



*Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies
Association for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seminar

“Europe facing ethnic and religious conflicts”

5 May 2006
Moscow

Introduction

In association with the Moscow-based Association for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation (AEAC), the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS) convened a seminar on ‘Europe facing ethnic and religious problems’ on 5 May 2006 in Moscow. Approximately 30 participants from both Russia and Western Europe debated in the course of four sessions the origins and consequences of ethnic and religious tensions and possible alternatives to current strategies.

This seminar is part of a series of meetings which bring together scholars from East and West to discuss questions which affect the whole of Europe. In recent years, the LIEIS and the AEAC have organised conferences on EU-Russia relations, Russia’s place in the world after 11 September 2001 and the evolution of Russia until 2020.

In his introductory remarks, Armand Clesse, director of the LIEIS, said that all parts of Europe face ethnic and religious problems and that this raises fundamental questions for politics, culture and social relations. He also emphasised the nature and the objective of the seminar: a lively and critical exchange of ideas which could be the basis for a larger international colloquium in 2007 or 2008.

At the outset of the seminar, Vladimir Baranovsky, deputy director of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, argued that in the past ethnic and religious conflicts in

places like India, Pakistan, Israel and the Arab world were seen as peripheral rather than central, local rather than global, and the exception rather than the rule. Nowadays such and similar problems are highly politicised, both in theory and in practice. One question which this tendency raises is whether we are over-dramatising the issue or whether events like the recent riots in France underscore the ethnic and religious dimension of socio-economic and political problems in Europe. There are different levels of analysis: social, ethnic, religious, spiritual, identity (in the sense of European culture and civilisation). Moreover, it is paramount to relate ideas to practices and to their political use. One philosophical question is whether religious and ethnic conflicts are a by-product of modernity and globalisation or whether they are universal problems which take particular forms over time and across space. In turn, this leads to reflections on differences in mentality and public psychology.

I. Demographic changes and ethnic problems in Europe

The first session concerned demographic trends and their impact on the ethnic configuration of certain European countries, above all Russia. Valery Tishkov, director of the Institute of Ethnography and Anthropology, argued that demography, including the movement of people inside states and across borders, has important consequences for the identity of the indigenous population, of minorities and, possibly, of the diaspora. He described the general situation in Europe as follows. The demographic evolution is in many ways dramatic. There is widespread fear of an ongoing and accelerating population decline both in the West and the East; yet at the same time, there are signs of a growing over-population on a global scale and a concomitant lack of natural resources (water, fertile soil, oil, gas, etc.). These rival tendencies are reflected in bestselling books like *The Population Boom* and *The Empty Cradle*. The demographic evolution towards lower birth-rates and higher longevity has powerful implications for politics, the economy, culture and social relations. Some commentators expect the demise of the Russian nation, as they predict a 50% decline over the next 30-50 years. Others contend that different countries in the post-Soviet space have suffered even more drastic reductions in the size of their populations than Russia, e.g. the Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia and Kazakhstan. There is thus a controversy about the nature of the problem: is Europe facing a temporary population decline or a protracted demographic crisis? Moreover, the ongoing geo-political rivalry between East and West continues to haunt the debate on the present and future of Russia, even though there is a strong alliance between some policy-makers in the West and certain groups of experts and politicians in Russia who contest the current path of development, especially the 'shock therapy' of the 1990s and the modalities of the transition from a planned to a 'free-market' economy. The Putin Administration is scathing about the pre-1999 demographic situation and heralds its own record as a fundamental reversal in the decline.

However, as V. Tishkov remarked, Russia has in fact experienced a population influx since 1990 – about 13.3 million people moved to Russia, mainly ethnic Russians who had previously been re-settled to the outskirts of the USSR. This figure corresponds approximately to 7.6% of world migration over this period. According to some estimates, 2/3 of these 13.3 million were labour migrants, and only 1/3 were ethnic migrants. This indicates that in economic terms, the transition in Russia was more successful than elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. In order to escape poverty and insecurity, people have moved from ex-Soviet Republics to Russia, not Western Europe. One reason is that the Schengen Zone has

created a ‘fortress Europe’ that favours internal free movement at the expense of external migratory flows. Russia thus stands to gain from a more liberalised migration because it could compete more effectively for global migration resources. For instance, many Moldovans currently prefer to migrate to Europe (especially Greece) rather than Russia because of discrimination. This has adverse effects on the Russian economy, as the economic contribution of immigrants is substantial: remittances are small in comparison with the overall share of the input of immigrants in Russia’s GDP. In large part, the metropolis of Moscow has flourished in the last ten years as a result of migrants.

