

# **MOTHERLAND IS CALLING YOU! MOTIVES BEHIND AND PROSPECTS FOR THE NEW RUSSIAN POLICY ON COMPATRIOTS ABROAD**

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On June 22, 2006, the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin issued his decree approving the *National Programme for Supporting Voluntary Migration of the Compatriots Residing Abroad to the Russian Federation*. The date of the decree was a symbolic one: the Russian “Motherland” was calling on its “sons” and “daughters” to return home on the 65th anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War [1]. Nevertheless, the appeal to compatriots to resettle in their “historically native land,” addressing primarily all the inhabitants of the former Union Republics, looks a little bit strange fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet regime. The present article deals with the issues of whom this appeal to transmigration is addressed to, why it is being made at this time, and what the prospects of the new state program are.

## **The problem of addressee: who are compatriots abroad?**

When in Russia they speak of “compatriots abroad,” primarily they mean the *Russian-speaking population of the former Union Republics*, which after the collapse of the USSR appeared to be beyond the frontiers of their “historically native country.” At the time of the Soviet system’s collapse there were about 27 million such persons, the overwhelming majority of whom were ethnic Russians. Actual Russian citizenship was never a prerequisite to be considered a “*compatriot*,” however. For Russia, which proclaimed itself the successor of the USSR, one’s past status as a Soviet citizen was important.

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1. “Motherland is Calling You” - a slogan from the most popular poster during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945).

In the view of experts on the matter, the status of this considerable part of the former USSR population in the new sovereign countries depended on both the “legacy of the past” and a range of structural factors. The primary factors include traditionally-established relations between the representatives of the titular and non-titular [2] ethnic groups, the size of the Russian-speaking population in the newly-emerged countries, and of course, the level of proficiency in the language of the main ethnic group. Whereas the secondary factors embrace the legal background of the problem concerning the citizenship, the ethnic and emigrational policy of the former Soviet Republics, including the Russian Federation itself. At the same time, we can note a close link between the “legacy of the past” and the structural factors as the former factor may partially predetermine the latter ones.

Traditionally established relations between the Russian-speaking population and the representatives of the titular ethnic groups were in some cases an obstacle and in others supported the integration of the first one into the new post-Soviet nations. It serves as a facilitator in the territories where in the Soviet era there was no tension between both groups, where neither group presented itself as possessing a higher or principally different culture, and where the interethnic marriages were not rare. Another situation occurred in countries where during the Soviet era the two groups were culturally and socially isolated from one another.

The size of the Russian-speaking population could have either a positive or a negative affect on its political and social integration into a given post-Soviet country. At the same time it should be noted that there is no simple correlation between this factor and the situation of the Russian “compatriots.” In many former Union Republics a large Russian-speaking population was treated as a rival by the titular ethnicity. In this relation, their integration during the first stage of country’s formation (or at the stage of restoration of the nationhood) was extremely complicated. In Estonia and Latvia, for example, legislative mechanisms were established to limit the participation of the Russian-speaking

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2. In the Soviet system of ethno-territorial federalism the titular ethnicity (titulnaya nationalnost’) included the ethnic groups that “gave the name” to the ethnic-territorial units, namely the Union and Autonomous Republics, as well as to the Autonomous Oblasts and Okrugs (districts). After the collapse of the USSR titular ethnicity gained the status of key ethnicity in the nation-building process almost in all former Union Republics.

population in the economic, political, and social spheres of public life. On the other hand, in some post-Soviet states the large size of the Russian population had a positive influence on their integration into political space. In Ukraine, for example, victory at elections very often depended on the ballots of Russian-speaking voters [3]. In Lithuania, despite the negative attitude towards the Soviet period both the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, a small size of the Russian population promoted the adoption of a citizenship law favourable to them. Yet in Uzbekistan, the small size of the Russian-speaking population translated into a total absence of legal protection for their rights as an ethnic minority.

