NORRUSS 2012 call: “Developments in Russia – Politics, Economy and Society”

Nation-building, nationalism and the new ‘other’ in today’s Russia (NEORUSS)

1. Summary and relevance to the NORRUSS Program
The nation-building program designed by Yeltsin for post-Soviet Russia is under strain. Central to this program is the concept of the ‘Rossiiskii’ nation, signaling a non-ethnic nation model with significant cultural and political rights to non-Russians, but held together with a high degree of common values and traditions. Today, the loss of the large, multiethnic Soviet state is accepted by an increasing number of Russians, but in the process also the civic understanding of the nation is being jettisoned, and Russian nationalism, for the first time in its history, seems to be turning towards a focus on ethnicity: ‘Russian’ is increasingly being understood as ‘ethnic Russian’ (‘Russkii’). Ethnocentric and xenophobic sentiments were prominent in the anti-Putinist rallies that attracted large crowds in winter 2011/2012. Especially notable were slogans against culturally alien migrant laborers from Central Asia and North Caucasus – the ‘new Other’.

This project examines the nationality question in Russian discourse and politics by focusing on four groups of actors and the interactions between them: the state authorities, the opposition, the media, and the population at large. To what extent is Russian national identity shifting from an imperial (and implicitly multiethnic) understanding of the nation, towards an ethnic and exclusive one? And what are the consequences of this for Russian politics?

The project addresses several of the primary objectives stated in the NORRUSS call, including:

- develop long-term and strategic competence in Norway on Russia (…) as well as research cooperation with Russia and with other countries on Russia
- produce knowledge on how political, economic and social factors affect Russian policy and decision-making
- improve and strengthen Norwegian research and develop long-term, strategic expertise by strengthening researcher recruitment
- actively disseminate research findings to political authorities, public administration, trade and industry, and
- generate R&D findings of high scientific calibre.

2. ASPECTS RELATING TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT
2.1 Background and status of knowledge
The substantial literature on Russian nationalism has focused mainly on the pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods, and cannot take us far in terms of understanding recent developments in the national question in Russian politics. More immediately relevant are works on Russian nationalism after 1991 such as Laqueur (1993), Shenfield (2001), Parland (2004), Mitrofanova (2005), Shnirel’man (2007), Umland (2009) and Pilkington et al. (2010), but these tend to focus exclusively on the far (indeed, the extreme) right, not on nationalism in mainstream politics. Conversely, most scholarly books on Putin/Medvedev era politics pay little attention to nation-building strategies, with the important exception of two multi-authored books edited by Laruelle (2010, 2012) as well as articles by Vera Tolz (2004a and 2004b). It is no coincidence that Tolz and several contributors to the Laruelle volumes will participate in this project, building upon their previous research and developing it further within the framework of the new project.

The rise of Russian nationalism: the ethnic turn
In mid-December 2010 Moscow became the scene of the biggest riots in recent years, when thousands gathered at Manezha Square to protest against the killing of a Russian football supporter who had died during a brawl with youth from North Caucasus. Rioters shouted nationalistic and anti-Caucasian slogans; when the mob became rowdy, more than a thousand were arrested (Russia Today, 2010). The event marked a sea change in the Russian regime’s approach to
the nationalists. Until then, the state authorities had largely condoned extremist Russian nationalism, for instance allowing the ‘Russian March’, which gather thousands of nationalists – including skinheads and neo-Nazis – in the streets of Moscow on 4 November, official ‘National Unity Day’. This leniency towards nationalists contrasted sharply with the regime’s harsh reactions against the rallies of the pro-Western, liberal opposition, whose meetings were regularly broken up and the participants rounded up by the riot police.

The Putin regime had apparently calculated that they could harness nationalist sentiments in the population and exploit them for their own purposes, as seen with the establishment of the pro-Putin youth movement ‘Nashi’ which sought to tap into the same nationalist sentiments. However, around 2009, Kremlin strategists seem to have had second thoughts about the wisdom of this strategy. According to Alexander Verkhovsky, director of the independent SOVA Center in Moscow and a respected observer of the Russian nationalist scene, ‘in 2009 the Kremlin abandoned its policy of controllable and moderate nationalism (…). Since then the only policy is suppression’ (quoted in Grove 2011). The disenchantment was mutual: ‘Russia’s nationalists feel that [Putin] has betrayed them by welcoming migrant laborers and sending billions of dollars to the majority Muslim North Caucasus’ (ibid.).

