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## *Constructing Ethnic Diversity as a Security Threat: What it Means to Russia's Minorities*

### **Abstract**

This article analyses the Russian government's securitisation of inter-ethnic relations, and national minorities' responses to such processes. While Russia's securitising dynamics have been linked to threats associated to ethnic groups (perceived as) culturally distant from the Russian majority (such as non-Slavic and Muslim minorities), this article argues that securitisation can affect all of Russia's national minorities (including Slavic and well-integrated communities). Through the analysis of the securitisation of three, partly converging, spheres of domestic politics (civil society, migration, and minority issues) the article highlights forms of (in)security impacting upon national minorities with reference to their *experience of securitisation* and format of their *civic engagement*. The article contributes to research exploring the relationship between security and minority studies, through a bottom-up perspective focusing on national minorities' experience of securitisation. It employs empirical data based on semi-structured interviews with minority representatives held in 2015-2016 in six locations of the Russian Federation.

### **1. Introduction**

This article analyses the Russian government's securitisation of inter-ethnic relations, and how national minorities experience – and respond to – such processes. Post-Soviet Russia has built a narrative around the image of a multi-ethnic and largely tolerant society (with reference to its 'unity in diversity'<sup>1</sup>), but also around the idea of an underlying volatility of inter-ethnic relations; the latter is presented as requiring the state's management of diversity so as to preserve a delicate societal balance. The threat has been primarily linked to the 'ethnic other', or communities regarded as culturally and ethnically distinct from the Russian majority, who have become targets of suspicion, racial discrimination and, at times, hate crime. Yet this article argues that Russia's securitisation of inter-ethnic relations impacts upon national minorities more widely, and not exclusively those who are perceived by the Russian majority as displaying a marked cultural disaffinity. Sweeping effects of securitisation derive from situating inter-ethnic relations within a broader securitising context.

This article addresses the securitisation of three, partially overlapping, spheres of domestic politics – civil society, migration,<sup>2</sup> and minority issues themselves. This triple form of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Council of Europe, *Fourth Report submitted by the Russian Federation pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, 20 December 2016, ACFC/SR/IV(2016)006 p.10 (para.11), <<https://rm.coe.int/16806fd935>>, visited on 14 January 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Migrants are sometimes referred to as 'new minorities'. In this article I differentiate between migrant communities and those with a traditional presence in Russia, given their different experience of (in)security,

securitisation creates (in)security that affects national minorities in two ways. First, with reference to minorities' *experience of securitisation* – by influencing their perceptions of Russia's inter-ethnic relations and attendant security implications, and, in some cases, arousing concerns over the state's construction of discourses positioning minorities as objects of securitising processes. Second, securitisation influences the format of *civic engagement* of minority representative organisations – the type of activities in which they engage, and modalities of interaction with the state authorities.

This article contributes to research exploring the relationship between security and minority studies.<sup>3</sup> It does so through a bottom-up perspective focusing on the “subjective element” of security (individual experiences).<sup>4</sup> It unravels national minorities' *responses* to securitising processes, using a wealth of empirical data that bring to the fore the voices of minority representatives themselves.

The article can be seen in the context of the literature considering the contestation of the “logic of security”,<sup>5</sup> in instances of non-alignment of societal (of particular communities) and state security.<sup>6</sup> A large body of literature has taken the view that securitisation unleashes forces that tend to have a detrimental effect on society;<sup>7</sup> the Copenhagen school, in particular, deems desecuritisation as normatively superior to (and more effective than) securitisation.<sup>8</sup> This article acknowledges that security does not forcefully impact negatively national minorities:<sup>9</sup> security-related processes could potentially benefit all residents in a particular state, by strengthening societal stability (including through the containment of inter-ethnic tensions) and by addressing socio-economic insecurity of vulnerable groups (such as minorities and migrants). However, in the cases analysed in this article, securitisation has

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while also acknowledging the partial overlap of the two categories, particularly with reference to instances of securitisation and generalised suspicion (as will be seen below).

<sup>3</sup> A. Carlà, ‘Societal Security in South Tyrol: A Model to Deal with Ethnic Conflicts’, 12: 1 *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* (2013) p. 56; M. Jutila, ‘Desecuritizing Minority Rights: Against Determinism’, 37: 2 *Security Dialogue* (2006) p. 167; P. Roe, ‘Securitization and Minority Rights: Conditions of Desecuritization’, 35: 3 *Security Dialogue* (2004), p. 279; P. Roe, *Ethnic Violence and the Societal Security Dilemma* (Routledge, London, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> R. Wyn Jones, ‘On Emancipation: Necessity, Capacity, and Concrete Utopias’, in K. Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, 2005). At the same time, the “subjective element” cannot be divorced from intersubjective (involving interaction/mediation) and non-subjective elements (structures). J. Nunes, ‘Emancipation and the Reality of Security: A Reconstructive Agenda’, in T. Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics* (Routledge, London, 2015), pp. 145-146.

<sup>5</sup> T. Balzacq (ed.) *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics* (Routledge, London, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> B. Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, 1998) pp. 119-126.

<sup>7</sup> C. Aradau, *Rethinking Trafficking in Women: Politics Out of Security* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008); C. Aradau, ‘Security as Universality? The Roma Contesting Security in Europe’, in T. Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics* (Routledge, London, 2015) p. 89; M. Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (Routledge, London, 1996); M. Neocleous, ‘Inhuman Security’, in D. Chandler and N. Hynek (eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Human Security: Rethinking Emancipation and Power in International Relations* (Routledge, London, 2011), p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Wæver states that ‘desecuritizing politics (...) I suspect, would be more effective than securitizing problems’. O. Wæver, ‘Securitization and Desecuritization’, in R. D. Lipschutz (ed.) *On Security* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1995), p. 57

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion on this, see Nunes, *supra* note 4.

implied the creation of a zero-sum game of conflicting (in)securities, by which the benefits for the majority population (and, crucially, the political leadership) result in disadvantages for other communities. Such disadvantages, in the cases here examined, have included: a dilution of ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity (affecting the societal security of minorities); a reduced sense of personal safety (in the cases of migrants); and the impairment of minorities' civic engagement, ultimately affecting their full integration into Russian society. The resulting scenario is one of multiple and colliding security spheres, with dynamics that, by inhibiting the exercise of their human rights, are ultimately detrimental to sub-state communities,

The article proceeds as follows. First, I outline Russia's securitisation of minority issues and situate it within broader securitising processes. These dynamics are shown to construct diversity as a threat, and the state as guarantor of security. Second, I analyse minorities' own experience of securitisation, taking into account variance among respondents. Third, I link minorities' experience of securitisation to the format(s) of their civic engagement.

In this article I employ Buzan et al.'s conceptualisation of securitisation,<sup>10</sup> as the state's response to a situation presented as an existential threat by enacting measures going beyond what is considered 'normal'. The response is, then, transferred from the sphere of 'normal politics' to the security realm. This can be done in two ways: treating a situation as 'a special kind of politics' (when the need for special measures is invoked), or as 'beyond politics' (when the situation is dealt with in a space 'above politics', and beyond public scrutiny). Securitisation may also encompass situations in which emergency measures are not adopted in practice, yet a presumption is created that such measures *may be* introduced *as and when* needed.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, securitisation may be the outcome of acts that may not explicitly employ the language of threat.<sup>12</sup> This last type of securitisation, by which the state assumes the role of guarantor of security,<sup>13</sup> and becomes perceived as such, largely reflects the attitudes of respondents presented in this article, although some diverging viewpoints were also recorded.

The views of persons belonging to minorities are examined on the basis of data from interviews with a range of respondents, encompassing Finno-Ugric groups, Tatars, and

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<sup>10</sup> Buzan *et al*, *supra* note 6,

<sup>11</sup> Buzan *et al* (*ibid.*) argue, with reference to securitisation:

[W]e do not push the demand so high as to say that an emergency measure has to be adopted, only that the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which *it is possible to legitimise emergency measures* or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return and necessity. [*italics added*]. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> D. Bigo, 'Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease', 27: 1 *Alternatives* (2002) p. 63; J. Huysmans, 'The European Union and the Securitization of Migration', 38: 5 *Journal of Common Market Studies* (2000) p. 751; Nunes, *supra* note 4, p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> The Russian state has presented itself in this manner. For example, President Vladimir Putin has stated that existing inter-ethnic conflicts should be resolved by public authorities, including law-enforcement agencies. 'Vladimir Putin v Yoshkar-Ole provel zasedanie Soveta po mezhnatsional'nym otnosheniyam' [In Yoshkar-Ola Vladimir Putin held a meeting of the Council on Inter-ethnic Relations], *Pervyi Kanal*, 20 July 2017 <[https://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-07-20/329185-vladimir\\_putin\\_v\\_yoshkar\\_ole\\_provel\\_zasedanie\\_soveta\\_po\\_mezhnatsionalnym\\_otnosheniyam](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-07-20/329185-vladimir_putin_v_yoshkar_ole_provel_zasedanie_soveta_po_mezhnatsionalnym_otnosheniyam)>, visited on 15 March 2018.

persons originating from the (North and South) Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>14</sup> The study was part of a wider research project on non-territorial national cultural autonomy in Central and Eastern Europe undertaken by the University of Glasgow.<sup>15</sup> Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted between June 2015 and June 2016 in six cities of the Russian Federation: in four ethnic republics – Saransk (Republic of Mordovia), Petrozavodsk (Karelia), Kazan (Tatarstan) and Ufa (Bashkortostan) – as well as in Moscow and St. Petersburg. In total 76 persons were interviewed; 66 respondents were from minority organisations (national cultural autonomies and NGOs operating in the sphere of minority issues); 25 respondents were academics or public officials,<sup>16</sup> some of whom were also active in minority organisations (resulting in a partial overlap of categories). Interview questions were on a range of subjects relating to Russia’s inter-ethnic relations, national cultural autonomy, and minority rights. Interviews were subsequently transcribed and coded in NVivo. This article includes the analysis of interview data corresponding to the codes of ‘security’ and ‘early warning’ (the securitisation of minority issues by the state, or perceived threats linked to inter-ethnic relations).