V. Tishkov concluded his presentation by arguing that Europe as a whole and Russia in particular face the problem of the relation between ethnic diversity and national unity. One key difference is whether ethnicity is institutionalised or whether it matters culturally and at the level of mentality. According to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), international legal norms have provided additional recognition to ethnic minorities by protecting not only individual rights but also communal rights, in line with UN provisions. However, the danger is that nations will be increasingly defined in ethnic terms. The ensuing ethno-nationalism, which is ignored by Western Europe, could pose a threat to the unity of multi-ethnic and multi-religious states such as Russia or exacerbate tensions with neighbouring countries. The challenge is to develop strategies of civic nation-building, by respecting the prevailing cultural mosaic of nations and also by safeguarding minority rights.

In his response to these comments, Viacheslav Nikonov, president of the Foundation ‘Unity in the name of Russia’ and of the Foundation ‘Politics’, said that mentality and reality reinforce each other. Since 1991, Russia is characterised by a paradox. On the one hand, nationalism is a predominantly ideological question. On the other hand, the mark of contemporary Russian politics is an ideological vacuum. The USSR defended a variant of proletarian internationalism. However, post-Soviet Russia lacks any coherent ideology – the current vacuum has been filled with the simplest notions like ‘us *versus* them’. Russian nationalism is fuelled by a narrow ethnic definition of ‘Russian-ness’ and the modern concept of the nation-state. Migration is mainly driven by economic factors and thus cannot be stopped without causing major disruption to growth and employment. In addition to the official figures on regular migrants, there are perhaps as many as 20 million illegal immigrants in Russia today. How can Russia integrate them while also preserving its identity and balance? Is there a simple correlation between the number of immigrants and the rise of anti-immigration feelings? What is clear from many surveys is that there is a positive correlation, but it is neither linear nor geometric. Instead, religious and linguistic factors play a significant role in the perception of immigrants and in the integration of vast numbers. Historically, since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia has had the advantage of taking in migrants who tend to know the language and culture and thereby have blended in with the indigenous population. Therefore, the major challenge is to find an alternative ideology which can preserve territorial unity and ethnic-cum-religious diversity. The worst possible response to higher immigration would be to impose a single model, which breeds nationalism (this tendency is also reinforced by foreign interference, for example the speech of the US Vice-President Dick Cheney in Vilnius on 4 May 2006).

V. Nikonov also argued that Europe, in contrast to Russia, has entered a so-called post-modern post-national era with a concomitant ideology. This vision is alienating all those who cling to nationalism, both in the West and in the East (France, Poland, etc.). Whereas Russia



has always been multi-ethnic and multi-religious, the West used to be more homogeneous. But nowadays immigration in general and Muslim communities in particular have changed this configuration: for instance, in the whole of Europe the most widespread name for newborn boys in 2005 was Mohammed. This raises a number of fundamental questions. First, is Islam an authentically European religion? Secondly, are Muslim values adaptable to secular European values? Thirdly, how can migration be controlled and its impact channelled?

According to [Anatoly Utkin](#), director of the Center of strategic studies at the Institute of USA and Canada, Europe only represents a tiny share of the entire world population and will continue to fall behind on a global level. Exceptionally low birth rates in traditionally fast-growing countries such as Italy and Spain have led to a dramatic situation. Coupled with high immigration, the prospect is the emergence of 'Muslim Europe', where Muslims constitute not only the largest minority but will in fact represent a majority in increasingly many European towns.

[Richard Mole](#), Lecturer in the Politics of Central Europe at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, contended that there is a fundamental difference between perception and reality. There is a widespread perception in Britain that immigrants represent between 15% and 25% of the total population and that a majority of immigration originates from the Third World, especially Asian countries. But in reality, the figure is 7% and a majority of immigrants are Irish and Canadian, not Asian and/or Muslim. Moreover, there is no uniform model of Islam or a single type of Muslim. The current mobilisation amongst British Muslims is in large part a response to the government reaction to events such as the 7 July 2005 bombings and the controversy about the cartoons of the Prophet, but this mobilisation does not extend to all Muslim groups which are present in Britain.