When the hard-line nationalists were driven out of the Kremlin embrace, some ended up in the anti-Putin opposition. This became clear when huge anti-Putin rallies erupted in Moscow and other Russian cities after the fraudulent parliamentary elections of December 2011, almost to the day one year after the Manezhnaia riots. In these demonstrations pro-Western democrats marched together with vociferous nationalists, and an incongruous medley of rightist, centrist, and leftist banners were waved. The new star of the anti-Putin opposition, blogger Aleksei Navalny, is often presented as a nationalist with liberal values (Drobotzheva 2012). Navalny is renowned for his characterization of United Russia as ‘the party of scoundrels and thieves’ but he has also endorsed more ominous slogans such as ‘Stop feeding the Caucasus,’ and participated in the Russian March. Although controversial in some camps, Navalny also epitomizes the increased acceptance of Russian nationalism in many parts of Russian society.

The backdrop of this rise of Russian nationalism is a state that is far more Russian in demographic terms than before 1991. When the Soviet Union broke up, the share of ethnic Russians rose from just above 50 percent in the USSR, to well above 83 percent in Russia. Observers commented that Russia now for the first time in its history had the chance to develop into a ‘nation-state’ based on a high degree of common values and common identity (Tishkov 1997, 246–71). The terms ‘Rossiiskii’ and ‘Rossiane’ – non-ethnic words for ‘Russian’ and ‘Russians’ – were introduced to encapsulate this new non-ethnic national idea. Twenty years later, however, the attempt to establish a ‘Rossiiskii’ nation seems for all practical purposes to have been discarded. The very adjective ‘Rossiiskii’ is associated with the Yeltsin era, and has been ditched along with shock therapy, oligarch economy, and other elements of the failed transition to Western-style pluralism and liberalism. Although the ‘national question’ still simmers beneath the surface, the Putin regime has effectively centralized the Federation and emasculated the power of the once powerful non-Russian elites in the republics.

While Russia became ethnically more homogeneous after 1991, it also experienced a serious demographic crisis. Due to high mortality and low reproduction rates, in addition to substantial outmigration (primarily to the West), the population is gradually contracting. This has led to a growing demand for guest workers and labor immigration, primarily unskilled or low-skilled workers from the former Soviet republics. In 2011 it was estimated that Russia was housing some 4–6 million labor migrants, but all figures are highly unreliable since as much as two out of three may be illegals not shown in official statistics (Federalnaia Migratsionnaia Sluzhba, 2011). In any case, figures are expected to rise further in the near future, and some experts believe that Russia may need a pool of 15 million or more guest workers to fill gaps in the labor market (Trenin 2011, 180). Moreover, Zhanna Zaionchkovskaja and Nikita Mkrtchan (2009, 24) note that the ethnocultural distance between the new migrants and local populations is increasing: whereas at the turn of the millennium foreign labor migrants were mostly Ukrainians, South Caucasians,
Moldovans and Chinese, they are increasingly being replaced by Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks. The ethnic element in federal politics has largely been taken off the agenda, but migration, another ethnicity-related issue, looms increasingly large in public discourse.

In addition to an influx of people from the ‘near’ abroad, all major Russian cities also have a population stemming from the ‘inner abroad’ – the string of non-Russian republics north of the Caucasian Range. High fertility rates and low standards of living have induced many people from these tracts to migrate to other parts of Russia. Russian nationalist discourse often does not distinguish between labor (im)migrants from the near and the inner abroad, but lumps them together as one group of ‘aliens’ which allegedly threatens to dilute the (ethnic) Russian character of their neighborhoods. This is paradoxical, since Russian cities, including Moscow, are remarkably homogeneous in ethnic terms, more so than most West European metropolises. The 2010 census gives the share of ethnic Russians in Moscow as 91.6 percent, making Russia one of the very few countries in Europe where the capital is more ethnically homogeneous than the rest of the country.

