development of cultures, languages, social and economic spheres of life of its constituent peoples or ethnic groups. For example, if in the US the state policy of the so-called “melting pot” strongly encouraged the assimilation of permanent immigrant flows into a single American nation, the national policy of the Soviet state led to opposite results. It can be argued that the USSR has become a kind of training ground not only for preserving, but also for the further development of various ethnic groups and nationalities.

In the conditions of the actual discrediting of the basic principles of the Soviet national policy, a whole set of contradictions arose, related to various aspects of the political sovereinization of national autonomies. With the development of perestroika processes in the country, and especially with the collapse of the USSR, a tendency towards politicization and ideologization of ethno-national relations, bringing radical versions of nationalism to the forefront, has gained special significance. Such a situation has become a prerequisite for the phenomenon of the so-called “parade of sovereignties”, the essence of which was the growing demand of different ethnic groups for self-determination within the Russian Federation or the creation of an ethnocratic state independent of it.

In many respects, these and other related factors explain one of the key features of the Russian Federation, the essence of which is asymmetry. It manifests itself in far-reaching differences between the subjects of the Federation in terms of territorial size, population size and density, national composition, level of social, economic, cultural development, etc. These differences are evidenced, for example, by their very names. For example, in the USA, Brazil, Mexico and a number of other federative states, the subjects of the federation are called the same: states in the USA, lands in Germany and Austria, provinces in Canada, etc. The Russian Federation, by virtue of a complex of factors, is a complex state, including, according to Part 1, Article 5 and Part 1, Article 65 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, six differences of the subjects of the Federation: region (“krai”), province (“oblast”), city of federal significance, national republics, national autonomies and one national autonomous

province (“oblast”). The Russian Federation inherited this position from the USSR, which included 15 union republics and 20 national autonomous republics, 6 regions, 114 provinces, 8 national autonomous provinces and 6 national autonomous districts. For all that, there was, or, in any case, it was believed that there was a single Soviet identity, which in the eyes of the people was legitimized by the phenomenon of the so-called new historical community of the Soviet people.

Therefore, it is natural that Russia faces many difficulties associated with the differences in traditions, ways of life, cultures, natural conditions, and the historical differences in the speeds of development of individual regions, subjects of Federation, republics, and peoples. Of particular importance from this point of view is the fact that with the development of restructuring processes in the country, and especially with the collapse of the USSR, in each of the national republics, a lot of contradictions and conflicts, dormant during the Soviet period, based on the ethno-territorial factor, came to the surface. Serious informational, ideological, socio-cultural, moral-psychological, political obstacle to the solution of the problems facing the country as a whole, and its individual regions in particular became the growth of national-chauvinist attitudes among certain segments of the population and socio-political forces.

It is appropriate here to distinguish between civic-political nation, which has more or less significant connotations with the institution and culture of citizenship of a particular state, and its version, based on the interpretation of the concepts of “ethnos” and “nation” in the spirit of primordialism (from the word primordial - original, primeval). As it is known, the followers of primordialism, in defining a nation, attach key importance mainly to ethnic constituents, based on origin, blood, culture, language, traditions, customs, stereotypes of behavior, etc. In their opinion, an ethnos carries in itself a biological energy and obeys different laws than most other social phenomena. They consider ethnicism as the main criterion for the definition of “we” - “they”, “our”-“their” “allies”- “opponents”, “friends”- “enemies” etc. It is on the basis of such an understanding of the nation that various variants of radical ethno-nationalism or politicized ethnicity are formed. Unfortunately, we have to admit that this and similar approaches in assessing the nation are popular among a certain parts of the intelligentsia in the new post-Soviet states and national republics of the Russian Federation. It seems that it would be more correct to speak here about ethnos and ethnism rather than nations and nationalism in the proper sense of these words.

Definitions of a nation based on the recognition of ethnic origin as a fundamental criterion were not true in relation to the period of emergence of modern nations and nation states. Moreover, they are not true in our days. In this regard, famous American scientist of Russian origin A. P. Sorokin was right, who, justifying the inconsistency of the theories of pure races, of any special German or English blood, wrote: “At present, the purity of blood is maintained only in horse factories that deduce” purebred stallions, and in Yorkshire pig

stables ... In the world of people, the indicated sign of the unity of the blood and unity of the race as a criterion of nationality is definitely not suitable". For example, the "blood" of the French nation turns out to be composed of "the blood of the Aquitans, Silurians, Iberians, Basques, Vascons, Ligures, Libyans, Sardons, Biturins, Vandals, Wends, Helvets, Poles, Vends, Qimbri, Visigoths, Alendins, Franks, Jews, Saracens, Etruscans, Belgovs, Pelasgians, Avars, etc." "From many of these ethnic groups, Sorokin stated, not without reason, "only historical names remained" [19].

