

## **Educational policies for non-Russian minorities in Russia**

### **A theoretical-historical case study**

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The subject of this article has in recent years become a focal topic of discussion in most European countries: the educational policy of (nation-)states towards sociocultural minorities, both immigrant and indigenous. In the present article, this issue is studied using the example of Russia's educational policy for minorities throughout history, from the beginnings of the Russian state until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Since its formation, Russia has been a multi-ethnic state and, as a consequence, has had extensive experience with linguistic and cultural diversity in education. Nonetheless, the educational policies of the Russian state for non-Russian minorities have found comparatively little attention in educational research (e.g., Mitter 1972; Mchitarjan 2011). In addition, the focus of the existing research is descriptive, that is, its aim is the *historical reconstruction* of Russian minority education policies. By contrast, the aim of the present study is to improve the *theoretical understanding* of Russian educational policies for non-Russian minorities. Hence this article is a contribution to the study of the history of education from the perspective of historical sociology: the analysis of history from the perspective of sociological theory (Calhoun 2003). Specifically, Russian educational policy for ethnic minorities is analyzed from the perspective of a theory of cultural transmission in minorities recently proposed by the author (see in particular Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010; 2013; 2014a). My aim is to show that, using the example of Russian educational policies for minorities: (1) the theory of cultural transmission in minorities is able to

explain not only the educational policies of a majority society for immigrants (the focus of previous applications of the theory), but also important aspects of the educational policy of a majority for indigenous minorities; and (2) the theory therefore affords a better understanding of Russian educational policies towards indigenous minorities.

In part 1 of the article, Russia's policies for non-Russian minorities are reviewed from the beginning of the Russian state until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Coverage of this broad time span is essential to make visible both historical continuities as well as changes in Russia's educational policies for minorities. In part 2, the theory of cultural transmission in minorities is summarized and applied to Russian educational policies for minorities. Part 3 summarizes the main results of the analysis.

### **Russia's educational policies for non-Russian minorities**

#### Russian national education policy before 1917

Since its formation in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian state has been home to multiple ethnic groups, including Slavic, Finnish, Baltic, and Turk peoples. The ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity of the population increased during the following centuries. Three main factors were responsible for this increase: (a) the discovery or develop-

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1 Because of the large time span covered in this article, the reconstruction of historical events is necessarily based in part on the secondary literature (e.g., Kappeler 2008). Reliance on secondary literature is generally considered legitimate in historiography if verifiable facts rather than evaluations possibly biased by ideological preconceptions are reported and if the historical events in question are described similarly by different historians, preferably scholars stemming from different countries, historical epochs, and scientific traditions. I have tried as much as possible to adhere to these criteria in my use of secondary sources; a few remaining historical controversies are pointed out. For a discussion of bias in nationalist Russian, as well as in Soviet and post-Soviet historiography, see Aymermakher and Bordyugov (1999); Alishev (1990); Gerasimov et al. (2004); and Sanders (1999).

ment of new areas and the accession of foreign elites and their peoples to the Russian crown; (b) the military conquest of new territories; and (c) the decision of individual states and principalities—more or less voluntary or forced by circumstances such as the need to protect themselves against dangerous neighbors<sup>2</sup>—to join the Russian Empire (Abdulatipov 2000; Baberowski 1999; Dyakin 1998; Kappeler 2008; Raeff 1971; Sarkisyanz 1961; Starr 1978; Sunderland 2006; Thaden 1984). As a result of these developments, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian empire spanned an area of 22 million square kilometers with a population of approximately 125 million comprising more than 200 different nations and ethnic groups (Abdulatipov 2000, 114; Kappeler 2008, 342).

Regarding the policy of the Russian state towards non-Russian minorities, two main strategies can be distinguished following Kappeler (2008) and in agreement with numerous other authors (e.g., Baberowski 1999; Becker 2000; Dolbilov and Miller 2006; Hosking 1997; Khodarkovsky 2002; Miller 2000; Suny 2001; Sarkisyanz 1961; Starr 1978; Steffens 1992; Sunderland 2003; Vulpius 2007): (a) the strategy of »flexible pragmatism and tolerance«, and (b) the strategy of »aggressive state nationalism.«<sup>3</sup> Both strategies already existed before the October Revolution of 1917, and—as will be argued below—both were taken up again in modified

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2 The question of the degree to which these decisions to join the Russian empire were voluntary is discussed controversially in modern historiography (see Dyakin 1998, 14, 18; Dolbilov and Miller 2006, 35; Kappeler 2000, 17; Kappeler 2008, 58, 146).

3 Kappeler's book *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History* (2008; first edition 1992) is, according to the dominant opinion of experts in the field, the most comprehensive study of nationalities policy in Russia in international historiography (see e.g., Krupnikov 1994; Singhofen 2006; Vulpius 2007; as well as Gerasimov et al. 2004, 19–20). A number of criticisms have been raised against Kappeler's analysis, the most important being that (a) counter to his own aspirations, his history of Russia remains ethnocentric; and (b) he did not sufficiently consider the »imperial perspective« (e.g., Gerasimov et al. 2004, 20; Vulpius 2007, paragraphs 6 and 7). However, these criticisms do not affect Kappeler's thesis about the two main strategies of Russian minority policy.

form after 1917. However, the strategy of flexible pragmatism and tolerance has a much longer tradition. It was characteristic for the nationalities policy of the pre-modern Russian state and continued—with the exception of the reign of Peter the Great and partially that of Catharine II—until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This strategy, based on the cooperation of the Tsar dynasty with loyal elites of the respective minority groups, consisted essentially in guaranteeing the status quo, i.e., non-interference of the Russian state in the socio-political and economic practices or value systems, often influenced by religion, of non-Russian ethnic groups (Kappeler 2008, 33, 70–101).

Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, excepting the periods mentioned above, the Russian government tolerated the non-Orthodox religions of its citizens: Lutheranism in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, Catholicism in Poland and Lithuania, Islam practiced by Tatars and Bashkirs, and Lamaism by Buryats and Kalmyks. Similarly, until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian government generally accepted the use of non-Russian languages in administrations and in schools, such as German in the Baltic governorates, Swedish in Finland, Romanian in Bessarabia, and Polish in Lithuania, the Ukraine and in the western as well as (with some exceptions) the eastern part of Belarus. As consequence of this liberal language policy, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were Russian schools for higher education in which up to seven foreign languages were taught, but not Russian; in four of the then existing eight universities of Russia, the language of instruction was not Russian but Polish, Swedish or German; and most non-Russian ethnic groups (e.g., in Poland, Finland, Siberia, the Volga region, and the Caucasus) conducted school instruction in their native languages (Kappeler 2008, 101–3.; see also Baberowski 1999, 199; Miller 2000, 227; Sunderland 2003, 102; Vulpius 2007, paragraphs 21, 24).<sup>4</sup>

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4 In some areas of the Russian empire, school lessons were not taught in the language of the indigenous minority, but in the language of the local national elite. For example, in the Baltic governorates, the language of instruction was frequently German rather than Estonian, Latvian or

The strategy of »aggressive state nationalism« (Kappeler 2008) towards ethnic minorities emerged in full-blown form only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the spread of the idea of »nation«. This strategy was fostered by the Polish national uprisings of 1830/1831 and 1863, which were perceived as a threat to the stability of the Russian empire. After these historical events, the Russian state tried to limit the dominance of the Polish and German cultures in the western regions of the empire and in the Baltic governorates by prescribing the use of the Russian language in the classroom (see Rozhdestvenskiy 1902; also Dyakin 1998; Kappeler 2008). Subsequently, beginning in the late 1860s, a phase of massive Russification set in, primarily in the western provinces. According to the »Regulation for primary schools in the provinces of Kiev, Podol'sk and Volynsk« (1869), all lessons in all subjects in these provinces were now to be taught in Russian (see Rozhdestvenskiy 1902, 582–87). In the 1870s–1890s, these laws were extended to German-language schools in the Baltic governorates and to Polish-language schools in the »Vistula country« (the Kingdom of Poland) (Rozhdestvenskiy 1902, 592, 685, 689). From then on, other mother tongues were permitted only as a teaching aid in elementary school. As of 1892, it was forbidden to found schools in minority languages and even tutoring in the mother tongue outside school hours was forbidden in the northern and south-western provinces upon threat of fines and even prison (see the »Provisional regulations concerning penalties for illegal instruction in the northern and south-western provinces« in Rozhdestvenskiy 1902, 690; Aref'ev 2012, 24).

However, even in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian educational policy for non-Russian minorities was not uniform: The hardline approach described above was taken primarily towards non-Russian minorities in the western provinces, whereas other minorities met with much more understanding. A »cautious approach« was in particular

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Lithuanian; in the western provinces, it was Polish instead of Ukrainian or Belarusian, and in the Grand Duchy of Finland it was Swedish and not Finnish (Kappeler 2008, 101–3).

advocated towards Muslims (see »O merakh« 1871, 1561–62, 1564; Rozhdestvenskiy 1902, 592–94). For this group, as well as for other non-Christian and Christianized »aliens« (*inorodtsy*),<sup>5</sup> the Ministry of Education issued a separate education law in 1870. These »Measures for the education of indigenous aliens in Russia« (»O merakh« 1871), dating from March 26, 1870, laid down the guidelines of educational policy for so-called Christians from other ethnicities (i.e., Christianized non-Russians) on the one hand and so-called Tartaric Muslims (i.e. non-Russian Muslims) as well as other non-Christian ethnic groups on the other hand.<sup>6</sup> The »Measures« named the following three basic principles: (a) instruction at elementary schools are to be held in the native language of the pupils; (b) teachers in non-Russian schools should be members of the local population with a good knowledge of Russian or people of Russian descent with knowledge of the local language; and (c) particular attention should be paid to the education of women (see »O merakh« 1871, 1558–66). Despite these seemingly liberal principles, the declared aim of the »Measures« was the gradual »Russification [of the ethnic minorities] and their final merger with the Russian people« (session diary of the Council of the Ministry of Education in Bendrikov 1960, 62–64; see also, »O merakh« 1871, 1557–58, 1561–62; Rozhdestvenskiy 1902, 592).

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5 The term *inorodtsy* (literally: »individuals of different descent«) was used in Tsarist Russia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to denote primarily Siberian and Central Asian minorities (Martiny 1992, 1756)—ethnic groups whose social structures and ways of life differed significantly from the Russian model. In the course of time, the concept was increasingly used to denote all non-Russian ethnic and national minorities (Slocum 1998).

6 Initially, the »Measures« of 1870 addressed the non-Russian minorities of the Volga region (the school district of Kazan<sup>7</sup>) and the Crimea (the school district of Odessa). In the following years, the educational guidelines specified in the »Measures« were extended to the school districts of Orenburg, West Siberia, the Caucasus, the governorates Irkutsk and Primorsk, and the district of Turkestan (see »Regulations concerning primary schools for aliens« 1907, reprinted in Anastasiyev 1910, 134).

The aim of this law becomes more clearly visible if one looks at the details of the organization of schooling for different »indigenous aliens.« The »Measures« specified that schools for ethnic minorities in Russia should take three different forms depending on the minorities' level of knowledge of the Russian language or their degree of Russification: (1) For »slightly Russified peoples« (»O merakh« 1871, 1558) education should start in the children's mother tongue, with Russian playing an increasingly larger role with increasing proficiency in the language. (2) For »partially Russified« peoples in areas with mixed Russian and non-Russian populations, common schools for Russian and non-Russian children were to be established in which lessons were to be taught in Russian from the beginning and the mother tongue allowed only for additional explanation. (3) Finally, for »sufficiently Russified peoples« (»O merakh« 1871, 1560, see also 1563–64) school lessons were to be taught exclusively in Russian and in accordance with the general school regulations (»O merakh« 1871, 1558–60, 1562–64).

To implement the planned school reform among the Muslim minorities (members of the »slightly Russified peoples« group), the educational act of 1870 specified three main measures. First, new state schools were to be founded. Second, Russian classes were to be established in traditional Muslim institutions of elementary and higher education (the makhtabs and madrassas): New makhtabs and madrassas could only be formed on the condition that teachers of Russian classes were employed, and Muslim communities were encouraged to install Russian classes in their existing schools. Third, both kinds of schools were to organize state-financed education for girls (»O merakh« 1871, 1562–64).

To encourage attendance of Muslim children at the new state-owned elementary schools, preparatory classes in Russian were to be offered »according to needs and possibilities«, and pupils were exempted from attending instruction in Church Slavonic, as well as, in the secondary and higher schools, in Greek and German (»O merakh« 1871, 1562–63). Furthermore, to reduce the »distrust [...] against this [new] school spirit« (»O merakh« 1871, 1564; see also 1561–62), the government accorded

Muslim communities the right to organize, at their own expense, Islamic instruction for their children at the state schools and invited them to nominate trustees to supervise these schools. Likewise, the headmasters and teachers of the maktab and madrassas were allowed to sit in on the Russian classes at any time («O merakh» 1871, 1562, 1564).