In any case, the ethnic composition as such does not influence the nationality debate directly: what matters is how it is perceived by the population. Research has shown that public assumptions significantly diverge from demographic data. A large-scale survey in 2005 revealed that when Russians were asked to gauge the share of specific non-Russian ethnic groups in the population in their oblast or city they invariably offered exaggerated numbers, on average believing that the ethnic group in question was 2.5 times larger than it actually was (Alexseev 2010, 171–73). Traditionally, Russian nationalism focused on the state – gosudarstvenichesvo (Hosking 1997, Pain 2004). As long as the state was large and strong, it mattered less to the gosudarstveniki that the ethnic composition of its population was heterogeneous. If non-Russians were willing to learn Russian and adapt to Russian customs, they were welcome to assimilate into the Russian nation – and historically, millions of non-Russians have done so (Kappeler 1993). Only the Jews were not allowed to assimilate (Kolsto 2009a). However, if in the past the Jews were singled out as the main ‘Other’, xenophobes are now – in Russia and elsewhere – more often venting their hatred against the other ‘inner enemy’: Muslim migrants.

According to Andrei Navalny:

The failure of our liberal-democratic movement is linked to the fact that they in principle regarded certain topics as too dangerous to be freely discussed, including the topic of national, interethnic conflicts. And all the same this is the real agenda. We must acknowledge that the migrants, including people of Caucasian extraction, come to Russia with their own peculiar values (in Sobchak and Sokolova 2011).

Navalny also defended his participation in the Russian March by pointing out that alongside rightist slogans the marchers also demanded a (sterzhen’) of the political system of Russia’ (Iakhlovkova 2008).

Regime response
The Putin regime has been ambivalent and vacillating towards right-wing Russian nationalism. Writing in 2007, Lilia Shevtsova claimed that officials not only condoned xenophobic attitudes and expressions, but actively encouraged and tried to exploit them for their own purposes:

Xenophobia has always been endemic in Russia, but it was never allowed public expression. It hid behind imperial ideology. Now ethnic nationalism is often fanned by factions within the ruling elite. In its search for external and internal enemies, the elite focuses on [inter alia] immigrants (Shevtsova 2007, 283).

If Shevtsova is correct, the authorities seem to have been acting as the sorcerer’s apprentice, creating a monster they cannot control. Xenophobic nationalism has turned into a weapon that can now be wielded against them.

As a part of his 2012 election campaign, Putin in January 2012 published an article in Nezavisimaia gazeta under the heading ‘Russia: the national question’ (Putin 2012). Here he
pointed to the ‘colossal migration currents’, expected to increase even further. In this situation, he claimed, politicians are tempted to play the nationalist card and ‘go over to the position of those who previously were regarded as marginal radical groups’. However, Putin went on to claim that he was here describing general trends in the modern world, trends that in his view did not include Russia. Russia, he maintained, is not an American melting pot, nor an ethnic state: it is a ‘unique multiethnic civilization’, the pivot of which is the Russian people and the Russian culture. ‘The Russian people is the state-forming nation; the fact that Russia exists proves this. The great mission of the Russians is to unite and bind together this civilization’. For that reason slogans like ‘stop feeding the Caucasians’ are not only wrongheaded but dangerous, Putin warned.

On the other hand, Putin went a long way to acknowledging that the rise in public nationalism in Russia in recent years reflects genuine concerns among the population. For instance, the violence in Manezha Square in 2011 he now described as ‘an aggravated reaction against an absence of justice and against the irresponsibility and inaction of certain state officials’. He also recognized that not only Western countries but also Russia must grapple with serious problems of migration. Putin put the blame partly on the poor work of state organs, but even more on the migrants themselves. As to internal migration to Russian cities, he insisted that ‘those who come from regions with other cultural and historical traditions must respect local customs, the customs of Russians and other peoples of Russia.’ Regarding migrants from abroad, Russia should practice a system of ‘positive selection’. Guest workers who are well qualified and culturally adaptable (kulturnaya sovmestimost’) should be granted work permits, others not. Putin’s recipe, however, failed to address the real problem of the illegal migration in Russia: the country has a serious deficit of unskilled and low-skill labor. As the state authorities operate with exceedingly small quotas of work permits, hundred of thousands of migrants end up with illegal status (Myhre 2012).