The problems of integration faced by the Russian-speaking population caused stormy public and political debates inside Russia. That is why in both the political establishment and society at large the image of “compatriots abroad” being constantly discriminated against as Russian-speaking inhabitants of the former Union Republics became a prevalent one. Here the role of Russia was seen in protecting the rights of these “compatriots,” especially in Latvia and Estonia. It manifested itself especially in the second half of the 1990s as evidenced by annual addresses of the RF President to the Federal Assembly [4]. In his address in 1997 B. Yeltsin stated that, “the key task of the foreign policy of Russia was and would be the protection of the rights of its compatriots living abroad. I am really concerned about the situation of Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia, and in some other countries.”[5] A year later Yeltsin reiterated this point: “The important element of our Baltic policy keeps the legalization of legal rights of our compatriots abroad. Despite the efforts of Russia and the whole range of other European institutions, the problem of our relations with Estonia and Latvia still has not been solved.”[6] In his last address

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3. In this particular case, the victory of L. Kuchma during the elections of 1994 is very significant.

4. In 1994, in Russia there was established a practice of annual address of the RF President to the Federal Assembly (Parliament of the country): the Federal Assembly, consisting of two chambers, the State Duma and the Council of Federation. In these speeches the President articulated key points of national policy and gave much attention to major issues. Sometimes these speeches evaluated the decisions of the previous year; sometimes they proposed certain policy measures. But in general, these annual addresses have a character of declarative documents that present the main thrusts of foreign and domestic policy.

5. Annual address of the RF President B. Yeltsin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation „*The Order in the Work of Authorities is the Order in the Country*“, <http://www.intelros.ru/lib/elzin/1997.htm>

6. Annual address of the RF President B. Yeltsin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation “*With Common Efforts to the Restructuring of Russia*”, <http://www.intelros.ru/lib/elzin/1998.htm>

to the Federal Assembly, given in 1999, Yeltsin again pointed out that “the course of Russia concerning the protection the legal rights of its compatriots remained unchangeable. We will not remove from the table the problem of discrimination against the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia”. [7]

Regardless of the prevailing discourse on the compatriots as Russian-speaking population, whose political rights are infringed primarily in Latvia and Estonia, the concept of “Russian compatriots” or “compatriots abroad” has undergone a number of changes in the post-Soviet Russia. Thus, the first official definition of a compatriot was given in the *Declaration on Support of the Russian Diaspora and Protection of Russian Compatriots*, adopted by the State Duma at the end of 1995 [8]. The document defines Russian “compatriots” as “all the natives of the USSR and Russia and all their descendants regardless of their nationality and ethnicity, language, religion, occupation and the place of living and other circumstances.” The only criterion for being classified as a “compatriot,” according to the Declaration, was the absence of the Russian citizenship and a statement of “a clear spiritual, cultural and ethnic *connection with the Russian Federation or with any of its subjects.*” As a result, at the end of 1995 any non-Russian citizen who was either a former citizen of Russia or the USSR or a direct descendant of one could be classified as a “compatriot” if this preference was clearly expressed. However, the Declaration does not prescribe how “clear connection” with the Russian Federation in general or with any of its subjects should be demonstrated.

Such a definition, being very abstract on the one hand, and on the other one, having not taken into account, for example, citizens of Russia, who are permanently residing abroad, could not get the status of a legal definition. That is why the *Action Program for Protecting the Compatriots Abroad*, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation in May 1996, declared a need to create “a legal definition for the concept ‘compatriot’ and its further use in the legislation.” [9] This definition was given and was approved

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7. Annual address of the RF President B. Yeltsin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation “*Russia at the brink of epochs*“, <http://www.intelros.ru/lib/elzin/1999.htm>

8. *Declaration on Support of the Russian Diaspora and Protection of Russian Compatriots*, [http://www.igrunov.ru/gdrf/sng/sng-archive/declar\\_sng.html](http://www.igrunov.ru/gdrf/sng/sng-archive/declar_sng.html)

9. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation from 17 May, 1196 Nr 590, *Concerning the List of Measures to Support of Compatriots Abroad*, <http://npa-gov.garweb.ru:8080/public/default.asp?no=1448735>

in May 1999 in the *Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning the Compatriots Abroad* [10] (Art 1, p 2). This law changed the right, which was stipulated in the Declaration, of the descendants of the former Russian or USSR nationals to claim for the status of “compatriot”: now the status may be granted both for the emigrants’ descendants and to the nationals of the former USSR, “except for the descendants of the titular ethnicities of the foreign states” (Art 1, p 2). In other words, the descendants of former citizens of Russia and of the USSR, who were ethnic Russians or ethnic Tatars, were recognized as “compatriots,” whereas the descendants of ethnic Armenians, Germans, or Jews, who were nationals of Russia and of the USSR, were excluded from recognition as compatriots.