The «Measures» of 1870 were based on the concept of «education for aliens» developed by Nikolay Il'minskiy (1822–91), a professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Kazan'. Il'minskiy's school concept was originally developed for the Orthodox Christian Mission Schools for the non-Christian population of the Volga and Ural regions and had been tested, from 1863 onward, on several non-Russian minorities (the Tatars, Chuvash, Udmurts, and others) (McCarthy 1973; Medynskiy 1938). Instruction at the Il'minskiy schools was given by teachers from the local population in the children's mother tongue; Russian was introduced at a later time. The textbooks were written in the native language of the pupils, but with Cyrillic transcription. To this end, Il'minskiy developed Cyrillic alphabets for previously unwritten languages such as Chuvash, Yakut, and Wotyak (Bendrikov 1960, 89–90).

The subsequent educational laws for minorities in pre-revolutionary Russia—the «Regulations for the elementary schools of aliens» (*Pravila o nachal'nykh uchilishchakh dlya inorodtsev*), issued in 1907 and 1913, respectively—were largely written in the spirit of the 1870 «Measures» («Regulations» 1907 and 1913 in Voskresenskiy 1913, 22–23, 133–35; and «Regulations» 1907 in Anastasiyev 1910, 130–134).<sup>7</sup> Despite some concessions to ethnic minorities, with these laws the Russian state continued to pursue the gradual assimilation of «alien» minorities. This conclusion is supported both by the official goal of Russian educational politics at the time—the spread of the Russian language and the

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7 In the «Regulations» of 1907 and 1913, the distinction between Christianized non-Russians, and those of Muslim faith and other non-Christians was abandoned. According to these laws, only the level of Russian language knowledge was important for the organization of schooling for the children of the non-Russian ethnic groups.



rapprochement [of ethnic minorities] with the Russian people on the basis of love for the common fatherland« (ibid.)—and by the prescribed curriculum of the schools for ethnic minorities, in which twice as many hours were slated for Russian as for the children’s mother tongue.

#### The national education policy of the Russian state after 1917

Compared to the pre-socialist era in Russia, educational policy for non-Russian minorities changed significantly, and in many ways fundamentally, in the Soviet Union. Yet on closer inspection, it is possible to discern parallels to Russian educational policies for non-Russian minorities in the time before 1917: In certain respects, Soviet Russia returned to the strategy of »flexible pragmatism« characteristic for pre-nineteenth century Russia (see also Kappeler 2008, 302).

One of the first and most important documents issued by the Soviet government for the regulation of national relations was the November 1917 »Declaration of the rights of the peoples of Russia« (*Deklaratsiya prav narodov Rossii*). As the basic principle of the new national minority policy, this law proclaimed the »equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia« (»Deklaratsiya« 1917). In agreement with this principle, in 1918 the Soviet Ministry of Education proscribed that teaching in the schools and universities of national minorities was from now on to be conducted in the mother tongue of the pupils or students (»O shkolakh natsional’nykh men’shinstv«; reprinted in Abakumov et al. 1974, 145). These two principles of minority (education) policy—the equality of all citizens irrespective of their national origin and the right to education in the mother tongue—were later incorporated into both the 1936 (Article 121) and 1977 (Articles 34, 36, 45) (»Konstitutsiya SSSR« 1936 and 1977) USSR constitutions.

To implement the right of non-Russian-speaking minorities to education in their mother tongue, the network of schools in the affected areas had to be extended, sufficient numbers of teachers had to be recruited from local communities, and textbooks had to be written in the minority languages. Because some non-Russian minorities did not have their own

written language at the time, Soviet linguists were assigned the task of developing alphabets. As a consequence, new alphabets were devised for about 50 ethnic groups (Aref'yev 2012, 36; Kappeler 2008, 304). In addition, the Arabic script, in widespread use among the Turk peoples, was replaced by the Latin alphabet in 1925 and by the Cyrillic alphabet about 10 years later, to facilitate learning of the Russian language (Frings 2007; Aref'yev 2012, 36–37). Hence, with respect to these minorities, Soviet education policy effectively returned to Il'minskiy's 1863 school concept, which likewise proposed, for non-Russian minorities, education in the mother tongue on the basis of the Cyrillic alphabet.

In the first twenty years after the October Revolution, native schools for non-Russian minorities were established across the entire Soviet Union. In 1927, 90 percent of pupils in Belarus, 94 percent in Kyrgyzstan, and almost 96 percent of Tatar pupils visited native language primary schools (Kappeler 2008, 304). In the Ukraine, the corresponding percentage was 78% (Aref'yev 2012, 35). In 1935, school lessons were taught in 80 different languages in the Russian Federation, in 22 different languages in the Republic of Uzbekistan, and in 12 languages in Dagestan (Kappeler 2008, 304). The peak of language diversity in Soviet schools was reached in 1932, when instruction was given in 104 different languages (Aref'yev 2012, 36).

Similar to pre-1917 Russia, and also similar to other comparable historical and contemporary cases (Mchitarjan 2006, 2009; see also Baberowski 1999; Kymlicka 2005), tangible domestic and foreign policy interests stood behind the Soviet state's liberal minority and language policy (e.g. Kappeler 2008, 305). After the socio-political upheavals of the revolutionary years, the new regime wanted to secure the stability of the multi-ethnic state, to end discrimination against non-Russians, and—in light of the upcoming world revolution—to set an example for other countries in dealing with minorities.

However, only twenty years after the October Revolution, the course that had been set for minority education policy was corrected.<sup>8</sup> In 1938, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR decided to introduce Russian as a compulsory subject in the second year of all non-Russian schools (Arefyev 2012, 36; Frings 2007, 378; Konstantinov, Medynskiy, and Shabayeva 1982, 373–74; Nolte and Schramm 1992, 1647). As reported above, comparable laws—the gradual introduction of Russian as a subject, but also as the language of instruction in minority schools—had been issued in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Tsarist government (e.g. in 1870, 1907 and 1913). Thus, 1938 marked a partial return to 19<sup>th</sup> century educational policy for non-Russian minorities. This time, however, the objective was different: Now the main goal was to unite the peoples of the Soviet Union around the political and ideological idea of a socialist state, and to strengthen their ties to this state by means of a common language (see also Frings 2007, 379; Mitter 1972, 43–44).