In his article Putin came across as a nationalist, but of a very different kind from the ones found among the anti-system radicals. Putin tried to steal the thunder from the opposition not by denouncing nationalism as such but by presenting his own alternative version of it (Rutland 2012). His national model differs significantly from the non-ethnic Rossiiskii model promoted by the Yeltsin administration in the 1990s, by clearly focusing on the historical role – indeed, ‘the mission’ – of the ethnically Russian people. At the same time, Putin’s model retains the state-centered orientation that characterized Russian nationalism before ‘the ethnic turn’ of recent years.

The re-emergence of nationalism as a strong societal force and public topic in Russia is nothing unique. In many other European countries, precisely the influx of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants from other continents has nourished nationalist sentiments, putting the liberal state under considerable strain. The difference is that in Russia one can hardly speak of a ‘liberal’ state in the first place. In the ‘controlled’ Russian democracy there is a temptation for regime and opposition alike to play the national card so as to tap into xenophobic sentiments in the population.

2.2. Approaches, hypotheses and choice of method

In this research project we aim to document and analyze the new preconditions for nation-building in Russia and for the formulation of policies on the ‘national question’. To this end, four issues will be taken up for separate scrutiny.

1. Changes in political signals as well as the state’s actual policies. We will monitor the zigzags in the evolution of the Russian national idea in official pronouncements, from the beginning of the Medvedev presidency throughout 2014. We will examine not only statements by the Medvedev–Putin tandem, but also by leading members of United Russia and other pro-Kremlin parties in the Duma, in addition to Kremlin policy advisors and spin-doctors. Of particular interest is the relative strength of the state-oriented and ethnicity-oriented vectors in the nationality concept. Do the civic, multiethnic, and ethnic elements in the official nation-state idea coexist or conflict with each other? Do Putin and other establishment politicians temper their messages to the perceived interests and sentiments of their audiences, or do they send clear and consistent signals about their vision for Russia?
As target topic we focus on federal migration policy. In 2007, Russian authorities liberalized the entry of ‘guest workers’, both to attract the extra work-hands Russia sorely needs and to cash in on the taxes that illegal immigrants are barred from paying. In 2010, however, regulations were amended, making it easier to hire highly qualified foreign specialists but tightening control over low-skilled manual labor from Central Asia. How do the authorities rationalize the need for labor migration? To what degree do they explain to the public that the immigration is an indispensable necessity in Russian economy? Our focus will be on the repercussions of migration policy in nation-building policies and in official rhetoric on the national question. Do the authorities present the migrants as aliens, as an ‘Other’— or as people who should be invited into the national community on condition that they settle down permanently and adopt Russian citizenship?

2. The nationality issue in the opposition and political fringe groups. During the first decade of the new millennium the political opposition in Russia was either marginalized or co-opted. Virtually all applications for holding anti-regime demonstrations except for those arranged by the nationalists were turned down – and those who disregarded this ban were thoroughly harassed and routinely arrested. The FSB had no difficulty keeping tabs on the opposition, literally counting their heads, and it represented no challenge to the regime. To determine the political profile of the protesters in any detail at that time could have only academic interest. In late 2011, that situation changed radically. At the peak, the anti-Putin rallies sparked by the heavily falsified Duma elections drew more than hundred thousand protesters. Although the protests now seem to have subsided, the mobilization of a substantial part of the urban middle class behind the banners of the opposition calls for closer study of the programs and ideas of these political parties and groups.

As noted, the rallies were organized by an unorthodox coalition of many ideological strains, including liberals and nationalists of various shades. Why did the liberal anti-putinists allow the nationalists to participate, waving flags and banners in ‘their’ rallies? Were they not afraid that the presence of these nationalists might discredit their movement in the eyes of their own constituency as well as the outside (Western) world? One possible answer could be that unity – ‘everybody against the regime’ – has been regarded as a value in itself. Or, that in the name of tolerance and liberal norms, nobody should be excluded. And finally, there is also the possibility of potential attraction: Referring to the debates in the ‘democratic camp’ in the wake of the 2006 Russian March about the degree to which nationalism may be tolerated, Alexander Verkhovsky (2009, 99) has claimed that ‘the tolerance towards it is fairly high.’