In addition, the law stipulates that affiliation with compatriots shall be confirmed either by the passport of the citizen of the Russian Federation or “a special document of a standard established by the Government of the Russian Federation”. According to the Law, the document should be issued upon the free choice of an applicant by the diplomatic and consular departments of Russia or by internal affairs authorities of the Russian Federation. (Art 3, p2, p3). However, this provision has not been applied yet, as no form of a compatriot certificate has been set. Among key reasons is the initial disagreement of the Government of the Russian Federation to the *Law on State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning the Compatriots Abroad* at large and to the provision on introduction of a special certificate of a compatriot in particular. Thus, in a letter of the Russian Government it was said that “even if a small share of people got the document proving their connection with Russia, on the basis of which they would get privileges on the territory of Russia, we could assume that the level of our security would be undermined, as well as the economy and the budget of our country.”[11] Despite the fact that at that time law making was a prerogative of the Russian parliamentarians, it was the Government which was supposed to approve the compatriot certificate specimen.

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10. Federal Law from 24 May,1999, Nr 93-FZ, *On the State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning the Compatriots Abroad*, <http://russiane.org/law/45.html>

11. Letter of the Government of Russian Federation dated from 4 April 1998, 4934 p-P2, Concerning a Draft Law on the State Policy On Support of Compatriots Abroad, <http://www.sovetpamfilova.ru/text/1965/?parent>

Perhaps, failure to implement provisions of the law caused another review of the concept of “compatriots abroad”. Thus, in 2001, President signed *Concept of Support to Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation in the Current Period*, which defined compatriots as “constantly living abroad, but connected with Russia historically, ethnically, culturally, spiritually and speaking Russian, trying to preserve their Russian affiliation and having a need to maintain contacts and cooperation with Russia.”[12] Meanwhile, the *State Program Concerning the Support...*, which was approved in June 2006, confirmed that compatriots were those who had been brought up in the traditions of the Russian culture, Russian-speaking and did not want to loose the connection with Russia.

In modern Russia, with the existing several legal acts defining the concept of “compatriot abroad”, there is no clear understanding who should be referred to as compatriot and not. Partly, that served as a reason for the Committee of the State Duma on Affairs with the CIS countries and Relations with Compatriots to initiate in spring of 2006 the preparation of amendments and supplements to the law of 1999. Thus, among the assignments of a specially established taskforce was to specify the concept of compatriot [13]. Nevertheless, I hardly imagine that the future amendments will provide for a full clarification of the concept of “compatriot”. It is not only because of the absence of political independence and professionalism of the majority of present Russian parliamentarians, but rather because of regularly emerging necessity to review the concept based on domestic and exterior political situation, list of social groups that might be considered compatriots. For example, if the Russian political actors due to one or other reason see compatriots abroad as some kind of a political, economic or social resource, then, the list of these groups is most likely to be expanded to the maximum. If compatriots abroad at a certain point of time become a kind of burden to the Russian authorities, there are two possible variants: maximum broadening or the maximum shortening of the mentioned list. Thus, having no possibility to tackle the problems of the social groups, considered to be compatriots abroad, the expanding of their list can formally grade the problem, having “dispersed” Russia’s responsibility in respect to a

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12. Concept of Support to Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation in the Current Period, <http://www.msrs.ru/commandpapers/commandpapersRF/26.html>

13. A. Dokuchaeva, The Law on Compatriots will be Amended, <http://www.materik.ru/index.php?section=analitics&bulid=107&bulsectionid=10147>

significant number of persons. In such a situation there is also a possibility to refuse in recognizing “problem” groups as compatriots.

Consequently, for the time being, it is not fully clear whom the appeal to “return” was addressed to. Nevertheless, Russia has demonstrated its interest in repatriation of compatriots residing abroad to its territory having fundamentally altered its treatment of them. One may realize the causes for this change by analyzing the formulation and transformation of the Russian policy towards compatriots.