On Russia, it was argued that approximately 81% of the whole population are ethnic Russians. This represents a small decline since 1971. While the demographic evolution of ethnic Russians is broadly similar to that of other ethnic groups in Russia, the main difference is the 'non-reproductive behaviour' – the birth rate of ethnic Russians tends to be distinctly lower than that of other population groups. One key finding of recent demographic studies is that Russia's present population is in essence the same as the population of the Russian territory in 1989. The 1989 census counted about 147 million inhabitants, while the 2002 census counted 145 million. However, given that the population census is voluntary, it has been estimated that between 5% and 7% of the actual population are not taken into account. Coupled with the tendency of Ukrainians to become Russian rather than to emigrate to the Ukraine, the actual population is higher but the share of ethnic Russians has perhaps somewhat declined. However, Russia's overall demographic situation has remained broadly stable over the period 1989-2002, as evinced by the continuity of the number of pupils in the classroom, which is a fairly reliable indicator. What has changed is the evolution of mortality: infant mortality is generally low, but the mortality of adult men is higher than in most other European countries. The birth-rate is only 1.1 and thus one of the lowest in the whole of Europe. As a result, the stability (or small decline) of the Russian population is entirely due to migration. This has significant implications for Russia's immigration policy. If the current trends prevail for the next 10-15 years, limits to immigration (which are currently envisaged by the Putin Administration) will entail a loss of between 500,000 and one million.

Yuri Rubinsky, director of the Center of the French Studies, Institute of the European Studies, added that from the middle of the nineteenth century to the 1930s, both France and Ireland suffered a substantial demographic decline due to low birth rates and high mortality rates. Thereafter and until recently, they achieved the highest birth rate in Europe as a result of voluntaristic policies that support large families. V. Tishkov said that the current situation is not as dramatic as has been alleged both in Russia and abroad. There are sufficient demographic resources still available to reduce and reverse the decline. Beyond the propaganda of parts of the Church and the state apparatus, one possible solution is to maintain the current levels of immigration and to reduce mortality (through health policy). Per year, between 70,000 and 100,000 Russian citizens die from the effects of alcoholism. Moreover, there are probably up to 500,000 deaths directly and indirectly related to the excessive consumption of alcohol.

Sergey Oznobishev, director of the Institute of Strategic Estimates, claimed that if Russians were to die out, it would signify the demise of the country as a whole and the possible loss of Siberia. There are powerful forces in China who are bent on annexing the Siberian territory in order to ease the demographic pressures on the Chinese homeland. Most commentators argue that failing economic and social policies explain low birth rates, but the question is whether higher wages would really help increase birth rates. In this respect, corruption is a major problem – rent-seeking is a consequence of low wages and a cause for lower economic growth because it has a negative impact on investment. On immigration, he said that the major challenge for Russia is whether and how Russians can coexist peacefully with immigrants from different ethnic groups and religious affiliations. In general, anti-immigration feelings are currently exacerbated by politicians and some people within the special forces. In response, it is not clear that Russia necessarily requires a certain ‘national idea’. Switzerland does not have a national identity, yet its unity is not threatened by the presence of various ethnic groups. In this context, he dismissed the suggestion of a new Cold War. This is a category mistake, as wrong at present as it was in the recent past, when in 2001 both Russian and American politicians first floated the same idea. Then as now, it amounts to nothing other than political and journalistic invention and exaggeration, void of any substance.

II. Ethnic conflicts, religious extremism and civic integration in Europe

The second session turned to the religious dimension of conflicts in Europe and discussed possible strategies which facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities. In his introductory presentation on religion, Alexey Malashenko, professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MGIMO), argued that there are different kinds of Islam at various levels of society in Europe. The first level is the communal (and perhaps ethnic) level, in the sense of a Muslim identity which is tied to a certain community or ethnic group. The second level is the national level, in the sense of a Muslim identity which is related to a nation or citizenship, e.g. British or French Muslims. The third level is the universal level of the Islamic *Umma* – a trans-ethnic and trans-national identity which is associated with a global project (the creation or re-creation of a pan-Islamic caliphate). For many observers in Europe, the *Umma* has negative connotations and invokes phenomena such as exclusion, fundamentalism and terrorism. In Russia, these distinctions can also be found: ethnic Muslims, Russian Muslims and members of the Islamic *Umma* who reside in Russia. One key question which arises for all Muslims in Europe is whether they are

part of European variants of Islam or universal Islam. This question is all the more topical since Islam in Europe is in transition and everywhere Muslims are faced with this problem.