A crucial question, then, is: what alterative, or rather alternatives, does the anti-system opposition represent as regards the formulation of a national idea? Is there a tug of war underway between liberals and nationalists? Have the liberals formulated their own national idea, or is Navalny right in claiming that the nationality question has been taboo in the liberal camp? If the liberal movements and parties in Russia do have their own nationality program, what does it look like? As indicated, most Western researchers who have analyzed the nationality issue in Russia have tended to focus on the extreme right. While this sector should not be ignored, we believe that it is equally important to study opinions and attitudes among other segments of society, also among the pro-Western liberals. To map this landscape we will conduct elite interviews with intellectuals, activists and movement leaders in the same cities where our planned survey will be carried out (see below).

3. Role of the media. The media are crucial in forming popular opinions on sensitive issues. In conflict situations, media representations of the ‘Other’ may critically influence the course of events, in either a violent or a non-violent direction (Kolstø 2009). In targeting the ‘the new Other’ in Russian identity discourse, the media have played an active and often deleterious role. Articles have described the Russian cities as being inundated by hordes of swarthy, culturally alien labor immigrants. Thus for instance, in 2000, the radical nationalist organization Movement against Illegal Immigration (banned after the Manezhnaia riots) spread an article stating that the real number of ethnic Russians in Moscow was 3.3 million, or only 31 percent of the total population.
This article has been reproduced or quoted by many mainstream Russian newspapers and radio stations (see Zaionechkovskaia and Mkrtchan 2009). The media have contributed to the transformation of ‘the Russian idea’ from a state-oriented to an ethnicity-oriented concept – from an imperial but inclusive model, to a narrow and exclusive one.

Russian national TV, and to some extent also radio, are the major sources of information for the vast majority of Russian citizens. We will single out three major TV channels – Pervyi Kanal, Rossiia and REN TV – to determine how these cover issues related to ethnic and national cohesion. Through our project participant Vera Tolz-Zilitinkevic, we will have access to a large compilation of transcripts of programs from these stations, on which this part of our research will draw.

In addition we will examine print media and the internet, where there is a considerable diversity of viewpoints (Tonnessen and Kolstø 2012). A selection of mainstream newspapers, high-brow elite publications, and popular internet sites and blogs will be exposed to systematic scrutiny. The media analysis will start in 2008, two years before the Manezhnaia riots, in order to show any changes in discourse before and after that decisive event.

4. Changes in the public mood. Some studies indicate that there is a relatively constant pool of xenophobia in the Russian public, around 45–55 percent of the population, varying somewhat with how the questions are formulated, while other researchers insist that intolerance against other ethnic groups is increasing (Shevtsova 2007, 283–84; Leonova 2010, 146). Anastasia Leonova finds that, somewhat counter-intuitively, the young and the better educated are more xenophobic, not less (ibid., 151–53). Against this view Leokadia Drobitzheva, an anthropologist with considerable experience in ethnopolitical monitoring, holds:

most Russians cannot support the nationalists, because Russians have always taken pride in their ability to live in concord with other nationalities. Even amid the influx of immigrants in the 2000s, the share of people with a negative attitude towards contacts with other nationalities did not exceed 30 percent (Drobitzheva 2012).

Only further research can determine whether Drobitzheva’s optimism or Leonova’s and Shevtsova’s pessimism hits the mark best. We will conduct a nation-wide, large-scale opinion survey (4,500 respondents): 2,250 respondents will form a representative sample of the Russian population at large, while the remaining 2,250 will be drawn from five selected large cities. The special focus on cities is deliberate, since most new non-Russian migrants settle here.

Twelve years ago the principal investigators of this project conducted a large-scale survey in six Russian regions with financial support from the Research Council of Norway. This survey focused on issues of nation-building and common values in the Russian population, and resulted in a multi-authored book on the topic (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2004). We then concluded that, with the exception of the Dagestanis in Northern Caucasus, the surveyed Russian and non-Russian populations adhered to remarkably similar value systems – and that even among the Dagestanis support for the Russian national state project was high.

The new survey will in one sense be a follow-up of the previous one. By repeating some of the same questions we will be able to make a longitudinal analysis of nationality-related sentiments in Russia. However, this new survey will not be a mere replication of the study we conducted in 2000. This time around we will omit questions designed to measure commonality and differences between value systems in different regions and segments of the population, and will not single out the titular groups in the non-Russian republics for scrutiny. Instead, we will partly aim to cover the national level through a representative sample; partly target those specific locations where clashes between recent immigrants and the original population have been most acute. These are the largest and most economically vibrant cities which receive most of the guest workers from the former USSR, in particular Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Yekaterinburg. In addition, we include two migratory hotspots – Krasnodar in Kuban and Vladivostok in the Far East – where the issue of Caucasian, respectively Chinese, migrants has been strongly politicized (see. e.g. Alexseev 2006).