### **Russian policy on compatriots abroad: from the discourse of a burden to the discourse of a resource**

The first steps to set a policy on compatriots abroad were made only in 1994. Mainly such inefficacy in the tackling this burning problem was determined by the interior political crisis, which started in 1992 and finished with the White House storm and adoption of the new Constitution at the end of 1993. Although the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation prepared a draft *Law on Compatriots*, however, this document was not adopted, due to, among other things, the confrontation between the legislative and executive branches of power.

The first address of the RF President to the Federal Assembly voiced in February of 1994 may be regarded as an official declaration of the necessity to form a policy on compatriots abroad. The matter of fundamental importance here was that the President in his address to the parliamentarians set the discourse of consideration of the problem of compatriots abroad: Russia should help her compatriots not with coming back to the “historically native land”, but Russia should help them to settle their life far away from Russia. As B. Yeltsin noted in his speech “everywhere, where our compatriots live, they should feel themselves full and equal citizens”, and defined a range of tasks of foreign policy aimed to support the “interests of Russians in the CIS countries and the Baltic states” [14].

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14. Address of the President of Russia B. Yeltsin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation „*Consolidation of the Russian State*”, <http://www.intelros.ru/lib/elzin/1994.htm>

In the first half of August 1994 the Russian President signed the first normative document in the field of policy towards compatriots abroad, namely his Decree № 1681. The Decree tasked the Russian Government by the 1st of September “to discuss and endorse *Guidelines of the State Policy On Compatriots Living Abroad*, as well to list immediate measures to support compatriots”[15] living abroad and a list of priority measures to support compatriots in the CIS member-states and in the Baltic countries.”[16]

On the last day of August 1994, the Government of the Russian Federation passed a resolution approving both the *Guidelines* and the *List of Primary Measures to Support Compatriots* [17]. Regardless of the failure to give a clear definition to the term “compatriots”, it maintained that the state policy was planned to be implemented towards two categories: emigrants from Russia and the USSR (including their descendants) and the Russian-speaking population of the former Union Republics. At the same time it anticipated implementation of actually two different policies in respect to these categories: regaining of the Russian citizenship and return to the “historically native land,” of the first category, and “prevention of mass migration” of the second one from the former Union Republics. Partly such a difference in the approach towards the two categories of compatriots had reference to the *Guidelines* and could be explained by the difficulties to receive a great number of immigrants. Thus, the document read that “at the moment all the new independent states, including Russia, faced significant economic difficulties, they were at the stage of establishing their nationhood, when it was not easy to consider specific demands of the emigrants from other states residing on their territory.”[18]

The Russian Government had grounds to believe that the repatriation of the emigrants and their descendants to the “historically native land,” would, first not be massive, and secondly, it would not become an economic burden for

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15. It is noticeable that in this Decree the word “compatriots” is always written in inverted commas, which may prove once again that there were no legal definitions of the term “compatriots abroad” at that time.

16. Decree of the Russian President from 11 August 1994, Nr 1681, *The Main Directions of the State Policy On “Compatriots” Living Abroad*, [http://www.mosds.ru/Dokum/dokum\\_rosUZ1681-1994.shtml](http://www.mosds.ru/Dokum/dokum_rosUZ1681-1994.shtml)

17. Resolution of the Russian Government Nr 1064 from 31 August, 1994, *On Measures to Support Compatriots Abroad*, <http://www.russiane.org/law/46.html>

18. Ibid.



the country: the last massive wave of emigration from the USSR took place in the first half of the 1940s [19], and the vast majority of emigrants settled down in the economically developed western countries. Meanwhile, many migrants from the former Union Republics have fallen under the category of socially unprotected stratum. Therefore, the massive return of the Russian-speaking population threatened to become an unbearable state expenditure. In this relation, in 1994 “the priority measures to support compatriots” turned out to be protection of the Russian-speaking population rights in the former Union Republics, as well as to their economic, social and cultural support. However, one should note, that in the Guidelines they provided for particular cases, when Russia would be ready to “arrange the reception of compatriots on its territory”. These cases included conflicts “creating a threat to life and health of compatriots”, as well as failure or impossibility of certain compatriots “to get adjusted to their new situation.”[20].