A. Utkin said that in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, France was by far the biggest country in Europe and encompassed 25% of all Europeans. By 1945, there were 40 million French and today there are approximately 62 million. The increase by about 20 million was the result of a number of different factors: first, 5 million French citizens returned from French colonies in Africa and Asia; secondly, there are about 5 million immigrants in France; thirdly, 5 million French were born as a result of improved living standards; finally, 5 million can be attributed to President de Gaulle's voluntaristic policies in the late 1950s and 1960s. According to a confidential memorandum of the French government, the economy and the social model require a total population of about 75 million citizens, viz. an extra 10-15 million. However, immigration from the Maghreb countries is the only substantial source. Higher immigration in general and more immigrants from Muslim countries in particular will meet the resistance of French society, as evinced by the recent events in the suburbs as well as reactions to EU enlargement and the formal opening of accession negotiations with Turkey.

A number of participants responded to these comments. V. Baranovsky argued that in most European countries, above all Russia, women hold the key to the demographic evolution. V. Tishkov and R. Mole drew the distinction between civic and ethnic identity and nationalism and said that the West tends to be seen as a civic rather than an ethnic or national model. However, there is a general tendency across the whole of Europe to emphasise ethnicity at the expense of civic identity. In part, this constitutes a local reaction to the global expansion of migratory flows and rising levels of immigrants from different ethnic groups and other cultures. Ethnic identity is also in some way a response to the increasing Americanisation and homogenisation of the world. Moreover, as R. Mole explained, not only Western countries but also increasingly Eastern countries confront a 'democratic paradox': there is now little, if any, real choice between the Left and the Right, so the prevailing populism in politics and the media prefers the choice between 'right and wrong'. This creates a kind of exclusion along the lines of 'us *versus* them' or, worse, 'civilised nations *versus* barbarians'. On Switzerland, he contended that it does not lack a national identity. On the contrary, it defends a very strong, though peculiar, national idea, linked to Swiss citizenship (which is very difficult to obtain) and to civic duties (which are complex and demanding).

One question which arises for Russia is why the first citizenship law was very generous and why it was tightened in the late 1990s. A. Utkin claimed that this change in Russia legislation was a backlash against events in the Caucasus and Central Asia, in particular armed conflicts and the presence of wealthy Caucasians in Moscow who are accused of operating with mafia-like methods and running corrupt businesses at the expense of ordinary ethnic Russians. Yuri Goriachev, director of the Center of inter-ethnic education and deputy director of the Department of the Moscow Government, reported that Alexander Solzhenitsyn was not listened to in the State Duma when it drafted the new citizenship law. Moscow is the first destination of migrants, followed by Siberian cities where gas and oil are prominent industries. It is estimated that there are more than one million people without proper documents in Russia. These are not necessarily illegal immigrants because they were invited by the Moscow Government to resettle and work in the capital. Now they are tolerated but their legal and socio-economic situation is deteriorating.

More generally, as Y. Goriachev argued, Russia has experienced successive waves of immigration since 1991. The vast majority of the first wave were ethnic Russians who returned from the Soviet republics. The second wave was constituted by former Soviet citizens who had studied Russian in the Soviet system and were familiar with Russian culture. Nowadays, the third wave of immigration includes a growing minority of migrants who neither speak Russian nor are knowledgeable about Russian culture. The share of this type of immigration already amounts to one-third of all immigrants and is set to rise significantly over the coming years. This requires extra language classes, the retraining of teachers and the re-organisation of the entire education system (e.g. Russian language and civic classes in each of the ten areas that make up Moscow). Most immigrants are from countries which are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), especially Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Currently, the cultural education of non-Russian migrants takes the form of integration and adaptation, not assimilation: in Moscow alone there are about 70 ethno-national schools.