Great Russian poets Pushkin and Lermontov, famous mariners Bering and Bellingshausen, well-known writer of the Nobel Prize Laureate Pasternak and famous artist Levitan, outstanding warlords Bagration and Barclay de Tolly and many others - Russians, in whose veins not only Russian blood flowed. The ancestors of the Rurikovichs - the first dynasty of the rulers of Russia, - which cannot be accused of the non-Russianness, were ethnic Normans, in the blood of the Romanovs for the 300th anniversary of the dynasty there was not enough purely Russian blood, and Catherine the Great did not have a drop of it.

Any idea of national identity based on the principles of primordialism is destructive from the point of view of unity, viability and perspectives of Russian statehood. This version of nationalism contradicts the very essence of the Russian idea, in the very infrastructure of which the central place belongs to the idea of uniting different peoples, cultures and traditions into an organic whole. For Russia, by definition, a politico-civilian type of nation is suitable, which has the advantage that the viability and effective functioning of modern society requires uniform legal principles for all citizens, unity of economic, informational, cultural, linguistic and other spaces. A genuine national idea cannot be confused with its national-chauvinistic, great-power profanation. It affirms and legitimizes itself not through the denial or debunking of cultures or ideals of other nations, but through a striving towards creation, the creative exploration of the whole viable and positive from the heritage of these peoples.

#### **4. On the Peculiarities of the Formation of the National Identity of Russia**

At the same time, it is important to take into account that ethnic identity is built on "we", or "ours", identified exclusively with "our" ethnic group, opposed to "not us" or "stranger", i.e. with all the other ethnic groups. If corresponding identities are built on such a division, then it can be assumed that in Russia there are many nations and, accordingly, many national identities - Russian, Tatar, Bashkir, Buryat, Lezghin, etc. With a certain interpretation, they can contradict each other and even exclude each other.

For a correct understanding of these arguments, it is important to emphasize that in the identity of Russians there is a significant element of ambivalence, since representatives of the overwhelming majority, if not all peoples of Russia, realize their identity not on the basis of the criterion of

ethnicity alone.

For example, the peoples of the North Caucasus, and possibly the peoples of the national republics of other regions too, have several levels of identity: ethnic, intermediate, republican and all-Russian. Ethnic identity is understood as a person's awareness of belonging to a particular ethnic group, such as Avars, Lezgins, Cherkess, Chechens, etc.

This level is characterized by such constituents as the languages, territories, myths, legends, traditions, culture, customs, shrines, heroes, martyrs, behavioral stereotypes, etc. that are appropriate for particular ethnic group. Due to a whole complex of factors, the second higher more widely perceived intermediate level of identity is formed on the basis of the people, whose name denotes the corresponding language group of the Caucasian-Iberian language family - Avar-Andean, Lezghin, Adyghe-Circassian. Thanks to the complex of factors the third - republican - level of identity of the peoples of the corresponding national republic, perceived as a single socio-cultural, political-cultural, economic space, is formed.

From this point of view, the fourth, highest level of all-Russian - civil or political - identity is of key importance. On this basis, the concept of the "Russians" is created. This concept is not reduced only to the formally fixed status of Russian citizenship. It includes the historical, socio-cultural, political and cultural experience of living together of the peoples of Russia. At the institutional level, the question of identifying as Russians all citizens of Russia, regardless of their ethnicity, is enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Of course, this is a civil or political identity. Meanwhile, self-identification of a single citizen according to the formula "I am a Russian" is not always unequivocal. Depending on socio-demographic characteristics, political preferences and cultural orientations, social and professional affiliation, place of residence, positive or negative experience of inter-ethnic communication, etc., self-identifications of different citizens may contain psychological and other nuances and differences. socio-demographic characteristics, political affiliation and cultural orientation, place of residence, positive or negative experience, inter-ethnic communication, etc., may contain semantic, emotional and psychological nuances and differences.

With all the possible reservations on this issue in Russia, the formula "unity in diversity" or "diversity in unity" is relevant. The identity of a civil or political nation implies the existence of symbolic, socially constructed meanings, meanings shared by society as a whole, and not by any single ethnic or other community. Being representatives of this or that Russian ethnos, all of them are simultaneously citizens of the Russian Federation. Traditionally, in Russia, ethnic and supra-ethnic principles, which contradict each other, essentially coexist side by side in the interpretation of Russian identity. In this regard, there is an obvious contradiction, for example, between the concepts of ethnic Russian (Russkaya) identity and Russian (Rossiyskaya) civil-political identity. If in the first case, Russian identity as such has ethnical connotation, in the second case it is based on

supra-ethnic, civic or political level. However, we can talk about the same dual identity of all the peoples of Russia, for instance, ethnic Tatar identity and Tatar all-Russian civil-political identity. At the same time, we regret to note the fact that the process of forming a sense of socio-cultural, political-cultural consolidation of Russian co-citizenship and, accordingly, of Russian national civil or political identity by now is not complete.