The resulting increase in the dominance of the Russian language in the Soviet Union was further strengthened by another educational reform that took place in 1958. As part of this reform, parents were allowed to choose between their native tongue or Russian as the language of instruction to »protect [their children] against an overload in language teaching« (Ob ukreplenii svyazi shkoly s zhizn'yu i o dal'neyshem razvitií sistemy Narodnogo Obrazovaniya v strane,« 1958 reprinted in Abakumov et al. 1974, 51). In fact, by then students in the national minority schools of the Soviet Union were learning at least three languages: their native language, Russian, and a second foreign language. The possibility of choosing the language of instruction may have reduced »overload in language teaching,« but it also facilitated the conversion of non-Russian-speaking schools into Russian schools with additional

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8 It could be argued that this correction was already anticipated by the earlier replacement of Arabic script by the Latin and later the Cyrillic alphabet.

instruction in the mother tongue. In these schools, the native language was only one subject among many.

In the following 20 years (1960–1980), the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued four additional resolutions that further extended the use of the Russian language in national schools (Aref'ev 2012, 37). As a result, at the end of the 1970s, the number of languages in which pupils could acquire a secondary school level certificate—the qualification for university—was reduced to 14 (Aref'ev 2012, 38). Accordingly, the percentage of Soviet pupils who had Russian as their language of instruction increased continuously in the following years, climbing to 68% in 1989/1990. In the national Soviet republics (with the exception of the RSFSR), about 43% of all pupils received instruction in the Russian language at that time (Aref'ev 2012, 38).

This »national turnaround« of Soviet educational policy is less surprising than it may at first seem—given the basic principles of minority politics proclaimed in 1917—if one considers that, even before the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership were critical of the concept of »national-cultural autonomy« (*nacional'no-kul'turnoj avtonomii*). Although the Bolsheviks advocated the right of peoples to self-determination, they clearly put this right behind the political interests of the working class. As a consequence, the idea of internationalism and the international solidarity of the working class was, from the beginning, put before the idea of the nation (see Lenin 1913, 314–22). In line with this, the Soviet rulers attempted to develop, despite their official commitment to cultural diversity, a new super-ethnic and super-national group identity around which individuals in the Soviet Union with different cultural backgrounds could unite. This new group identity was provided by the by ideology of socialism, and was the concept of the »Soviet people.«

In the 1970s, Lenin's vision of a new socialist society seemed to have become a reality. At the XXIV Congress of the CPSU in 1971, it was announced that in the decades after the October Revolution, a »new historical community [...] of all classes and social groups, nations and

nationalities« had emerged on the basis of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the »Soviet people« (*sovetskii narod*) («XXIV s'ezd Kommunisticheskoy partii Sovetskogo Soyuz» 1971, 101). And Russian was chosen as the common language of communication of the Soviet people (Kim and Sherstobitov 1972, 14–15).<sup>9</sup>

Russian national education policy: Interim summary and two research questions

Considered from the perspective of theoretical sociology, the educational policy of a state towards (indigenous as well as immigrant) minorities—in the present case, the policies of the Russian state for non-Russian minorities—raises two questions in particular:

*Question 1:* What are the *superordinate goals* a majority society (represented by the state) pursues with its educational policies for minorities? As reported in the first part of this article, the official guidelines of Russian educational policies towards non-Russian minorities varied greatly at different times, ranging from Russification of ethnic minorities, to non-interference in the cultural systems of non-Russian peoples, to the right of every citizen to education in their native language. This raises the question of whether there are any overarching goals behind the diversity of the state's or the majority's minority (education) policies. And if yes, which goals are these?

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9 After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the use of non-Russian languages in schools increased once again. This occurred primarily because of new laws that encouraged linguistic and cultural diversity in society in general and in the educational system in particular (see »Zakon o yazykakh narodov Rossiyskoy Federatsii« 1991; »Zakon ob obrazovanii« 1992; »Konstitutsiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii« 1993; »Federal'nyy zakon o natsional'no-kul'turnoy avtonomii« 1996; »Kontseptsiya natsional'noy obrazovatel'noy politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii« 2006). An analysis of post-Soviet educational policy for minorities applying the theory of cultural transmission in minorities must be left to another occasion.

*Question 2:* The second question concerns the *strategies* used by the majority society to achieve its goals towards minorities. How can one explain that a state (as the representative of the majority) uses very different political strategies for minorities at different times, or even at the same time for different minorities? This question is of particular interest if the first question has a positive answer (as I will argue below).

In the second part of this article, I argue that the theory of cultural transmission in minorities (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010; 2014a) can make an important contribution to answering these questions.

### **Theoretical analysis of Russia's Minority Education Policy**

#### A theory of cultural transmission in minorities

The explanatory focus of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities proposed by Mchitarjan and Reizenzein (2010; 2014a; 2013; 2014b) is on the interaction between sociocultural majorities and minorities<sup>10</sup> in the area of education; in particular the educational activities of minorities and the educational policies of the majority towards them. The explanation of these social phenomena by the theory targets two connected explanatory levels: the level of the proximate psychological mechanisms that guide the actions of the minority and of the majority, and the level of the historical-cultural development of these mechanisms. Corresponding to these two levels of explanation, the theory comprises two components: (a) an action-theoretical model of minority-majority interactions in the domain of education (broadly understood) and (b) a set of assump-

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10 In agreement with a widespread view in contemporary social science, *sociocultural minorities* are defined as *low-power subgroups* of a society that have, or claim, a cultural (ethnic, religious, etc.) identity (see e.g., Polm 1995). (In the extreme case, a minority can therefore even be the quantitative majority, as was the case for the black population in the Apartheid system of South Africa). Note that this definition covers both immigrant and indigenous minorities. The theory of cultural transmission in minorities is relevant for the interaction of majority societies with both kinds of minorities.

tions about the evolution of sociocultural groups that provides an enhanced understanding of the basic goals and strategies of minorities and majorities in cultural transmission situations.

**An action-theoretical model of majority-minority interactions.** The action-theoretical model of majority-minority interactions<sup>11</sup> starts from the *methodological* assumption that the educational activities of a minority and the policies of the majority towards it can be modeled as an interaction between two individuals.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the two groups involved—the minority and the majority—are conceptualized as two social actors who attempt, by and large in a rational fashion, to achieve their goals in the area of education in a given historical situation. Furthermore, again analogous to the case of interaction between individuals, it is assumed that the actions of the minority and the majority, and their success or failure, are determined by three groups of factors (see e. g., Reizenzein

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11 Action-theoretical accounts are the dominant theories of motivation in psychology (see e.g., Reizenzein 2006) and a strong paradigm in sociology (e.g., Esser 1999; Lindenberg 1985).