Ethnic affiliation was determined on the basis of self-identification by the respondents. Unless otherwise indicated, the respondents cited in this article represented minority organisations. Respondents are referred to with a code in square brackets; details on respondents and interviews are provided in Table 1.

## 2. The State as Securitising Actor

In the post-Soviet period the Russian state has presented itself as an inclusive, multi-ethnic polity by promoting the narrative of a predominantly civic Russian identity (*rossiiskaya natsiya*).<sup>17</sup> At the same time, state policies have placed the Russian language at the core of Russia’s multi-ethnicity, treating it as a unifying factor between its disparate ethnic groups.<sup>18</sup> Russian official positions have also implied a relative openness to immigration, mostly from

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<sup>14</sup> Ten respondents did not belong to an ethnic minority.

<sup>15</sup> The research for this article was carried out under the project ‘National Minority Rights and Democratic Political Community: Practices of Non-Territorial Autonomy in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe’ (2014-2017). The research was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number ES/L007126/1]. The data have been deposited with the UK Data Service Data, Collection Number 852375.

<sup>16</sup> In some cases *former* public officials.

<sup>17</sup> See V.A. Tishkov, ‘Rossiiskaya Natsiya i Rossiiskie Natsional’nosti [Russian Nation and Russian Nationality]’, in V.A. Tishkov (ed.) *Rossiiskaya Natsiya: Stanovlenie i Etnokul’turnoe Mnogoobrazie [The Russian Nation: Formation and Ethnocultural Diversity]* (Russian Academy of Sciences, p. 13, 2011), p. 13. However, this civic identity tends to have ethnic Russian undertones. F. Prina, *National Minorities in Putin’s Russia: Diversity and Assimilation* (Routledge, London, 2016), pp. 96-107.

<sup>18</sup> For example, in a 2017 speech, Putin recalled that Russian was not only the country’s ‘language of inter-ethnic communication’, but also ‘the natural spiritual framework of our entire multinational country’. ‘Vladimir Putin v Yoshkar-Ole provel zasedanie Soveta po mezhnatsional’nym otnosheniyam’ (*supra* note 13). See also, *inter alia*, Putin’s 2012 state of the nation address:

For centuries, Russia developed as a multi-ethnic nation . . . a civilisation-state bonded by the Russian people [*ruskii narod*], Russian language and Russian [*ruskii*] culture native for all of us, uniting us and preventing us from dissolving in this diverse world.

President of Russia, Address to the National Assembly of the Russian Federation, 12 December 2012, <<http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4739>>, visited on 1 February 2019. Similar wording can be found in the 2012 presidential Decree ‘On the Strategy of State Nationality Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025’, No. 1666, 19 December 2012.

former Soviet states, on which the Russian state relies to compensate for its own demographic decline: immigration supplies the workforce needed to sustain several industries (particularly construction, but also agriculture and the hospitality business). In turn, migrants often support families in the countries of origin through financial remittances.<sup>19</sup> A significant portion of Russia's migrants originate from Central Asian states:<sup>20</sup> according to 2013 data, migrants' top two countries of origin after Ukraine were Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.<sup>21</sup>

### ***2.1 Security Concerns and Longing for Stability***

As migration waves occurred, Russia's nationalities policies have increasingly displayed a pronounced security component. Effectively, official narratives have oscillated between two poles: one that presents Russia as a (multi-ethnic) state whose policies facilitate peaceful inter-ethnic relations; and another that constructs an underlying threat of inter-ethnic friction that may jeopardise the country's stability. Security concerns have emerged during a period of uncertainty as to the definition of Russian identity following the removal of the Soviet superstructure. The renegotiation of a post-Soviet Russian identity implied, among other things, drawing a "line of demarcation between "our own people" and "aliens" ", as Abashin writes.<sup>22</sup> Migration flows have intensified at this critical juncture, while Russian citizens and recent migrants no longer share a common Soviet identity. In particular, younger migrants have inhabited a cultural environment which no longer presupposes communalities stretching across former Soviet countries, in the shape of shared norms or fluency in Russian; recent migrants are, consequently, more readily seen as 'cultural aliens' by ethnic Russians. The rigidity of perceived ethnocultural boundaries between communities, already pronounced during the Soviet period,<sup>23</sup> seems to have been compounded since the 1990s, with the consolidation of a "highly hierarchical account of cultural diversity".<sup>24</sup>

Alongside these complexities, several factors have contributed to forging a link between ethnic diversity and perceptions of insecurity in post-Soviet Russia. These include: the eruption of two ethnic conflicts in Chechnya; the presence of insurgents in the North

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<sup>19</sup> M. Laruelle, 'Central Asian Labor Migrants in Russia: The "Diasporization" of the Central Asian States?' 5: 3 *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (2007) p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> On migrants from Central Asia, see, among others: Laruelle (2007, *ibid*); S. Abashin, 'Central Asian Migration: Practices, Local Communities, Transnationalism', 51:3 *Russian Politics and Law* (2013) p. 6; S. Abashin, 'Migration from Central Asia to Russia in the New Model of World Order', 52: 6 *Russian Politics and Law* (2014) p. 8; E. Nikiforova and Olga Brednikova, 'On Labor Migration to Russia: Central Asian Migrants and Migrant Families in the Matrix of Russia's Bordering Policies', 66 *Political Geography* (2018) p. 142; M. Reeves, 'Clean Fake: Authenticating Documents and Persons in Migrant Moscow', 40(3) *American Ethnologist* (2013) p. 508. See also below (Section 3.2.1 – 'Insecurity of (Real or Perceived) Migrants').

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF, *Migration Profiles*, <<https://esa.un.org/migmgmprofiles/indicators/files/Russia.pdf>>, visited on 18 January 2019).

<sup>22</sup> S. Abashin (2013), *supra* note 20, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> R. Brubaker, 'Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account', 23: 1 *Theory and Society* (1994) p. 47; F. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Culture and Society after Socialism (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2005); R. G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1993); R. G. Suny and Terry Martin, *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> V. Tolz and Sue-Ann Harding, 'From "Compatriots" to "Aliens": The Changing Coverage of Migration on Russian Television', 74 *The Russian Review* (2015) p. 455–6.

Caucasus; instances of terrorist acts (including in the heart of Russia – Moscow and St Petersburg); repeated outbreaks of inter-ethnic riots;<sup>25</sup> and state-sponsored discourses stressing the importance of national unity, implying that Russia’s heterogeneity may constitute a menace.<sup>26</sup>

Generalised societal suspicion has tended to centre around the idea of the ‘ethnic other’, or the highest level of perceived alterity vis-à-vis the Russian majority, leading to a sense of cultural incompatibility or unassimilability. While that of the ‘ethnic other’ is a nebulous concept largely escaping categorisation, it can generally be linked to individuals who can be visibly identified as non-(ethnic)Russian because of (often only slightly) darker features than the ‘average Russian’, and/or Turkic or Asiatic ‘appearance’. Persons to whom the concept (consciously or unconsciously) applies tend to originate from the (North and South) Caucasus and Central Asia, and are generally viewed as ‘culturally distant’ from the majority population. Other minorities – ranging from, for example, Tatars, to persons belonging to Finno-Ugric groups, to non-Russian Slavs, such as ethnic Ukrainians or Belarusians – tend to be perceived as having diminishing ‘degrees’ of otherness from the Russian majority. Clearly such constructs imply processes of *racialisation*. This is described by Kosygina – with reference to migrants from the former Soviet republics – as “a representational process of constructing the ‘Other’ by ascribing meaning to real and imagined biological characteristics of people”.<sup>27</sup> She adds that:

‘Russian’-looking people are assigned to one group, while people who have features (colour of skin, form of nose or eyes, etc.) which are defined as ‘non-Russian’ find themselves ascribed to another group.<sup>28</sup>

‘Non-Russians’ (*ne-russkiye*) are also referred ‘person(s) of Caucasian nationality’ (*litso kavkazkoi nationalnosti*), ‘blacks’ (*chernye*), and a range of derogatory expressions<sup>29</sup> The use of pejorative remarks to describe non-Russians suggests that their cultural distance from the majority is coupled to a perception of their inferiority. Moreover, the media and public discourses have tended to portray negatively the ‘non-Russian’ characteristics of visible minorities.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Among others, in Kondopoga (Karelia, 2006), and in Moscow (2010 and 2013). See M. Laruelle, ‘Anti-Migrant Riots in Russia: The Mobilizing Potential of Xenophobia’, 141 *Russian Analytical Digest*, 23 December 2013, pp. 2–4.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Prina on judgements of the Russian higher courts referring to national unity versus diversity. F. Prina, ‘Linguistic Rights in a Former Empire: Minority Languages and the Russian Higher Courts’, 10 *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* (2011) p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> L. Kosygina, ‘Constructions of the “Other”: Racialisation of Migrants in Moscow and Novosibirsk’, in *Cultural Diversity in Russian Cities: The Urban Landscape in the Post-Soviet Era.*, edited by Cordula Gdaniec (Berghahn Books, New York, 2010), p. 50. Similarly, Reeves describes racialisation as ‘the discursive and material processes through which distinctions attributed to “race” come to acquire social salience’. Reeves, *supra* note 20, p. 512.

<sup>28</sup> Kosygina, *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*. See also M. L. Roman, ‘Making Caucasians Black: Moscow Since the Fall of Communism and the Racialization of Non-Russians’, 18: 2 *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* (2002) p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, (*Third*) *Opinion on the Russian Federation*, ACFC/OP/III(2011)010, 25 July 2012, para.6, available at

Besides the suspicion of the ‘ethnic other’, security concerns have casted a wider net, encompassing national minorities more broadly (including settled, Slavic and largely Christian communities), as will be shown below. The backdrop to these dynamics is a longing for ‘normality’ triggered by the grave challenges of the transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period, and the political and economic volatility of the turbulent Yeltsin years.<sup>31</sup> Thus, past (and present) hardships can result in the conflation of political instability with insecurity, as the former leads to socio-economic precariousness across societal strata, exacerbating widespread vulnerabilities linked to low income and limited access to services.