These remarks on ethno-national schools sparked a controversy. Sergey Lunev, professor at MGIMO, asserted that increasingly many schools practice discrimination against Russian pupils and foster a climate of segregation and ghettoisation. He cited the case of a Georgian school in Moscow where Russian pupils are barred from using the sports and computing facilities and excluded from other activities. Y. Goriachev responded by saying that such schools tend to have more than one single class and that ethno-national schools with a special syllabus aimed at integrating immigrants are a more effective means of fighting against the negative consequences of immigration than propaganda and populism. Asked by Adrian Pabst, research fellow at the LIEIS, about the existence of faith schools in Russia, he explained that each state school teaches the history of religions as part of the normal school syllabus and that ethno-national schools teach their own tradition. There are thus no faith schools, but instead educational institutions along ethnic and national lines (with a special focus on language and culture, not primarily faith).

According to Viacheslav Igrunov, director of the Institute of humanitarian and political studies, many experts disagree with the assertion that Russia is suffering a demographic crisis. Instead, they contend the opposite, for Russia benefits from continuously strong immigration. Even though the population loss amounts to 500,000 and perhaps as such one million people every year due to an exceptionally high mortality, Russia has seen about 12 million official immigrants since 1991 and approximately 5-10 million illegal immigrants. Thus, on balance, Russia's population has increased, not decreased. But without immigrants Russia could not cope with the demographic decline as a result of low birth rates (living standards and uncertainty) and high mortality rates (alcoholism, abortion, suicide, etc.). Strong xenophobic feelings can be observed not only in Russia but also in other countries with a substantial influx of migrants, e.g. Germany, France and The Netherlands.

Is xenophobia a widely shared feeling or a marginal political phenomenon? For V. Igrunov, xenophobia is a popular feeling which is fuelled by official populist rhetoric. There have been some important attempts to tackle this problem by improving the integration of immigrants into Russian society. As a former member of the State Duma, he related how he was vilified by some of his colleagues for suggesting more inclusive citizenship laws. Already in the 1990s, Russian politics was characterised by a dangerous obsession with the nexus between demography and immigration. In discussions on immigration, prominent politicians insisted

on the demographic crisis and the loss of ‘Russian-ness’. Likewise, in debates on demography, the same politicians were adamant that the real danger stemmed from excessively high immigration. Until 1998, Russia was in a very difficult economic situation as a result of ‘shock therapy’. In August 1998 and thereafter, it had to cope with a severe crisis following the devaluation of the rouble and the loss of private savings. This experience produced cultural stereotypes which favoured populism and xenophobia and which continue to operate until today. The challenge is to integrate immigrants in such a way that they blend in with the dominant culture without losing their own particular identity. Ideally, the teaching of Russian language and culture would take place not only after their arrival in Russia but already in their countries of origin (above all the CIS). Equally, it is important to train potential future immigrants where they live, not in the country of destination. In consequence, Russia must care not only about its own economic situation but also that of the countries whence immigrants originate. Finally, it is paramount to foster a proper attitude towards immigrants, to see them as friends and allies, not as foreigners and enemies.

Y. Rubinsky said that widespread corruption within the bureaucratic state apparatus also affects immigration because officials receive bribes in order to grant official papers to illegal immigrants who thereby avoid imprisonment or deportation. S. Luney wondered whether it would not be cheaper to pay Russian families in order to have more children rather than to cover the costs of encouraging more immigration and enabling immigrants to stay rather than return to their countries of origin. In response to these comments, V. Igrunov said that each child costs about US \$ 20,000 and that couples tend to have children later in life. The combined effect on birth rates is strongly negative. However, those who wish to have numerous families already do so and improved financial support for families will increase rather than reduce the level of immigration.

In his brief remarks on the wider causes of terrorism, Vladimir Lukov, director of the Center for prevention of terrorism at the Russian State Social University, argued that the tensions between Russians and non-Russians help generate ‘ethnic terrorism’. Because many immigrant groups are excluded on ethnic grounds, their self-identity in turn becomes exclusivist. Therefore, the treatment of immigrants and their self-perception are mutually reinforcing and can provide fertile soil for terrorist activity. Given that Europe differs from America in terms of ‘soft’ versus ‘hard’ power, the main challenge for European countries is to identify non-military means of countering this problem.