12 This methodological assumption is commonly made in historiography. Although it is a simplification and idealization, systematic considerations and historical examples suggest that it is adequate for the analysis of many cases of minority-majority interactions. First, in many historical cases, minority and majority groups have a high degree of organization and, as a result, actually interact like individual agents (through their representatives). For example, a pedagogical emigrant organization negotiates with a state authority about the founding of a school (Mchitarjan 2006). In other cases, group actions are the result of parallel decisions of many group members reached individually. A possible example is the decision of migrant families to organize language instruction in their mother tongue for their children. In this second case, the term »the group« stands for »most members of the group« or »the typical group member« (see e.g., Tuomela 2000). Note also that the theory of cultural transmission in minorities allows different cultural transmission scenarios to exist side by side on a local level, i.e. the theory allows that the same or different members or subgroups of a minority can be treated differently by different members or subgroups of the majority.

2006): (1) the *motives* or *goals* of the majority and the minority; (2) the *beliefs* of the majority and minority about the attainability of these goals by particular actions; and (3) the *objective conditions* or *situational constraints* that apply to both parties, which are either conducive or obstructive to the success of their actions (knowledge, financial resources, relevant national and international laws and regulations, etc.).

In the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, this general model of group interaction is elaborated by supplementing it with several additional assumptions. The most important of these is the assumption that sociocultural groups have, in addition to their other motives (in particular, the wish to preserve and increase their resources and their power; see Bourdieu 1986), a *culture-transmission motive*: a special appreciation of their culture and the desire to preserve it and transmit it to the next generation.<sup>13</sup> This assumption is supported by historical studies of the cultural transmission of minorities in majority environments (e.g., Feidel-Mertz

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13 Note that postulating a culture-transmission motive does not imply a »primordial« nor an »essentialist« view of culture (for discussions, see e.g., Bayar 2009; May 2005; Modood 2007; Smith 1998). In fact, according to the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, culture is »socially constructed« in at least three ways: it is socially transmitted; its core elements (including norms and values, language, and even the culture transmission motive itself) are products of cultural evolution; and it contains, in addition to objectifiable elements such as language and norms, important subjective elements including the group's self-definition. Such a view of culture naturally accommodates intragroup variations in culture and the idea that cultures are not fixed and immutable (see also Modood 2007). All this is compatible with the assumption that once »installed« in the members of a group, cultural systems have powerful effects on behavior (e.g., Sober and Wilson 1998; Richerson and Boyd 2005; see also May 2005). Note also that postulating a culture-transmission motive *in a group* does not imply that (a) this motive is necessarily strong in all group members or that (b) it has the form of an explicit desire to »maintain and disseminate one's culture«; it may also (and perhaps typically does) consist of a plurality of more specific wishes for the preservation and transmission of particular cultural elements (e.g., language or religion).



and Hammel 2004; Hansen and Wenning 2003; Mchitarjan 2006, 2009, 2010) as well as by empirical surveys of migrants (e.g., Berry et al. 2006; Boos-Nünning and Karakaşoğlu 2006; Vedder et al. 2009). Although most of the latter evidence is indirect, Mchitarjan and Reizenzein (2013) recently obtained direct evidence for the existence and effects of the culture-transmission motive.<sup>14</sup>

According to the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, the culture-transmission motive is typically a latent concern of groups that is only activated in special circumstances, in particular if group members perceive a threat to the transmission of their culture. This occurs regularly when a sociocultural group comes into the sphere of influence of a socioculturally different, more powerful group. The activated culture-transmission motive then prompts actions designed to counter the perceived threat to cultural transmission, such as special efforts invested in »cultural education« in the family and activities in the domain of public education (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a).

Another central assumption of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities is that the method of cultural transmission chosen by a minority in a given historical situation, and its success or failure, depends to a great extent on the educational policies of the majority. Basically, the majority can support, tolerate, or actively hinder the cultural transmission attempts of the minority. Analogous to the explanation of the educational activities of the minority, it is assumed that the educational policy of the majority towards the minority is determined by (a) the goals

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14 Using a sample of Russian and Turkish adolescents and young adults with immigrant background, Mchitarjan and Reizenzein (2013) tested six predictions of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, all of which were at least partially supported. In particular, the participants expressed a strong appreciation of their culture and the desire to transmit it to the next generation; their culture transmission motive focussed on language and norms and values. It also predicted their readiness to take action against the potential loss of their language or culture in their children, as well as their desire to have the minority language taken into account in public schools.

that the majority hopes to achieve in the concrete historical situation, and (b) its beliefs about the attainability of these goals by means of the available educational policies. Furthermore, it is assumed that the latent motive structure of majorities is fundamentally the same as that of minorities. Nevertheless, there is an important difference: In contrast to the minority, the cultural transmission of the majority is usually safeguarded, and is therefore not one of its currently active concerns. As a consequence, the educational policies of majorities towards minorities are usually motivated by goals other than cultural transmission. In agreement with this prediction, historical case studies suggest, for example, that a key reason for *supporting* the cultural transmission of a minority is the majority's hope to profit, economically or politically, from this support (see e.g., Mchitarjan 2006; cf. also the case of minority education policy in the early Soviet Union described in the first part of this article). However, as explained below, in special circumstances the minority politics of a majority can also be motivated by the culture-transmission motive.

**Evolutionary foundations of cultural transmission in minorities.**

The second component of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities consists of a set of assumptions about the *historical origins* and *functions* of the basic motives and strategies of minorities and majorities in cultural transmission situations. This component of the theory is based on a theory of the cultural evolution of groups proposed by D. S. Wilson (2002; see also, Richerson and Boyd 2005; Sober and Wilson 1998). According to Wilson, certain ideological systems such as »religion« or »culture« form the non-biological heritage of social groups. This heritage has developed in the course of history because it aided the survival and reproduction of groups by allowing them to function as adaptive units. Accordingly, the central approach to the explanation of a social phenomenon by this theory of cultural evolution is the attempt to explain the phenomenon in question as a group-level cultural adaptation.

The theory of cultural transmission in minorities uses this principle to explain, first of all, the *existence* of the postulated culture-transmission

motive: It is assumed that this motive is a product of cultural evolution. The reasoning is as follows: The persistence of sociocultural groups necessarily requires the transmission of their culture to the next generation. Therefore, groups who are more successful in their attempts at cultural transmission than others have—other factors constant—an advantage. As a result, it can be expected that all sociocultural groups have evolved mechanisms that support their cultural reproduction. According to the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, the core of these mechanisms is the culture-transmission motive (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a).