These factors have contributed to legitimising political centralisation in the name of stability under Putin’s leadership, including through securitising moves, as well as creating a receptive audience to the discursive representation of a strong Russia, able to withstand security threats.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, a crucial aspect of Russia’s securitising processes under Putin has been not (only) guaranteeing national security as such, but safeguarding the stability of the existing political order.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, extremism and other legislation has been applied selectively (sometimes abusively) to reduce (political) threats towards the regime.<sup>34</sup>

## ***2.2 Securitising Civil Society, Migration and Minority Issues***

The intensification of security measures under Putin has often been associated to his own security background (in the KGB and as former director of the FSB), and the fact that since his advent to power he has surrounded himself by *siloviki*.<sup>35</sup> Yet securitising acts have gone much further, permeating Russia’s domestic policies – with reference to the security forces, the media, civil society, migration and the economy<sup>36</sup> – as well as impacting upon the country’s foreign policy.<sup>37</sup> I focus here on a triple form of securitisation, encompassing civil society, migration and minority issues.

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<<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c6a6>>, visited on 1 February 2019.

<sup>31</sup> M. Laruelle, ‘Rethinking Russian Nationalism: Historical Continuity, Political Diversity, and Doctrinal Fragmentation’, in M. Laruelle (ed.) *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia* (Routledge, London, 2009), p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> A. Snetkov, *Russia’s Security Policy under Putin: A Critical Perspective* (Routledge, London, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> This point was reiterated by a respondent with reference to the sphere of inter-ethnic relations [2.1]. See Table 1.

<sup>34</sup> State intervention has been principally triggered by the activists’ political stance vis-à-vis the state rather than the severity of security threats. SOVA argues that ‘on the whole, the objective is to neutralize political opponents rather than ensure public safety’. SOVA, *Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2017*, 24 April 2018,

<<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/reports-analyses/2018/04/d39253/>>, visited on 15 February 2019; similarly Human Rights Watch report that, in the year 2018, the Russian “[a]uthorities continued to stifle critical voices, particularly online, through criminal prosecutions on extremism charges.” HRW World Report 2019. *Russia: Events of 2018* <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/russia>>, visited on 1 March 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Former members of the security or armed forces.

<sup>36</sup> E. Bacon and Bettina Renz, *Securitising Russia: The Domestic Politics of Putin* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Snetkov, *supra* note 32.

First, with reference to *civil society*, a broad range of securitising moves were outlined by Bacon and Renz already in 2006.<sup>38</sup> Since then the trend has intensified: among recent measures that exceedingly affect civil society has been the adoption of the 2012 ‘Foreign Agents’ Law’.<sup>39</sup> The Law states that any organisation in receipt of foreign funding and engaging in ‘political activity’ must register as an “organisation performing the functions of a foreign agent”. The interpretation of ‘political activity’ is extraordinarily wide: all activities that influence policy-making and public opinion may be designated as ‘political’.<sup>40</sup> Registration as a foreign agent triggers measures for the control of the activity and flow of funds of organisations. The expression ‘foreign agent’ has explicit security connotations: it conjures up images of sinister, illicit activities of entities that direct their loyalty to foreign actors rather than to the Russian government, via discourses linking domestic and foreign enemies.<sup>41</sup> Other forms of securitisation have included surveillance activities by the Russian government,<sup>42</sup> and the (already mentioned) widespread use of extremism legislation to target ‘disloyal’ organisations.

Second, securitisation has occurred in the *migration* sphere. Official pronouncements have linked migrant labour to threats to the national economy (with reference to tax evasion, capital flight from Russia and increase in unemployment figures), as well to crime and terrorism.<sup>43</sup> The agency responsible for migration policies (the Federal Migration Service – FSM) was subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2001, which is traditionally headed by military figures: this signals that the state posits immigration as a threat, and the FMS has sought to strengthen control over migration.<sup>44</sup> The language employed by the state authorities in the sphere of migration has increasingly borrowed expressions from the security realm, according to a study analysing successive migration-related programmes by the St Petersburg authorities:<sup>45</sup> a respondent (an academic specialising on migration) observed that

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<sup>38</sup> Bacon and Renz, *supra* note 36.

<sup>39</sup> The full name is Federal Law ‘On the Amendment of Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in the Regulation of Activities of Non-Commercial Organisations Fulfilling the Functions of Foreign Agents’, No. 121-FZ, 20 June 2012.

<sup>40</sup> The law states that:

A non-commercial organisation [...] is considered to take part in political activity [...] if [...] it participates [...] in the organisation and implementation of political actions with the objective of impacting on decision-making by the state organs, with a view to changing their policies, and also [if it participates] in the formation of public opinion [...].

This paragraph was added by the ‘Foreign Agents’ Law to Art.2 of the Federal Law ‘On Non-Commercial Organisations’, No. 7-FZ, 2 January 1996.

<sup>41</sup> A manifestation of the same trend has been the adoption of the 2015 ‘Law on Undesirable Organisations’ (the full name is Law ‘On amendments of some legislative acts of the Russian Federation, No. 29-FZ, 23.March 2015. See BBC, “Russia’s Putin Signs Law against ‘Undesirable’ NGOs”, 24 May 2015, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-32860526>>, visited on 24 January 2019.

<sup>42</sup> A. Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia’s Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB* (Public Affairs, New York, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Bacon and Renz, *supra* note 36, pp. 126-127.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135.

<sup>45</sup> M. S. Rozanova and R. L. Boyarkov. ‘Migratsionnaya i Integratsionnaya Politika v Sankt-Peterburge: Dinamika Izmenenii [Migration and Integration Policy in Saint Petersburg: The Dynamics of Change]’, 10: 4 *Politeks - Politicheskaya Expertiza* (2014) p. 36.

such programmes had altered ‘conceptually’, increasingly intersecting with law-enforcement [3.1].<sup>46</sup>

Third, the Russian state has securitised issues linked to *national minorities*. The types of threats associated to inter-ethnic relations have been both violent (with reference to terrorist attacks and the Chechen wars) as well as identity-based (altering Russian culture and way of life).<sup>47</sup> Perceptions of violent threats have been linked to the demonisation of the Chechens in the media at various stages, and particularly immediately after the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chechen war,<sup>48</sup> when state narratives revolved around the need for emergency measures to withstand an existential threat. With the official termination of the conflict in April 2009, the state has repositioned its security discourses: it has presented the ‘normalisation’ of Chechnya and the North Caucasus,<sup>49</sup> yet inter-ethnic violence and terrorism have continued to be constructed as carrying an underlying menace, albeit one mostly managed by the state.<sup>50</sup> The state has thus assumed the role of ultimate security arbiter, which, to fulfil its tasks, is to be given free rein to intervene in emergency situations. This has led to responses to terrorist attacks that, despite being replete with errors and at times incompetence,<sup>51</sup> have not been subjected to public scrutiny and were instead portrayed (and mediated) as victories for the state.<sup>52</sup>

In feeding the image of a state effectively handling inter-ethnic tensions, security and anti-extremism feature very high in state policies. Already in 1996, the adoption of the Law on National Cultural Autonomy<sup>53</sup> was situated within a security context: it envisaged a non-territorial system of accommodation of minorities’ cultural and linguistic needs, so as to preempt claims for regional autonomy (or potentially separatism).<sup>54</sup> More recently, a manifestation of securitising trends has been the establishment, in March 2015, of the Federal Agency for Nationalities Affairs.<sup>55</sup> The Federal Agency replaced a department on inter-ethnic relations in the Ministry of Regional Development (which previously had been located in the Ministry of Culture). The Agency has been headed by Igor Barinov, a former FSB colonel who participated in anti-insurgency operations in Chechnya. In 2015, Barinov argued that state priorities in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations were radical Islam, extremism and hate

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<sup>46</sup> See Table 1.

<sup>47</sup> Bacon and Renz, *supra* note 36.

<sup>48</sup> J. Russell, ‘Terrorists, Bandits, Spooks and Thieves: Russian Demonisation of the Chechens before and since 9/11’, 26: 1 *Third World Quarterly* (2005) p. 101.

<sup>49</sup> Snetkov, *supra* note 32.

<sup>50</sup> We should note that some of the messages originating from the state (and disseminated through the media), are contradictory: the periodic demonisation of Chechens and an anti-migrant campaign in 2012-13 have alternated with official pronouncements on Russia’s multi-ethnic, multi-confessional – and generally peaceful – character. S. Hutchings and Vera Tolz, *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television: Mediating Post-Soviet Difference* (Routledge, London, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> Soldatov and Borogan, *supra* note 42.

<sup>52</sup> An example is the 2004 Beslan school siege, when Islamic militants took hostage over 1,100 people in a school in Beslan (North Ossetia), demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya. The fighting between the militants and the Russian security forces led to the death of 334 people. Soldatov and Borogan, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Law ‘On National Cultural Autonomy’, No. 74-FZ, 17 June 1996.

<sup>54</sup> Russian Duma, *Stenogramma zasedanya* [Transcript of Parliamentary Debates], 17 November 1995. This view was also expressed by several respondents, cited below (Section 3.1 – ‘The State as Guarantor of Security’).

<sup>55</sup> By Presidential Decree No.168, 31 March 2015.

crime.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the protection of national security has become the main objective of nationalities policies.<sup>57</sup>

The fact that the state institution responsible for nationalities policies had previously been situated within the Ministry of Culture had reflected a strong nexus between nationalities policies and cultural, folkloristic events, typical of the Soviet period.<sup>58</sup> While folklore has remained a prominent aspect of the expression of ethnic identity, the new Agency's priority is clearly security.<sup>59</sup> The security-centred approach to inter-ethnic relations, and its coexistence with folklore (and cultural programmes more broadly), underscores an oscillation between the two poles of 'security' and 'culture'. On the one hand, the cultural expression of diversity is 'sanitised' by being devoid of political content,<sup>60</sup> on the other, a special emphasis is placed on the *pre-emption* of tensions,<sup>61</sup> for example through state-sponsored 'programmes of tolerance'.<sup>62</sup> In the context of the security-culture binary, the balance has arguably tipped towards security in recent years.