Of course, it would not be entirely correct to say that in Russia there are no inter-ethnic, intercultural, inter-confessional and other related problems and those generated by them. For all that, in conditions of living together for many generations in a single state, almost all aspects of life of the overwhelming majority of the peoples of Russia underwent a profound transformation on the paths of secularization and modernization. They deeply affected not only social, economic and political structures, but also the very lifestyle, the system of values, orientations and attitudes, undermined or completely destroyed the traditional institutions regulating the daily lives of people. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, multilateral relations, integrally pervading economic, cultural, educational, spiritual, political and other realities, have become firmly established fact of life of all the republics and regions of Russia.

As for the current situation, globalization and the information and telecommunication revolution are unprecedentedly intensifying the processes of migration, mixing of nations, unification, universalization of the most important spheres of public life. These processes, in turn, lead to leveling, erosion, erasure of the systemic and structural components of the socio-cultural identity of national minorities, and in particular of small indigenous peoples. Under these conditions, the tendency towards assimilation of national minorities prevails all over the world. Moreover, in the national republics of the Russian Federation, for example, of the North Caucasus, small nations undergo a double assimilation: on the one hand, in relation to the leading ethnos in the language group (Avar, Lezgin, Adyg, etc.) and, on the other hand, to Russia as a whole.

An increasing number of representatives of the youth of the peoples of the North Caucasus travels outside their republics in search for a job to other, first of all, Russian subjects of the Federation. They, as a rule, settle dispersed, which, in turn, leads to a significant weakening, and even to the termination of relations between representatives of the respective ethnic groups. Accordingly, the space and possibilities of applying native languages are narrowed. In such a situation, the problem of preserving the ethno-cultural identity, language, and culture of national minorities becomes ever more important. Unable to withstand the powerful waves of globalization and informatization, purely ethnic cultures and purely ethnic identities cease to exist. Moreover, the question of their physical survival arose, since the tendencies toward their assimilation are inexorably accelerated. From this point of view, of interest are the data of a study conducted by UNESCO and Rosstat in 2012,

according to which more than 40 ethnic groups of Russia are facing the threat of extinction, and 7 languages are irretrievably lost.

According to the data provided in the dictionary-reference book "Languages of the peoples of Russia. Red Book", the group of disappearing includes the languages of more than twenty ethnic groups of the Caucasian-Iberian language family of the North Caucasus, such as Aguls, Andeans, Archins, Akhvaks, Bezhtas and others [8]. Of particular interest are the data according to which, despite the noticeable increase in the post-Soviet period, the number of pupils studying the Adyghe language, the majority of students from Adyghe families in the school in the city Maikop - the capital of the Republic of Adyghea - communicate with each other in Russian. Moreover, at school only 1% of the Adyghe people speak their native language, and 32% of the Adyghe language "do not speak at all" and 25% - "speak it with great difficulty" [7].

According to other data, Abazins use numerals in their native language only up to ten, generally counting in Russian. Russian names are also used to designate the days of the week. The Russian unions, "but", "and", the words "here", "already", "frequent", "all", "come on", "bye" and many other Russian words have become part of the colloquial Abaza language [5]. This trend is particularly pronounced among the urban population. In such a situation, the current younger generation loses the ability or even the desire to use their native language, culture and other attributes that determine national identity. With regret, we have to admit that this is exactly the situation with the majority of national minorities of the national republics of the North Caucasus. For all that, the paradox is the fact that the reverse side of globalization is fragmentation, the revival of localism, ethnicism, religious beliefs, a growing interest in a certain part of the representatives of national minorities to their cultures, languages, socio-cultural identity. It is obvious that, at least in the foreseeable future, there can be no talk of any kind of dissolution of the ethnic component of the Russian peoples and the affirmation of their, so to speak, crystal clean "Russianness".