In addition to explaining the existence of the culture-transmission motive, the theory of cultural evolution also allows one to explain, to a large extent, the *content* of this motive. The theory predicts that the culture-transmission motive focuses on those elements of culture *in the broad sense of the term* (the totality of socially transmitted information; Richerson and Boyd 2005, 5) that are particularly important for the preservation of culture (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a, 2013, 2014b).<sup>15</sup> These cultural elements comprise in particular the values and norms of the group and the ideology that supports them (such as beliefs about a common origin and a shared destiny). These elements constitute the core of the sociocultural identity of groups and they are a (or even *the*) central mechanism that allows them to function as adaptive units. In addition, the elements of a culture particularly important for its survival include group characteristics which are reliable outward signs of cultural identity and thereby make it easier for group members to recognize each other. These characteristics include, importantly, the group's language or sociolect (see Richerson and Boyd 2005; Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2013, 2014a). In addition, language is of fundamental importance

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15 From an evolutionary perspective, »culture« is defined broadly as »information capable of affecting individuals' behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission« (Richerson and Boyd 2005, 5).

for cultural transmission because it constitutes the central channel for the transmission of cultural information.<sup>16</sup>

The evolutionary assumptions of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities also suggest an answer to the question of the possible *functions* (evolutionary benefits) of different educational policies towards minorities used by majorities. To avoid redundancy, these assumptions are described in the next section, in which I attempt to answer the two main questions raised by the Russian educational policy for minorities from the perspective of the theory of cultural transmission described above.

Russian education policies for non-Russian minorities in light of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities

*Question 1:* What are the superordinate goals a majority (represented by the state) is pursuing with its educational policies for minorities?

The answer to this question suggested by the theory of cultural transmission in minorities can be derived from two central assumptions of the theory. (1) Unlike the minority, the majority's culture transmission is usually safeguarded and is therefore not one of its current concerns. As a consequence, the educational policies of majorities towards minorities are usually motivated by goals other than cultural transmission. (2) Other factors constant, social groups are at an advantage to the degree that they manage to act as adaptive units (Wilson, 2002). Because achieving this aim is a particular challenge in a multi-ethnic state, a primary concern of the majority (represented by the state government) in a multi-ethnic state should be the unification of the different ethnic groups living within its borders into a functional unit. This prediction of the present theory agrees well with Kymlicka's (2005) proposal that the basic problem of multi-ethnic states is to coordinate the different ethnic groups living in

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16 Note that the core elements of culture suggested by the evolutionary perspective adopted here agree well with a popular definition of culture proposed by social scientists according to which »culture« denotes a system of socially transmitted norms and values that regulates the behavior of a group (see for example, Maletzke 1996; Thomas 2005).

their territories into a functional whole. This includes mastering communication problems stemming from the use of different languages, solving conflicts between different ethnic groups, negotiating value clashes, and the like. In agreement with Kymlicka, I submit that achieving this aim is the main superordinate goal of the majority's policies towards minorities in multi-ethnic states, as different or even contrasting as they may look.

Accordingly, I propose that the two historically documented, primary strategies of dealing with minorities in Russia—the strategy of »flexible pragmatism and tolerance« and the strategy of »aggressive state nationalism« (Kappeler 2008)—can for the most part be understood as two different strategies for reaching the superordinate goal identified above. Seen from this perspective, the aim of the *pragmatic/tolerant strategy* is to unite the different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic state by establishing some form of common group identity. In Tsarist Russia, this was achieved by means of loyalty of the non-Russian elites and their peoples toward the Tsar dynasty, and their identification with the Russian Empire as a common home. Similarly but again different, in the Soviet Union, the government tried to gain the loyalty of non-Russian minorities by fostering their identification with the values of the »Soviet people«. In contrast, the strategy of *aggressive state nationalism* is the attempt to solve the coordination problem of the multi-ethnic state by assimilating the ethnic minorities into the dominant culture (»Russification of the ethnic minorities and their ultimate merger with the Russian people«; Bendrikov 1960, 62–63). In this case, the coordination problems caused by cultural differences are overcome by creating cultural homogeneity. As Kymlicka (2005) describes this strategy, »the state [...] express[es] the national identity of the dominant national group while attempting to assimilate other national groups or at least relegating them to the private sphere« (39). A key means of achieving this goal is an assimilationist educational policy. In sum, according to the proposed analysis, both of the main educational policies of the Russian state for minorities—tolerance of the minorities versus the attempt to assimilate them—had, despite their opposing directions, the same ultimate goal: to

solve the coordination problem of the multi-ethnic state and thereby to safeguard its stability and efficiency.

However, the theory of cultural transmission in minorities suggests that this analysis is incomplete. A full understanding of majority politics for minorities must also take into account the majority's culture transmission motive as a possible additional motive of, in particular, assimilationist policies. The assimilation of minorities is not only a means of solving the coordination problems of a multi-ethnic state, it is also a means of supporting the maintenance and transmission of the majority culture: The successful assimilation of a sociocultural minority leads to both the numerical increase of the majority and the conversion of its resources into those of the majority (whose ranks minority members join in the process of assimilation), as well as the termination of potential risks (e. g. separationism) posed by the minority (Mchitarjan 2010; Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a). Hence, historical analyses of the reasons for any concrete case of assimilationist policy should always consider the possibility that it was, at least in part, motivated by the majority's culture-transmission motive.

Beyond that, the majority's culture-transmission wish can in theory also motivate certain (seemingly) tolerant policies for minorities. In particular, the goal of establishing a super-ethnic identity often leads, in practice, to a further strengthening of the dominance of the majority culture. In the case of Russia, this is true in particular of the attempt—in the later Soviet Union—to establish a »Soviet« identity, which in practice led to the increasing dominance of the Russian language and culture. Many representatives of non-Russian minorities therefore considered the state policy of establishing a Soviet identity to be a covert form of Russification (Kymlicka 2005). It is possible, however, that in this case the strengthening of the majority culture was an unintended side-effect rather than a goal of the respective minority policies. Indeed, Kymlicka (2005) suggests that the establishment of a dominant cultural identity often occurs unintentionally.

*Question 2:* Why does a majority society adopt different educational policies for a given minority at different times, and even at the same time for different minorities?