Meanwhile, minority issues – and related, state-engendered securitising processes – partially overlap with migration. This is for multiple reasons. First, some minority communities, despite having a traditional presence in Russia and being recognised as national minorities,<sup>63</sup> are conflated with the category of 'migrants', when co-ethnics have moved from their country of origin to post-Soviet Russia in large numbers (principally as labour migrants).<sup>64</sup> In particular, persons of Central Asian origins tend to be lumped together as 'migrants' even when they have Russian citizenship and have resided exclusively in Russia. Second, those persons belonging to national minorities who are seen as having a 'high degree' of alterity vis-à-vis ethnic Russians – particularly ethnic groups with titular republics in the North Caucasus, regarded as remote (culturally as well as geographically) from the Russian 'core' – are often regarded as the 'ethnic other'. Third, given the frequent ambiguity of migrants' legal statuses,<sup>65</sup> various social categories have ultimately converged: as Reeves argues, “non-

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<sup>56</sup> 'Balans Barinova', *Natsionalnyi Aktsent*, 15 July 2015, available at: <<http://nazaccent.ru/content/16800-balans-barinova.html>>, visited on 24 January 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Alongside an emphasis on state-centrism and Russia's sovereignty. See B. Bowring, 'National Developments – Russia: Emphasis on Crimea, Russian Language, and National Security', 14: 1 *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* (2015) p. 186.

<sup>58</sup> This point was made by a respondent, director of an NGO and analyst [2.1].

<sup>59</sup> A respondent [2.1] believed that the Agency was created as a response to inter-ethnic riots in October 2013 in Moscow. See BBC, 'Moscow Riots after 'Murder by Migrant'', 14 October 2013, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24514345>>, visited on 24 January 2019.

<sup>60</sup> F. Prina, 'National in Form, Putinist in Content: Minority Institutions "Outside Politics"' 70:8 *Europe-Asia Studies* (2018) p. 1236.

<sup>61</sup> Writing about ethnic discrimination, Osipov similarly argues that cases that enter the public agenda are linked to national security, stability and public order, while routine discrimination tends to be ignored. A. Osipov, 'Ethnicity, Discrimination and Extremism in Russia', 57:2 *Problems of Post-Communism* (2010), p. 58.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, the programme for St Petersburg for the period 2011-2015, <<http://dum-spb.ru/programma-tolerantnost-v-sankt-peterburge-na-2011-2015-gg>>, visited on 24 January 2019.

<sup>63</sup> They are included in Russia's Reports to the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/russian-federation>>, visited on 24 January 2019.

<sup>64</sup> See also Abashin (2013) on the ambiguity of the category of 'migrant' in Russia, *supra* note 20.

<sup>65</sup> Linked to the complexities in Russian migration legislation; see below (Section 3.2.1 – 'Insecurity of (Real or Perceived) Migrants').

Russian” (*nerusskiye*), “of non-Slavic appearance” (*neslavianskoi vneshnosti*), “black”<sup>66</sup> (*chernye*), or “Central Asian” (*sredneaziatskie*)’ become conflated with ‘ “guest-worker” (*gastarbaiter*) and “illegal immigrant” (*nelegal*)’.<sup>67</sup> One final reason for the two categories’ congruence is that state institutions responsible for inter-ethnic relations – such as the Federal Agency for Nationalities Affairs – deal with matters concerning *both* settled communities and migrants. The expression ‘Nationalities Affairs’ refers to all forms of ethnic diversity: thus, minority issues and migration have been effectively merged in Russian official discourses. This has affected minorities’ experience of security.

### 3. Minorities’ Experience of (In)Security

Securitising dynamics have created particular forms of minority (in)security, which were highlighted by the respondents. We should note here that, of the minority organisations represented by the respondents, most were national cultural autonomies (NCAs), which sought to engage government structures on the basis of an institutional framework designed by the state itself. Others belonged to regular NGOs, but, in most cases, they had not positioned themselves antagonistically to the government. They had pragmatically adjusted to the contemporary Russian environment – which impedes civil society’s autonomous activity<sup>68</sup> and largely the expression of political opposition – whether willingly or reluctantly.<sup>69</sup> Thus, respondents mostly found themselves immersed in social structures where the opportunities for resistance to and emancipation from state security practices were untenable or counter-productive. Most had accepted the state’s justification for security practices; yet, as Balzacq notes,<sup>70</sup> this does not mean that people always agree with security practices, but rather their consent may be linked to a desire to abide by the existing rules.<sup>71</sup>

Overall, most respondents espoused the idea that inter-ethnic relations were generally peaceful in Russia, although tensions continued to simmer beneath the surface. Among the threats identified were political instability in the North Caucasus and various forms of religious- and ethnicity-based mobilisation (including radical Russian nationalism). The main distinction between respondents that emerged from the interview data related to whether or not they shared the state’s vision of a security framework associated to Russia’s multi-ethnicity. This was true in most instances, resulting in a general consensus in approaching diversity management.<sup>72</sup> In other – less frequent – cases, respondents, while recognising the

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<sup>66</sup> In the sense of ‘dark-skinned’.

<sup>67</sup> Reeves, *supra* note 20, p. 512.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example: L. Gilbert, ‘Crowding Out Civil Society: State Management of Social Organisations in Putin’s Russia’, 68: 9 *Europe-Asia Studies* (2016) p. 1553; K. Lavinski, ‘Non-Governmental Organizations in Russia: Legal Aspects’, 1 *Voprosy Rossiiskogo i Mezhdunarodnogo Prava* (2013) p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> A. Cheskin and Luke March, ‘State-Society Relations in Contemporary Russia: New Forms of Political and Social Contention’, 31: 3 *East European Politics* (2015) p. 261; F. Prina, ‘The Mechanics of Consensus: Non-Territorial National Cultural Autonomy and the Russian State’, *Nationalities Papers* (forthcoming, 2019).

<sup>70</sup> T. Balzacq, ‘Legitimacy and the “Logic” of Security’, in T. Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics* (Routledge, London, 2015), p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Vuori argues that “citizens do not have to believe in the system, but merely comply with it to a degree that will not jeopardize the ‘official truth’, by engaging in ‘rituals of compliance’”. J. A. Vuori, ‘Contesting and Resisting Security in Post-Mao China’, in T. Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics*, (Routledge, London, 2015), p. 34. Vuori was writing about post-Mao China.

<sup>72</sup> Prina, *supra* note 69.

existence of a range of threats, believed that security concerns were overstated, or even manipulated to serve the government's interests.

Another tendency common to most respondents was the perception of a partial overlap of migration and minority issues, thereby reflecting official discourses. Some respondents located the two spheres on a continuum, particularly when waves of co-ethnics had entered Russia as migrants: in these cases, assistance to migrants was a component of minority organisations' programme of activities. In other cases, the congruence of migration and minority issues was believed to adversely affect minority interests, by prioritising migrants' integration over the maintenance of society's linguistically and culturally rich tapestry. I first relay the instances in which the respondents' perceptions converged with state-endorsed discourses; subsequently, I examine the data from respondents whose views diverged from government positions, and who believed to have been 'securitised'.

### *3.1. The State as Guarantor of Security*

The first group of respondents generally referred to good inter-ethnic relations in Russia, and to a societal acceptance (if not always an appreciation) of diversity. The idealised narrative of harmonious inter-ethnic relations (a near-replica of the Soviet *druzhba narodov*, or 'friendship of peoples'<sup>73</sup>) emerged often in interviews. It was frequently accompanied by the observation, also common in official statements and the media, that Russia's historical trajectory as a multi-ethnic society had brought greater inter-ethnic harmony than multiculturalism in 'the West'.<sup>74</sup> The respondents mirrored another aspect of the government's security-related narratives by conveying the view that inter-ethnic relations necessitated careful management.

Other respondents who were less positive about government policies – considered insufficiently supportive of diversity – nonetheless identified instances in which the state had successfully addressed inter-ethnic tensions. The 1996 adoption of the above-mentioned Law on National Cultural Autonomy was described by various respondents in the context of management of existing or potential inter-ethnic tensions. A respondent saw the Law's adoption as a response to the 'parade of sovereignties',<sup>75</sup> which had taken place just a few years earlier, and to the first Chechen war [2.2] – by shifting the attention away from territorial autonomy and sovereignty to a (more benign and politically non-challenging<sup>76</sup>)

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<sup>73</sup> The idea of inter-ethnic accord among the nations of the Soviet Union. Nationalist sentiments and ethnic difference were expected to be ultimately transcended to engender the 'Soviet people'. On Soviet nationalities policies see above, note 23.

<sup>74</sup> Putin has called the Western multiculturalist model a 'compensation for a colonial past', while, he argued Russia had naturally developed as a 'poli-ethnic and poli-cultural' society. Speech by V. Putin, Meeting of the International Discussion Club 'Valdai', 19 September 2013, <<http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19243>> (in Russian) visited on 1 February 2019. See also Hutchings and Tolz, *supra* note 50.

<sup>75</sup> In 1990 and 1991 most of the republics of the RSFSR declared their sovereignty from the centre, in a phenomenon commonly known as the 'parade of sovereignties'.

<sup>76</sup> On this, see: A. Osipov, 'Non-Territorial Autonomy as a Way to Frame Diversity Policies: The Case of Russia', in E. Nimni, A. Osipov, and D. J. Smith (eds), *The Challenges of Non-Territorial Autonomy: Theory and Practice* (Peter Lang, Bern, 2013) p. 133; Prina, *supra* note 60. An academic interviewed also linked NCAs focus on culture to non-political (non-destabilising) activities [3.2].

cultural autonomy [1.1]. Indeed, the Law has resulted in the establishment of minorities' national cultural autonomies (NCAs) at the local, regional and federal levels, which carry out cultural events, promote minority languages and, in some cases, assist migrants' integration. Other respondents added that the Law was adopted at a time when friction was intensifying [1.2; 1;3], and 'it was able to lower the heat of inter-ethnic hatred' [2.3]. Similarly, respondents spoke about the importance of early warning mechanisms to anticipate possible sources of tension, as well as initiatives such as 'programmes of tolerance'.

In these cases, the state was, clearly, construed as the security guarantor, with primary responsibility for national stability in the context of nationalities policies. A respondent added:

All should be within the framework of the law, otherwise there will be anarchy.<sup>77</sup> The national question is a very *delicate* issue. To deal with it one has to be very careful. [...] A language should be preserved, I'm against globalisation. And we make some attempts for its preservation. [...]. But this should be *state policy*. We live here, we can't be against the state's nationalities policies, right? We can declare our dissatisfaction, but we can't be against it. How can we be against nationalities policies? We are not opposition, we are a public organisation [2.4].