Taking into account these realities in Russia, it is necessary, as rightly noted by the Russian researcher V. Martyanov, to strictly maintain the hierarchy of identities, in which "by definition, only the civil identity of a person, which is a priority before all his identities, including ethnic". The significance of such an approach to the question will become especially obvious if one considers that the Russian peoples have much more uniting than disjunctive beginnings and interests. Therefore, the main task facing all peoples, civil society institutions, government bodies, political parties, in a word, the whole society is the formation of an all-Russian civil political identity. In this matter, one cannot but agree with the mentioned Martyanov, in whose opinion, at present, Russia needs, first of all, the "civil nationalization of the state", "depoliticization and denationalization of the ethnic identity... bringing the ethnic out of the political and legal spaces" [11, 12]. Therefore, ethnic and religious

affiliation, as well as the creation of various kinds of public organizations on ethnic, confessional and other grounds, should become not a political, but a public affair of citizens. Civil or political identity can be associated only with a nation-state and with a complex of national ideals, symbols, myths, a single socio-cultural and political-cultural system, if you wish, with a national mission.

## 5. Conclusions

For a state claiming viability and a historical perspective, a coordinate system is necessary, implying its own more or less distinct point of reference. Perhaps the ancient Roman statesman and thinker Seneca was right, who said that for a ship, the port of destination of which is unknown, there is no fair wind. It seems that such a fair wind is also necessary for human communities. The point is that for the formation of a civic-political nation and national identity it is necessary to provide conditions for the formation of common and understandable to all peoples of the federation of meanings, images, ideals that are able to unite all of them into a single whole. They can provide the necessary fair wind for the economic, technological, social, spiritual progress of Russia. They are affirmed and legitimized not through the denial or debunking of cultures or ideals of other nations, but through a striving for creation, creative mastering of all the viable and positive from the heritage of its constituent peoples on the paths of forming a civil-political identity, which, in turn, can only be associated with a nation-state. In this sense, "Russians" are, in essence, a collective name of representatives of all the peoples of the Russian Federation, regardless of their ethnic, racial, religious or other affiliation.

For all that, it would not be correct and premature to talk about the final melting of multitudes of peoples that make up the population of the Russian Federation into a single, finally institutionalized Russian nation. It can be argued that in the formation of a Russian civil-political nation the last dots over *i* are still not put. The famous American ethnologist E. Smith, along with the terms "ethnos" and "nation", introduced the concept of the so called "would be nation" or "potential nation", believing that most modern nations belong to this category [17]. Perhaps this category should also include the Russian nation. Of interest is the fact that so far among the researchers involved in this issue, there is no consensus about what arose before - nationalism, nation or nation state. Many researchers note, not without reason, that it is not nations that create states and nationalism, but, on the contrary, both the nation and nationalism are created by the state. Specialists are still unable to reach a consensus on what exactly prevailed in the unification process, for example, of Italy - the policy of state-building under the direction of Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, or the formation of a new nation by the people of Italy themselves, led by J. Mazzini and J. Gariibaldi. As for Germany, one cannot but admit that long before the unification there existed a strong national movement. But it is impossible not to acknowledge the fact that in many respects united Germany was the brainchild of

the iron chancellor O. Bismarck.

Often, nationalism is largely born precisely in relation to the already established national state. Perhaps, in this sense, the state precedes nationalism, and not vice versa, although here the role of the processes taking place in the society itself is important. In many respects, the well-known English scientist E. Hobsbaum was right when he claimed that, nations are "a dualistic phenomenon created primarily from above, but which cannot be understood without studying the processes that followed from below, that is, without aspirations, hopes, needs, desires and the interests of the common people, who not always belonged to the nation, but that did not make them less nationalistic" [8].

It would be an unacceptable misunderstanding that a nation, like a state, can emerge spontaneously on the basis of fraternity or another positive impulse. As for the Russian nation and Russian statehood, few can deny the fact that they were created by the purposeful efforts of the Moscow kings (tsars) who turned the small Moscow kingdom (tsarstvo). into a great multinational empire. The imperial center, whether the Russian empire or the USSR, was the most important factor for incorporating a multitude of peoples, diverse regional and ethno-national communities into a wider socio-cultural space, into a single state. Therefore, it is obvious that the federal center plays the key role in creating the conditions for the formation (It's about formation, not otherwise) of a single Russian national identity. As B. V. Mezhyuev notes, on this way "Russia is being tested for the validity of its centuries-old claims to a "civilization feature"- it cannot be excluded that sociocultural innovations coming from the West will be accepted in our country sooner or later, especially since Russia is more significant than the material capabilities of all potential isolationists" [13]. Obviously, the realization of this goal will require a lot of time, the efforts of the institutions of the civil society and the state, the desire of all constituent peoples and ethnic groups of the Russian Federation, the intellectual, political, spiritual elite, and the political will of the leadership of the state.

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## Biography



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