III. Social and cultural dimensions of ethnic and religious conflicts in Europe

At the beginning of the final session, A. Clesse returned to the question of the causes of xenophobia. He asked whether there had been any significant levels of xenophobia and nationalism during the USSR and, if so, what the origins were. He also wondered why in contemporary Russia a wide range of public figures, including politicians and journalists, can deploy overtly racist rhetoric with impunity. For example, racist crimes against foreign non-white students are frequently described as acts of hooliganism. As a result, the perpetrators of such crimes escape heavy prison sentences and the crimes themselves are trivialised. This sends a certain message to society as a whole – racist propaganda and racists crimes seem to be acceptable in Russia. Y. Rubinsky argued that this is part of a wider political game which uses xenophobic feelings in order to eliminate the liberal opposition and consolidate its hold

on power. V. Baranovsky raised the problem of how to define phenomena such as nationalism and fascism and how to punish related crimes. A. Clesse asked whether Russian law contains the notion of incitement to racial hatred and violence and crime and, if so, whether such acts are punished and what the court practices are. S. Lunev denounced the fascist project as criminal and cited evidence from sociological surveys which reveal that there is no large-scale racism, anti-Semitism or xenophobia in Russia. On the contrary, Russians are amongst the most tolerant people and the only reason why they become more nationalistic is that they are portrayed as jingoistic and react to all sorts of stereotypical accusations. More fundamentally, increasingly many Russians are outraged by events in the Northern Caucasus – the widespread kidnapping and murdering of Russian citizens and instances of ethnic cleansing by Chechens and other tribes.

Sergey Sokolovsky, editor-in-chief of ‘Ethnographic Review’, examined the thesis of ‘sub-cultures’. In the 1970s, British sociologists from the Birmingham Centre of Sociology studied the British working-class and found evidence of an emerging new ‘under-class’ – standards of living below the poverty line, little or no access to education and health, and the rise of violent counter-cultures. Nowadays, the same phenomenon applies to parts of the Russian working-class, especially those hit hardest by the economic crisis of 1998. To be deprived of a decent socio-economic situation constitutes a source of anger and hatred, which is projected onto people who are equally deprived. They are made scapegoats and become the target of discrimination, persecution and attacks. S. Sokolovsky also commented on the national and European debates about the definition of minorities and their rights. He described these debates as scholastic and excessively abstract. Based on his survey of European definitions, he showed that each national approach is idiosyncratic. For example, Russia has the notion of ‘territorialised ethnicity’. This translates into an ethno-centralism on the part of the ethnic Russians and an unwillingness to be labelled a minority (because of the preference for natives). However, there are provisions in international law which are applicable to Russia, including Article 160 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and various UN and OSCE provisions. Moreover, there is a specifically Russian law on minorities which concerns both indigenous and foreign communities and includes approximately 45 different ethnic groups. This law defines a number of special privileges and exceptions (e.g. army service etc.). However, in practice, if any group exceeds 50,000 members, then it is stripped of advantages. On the whole, this legislation is effective, as evinced by the fact that in the inter-census period more people opted for this identity rather than standard Russian citizenship.

These remarks on minority rights raised a series of questions. First, V. Baranovsky wondered whether Russia has a more sophisticated system of protecting minority rights than the EU. S. Sokolovsky said that within specific territories, the protection which is provided by the current Russian legislation is more effective. However, members of minorities are not sufficiently protected when they are on other territories of the Russian Federation. The single most important drawback of the law is that it tends to establish rights for corporations which it has created, rather than offering protections for individuals and small groups. This matters, as numerous groups are autochthonous and live a subsistence life. Secondly, V. Baranovsky asked whether such a change does not amount to positive discrimination and whether it is indeed both desirable and feasible to support certain groups rather than others. R. Mole drew the distinction between historical and migrant groups and said that rights and legal protection had not been granted to Kurds or to indigenous Americans, even though they had suffered systematic persecution. In response, S. Sokolovsky said that the population census recognised

upon to 1,000 different categories of ethnic identity, sometimes many different names for the same ethnic identity, in languages other than Russian.

R. Mole then made some remarks on the situation of Russians in the Baltic States. In the context of EU membership since May 2004, each of the three Baltic republics accepted to respect a wide range of obligations towards ethnic and linguistic minorities. However, not all of these obligations have been implemented. In 2005, 48% of Russians had not acquired Latvian citizenship. There are not only legal but also psychological factors. Some argue that hostile attitudes towards Russians are inculcated, but this is untrue. Rather, information campaigns to denounce stereotypes and promote peaceful coexistence between Latvians and Russians would work, as underlined by the success of advertisement and health campaigns. For example, tests have been conducted in order to determine the impact of different messages: Latvia for Latvians, multiculturalism and no message on minorities. The results demonstrate that beyond a small hard core of people who do not change their views either way, there was a very significant share of persons who were influenced by messages. This sort of test confirms the importance of official rhetoric and propaganda and highlights the crucial role which is played by political messages and the media.