Thus, civil society organisations were seen as supporting state policies, rather than deviating from them. Consistent with this approach, when asked about problems affecting their own communities, respondents at times referred to extreme positions taken up by (more radical) members of their ethnic communities [1.4; 1.5; 2.3]. Threats to stability were referred to as a concern more frequently than the lack of an environment enabling the preservation of diversity. By contrast, when speaking about the reduction of Russia's cultural and linguistic pluralism, respondents primarily situated it in the context of the inevitable predominance of Russian (and, in some contexts, English) in contemporary Russia, rather than state policies inimical to diversity.<sup>78</sup>

A disinclination to support 'extreme' positions, or claims that may be regarded as oppositional, was linked to the view that inter-ethnic relations are a 'delicate issue', carrying explosive potential:

A balance of interests between nations [ethnic groups] has to be found in society. If this equilibrium is not reached, there will be conflict. [...] A national [ethnic] conflict is the worst conflict. It's the most heated, the bloodiest of conflicts. We have been through it. [1.1]

In another case, a respondent stressed that inter-ethnic violence could be prevented only through sustained effort:

Inter-ethnic issues are the most difficult. We need to constantly deal with this problem, work on it year after year. Issuing laws doesn't resolve the problem. [Inter-

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<sup>77</sup> The respondent was referring to the adoption of the NCA Law.

<sup>78</sup> On this, see also Prina, *supra* note 17.

ethnic relations] are a very delicate matter: a few phrases pronounced recklessly can generate an inter-ethnic conflict that will cause blood to be spilled for a long time. [1.3]

Another respondent stressed even more emphatically that interethnic relations were a compelling security priority:

[T]he issue of inter-ethnic relations in Russia is a question of national security. I don't know whether we should be afraid of American missiles or China, but I am certain that inter-ethnic problems could tear Russia apart. [1.6]

The same respondent argued that political engagement by ethnicity-based organisations would lead to severe security concerns in a country as vast and heterogeneous as Russia:

Representatives of 200 groups live in Russia: if all of them establish their political parties and start competing in elections, it will lead to the disintegration of the country, a country with nuclear weapons. [...] If we allow this here, it will be a catastrophe [...]. In Denmark or South Tyrol they have [minority] political parties, it is possible – but not in Russia.<sup>79</sup> [1.6]

These respondents did not present themselves as targets of securitisation processes; at the same time, they had generally placed themselves in a position that effectively pre-empted their being associated to security concerns: they engaged in activities that could not be seen as remotely connected to extremist, or even political, acts.<sup>80</sup> This approach might have derived from a genuine disinterest in activities beyond narrowly-defined cultural programmes, or it might have been a way to circumvent possible charges of overstepping the boundaries of legitimate civic activism, which could result in securitisation.

### ***3.2 The State as a Source of Insecurity***

In contrast with the foregoing, some respondents considered the *state* itself a source of insecurity. Although they did not generally describe the state as a direct antagonist, they regarded some aspects of the securitisation of minority issues (combined with that of migration and civil society) a threat to their communities. These respondents saw state intervention as a double-edged sword: it provided some opportunities (some attention to diversity through designated institutions and financial support), but it also led to corrosive policies. The latter engendered situations of non-alignment between state security and societal security.<sup>81</sup> This creates a zero-sum game by which gains by one group in promoting its identity directly causes another group's insecurity. An escalation of tensions would lead to what Roe defines a “societal security dilemma”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> This and another respondent [1.7] also remarked that economic instability and low standards of living tended to fuel resentment, which could easily translate into xenophobic attitudes.

<sup>80</sup> Prina, *supra* note 60.

<sup>81</sup> Buzan *et al*, *supra* note 6, pp. 119–126.

<sup>82</sup> Roe describes the dynamic of the societal security dilemma in this way: “the measures that one side takes to defend its societal security (strengthen its identity) are *misperceived* by another as a threat to its own identity. Consequently, countermeasures are employed, thereby weakening the societal security of the first side”. [italics in original. P. Roe, ‘Misperception and Ethnic Conflict: Transylvania’s Societal Security Dilemma’, 28:1

Non-alignment of state and societal insecurity has multiple reasons. As Wæver notes, “security means different things to different societies, as the core fears of any group of nation are unique and relate to vulnerabilities and historical experiences”.<sup>83</sup> As he described in this section, security/isation was linked by some respondents to a perception of power as subordination or oppression.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, security is often constructed as exclusionary, drawing demarcating lines between groups.<sup>85</sup> As Aradau argues “closure and the creation of spaces of abjection are intrinsic to its practice. Security cannot remain open”:<sup>86</sup> it draws boundaries between those who are protected and those who are endangering security. In these instances, security implies an “order of fear”.<sup>87</sup>

In the case of Russia, and with reference to majority and minorities’ identities, zero-sum (in)security dynamics imply that, for example, the promotion of Russian as the state language (and language of the majority population) simultaneously causes the marginalisation of regional languages (thereby threatening minority identity). In turn, the promotion of regional languages can be interpreted as detracting from Russian nation-building. An example of how these processes may disadvantage national minorities was provided by one of the respondents, a Tatar academic and activist in Kazan [3.3]. He argued that the promotion of Russianness, packaged as Russian civic identity (*rossiiskaya natsiya*), in practice posed an existential threat to minority communities, as it hid dynamics of gradual assimilation into the Russian majority. The respondent believed that federal policies were facilitating cultural homogenisation as a vehicle to stability.<sup>88</sup>

The mere term *rossiiskaya natsiya* is quite disputed. In principle, as an idea it is quite acceptable. However, currently it is being used not for the unification of peoples [*narod*], but for their *assimilation*. [...] If it continues, more than hundred ethnic groups living in Russia will disappear and the problem will be solved by itself. [...] The federal centre says that many problems in today’s Russia result from the fact that it is so diverse. It means that if everybody were Orthodox and Russian, there would be no problems. [3.3]

In seeking ‘protection’ from the state, the leader of an NCA referred to the benefits of registering an organisation as an NCA (rather than an NGO), as “it shows the authorities we are playing by the rules;<sup>89</sup> we don’t want to break the law” [1.8]. Yet another respondent worried that an NCA (rather than an NGO) might draw more attention to itself; an application for a grant from an NCA might be “like a signal; [the local authorities might ask]: ‘why does

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*Review of International Studies* (2002) p. 73.

<sup>83</sup> O. Wæver, ‘Conflicts of Vision: Visions of Conflict’, in O. Wæver, P. Lemaitre, and E. Tromer (eds.), *European Polyphony: Perspectives Beyond the East-West Confrontation* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989), p. 301.

<sup>84</sup> This may generate an impetus for resistance, Vuori, *supra* note 71, p. 30.

<sup>85</sup> Aradau (2008, 2015), *supra* note 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* (2008), p. 162.

<sup>87</sup> Dillon, *supra* note 7, p. 16.

<sup>88</sup> See also Prina, *supra* note 17.

<sup>89</sup> By conforming to the framework on nationalities policies established by the state.

this autonomy need to be supported? Why are they asking money? For what? Let's check it out” [2.5].

### 3.2.1 Insecurity of (Real or Perceived) Migrants

In the opinion of these respondents, constructing diversity as a threat impacted on settled minorities with a long history of coexistence with Russians. At the same time, migrants experience particularly severe forms of insecurity. This derives primarily from their condition of legal uncertainty: Russian migration law's complexity and frequent amendment<sup>90</sup> routinely frustrate migrants' attempts to obtain valid legal documents and regularise their stay in the country.<sup>91</sup> Their documentary uncertainty often leads to a blurring of the line between migrants' legal and illegal statuses<sup>92</sup> and causes relentless suspicion. Public distrust is amplified through sensationalising media – featuring exposés of migrants residing illegally in crowded apartments, sometimes posted on social media<sup>93</sup> – and right-wing politicians employing anti-immigrant themes.<sup>94</sup> These processes are, in turn, exacerbated by the general devaluing (if not dehumanisation) of migrant workers as “expendable” *homo laborans*.<sup>95</sup> Such “expendability” likely results in a virtual absence of social responsibility towards migrants,<sup>96</sup> with the state's failure to address discriminatory treatment of migrants and a scarcity of social services accessible to them.<sup>97</sup>

Besides social insecurity, migrants experience continuous threats of raids and harassment by law-enforcement officials and special ‘vigilante groups’.<sup>98</sup> Racialisation causes hostility towards persons from the Caucasus and Central Asia (and predominantly Muslims), while more benign attitudes are directed at Slavic (and Christian) migrants, effectively leading to an ethnic hierarchy.<sup>99</sup> Frequent document checks of persons of ‘non-Slavic appearance’<sup>100</sup> have become socially accepted through habituation,<sup>101</sup> and even seen as necessary to subside

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<sup>90</sup> See also: Human Rights Watch, *Russia: Mass Detention of Migrants: Racial Profiling, Arbitrary Detention, Harsh Detention Conditions*, 8 August 2013 <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/08/russia-mass-detention-migrants>>, visited on 8 May 2019; and ACFC (n. 30), paras.125-130.

<sup>91</sup> Abashin (2013), *supra* note 20; Laruelle, *supra* note 19; Reeves, *supra* note 20; Human Rights Watch, *Are You Happy to Cheat Us?: Exploitation of Migrant Construction Workers in Russia*, 2009, <<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/02/09/are-you-happy-cheat-us-0>>, visited on 4 March 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Reeves, *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 514.

<sup>94</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *The ECRI Report on the Russian Federation (forth monitoring cycle)*, 20 June 2013, CRI(2013)40, para.111.

<sup>95</sup> E. Nikiforova and Olga Brednikova, ‘On Labor Migration to Russia: Central Asian Migrants and Migrant Families in the Matrix of Russia's Bordering Policies’, 66 *Political Geography* (2018) pp. 149.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> O. Borodkina, Nikolay Sokolov, Alexander Tavrovskiy and Liliia Pankratova. ‘Social Work with Muslim Migrants in Russia: Public Opinion Issues and Practical Perspectives’, 36: pp. 1–2 *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* (2017) p. 215.