According to the action-theoretical model of cultural transmission described earlier, the pursuit of different educational minority policies by a majority can be explained by two factors: (a) the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the available educational policies for furthering the superordinate goals of the majority, and (b) their estimated attainability. The action-theoretical model predicts that the majority chooses the strategy that appears, from its perspective, to be most efficient—i.e., the strategy that maximizes the majority's chances of achieving its aims while minimizing costs and negative side-effects.

Both the tolerance and support of a minority's cultural transmission, and the attempt to interfere with it—and in the extreme case, the attempt to assimilate the minority—have benefits and costs. The potential benefits of the assimilation of a minority were already mentioned: the enlargement of the majority group and its resources and the termination of potential problems associated with minorities in a multi-ethnic state. As to the costs, the most important factor is that direct attempts at assimilation—or maximal threats to the minority's culture-transmission motive—usually trigger strong opposition from the minority, including protests, overt or covert resistance, and appeals to third parties (e.g., other countries or international organizations; for historical evidence see e.g., Mchitarjan 2006). These defensive strategies of the minority can make its assimilation too expensive or too difficult. In addition, at least in modern democratic societies, the forced assimilation of minorities is considered ethically unacceptable. Therefore, the attempt to forcefully assimilate a minority also has moral costs for the majority, including ostracism by the international community. Kymlicka (2005) considers these costs and the increasingly effective defenses of minorities against attempts at forced assimilation to be the main reason why such attempts were only rarely successful in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. However, although international condemnation of the forced assimilation of minorities is a

comparatively recent achievement, the history of Russia and other multi-ethnic states suggests that a tendency to morally oppose forced assimilation existed long before the formal international recognition (after the First World War) of the rights of peoples and the protection of minorities. This hypothesis receives deductive support from the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, which suggests that a »natural« moral opposition against forced assimilation should indeed exist, although it is created by cultural rather than biological evolution. The cognitive basis of this moral tendency is the mutual knowledge of sociocultural groups about the existence of the culture-transmission motive. It is difficult to legitimately deny other groups that which one desires for one's own group. Support for this hypothesis can be seen in the fact that the assumption that groups have a desire to transmit their culture has been accepted in international minority law (e. g., Opitz 2007; Thornberry 2001). The existence of a »natural« opposition to forced assimilation can explain why the forced assimilation of minorities has historically always seemed to have required special justification—e. g., that the creation of cultural homogeneity is necessary to ensure the political stability of the state, or that the minority in question is culturally backwards and assimilation therefore in its own best interests (Kymlicka 2005).

Like the attempt to assimilate a minority, the tolerance and support of a minority have both benefits and costs for the majority (see also Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a). The possible benefits of a tolerant/supportive strategy include the avoidance of the above-mentioned material and moral costs of attempts at assimilation (which often remain unsuccessful), fostering a loyal attitude in the minority, and the provision by the minority of desired goods such as manpower, technical knowledge or the establishment of favorable relations to other countries. The possible costs of a tolerant/supportive strategy include problems arising from intercultural differences (e.g., communication problems, value clashes, separatism) and the expenditure of majority resources to support the minority.



In summary, according to the theory of cultural transmission in minorities, the reasons for different educational policies towards minorities are the different expected costs and benefits of these policies and their different perceived feasibility. Furthermore, when estimating the possible effects of different minority policies, the majority implicitly takes into account the minority's culture-transmission motive and the associated material and moral costs of an assimilative strategy, as well as the associated benefits of a tolerant/supportive educational policy.

Taken together, these assumptions allow the theory of cultural transmission in minorities to explain many details of Russian educational policy towards minorities throughout history, including several that are otherwise difficult to make sense of.<sup>17</sup> This claim will be documented by three examples.

*Example 1.* The theory of cultural transmission in minorities explains why the attempt to forcefully assimilate minorities has been a comparatively rare occurrence in Russian history and was strongest at the climax of Russian nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As explained above, the theory suggests that the forced assimilation of a minority typically meets not only with practical resistance, but also with intuitive moral rejection. Therefore, the assimilation of a minority requires special legitimation, such as the claim that the creation of cultural homogeneity is needed to safeguard the political stability of the state, or that the majority culture is superior (Kymlicka 2005). This rhetoric is characteristic of the legitima-

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17 In addition, the theory of cultural transmission in minorities answers the more general question of why both the tolerant and intolerant majority policies for minorities focus on systems of norms and values, and language, rather than some other aspect of culture (e.g., technology, eating habits, etc.). The reason is that norms and values, and language, are the core elements of culture. They are central to the identity of sociocultural groups and essential for their functioning as adaptive units. For this reason, they are also the focus of the culture-transmission motive: It is these cultural elements that minorities primarily want to maintain and transmit, and which they are therefore particularly quick to defend.

tion discourse of ethnocentric nationalism. Although nationalism is a comparatively recent historical »invention«, I assume that it has old cultural-evolutionary roots, possibly the most important of which is the culture-transmission motive (see also Nikolas 1999). Why this ideology won the upper hand in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia is beyond the theory of cultural transmission in minorities to explain. However the theory *can* explain why forced assimilation has been a comparatively rare occurrence in Russian history. It is because forced assimilation is in principle an unstable strategy: It requires special justification and it becomes untenable once the defense is no longer accepted.

In the later Soviet Union, the dominance of the Russian majority culture was again fostered by the educational policy of the state. However, at that point in history, this was only possible in the context of a program aimed at establishing a super-ethnic identity.

*Example 2.* The theory of cultural transmission in minorities explains why, in the era of Russian state nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a hardline assimilationist politics was taken against culturally similar non-Russian minorities (e.g., Poles and Ukrainians), whereas a »cautious« line was adopted towards Muslim and other non-Christian ethnic groups. The theory suggests the following explanation of these historical facts: The Russian assimilationist policy was based on the implicit assumption that resistance to assimilation increases with the cultural distance between majority and minority. Accordingly, it was expected that minorities whose core culture—the (religiously impregnated) value and norm systems and in some cases (e.g., in Poland and the Ukraine) also the language—are similar to the Russian culture would show comparatively little resistance to Russification and for that reason, the chances of success of a concerted assimilation attempt would be good. By contrast, the Muslims and other non-Christian minorities were expected—because of their perceived greater distance to the Russian culture—to show strong resistance to a direct assimilation attempt, making its costs high and its chances of success uncertain. Therefore, a more gradual approach that did not strongly threaten the minority's culture-transmission motive

was preferred in this case. Hence, a »cautious approach« was taken towards Muslims (and more generally non-Christians) not because they were not to be Russified, but because stronger opposition against a direct assimilation attempt was expected.