Irina Semenenko, leading research fellow at the Center of comparative social-economic and social-political studies, argued that at the level of personal contacts, there is a developed sense of solidarity and tolerance between ethnic Russians and immigrants. However, beyond the micro-level this is not the case, certainly not the way it should be for a country with as high an education level as Russia. It follows that both politics and the media should address this problem by focusing on the civic dimension of coexistence and ethnic relations. Y. Rubinsky spoke about local nationalism and said that the federal state inside Russia was a copy of the Soviet state, with 89 subjects, 20 so-called autonomous republics with ethnic differences. The problem is that some are more equal than others. This is because some republics have more privileges and contribute less to the federal budget than others, e.g. the Northern Caucasus, even in places historically friendly towards Moscow. This creates antagonism and tensions, which tend to erupt along ethnic and religious lines.

In his presentation, Nikita Zagladin, director of the Center of comparative social-economic and social-political studies, spoke about social and cultural factors in ethnic and religious relations. He argued that social and cultural determinants never occur separately but instead are always linked to each other and to other determinants. For instance, the recent riots in the suburbs of France are part of a wider global economy of trends. In theory, France defends the principles of the French Revolution and thus promotes equality of opportunities. But in reality, two-thirds of young people who are in higher education come from upper- and middle-class families, only one-third come from working-class backgrounds. In addition, there are significant differences between those who come from cities and urban areas and those who come from villages and rural areas. While the factors which account for divergences are exclusively economic, the result is both social and cultural. Compared with the USA, the situation is broadly similar: members of ethnic minorities suffer discrimination and exclusion – Afro-Americans are worst off, followed by Hispanics and Asians. This is a dangerous situation, especially in the context of terrorism, not least because terrorists are recruited from marginalised backgrounds. The key point is that demands for the adaptation of immigrants also require cultural changes and social transformation on the part of the indigenous

population. Europe faces a deep crisis of integration and coexistence because social policies do not take into account cultural aspects which encompass ethnic and religious factors.

According to I. Semenenko, Europe in general and Russia in particular experience a profound crisis of identity as a result of a double failure: first, the failure to integrate successive generations of immigrants and, secondly, the failure to transform the ‘host’ nations in the direction of openness and tolerance. Neither the first nor the second generation of immigrants have been properly integrated. This indicates that economic factors are not the only determinant of social and cultural questions. Independently of the actual economic situation of immigrants and the indigenous populations, there are other forces at work which determine the nature and degree of co-existence. The multicultural model offers an alternative to both assimilation and transformation, but it has neglected social cohesion. Beyond these broad similarities, there is at least one fundamental difference between Russia and the rest of Europe: there are equal numbers of Muslims in Europe and Russia, about 15-20 million, but Muslims in Russia tend to be integrated, both legally and culturally. In Europe, by contrast, the situation of Muslims varies significantly but it is difficult to point to a single case of successful integration. What most Muslims across Europe share is the desire to stay where they are and not to return to their countries of origin. There is thus an unprecedented need for socially and culturally differentiated policies. Seen in this light, the recent rise in crimes caused by racial hatred is in part a function of fewer students from Africa and Asia. This has created a context in which ethnic and ‘racial’ stigmata are once again important. The only solution is to promote a vision based on values and civic practices. In turn, this requires decentralisation and the empowerment of local communities.

S. Lunev claimed that the major problem is one of civilisation. The problem is not the decline of the European population in relation to the world population or the decrease of the ‘white’ population in Europe compared with the share of ‘non-white’ immigrants. Instead, the real problem is the loss of the European and the Russian civilisation. For example, prior to 1991, Moscow featured about 100,000 Armenians who were fully integrated and lived peacefully alongside ethnic Russians and other groups. But after 1991, another wave of immigration has tried to impose its own values upon all Russians, namely those from the Northern Caucasus. Similarly, in France, the birth rate is only above the European average because Arab immigrant families are more numerous. This can create a dangerous dynamic whose effects are beyond control. The difference is between those who are prepared to integrate and those who are not. Russia should stop accepting aggressive immigration or else it will face problems similar to those in Europe and the USA. On the Baltic State, he said that both Estonians and Latvians have forgotten that their ancestors had been the slaves of Germans for almost 800 [*sic*] years. By 1940, Baltic totalitarianism was not substantially better than the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union. Those who suffered under Baltic tyranny were the Jews. They were the victims of persecution and most Jews from the Baltic States ended up in Nazi concentration and extermination camps.