Moscow and St. Petersburg were surveyed also in our previous project. Their inclusion in the current study will allow us to compare not only responses to the same questions twelve years on,
but also attitudes towards these issues in the same locations. Popular attitudes in these two cities are important for another reason as well: Moscow and St. Petersburg are national trend-setters. Moscow-based newspapers and television programs reach the entire country and affect attitudes nationwide. Finally, it was in these cities that the opposition mobilized most strongly and where the party in power, United Russia, took some of the heaviest losses during the last electoral cycle.

Our four-pronged approach will allow us to find answers not only to the question “what are the main components of the Russian nationality discourse?”, but also “what is powering this discourse and determining the direction of the policy shifts?” Are the politicians with their new emphasis on Russianness populistically seeking to please the public, or are they actively creating new national enemy images? Is the population in the major cities basically more liberal in its attitudes than the authorities, in line with them, or more ethnonationalistic than the Putin regime?

**Methodology**
At the core of the project will be a large survey carried out in partnership with ROMIR, a Russian polling agency with which we previously have collaborated successfully. The survey will be central to the studies that focus on the public mood, but the other studies will also be informed by the survey results. In the various sub-studies, quantitative data will be complemented with qualitative insights. Members of the research team who are not already based in Russia will be encouraged to carry out fieldwork and conduct interviews with relevant actors in the respective areas. In addition, members of the Norwegian core team will visit the five cities that we target in the survey to supplement this with qualitative data and elite interviews. Finally, several members of the research team will carry out media analyses. Through triangulation of different types of data, we aim to achieve a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the processes fueling Russian nationalism and shaping the new national idea.

**2.3. The project management, organization and cooperation**
Project coordinator is Pål Kolstø, Professor of Russian Studies at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo. Kolstø has extensive experience in coordinating large-scale, international research projects on Russia as well as on the Western Balkans, including several such projects funded by the Research Council of Norway. He is a prolific author on issues of nation-building and nationalism as well as Russian politics and society in general (see CV). Through developing BA and MA programs in Russian area studies at the University of Oslo, he has also played an important role in recruitment to the field.

The main project partner is Helge Blakkisrud, Head of the Department of Russian and Eurasian Studies, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). Kolstø and Blakkisrud have a long history of productive research collaboration, including the aforementioned RCN-funded ‘Nation-building and Common Values in Russia’, as well as a series of joint publications on state- and nation-building in post-Soviet de facto states.

The third member of the Norwegian research team will be a PhD candidate, selected through a nationwide call for applications in the fall of 2012. In this way the project will contribute to recruitment. The PhD student will be based at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo, and be supervised by Professor Kolstø. Finally, we will hire a project assistant to work in a 25 percent position throughout the project period.

To complement and strengthen the Norwegian team, we have recruited a team of leading international experts in the field of Russian nationalism. These external partners have all confirmed willing to participate in the project:

- Mikhail Alexseev, Associate Professor of Political Science, San Diego State University
- Henry Hale, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, and Director of the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University
- Natalia Kosmarskaya, PhD, Senior Researcher, Centre for Central Eurasian Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences
Marlene Laruelle, Research Professor of International Affairs, the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University

Anastasia Mitrofanova, Professor, Institute for Contemporary International Studies, Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MGIMO)

Emil Pain, Professor, State University – Higher School of Economics, and Director of the Centre for Ethno-Political and Regional Studies, Moscow

Peter Rutland, Professor, Government Department, Wesleyan University

Vera Tolz-Zilitinkevich, Sir William Mather Professor of Russian Studies, the University of Manchester

Andreas Umland, DAAD Associate Professor in German and European Studies, National University of ‘Kyiv Mohyla Academy’, Kiev

Alexander Verkhovsky, Director of SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow.

All external partners have committed to write one peer-reviewed article and a book chapter (see 4.1. below). They are also expected to contribute to the ‘New Russian Nationalism Seminar’ (see 4.2 below). The latter will, in addition to the dissemination aspect, contribute to strengthening our network and facilitate research coordination, as the Norwegian project team will have the chance to meet up with the external partners on a regular basis and discuss and provide feedback on the ongoing research.