Thus, from the very beginning the policy towards compatriots abroad resulted, first of all, in the restriction of the mass immigration of the Russianspeaking population from former USSR countries to the territory of Russia by promoting the integration of its representatives to the new political communities. This trend is obvious in the normative documents adopted in the second part of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. Thus, in the abovementioned *Declaration on Support and Protection of the Russian Compatriots* it says that “the Russian Federation should contribute to the effective exercising of their right to participate in decision making process, related to their lives and the life of the regions, where they live.”[21]. Assistance in repatriation of compatriots was supposed to be provided only in cases of their discrimination “in the domain of human rights and freedoms and the rights of minorities”, as well as in the event of military conflicts in places of their residence, which would cause threat to “their rights to personal security.”[22]

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19. In this case I will put aside the emigration of ethnic Germans and Jews, which was tackled in the late Soviet period.

20. Resolution of the Russian Government Nr 1064 from 31 August, 1994, *On Measures to Support Compatriots Abroad*, <http://www.russiane.org/law/46.html>

21. *Declaration on Support and Protection of the Russian Compatriots*, [http://www.igrunov.ru/gdrf/sng/sngarchive/declar\\_sng.html](http://www.igrunov.ru/gdrf/sng/sngarchive/declar_sng.html)

22. Ibid.

In May 1996, the Government passed its Resolution endorsing the *Program of Measures to Support Compatriots Abroad* [23]. Like the previous documents the Program focused on the problem of Russian-speaking population in the former Union Republics. In the first part of the document it was said that “due to the collapse of the USSR and the establishment of the new independent countries millions of the compatriots found themselves to be separated from the Russian Federation by frontiers.”[24] The document also emphasized that compatriots “had to live and determine their own destiny” not only in difficult economic, social and cultural conditions, but also under complicated political conditions. Moreover, the last mentioned difficulties were provoked by the “circumstances, related to the formation of the new independent states as nation-states of the titular ethnicities, which have realized the right to self-determination.”[25] The document differs from the previous ones by having identified Russia not as the key protector of the rights of discriminated compatriots, but as an assisting partner both for the states where they live, and for the civil organizations of compatriots. The Program emphasises that the countries, where compatriots permanently reside, “shall be responsible for safeguarding the full complex of legal, political, economic, social and cultural rights of these persons”. In its turn, Russia, “as the successor of the USSR is responsible to compatriots in moral terms, is ready to assist the governments of the independent states in tackling these tasks.”[26]

Another distinguishing feature of the Program is its declaration of the principle that “support to compatriots abroad in no circumstances shall be a veiled denial of their right to return to Russia”. Moreover, as a “fundamental two-fold objective of the Russian policy towards compatriots” it recognises a “guarantee of both integration into the life of the country of permanent residence while preserving the cultural identity, and return to the historic motherland.”[27] Nevertheless, the Program does not provide for specific mechanisms to contribute to the return of compatriots to Russia and their settlement in historic

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23. Resolution of the Russian Government from the 17 May, 1996, Nr 590, *Program of Measures to Support Compatriots Abroad*, <http://www.friends-partners.org/partners/valery/humright/hr960512.html>

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

motherland. Like before, the document keeps focusing on the integration of Russian-speaking population into political and social reality of the former Union Republics. The *Law on State Policy of the RF towards Compatriots Abroad*, which was adopted in 1999, was also aimed rather to assist compatriots in their settlement beyond the borders of Russia than in their return to “historic motherland.”[28]

In August 2001, the new President V. Putin signed the *Concept of Support for the Compatriots Abroad at the Present Stage*. The document actually reiterated the basic provisions of the Program of Measures...of 1996. Thus, the Concept declared, that “the primary responsibility to guarantee individual and collective rights and providing the decent conditions of social life to all its inhabitants was laid on the countries where these people live (stay).”[29] Meanwhile, in respect to compatriots Russia saw its role in assistance in “adjustment and integration into the life of countries of residence while voluntarily preserving the ethnic identity”, and “restriction of uncontrolled migration in Russia.”[30]

However, starting with 2002 the official discourse on compatriots abroad gradually started to change. If almost during the period of eight years political establishment viewed situation with compatriots as a problem, in tackling of which Russia should take an active part, now the Russian-speaking population of the former Union Republics was perceived as a resource. For example, *Basic Guidelines for Support by Support of Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation for 2002 – 2005*, which were approved by a Decree of the Government, among other fundamental objectives of the policy declare “promotion of a more active engagement of compatriots and their organizations in the expansion of the equal and mutually beneficial relations between Russia and foreign states and further implementation of democratic reform in the Russian Federation.”[31] Thus, they started gradually perceiving compatriots as “their people” in other states, who contributed to establishing a constructive