<sup>98</sup> Vigilante campaigns against illegal immigrants; see, for example, A. Nemtsova, ‘Russia's New Vigilantes’. *Foreign Policy*, 3 March 2013, <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/04/russias-new-vigilantes>>, visited on 25 May 2019.

<sup>99</sup> A. Bessudnov, ‘Ethnic Hierarchy and Public Attitudes towards Immigrants in Russia’, 32: 5 *European Sociological Review* (2016) p. 567.

<sup>100</sup> M. Adjami, *Ethnic Profiling in the Moscow Metro* (Open Society Institute, New York, 2006).

<sup>101</sup> V. S. Malakhov *Skromnoe obayanie rasizma i drugie stat'i [The Discreet Charm of Racism and Other Articles]* (Dom Intellektual'noi Knigi, Moscow, 2001); Reeves, *supra* note 20.

societal threats.<sup>102</sup> Migrants (of ‘non-Slavic appearance’) have reported being watched as they entered shops, and experienced an intensification of police checks in the aftermath of terrorist acts.<sup>103</sup> This is another facet of zero-sum (in)security dynamics, by which the majority population’s sense of security is brought about by practices that trigger migrants’ insecurity. Reeves likens the condition of Central Asian migrants in Russia to a permanent ‘state of exception’,<sup>104</sup> in Agamben’s sense of the expression,<sup>105</sup> by which human rights are diminished through the extension of the government’s powers, justified as emergency security measures.

Insecurity extends to ‘imagined’ migrants. Given the noted overlap of the categories of ‘migrants’ and ‘minorities’, minorities seen to converge with the ‘ethnic other’ also tend to be associated to crime, corruption and disease.<sup>106</sup> Hostility particularly affects persons from the North Caucasus (especially Chechens) and Roma,<sup>107</sup> with references to ‘ethnic criminal groups’,<sup>108</sup> and reports of police extorting bribes from the same visible minorities.<sup>109</sup> The media and public discourse reproduce negative stereotyping of ‘non-Russians’.<sup>110</sup> Murders attributed to persons of ‘non-Slavic appearance’ have led to attacks on individuals who were seen to fit this description during instances of public unrest.<sup>111</sup>

According to a respondent, another way that both minorities and migrants experience insecurity stems from relations between Moscow and Russia’s ethnic regions or post-Soviet states:

If relations between countries are getting worse, it is all depicted on the media; NGOs and businesses [of minorities] feel pressure. It is a complex issue. If something happens somewhere, like the war in Chechnya, Chechens immediately feel this. It is visible in the media, in relations, in attitudes.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> V. S. Malakhov, ‘Rasizm i Migranty’ [Racism and Migrants], 2: 25 *Neprikosnovennyi Zapas* (2002) <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2002/5/mal2.html>> visited on 19 January 2019.

<sup>103</sup> At the same time, Kosygina notes that racialisation may also have positive outcomes: “representation of the ‘Other’ as different and ‘exotic’ creates additional opportunity for those non-Russian looking people whose appearance is defined as ‘Oriental’ to participate in the economy through selling their ‘Otherness’ to the local population”. Kosygina, *supra* note 27, p. 65.

<sup>104</sup> Reeves, *supra* note 20, p. 512.

<sup>105</sup> G. Agamben, *State of Exception* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005).

<sup>106</sup> Abashin (2013), *supra* note 20, p. 11.

<sup>107</sup> ECRI, *supra* note 94, paras 117, 121; ADC Memorial, *Structural discrimination against Roma in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, October 2018, <<https://adcmemorial.org/www/publications/structural-discrimination-against-roma-in-eastern-europe-and-central-asia?lang=en>>, visited on 1 March 2019.

<sup>108</sup> Bacon and Renz, *supra* note 36, pp. 128-130.

<sup>109</sup> ECRI, *supra* note 94, para.189.

<sup>110</sup> A. Verkhovsky, ‘Yazyk Vrazhdy Protiv Obschestva [Hate Speech against Society] (SOVA, Moscow, 2007). See also ACFC, *supra* note 30, para.6; ECRI, *supra* note 94, para.100.

<sup>111</sup> In Manezhnaya Square and Biryulevo district in Moscow, in December 2010 and October 2013 respectively. See N. Zakharov, ‘Rioting for Whiteness: Doing Race on the Squares of Moscow’, in *Race and Racism in Russia* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2015) p. 109.

<sup>112</sup> He referred to biased media coverage against certain minorities [2.2]. Others have discerned similar patterns: ECRI refers to Russian-Tajik tensions in November, resulting in public anti-Tajik statements and, subsequently, reprisals against Tajik migrants (ECRI, *supra* note 94, para. 111). The same respondent believed that, conversely, stable relations with certain post-Soviet countries would also be positively reflected in the media’s depiction of kin minorities.

Concerns linked to (legal or illegal) immigration are, clearly, not confined to Russia: in most countries migration routinely features in policy discourses and emerge in the media.<sup>113</sup> Immigrant cultures are often portrayed as a threat to national culture, activating concerns about cultural loss in the host state.<sup>114</sup> In Russia post-colonial attitudes have to be added to the equation, effectively resulting in expectations that persons associated with titular regions should reside therein.<sup>115</sup>

### 3.2.2 Minorities as Targets of Anti-Extremism Measures

Anti-extremism measures have had even more far-reaching implications as they condition not only persons associated to ethnic, cultural or religious alterity (and non-settled status), but minorities more broadly. Respondents from minority organisations expressed their sense of vulnerability to extremism charges, or at least to wide-spread suspicion of involvement in extremist activities. Besides a generalised societal prejudice, suspicion was linked by the respondents to their positions vis-à-vis the government, with reference to openly stated or implied criticism of the political *status quo*. Among the more severe cases was the statement of the leader of an NCA in Karelia:

I had a phone call from the FSB. They took me there and it went on for a few hours. At first they said: ‘Why do you need this? Why do it?’ Then they noticed that I didn’t agree and they said: ‘We know that you have a daughter, we know that you have a small granddaughter, and it could end badly’. [1.9]

This incident was linked by the respondent to his voicing support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity, by objecting to Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea. Similarly, a Tatar respondent in Kazan referred to the case of Rafis Kashapov,<sup>116</sup> a fellow Tatar activist and member of the nationalist organisation Tatar Public Centre, who in 2015 was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment on the grounds of inciting ethnic hatred and separatism for condemning the Crimean annexation [2.6]. Another respondent, director of an NCA, stated: “some accuse me of extremist positions, because I sharply criticise the authorities. This is not common; you will not hear this among other interviewees.” [1.10]

Other respondents had not directly been accused of extremism, although some believed they faced this menace. Two Tatar respondents criticised the elastic application of extremism legislation as a form of repression of minority organisations [2.6; 3.4]. Another, representing a Finno-Ugric community, observed that the onus was on minority organisations to

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<sup>113</sup> B. Anderson and Martin Ruhs, ‘Researching Illegality and Labour Migration’, 16 *Population, Space and Place* (2010) p. 175.

<sup>114</sup> S. Vertovec, ‘The Cultural Politics of Nation and Migration’. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011) p. 241.

<sup>115</sup> Tolz and Harding put it this way: “[t]hose who call North Caucasians “migrants” (often unconsciously) evoke the former colonial status of the North Caucasus, the legacy of which the Soviet integrationist project did not overcome.” Tolz and Harding, *supra* note 24, p. 473.

<sup>116</sup> RFE/RL, ‘Tatar Activist Get Three Years In Jail For Stance On Crimea’, 15 September 2015, <<https://www.rferl.org/a/tatarstan-crimea-activist-prison/27249218.html>>, visited on 1 March 2019. He was released in December 2017, and recognised by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience: AI, Russian Federation: Tatar Activist and Prisoner of Conscience Released: Rafis Kashapov, 19 January 2018, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/7742/2018/en/>>, visited on 1 March 2019.

demonstrate they did *not* represent a threat, in an environment that tended to presume their anti-establishment (and illegitimate) positions. He said:

Sometimes we feel depressed, because it's like we are trying [...] to *prove that* [...] *we are not enemies*, we are not separatists, extremists. We just want to survive, and we want to transmit this culture from generation to generation, for the future [...]. [2.5]

The same respondent sarcastically commented on the fact that, in his *oblast*, the same government department managed inter-ethnic *and* inter-confessional relations, by noting that this convergence derived from the authorities' wish to place "all dangerous things together". Another respondent, a Tatar activist and academic in Kazan, said:

[I]n Moscow people think that the more nationalists we have, the more problems we will have. If all people become Russians, we will live happily. We are treated as parasites just dreaming of tearing Russia apart. [3.4]<sup>117</sup>

In another case, a respondent belonging to the Finnish minority in St Petersburg referred to instances by which local authorities treated with suspicion Finnish organisations as the flag used by the community had also been adopted by a regional separatist movement, *Svobodnaya Ingria* (Free Ingria). He believed that "The authorities [we]re afraid. [They ask:]: 'what does this flag mean? Are the Finns separatists?'" [1.8]<sup>118</sup>

Meanwhile, an activist from a Turkic group (a minority originating from the North Caucasus) spoke about his wish for closer relations with Russia's other, multiple groups speaking Turkic languages. He stressed, however, that his position did *not* stem from pan-Turkism, as, he said, the expression had seditious connotations [2.8]. His position, he argued, was a moderate one: for example, he had organised an exhibition with photographs of ethnic minorities residing in Moscow (an activity which had been supported by the local authorities):

We wanted to show to the Moscow society that we live here, and we work everywhere. We are represented in the governmental sector, in banks, among teachers – we are everywhere, and you should see us, and you should understand that *we are not dangerous*, and we are part of this society. We work together. Maybe you don't know us, mostly because we are not connected with some scandals or something like that. We are not terrorists. We are just ordinary people who want to be heard, we have

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<sup>117</sup> This echoes the words of another respondent, cited above [3.3, p. 12].