This interpretation is supported by the following historical facts: (1) The assimilation of the non-Christian minorities was the declared long-term goal of the »Measures« of 1870 (»O merakh« 1871, 1561–62; cf. 1555–56). (2) A previous forced assimilation attempt under Peter the Great (that included banning the native language in schools) did not have the desired effect and had raised strong protests (Medynskiy 1938, 350). (3) Il'minskiy, whose school concept for ethnic minorities formed the basis of the »Measures« of 1870, was himself a fervent nationalist and was convinced that his »cautious« educational policy would in the long run result in the replacement of the native cultures by the Russian culture (McCarthy 1973). Il'minskiy (cited in Medynskiy 1938, 352) argued that using the mother tongue as the language of instruction in schools for ethnic minorities would be the best way to teach them the Russian language and culture. (4) According to the »Measures« of 1870, different non-Christian minorities were to be provided with different forms of schooling finely attuned to the degree of their Russification: The less an ethnic group was already Russified, the more space the mother tongue of this group was given in the classroom, and the later the learning of the Russian language began. (5) Several of the measures proposed for the schooling of Muslims, such as allowing the headmasters and teachers of the makhtabs and madrassas to sit in on Russian classes at any time, were explicitly aimed at reducing the expected »distrust against the new school spirit« and more specifically »the fear that the government attempts to dissuade the children from their religious faith« (»O merakh« 1871, 1561–62).

*Example 3.* The theory of cultural transmission in minorities can also make sense of Russian educational administrators' recommendation, made in the assimilationist phase and mentioned in the first part of this article, to give special attention to the education of girls and women in

areas with Muslim and other non-Christian populations. For successful cultural transmission, certain members of a culture are of particular importance (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a). These key agents of cultural transmission include the religious and political leaders of sociocultural groups, as well as members of certain professions (e.g., teachers) who are considered to be experts for cultural transmission. The group of »cultural transmission experts« also includes women, because—especially in pre-modern societies and in societies with a missing or only weakly-developed system of public education—the education of children usually falls upon women. Hence, if a majority plans to assimilate a minority, it is well advised to focus on the »cultural conversion« of leaders and other key agents of cultural transmission, such as women. In this way, the transmission of the minority culture is diverted at a crucial point. The Russian educational politicians of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were apparently aware of these points, as witnessed by the justification they gave for their recommendation: »It is the mothers who mainly preserve the language and traditions of ethnic minorities« (»O merakh« 1871, 1558, see also 1559–60, 1564).

### Summary

Historians often restrict their efforts to reconstructing events from the past, with a minimum of theoretical interpretation and explanation. In contrast, the focus of the present article was explanatory. My aim was to analyze Russian educational policy for non-Russian minorities throughout history from the perspective of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities (Mchitarjan and Reizenzein 2010, 2014a), a theory that was explicitly formulated to explain minority-majority interactions in the domains of education and cultural transmission. This attempt was premised on the belief that the explanation of historical events by general theories (or at least »middle-range« theories; Merton 1968) is both feasible and desirable (see also Calhoun 2003). Specifically, using the case of Russian educational policies for minorities, the theory of cultural transmission in minorities was probed for answers to two main questions raised by the educational policy of a majority for a minority: (1) What

were the superordinate goals pursued by the Russian state with its educational policy for ethnic minorities? and (2) Why were very different educational strategies used at different times, and even at the same time for different minorities? The results of my analysis indicate that the theory of cultural transmission in minorities can give at least partial answer to both questions.

Regarding the *superordinate goals* of the Russian educational policy for minorities, I argued that the two main historical strategies for dealing with minorities in Russia—the strategy of »flexible pragmatism and tolerance« and the strategy of »aggressive state nationalism«—are both motivated by the common goal of solving the basic problem of multi-ethnic states: to coordinate different ethnic groups to form a functional whole (see also Kymlicka 2005). In addition, I argued that the educational policy of the majority can also be influenced by the majority's culture-transmission motive. In particular, this motive can be an additional reason for the majority's pursuit of an assimilationist strategy. Beyond that, even some forms of »tolerant« educational minority policies—in particular the attempt to establish a super-ethnic identity on the basis of the majority culture and language—can be partly motivated by the culture-transmission motive of the majority, or can at least have the unintended side-effect of strengthening the majority culture.

The second question—why, given the described common superordinate goal, the Russian state used very different policies for minorities in different historical periods, and even at the same time for different minorities—can be answered by pointing to the expected utility of the different strategies for reaching the majority's goals, as well as their perceived feasibility. For example, the attempt to assimilate a minority has, if successful, a variety of benefits for the majority, but it usually triggers strong defense mechanisms within the minority and is considered inadmissible in modern democracies. Furthermore, I argued that even in pre-modern societies, there is a »natural« moral opposition to forced assimilation, which is based on the mutual knowledge of groups about their culture-transmission motive. The strategy of forced assimilation

therefore always needs special legitimation. Such a legitimation was in particular provided by the ideology of ethnocentric state nationalism that set the tone in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. In the Soviet Union, this legitimation was no longer viable. Instead, there was an initial return to a minority-friendly educational policy. In the later Soviet Union, the dominance of the Russian majority culture was again promoted through educational policies, but at that time in history this was only possible in the context of the aim of establishing a super-ethnic identity (the »Soviet people«).

Differing perceived costs and chances of success can also explain why the Russian government took a hardline assimilationist approach towards culturally close minorities in the era of 19<sup>th</sup> century state nationalism, whereas culturally more distant ethnic groups were handled more cautiously. The explanation suggested by the theory of cultural transmission in minorities is that a stronger defense against direct assimilation attempts was anticipated from the culturally distant ethnic groups, and a more gradual assimilation strategy was considered to be more promising. Other details of Russian educational policy towards minorities also become understandable in light of the theory of cultural transmission in minorities. For example, the recommendation of Russian educational experts during the assimilationist phase in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that special attention be paid to the education of the girls and women from Muslim and other »alien« minorities can be explained by noting that the »cultural conversion« of women, particularly in traditional societies, disturbs the cultural transmission of minorities at a crucial point.

In conclusion, both the central tenets as well as many details of Russian educational policies for minorities can be explained by the theory of cultural transmission in minorities. This conclusion supports the thesis of Mchitarjan and Reizenzein (2010, 2014a) that the theory is not only useful for explaining interactions between a majority society and immigrants, but also those between the majority and indigenous minorities. At the same time, the results of the present historical, theoretical case study

provide a better understanding of the case at hand, Russian educational policy for minorities.<sup>18</sup>

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\*\*\*

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