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28. Federal Law from 24 May, 1999, Nr93-FZ *On the State Policy Towards Compatriots Abroad*, <http://russiane.org/law/45.html>

29. *Concept of Support for the Compatriots Abroad At the Present Stage*, <http://www.msrs.ru/commandpapers/commandpapersRF/26.html>

30. Ibid.

31. *Basic Guidelines for Support by Support of Compatriots Abroad by the Russian Federation for 2002 – 2005*, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation from 28 November, 2002, [http://www.mosds.ru/Dokum/dokum\\_rosOsn2005.shtml](http://www.mosds.ru/Dokum/dokum_rosOsn2005.shtml)

dialogue between Russia and neighbouring countries. In addition, political figures of Russia began marking that “emigrants from Russia actively participated in shaping a modern image of our country” as they “were an integral part of the special social community, which was more often referred to as “the Russian world”, adding up a ...wide culturological connotation to this concept [32]. Thus, in 2002-2003, compatriots abroad were regarded as an external political resource of Russia; however a perception of them as an internal political recourse of beneficial migrants for the country was built up gradually.

At the beginning of 2000, Russia was confronted with a need to attract migrants to the country. The need derived from two factors of depopulation and workforce shortage. According to the *Concept of Regulation of Migration Processes in the RF*, the reduction of domestic social and economic migration of Russian population “prevents from supplying workforce to the new and revived enterprises and economic growth.”[33] The Concept mentions yet another problem of population drop in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country and frontier territories. However, Russia could not be satisfied with “any kind” of migrants. For example, this particular document refers to the “mass resettlement of foreign nationals and persons without citizenship in the regions having boundaries with the states of Central and Eastern Asia” as “a threat to the security of the RF.”[34] Consequently, there emerged a need for “their own” migrants, who would not only easily get adjusted to the Russian reality, but would be morally bound with the state. In this connection, key political figures of the country repeatedly reminded of the area of the former USSR as a possible source of new human resources. For example, at the end of the 2002, in a speech on migration policy V. Putin pointed out that “we were in a better situation compared with other countries, as we had an obvious reservoir, from which we could take people for Russia. These people have our mentality, often speak Russian as their mother-tongue; we have common cultural and

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32. Shorthand notes of a speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation I. Ivanov during a meeting of the Advisory Council of the subjects of the Russian Federation on international and external economic relations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow, 18 March, 2003,

[http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/70dbcc03e7421a4243256ced003f6d70?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/70dbcc03e7421a4243256ced003f6d70?OpenDocument)

33. *Concept of Regulation of Migration Processes in the RF*,

<http://www.antropotok.archipelag.ru/text/a045.htm>

34. Ibid.

confessional routs. Those are the Republics of the former Soviet Union. And we should do everything in order to win them over.”[35]

Regardless of these pompous declarations, it was the time when Russia introduced a paradoxically rigid migration policy. As an example, in May 2002, they passed a new *Law on Citizenship of the RF*, which made the naturalization procedure for the Russian-speaking population of the former Union Republics aspired to move for a permanent residence to Russia more complicated. During the third reading of the draft law the provisions was fiercely discussed by the parliamentarians of the State Duma. However, both the authors of the draft, and President’s Representative in Duma A. Kotenkov grounded the new regulation on the fact, that persons willing to become Russian nationals could do so freely in the period of 10 years, which would be a sufficient period for such a decision to be made [36]. In addition, since June 2003 new migration legislation has been enforced in Russia, which imposed significant difficulties on the legal work of migrant workers. This resulted in a harsh evaluation by experts of the new migration policy of the country. Thus, the Russian migration policy of the last years is called “absurd”[37] and “repressive”, while President of the *International Legal Advocacy Assembly* M. Arutyunov even referred to it as “punitive” [38]. Chairman of the executive committee *Emigrant Organizations Forum* L. Graphova spoke of it as “a war against native migrants.”[39]