<sup>118</sup> Another respondent belonging to the same Finnish community was similarly concerned: "The local residents, seeing this [news on 'separatism'] on television, think: 'what is happening with the Finns? What do they want?'" [2.7]. On the movement, see, for example, P. Goble, 'Regionalist Movements, Now Under Kremlin Attack, Must Focus on Small Steps if They are to Recover, Vitushkin Says', *Window on Eurasia -- New Series*, 16 February 2019, <<http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2019/02/regionalist-movements-now-under-kremlin.html>>, visited on 25 July 2019; and P. Goble, 'By Attacking 'Free Ingria' Leader, Moscow Highlights Regionalist Challenge to Itself in Russia's Northwest', *Window on Eurasia -- New Series*, 30 May 2016, <<http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2016/05/by-attacking-free-ingria-leader-moscow.html>>, visited on 25 July 2019.

our problems, we have our specific issues that should be taken into account, and you shouldn't deny us this on the basis of our surnames – for example, when you recruit us. Our message was this. [2.8]

In this sense, respondents attempted to promote degree of 'desecuritisation', by defusing the sense of threat, and seeking to demonstrate that the threat identified by the state was, in fact, spurious.<sup>119</sup>

### 3.2.3 Minorities as Internal Enemies

These citations reveal the respondents' yearning to demonstrate their moderate, non-extremist positions, and in some cases their frustration at a tendency for Russian society to distrust them. Similar societal perceptions identified minorities as (possible) internal enemies, acting as 'foreign agents' for external enemies.

The search for internal enemies – coalescing with external ones – is not a new phenomenon: a German minority respondent said that the German community in Russia had to start 'from less than zero' following the Second World War, in order to shake off a prejudice which had equated them to Nazi collaborators [1.10]. More recently (and in less extreme cases), a sense of threat has continued to be associated to communities forging transnational links, presumably to the detriment of their country of residence.

For example, while various respondents referred to the threat of being labelled 'foreign agents', one had experienced it first hand in her NGO, *Nuori Karjala* (Young Karelia). The organisation was added to the list of 'foreign agents' in 2016 for receiving a \$10,000 grant from the United Nations for a project on Finno-Ugric languages in Karelia (a republic of the Russian Federation neighbouring Finland), and for hosting a group of Finns during a study visit.<sup>120</sup> The organisation had been cooperating with Finnish institutions for years, given the linguistic affinity of Finnish and Karelian, and the geographic proximity. The respondent stated:

We did not think that we are doing something against the law, quite contrary: we were sure that we were developing civil society. [...] Even the President [Putin] announced a policy of control of those organizations receiving finances from abroad saying that they might be influenced by the West. [...] Personally, I am a bit confused about how I have to continue my civic activities. It is ridiculous to reduce our relations with the Finns, since Finnish and Karelian languages are very close: we use the same vocabulary, the same studies. We have relations that are very well-established between our communities of scholars. [...] It is impossible to stop these relations immediately. Currently, these relations are being traced and carefully studied [by the

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<sup>119</sup> On these processes, see Vuori, *supra* note 71, p. 34. Some of these respondents might have acted as what may be designated as "closed rebels", or persons who reject the security measure 'and covertly try to neutralize it'. G. T. Marx, 'Security and Surveillance Contests: Resistance and Counter-Resistance', in T. Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics*, (Routledge, London, 2015), p. 27.

<sup>120</sup> The list had 74 organisations in mid-2018. See Human Rights Watch, *Russia: Government vs. Rights Groups - The Battle Chronicle*, 18 June 2018, <<https://www.hrw.org/russia-government-against-rights-groups-battle-chronicle>>, visited on 19 January 2019.

Russian authorities]: each project, each connection. Those people who are responsible for analysing these connections are not interested in looking deeper [into what is happening]. If, for example, they see a *foreign* connection, it is considered bad *a priori*. [2.9]

These attitudes reflect the spread of anti-Western attitudes,<sup>121</sup> also evident in the discursive representation of the image of an enemy (*obraz vraga*) that can encompass both external and internal actors.<sup>122</sup> Unsurprisingly, NCAs and other minority organisations have distanced themselves from Western institutions. Some respondents reported refraining from applying for grants from Western funding bodies in light of the ‘Foreign Agents’ Law’.<sup>123</sup> According to a respondent from a minority NGO, the notion of an “external threat” was pivotal for the Russian state to solidify state cohesion [2.2]. Another respondent, director of an NGO and analyst, similarly referred to the state’s pursuit of a “civic solidarity” that would supersede ethnic particularities. Ethnic identity (and other solidarities) disperse loyalty to a range of recipients, while, in his opinion, the Russian authorities aimed at creating “a situation in which civic solidarity, loyalty to the authorities, would effectively be a common loyalty to the political leadership, and be the most crucial, the strongest element of loyalty” [2.1].

#### 4. Minority Institutions’ Civic Engagement in a Securitised Context

In parallel to minority (in)security, state policies and security narratives have influenced the *modus operandi* of minority organisations. In most cases respondents indicated that they cooperated with the state authorities, or, at a minimum, they respected basic rules of engagement.<sup>124</sup> Meanwhile, the state’s wish to involve minority organisations in the management of inter-ethnic relations is evidenced by 2014 amendments of the Law on National Cultural Autonomy, which added to the objectives of NCA “the realisation of activities directed at the social and cultural adaptation and integration of migrants”.<sup>125</sup> As an academic interviewed put it:

When the migration issue emerged, the authorities wanted NCAs to have a role in supporting migrants. [...] For example, the Moscow mayor’s office has a consultative council on relations with [ethnic] communities: how can it interact with Ukrainians and Azeris living in Moscow? So, they invite the leaders of the communities, and they say: ‘there is a big inflow of Azeris and Armenians’ [...], ‘help them to adapt better’ and ‘[help] us to have better contacts [with them]’ [3.5].

This broadening of the scope of activity of NCAs – originally intended primarily to regulate ethnic communities’ cultural and linguistic matters – might have been linked to security

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<sup>121</sup> L. Gudkov, ‘Structure and Functions of Russian Anti-Americanism: Mobilization Phase, 2012–2015’, 59: 4 *Russian Social Science Review* (2018) p. 332.

<sup>122</sup> Snetkov, *supra* note 32, p. 106-7.

<sup>123</sup> There were some exceptions, such as special conditions agreed with state organs, which, for example, enabled German NCAs to receive funding from German sources.

<sup>124</sup> Prina, *supra* note 69.

<sup>125</sup> Added to Article 1 through Federal Law ‘On Introducing Amendments to Articles 1 and 4 of the Federal Law ‘On National Cultural Autonomy’, No. 336-FZ, 4 November 2014. Another objective added was “the strengthening of the unity of the civic Russian nation (*rossiiskaya natsiya*)”.

concerns. Indeed, respondents referred to activities aiming at managing inter-ethnic relations and defusing tensions. For example, in Tatarstan, respondents spoke about the Council of the President [of Tatarstan] on Inter-Ethnic Relations, which, *inter alia*, involved early intervention to defuse inter-ethnic tensions:

Periodically the Council gathers, and issues are raised [...] about relations between ethnic communities, prevention of inter-ethnic [tensions]. The main task [...] is to intervene at an early stage: if a conflict appears, you have to suffocate it at an early stage. Our work, as public organisations, is to help if there is a conflict. There can be conflicts with Azeris, Uzbek, Armenians against Azerbaijanis. The representatives, the leaders go there [where a conflict has emerged]. When *you speak to your own people in your own language*, [and] you explain the situation, this works out a lot faster than using law and order. [1.2]

Other consultative councils at the regional level were described as having the function of “bridging the authorities and minorities”,<sup>126</sup> including through the creation of “mobile groups” which could mediate on location should tensions arise [3.6]. Other respondents emphasised engagement with law-enforcement organs: in the case of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan, a respondent – leader of an Uzbek NCA – mentioned regular meetings to address problems such as migrant workers’ unpaid salaries, or instances of police abuses [1.3]:

[T]he authorities tell us their problems, like that Uzbeks committed a certain violation of the law, and the Uzbeks say that our people were handled very roughly by the police. These are difficult problems, but we don’t just ignore them, we discuss them and find solutions. [1.3]<sup>127</sup>

A high-ranking member of a regional NCA, who was also a religious leader in Bashkortostan, referred to seminars on Islamic themes, which, *inter alia*, cautioned participants against religious extremism [1.14]. In line with the cited respondents’ statements, academics interviewed observed that “conflict management” and “peacekeeping” were among the aims of NCAs and other minority institutions [3.5; 3.7]:

[I]f there is a conflict, say at a market:<sup>128</sup> what to do? [...] the minority organisations can help resolve the conflict [...]. If it’s quiet, then they’ll get on with cultural things, and that’s all. [3.5]

This last citation exposes, once again, minority organisations’ main fields of activity, oscillating between cultural events and responses to insecurity. In the second case, respondents often acted as intermediaries between the authorities and co-ethnics (“speak[ing]

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<sup>126</sup> The respondent added that in some regions such platforms “work[ed] very well”, while in others “exist[ed] just formally” [1.4].

<sup>127</sup> Another platform often cited in Tatarstan, for similar purposes, was the Assembly of Peoples of Tatarstan [*Assemblea Narodov Tatarastana*], which gathered different ethnic communities, and whose leaders mediated between co-ethnics and state authorities if tensions arose [1.12; 1.13].

<sup>128</sup> That of market seller is a common occupation for immigrants.

to your own people in your own language”<sup>129</sup>). Yet another goal of minority organisations – which emerged even more strongly from the interviews – was the management of tensions between minority communities themselves. This occurred with state support, through consultative institutions incorporated into state structures or sanctioned by them. The resulting scenario is one in which the state and civil society’s interests converge: cooperation has enabled civil society to pursue (at least some of) its objectives despite obstacles the state has erected around civic engagement. In turn, the state is enabled to channel minority activism in a direction it finds beneficial, by absorbing minority institutions into the security effort.