Although we have strong team of external partners, we have, in keeping with the call’s emphasis on developing long-term and strategic competence in Norway, prioritized PhD funding. Hence, almost 90 % of the direct research funding, (salary and indirect costs) will be spent in Norway.

With altogether 13 researchers, we will have three to four researchers covering each of the four issue areas. Alexseev, Rutland and Blakksrud will cover state policy; Laruelle, Mitrofanova, Umland and Verkhovsky the opposition; Pain, Tolz-Zilitinkevich and the PhD student the media; and Kolstø, Hale and Kosmarskaya the public mood.

3. KEY PERSPECTIVES AND COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

3.1. Compliance with strategic documents

Besides the obvious ‘Nationalism, political identity’, this proposal targets the following points emphasized in the NORRUSS Program Document:

- Managed democracy
- The development of rule of law
- Role of the media
- Islam in Russia
- North Caucasus
- Labor supply
- Role of civil society

3.2. Relevance and benefit to society

The strength and trajectories of nationalism in Russian politics will in important ways influence the strategic choices of the regime over the next decades. This is seen clearly in immigration and labor policies, but also domestic politics in general. To the extent that the Putin regime feels pressure to accommodate extra-parliamentary opposition after the latest round of popular mobilization, it will be important to know what kind of pressure this is: does it stem from the direction of ethnic nationalism, from neoimperialist gosudarstvennik nationalism, or from a nationalism based on a civic, inclusive understanding of the nation? Which tendencies gain the upper hand will also have a spill-over effect in foreign policy, influencing Russia’s attitude towards the outside world. Will Russia adopt a self-asserting and expansionist position? or a more inward-looking and self-contained one? In this way, the project will also contribute valuable background and context for the formulation of Norwegian policies regarding Russia.
3.3. Environmental impact
The only negative environmental consequence of the project is the air travel in connection with fieldwork, planned project workshops and seminars/conferences as well as presentations at international conferences/conventions. This is difficult to avoid, since we intend to carry out research in and on Russia, and communicate the results to the wider research community.

3.4. Ethical perspectives
The project does not raise any major ethical concerns. The project manager will ensure that the storage of data from the large-scale survey is in accordance with both Russian and Norwegian law. In the case studies, to the extent they draw on interviews, the researchers involved will follow standard ethical guidelines in their interactions with interviewees, not least as regards anonymity.

3.5. Gender issues
In assembling the team of international partners, we have paid attention to the gender balance (four women, six men). In keeping with the employment practices of the University of Oslo, and with the Research Council’s objectives of increasing recruitment of women and improving gender balance in projects, the call for the PhD candidate and project assistant will encourage female applicants.

4. DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Dissemination plan
Through the project we aim to publish
- at least 12 articles in international refereed journals (English and Russian language publications)
- one English-language edited volume with an international publisher (a level 2 publisher according to the NSD ranking of scientific channels) with revised versions of the papers presented at the ‘New Russian Nationalism Seminar’
- a Russian translation of our English-language book
- one PhD thesis.

4.2 Communication with users
Our main communication strategy vis-à-vis the Norwegian audience is our planned seminar series, the ‘New Russian Nationalism Seminar,’ to run throughout the project period with seminars once every three months at NUPI and with presentations of all national as well as external partners. We will work closely with NUPI’s Communications Department to ensure that project results reach a broad audience. NUPI has extensive experience here, organizing more than 100 conferences and seminars each year (over 5,600 registered attendees in 2011). As appropriate, we will organize separate meetings on the margins of these seminars, between lectureres and relevant user groups (e.g. the MFA).

To communicate and discuss early findings with our peers in the international research community, we will present preliminary research results at relevant international conferences and conventions (for example ASN, ASEES and ISA). We will also publish early findings in the bi-weekly Russian Nationalism Bulletin, which is edited by Adreas Umland, a member of our project team (see http://groups.yahoo.com/group/russian_nationalism/).

Finally, in 2015, we will organize a capstone conference on contemporary Russian nationalism, bringing together project participants and other international experts. Here the final results of the project will be presented and discussed in full. The conference will be held in Oslo, tentatively at the House of Literature.
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