In many respects, these paradoxes can be explained by internal political processes of the last six years and by an attempt to erect the new country in particular. Currently, the discourse on national consolidation prevails in the domestic policy of Russia. It should be noted that the idea of national consolidation is not just a project of the ruling elite, but it is highly demanded by the society. For example, it is manifested by the outcome of elections to the State Duma of the fourth convocation. An undisputed leader of the last elections to

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35. Dialogue between the President and the People, <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article27957/>

36. Shorthand Notes of Plenary Session of the State Duma, 19 April, 2002. Morning session, [http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN\\_Z/2002/04/s19-04\\_u.htm](http://www.akdi.ru/gd/PLEN_Z/2002/04/s19-04_u.htm)

37. V. Perevedencev, *Fates and Figures // Novoye vremja* (New time) No. 29 from 20 July, 2003, [http://www.newtimes.ru/artical.asp?n=3006&art\\_id=4137](http://www.newtimes.ru/artical.asp?n=3006&art_id=4137)

38. M. Arutyunov, *Punitive Migration Policy*, [http://www.hro.org/editions/pg/07\\_03/18-2\\_07\\_03.htm](http://www.hro.org/editions/pg/07_03/18-2_07_03.htm)

39. L. Graphova, *Migrants of Russia Call Upon the Authorities to Common Sense*, <http://terraincognita.spb.ru/n8/smisl.htm>

the Duma was the “Yedinaya Rossiya” (*United Russia*) party, the third and the fourth places were taken by the LDPR and the national patriotic block “Rodina” (*Motherland*) [40]. At the same time, the voiced policy and the “idea of the nation” is not the only condition to get modern Russia transformed into a nation-state, as one needs institutional arrangements for the construction of a nation. Theories on nations and nationalism, as a rule, consider three main criteria of a nation-state: (1) external and internal *sovereignty*, supported by the state administration; (2) a territory with fixed exterior borders; (3) the availability of its own political *community* (a nation) [41]. Despite the fact that during the overall post Soviet period there were some problems in Russia related to the territorial arrangement of the country, the central problem for the transformation of Russia into a nation--state is the problem of the community-formation.

In Russia of the last years, the formation of a nation-state implies searching for the ways of fencing in from the exterior world, a kind of “withdrawal” into herself. It is reflected in all the fields of political regulation, including the area of migration policy. At the current moment Russia faces an acute problem of symbolical and ideological definition of who is “hers”. As the Russian citizens have not yet formed up an integral image of their community, the external migration at the moment is rather an obstacle, than a favourable consolidation factor. At the moment migrants, in the view of the project of unification which is implemented by the authorities, are not desirable as they may introduce disintegration elements to a weakly consolidated Russian community. On the other hand, Russia desperately needs a migration flow to alleviate its demographic and economic problems. To resolve the contradiction one may repatriate *Russian-speaking population* from the former Union Republics. Perception of that made the central figures of the RF once again review their attitude towards compatriots and adopt the *National Programme on Support to Voluntary Migration of Compatriots Living Abroad to the Russian Federation* [42].

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40. In this particular case I do not exclude an influence of the administrative resource or just election fraud to get the election results. However, even a distorted picture of the elective preferences allows us to make conclusions about the moods of the majority of Russian voters.

41. For example, see J. Habermas *The European Nation-State – Its Achievements and Its Limits. On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship*, in G. Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, London & New York, 1996.

42. Decree of the President of the RF from 22 June, 2006 No. 637 *On Measures of Support Voluntary Migration of Compatriots Living Abroad to the RF*, <http://www.rg.ru/2006/06/28/ukaz-pereselenie.html>

Among basic objectives of the Program they defined “compensation for the natural population decrease in the country at large and in its individual regions by attracting immigrants for permanent place of residence in the Russian Federation [43]. In this respect, Russia is not interested in an ordinary return of its compatriots, but rather in their resettlement in particular regions of the RF identified in the document as “regions for settlement”. On the whole, they identified three main categories: “A”, “B” and “C”. “Strategically important for Russia frontier regions, with a typical decline in population” were included in the “A” category. “B” category included regions, where they implement significant investment projects, which require a mass attraction of migrants due to the absence of a respective labour force supply on the local labour market.”[44] Finally, the last “C” category united “regions with sustainable social and economic development, where in the course of the last three years and more there was a reduction of population and (or) migration flow-out”. The Program stipulates that all migrants “are entitled to state guarantees and social benefits”. However, the volume of the guarantees and support depends on what category of the regions migrants will go to. Thus, the largest volume is anticipated for the regions of “A” category, and the lowest is for “C” category [45].