Similarly, activities aiming at facilitating the integration of migrants were often approached from a security perspective. While respondents considered cultural and linguistic identity a priority in their work, assisting their co-ethnics’ integration had become a significant area of activity.<sup>130</sup> In these cases, NCAs organised Russian-language classes for migrants who lacked fluency, and provided support in navigating Russian migration legislation. A Tajik respondent said:

We explain that we have come to the Russian Federation and we have to respect the law [...] And we tell them that they must respect all traditions, customs and culture of the place where they live, and respect the law. [1.13]

The emphasis on migrants’ compliance with Russia’s legislation and rules of behaviour, also noted by other respondents, suggests a greater attention to the host society than to migrants’ support. Migrants’ integration is generally referred to in Russia as *adaptation* of migrants (*adaptatsiya migrantov*) which indicates a one-way approach to adaptation, rather than intercultural dynamics. Admittedly, the last cited respondent added that his NCA also assisted migrant co-ethnics when their rights were violated, through interpreters and lawyers, including in court hearings; this can still be situated in a security context, through the objective of defusing existing or potential tensions. The same is true for assistance to migrants in navigating the complexities of Russian migration law: the onus was generally placed exclusively on migrants themselves to fulfil legal requirements. Among the respondents, only those from NGO specialising in legal aid to migrants criticised Russian migration law for directly causing migrants’ insecurity, given the (above-mentioned) practical obstacles to legalising their stay [2.2; 2.10].

Nationalities policy’ security-centred approach was questioned by some respondents, who believed it caused other facets of minority issues to be neglected. A Karelian respondent referred to a lack of state motivation in preserving the cultural distinctiveness of communities not perceived as a security threat (as, he opined, was the case for Karelians) [2.11]. Other respondents (from Finnish and Mordovian communities) believed their cultural needs to be neglected in favour of programmes on migrants’ integration – migration being regarded a greater source of insecurity than settled minorities’ concerns [1.11; 2.7]. A respondent regretted the conflation of nationalities policies with *migration* policy:

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<sup>129</sup> See citation above [1.2].

<sup>130</sup> Particularly since the 2014 amendments to the NCA Law. See *supra* note 125.

[Issues about] Uzbeks working in the construction sector in St Petersburg [...] are *not* nationalities policies, it's *immigration* policy [...]; nationalities policies are about specific cultural issues, which the authorities are not able to understand, evaluate or regulate [1.8].<sup>131</sup>

In line with these views, a respondent argued that organisations were devoted attention from the state when a specific, local threat materialised: organisations received resources and were consulted in local decision-making exclusively with a view to defusing existing tensions [2.2].

One final consequence of the security-centred approach to minority issues was mentioned: the control on the activity of minority organisations. A respondent from a regional NCA (in an ethnic republic) described state interference with reference to NCA leadership, despite elections being held:

I cannot be the head of the autonomy [regional NCA] [...] since the authorities control this issue. They need a person who can be controlled. [...] This is needed in order to ensure that loyal people get elected. [1.4]

Nevertheless, the respondent had become one of the more prominent members of the organisation's management structure: "When almost all delegates supported my candidature, it was agreed with the administration. I am a loyal person, I am not an extremist" [1.4]. The respondent's interpretation suggests that he was considered sufficiently safe (devoid of radical views) for his candidature (as *one of* the leaders) to be endorsed by the regional authorities, although short of the full loyalty required of the NCA's main leader.

The involvement of the state in the affairs of NCAs, and state-civil society interaction in consultative councils, can promote dialogue between the two sides; at the same time, it can intensify the state's scrutiny of minority organisations. A respondent, representative of a Finno-Ugric minority in St Petersburg, believed that an aspect of Russia's nationalities policies was the monitoring minority organisations' activities.<sup>132</sup> She referred to Houses of Nationalities, institutions gathering representatives of ethnic minorities at the local level, holding joint activities and discussions, and supported by state organs:

There is some freedom in working on nationalities issues, but in this freedom one is also under control. There is a feeling that one needs to *regulate* nationalities. This is why there are institutions like the Houses of Nationalities. If all [nationalities] worked separately it would be difficult, but if you gather them all in the same place, then all is in front of your eyes, all can be seen.<sup>133</sup>

The securitisation of inter-ethnic relations, and the overuse of extremism legislation, were likely among the reasons why the respondents – for the most part – acknowledged that

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<sup>131</sup> He added that the staff of the relevant state institutions were often former employees of the police or procuracy, and therefore had no background in nationalities policies.

<sup>132</sup> As part of a different research project (the interview was held in 2010).

<sup>133</sup> Interview with the representative of a Finno-Ugric NGO, St Petersburg, 25 October 2010.

moderate positions were to be preferred to radical ones. A respondent stressed that one ‘has to find a common language’ with the authorities,<sup>134</sup> while another argued:

We do not want to solve issues radically. The sphere of ethnic relations is very delicate. If we act in a radical way, we can harm ourselves and scare off the authorities. [1.4]

On the same subject of state-civil society cooperation, another respondent observed:

[W]e try not to be opponents, but partners of the state. But we also speak about our rights, we point out shortcomings in ethnic policies, especially language issues. We prefer to talk about them, and to say that we are part of this country, so we have to be accepted as part of this country [...]. [2.8]

As noted, some respondents considered separatist, radical factions within their own ethnic group as ultimately harmful. They articulated their disapproval of methods that could be perceived as non-constructive and excessively demanding. In some cases they might have internalised securitising approaches, in others the ‘moderate’ stance seemed to derive from a pragmatic approach on the part of respondents. This involved signalling a willingness to operate within the existing framework for diversity management, to pre-empt the eventuality of becoming the target of securitising measures.

## 5. Conclusions

State macro-narratives convey the view of harmonious relations between the country’s numerous ethnic communities, with, however, a lingering sense of menace. While the threat is associated primarily to the idea of the ‘ethnic other’, Russia’s securitisation of minority issues affects not only groups perceived as having high levels of cultural alterity vis-à-vis ethnic Russians, but also minorities more generally. The effects of securitisation cast a long shadow as boundaries dissolve between migrants and non-migrants, legality and illegality, and, we may add, extremist acts and lawful protest. Minorities’ responses to securitisation are detectable at two levels. First, in the way they *experience (in)security*, in the sense of perceptions of inter-ethnic relations and possible security implications, as well as vulnerability to charges of representing a menace to Russian society. And, second, in the *format of their civic engagement* with reference to their *modus operandi* (choice of activities and interaction with state organs). This article has outlined such dynamics through the analysis of bottom-up experiences of insecurity.

The idea of a threat originating from various types of ‘others’ (*nerusskie, nelegaly*, etc.) is discursively represented in Russia as managed, mostly successfully, by the state. In this way, the state’s credentials as guarantor of stability receive broad public endorsement, legitimising securitising measures – in the sense of transferring particular issues from the level of ‘normal politics’ to the security realm. That security measures are (mostly) socially accepted as a vehicle to stability enables the state to increasingly control the domestic sphere. The state’s multiple securitising measures encompass civil society (non-state institutions regarded as

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<sup>134</sup> Rather than “shout” [1.5; 1.15]

potentially subversive) and ethnic diversity (with reference to both national minorities and migrants). Various areas of securitisation reinforce each other, including through narratives on the interconnectedness of internal and external enemies.

Security concerns affect a range of societal strata, stretching to include any individual regarded as disloyal, and going beyond racialisation. Forms of civic activism that do not pose a threat to society are still confined to a space of 'possible danger'. Thus, the segment of Russian society constructed as a threat has the potential of widening indefinitely. As suspicion is normalised, securitisation also becomes part of routine practices. Meanwhile, securitisation (of inter-ethnic relations and more broadly) is not (only) driven by concerns over potential instability, but (also) by the objective of preserving the political *status quo*, though the elimination of alternative political loyalties. Thus, security processes can be hijacked, legitimating acts of self-preservation by existing political forces under the guise of 'national security'. This set of circumstances has, clearly, grave implications with regard to the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, not only for minority and migrant communities, but for Russian society as a whole.

Among the respondents, most indicated that they shared the state-endorsed security framework and ascribed to the view that inter-ethnic relations were generally harmonious in Russia, although carrying a potential risk that had to be contained. Some minorities considered legitimate the securitisation of some of their co-ethnics, exposing intra-community fissures. Other respondents believed risks implied in security-infused narratives to be amplified, resulting, in some cases, in the repression of institutions whose priorities (even marginally) deviated from government ones. A securitised approach, including one that condones the overuse of extremism legislation, caused several respondents to be concerned that they might be labelled as extremists and 'foreign agents'. This suggests that, at least in some of the cases here considered, the endorsement of a system of diversity management based on securitisation has, in fact, a coercive origin, deriving from the *insecurity* induced by the state policies.

This scenario severely limits the scope of minority institutions' civic engagement. The artificial separation between Russians/loyal citizens and 'others' inhibits non-state-actors (including minority organisations), restricting the contribution they can make to Russian society through participation. Civil society organisations are prevented from acting as independent agents, and minority institutions are absorbed into the general security effort (interpreted in a narrow sense). Ethnic leaders are generally expected to guide co-ethnics towards adaptation to Russian society, defusing possible tensions and building migrants' loyalty towards the Russian state. Effectively, this facilitates the flow of power from the state to minority institutions, whose representatives serve as conduits in the management of diversity. Minority organisations have to position themselves within the state-engendered framework that presupposes the oscillation between the two poles of security and culture. Activities in the cultural sphere allow only the most ritualistic discussion of minority concerns, while additional claims can easily be linked to radicalism.

Two final considerations can be made. First, the suspicion directed against non-Russian groups – with different degrees of otherness but all perceived as possible threats short of near-assimilation into Russian society – leads to obstacles to their full integration. Migrants (or imaginary migrants) are not treated as an integral part of society, while persons who are cognisant of being perceived as ‘threats’ are unlikely to feel part of Russia’s political community. Securitisation tends to lead to societal divisions, contradicting official pronouncements on Russia’s unity in diversity. Russian society tends to be imagined as divided into groups, with ethnic difference intertwined with varying levels of loyalty towards the state.

Second, nationalities policies occupy a contested space between security imperatives and the accommodation of multi-ethnicity. The reducibility of ethnic policies to the preservation of stability causes the significance of cultural diversity and multilingualism to recede from view, while the need for security is magnified. It accompanies a dual strategy of reducing the expression of diversity (as potentially destabilising) and the promotion of political uniformity. It further leads to a security zero-sum game by which the security of the (ethnic/loyal) majority forcefully implies the insecurity of all others.