A. Pabst argued that religion tends to be violent when allied to state (and market) power. In the past and present, extremist movements in Judaism, Christianity and Islam justify violence in the name of territorial conquest and domination – Greater Israel, the American beacon for democracy and liberty, the Imperial pan-Islamic caliphate. Moreover, Christians Millenarian conservatives even deny the moral claims of the poor. They preach a gospel of prosperity and pervert Christian teachings by conflating the elect with the wealthy. By contrast, traditional

Jewish and Muslim teachings prohibit usury and impose limits on the 'free movement' of capital. Likewise, traditional religion condemns alliances with secular powers and the use of indiscriminate violence. Movements such as the Mennonites and the Anabaptists defend the autonomy and independence of religious communities from states. The importance of these ideas for contemporary Europe could hardly be overstated. A genuine alternative to secular extremism and religious fanaticism is a mediated civic vision where religions and ideologies engage in a common public realm. Only a proper non-violent confrontation on values and practices which embody them will be able to challenge the current consensus on both sides by changing the terms and references of the debate. In this respect, both secular liberalism and religious conservatism have a lot to learn from proper mediating practices, e.g. the Islamic bank which lends money without charging interest and the importance of family and kinship ties which provide solidarity and communal sanctioning of violence and taboo-breaking (including promiscuity and other forms of Western permissiveness).

R. Mole concluded the third and final session of the seminar by arguing that - paradoxically - Russification in the Baltic States in the Russian Empire was beneficial to the people, economically and socially. In the interwar period Latvia was never homogenous, with Latvians constituting around 77% of the population. The inclusion into USSR is and always will be seen as forced. This is why it is rejected as illegitimate, violent and imperialist. Thus, the annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union was the ultimate reason for seeking independence and national unity after 1989 and membership in NATO more recently. Such and similar historical memories also prevent closer relations between the EU and Russia.

Concluding remarks

This conference brought together a group of eminent scholars from Russia and some experts from Western Europe. The discussions raised a series of fundamental questions on the relation between ethnic and religious conflicts in contemporary Europe. The objective was to debate controversial issues in a lively argumentative manner beyond the conventional ideas and policies of the political elite and the policy-making community in the East and West. As such, the conference constituted an attempt to break new ground and provide the beginnings of a different conceptualisation. Two main conclusions emerged from the three sessions. First, perceptions in the West of the demographic reality in the East, especially in Russia, are partial and do not take into account a number of key factors, e.g. the high levels of immigration and the relative stability of the total population since 1989. Secondly, virtually all European countries face similar challenges, above all historically low birth rates. This raises questions about the deeper causes of this evolution and possible solutions, including the desirability and feasibility of providing more support for children and large families.

This project on ethnic and religious problems in Europe could be extended in a number of directions. First, more research and analysis is needed on the fundamental demographic trends across European countries, in particular the reliability of official census and alternative indicators of population. This is a politically sensitive issue because it raises questions about the actual levels of illegal immigration. Secondly, beyond conceptual problems, there are also policy-related issues. One such example is the scope for reducing mortality in Russia by devising and implementing specific health policies. Another example is the nature of the future European family and normative questions about whether the nuclear family and

perhaps even the extended family ought to receive special support. In turn, this requires reflections on the wider cultural causes of the current demographic situation, including the decline of the ‘traditional family’ and the rise of new forms of cohabitation (e.g. ‘gay marriage’ and the adoption of children by homosexual couples). Thirdly, no meaningful demographic analysis of Europe (and the concepts and the policies which it involves) can exclude religion. At the same time, religion does not operate at the same level as other determinants of social relations because it is both metaphysical and practical – it encompasses norms and virtues that embody them. So a further angle of this topic which could be developed is the difference which religion makes to people’s understanding of their ethnicity and their kinship ties insofar as these impact upon ‘reproductive behaviour’, the family as well as the demographic evolution of communities and countries as a whole.

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