At the same time compatriots appear to be “tied up” to the regions of their resettlement by issuing a special “certificate of a participant of the state program” at least for two years [46]. Thus, although Russia has called back its “sons” and “daughters”, the main aim of their repatriation is not the “restoration of the family”. On the contrary, Russia treats the compatriots abroad as the internal political resource and tries to solve its own problems with their help, but not the problems of those who were left abroad after the collapse of the USSR. Essentially, the immigrants are supposed to be exposed to a certain selfhood, as they are forced to live in such places where the Russians themselves do not want to move to.

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43. Ibid

44. Ibid

45. Ibid

46. Program maintains that its participant “and (or) member of his/her family having migrated for a permanent place of residence from a unit of the Russian Federation, identified in the Certificate of the State Program Participant, prior than in two years shall reimburse the cost related to their allowance paid (Decree of President of the RF from 22 June 2006 No. 637 On Measures of Support to Voluntary Migration of Compatriots Living Abroad to the RF, <http://www.rg.ru/2006/06/28/ukaz-pereselenie.html>

## **Instead of conclusion: some thoughts about the prospects of the new State program**

Efforts undertaken on the 22nd of June to repatriate the compatriots from abroad to Russia most likely will not be successful. To my mind, there are several reasons for that.

First of all the implementation of measures to repatriate compatriots is too late. These measures would have been timely if they were undertaken in 1990s (especially in the first part of the decade). However, at that time the desire of coming back to Russia of the main part of Russian-speaking population was out of tune with the Russian policy towards compatriots abroad. Currently, on the contrary, the desire of the Russian government to resolve the demographical problem by attracting compatriots does not any more match life strategies of the main part of the Russian-speaking population on the territory of the former Union Republics. Fifteen years after the collapse of the USSR a larger part of those who wanted to come back to their “historically native land” have already moved to Russia for permanent residence. Those who have not moved or deliberately decided to stay in the new countries, during the last years have developed their own strategies of adaptation. In addition, the unveiled motive for the repatriation of compatriots in order to solve domestic problems of Russia rather than the problems of the compatriots will most likely alienate than attract those, who have not put aside their plans to return.

Secondly, the issue of the target group remains open, as the Program, endorsed by the President, has not precisely defined compatriots abroad. Failure to give in the document the precise legal definition for those who are subjected to the supposed measures leads to difficulties of the bureaucratic, cultural and political kind. So, if you rely on the definition for the “compatriots abroad” given in the Federal Law of 1999, hypothetically the implementation of State Program should cover the overwhelming part of population of the former USSR. Nevertheless, the Law provided for a certain mechanism of the precise identification of the target group, namely, by issuing special documents (certificates) of compatriots. Enforcement of this mechanism was supposed to tackle two problems: (1) to define the actual number of people, who are the Russian compatriots abroad, i.e. people who voluntarily identify themselves with



this group.; (2) to create a regulation system to deal with relations “compatriot – the Russian Federation”, in which state certificates of the unified specimen would serve as a ground to grant individual rights to their holders. However, in the course of seven years since the enforcement of the *Law on State Policy of the RF towards Compatriots Abroad*, neither the system of issuing certificated has been created, nor even the specimen has been approved. As it was shown above, the key reason was related to the lack of material resources. In addition, the new Program anticipates issuing a “certificate of specimen approved by the Government of the Russian Federation” to compatriots that in its turn will once again require significant material resources and is time-consuming. Adjustment of the mechanisms of identification of target groups threatens to drag on several years and will become another obstacle for implementation of the Program endorsed by the President.

There is also a doubt if the definition of “compatriots abroad” in the Law of 1999 corresponds with the modern trends of domestic Russian policy. As it was mentioned, currently Russia is not interested in all the nationals of the former USSR. There is little possibility, that the authorities would support massive resettlements of representatives of other than the Russian ethnic group, for example, to Khabarovsk Kraj or Kaliningrad Oblast. Even the migration of representatives of former “brotherly ethnicities” to the Central Russia’s territories will poorly match the idea of state consolidation. Thus, the number of potential program participants most likely will be limited to cultural issues.